

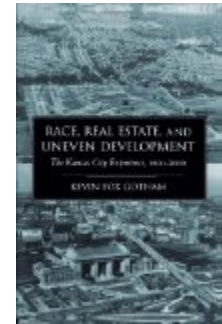
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Kevin Fox Gotham. *Race, Real Estate, and Uneven Development: The Kansas City Experience, 1900-2000.* Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002. xiii + 204 pp. \$20.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-7914-5378-0.

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The Racialization of Space in Urban America

In the past two decades, the persistence of school segregation and/or re-segregation has been attributed to white flight from urban areas due to deindustrialization, mandatory desegregation policies, and middle-class desires for suburban living. In many school districts such as Prince Edward County and Norfolk, courts have released school districts from desegregation plans viewed as perpetuating white flight. In other cases, courts have seen the re-segregation of schools as products of residential patterns beyond the control of school officials and not, as had been in the past, a direct result of school board or state action. In this perspective, residential segregation does not result from intentional discriminatory practices, but rather, a general trend toward suburbanization following World War II. The parallel development of disinvestment and ghettoization in urban America has been scrutinized, however, by a number of sociologists, most notably Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton, who argue that residential segregation results from discriminatory governmental policies and private interests. Kevin Fox Gotham's *Race, Real Estate and Uneven Development* contributes to this scholarship.

Gotham argues that "uneven development"—urban decline coupled with suburban growth—is linked to the development of racial residential segregation. Using Kansas City as a case study, Gotham contends privatism in policies toward real estate, land development, and housing promoted racial segregation to the benefit of developers and to the detriment of inner-city African Amer-

ican residents (pp. 10-11). Noteworthy in this argument is Gotham's analysis of national and local realtor associations, such as the National Association of Real Estate Boards (NAREB), as key lobbying forces behind federal urban renewal and housing programs following World War II. Racial segregation became institutionalized in real estate practices and public policies in ways that made efforts to eradicate housing discrimination futile and contradictory. This reading of residential segregation and uneven development reveals the multiplicity of interests that have shaped and functioned to maintain segregation in urban America despite decades of reform.

The book is organized in six substantive chapters and a conclusion that nicely synthesizes the theoretical arguments about urban decline and residential segregation. (Due to an editorial error, the chapter numbers contained in the chapter summary provided in the introduction are incorrect.) The first chapter, an introduction to the book, provides the reader with the conceptual frame work used in analyzing the Kansas City experience. Importantly the author discusses the meaning of terms such as racialization and privatism which become key tropes in the argument about residential segregation. In this analysis, Gotham states "racial discrimination is not viewed as the cause" of residential segregation, but he views the development of "specific racisms, racial identities, and other racial phenomena within the broader historical and political process" (p. 5). Noting that racial discrimination in the United States has historically existed in the absence

of residential segregation, chapter 2 traces the origins of residential segregation to the “racialization” of space in the early-twentieth century. In particular, the author focuses on how, with the increasing migration of African Americans to Kansas City, local and national realtor associations began to disseminate an ideology that associated the presence of African Americans in residential areas with moral decay, crime, and diminishing property values. The industry profited from this ideology and began using restrictive covenants as a means to promote the racialization of space in urban America.

In chapter 3, Gotham scrutinizes the involvement of both the federal government and interests groups such as NAREB in promoting suburbanization prior to and following World War II. The ideology associating race with residential space became embedded in the development of the real estate industry and the policies of the Federal Housing Administration. Gotham notes how the racialization of space promoted by real estate practices fueled anti-black violence as white homeowners saw African American residents as threats to their livelihood and property values. Interestingly, Gotham notes the racialization of space had implications for maintaining school segregation. As African Americans increased in certain areas, school officials would convert all-white schools to all-black ones, further promoting white movement from the city (p. 67). Chapter 4 continues to explore how the racialization of space became institutionalized in urban renewal and public housing policies. Government officials turned to “urban renewal” and “slum clearance” as ways to curtail urban blight, which public policies and real estate interests had promoted. Yet, Gotham demonstrates that urban “renewal” in Kansas City only displaced low-income residents and further segregated white and black citizens in relocation programs. Threatened by a new competitor, real estate interests organized a successful attack on public housing by promoting privatism in urban redevelopment. Therefore, Gotham insists that it is misleading to view urban renewal as a government housing program. In many cities, such as Kansas, private interests and elites utilized urban renewal for their own interests which had little to do with providing affordable and adequate housing to low-income residents.

In chapter 5, Gotham focuses in on the increasing residential segregation in Kansas City, particularly the use of blockbusting by realtors (both white and black).

Highlighted in this chapter is the role the school district played in demarking racial territory following the *Brown* decision. By racializing school attendance boundaries to maintain school segregation, school officials promoted residential segregation. This case is significant as it corrects the belief that desegregation, particularly busing, is largely responsible for white flight. Gotham also details how local residents organized to fight “block busting.” Interviews with local residents who participated in this process reveal the institutional practices that “pushed” whites to the suburbs (p. 118).

Chapter 6 examines the failure of the fair and open housing movement. Gotham examines how the real estate industry fought fair housing legislation nationally and in Kansas City. Real estate agents used new policies such as Section 235 of the 1968 Housing Act, which provided subsidies to low income home seekers, to maintain and profit from racial segregation. In Kansas City, residential segregation and with that school segregation increased under the Section 235 housing program. Furthermore, when these policies were revoked, disinvestment in inner city communities continued. Gotham concludes that fair housing laws were unsuccessful because the legislation was reactive and only challenged overt discrimination, while leaving the structural mechanisms and ideologies that perpetuated segregation intact. In the conclusion, Gotham places the Kansas City experience in the larger historical, national, and theoretical context. He argues that the ways in which residential segregation is maintained are part of the new racism in which racialized meanings are embedded in seeming non-racial or race-neutral categories. From this standpoint the “new urbanism” shows little promise to eradicate uneven metropolitan development.

Race, Real Estate and Uneven Development is of interest to scholars and students of urban history and community life in America. This work challenges the notion that demographic change and residential patterns are “natural” or products of free market choices. Though Gotham does not discuss larger economic changes such as deindustrialization noted by other sociologists, this work contributes greatly to our understanding of how real estate interests shaped the hyper-segregation of American cities, and how government agencies including school districts worked in tandem to further demark the separate and unequal worlds in metropolitan life.

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