

**Edison Tech Youth Document Structural Racism in Rochester Housing & the Effects Today;
Biden's 2021 Executive Orders**

Link: [\(27\) The Unattainable Dream: Redlining in Rochester, NY - YouTube](#)

The Unattainable Dream: Redlining in Rochester, NY [2022 (13 mins)]

The student narrates: "While it is imperative to examine the history of the past, it is imperative that we look forward and find a path to right the wrongs of our mistakes." Rochester's Edison Career and Technology High School "Students in Participation in Government & Economics, English Language Arts, and Digital Media Arts and Communications" [YouTube description] took the "Philip Seymour Hoffman Best of Fest" with this documentary that they researched, narrated, filmed and edited. In it, the students describe the role that structural racism—via the Federal Housing Authority, redlining and racial covenants—played in, *and play out today* in Rochester. From a beginning that can boast Frederick Douglass and Susan B Anthony, the students demonstrate how our city's future then intentionally unfolded favoring whites while segregating Black and Brown Rochesterians. Shane Wiegand of PathStone describes how redlining and other racism hurt even thriving neighborhoods of color. The students describe how redlining and racial covenants functioned and point out that while both became illegal with 1964's Civil Rights Act and '68's Fair Housing Act, "the damage had already been done... Today, Monroe County is one of the most segregated counties in all of the United States"—with the casualty being city violence and a school district cited for low performance serving children, overwhelmingly of color and living in concentrated poverty, whose families were legally prevented from accumulating generational wealth through home ownership and mortgages.

In interviews, Mayor Malik Evans uses an analogy comparing the wreckage left in many neighborhoods to not prioritizing care of our bodies or our cars, "Things start to break down. And that is what happened in our neighborhoods." This racism has led to higher mortality rates. Shane Wiegand refers to a Common Ground study: a child living on Carissa Street today statistically will live nine years less than a child in Pittsford, "And that is not by accident, it is by design." Camille Simmons describes the cyclical relationship between home ownership and local taxes funding local schools that perpetuates the education and housing problems. Lovely Warren says, "When you think of people and different groups of people, it has made it very, very challenging for those people to overcome what has happened to them historically and be able to change the trajectory of their lives."

The narrator describes the myth of the American Dream where, "*all people are able to achieve at the highest level... through their hard work and ideas... There are no barriers to you achieving your goals, just your own hard work and dedication... But what happens when the American Dream is only a reality for certain racial groups.*" Shane Wiegand responds that his white family got the American Dream because they worked hard AND the government helped then get it because of how they looked. Author and journalist Justin Murphy ["Your Children are Very Greatly in Danger] says the time for blaming people who could not ride the wave to the American Dream needs to be over and the government needs to choose a new path- and there are many that address inequities. Lovely Warren says that process begins with an acknowledgement of the wrongs committed.

Our youth are demanding credibility and accountability from us, and this film is an example of that demand. Thank you so much to the students at Edison who have delivered a powerful message. They are watching to see what we do next. It is our turn to respond—and they know it.

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mt9sjhISYfg&t=151s>

Racial Segregation and Concentrated Poverty: The History of Housing in Black America
[Mar 4, 2021 (6 mins)]

[Joe Biden's Executive Order on Housing Is a Long Time Coming for Black Americans \(theroot.com\)](#)
[The Root](#)

“The story of what housing and other living conditions is for many Black Americans is pretty bleak. And that is by design.” The government, “intentionally sponsored that institution” to contain Black people in their own neighborhoods following the Great Migration. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) played a key role. James Baldwin describes how this went further, “Urban Renewal really means: Negro removal.” The video illustrates how the decisions to place new highways deliberately isolated and devalued, and increased poverty in Black and Brown communities and how the “federal government invested billions of dollars in racial segregation,” during the first seven decades of the 20th C. Following the Fair Housing Act of 1968, a change was expected, but today, half of Black people still live in areas of high segregation, “and economic segregation has spiked since 1970,” states Sheryll Cashin, JD, Law Professor and Author. “In 1980, 8 out of 10 Black people would have had to move if it were to be evenly integrated within metropolitan areas. Half of Black people in metropolitan areas still live in areas of high segregation... And economic segregation has spiked since 1970... the so-called American dream is only working for a relatively small slice of the population that can afford to buy their way into what I call ‘gold standard neighborhoods... and everybody else struggles and the Black poor struggle the most.”

Two years ago, Biden signed four executive orders to address racial equity, “I’m directing the Department of Housing and Urban Affairs, and Urban Development to redress historical racism in federal housing policies.” The White House statement, “[he] will take steps necessary to redress racially discriminatory federal housing policies that have contributed to wealth inequality for generations.” Dr Cashin suggests to begin with, the government should conduct equity analyses to see where the vast amount of federal monies are being spent and to begin looking at equity from that vantage point. Baltimore did this and found that four times the amount of money was being spent in majority white neighborhoods than in majority Black neighborhoods.”

Resources:

Housing Segregation and Redlining in America: A Short History | Code Switch | NPR

From the YouTube Description, “In 1968, Congress passed the Fair Housing Act that made it illegal to discriminate in housing. Gene Demby of NPR’s Code Switch explains why neighborhoods are still so segregated today. • Read “How Segregation Shapes Fatal Police Violence” at <https://n.pr/2lc6A1Q> • Read or listen to: “‘The Color Of Law’ Details How U.S. Housing Policies Created Segregation” at <https://n.pr/2HggATh>”