

Hi there,

Happy Sunday! Besides [cooking a ton of fun stuff for Thanksgiving](#), I've spent the past few days rereading* *The Color of Law* in preparation for Greater Greater Washington's discussion of it tomorrow night. You're signed up to attend, which is why you're receiving this email. I'm really looking forward to the event and wanted to send along some additional details and materials to get you prepared.

A few logistical notes:

- **You'll receive a Zoom link tomorrow!!**
- We're planning on what I hope will be a casual, constructive, and fun talk about the book, **starting at 5:30 p.m.**
- Office of Planning staffers Faith Broderick and Heba ElGawish will be joining us, and I'm super-excited for them to share their expertise as practicing planners on what it takes to begin to remedy the sorts of legally codified injustices that Rothstein identifies in *The Color of Law*.
- I'll be moderating the discussion, so come with questions, thoughts, and ideas. We will run this as a Zoom call, not a panel, to keep it intimate, and not talk at you too much. I will keep attendees muted, so prepare to use the "raise hand" function or put questions in the chat so I can call on you or bring up your thoughts.
- After about 45 minutes of group discussion with Faith and Heba—or, if it's really rollicking, perhaps a little longer—we'll move into breakout rooms, which GGWash staff, including me, will be in and out of.
- We will record the group discussion and post the video, with a recap, on ggwash.org. (We will not record the breakout groups.)

There is absolutely zero expectation that you will have read all of the book by tomorrow night. Maybe you've read it previously, or have a good sense of what it's about (racial segregation, Supreme Court cases, the federal government, neighborhoods, etc.) That's great! But: Book discussions are the most fun, in my experience, when people are really wrangling with the text that's being discussed. There is seriously no pressure to be an expert in *The Color of Law* before tomorrow night, but...if the book's a bit fuzzy for you (it was for me, for sure), then here are some things to check out:

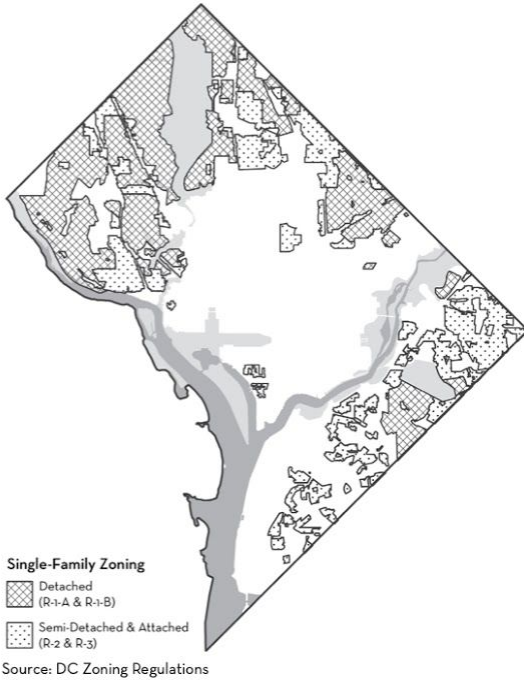
- [Segregated By Design](#) is a short film that visually explains much of Rothstein's book.
- Prologue DC's [Mapping Segregation](#) project is a collection of research and writing on where racially restricted covenants were instituted in DC. As Rothstein writes, though racial covenants were enacted by private citizens, the federal government, even after *Shelley v. Kraemer*, which banned court enforcement of restrictive covenants, [enabled them](#): In one instance, in Chicago in 1949, Federal Housing Administration officials insisted that "an interracial community was a bad risk" that the FHA could not insure (that's on page 57).
- [A \(52-minute! Put it on while you're making lunch!\) lecture by Rothstein about his work](#)

- [A \(much shorter! eight-minute!\) edited video of many Rothstein talks organized by the book's chapters](#)
- [This transcript](#) of Rothstein discussing The Color of Law
- [Many, many existing discussions about the book](#)
- This [wonderfully comprehensive collection](#) of interviews, lists of policies referenced, and other questions regarding The Color of Law

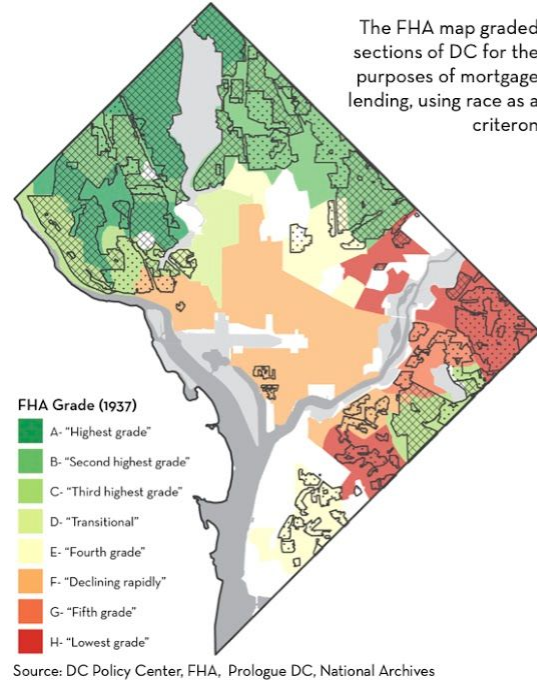
GGWash has also published some really great articles about The Color of Law and local examples of de jure segregation:

- [Richard Rothstein lays out the reality of government-mandated segregation in “Color of Law”](#)
- [US cities were segregated by design. This video shows how we’re still affected.](#)
- [These maps show how public housing was manipulated to segregate DC](#)
- [One man zoned huge swaths of the DC region for sprawl, cars, and exclusion](#)
- We haven't written about it yet (I've been really busy!), but the Office of Planning's report about the [impact of single-family housing on the District overall](#) is well worth looking over; it was required by the legislation passed by the Council approving the Framework element last October, which GGWash worked on closely (and of which I am extremely proud). These maps (on page 18) are quite striking:

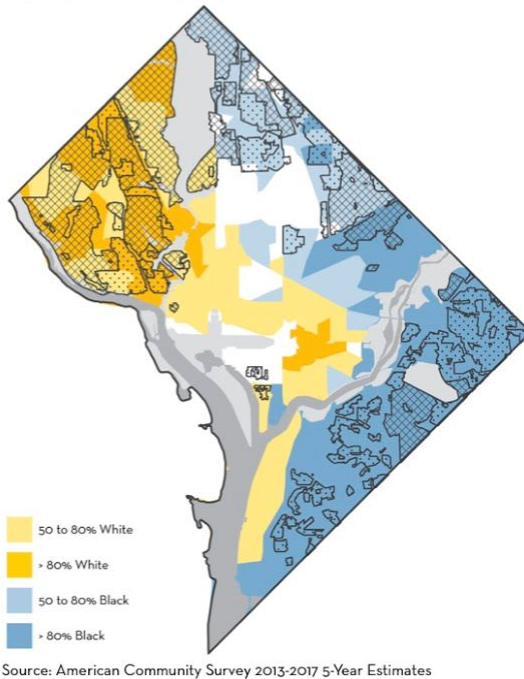
Figure 9.
Single Family Zoning in the District



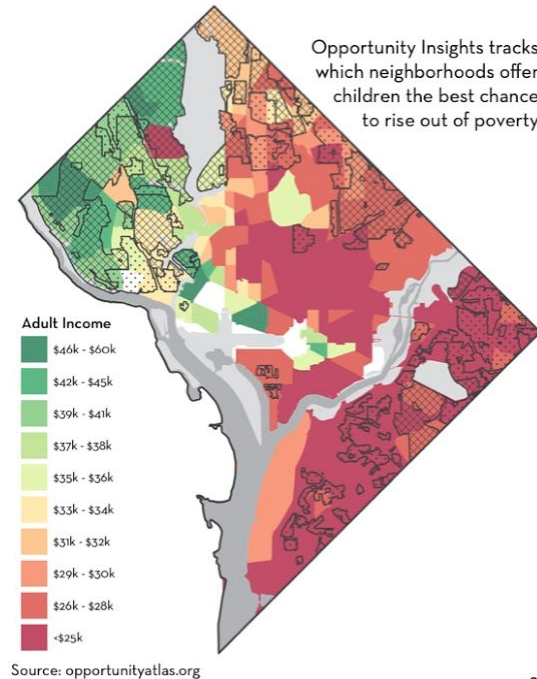
1937 Federal Housing Administration Map



Majority White & Majority Black Census Tracts



Adult Income for Children in Low-Income Households



Obviously, there is so much to say about The Color of Law. We are not going to be able to tackle all of it, and I'm hoping to really focus our conversation on the relationship between de

jure segregation and what's doable with the District's Comprehensive Plan, amendments to which are currently being considered by the DC Council after close to four years of public debate. As you likely know, the Comp Plan is the District's foundational land use text, and a great deal of GGWash's advocacy (and most of my job, for the past year and a half) has been devoted to working on it. With a zoning-code rewrite functionally off the table—our first zoning rewrite since 1950 was completed in 2016, after a decade of debate—amending the Comp Plan, and pushing for the 2006 plan to be fully rewritten as soon as possible, is the only real viable opportunity we have right now to make some changes to the District's existing land-use regime. If you're on GGWash's main email list, you likely already received an email from me tonight about the Comp Plan, urging you to send in a comment before the hearing record closes this Thursday, Dec. 3—because it's really important, and it's on me to get you to [participate](#) in public processes like amending the Comp Plan! We'll talk more about that tomorrow night; if you'd like to send in a comment, follow the instructions [here](#), and cc me, abaca@ggwash.org, please! And don't hesitate to let me know if you need any help.

With all that, I look forward to hanging out with you tomorrow after work, doing one of my favorite things: talking about a well-written, interesting book that's really relevant to where I live and what I do.

See you then,

Alex

Alex Baca
Housing Program Organizer
Greater Greater Washington
[Join our Neighborhood.](#)

**While I always think that I'm going to be most in love with Rothstein's third chapter, "Racial Zoning," because of, you know, what I work on at GGWash, it's really his skillful demonstration of how the federal government segregated places that weren't segregated until there was a federal presence or action that sticks with me. While that's obviously the theme of the whole dang book, it's most directly described in the earlier chapters. This, on page 37, is an elegant and infuriating summation of a deliberate federal screwover of public housing and its residents: "New federal and local regulations set forth strict upper-income limits for families in public housing. ... This policy change, mostly complete by the 1960s, ensured that integrated public housing would cease to be possible. ... The federal government had required public housing to be made available only to families who needed substantial subsidies, while the same government declined to provide sufficient subsidies to make public housing a decent place to live."*

This is easily extrapolated to the private market, which, through both overt and tacit encouragement of segregationist practices like blockbusting, covenants, and tax writeoffs, exploited and ghettoized Black buyers. This ad, which I found browsing archives of the Washington Star, is a direct result of that:

**FOR ATTENTION OF
COLORED PEOPLE.**

If you want to see the most comfortable and best appointed homes that have been built in a long time, inspect those now in course of construction at 711-731 Irving street northwest. Between Georgia and Sherman avenues.

The location is ideal and the appointments and finish include everything that makes for living comfort and convenience. Inspect Them Critically—Open Every Day and Evening.

B. B. PINN.
On the Premises.
Phone Columbia 5817.