Segregation by Design

Segregation by Design draws on more than 100 years of quantitative and qualitative data from thousands of American cities to explore how local governments generate race and class segregation. Since the early twentieth century, cities have used their power of land use control to determine the location and availability of housing, amenities (such as parks), and negative land uses (such as landfills). The result has been segregation – first within cities and more recently between them. Documenting changing patterns of segregation and their political mechanisms, Trounstine argues that city governments have pursued these policies to enhance the wealth and resources of white property owners at the expense of people of color and the poor. Contrary to leading theories of urban politics, local democracy has not functioned to represent all residents. The result is unequal access to fundamental local services – from schools, to safe neighborhoods, to clean water.

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Segregation by Design

Local Politics and Inequality in American Cities

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For Brian
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Acknowledgments

This book began in 2008 as a debate with Brian, my then partner, now spouse, while we were on a walk by the ocean in Half Moon Bay, California. We argued over the extent to which private control of coastal land would generate unequal access to the beaches and whether or not this was an important public policy concern. As this seemed like a straightforward question about control of local public goods, I went looking for evidence to support my perspective in the political science literature. I found unsatisfying answers. As I ventured into the puzzle, I realized that I had to wrestle with more essential questions about the relationship between land use control and inequality first. This book is the result of that quest. Throughout the process, Brian’s views of the world, his unwillingness to adopt my perspective without evidence, and his unyielding support of my career made this work both exciting and possible. And it is to him that I dedicate this book. I am grateful for the life we have built and for the mooring that our marriage has provided in the journey.

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Prologue
Prologue

Written by Jessica Trounstine and Darick Ritter
Illustrated by Darick Ritter

SEPARATION BY DESIGN

NATURALLY YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO OBTAIN EVERYTHING YOU DESIRE...

BUT WE CAN PRIORITIZE FOR WHAT YOU REALLY WANT.
Prologue
Prologue

I didn’t say that—I said I didn’t want you carrying race after dark.

With Cherry Hill’s nice homes and schools, you could just think of this like an investment for Katie...

We’re right outside Philadelphia and yet the delapidation’s here—why not Cherry Hill?

You can’t miss that Camden’s mostly black and Cherry Hill’s mostly white.

I’d say it isn’t just about racism or even individual’s choices...

In the early years this place was a diverse black and white neighborhood with different families living right around the corner from each other. Some were renters...some were owners.

Politics

Look, we got time...

All the old cities used to be like that, so what happened?
Prologue

LATE FIFTIES...

THE CITIES ACTUALLY CONTROL WHAT GETS BUILT AND WHERE--

THEY CONTROL WHAT KIND OF HOUSING GETS BUILT AND WHAT PUBLIC SERVICES ARE AVAILABLE.

THEM DIRECTLY AFFECT WHAT EACH NEIGHBORHOOD FELLS LIKE AND WHO CAN LIVE WHERE--

EARLY SIXTIES...

IT’S GONNA GO SOMEWHERE FOLKS!

AND WE’VE GOT TO GET ON WITH DISCUSSING FUNDS FOR REHABILITATING FARNHAM PARK ANYWAY...

AFTER WWII, NUMEROUS NUMBERS OF WHITE MIDDLE-CLASS PEOPLE MOVED TO SUBURBAN PLACES LIKE CHELMSFORD HILL...

WITH THE HELP OF FEDERALLY BACKED HOME LOANS AND NEW HIGHWAYS.

AND THEN, SUBURBAN GOVERNMENTS PROCEEDED TO USE RESTRICTIVE LAND-USE POLICIES TO KEEP THEIR COMMUNITIES HOMOGENEOUS, PROTECTING THE RICH HOMEOWNERS.

YOU CAN’T SAY WHAT’S IN THE HEARTS AND MINDS OF THE INDIVIDUALS ENACTING THOSE POLICIES. BUT WHAT YOU CAN SAY IS THIS:

IT WAS SEGREGATION BY DESIGN.

...THE VOTE WAS 6-2. THE I-70 ROUTE IS GOING THROUGH STANLEY PARK.

...HERE COMES THE HOMEBUYER...
Prologue

AND THAT RACISM YOU MENTIONED EARLIER TOM,
IT WAS BUILT INTO THE DESIGN.

SO WHEN THE DESIGN IS THREATENED
LIKE WHEN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TELLS THE DESIGNERS TO DESSEGREGATE SCHOOLS
OR NEIGHBORHOODS) THOSE IN POWER CHANGE THE DESIGN.

WHEN THE POWERFUL WORRY ABOUT THE CHARACTER OF THEIR STREET OR SCHOOL,
THEM STRATEGY OF SEGREGATION

FIRST THEY WALL-OFF NEIGHBORHOODS.
THEN WHOLE CITIES.

AND NO MATTER WHERE THE POWERFUL END
UP THEY PUSH THEIR CITY GOVERNMENT TO USE LAND USE REGULATIONS TO PROTECT
AND PRESERVE THE CHARACTER OF THEIR PRECIOUS COMMUNITY.

PROTECT OUR HOME VALUES

Vote No!
Prologue

Prologue
Prologue

IT’S TIME TO MAKE YOUR MARK...

OH, IT’S BEAUTIFUL!

YEAH, BUT I’M DEPRESSED.

WE JUST FELL IN LOVE WITH THE BEST HOUSE...

THEY GOING TO BUY IT FOR OUR FAMILY.

NOT SEGREGATE A COMMUNITY, LINDA.

OH I KNOW, TOM, BUT THIS IS WHAT HAPPENS WHEN RACISM IS INSTITUTIONALIZED.

YOUR CHOICES BECOME PART OF A LARGER STORY THAT YOU Didn’T INTEND TO WRITE.

SO WHAT CAN WE DO?

WE COULD PROVIDE HOUSING SUBSIDIES TO PEOPLE SO THAT EVERYONE COULD LIVE IN PLACES LIKE HER CHERY HILL.

WE COULD FORCE COMMUNITIES TO BUILD MORE MULTI-FAMILY HOUSING.

AND WE COULD VALUE DIVERSITY MORE THAN PURCHASING OUR HOMES.

TOM-- THESE FLOWERS!

BUT AMERICA’S TOLERANCE FOR INEQUALITY AND HISTORY OF RACISM MAKE THESE SOLUTIONS POLITICALLY DIFFICULT.

AAAAAAH! DECREASE MY HOURLY WAGE AND I MUST GET TO THIS HOUSE AT ZONE POINT...

YOU’RE PROBABLY RIGHT, THANKS LINDA.

YOU’RE DOING WHAT YOU THINK IS BEST FOR YOUR FAMILY. THE PROPERTY VALUES ARE STABLE AND KATIE WILL HAVE ALL SORTS OF KIDS JUST LIKE HER AROUND TO PLAY WITH.

AND I CAN ONL SAY... CONGRATULATIONS!

AND... MY JOB IS TO FIND YOU WHAT YOU WANT.
Prologue

GREAT! My name’s Jessica and I’m here on behalf of the South Jersey Affordable Housing Alliance. We are hoping to build 10 units of affordable housing along the Cooper River – just around the corner. Will you sign this petition in support?

OH, GREAT!

DID YOU MENTION ANY VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES?