

Day 12 - Housing Inequity in Your Backyard

“It is hard to argue that housing is not a fundamental human need. Decent, affordable housing should be a basic right for everybody in this country. The reason is simple: Without stable shelter, everything else falls apart.” -Matthew Desmond, American sociologist and author of “Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City”

You may be wondering what housing has to do with racial equity. The reality is that housing affordability and homeownership is largely influenced by our country’s history of racism, discrimination and their legacy today. The DMV is no exception.

After the Civil War, as the Jim Crow era began with laws codifying discrimination and segregation, separate districts for Black cultural and social organizations were systematically cut out of community investments. You may have heard the term “redlining,” referring to the racial practice of denying home loans to majority Black and Brown neighborhoods, boxing them out of community investment and increased property value. This can also adversely affect public school systems as the level of funding they receive can vary based on the taxes of homeowners and residents in their jurisdiction.

[Gentrification](#) is a term coined to describe the gradual process of transformation of previously disinvested communities pricing out residents who resided in those communities before them. Urban investment and development cater to new residents with more wealth, forcing low-income households to displace elsewhere to keep up with the cost of living. Urban-renewal programs that sought to expand inner city infrastructure have disproportionately cleared Black households, businesses and neighborhood institutions from inner city housing.

Today’s Challenge:

OPTION 1: Watch NPR’s short history on [housing segregation and redlining in America](#), outlining how government practices in partnership with developers locked Black communities out of wealth for generations. (10 minutes)

OPTION 2: Check out the interactive map created by [Mapping Inequality](#) that details a history of redlining across the United States. (5 minutes)

OPTION 3: Watch [United Way NCA’s documentary “Uprooted”](#) and follow the lives of three individuals experiencing homelessness in DC, Maryland and Virginia. (10 minutes)