First & Last Name: _____

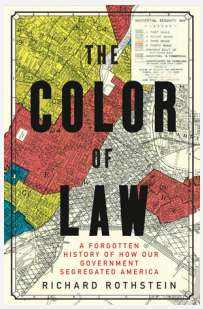
Excerpt 1: *The Color of Law: Creating Racially Segregated Communities*

Excerpt #1 by Richard Rothstein

***Directions*:**

- ☐ Within your groups, read and annotate this excerpt, looking for evidence for why segregation or inequality persists in America. .
- ☐ Be prepared to share five unvarnished truths with the class.

Annotate for:
Argument on the wealth gap



How did the New Deal's housing programs treat Black Americans differently from White Americans?

The federal government first developed housing for civilians—living quarters on military bases had long been in existence—during World War I, when it built residences for defense workers near naval shipyards and munitions plants. Eighty-three projects in twenty-six states housed 170,000 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 imposed racial segregation where it hadn't previously been established, forcing African Americans into overpopulated slums. When the war ended, the government sold off its existing projects to private real estate firms and canceled those that were not complete.

Beginning with the Great Depression of the 1930s and into the early 1950s, working- and middle-class whites as well as African American families faced a serious housing shortage. In the Depression, only the affluent could afford to purchase homes or rent new apartments, so builders couldn't be induced to provide housing for others. World War II exacerbated the shortage because all construction material was appropriated for military purposes. Working- and lower-middle-class families doubled up with relatives, stayed in apartments that were too small for their growing families, or remained in emergency Quonset huts that had been put up toward the end of the war for returning veterans.

In response, President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal created the nation's first public housing for civilians who were not engaged in defense work. Race determined the program's design. The administration constructed separate projects for African

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What are the reasons for why American communities are so segregated?	Americans, segregated buildings by race, or excluded African Americans entirely from developments. Segregation in the administration's housing programs followed a pattern that was established by New Deal construction, employment, and jobs agencies. An early initiative was the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), created in 1933 to bring jobs and economic growth to a region whose suffering during the Depression had been unusually severe. In Norris, Tennessee, where the TVA was headquartered, the government developed a model village with 500 comfortable homes, leased to employees and construction workers. The village, though, was open only to whites, while the TVA housed its African American workers in shoddy barracks some distance away. A TVA official explained that the town was being reserved for whites because "Negroes do not fit into the program."
Why were many urban neighborhoods integrated?	Despite its nominal rule of respecting the prior racial composition of neighborhoods—itself a violation of African Americans' constitutional rights—the PWA [Public Works Administration] segregated projects even where there was no previous pattern of segregation. At the time, many urban neighborhoods contained both black and white (mostly immigrant) low-income families. The neighborhoods were integrated because workers of both races needed to live close to the downtown factory jobs to which they walked.*
How was the segregation of public housing by government organizations like PWA biased against Black people?	The PWA designated many integrated neighborhoods as either white or black and then used public housing to make the designation come true—by installing whites-only projects in mixed neighborhoods it deemed "white" and blacks-only projects in those it deemed "colored." The first PWA project, the Techwood Homes in Atlanta, opened in 1935. It was built on land cleared by demolishing the Flats, a low-income integrated neighborhood adjacent to downtown that had included 1600 families, nearly one-third of whom were African American. The PWA remade the neighborhood with 604 units for white families only. The Techwood project not only created a segregated white community, it also intensified the segregation of African American families who, evicted from their homes, could find new housing only by crowding into other neighborhoods where African Americans were already living. Some families evicted from the Flats settled in a segregated development, also created by the federal government, that later opened on the west side. But because public housing was intended not for poor but for lower-middle-class families, many of those displaced from the Flats had incomes that were insufficient to qualify. Instead, many had to double up with relatives or rent units

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What are the stereotypes and racist ideas used to justify Baltimore's segregation ordinance?	created when other African American families subdivided their houses. A result of the government program, therefore, was the increased population density that turned the African American neighborhoods into slums. In 1934, the city of St. Louis proposed to raze the DeSoto-Carr area, a tenement neighborhood on the near north side whose population was split nearly evenly between whites and African Americans. For the cleared site, the city proposed a whites-only low-rise project. When the federal government objected to the city's failure to accommodate African Americans, St. Louis agreed to a blacks-only project as well. In the end, St. Louis built a segregated development for African Americans in the DeSoto-Carr area, while it demolished another previously integrated neighborhood south of downtown to build a separate project for whites. Across the Northeast and the Midwest, the PWA imposed segregation on integrated communities. In Cleveland, for example, the Central neighborhood had been a packed but racially mixed tenement community, housing African Americans along with Italian and Eastern European immigrants. Langston Hughes, the African American poet, playwright, and novelist, recounts in his autobiography that when he attended Central High School in the late 1910s, he dated a Jewish girl and his best friend was Polish. Over the next fifteen years, white families began to leave the Central neighborhood, and African Americans arrived. Yet many whites remained. Despite the neighborhood's biracial history, the PWA constructed two segregated projects, one for African Americans (the Outhwaite Homes) and one for whites (the Cedar-Central apartments). Although there previously had been ethnic and racial clusters in the neighborhood, the PWA solidified its racial segregation. The PWA also built a third Cleveland project, Lakeview Terrace, developed, as its name suggests, in a more scenic location; it was exclusively for whites. Like many other PWA projects for white families—but rarely like those for African Americans—Lakeview Terrace included a community center, playgrounds, and plentiful green space, and it was decorated with murals. --- Unlike public housing, which was primarily a federal program with some local participation, government policies to isolate white families in all-white urban neighborhoods began at the local level. As African Americans were being driven out of smaller midwestern and western communities like those in Montana, many other cities, particularly in southern and border states, already had large black populations

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Why did Baltimore have trouble enforcing its segregated zoning ordinances?	that couldn't be expelled. Instead, many of these cities adopted zoning rules decreeing separate living areas for black and white families. The first to do so was Baltimore, which in 1910 adopted an ordinance prohibiting African Americans from buying homes on blocks where whites were a majority and vice versa. Milton Dashiel, the lawyer who drafted Baltimore's ordinance, explained: "Ordinarily, the negro loves to gather to himself, for he is very gregarious and sociable in his nature. But those who have risen somewhat above their fellows appear to have an intense desire to leave them behind, to disown them, as it were, and get as close to the company of white people as circumstances will permit them." The segregation ordinance, he said, was needed to prevent this.
How did fear-mongering tactics support segregation and work to prevent integrated communities?	The troubles Baltimore encountered in applying the ordinance reflected just how integrated some areas of the city were. Soon after it adopted the ordinance, the city pursued twenty prosecutions to evict wrong-race residents. Judges had to grapple with such questions as whether an African American should be allowed to buy a home on a block that was evenly divided between white and black. A white homeowner moved out while his house was being repaired but then couldn't move back because the block was 51 percent black. An African American pastor of a church with an African American congregation complained to the mayor that because his church was on a mostly white block, the pastor who succeeded him would be forbidden to move into the parsonage. Eventually, the ordinance was revised so that it applied only to blocks that were entirely white or black, leaving Baltimore's integrated blocks unaffected. Many southern and border cities followed Baltimore and adopted similar zoning rules: Atlanta, Birmingham, Dade County (Miami), Charleston, Dallas, Louisville, New Orleans, Oklahoma City, Richmond (Virginia), St. Louis and others.
How did the actions of banks and federal agencies (like the FHA) make the problem of segregation worse?	Blockbusters' tactics included hiring African American women to push carriages with their babies through white neighborhoods, hiring African American men to drive cars with radios blasting through white neighborhoods, paying African American men to accompany agents knocking on doors to see if homes were for sale, or making random telephone calls to residents of white neighborhoods and asking to speak to someone with a stereotypically African American name like "Johnnie Mae." Speculators also took out real estate advertisements in African American newspapers, even if the featured properties were not for sale. The ads' purpose was to attract potential African American buyers to walk around white areas that were targeted for blockbusting. In a 1962 Saturday Evening Post article, an agent (using the pseudonym "Norris Vitchek")

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claimed to have arranged house burglaries in white communities to scare neighbors into believing that their communities were becoming unsafe.

Real estate firms then sold their newly acquired properties at inflated prices to African Americans, expanding their residential boundaries. Because most black families could not qualify for mortgages under FHA [Federal Housing Administration] and bank policies, the agents often sold these homes on installment plans, similar to the one Charles Vatterott developed in De Porres, in which no equity accumulated from down or monthly payments. Known as contract sales, these agreements usually provided that ownership would transfer to purchasers after fifteen or twenty years, but if a single monthly payment was late, the speculator could evict the would-be owner, who had accumulated no equity. The inflated sale prices made it all the more likely that payment would not be on time. Owner-speculators could then resell these homes to new contract buyers.

The full cycle went like this: when a neighborhood first integrated, property values increased because of African Americans' need to pay higher prices for homes than whites. But then property values fell once speculators had panicked enough white homeowners into selling at deep discounts.

Exit Ticket

- What result did the government actions mentioned in the passage have on African American people and communities?

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- Identify FIVE unvarnished truths that your group will share out with the class

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