



A City Divided: Housing Segregation in Chicago and Beyond

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by Lea Stenson

To bring about sustainable social change, we must first raise awareness of the systemic oppression at the root of injustice. This unit explores the history and legacy of residential segregation in the United States, with a focus on Chicago and other Northern cities.

When we think about segregation in the North, we often think of *de facto* segregation, or segregation by common practice and individual choice. But by taking a closer look at housing policy in Chicago and other cities, we see a long history of *de jure* segregation, or segregation by law. Federal, state and local governments collaborated with banking institutions, insurance companies and real estate associations to enact policies designed to create and maintain residential segregation.

Students will learn about redlining, the process by which banks refused to offer mortgages, or offered worse rates to customers in African American neighborhoods. They will explore exclusionary zoning laws, segregated public housing projects, discriminatory lending practices and racially restrictive housing covenants, which were contractual agreements within a home's deed that prohibited African Americans from purchasing the home.

After learning about various forms of *de jure* segregation that are rarely discussed in history books, students will learn of the intentionality behind these policies. They will learn about the relationship between segregation and issues such as educational inequity, the racial wealth gap, concentrated poverty, under-resourced neighborhoods, unemployment, public health, crime rates, racial profiling, police brutality and mass incarceration. They will no doubt react strongly to the systemic racism that has long existed in their city and elsewhere in the Northern U.S., running contrary to the prevailing narrative that state-mandated segregation is a strictly Southern phenomenon. As a culminating project, students will channel their newfound knowledge and passion into public works of art that will shed light on a history that has been ignored for far too long.

(Developed for Social Studies, grade 8; recommended for Social Studies, U. S. History, Sociology, and English/Language Arts, grades 7-12)

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