

A Brief Story of Housing Segregation in the U.S and Virginia: History and Impact  
Prepared by the LWV-VA Affordable Housing Issues Committee

November 2021

Background Causes:

The LWV-VA recently completed an Affordable Housing Study that resulted in a position on the topic that was adopted at the May 2021 LWV-VA Convention. A report was completed for the study that focused on the needs and solutions for housing for low income renter households. The report did not provide information on the racial disparities in housing except for the section on evictions. Questions were raised about this omission by members of the newly-created LWV-VA Affordable Housing Issues Committee. This report is an attempt to remedy that omission and highlight current racial disparities in housing by providing background information on the policies and practices that occurred in the U.S. over the past 160 years leading to this disparity. For the most part, this report discusses the causes and disparities in housing for African Americans while not discounting disparities that have and are occurring for other minority groups.

History

Much of the information for the Background Causes is derived from *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*, by Richard Rothstein, who provides facts and analysis proving that “African Americans were unconstitutionally denied the means and the right to integration in middle class neighborhoods, and because this denial was state-sponsored, the nation is obligated to remedy it”. (XIV -Prologue) Past racial discriminatory practices, such as zoning, redlining, FHA policy, public housing segregation, highway destruction of Black Communities, etc. have resulted in racial disparities in housing, especially for African Americans. Where possible, the report includes Virginia specific information on discriminatory policies and practices and their impact.

### 1. Segregation and Expulsion Begins:

The first steps toward official segregation came in the form of “[Black Codes](#).” These were laws passed throughout the South starting around 1865, that dictated most aspects of Black peoples’ lives, including where they could work and live. [A Look Back at Segregation in the United States](#)

Once federal troops left the South in 1877, Reconstruction ended and an era of violence, intimidation and Jim Crow laws were adopted designed to subjugate and intimidate African Americans all over the nation. While acts of violence were particularly overt and heinous in the South, which resulted in the Great Migration during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, they were also brutal in the north and Midwest as well. Rothstein tells the story of blacks being expelled from Montana in the early 1900’s.

The removal of African Americans was gradual. By 1890, black settlers were living in every Montana county. By 1930, though, eleven of the state’s fifty-six counties had been entirely cleared of African Americans, and in the other counties few remained. The African American population of Helena, the state capital, peaked at 420 (3.4 percent) in 1910. It was down to 131 by 1930, and only 45 remained by 1975. (pp. 41-42)

By the early 1900’s in Montana there was a thriving middle-class African American community: black newspapers, black-owned businesses and a black literary society where hundreds would gather to hear poets, playwrights and essayists. All of that started changing in 1906. Laws were enacted banning interracial marriages, African Americans were banned from residing in town or even to be seen near town after dark. This and other laws/ordinances forced African Americans to leave the state.

The federal government got on board with segregation in 1913, right after Woodrow Wilson was elected President. He “and his cabinet approved the implementation of segregation in government offices. Curtains were installed to separate black and white clerical workers. Separate cafeterias were created. Separate basement toilets were constructed for African Americans. Black supervisors were demoted to ensure that no African American oversaw a white employee.” (p.43)

### 2. Public Housing:

In *The Color of Law*, Rothstein describes how the federal government first became involved in providing segregated housing.

The federal government first developed housing for civilians during WWI, when it built residences for defense workers near naval shipyards and munitions plants. Eighty-three projects in 26 states housed 176,000 white workers and their families. African Americans were excluded, even from projects in northern and western industrial centers where they worked in significant numbers. Federal policy sometimes forced racial segregation when it hadn't previously been established, forcing African Americans into overpopulated slums. After the war ended, the government sold off the property to private interests. (p. 18)

Public housing was created for working and middle-class white families. It was not subsidized. "Public housing's original purpose was to give shelter not to those too poor to afford it but to those who could afford decent housing but couldn't find it because none was available." (p. 18)

Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal created the nation's first ever public housing. Race determined the program's design. Separate projects were created for African Americans. (p. 19)

In the mid 20th Century, New Deal Construction programs such as the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) and the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) were created. African Americans were excluded by the government from housing in villages and camps for white workers and were segregated in shabby housing or in separate camps elsewhere. "A TVA official explained that the town was being reserved for whites because 'Negroes do not fit into the program'". (p. 19)

This same segregation occurred in the Public Works Administration (PWA) that was created in 1933 to build housing and create jobs. The projects that were built were not subsidized. The PWA created a neighborhood composition rule, which meant that "federal housing projects should reflect the previous racial composition of their neighborhoods". In areas where city planners had zoned exclusively for black residents only, housing projects were built for blacks only and vice versa. "A Miami civic leader explained to federal administrators that the sites were chosen to 'remove the entire colored population' from places that had been reserved for white occupancy." (p. 21)

Apparently, the PWA did not follow their own rules either. In integrated areas, the PWA designated them either white or black and "then used public housing to make the designation come true" thus intensifying segregation. An example of this is the first PWA project, the Techwood Homes that opened in 1935 in Atlanta. The PWA demolished a low income integrated neighborhood, the Flats, that included 1,600 families, one third of whom were African Americans. In its place, they erected 604 units for white families only. In effect, these

practices also resulted in overcrowding in segregated black neighborhoods. Since the projects were not subsidized, many African American families who were in the Flats could not afford the new segregated housing that was built for them, so the black families that were in the Flats were displaced with nowhere to go forcing them to double up with family and friends. (pp. 21-22)

This government-imposed segregation did not just happen in the South, but in the Northeast and the Midwest. The PWA concentrated African American projects in low income neighborhoods in Detroit, Indianapolis, Toledo and New York, and all projects were not created equal. Many white projects included amenities, such as community centers, playgrounds and green space whereas this rarely happened in African American projects. Even after the *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision invalidated separate but equal, the Eisenhower administration said that the decision did not apply to housing and in 1955 formally abolished a policy that it never enforced anyway: that African Americans and whites receive public housing of equal equity. Rothstein cites a 1984 report by investigative reporters from the *Dallas Morning News* who visited federally funded developments in 47 metropolitan areas.

The reporters found that the nation's nearly 10 million public housing tenants were almost always segregated by race and that every predominantly white-occupied project had facilities, amenities, and maintenance that were superior to what was found in predominantly black-occupied projects. (p. 34)

Congress ended the PWA program in 1937 and created the U.S. Housing Authority (USHA) that required localities to create their own agencies who could then build housing with federal subsidies. The USHA continued the policy of "respecting existing neighborhood racial characteristics while in practice creating new racially homogenous communities". (p. 23) The manual warned that it was undesirable to have projects for white families "in areas now occupied by Negroes". Austin, Texas was the first city to build segregated projects under the new USHA. In East Austin's black neighborhood, the city condemned Emancipation Park, owned by a neighborhood association and the site of annual commemorations of abolition. Despite the protests of the residents, the project was built there. This project also advanced the city's plan to "shift African Americans who were scattered throughout the city to a single Eastside ghetto." (p. 24)

Rothstein admits that segregated neighborhoods already existed, but that the federal government reinforced the segregation and where integrated neighborhoods existed, they forced segregation to occur. The federal government's rules "pushed cities into a more rigid segregation than otherwise would have existed". (p.24)

During WWII, the Lanham Act was passed creating war housing that largely was segregated. After the war, when there was a severe shortage of housing for war veterans, the 1949 Housing Act was passed allowing public housing authorities to continue to create segregated housing, despite efforts by the NAACP to pass an integration amendment. "With funds from the 1949 act, massive segregated high-rise projects were constructed nationwide, including the Robert Taylor and Cabrini Green Homes in Chicago, Rosen Homes and Schuylkill Falls in Philadelphia, Van Dyke Homes in New York City and the Pruitt-Igoe towers in St. Louis." (p. 32) While most of these projects were for African Americans, some, like the Igoe, were exclusively for whites in areas where housing was still needed for working-class whites. Across the U.S. whites moved out of public housing as their housing options in the suburbs increased for them. As African Americans were excluded for the most part from the suburbs, they stayed in public housing. While there were waiting lists in black projects, there were vacancies in white ones. Gradually, most of the projects that had been white became black.

In the 50's, many states, including Virginia, passed constitutional amendments requiring local referenda before building a low-income family public housing project, thereby ending any hope for integrated developments. A lower federal court found such referenda unconstitutional, but the US Supreme Court disagreed and upheld the referenda provisions in 1971. (pp. 32-33)

Public housing authorities continued to choose segregated sites for new developments but also segregated existing integrated projects. Rothstein cites Savannah as an example where the housing authority evicted the white tenants in the integrated Francis Bartow project to create an all-black project justifying it by saying blacks needed the housing and whites could easily find homes elsewhere. (p.34)

According to Benjamin Campbell in his book, *Richmond's Unhealed History*, Brandylane Publishers, Inc. 2012, the City of Richmond's public housing began in 1941, when the newly created Housing Authority took part of Jackson Ward, a historically African American neighborhood. The City demolished Apostle Town containing almost 200 houses to build the City's first public housing project, Gilpin Court, 297 units. Five public housing projects (totaling 2,000 units) segregating African Americans were built in the east end of Richmond within one mile of each other beginning in 1952 and ending in 1962. Campbell contends that they were built to get around court ordered school desegregation. Richmond built a school in the middle of Mosby Court to serve 1,500 junior high school and 1,000 elementary school students. "Richmond developed what is now the sixth highest concentration of public housing among cities over 200,000 in population." (p. 157)

### 3. Zoning Laws:

According to Rothstein, unlike public housing, which was a federal program, government policies to segregate the races geographically started at the local level. While states with smaller black populations, such as Montana, could expel African Americans, states with larger black populations sought to separate whites and blacks in different neighborhoods and areas through local laws and ordinances. Baltimore was the first city to adopt an ordinance in 1910 “prohibiting African Americans from buying homes on blocks where whites were a majority and vice versa”. (p. 44) At the time, the City was fairly integrated so the ordinance was very difficult to administer and judges were forced to decide matters of whether a black potential buyer or white potential buyer was allowed to purchase a home in an integrated block. The ordinance was eventually revised so it only applied to blocks that were either all white or all black. Many cities in the U.S., including Richmond and Roanoke, copied Baltimore.

A study of the history of zoning and segregation and its impacts in Virginia was recently completed by McGuire Woods Consulting, Public Affairs Solutions that documented the legacy of systemic racism preserved by zoning. [Zoning and Segregation in Virginia: Part 1 \(mcguirewoods.com\)](https://www.mcguirewoods.com) The study highlighted the history of zoning which began with racial segregation.

The city of Richmond, using its charter powers, adopted the first ordinance dividing the city into separate blocks for white and “colored” in April 1911. Eleven months later, the General Assembly approved legislation enabling all cities and towns in Virginia to adopt segregation districts dividing blocks between white persons and “colored” persons. Norfolk, Ashland, Roanoke, Portsmouth and Falls Church adopted similar residential segregation statutes following Richmond.

(Even prior to 1911, the City of Richmond imposed its own segregated policies using “permitting” as one means. Alice Tousignant describes researching the permit for her home in Richmond, which was built in 1908. On the permit, you were required to respond to a question on whether the structure was going to be built for “whites” or “Negroes”.)

The McGuire Woods study indicates that while the Supreme Court of Virginia upheld these segregation districts in *Hopkins v. City of Richmond*, 117 Va. 692, 86 S.E. 139 (1915), two years later, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Buchanan v. Warley*, 245 U.S. 60 (1917), that explicit racial segregation zoning was unconstitutional.

“In the wake of the *Buchanan* decision, racial zoning gave way to the broader notion of a race-based comprehensive planning process and racially informed zoning districts. The

first zoning enabling statute, following the 1912 racial zoning statute, passed in 1922 and allowed cities to divide their land into districts to regulate the use of land and of buildings. This power was extended to towns (1926) and counties with higher population densities (1927). The Buchanan decision undermined the use of zoning to segregate explicitly by race but not the use of the planning process in the service of segregation. After 1917, cities preferred to engage professional planners to prepare racial zoning plans and to marshal the entire planning process to create the completely separate Black community. Some early comprehensive plans, such as the 1928 comprehensive city plan for Roanoke, specifically called out “Areas for Colored Population.”

In addition, the McGuire Woods study states that maps were drawn in some areas categorizing largely African American areas as “industrial” while white areas were “residential”. In the *Color of Law*, Rothstein cites similar examples of this industrial categorizing. In St. Louis, the Planning Commission “changed an area’s zoning from residential to industrial if African American families had begun to move into it.” (p. 50)

Rothstein also says that zoning decisions not only promoted segregation, they also contributed to areas becoming slums. Again citing St. Louis, Rothstein explains:

Not only were these areas zoned to permit industry, even polluting industry, but the (Planning Commission) permitted taverns, liquor stores, nightclubs and housing of prostitution to open in African American neighborhoods but prohibited these as zoning violations in neighborhoods where whites lived. Residences in single-family districts could not legally be subdivided, but those in industrial districts could be, and with African Americans restricted from all but a few neighborhoods, rooming houses sprang up to accommodate the overcrowded population. (p. 50)

Another tool that was used to keep areas segregated was exclusionary zoning. As explained in the McGuire Woods study about Virginia, “The majority of land in most localities was zoned exclusively for “single family” housing. In most cases, a minority household could not afford to purchase a house on a large lot and was forced to live in a concentrated neighborhood of higher density.” This exclusionary zoning happened all over the U.S. and still exists today.

In the *Color of Law*, Rothstein states that many cities including Atlanta, Birmingham, Indianapolis and Louisville, ignored the Buchanan decision even though most of them were sued and were overturned, they continued to find ways to keep segregation alive. (Birmingham’s racial zoning law, however, continued until 1950 when it was finally struck down

by a federal appeals court. Other cities racial zoning laws survived until well into the 60's. Rothstein says that other cities, including Norfolk had planning documents that designated spot zoning decisions and "Norfolk continued this practice until at least 1987.) (p. 46)

Rothstein says that "Richmond, Virginia, attempted a sly evasion of *Buchanan* by adopting a law in 1924 banning interracial marriage, so the city then prohibited anyone from residing on a street where they were ineligible to marry a majority of those already living there." It was overturned by the U.S. supreme Court in 1930. (p.47)

#### 4. Segregation in Homeownership:

According to Rothstein, the federal government began encouraging white homeownership as early as 1917 as a way of promoting capitalism in the wake of the Communism scare. This also coincided with residential segregation efforts encouraging white families to leave urban areas and move to the suburbs. The Department of Labor began a "Own Your Own Home" campaign in 1917 distributing buttons to schoolchildren, and pamphlets and posters throughout the country with the images of white people, saying that it was a patriotic duty to stop renting and build a single family unit. Another *Better Homes in America* campaign was launched in 1921 by a private agency, but headed up by Herbert Hoover, Secretary of Commerce at the time. This organization published a pamphlet about the benefits of property ownership, including how to avoid "racial strife" presumably by moving to single family homes away from urban African Americans. (p. 60)

#### **A. Redlining:**

Despite the government's best efforts, homeownership even for white families in the early 1900's was difficult to come by and during the Depression, mortgagees couldn't make their payments. The New Deal created two programs to help: one for those having trouble paying their mortgages and another to help middle class families buy homes. The first rescue program to homeowners was through a newly-created Homeowners' Loan Corporation (HOLC). Assessments to qualify for new loans with longer terms were done by local real estate agents. Neighborhoods were determined safe (green) or risky (red). All African American neighborhoods, even single-family solidly middle class ones, were deemed risky.

For example, in St. Louis, the white middle-class suburb of Ladue was colored green because, according to an HOLC appraiser in 1940, it had 'not a single foreigner or negro'. The similarly middle-class suburban area of Lincoln Terrace was colored red because it had 'little or no value today... due to the colored element now controlling the district.' (Rothstein, p. 64)



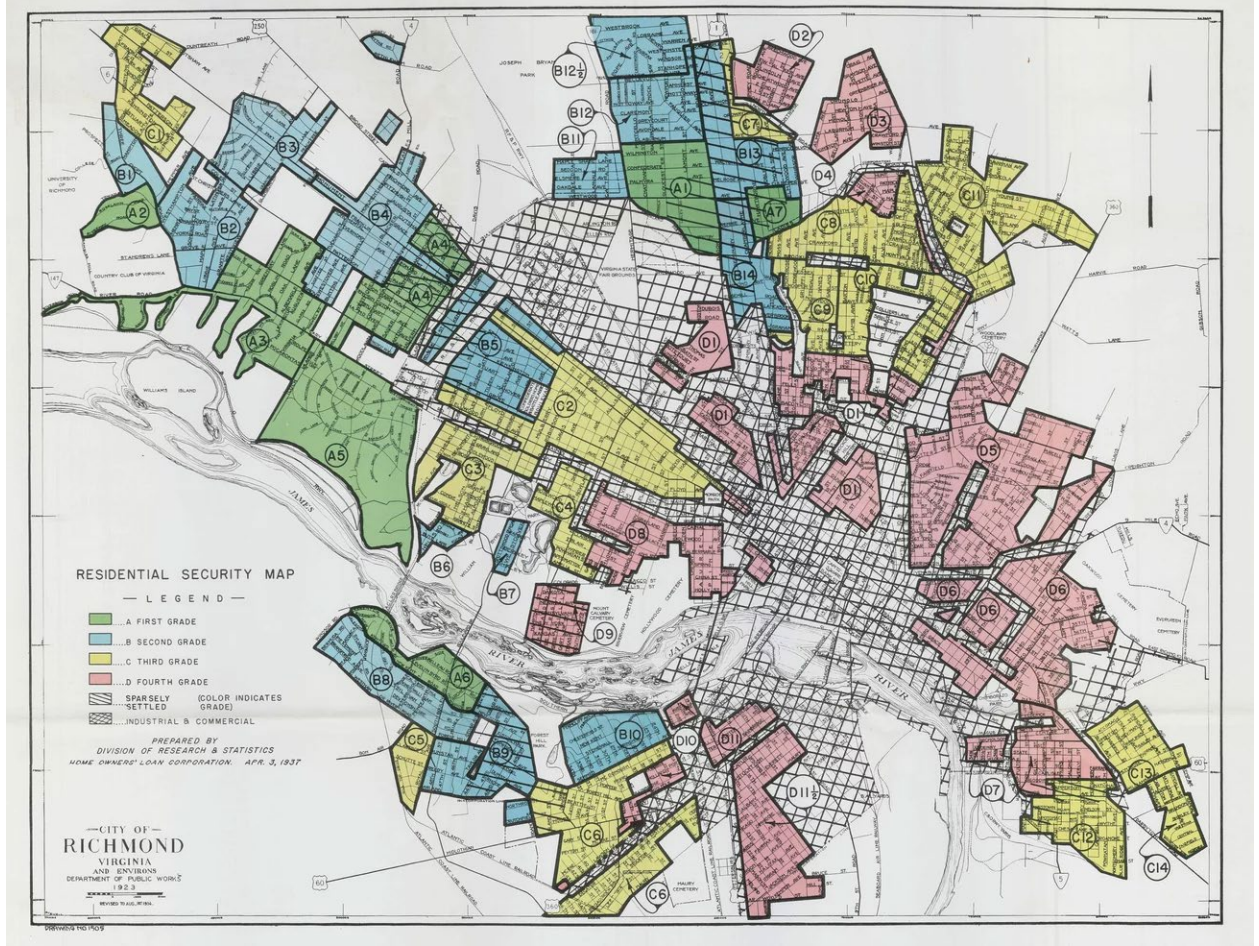
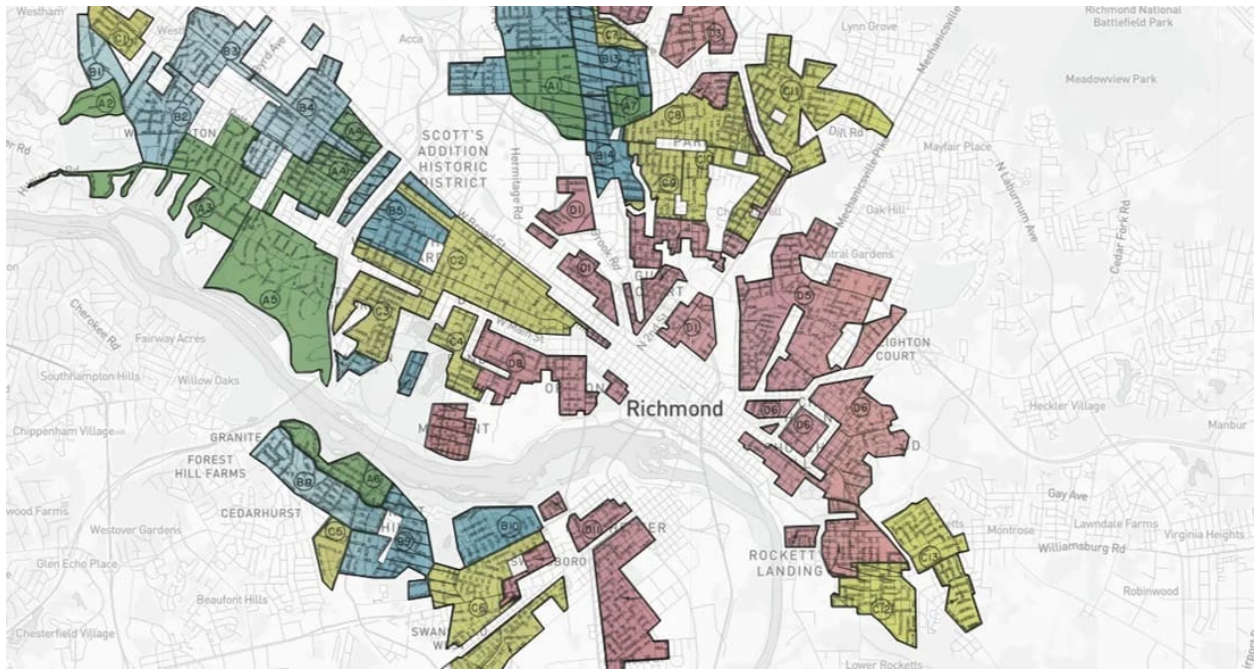
To spur homeownership, in 1934, Congress created the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) which insured bank mortgages that covered 80% of the purchase price. The FHA's appraisal standards included a "whites-only" requirement. Rothstein indicated that "The FHA judged that properties would probably be too risky for insurance if they were in racially mixed neighborhoods or even in white neighborhoods near black ones that might possibly integrate in the future." (p. 65) Rothstein further states that with very few exceptions, "no guarantees for mortgages to African Americans, or to whites who might lease to African Americans (were made) regardless of the applicants' creditworthiness". (p. 67)

According to Rothstein, after WWII, the newly-created Veterans Administration (VA) began guaranteeing mortgages to help returning veterans purchase homes. The VA adopted the FHA's underwriting practices and redlined neighborhoods, virtually shutting African American veterans' hopes of purchasing a home with a VA guarantee. The FHA and VA were responsible for huge segregated white subdivisions like Levittown with 17,500 homes to be built. Each mass-produced 750 square foot house sold for \$8,000 with no down payment required. Indeed, the FHA financed Levittown on condition that it be all white with no foreseeable change in its racial make-up. And, the FHA rejected housing projects that were exclusively for African Americans forcing these developments to use costlier private financing dooming the projects for failure. Occasionally, African American subdivisions were approved by FHA. For example, in New Orleans in 1954, despite the protest of a segregated development by the NAACP, the FHA insured a development for middle class black professionals and promised that no units would be sold to whites. (pp. 70,71,74)

In the 1930s, appraisers mapped the City of Richmond as part of the Depression era federal program to rescue the nation's collapsing housing market. Every Black neighborhood in Richmond was outlined in red and deemed a hazardous area for housing loans, regardless of the income level. Another part of town was outlined in yellow and rated as declining because the appraiser indicated Black families sometimes walked through.

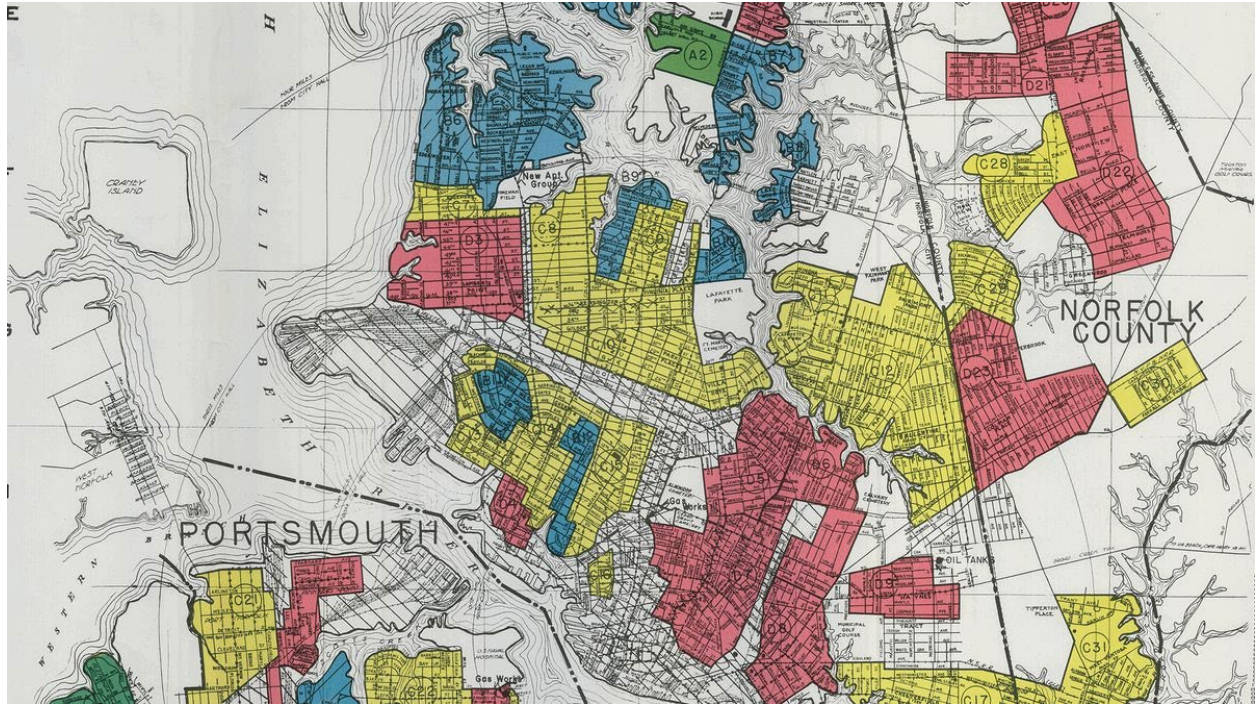
<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/08/24/climate/racism-redlining-cities-global-warming.html>

The following is the map of Richmond.



Richmond’s map shows large parts of the East End and Southside labeled yellow for “definitely declining” and red for “hazardous.” Green or “best” areas often got that grade for their restrictive covenants.

It happened in Norfolk as well. Starting in the early 1900s, after Reconstruction ended, racist laws and housing covenants began to take root, pushing Black residents out of certain areas of the city. Below is perhaps the most well-known example of government-induced segregation: the redlining maps of Norfolk.



The federal government released them between the late 1930’s and the early 1940’s to tell banks and mortgage lenders where it was safe to invest and where it wasn’t. Most white neighborhoods were marked in green and blue, indicating a safe place to lend money and build new homes. Black neighborhoods were marked in red, indicating a dangerous investment.

### **B. Restrictive Covenants:**

In the 1920’s after the Supreme Court *Buchanan* decision barring explicit racial zoning restrictions, restrictive covenants on deeds sprang up all over the nation as a way to get around the ruling. According to Rothstein, a typical restrictive covenant would exclude domestic servants. He offered an example:

The real property above described, or any portion thereof, shall never be occupied, used or resided on by any person not of the white or Caucasian race, except in the capacity of

a servant or domestic employed thereon as such by a white Caucasian owner, tenant, or occupant. (p. 78)

However, restrictive covenants were only as good as the owners who chose to obey them. One way of getting around this, especially for new subdivisions, was creating community associations that excluded African Americans and required membership as a condition of purchase. Restrictive covenants were pervasive all over the country. Rothstein cites surveys done around suburban New York City of 300 developments built between 1935 and 1957 with 56% having racially restrictive covenants (for those with 75 or more units, 85% had them). Other surveys showed that an estimated 175 Chicago neighborhood associations were enforcing them by 1943 and between 1943 to 1965 in Detroit, white homeowners, real estate agents or developers organized 192 of these associations. It also happened in the Great Plains and in the West, not to mention the South. (pp. 79, 80)

All of these practices were upheld by the government. In 1926, the U. S. Supreme Court not only upheld exclusionary zoning but restrictive covenants as well, ostensibly because these were private contracts between individuals. (p.82) Rothstein said that

Government at all levels became involved in promoting and enforcing the restrictive covenants. Throughout the nation, courts ordered African Americans evicted from homes they had purchased. State Supreme Courts upheld the practice when it was challenged— in Alabama, California, Colorado, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Missouri, New York, North Carolina, West Virginia and Wisconsin. (pp. 81, 82)

In addition, the FHA lowered risk estimates for individual properties with restrictive covenants. (p. 83) The FHA manual included this language:

284 (3). Recorded deed restrictions should strengthen and supplement zoning ordinances... Recommended restrictions include... prohibition of the occupancy of properties except by the race for which they are intended and appropriate provisions for enforcement. (p. 84)

The FHA in many cases demanded that developments receiving construction loans they sponsored include racially restrictive covenants in their subdivisions' property deeds.(p. 84) The VA began doing the same thing when they guaranteed mortgages. In 1948, the U.S. Supreme Court in the *Shelley v Kraemer* case banned court enforcement of restrictive covenants, meaning purchasers could not be evicted. However, sellers could still be penalized for selling to African Americans. This was later struck down in a 1953 U.S. Supreme Court decision but it still

“refused to declare that such private contracts were unlawful or even that county clerks should be prohibited from accepting deeds that included them.” Even after the Shelley decision, however, the FHA continued the practice and financed developments through the 1950’s that excluded African American purchasers. The FHA only ceased this practice after Robert Kennedy issued an executive order in 1962 prohibiting the use of federal funds to support racial discrimination in housing. (pp 85-91)

Today, while racially restrictive covenants cannot be recorded, they still exist on many properties all over Virginia. However, the Virginia Legislature took a historic step during the 2020 General Assembly by passing HB788 that prohibits any deeds containing restrictive covenants from being recorded on or after July 1, 2020 and provides a process for restrictive covenants to be removed from existing deeds.

### **C. Blockbusting:**

Blockbusting according to Rothstein “was a scheme in which speculators bought properties in borderline black-white areas; rented or sold them to African American families at above market prices; persuaded white families residing in these areas that their neighborhoods were turning into African American slums and that values would soon fall precipitously; and then purchased the panicked whites’ homes for less than their worth”. (p. 95) They used tactics like hiring African Americans to drive cars with loud radios down their streets and hired African American women with baby carriages to walk in their neighborhoods.

### **D. Contract Sales:**

Once speculators bought the whites’ homes, they turned around and sold them at inflated prices to African Americans who could not get FHA loans. “Agents often sold these homes on installment plans... in which no equity accumulated from down or monthly payments”. Usually these contract sales would only transfer after 15 or 20 years, but if a monthly payment was missed, the speculator could evict the family and sell to another family with the original family having nothing to show for it. (Rothstein p. 96)

*In Family Properties: How the Struggles over Race and Real Estate Transformed Chicago and Urban America*, author Beryl Setter describes contract sales in her memoir:

Because black contract buyers knew how easily they lose their homes, they struggled to make their inflated monthly payments. Husbands and wives both worked double shifts. They neglected basic maintenance. They subdivided their apartments, crammed in extra tenants and, when possible, charged their tenants hefty rents... White people observed that their new black neighbors overcrowded and neglected their properties....

In the end, whites fled these neighborhoods, not only because of the influx of black families, but also because they were upset about overcrowding, decaying schools and crime. (Rothstein p. 97)

Rothstein explains that just in Chicago in the 1960's, about 85% of the homes sales to African Americans were contract sales.

**E. Steering:**

Steering is the practice realtors used to show houses only in neighborhoods occupied by their own race. In Richmond City as late as 1967, real estate agents at one local firm (that can be verified) used these forms below to ensure blacks and whites were not shown properties outside their race. It was not until 1968 and the passage of the Fair Housing Act, that these forms were barred from use.

**HOUSE LISTING:**  White  Colored

Listed By \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Rent \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Inspected By \_\_\_\_\_

How Listed \_\_\_\_\_ Construction \_\_\_\_\_

Type \_\_\_\_\_

Yard \_\_\_\_\_ Shrubby \_\_\_\_\_ Flowers \_\_\_\_\_

Floor	1	2	3
Receptn. Hall			
Living Room			
Dining Room			
Dinette			
Kitchen			
Breakfast Rm.			
Pantry			
Bed Rooms			
Closets			
Lavatory			
Bath			
Porches			
Fl. Attic			

Basement \_\_\_\_\_ Garage \_\_\_\_\_

Type Heat \_\_\_\_\_

Wired for Elec. Stove \_\_\_\_\_

Utilities Furn. \_\_\_\_\_

Personal Property Included \_\_\_\_\_

Keys At \_\_\_\_\_

How Shown \_\_\_\_\_

Owner \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Add'l Info. \_\_\_\_\_

PROPERTY \_\_\_\_\_ POSS.

**5. Highway Construction and Other African American Displacement:**

In the 1960's and early 1970's, a number of major highways were built in Hampton Roads: I 264 (1960), I 464 (1968), and I 664 (1972). Even though in 1970, 70% of the population was white, most of these highways ran through majority Black neighborhoods. Although this increased mobility for those with automobiles, it decreased mobility for those living in those neighborhoods by cutting them off from parks, schools, and jobs. An example of a minority community cut off by major thoroughfares is the St. Paul's area in Norfolk. It is divided from downtown Norfolk on the west by St. Paul's Boulevard, on the north by Virginia Beach Boulevard, and on the East by Tidewater Drive.

Richmond offers other examples of Black neighborhoods split by highway construction in the guise of "Neighborhood Revitalization" and "Urban Renewal". These are described poignantly in Benjamin Campbell's book, *Richmond's Unhealed History*.

Over the next thirty-five years, (beginning in 1946) in the name of urban renewal, the (all-white) city council pursued a plan that destroyed or invaded every major black neighborhood in the city. The neighborhoods included Apostle Town, Jackson Ward and Navy Hill in the north; 17<sup>th</sup> Street, portions of Church Hill and Fulton in the east; Oak Grove and Blackwell in the south and the Black west end (Randolph); Penitentiary Bottom and Carver in the West.

Residents were given \$700 with no other support for relocation. They were given priority for the new housing but many did not want to live in what they considered unattractive and socially demeaning places. “The result of the massive clearance was the destruction of most major black neighborhoods. In the decade of the 50’s, the city destroyed 4,700 units of housing in black neighborhoods and replaced them with 1,760 units of public housing.”

Campbell describes in detail how Jackson Ward was split in half by the construction of I-95. To get around two public referenda opposing the construction through the historically significant black neighborhood, in 1954, the all-white General Assembly created the Richmond-Petersburg Turnpike Authority and gave it eminent domain. Four months later, the Authority announced the highway would be built through Jackson Ward.

As many as 1,000 homes of African Americans lay in the path of the proposed expressway. Residents of Jackson Ward, who were not represented in the City Council or on the Richmond-Petersburg Turnpike Authority, were powerless to stop the destruction of their historic neighborhood. The highway cut a barrier canyon the width of a city block through the middle of the neighborhood, from east to west, separating half of it from the center city, eliminating pedestrian pathways, and blocking thirty-one streets.

Campbell cites several other similar examples of black neighborhoods being destroyed in the guise of urban renewal.

In Norfolk, issues of strict segregation and the scarcity of affordable housing for Black citizens were clearly related to attempts to avoid integrating the schools despite federal mandates to do so. For example, in 1955 a group of Black developers “had already platted the Broad Creek Shores subdivision and had a number of houses under construction.” The city of Norfolk annexed that area to isolate the black development from nearby white neighborhoods and used its powers of eminent domain for a park and possible school expansion, “neither of which

was ever built on the site.” (White, p. 198 Forrest R. “Hap” White (2018) *Black, White and Brown*. Parke Press, Norfolk.)

Similarly, about the same time that a federal judge was ordering the desegregation of Patrick Henry Elementary School in the Atlantic City portion of the city, a working class racially integrated area, the Norfolk Redevelopment and Housing Authority announced that it planned to demolish the entire neighborhood. (White p. 199) In just 16 months, the homes of almost twenty thousand working-class white families and a few black residents—roughly 10% of its population were demolished. Neither Broad Creek nor Atlantic City had been slums, and most of the dwellings met the city’s minimum housing code. Both these areas “were rushed into the demolition phase so quickly that portions of the cleared land sat vacant for close to three decades. (White, pp. 202-203)

Black businesses were also displaced in Williamsburg. In a recent article that appeared in the *Williamsburg Yorktown Daily*, <https://wydaily.com/local-news/2021/02/08/paying-the-price-how-williamsburgs-black-business-sector-died-in-the-20th-century-2/>, the story is told of how the Triangle Black Business block was destroyed and Black businesses displaced in the 70’s again under the guise of urban renewal and efforts to increase tourism in Colonial Williamsburg. In the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the Triangle Area was home to Black barbers, store owners and the only hospital in the area serving African Americans. The story was kept alive by Latasha Holloway whose grandmother and other relatives owned businesses in the area and who kept articles and stories that she donated to William and Mary. Holloway said her grandmother told her Blacks started businesses because they were not welcome in white establishments and told her that she was personally denigrated by a white business owner as she tried to try on a hat. “Holloway said her grandmother told stories of that time and the fight Black business owners put up against the city to try and preserve their properties. Part of the issue was that Black business owners continuously asked the city for improvements to the area but were never granted any. The city then used language such as “substandard” or “blighted” to describe the area, which allowed for a certain amount of grants to redevelop the Triangle Block.”

“Plans to redevelop the area started in the 1950s when a comprehensive plan designed the Triangle Block as the site of a bus terminal and single-family housing units. The comprehensive plan was updated in 1968 and recommended the area for “Tourist Commercial” land use and considered how the area would serve tourists since it was so close to Colonial Williamsburg.” Despite protests and articles in the paper by the Black community, this area and other nearby areas were redeveloped and Black businesses were pushed out.



In the City of Roanoke, urban Renewal (the term Slum Clearance was used in record books) began in 1955 and lasted more than 26 years. Most of Urban Renewal occurred in the primarily black neighborhoods. People were promised “that they were going to fix it up and make it beautiful for the people” 1600 homes were demolished, 200 businesses owned by persons of color and 24 churches attended by primarily people of color were demolished. Businesses were built in the cleared areas and eventually public housing was erected. However, there were reports that owners of property had trouble getting paid for their land. (Roanoke Times and World News Special Section by Mary Bishop Jan 29, 1995 *Urban Renewal*)

Impact:

1. Racial Disparities in Income and Wealth:

People of color disproportionately face greater challenges in finding decent and affordable housing in the U.S., and income inequality contributes to those challenges. Income inequality along racial lines is the product of historical and ongoing discrimination, economic exploitation, and unequal opportunities.

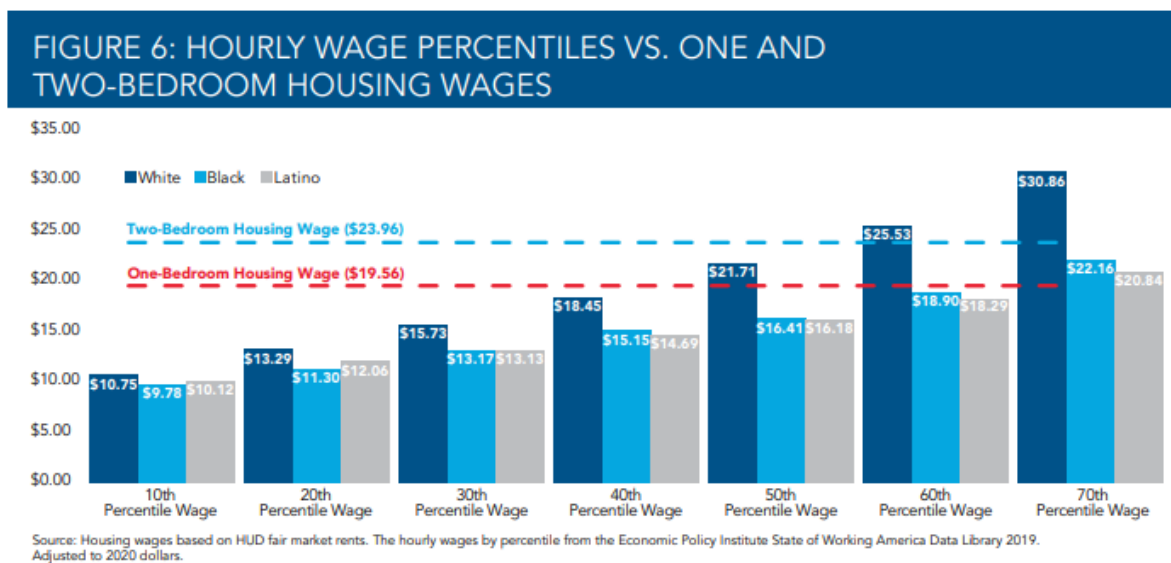


Figure 6 compares the hourly wage distributions of white, Black, and Latino workers. For example, the 10th percentile wage bars show what the lowest paid 10% of white, Black, and

Latino workers are paid. White workers at the bottom of the white income distribution earn more than Black and Latino workers at the bottom of their respective income distributions. A Black worker at the 20th percentile of Black wages earns 15% less than a white worker at the 20th percentile of white wages. A Latino worker at the 20th percentile of Latino wages earns 9% less than the 20th percentile white worker. This disparity holds across all income levels. The median Black worker and Latino worker earns 24% and 25% less than the median white worker.

In a recent article in the Wall Street Journal, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/college-was-supposed-to-close-the-wealth-gap-for-black-americans-the-opposite-happened-11628328602>, The median net worth of households with Black college graduates in their 30s has plunged over the past three decades to less than one-tenth the net worth of their white counterparts, according to a Wall Street Journal analysis of Federal Reserve data. The drop is driven by [skyrocketing student debt](#) and sluggish income growth, which combine to make it difficult to build savings or buy a home. Now, the generation that hoped to close the racial wealth gap is finding it is only growing wider.

More than 84% of college-educated Black households in their 30s have student debt, up from 35% three decades ago, when many baby boomers were at the same age. The younger generation owes a median of \$44,000, up from less than \$6,000. By comparison, 53% of white college-educated households in their 30s have debt, up from 27% three decades earlier. The median amount rose to \$35,000 from \$8,000. All figures are adjusted for inflation. Meanwhile, Black graduates' household incomes have grown more slowly than those of college graduates in general, according to a Journal analysis of census data. Median income for Black college-educated households in their 30s increased 7% from the early 1990s to late 2010s to about \$76,000. Income for their white counterparts rose 13% to about \$114,000.

“One reason white households are more likely than people of color to be homeowners is the immense racial wealth gap, which is the product of centuries of slavery, Jim Crow, and ubiquitous anti-Black discrimination.” In 2019, the median Black household's net worth was roughly 13% of the median white household's net worth, and the median Latino household's net worth was 19% of the median white household's (Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, 2020)

“In the 2019 American Community Survey, the median income of Black and Latino households was 61% and 78% of the median white household, respectively. Hiring discrimination adversely affects people of color: whites receive on average 36% more employment call backs than Blacks and 24% more than Latinos (Quillian, Pager, Hexel, & Midtbøen, 2017). Research shows no decline in hiring discrimination against Blacks over the past 25 years. Differences in educational

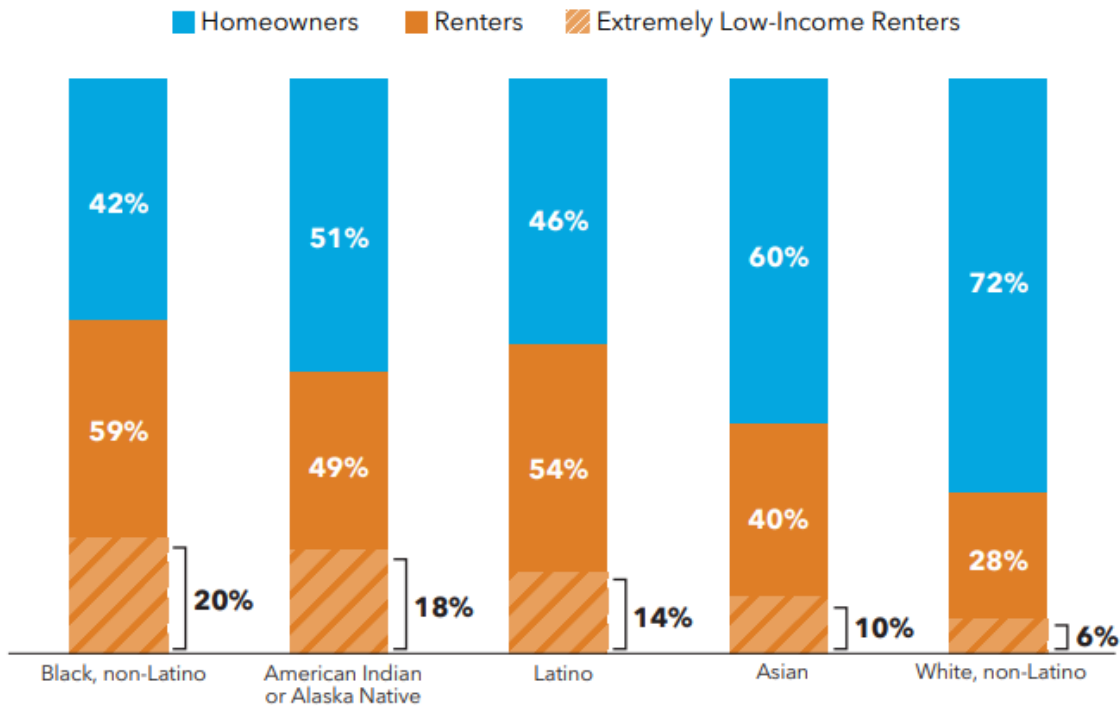
opportunity affect incomes, and Black and Latino students still have lower college participation and six-year completion rates than white students (de Brey et al., 2019; Shapiro et al., 2017).”

“Between 2015 and 2019, white workers with bachelor’s degrees saw their wages increase by 6.6%, but Black workers with the same degrees saw their wages decline by 0.3% (Gould & Wilson, 2019). Black workers are more likely than white workers to be underemployed or unemployed at all education levels (Williams; Wilson, 2019). Black and Latino workers were also more likely to lose income or employment during the pandemic. As of January 2021, 43% of white people reported a loss of employment income since March of 2020, compared to 55% of Black people and 60% of Latino people (Census, 2021b).”

2. Racial Disparities in Rental Housing:

Unsurprisingly, Black and Latino workers face larger gaps between their wages and the cost of housing than white workers. “This income inequality partly explains why 44% of Black households and 42% of Latino households spend more than 30% of their incomes on housing, compared to 26% of white households (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019).”

**FIGURE 10: SHARE OF ALL HOUSEHOLDS WHO ARE EXTREMELY LOW-INCOME RENTERS, BY RACE OR ETHNICITY**



Source: NLIHC tabulations of 2019 ACS PUMS. Homeowner and renter rates do not always add to 100% due to rounding.

FIGURE 10: SHARE OF ALL HOUSEHOLDS WHO ARE EXTREMELY LOW-INCOME RENTERS, BY RACE OR ETHNICITY Source: NLIHC tabulations of 2019 ACS PUMS. Homeowner and renter rates do not always add to 100% due to rounding.

### 3. Discrimination in homeownership

Discrimination in homeownership did not end 50 years ago. In the early 2000's "reverse redlining" occurred all over the U.S. According to Rothstein, "Banks, thrift institutions, and mortgage companies designed subprime loans for borrowers who had a higher risk of default, and they charged higher interest payments to subprime borrowers to compensate for that risk." Kickbacks were given to brokers who made loans with higher interest rates. "Among homeowners who had refinanced in 2000 as the subprime bubble was expanding, lower-income African Americans were more than twice as likely as lower-income whites to have subprime loans, and higher-income African Americans were about three times as likely as higher-income whites to have subprime loans." Rothstein gives Buffalo as an example, where three quarters of all refinance loans to African Americans were subprime.

The facts are these: one major way to build wealth is through homeownership; African Americans are denied home loans far more often than whites and far less likely to own their own homes; and the African American homeownership rate in Virginia has decreased in the past 50 years. According to an article in the *Virginia Mercury* by Jeff South, ['The bedrock of wealth inequality': Data shows big racial disparities in mortgage loans and homeownership - Virginia Mercury](#) "racial and ethnic minority Virginians were more likely than non-Hispanic Whites to be denied mortgage loans even when applicants had the same income. For example, Whites making about \$145,000 a year had a loan rejection rate of 2.8%. For African Americans in that income bracket, the denial rate was 9.7%. That was higher than the rejection rate for Whites with annual incomes around \$35,000." In 1968, 52% of African Americans in Virginia owned their own home. Today, only 48% of African Americans own homes compared with 73% of non-Hispanic whites. The figures are even greater in different parts of the state.

- In the Harrisonburg metro area, 66 percent of non-Hispanic Whites compared to just 14 percent of Blacks own their homes.
- In the Staunton-Waynesboro area, 73 percent of non-Hispanic Whites and 28 percent of Blacks own their homes.
- In the Blacksburg-Christiansburg-Radford area, 68 percent of non-Hispanic Whites and 29 percent of Blacks own their homes.

The maps below are interactive. They compare loan denial rates and homeownership rates in different parts of the state.

## Racial disparities in loan denial rates by locality

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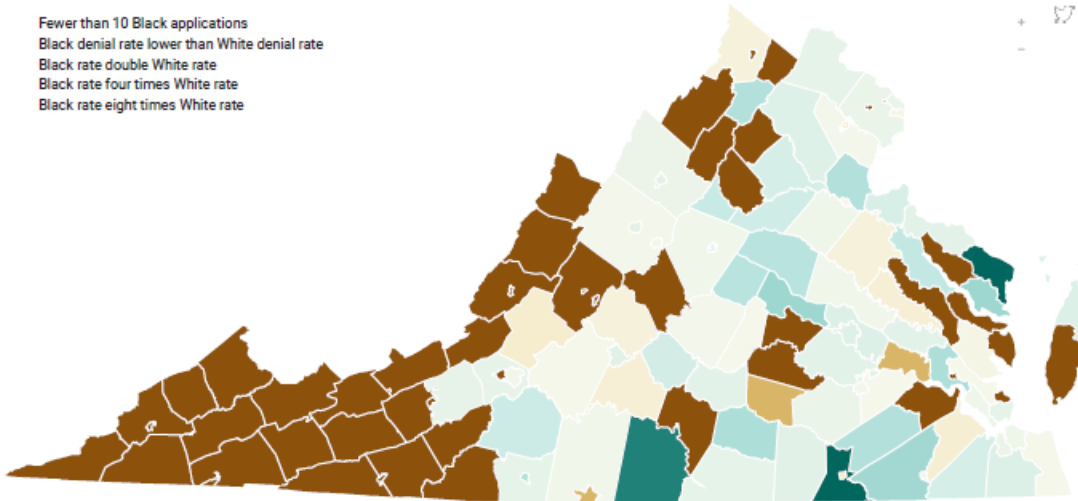
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Racial disparities in loan denial rates by locality

### Racial disparities in loan denial rates by locality

Statewide, African Americans were 2.4 times more likely than non-Hispanic Whites to be denied mortgage loans. In a handful of localities, the denial rates for the two groups were about the same. But in at least 25 cities and counties, the denial rate for Blacks was more than triple the rate for Whites.

- Fewer than 10 Black applications
- Black denial rate lower than White denial rate
- Black rate double White rate
- Black rate four times White rate
- Black rate eight times White rate



Disparities were not plotted for localities with fewer than 10 mortgage loan applications from African Americans.

Map: By Jeff South • Source: 2019 Home Mortgage Disclosure Act Database • Get the data • Created with Datawrapper

## Racial disparities in homeownership rates by locality

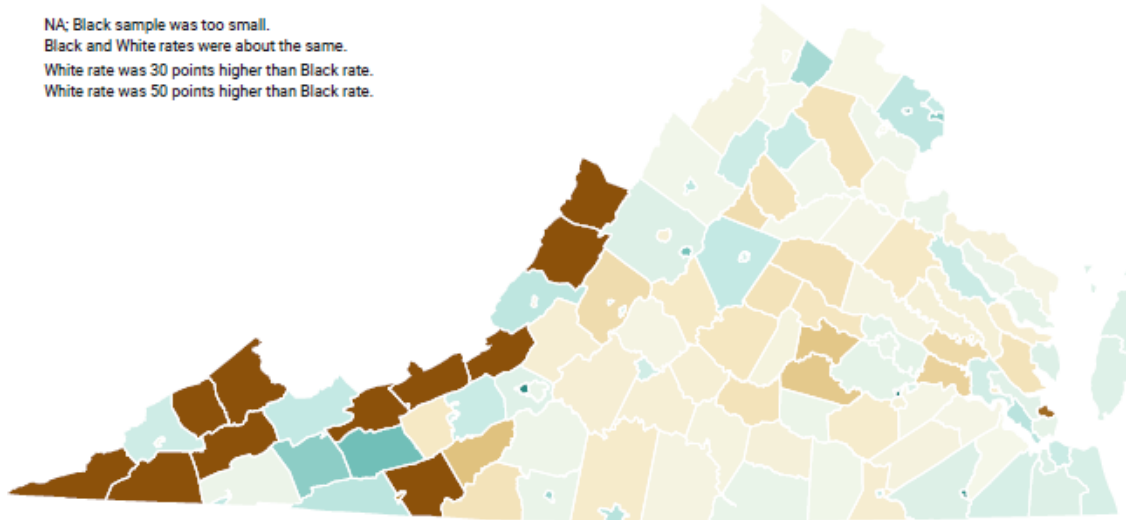
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## Racial disparities in homeownership rates by locality

Statewide, 48% of African American households own their home, compared with 73% of non-Hispanic White households. That's a difference of 25 percentage points. In many localities, the difference is much greater. In the city of Fairfax, for example, 77% of Whites but only 32% of Blacks own their homes.

NA; Black sample was too small.  
Black and White rates were about the same.  
White rate was 30 points higher than Black rate.  
White rate was 50 points higher than Black rate.



Map: By Jeff South • Source: U.S. Census Bureau | 2018 American Community Survey • Get the data • Created with Datawrapper

### 4. Racial Disparities in Evictions:

According to the Eviction Lab at Princeton, Virginia has five of the top 10 highest eviction rates among large U.S. cities and three of the top 10 highest eviction rates among mid-size U.S. cities. They are all concentrated in central Virginia, the tri-cities (cities of Petersburg, Hopewell and Colonial Heights) and Hampton Roads. Two professors from Virginia Commonwealth University Center for Urban and Regional Analysis, Drs. Ben Teresa and Kathryn Howell, launched an eviction lab in Richmond <https://cura.vcu.edu/ongoing-projects/rva-eviction-lab/>. They determined that there is a strong correlation between evictions and race. While 11.5% of Virginia Census tracts have eviction rates greater than 10%, 60% of all majority Black tracts have rates over 10%. While 39% of all high eviction rate census tracts have poverty rates over 20%, 76.7% of these are majority Black. If one overlays a redlining map with a map of evictions in the Cities of Richmond and Norfolk, they are almost identical.

### 5. Racial Disparities in Homelessness:

HUD released its 2020 Annual Homeless Assessment Report Part 1 to Congress on March 18, 2021. It appears that this may be the first report to include data about homelessness by race and ethnicity.

National Data: Press Release Thursday March 18, 2021 HUD Releases 2020 Annual Homeless Assessment Report Part <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/2020-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>

State Data: United States Census Quick Facts Virginia, Virginia Population by Race and Groups <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/VA> <http://www.populationu.com/us/virginia-population>

Homeless State Data: HUD 2020 Continuum of Care Homeless Assistance Program Homeless Populations and Subpopulations [https://files.hudexchange.info/reports/published/CoC\\_PopSub\\_State\\_VA\\_2020.pdf](https://files.hudexchange.info/reports/published/CoC_PopSub_State_VA_2020.pdf)

Homeless Populations by Race and Ethnicity	2020 National Data	Virginia 2020	State Population
White (non-Hispanic)	48.3%	53%	61.2%
Black or African American	39.4%	29%	19.9%
Asian	1.3%	2%	6.2%
Hispanic or Latino	23%	8%	9%
Native American, Pacific Islander	4.8%	1%	0.5%
Multiple Races	6.1%	6%	3.2%

**Conclusion:**

- Homelessness of Black or African Americans is disproportionately greater than the general population of Black or African Americans. White Americans follow, then Native Americans & Pacific Islanders.
- Homelessness of Asians, Hispanic, and persons of Multiple races is less than their proportion of the general population.

6. Residential Segregation and its Impact:

Reviewing the maps of redlining for the City of Richmond, C and D neighborhoods can be linked to lower rates of homeownership, current health inequities, less green space, higher temperatures, educational disparities, food access, employment, higher rates of poverty, shorter life spans, higher rates of chronic diseases, and interactions with law enforcement.

“Neighborhoods to Richmond’s west that were deemed desirable for investment, outlined in green on the old maps, remain wealthier and predominantly white, with trees and parks covering 42 percent of the land. Neighborhoods in Richmond’s east and south that were once redlined are still poorer and majority Black, with much lower rates of homeownership and green space covering just 12 percent of the surface.”<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/08/24/climate/racism-redlining-cities-global-warming.html>

Gilpin is an example of a Richmond neighborhood that continues to suffer the effects of redlining. More than 2,000 residents, mostly Black, live in low-income public housing that lacks central air conditioning. Many front yards are paved with concrete, which absorbs and traps heat. The ZIP code has among the highest rates of heat-related ambulance calls in the city. The local playground lacks shade, leaving the gyms and slides to bake in the sun.

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/08/24/climate/racism-redlining-cities-global-warming.html>

Residents have high rates of asthma, diabetes and blood pressure, all conditions that can be worsened by heat. They are also exposed to air pollution from the six-lane highway next door. There are no doctor's offices nearby or grocery stores selling fresh produce, which means that people without cars face further health challenges in the heat.

Researchers have found that excess heat and a lack of green space can [affect mental well-being](#) and increase anxiety. Without parks or shady outdoor areas to gather, people are more likely to be isolated indoors during the summer, a dynamic worsened by the coronavirus pandemic.

"In Gilpin, the average life expectancy is 63 years. Just a short drive over the James River sits Westover Hills, a largely white, middle-income neighborhood that greets visitors with rows of massive oak trees spreading their leaves over quiet boulevards. Life expectancy there is 83 years." [Center on Society and Health \(vcu.edu\)](#)

The publication of the HOLC maps by Mapping Inequality has led to research examining how these policies play out today. A working paper from the Federal Reserve, [The Effects of the 1930s HOLC "Redlining" Maps \(REVISED August 2020\) - Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago\(chicagofed.org\)](#), finds the maps contributed to rising segregation, reduced credit access and disinvestment. The real estate company [Zillow](#) used the data to examine property values, finding homes in Richmond neighborhoods graded "best" are now worth a median value of about \$490,000 compared to \$297,000 for neighborhoods designated as "hazardous."

Brian Koziol, formerly with Housing Opportunities Made Equal, overlaid contemporary police pedestrian stops on the HOLC map of Richmond, showing the majority of stops are in areas graded C and D. Jonathan Knopf with HD Advisors and the Maggie Walker Community Land Trust found that [more than half of tax delinquent properties](#) are in C and D neighborhoods. The Science Museum of Virginia's Jeremy Hoffman compared the [HOLC maps to today's urban heat islands](#), finding those same downgraded neighborhoods have higher temperatures during summer heat waves affecting the health and wellness of residents.



Writeup:<https://www.virginiamercury.com/blog-va/there-may-be-a-link-between-urban-heat-islands-and-past-redlining-practices-study-finds/>

Of those urban areas mapped by HOLC, the researchers found, “in nearly all cases, those neighborhoods located in formerly redlined areas — that remain predominantly lower income and communities of color — are at present hotter than their non-redlined counterparts.” That pattern holds in the four cities examined in Virginia: Richmond, Norfolk, Roanoke and Lynchburg.

According to the 2000 Census, the City of Roanoke was the most residentially segregated in Virginia. As previously stated, following the lead of the City of Baltimore, in 1911-1915 City ordinances to codify residential segregation were passed by Roanoke City Council, adopting a map with 4 districts for black persons. Two of these districts were Gilmer and Gainsboro, where the current population is 87.8% Black and 12.2% white in the former and 79.1% Black and 20.9% White in Gainsboro.

Of the 108 urban areas examined, Roanoke revealed the ninth-largest difference between average land temperature in areas classified by HOLC as Type A and those classified as Type D. There, researchers found the disparity to be as much as 9.5 degrees Fahrenheit. Smaller but still noticeable differences were found in Norfolk (5.3 degrees), Richmond (4.7 degrees) and Lynchburg (1.8 degrees). Two key factors drive land temperatures, Hoffman said: tree canopy and impervious surface. Disadvantaged and minority communities tend to have too little of the first, which provide shade, and too much of the second, which absorb and reflect heat.

In an article in [Shots - Health News : NPR](#), titled *In U.S. Cities, the Health Effects of Past Housing Discrimination Are Plain to See*, Researchers from the National Community Reinvestment Coalition, the University of Richmond and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee [analyzed historic redlining maps](#) from 142 urban areas across the U.S. — these maps, created in the 1930s, classified Black and immigrant communities as risky places to make home loans. They compared the maps to the current economic status and health outcomes in those neighborhoods today and found higher rates of poverty, shorter life spans and higher rates of chronic diseases including asthma, diabetes, hypertension, obesity and kidney disease.

"When banks and other actors are discouraged from lending in the community, you see a very kind of predictable arc of that community," Richardson says. "When I stop and think about it, I'm kind of shocked by the lingering impact of these policies."

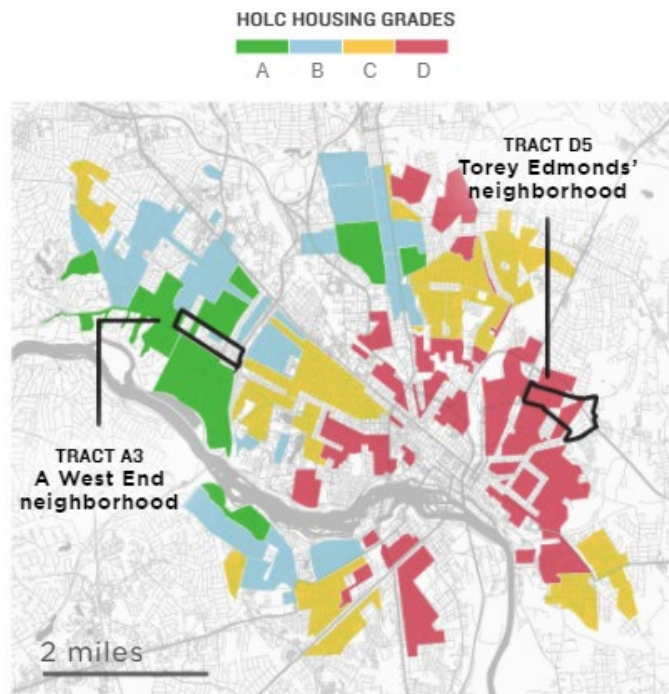
Redlining made it difficult, if not impossible, to buy or refinance. A lack of investment meant houses fell into disrepair. That led to health hazards like mold and lead paint. Industrial sites were more likely to be locally in or near redlined neighborhoods, which meant more exposure to pollution.

As areas declined, retailers left, including grocery stores, which meant less access to healthy food. These neighborhoods also had less access to parks and other green spaces, meaning fewer places to exercise. All of those factors combined to create an environment conducive to poorer health outcomes, the researchers say.

One of the cities researched was the City of Richmond where a predominantly white west end neighborhood was compared to a predominantly Black neighborhood as shown below.

## Stark Disparities: The Effects Of Redlining On 2 Neighborhoods

Edmonds' neighborhood, located in a tract given a "D" grade by the Home Owners' Loan Corp. in the 1930s, has a more than 20-year difference in life expectancy from Tract A3. Tract A3, an area in the West End of Richmond, Va., includes neighborhoods given "A" and "B" grades.



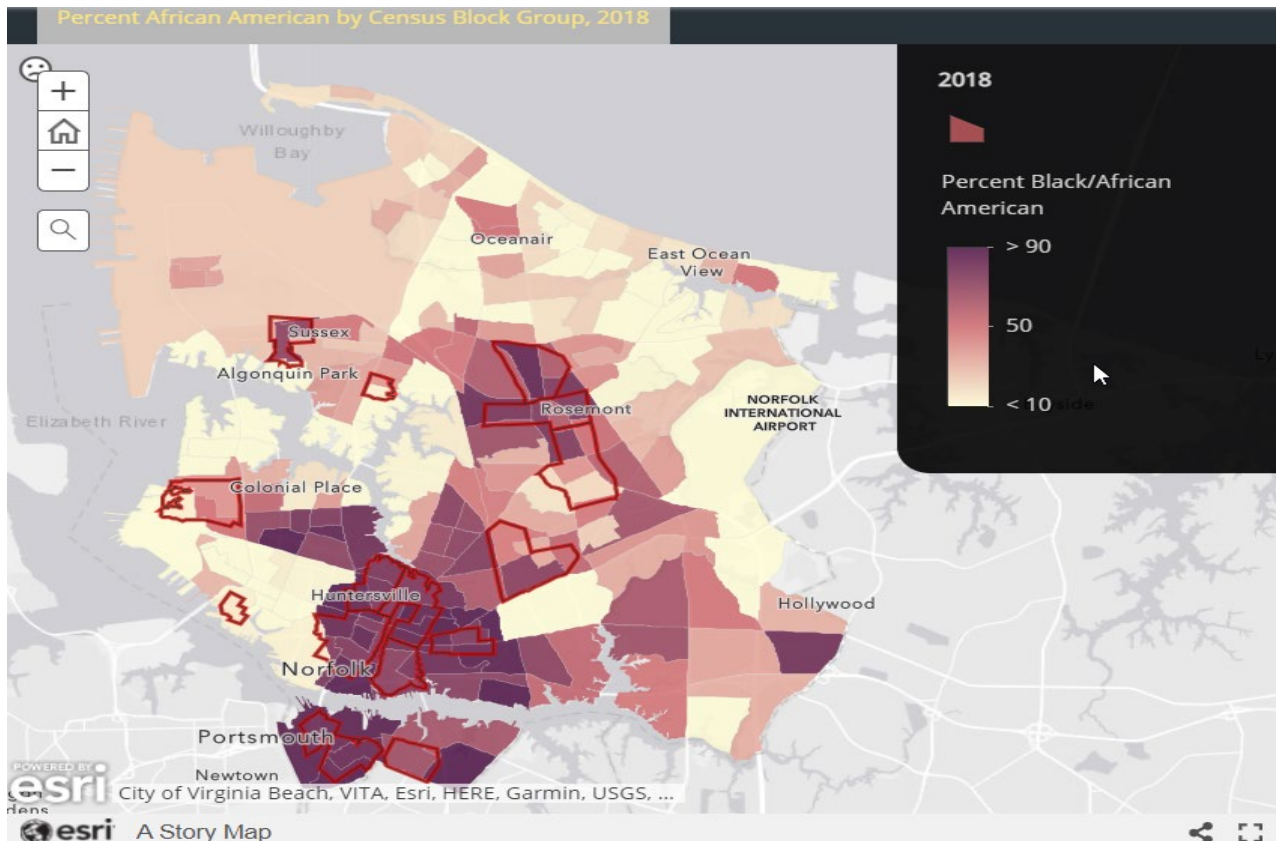
PRESENT DAY HEALTH AND SOCIOECONOMIC DATA	TRACT A3	TRACT D5
Social Vulnerability Index	0.015	0.84
Life expectancy	89.3 years	68.1 years
Poverty rate	3.6%	59.6%
Percent minority	1.1%	98.9%
Diabetes rate	6%	22.1%
Obesity rate	22.4%	50.5%
High blood pressure rate	22.3%	48%
Pulmonary disease rate	3.8%	13.3%

Source: HOLC map courtesy of Digital Scholarship Lab and NCRC, "Not Even Past: Social Vulnerability and the Legacy of Redlining." Street outlines © OpenStreetMap contributors.  
 Credit: Connie Hanzhang Jin/NPR

<https://www.pilotonline.com/projects/dividing-lines/vp-nw-dividing-lines-segregation-20210121-nl2ygr47mrg7vdifoh2cxnxcbg-htmlstory.html>

### Dividing Lines: How Norfolk Remains Deeply Segregated

The city is close to half Black and half white, according to the most recent Census data. But there aren't a lot of neighborhoods where you see that kind of split. By and large, there are Black neighborhoods and there are white neighborhoods, especially in the older core of Norfolk. Decisions made 60, 80 or 100 years ago segregated neighborhoods by race and deprived Black residents of economic and educational resources afforded to those in white neighborhoods.



This segregation has consequences beyond the race of the family next door or the makeup of the student body at a school. Black neighborhoods in Norfolk are poorer than white ones. Blacker neighborhoods also have higher poverty, lower household incomes and lower home values.

Race and class also heavily influence how long people live and how healthy they are. The neighborhoods in Norfolk with the lowest life expectancy, the worst access to medical care, the highest rates of diabetes, asthma and coronary heart disease, are consistently the city's poor, Black and brown neighborhoods.

Rothstein states in *The Color of Law* that:

In 1973, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights concluded that the ‘housing industry, aided and abetted by Government, must bear the primary responsibility for the legacy of segregated housing. ... Government and private industry came together to create a system of residential segregation’.