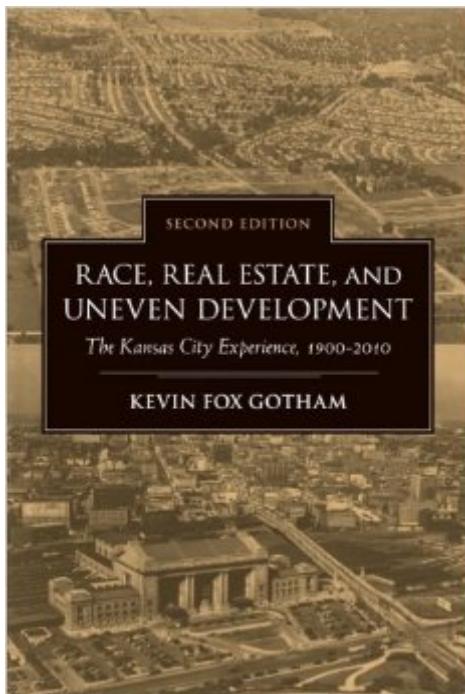


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Race, Real Estate, And Uneven Development, Second Edition: The Kansas City Experience, 1900-2010



Synopsis

Updated second edition examining how the real estate industry and federal housing policy have facilitated the development of racial residential segregation. Traditional explanations of metropolitan development and urban racial segregation have emphasized the role of consumer demand and market dynamics. In the first edition of *Race, Real Estate, and Uneven Development* Kevin Fox Gotham reexamined the assumptions behind these explanations and offered a provocative new thesis. Using the Kansas City metropolitan area as a case study, Gotham provided both quantitative and qualitative documentation of the role of the real estate industry and the Federal Housing Administration, demonstrating how these institutions have promulgated racial residential segregation and uneven development. Gotham challenged contemporary explanations while providing fresh insights into the racialization of metropolitan space, the interlocking dimensions of class and race in metropolitan development, and the importance of analyzing housing as a system of social stratification. In this second edition, he includes new material that explains the racially unequal impact of the subprime real estate crisis that began in late 2007, and explains why racial disparities in housing and lending remain despite the passage of fair housing laws and antidiscrimination statutes. Praise for the First Edition: "This work challenges the notion that demographic change and residential patterns are 'natural' or products of free market choices. It 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 mark the separate and unequal worlds in metropolitan life." H-Net Reviews (H-Education): "A hallmark of this book is its fine-grained analysis of just how specific activities of realtors, the FHA program, and members of the local school board contributed to the residential segregation of blacks in twentieth century urban America. A process Gotham labels the 'racialization of urban space'—the social construction of urban neighborhoods that links race, place, behavior, culture, and economic factors—has led white residents, realtors, businessmen, bankers, land developers, and school board members to act in ways that restricted housing for blacks to specific neighborhoods in Kansas City, as well as in other cities." Philip Olson, University of Missouri: "Kansas City" This is a book which is greatly needed in the field. Gotham integrates, using historical data, the involvement of the real estate industry and the collusion of the federal government in the manufacturing of racially biased housing practices. His work advances the struggle for civil rights by showing that solving the problem of racism is not as simple as banning legal discrimination, but rather needs to address the institutional practices at all levels of the real estate industry." Talmadge Wright, author of *Out of Place: Homeless*

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Customer Reviews

Most works that focus on racial residential segregation explain its roots with the perspective, or that races become spatially segregated based on market supply and demand and consumer desire (6). In *Race, Real Estate and Uneven Development: The Kansas City Experience, 1900-2010*, sociologist Kevin Fox Gotham deviates from the norm and aims to describe the role of private interests and government policy in the development of racial residential segregation while at the same time highlighting connections between race, uneven development and the real estate industry (3). Gotham's central thesis is that space was intentionally racialized in Kansas City, but not by its residents (13). He argues that the real estate industry and federal housing policies created the racialization of space and segregated the races. Real estate agents and firms, in particular convinced white buyers that homogeneity was the ideal and, along with home owner associations, created a housing environment that purposely excluded blacks from white neighborhoods and fostered a exclusionary real estate ideology (35). Using newspapers, retrospective interviews, census bureau data, oral histories, federal legislation, housing studies, maps, and restrictive covenants, Gotham investigates the role of the real estate industry in the concentrating poor minorities in the inner city and encouraging white flight to the suburbs (2). Gotham argues that the real estate industry had a profound, negative impact on federal policy, public housing, school boundary-drawing, land clearance, urban renewal, suburbanization, blockbusting, panic-selling, and lending. According to Gotham, there was no

housing or land issue untouched by the à œsegregative practices of the real estate industry • (130).

This book attempts to explain the rise and continuation of racial segregation in Kansas City, Mo. This book includes a fairly impressive collection of statistics, although I am not sure I always agree with Gorham's interpretations. Gorham begins in the 19th century; in 1880, the black population was small and much more evenly distributed among the city's wards than it is today. What changed? Gorham blames racist real estate agents who kept blacks out of newer areas by putting racially restrictive covenants (that is, contract provisions prohibiting the sale of property to blacks) in their deeds. Between 1900 and 1947, 62 percent of subdivisions in Jackson County (which includes most of Kansas City) had such restrictive covenants. But I wonder whether Gorham is confusing correlation with correlation; his book doesn't fully explain whether the covenants had a significant independent impact or merely mimicked what whites would have done without them. Were areas without covenants any less segregated? Gorham doesn't really say. Gorham himself notes that "In 1910, a number of home owners received written threats that black residents living in an area were to leave in 30 days or face death" and cites a number of similar examples of racist intimidation. If such threats of violence were common, maybe covenants merely reflected white preferences rather than causing them. Another chapter focuses on the city's "urban renewal" programs of the 1950s and 1960s. In the name of eliminating blight, government eliminated many urban working-class neighborhoods.

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