

# 1789

The **Fifth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States** protects property rights. Slaves were considered property and had no property rights. Women were not included among those with property rights. Military power, legislation, and court decisions often denied property rights to Indigenous Americans and those of African, Asian, and Latin American decent.

# 1866

Following the Civil War, the **Civil Rights Act of 1866** granted full citizenship rights to all males born in the U.S. regardless of race. It guarantees all U.S. citizens the rights to inherit, purchase, lease, sell, hold, or convey real and personal property. It was the first civil rights bill passed to support the 13th Amendment. Despite this guarantee, courts, immigration laws, and racially defined zoning often denied those rights.

# 1872

During Reconstruction, the **Homestead Act** was amended to allow people of color to participate in homestead resettlement programs on land purchased or seized from Native Americans.

# 1877-1964

After Reconstruction ended, what is called the “Jim Crow” era began. Primarily in the South, local governments constructed a legal system aimed at preventing African Americans from exercising their rights. Men were largely barred from voting. Legislation separated people of color from Whites in schools, housing, jobs, and public places. Many of these laws remained in place until struck down by the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

# 1880-1924

Mass migration, mostly from Eastern, Central, and Southern Europe, brought more than 27 million new people to the United States.

# 1882

The Chinese Exclusion Act was passed, becoming the first and only U.S. federal law to explicitly prohibit immigration for a specific nationality.

It was not repealed until 1943.

# 1890s

Racially restrictive covenants on housing deeds first appeared in California and Massachusetts. They spread throughout the United States until the Supreme Court declares them legally unenforceable in 1948.

# 1896

The Supreme Court ruled segregation legal in the case of *Plessy v. Ferguson*. The decision became the legal basis for restrictive Jim Crow legislation and separate public accommodations for the next 58 years.

# 1908

A massive riot started by a White mob kills 16 people in Springfield, IL. Partly in response, an interracial group of citizens met in New York City to form the **National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)**. Among their goals was to pursue full legal and social equality.

# 1910

W. Ashbie Hawkins, a prominent Black lawyer, bought a Baltimore home and rented it to George McMechen, who became the first Black resident on an all-White block. Neighbors formed an association and pushed the city of Baltimore to create the **first racially based municipal segregation law**. It prohibited members of one racial group from buying a house in a city block already occupied by another race

# 1910-1970

In the **Great Migration**, one of the largest mass movements in American history, an estimated six million Black Americans move from the Southern States to destinations in the North, Midwest, and West. The driving force behind the mass movement was to escape racial violence, pursue economic and educational opportunities, and obtain freedom from the oppression of Jim Crow. By 1970, for the first time in history, more Black people lived outside the Southern states than in them.

# 1913

California passed the first **Alien Land Law**, barring Asian immigrants from owning land and eventually barring land ownership by American-born children of Asian immigrant parents. In the years that follow, similar laws pass in 15 states, including Washington, Oregon, Minnesota, Utah, Wyoming, Arizona, Idaho, and Montana.

# 1915

The Ku Klux Klan was revived. During the 1920s-1930s, between three and six million Americans joined the Klan. It became strong across the Northern and Western states with 45 percent of its members in Illinois, Ohio, and Indiana.

# 1917

A new racial zoning law in Louisville, KY, was challenged by the NAACP. In **Buchanan v. Warley**, the U.S. Supreme Court agreed with the NAACP, ruling that racially segregated zoning violated the 14th Amendment. Zoning could no longer restrict housing by race.

# 1919

During the “Red Summer,” White mobs attacked Black communities in more than three dozen towns and cities. Over ten months, White mobs killed approximately 250 Black people, destroyed property, and started riots in Black neighborhoods in cities around the country.

# 1921

In the **Tulsa Massacre**, Whites rioted for two days in the thriving Black neighborhood of Greenwood. They destroyed 35 square blocks, killing 300 people and burning more than 1,200 houses. Residents filed almost 200 lawsuits against the city and insurance companies but were unsuccessful in getting compensation for the loss of their homes and businesses.

# 1922

The Colored Women's Clubs of Michigan released a map titled the "Red Record of Lynching" as part of a petition to Congress seeking to make lynching a federal crime. It documents 3,424 extrajudicial killings in 33 years.

# 1924

The National Association of Real Estate Brokers publishes a Code of Ethics that stops members from "introducing into a neighborhood...members of any race or nationality...whose presence will clearly be detrimental to property values."

# 1925

After moving into their new home in an all-White neighborhood of Detroit, Dr. Ossian Sweet, with his wife Gladys and a number of friends and relatives, endured a violent attack by a White mob that surrounded the house, throwing rocks and bottles. Shots fired from inside the house killed a White man in the crowd. All eleven people in the house were charged with first-degree murder. The NAACP hired famous lawyer Clarence Darrow to defend the Sweets, and they were acquitted.

# 1926

The power of towns and cities to create zoning laws was tested in the Supreme Court case **Village of Euclid vs. Ambler Realty Co.** The Court declared that such laws are constitutional as long as they are reasonable and “have some relation to health, public safety, morals, or general welfare.”

# 1926

In the case **Corrigan Vs. Buckley**, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that racially restrictive deed covenants were legal. In the years that followed, deed restrictions became more common.

# 1935-1940

The Home Owners Loan Corporation, a New Deal housing program, creates maps that determine where federally backed housing loans can be made. The maps denied loans to homeowners in mostly African-American neighborhoods and other neighborhoods considered to be poor investments.

# 1936

The Federal Housing Administration Underwriting Manual recommended using deed restrictions to prevent “the occupancy of properties except by the race for which they are intended” and the “infiltration of...lower class and inharmonious racial groups.”

# 1936

Mail carrier Victor Hugo Green began publishing the “Negro Motorist Green Book,” a travel guide listing restaurants, hotels, and services that were relatively safe for Black travelers during times of extreme racial discrimination. The Green Book remained in print until 1967.

# 1937

A federal act created the United States Housing Authority to oversee the development of the nation's first public housing. Between 1937 and 1941, the USHA lent local housing authorities \$800 million to build 587 low-rent housing developments with more than 170,000 units. The rent was split between tenants, who were responsible for about half of it, and federal, state, and local governments.

# 1944

The **Servicemen's Readjustment Act, or GI Bill**, provided returning veterans with low-interest mortgages, funding for college tuition, and business loans. More than one million African American veterans were eligible for these benefits but could not access them because they were denied home loans in Black neighborhoods and because segregated colleges, schools, and workplaces were not open to them.

# 1948

In the case of *Shelley v. Kraemer*, the US Supreme Court declared that racially restrictive covenants were legal contracts between private parties, but that courts could not enforce them because that violated the Fourteenth Amendment.

# 1949

Promising “decent homes in wholesome surroundings for low-income families now living in the squalor of the slums,” the **1949 Housing Act** funded urban renewal programs. Many of these projects required tearing down ‘slum” housing in order to replace them with new developments. More than one million people, two-thirds of them Black or Puerto Rican, were forced to leave their homes for urban renewal projects throughout the 1950s and 1960s.

# 1956

The **Federal Aid Highway Act** authorized the building of more than 41,000 miles of new interstate highways. Many of those roads are routed through existing neighborhoods, demolishing up to 475,000 city homes. More than one million are displaced, a disproportionate number of them Black.

# 1967

Civil unrest broke out in Los Angeles, New York City, Detroit, Chicago, and dozens of other places across the country, causing more than 150 deaths and 20,000 arrests. The **Kerner Commission** convened to study the reasons for urban protest, reporting the main cause as frustration at the lack of opportunity for Black Americans. The report stated: “our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white—separate and unequal.”

# 1968

The **Fair Housing Act** was signed into law after two years of consideration, spurred into motion by the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The act prohibited discrimination by landlords, real estate companies, banks, insurance companies, and governments on the basis of race, religion, or national origin. The passage of the act officially ended redlining.

# 1971

In a California case, residents challenged the ability to use popular vote to block the construction of low-income housing. In the case **James v. Valtierra**, the Supreme Court ruled that such a vote was not racially discriminatory despite the fact that low-income residents disproportionately belong to racial minorities. The decision supported exclusionary zoning on the basis of income, not a protected category under the Fair Housing Act.

# 1974

Congress amended the Fair Housing Act, making it illegal to discriminate on the basis on sex and expanding the definition of discriminatory housing practices to include interference and intimidation.

# 1988

Congress amended the Fair Housing Act, making it illegal to discriminate on the basis of disability. It also prohibits discriminating against households with children under 18.

# 2020

Despite legal protection, an estimated four million people experience housing discrimination every year. About 28,000 complaints are filed with government housing agencies.