

Shane Wiegand - Racist Policy and Resistance in Rochester, New York Part 1

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XF3RzJuz1C0> (2021 first 30 minutes)

New York state has the most segregated housing patterns in the country. Rochester mirrors that racist trend. Since school districts' socio-economic compositions follow housing patterns, it is logical to grasp how Monroe County and Rochester schools became so segregated. But how and why did this all start? Using mountains of archival evidence documenting the "hows and whys" and demonstrating how segregation patterns over time stamp those that exist today, Shane Wiegand (Co-Director, Antiracist Curriculum Project at the PathStone Foundation) takes us on a journey into our country and community's racist past, and how we got to the place we are now at. During the first half hour of Wiegand's talk, he recaps how the Federal Housing Authority (FHA)—formed during FDR's New Deal—launched wide-spread access to homeownership across the country. But there were clear racist caveats in the forms of racial covenants. These start in 1910 but are codified through the US government during and shortly after the New Deal. Built into the FHA's underwriting manual is the language: "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 [economic] values." Low interest government backed loans and subsidies and racist covenants become the drivers that create the racially restrictive suburbs that boomed across the country and in Rochester. Using first person narrative, Wiegand tells the story of even prominent Black prospective buyers being denied access to Rochester and Monroe County communities. Rochester's Inner Loop was designed to align with the FHA policies to create racial barriers. Governmental racism achieved its goal in building the suburbs: in 1960, the most integrated suburb in Monroe County was Henrietta with eleven People of Color living there.

Between the FHA and the Veteran's Administration (VA), over \$119 billion dollars were provided to Americans in federally backed mortgage insurance. Over 35 million families benefitted from FHA bank loans. 98% went to white families-- who through the explicit racist policies of the US government, then began to build generational wealth.

In Part 2 (the last half hour) of this talk, Wiegand will address the coordinated and repeated resistance to racism in Rochester.

Additional Resources:

[Reparations. Finally. - Rochester Beacon](#)