A (Partial) Timeline of Hudson Valley Racial History from New York City to the Capital Region

1613: Juan Rodriguez (a freed man from Santo Domingo, DR), is the first known person of African descent to set foot in the Hudson Valley; he lived in Manhattan where he worked as a translator and trader (Levine, 2021).

1626: The Dutch West India Company ships 11 men of African descent to be enslaved in New Amsterdam (New York City). Other enslaved people were sent to Fort Orange (Albany). (Levine, 2021). The Dutch slave trade continued for decades, mainly with captives from Angola and Curaçao (McManus, 1966, pp. 5-6). Enslaved people in New York City and the Hudson Valley worked in various sectors including farming, construction, and domestic labor. (McManus, 1966, pp. 7-8).

1630: An African burial ground is created on six acres in lower Manhattan and used until 1795. Discovered in 1991, it is thought to contain 15,000 human remains of both free and enslaved African Americans and is now designated as a National Monument. (Moore, 2019)

1644: The first 11 enslaved people brought to New Amsterdam in 1626 petition and win partial freedom, allowing them to earn wages, intermarry with whites, and own land, though their children remain enslaved. (Harris, 2003, p. 23)

1655: The Witte Paert docks in New Amsterdam, carrying over 300 enslaved people, one of the largest shipments of enslaved people to date. (Harris, 2003, p. 15)

1664: Eight hundred descendants of Africans and their children reside in the Hudson Valley, roughly 90% of whom are enslaved. (Levine, 2021) In New York City, as the British began to take control of the colony, the Dutch freed about 40 enslaved people and finalized their land grants, which they retained under British rule. The slave trade in what became New York continued under British rule. (Christoph, 1991)

1674: The French Huguenot founders of New Paltz purchase the first of many enslaved people in Kingston. All known Huguenot families in New Paltz owned enslaved people. (Levine, 2021)

1703: 42% of New York City households owned enslaved people. (Oltman, 2005)

1711: A slave market is established in New York City and operates until 1762. (Phillip, 2015)

1712: As part of a slave rebellion, 23 enslaved people kill nine white people in New York City. (Levine, 2021)

1730: New York law forbids the gathering of more than three enslaved people at a time except with the consent of their owner, punishable by up to 40 lashes. (Dillon, 1879, p. 225)

1750: Pine Street Cemetery is established in Kingston, NY for enslaved people as they were not permitted church burials at the time. Pine Street Cemetery is potentially the oldest and largest cemetery of enslaved people in the northeast, possibly dating back as far as the 1660s. (Levine, 2021)
1775-83: During the Revolutionary War, enslaved New Yorkers replace their owners in battle. (Levine, 2021) The British offered freedom to any enslaved people who would support the loyalist cause, resulting in numerous formerly enslaved people fighting for the British, including in the famous “black pioneers” unit. After the war in 1783, approximately 3,000 African American British loyalists were repatriated to British Canada mostly settling in Nova Scotia. (Ito, 2009)

1777: Under the New York Constitution, voting rights in New York are only extended to free men who own real estate. (New York State Library)

1785: The New York Manumission Society is founded with the purpose of abolishing slavery and providing education for free and enslaved Black children. (New York Historical Society)

1790: More than 21,000 enslaved people live in New York (almost as many as in Georgia) (Levine, 2021)

1794: Three enslaved girls (aged 12, 12, and 14) were hung in Albany for setting a fire that burned much of downtown Albany. Two were hung at the “The Hanging Elm Tree,” the other at what is now the Capitol. (Levine, 2021)

1797: Sojourner Truth (née Isabella Baumfree) is born enslaved in Rifton, NY. Over her lifetime she was sold four times to families in Ulster County. (Michals, 2015)

1799: New York State legislates the gradual emancipation for children born to enslaved mothers after July 4, 1799. The children would be indentured servants until age 25 for women and 28 for men, when they would become fully free. Their parents could not be sold, but were considered unpaid indentured servants under this law. Slavery in New York was not fully ended for another 28 years on July 4, 1827. (New York State Archives)

1807: Congress bans the Atlantic slave trade. (Glass, 2018)

1821: The NYS constitution eliminates the voting rights requirement for white men to own property but requires black men to own high-value property, a provision that remained in place until the 15th amendment to the US constitution was passed in 1870. (Fox, 1928 as cited in McManus, 1966)

1826: Sixteen Black men vote in New York City. (Foner, 2015, p. 47)

1827: Freedom’s Journal is published, written by and for Black Americans. (Hodges, 2010, p. 33)

1826: Sojourner Truth escapes slavery with her infant daughter and was taken in by a family in New Paltz, who paid her previous enslaver to secure her freedom. In 1828, she successfully sued a white man to get her son back (her son had been illegally sold at age five to slavery in Alabama), becoming the first Black woman to sue a white man and win. She subsequently earned national fame as an abolitionist and women’s rights activist. (Michals, 2015)

1827: NYS Emancipation Act abolishes slavery, the largest emancipation of enslaved people before the Civil War (Levine, 2021)

1830: Congress passes the Indian Removal Act: The U.S. government forcibly removes Indigenous peoples from their land and onto distant reservations. In 1838, the U.S. government forcibly evicts approximately 16,000 Cherokee from their homelands in Tennessee, Georgia, North Carolina, and Alabama to a reservation in
Oklahoma, in what is known as the Trail of Tears. While exact figures are unknown, it is estimated that several thousand Cherokee died during the trip. (National Park Service, 2020)

1850: Congress passes the Fugitive Slave Act, requiring that formerly enslaved people living in free states be captured and returned to their owners. (Cobb, 2015)


1865: Establishment of the 13th and 14th Amendments, which abolish slavery, give Congress the ability to enact laws that enforce the abolishment of slavery, guarantee all citizens equal protection, and grant U.S. citizenship to those born in the United States. (Rothstein, 2017, loc. 59)

June 19, 1865: News reaches Texas that slavery has been abolished. Today, the holiday of June 19, known as Juneteenth, celebrates the abolition of slavery. (Gates, 2013)

1865: The KKK—the first domestic terrorist group in the U.S.—is founded in Pulaski, Tennessee with the goal of terrorizing newly freed African Americans (and those who supported racial justice) and upholding white supremacy through intimidation, lynching, and other forms of violence. (Equal Justice Initiative, 2021)

1866: *Civil Rights Act* passed to enforce the abolition of slavery as established by the 13th amendment. The law prohibited actions, like housing discrimination, that perpetuated the characteristics of slavery and that oppressed African Americans. (Rothstein, 2017, loc. 66)

1867—1876: The U.S. government commissions geological surveys of the western U.S. to map out resource development and plan for the removal of Indigenous populations. Of these surveys, John Wesley Powell, eventual USGS director and head of the Smithsonian Bureau of Ethnology, famously conducted the 1869 rafting expedition down the Colorado River. In his writings of the expedition, Powell downplayed the presence of Indigenous populations, giving the false impression that the region was “unchartered.” Powell was also an advocate for Indigenous assimilation, including teaching Indigenous populations about Christianity, Western styles of farming and manufacture, and English, claiming that, “Into [the Ute] language there is woven so much mythology and sorcery that ... the ideas and thoughts of civilized life cannot be communicated to them in their own tongues.” (Pico, 2019)

1871: Los Angeles Chinese Massacre: After a rumor spread that Chinese individuals had intentionally murdered a white police officer, a mob of 500 white and Hispanic individuals attacked Chinatown, murdering 18 Chinese men and injuring many more. (Kim, 2017)

1870s: As a backlash to the abolition of slavery, cities and states institute Jim Crow laws (enforcing segregation, disenfranchisement of Black Americans), meant to oppress newly freed African Americans and reinforce the racial hierarchy. In 1896 the Supreme Court upholds segregation as constitutional in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, under the doctrine of “separate but equal.”

1882: Chinese Exclusion Act signed into law: “The first major law restricting voluntary immigration to the United States, the act banned all immigrants from China for ten years, prohibited Chinese immigrants from becoming American citizens, and restricted the entry and re-entry of Chinese nationals.” (Equal Justice Initiative, 2021)
1883: SCOTUS denies Congress’s ability to prohibit housing discrimination, as it was not considered to perpetuate the characteristics of slavery, thus diluting the power of the 1866 Civil Rights Act. (Rothstein, 2017, loc. 68)

1887: Congress passes the Dawes Act, authorizing the federal government to break up tribal land, which resulted in over 90 million acres being taken from Indigenous peoples and resold by the U.S. government to non-native settlers. (National Park Service, 2020)

1890: Massacre at Wounded Knee: U.S. troops open fire on a Lakota Sioux camp, killing 300. (Equal Justice Initiative, 2021)

1901: To promote park tourism, John Muir, founder of the Sierra Club and a leading conservationist, publishes his essay collection, “Our National Parks,” which refers to Indigenous populations as either “dead or civilized into useless innocence.” Muir also referred to Indigenous populations as living a “dirty and irregular life” and to “Sambos” as lazy. (Purdy, 2015)

1906: Ota Benga, a Bushman from the Congo, is displayed at the Museum of Natural History as part of an “ethnographic display” and later at the Bronx Zoo as part of the primate exhibit, reinforcing racist ideas of Black inferiority and dehumanization. (Finney, 2014, p. 41)

1909: Roosevelt’s National Conservation Commission publishes a three-volume report including the volume, “National Vitality, Its Waste and Conservation,” authored by Yale Professor, Irving Fisher, which highlights the connections between eugenics and environmentalism, and the racist ideologies which undergirded both movements. In his report, Fisher provided various recommendations for advancing the progressive political movement (i.e., worker safety regulations, a public health administration, food inspection, etc.) and also recommended “eugenics, or hygiene for future generations,” including forced sterilization or marriage prohibition for “degenerates generally,” including those with disabilities, the poor, and those with criminal convictions. The report concluded: “The problem of the conservation of our natural resources is therefore not a series of independent problems, but a coherent, all-embracing whole. If our nation cares to make any provision for its grandchildren and its grandchildren’s grandchildren, this provision must include conservation in all its branches — but above all, the conservation of the racial stock itself.” In the following decades, eugenics laws across the country would authorize the forced sterilization of at least 64,000 Americans. (Wohlforth, 2010)

1912: Gifford Pinchot, the architect of the national forest system and Roosevelt’s conservation chief and advisor, serves as a delegate at the International Eugenics Congress, which he attends again in 1921. From 1925 to 1935, Pinchot also served as a member of the advisory council of the American Eugenics Society. (Purdy, 2015)

1913: Woodrow Wilson segregates the federal government (separate bathrooms, cafeterias, Black supervisors were demoted so as to not supervise white employees). (Rothstein, 2017, p. 43)

1916: Madison Grant, a leading conservationist, publishes the pseudo-scientific, white supremacist book, “The Passing of the Great Race, or The Racial Basis of European History,” which lamented the decline of “Nordic” peoples, who Grant believed to be the superior race. The book was praised by Theodore Roosevelt and Hitler, and continues to be referenced by white supremacists. The book also included a forward by Henry Fairfield Osborn, the head of the New York Zoological Society (and member of the USGS and trustee of the American Museum of Natural History), which stated that “conservation of that race which has given us the true spirit of Americanism is not a matter either of racial pride or of racial prejudice; it is a matter of love of country.” (Purdy, 2015)
1917: *Buchanan v. Warley*: Supreme Court overturns the use of racial zoning ordinances. (45) Numerous cities ignore the ruling and continue to issue racial zoning ordinances often by using “race neutral” language that instead exclude prospective Black homeowners through complex zoning maneuvers or by pricing them out. (Rothstein, 2017, p. 49)

1917: 10,000 African Americans protest lynching by marching in silence down Fifth Avenue in the “Negro Silent Protest Parade” (Equal Justice Initiative, 2021)

1917: Congress passes the Immigration Act of 1917, which heavily restricts immigration from Asia, Mexico, and Mediterranean countries (excluding Western Europe) (Equal Justice Initiative, 2021)

1920s: In response to *Buchanan*, private property owners, developers, neighborhoods, and eventually community associations across the country use restrictive covenants that prohibit home resale to African Americans. “A survey of 300 developments built between 1935 and 1947 in Queens, Nassau, and Westchester Counties found that 56 percent had racially restrictive covenants. Of the larger subdivisions (those with seventy-five or more units), 85 percent had them.” (Rothstein, 2017, p. 79) Courts across the country (including New York) uphold restrictive covenants as constitutional because they were private agreements, later reinforced by a 1926 Supreme Court upholding the same. (Rothstein, 2017, p. 82) Churches, universities, and other non-profit organizations helped support and defend community associations’ use of restrictive covenants. (Rothstein, 2017, p. 100)

1921: Committee on Zoning (established by then-Secretary of Commerce, Herbert Hoover) develops a manual urging localities to develop zoning ordinances that are “race neutral” on the surface, but clearly intended to promote racial segregation. Frederick Olmsted, designer of Central Park, was a member of the committee and a staunch segregationist. The new “race neutral” zoning laws evade being struck down by the courts. (Rothstein, 2017, p. 51)

1921: Then-Secretary of Commerce, Herbert Hoover, creates Better Homes in America, an organization promoting home ownership amongst white Americans. The U.S. government believed that home ownership would invest Americans in upholding capitalism and thus protect the country against communist/Soviet influences. Better Homes in America urged white families to move into single family homes to escape “racial strife” and to avoid apartments, which were described as the worst housing option due to the “ignorant racial habit” of the African Americans and European immigrants who lived there. White homebuyers were told to consider the “general type of people” in a neighborhood before purchasing their home. (Rothstein, 2017, p. 60)

1923: The Ku Klux Klan conducts an initiation ceremony just outside Warwick, New York attended by approximately 1,000 people. (Equal Justice Initiative, 2021)

1924: Congress passes the Immigration Act of 1924 prohibiting immigration from Asia and prioritizing immigration by white immigrants from northern and western Europe (Diamond, 2020)

**New Deal Legislation**
- **1933:** Establishment of the Home Owners’ Loan Corporation (HOLC), which purchases mortgages on the verge of foreclosure and reissues new mortgages. To assess default risk, HOLC evaluates house/neighborhood conditions and considers the racial composition of an area—safe neighborhoods are colored green and risky neighborhoods are colored red in a process known as redlining. All African American neighborhoods are colored in red, regardless of class status or type of house. For the most part, HOLC does not issue mortgages to homes in “red” areas. (Rothstein, 2017, p. 63)
• **1933:** Establishment of the Civilian Conservation Corps, which creates work opportunities for youth/young adults. The CCC segregates groups by race, excluding African Americans from certain groups and housing African American units farther from working sites than white units (Rothstein, 2017, p. 19)

• **1933:** Establishment of the Public Works Authority (PWA): PWA segregates units by race and only sends white PWA units to white neighborhoods (Rothstein, 2017, p. 20)

• **1934:** Establishment of Federal Housing Administration (FHA), which insures bank mortgages to whites only (arguing that insuring racially mixed/Black neighborhoods would be too risky). The FHA tells home appraisers to ensure that neighborhoods continue “to be occupied by the same social and racial classes” and that the “infiltration of inharmonious racial or nationality groups” was to be noted and would count against a home rating. (Rothstein, 2017, p. 64) The FHA also incentivizes physical separation of African Americans (who were described as “adverse influences”) and whites via boulevards, highways, and other natural or artificial barriers. (Rothstein, 2017, p. 65) Across the country, the FHA denies insurance to creditworthy African Americans (and to whites who leased their properties to African Americans). (Rothstein, 2017, p. 67) The FHA would later encourage deeds to encourage the explicit prohibition of resale to African Americans. (Rothstein, 2017, p. 84)

• **1935:** PWA takes on its first project, Atlanta Techwood Homes, which involves the demolition of an integrated neighborhood of 1,600 families (1/3 were Black) and the subsequent construction of 604 units for white families only. The Black families were displaced primarily to other predominately Black neighborhoods, significantly increasing the population density in those areas. (Rothstein, 2017, p. 21) The Atlanta project was an example of how New Deal projects both segregated formerly integrated areas, maintained segregation in other areas, and increased housing density in predominately African American neighborhoods. Of 26 PWA projects in the Northeast and Midwest, 16 were for whites-only, 8 for African Americans-only, and 2 were internally segregated. (Rothstein, 2017, p. 23)

• **1935:** Congress passes the National Labor Relations Act, which protects union bargaining rights, including unions that do not grant African Americans union membership or workplace rights. (Rothstein, 2017, p. 158) Union exclusion of African Americans continued until 1964, when the NLRB refused to certify whites-only unions. (Rothstein, 2017, p. 161)

• **1937:** The PWA is dissolved, and localities are instructed to set up their own housing agencies to receive funding by the newly created U.S. Housing Authority (USHA). USHA continues PWA’s legacy of maintaining, promoting, and creating racial housing segregation. (Rothstein, 2017, p. 24)

• **1939:** Agricultural and domestic workers (who were predominately Black at the time) are excluded from receiving federal benefits (social security, minimum wage, labor union recognition). (Rothstein, 2017, p. 155)

1938: Despite having lower incomes, the median Manhattan rent for African Americans is 50% greater than the median for whites. This exploitative pricing—possible due to restricted housing options for African Americans and limited legal recourse—is reflective of rent discrepancies across the country. Beyond overcharging for rent, landlords also subdivided buildings set aside for African Americans into a greater number of apartments than typical for white-designated buildings, causing overcrowding in those buildings. (Rothstein, 2017, p. 174)

1938: Metropolitan Life Insurance Company builds the whites-only Parkchester Apartments in New York City, made possible by an amendment to the NYS insurance code (passed by the state legislature, who knew and approved of the whites-only development). In 1942, Metropolitan Life builds the whites-only Stuyvesant Town housing complex and was given a 25-year tax abatement by the city. Both projects involve razing pre-existing housing and displacing residents of which a significant portion are African American. (Rothstein, 2017, p. 105)

1938: The federal government considers providing aid to interstate highways, viewing highways as a strategy to displace and cut off African American neighborhoods. (Rothstein, 2017, p. 127)
due to highway construction, little to no assistance was given to displaced families (arguing that compensation would make projects too costly) and none was required by law until 1965. (Rothstein, 2017, p. 131)

1942: President Franklin Roosevelt orders the imprisonment of Japanese Americans and Japanese immigrants. Over the course of WWII, the U.S. government imprisoned over 120,000 Japanese Americans and Japanese immigrants in 10 prison camps across five states. (Strochlic, 2020)

1943: Thurgood Marshall, then a lawyer at the NAACP, leads a successful school desegregation case against the all-white Hillburn School in Rockland County, New York. The case becomes the foundation for the groundbreaking 1954 Supreme Court case, Brown v. Board of Education. (Levine, 2021)

1946: The first whites-only veterans housing development, Oak Forest, is built in Houston, financed by the FHA and the VA. Oak Park is one of many white-only veterans established post WWII that are funded almost entirely with FHA and VA funds. “By 1948 most housing nationwide was being constructed with this government financing.” (Rothstein, 2017, p. 71)

1947: General Electric begins discharging PCBs into the Hudson River (ending in 1977) (EPA, 2020)

1948: Shelley v. Kraemer: Supreme Court strikes down the use of racially motivated restrictive covenants as unconstitutional. Federal agencies resist the implications, continuing to uphold restrictive covenant usage as being protected under the rights of private citizens. (Rothstein, 2017, p. 86)

1949: Peekskill Riots: White mobs attack African American and Jewish attendees of a civil rights benefit concert featuring political activists/artists like Paul Robeson and Pete Seeger. The police refuse to respond to the mob violence; over 150 people are injured. (Coen, 2020)

1949: 1949 Housing Act authorizes further construction of segregated housing projects. In response to Congress passing the Housing Act and upholding segregation, government officials recommit to segregation (Rothstein, 2017, p. 31)

1949: The solicitor general announces that starting in February 1950, the FHA would be prohibited from insuring mortgages with restrictive covenants. The rule would only impact insurance issued from February 1950 onward. The timing of the announcement—two years after the Shelley decision and with two-months’ notice of the change—gave homeowners time to codify restrictive covenants before the new rules were implemented. The FHA continued to show contempt for the new policies, reflected by internal memos and media interviews given by FHA staff. (Rothstein, 2017, p. 87) The FHA continued to argue (incorrectly, with no support) that insuring mortgages to Black homeowners in predominately white neighborhoods would decrease the value of white-owned properties. In certain cases, developers use a technique known as “blockbusting” which consisted of selling homes to Black families in areas adjacent to white neighborhoods at inflated prices and then scaring off white families by falsely claiming that their neighborhoods were turning into dangerous, overcrowded “slums” and that their houses were depreciating. White families would leave in a panic and speculators would then buy their homes for less than their worth. (Rothstein, 2017, p. 95)

1950: NYS legislature prohibits racial discrimination in any housing unit that received state aid. (Rothstein, 106) The statute did not put forth any remedies for past harm/ segregation. (Rothstein, 2017, p. 107)

1954: Brown v. Board of Education: Supreme Court rejects racial segregation in schools and the “separate but equal” justification. Afterward, the Housing and Home Finance Agency states that the ruling does not apply to housing. (Rothstein, 2017, p. 33)
1955: Rosa Parks is arrested for refusing to give up her seat in the “white section” of a bus in Montgomery, AL, sparking the Montgomery Bus Boycott.

1955: Emmett Till is lynched in Money, Mississippi.

1955: Eisenhower administration reinforces segregation by: (1) abolishing a policy that required that Black and white individuals receive public housing of equal quality, (2) no longer following a policy that required that the neediest applicants be prioritized for public housing regardless of race, and (3) ending adherence to policy requiring that the net supply of housing for Black applicants not be reduced by demolition projects. (Rothstein, 2017, p. 33)

1955+: The Federal Home Loan Bank Board (which regulated savings and loan associations) opposes the denial of mortgages to African Americans, after years of supporting denials to African Americans, falsely claiming that African Americans were poor credit risks and would cause the value of white property values to decrease. (Rothstein, 2017, p. 108)

1956+: The FBI launches COINTELPRO, a counterintelligence program in collaboration with local police enforcement meant to surveil, infiltrate, and destabilize political movements in the U.S. including the Black Panthers, anti-Vietnam activists, communist and socialist parties, the American Indian Movement, and their associated leaders like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr and Malcolm X. Throughout its two decades of activity, COINTELPRO was responsible for the murder of 28 Black Panther Party members and the arrest of another 750, including the murder of Illinois Black Panther Party Chairman, Fred Hampton, in 1969. (Foster, 2014)

1961: The Federal Home Loan Bank Board (which regulated savings and loan associations) opposes the denial of mortgages to African Americans, after years of supporting denials to African Americans, falsely claiming that African Americans were poor credit risks and would cause the value of white property values to decrease. (Rothstein, 2017, p. 108)

1965: Agricultural workers begin the Delano Grape Strike in California, calling attention to poor conditions and low pay. (Kim, 2017) The strike, led mostly by Filipino farm workers, fuels the farmworker and agricultural worker rights movement, a deeply intersectional movement that over time would expand to focus on toxic exposure, climate impacts, and other forms of environmental racism on farms.

1968: Congress passes the Fair Housing Act, which prohibits private discrimination in housing sales/rentals and upholds the rights of African Americans to choose where they want to live. (Rothstein, 2017, p. 177) While rightfully outlawing discrimination, the FHA does not address the issue of housing unaffordability for African Americans. “…it was not primarily discrimination (although this still contributed) that kept African Americans out of most white suburbs after the law passed. It was primarily unaffordability...The advantage that FHA and VA loans gave the white lower-middle class in the 1940s and 50s has become permanent.” (Rothstein, 2017, p. 183)

1969+: BIPOC-led movements across the country (like El Plan Espiritual de Aztlan, Red Guard Party, I Wor Kuen, and the Young Lords Lead and Garbage Offensives) center environmental justice in their platforms and fight for community control of the land.

1969: NYC Stonewall Riots: Patrons of the Stonewall Inn (a known LGBTQ+ establishment) resist an NYPD raid, calling attention to the police harassment of and discrimination against LGBTQ+ people. For six days, thousands of protestors rioted in the area surrounding the Stonewall Inn, marking a major turning point in the LGBTQ+ movement. The movement owes much of its success to the strong leadership of trans women of color, such as Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera. (National Park Service, 2016)

1971: James v. Valtierra: Supreme Court upholds provisions that require a local referendum before building a low-income family public housing project because the provisions “ensures democratic decision making.” The provisions were often used in middle-class white communities as a mechanism to veto public housing proposals, in anticipation that incoming residents would be Black. (Rothstein, 2017, p. 33)
1973: As part of racist, classist reputational attacks on public housing, Nixon reports to Congress that public housing projects are “monstrous, depressing places—rundown, overcrowded, crime-ridden” (and should therefore not be forced upon white communities) (Rothstein, 2017, p. 37).

1973: U.S. Commission on Civil Rights concludes in a report 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.” (Rothstein, 2017, p. 75)

1973-1980: “African American median wage falls by one percent, while the average American house price grows by 43 percent.” (Rothstein, 2017, p. 181)

1976: *Hills v. Galtreaux*: Supreme Court rejects the Chicago Housing Authority’s public housing site location choices as unconstitutional, on the basis that the sites were chosen to advance residential segregation by keeping public housing projects out of predominately White neighborhoods. In defense of Chicago’s practices, the solicitor general argued about the burden public housing would put on the white communities: “There will be an enormous practical impact on innocent communities who have to bear the burden of the housing, who will have to house a plaintiff class from Chicago, which they wronged in no way.” In response to the defeat, Chicago stopped building public housing. (Rothstein, 2017, p. 35)

1979: *Bean v. Southwestern Waste Management, Inc.* (Southern District of Texas) is the first case to challenge environmental discrimination using civil rights law. Black residents in Houston sue regarding the proposed placement of yet another waste facility in their neighborhood. The judge rejects their lawsuit given that while the placement was “unfortunate,” there was no proof of explicit racist motivation. (Rothstein, 2017, p. 56)

1981: In Albany, the ANSWERS Incinerator opens in a predominately Black neighborhood—burning 350 tons of waste per day and releasing arsenic, lead, mercury and other pollutants into the air—leading to protests of environmental racism until the incinerator shut down in 1994. (Moody, 1994)

1981: Michael Donald lynched in Mobile, Alabama. In 1984 Michael’s mother, Beulah Mae Donald, represented by the SPLC, sued the United Klans of America, who were responsible for Michael’s murder. In 1987 Beulah was awarded a historic settlement of $7 million, leading to the end of the United Klans of America. (Kornbluth, 1987)

1982: Protests begin in Warren County, NC over the siting of an additional landfill in a predominately Black community, despite the community already hosting all three existing county landfills and despite the initial proposal being to host the landfill in a white neighborhood (and being rejected due to resident protests). The Warren County protests are considered one of the founding moments of the environmental justice movement. (Fears, 2021).

1983: U.S. General Accounting Office study finds that commercial waste treatment facilities or uncontrolled waste dumps are more likely to be found near Black than white residential areas, placements which further harm Black residents and contribute to the perception of Black neighborhoods as “slums.” Residential zoning restrictions were often lifted or changed to permit toxic site placements in Black neighborhoods. (Rothstein, 2017, p. 51)

1984: The Peekskill Wheelabrator, the garbage incinerator for Westchester County, opens in a relatively poorer, BIPOC community in Peekskill, displacing environmental harms away from wealthier white Westchester communities. (Hudson Valley Environmental Justice Coalition, 2021)
1986: A white mob chases and kills a Black man in Howard Beach, NY (Queens). (Equal Justice Initiative, 2021)

1987: The United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice publishes Toxic Wastes and Race in the United States, a study identifying race (and not income) as the most reliable predictor of the location of commercial hazardous waste sites in the U.S. The groundbreaking report coined the term “environmental racism” and helped fuel the environmental justice movement. (NRDC, 2007)

1988: In Harlem, the “Sewage Seven” protest the siting of the North River Sewage Treatment and its impact on residents’ respiratory health. The protests lead to the creation of grassroots organization, WE ACT for Environmental Justice. (WE ACT)

1989: Central Park Five: Five Black and Latinx teenagers (aged 14 to 16) were falsely accused and convicted of raping a white woman in Central Park (later exonerated). In response to the incident, Donald Trump took out four full page newspaper ads urging New York to “bring back the death penalty” and punish the teens, furthering racist ideas of Black men as dangerous threats to society, especially to white women, an ideology which over time has been used to justify lynching, police violence, and mass incarceration. (BBC, 2019) (Pilgrim, 2012)

1989: Data shows persistent wealth disparities: In 1989, 6% of Black households inherited wealth from the previous generation with an average inheritance of $42,000, whereas 24% of white household inherited wealth from the previous with an average inheritance of $145,000. (Rothstein, 2017, p. 186)

1990: “Group of 10” letter: activists of color write a letter to major environmental organizations in the U.S. highlighting the lack of representation within their organizations and requesting that the organizations hire more people of color (Finney, 2014, p. 26)


1991: President Clinton issues an executive order requiring that disparate environmental impacts (i.e., placement of toxic waste facilities) be avoided. The order does not address how to deal with existing disparate impacts. (Rothstein, 2017, p. 56)

2008: Housing market collapse: mortgage brokers target African American communities for subprime mortgages leading to the housing bubble and the onset of the Great Recession. (Rothstein, 2017, p. 182) The practice of marketing exploitative, deceitful loans to African Americans is known as “reverse redlining.” (Rothstein, 2017, p. 109) “Amongst 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. The most extreme case occurred in Buffalo, New York, where three-quarters of all refinance loans to African Americans were subprime.”(Rothstein, 2017, p. 110) The collapse of the housing bubble greatly impacted the African American community leading to an increase in foreclosures, homelessness, and families doubling up in apartments; and a decrease in home ownership. (Rothstein, 2017, p. 113)

2010: School segregation persists: the average African American student attends a school with a white student population of 29% compared to a white student population of 32% in 1970. Challenges in school desegregation have been exacerbated and reinforced by residential segregation. New York State remains one of the most segregated states in the country. (Rothstein, 2017, p. 178)
2010: U.S. Justice Department concludes that: “the more segregated a community of color is, the more likely it is that homeowners will face foreclosure because the lenders who peddled the most toxic loans targeted those communities.” (Rothstein, 2017, p. 111)

2014: Eric Garner murdered by the NYPD. Michael Brown Jr. murdered by the Ferguson Police Department. Protests nationwide call further attention to police violence against Black Americans, growing the Black Lives Matter movement, a term coined in 2013 by three Black women—Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi—after the 2013 acquittal of George Zimmerman, who murdered Trayvon Martin. (Black Lives Matter)

2015: Hudson City Savings Bank is sued for violating the Fair Housing Act and Equal Credit Opportunity Act. Per the Justice Department complaint, from 2009 to 2013, the bank denied and avoided providing credit to Black and Latinx neighborhoods, a continuation of discriminatory redlining practices first established in the 1930s. As a settlement, Hudson City Savings Bank agreed to make several policy changes and to pay over $25 million for a loan-subsidy fund targeted at Black and Latinx neighborhoods, over $2 million for community programs, and over $5 million in fines. (Heins, 2015)

2016: Dangerous levels of PFAS found in the City of Newburgh’s primary drinking water reservoir, kicking off a drinking water crisis and bringing attention to the ongoing health risks of PFAS. (Riverkeeper)

2016: The Standing Rock Sioux Tribe leads major protests against the Dakota Access Pipeline, calling attention to the ongoing environmental harms forced upon Indigenous populations. (Earthjustice, 2019)

2018: Income and household wealth disparities persist: Median family income is approximately $60,000 for a white family and $37,000 for a Black family (amounting to 60% the median white family income). Median household wealth is approximately $134,000 for a white household and $11,000 for a Black household (amounting to 10% the median white household wealth). Median household wealth is calculated as assets minus liabilities. (Rothstein, 2017, p. 184) “As is true with income, African Americans are also less mobile in wealth than whites.” (Rothstein, 2017, p. 185) “…the average child living in a poor household is less likely to escape poverty as an adult, and the average child living in a poor household in a poor neighborhood is even less likely to do so.” (Rothstein, 2017, p. 187)

2020: President Trump refers to COVID-19 as the “Kung Flu” and “Chinese Virus,” inciting further racism against the Asian American community, including the 2021 murder of six Asian women in Atlanta. (Strochlich, 2020)

2020: George Floyd murdered by Minneapolis Police; Racial Justice Uprisings

Present-day: In addition to the ongoing harms caused by decades of racist housing policies, gentrification, redevelopment projects, highway routing, issues with public housing management, and “race-neutral” solutions continue to create and reinforce residential segregation, income inequality, and general disenfranchisement of the Black community. (Rothstein, 2017, p. 189, 191)
Citations


NRDC. (2007, March 30). Toxic Wastes and Race at Twenty: 1987—2007. https://www.nrdc.org/resources/toxic-wastes-and-race-twenty-1987-2007#:~:text=In%201987%2C%20the%20United%20Church%2C%20Race%20in%20the%20United%20States%2C%20in%20race%20and%20state%2C%20the%20nation%20has%20had%20to%20deal%20with%20the%20issue%20of%20environmental%20justice%20and%20race%20at%20least%20since%20the%201970%20Dawes%20Act%20(%20sometimes%20called%20the%20Dawes%20Act%20or%20the%20Indian%20Reorganization%20Act%20of%201934%20)%20and%20the%201940%20Johnson%20Olmsted%20Act%20(%20sometimes%20called%20the%20Johnson%20Olmsted%20Act%20or%20the%20Indian%20Reorganization%20Act%20of%201940%20)%20in%20the%20United%20States%20and%20the%201949%20Johnson%20Olmsted%20Act%20(%20sometimes%20called%20the%20Johnson%20Olmsted%20Act%20or%20the%20Indian%20Reorganization%20Act%20of%201949%20)%20in%20the%20United%20States%2C%20the%20United%20States%20has%20been%20fighting%20to%20end%20the%20practice%20of%20environmental%20discrimination%20against%20people%20of%20color%20and%20to%20achieve%20environmental%20justice%20for%20all%20citizens.


Riverkeeper. (n.d.) *Newburgh Drinking Water Crisis.*
https://www.riverkeeper.org/campaigns/safeguard/newburgh-2/


