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WHO'S MY NEIGHBOR?

BY ALGERNON D. BLACK

PUBLIC AFFAIRS PAMPHLET No. 273



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the public affairs committee

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WHO'S MY NEIGHBOR?

BY ALGERNON D. BLACK

Mr. Black is a Leader of the Ethical Societies in America. He is Chairman of the Ethics Department of the Ethical Culture Schools. He is Chairman of the New York State Committee on Discrimination in Housing and Educational Director of the Encampment for Citizenship. . . . The drawings in this pamphlet were done by Ernest Crichlow.

Have you heard the news? A colored family has bought the old Smith house!

What are you going to do about it?

I've decided to move out. My "For Sale" sign is up.

Why not have a meeting and see what we can do to stop it?

I'll be there. This has always been a white neighborhood and I say let's keep it that way. The first thing you know we'll have Puerto Ricans and Orientals and all kinds of people moving in.

Are you asking me what I would do? I'd say: Let's welcome the new family. Let's stay where we are. I'll put up a sign "This House Is Not for Sale."

I don't follow your thinking. You don't make sense.

Don't I? Well, the way I figure it, America means equal opportunity. There are good and bad in every group. If a man is a good man and can pay for a house, I don't care what his color or creed is — or his nationality or his ancestry either. When it

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comes to being a good neighbor I judge a man by what he is, not by his religion or his race or his nationality.

Have you made up your mind?

Have we any choice in the matter? What should a decent American family do?

Levittown, Pa.

In August 1957, a Negro refrigeration engineer purchased a home in Levittown, Pennsylvania. He purchased it from the home owner who had been trying to sell the house for many months. The Negro family consisted of a man and wife and three small children. They had lived in an interracial community and needed a larger house. They knew a number of Levittown families. A friend told them of a house for sale next door, and the closeness of the friend was a strong factor in their decision to buy.

On the day the family started to move in, a crowd gathered. They numbered about two hundred, adults and teen-agers. They jeered, threw stones, broke two picture windows, and injured some of the police. The incident involved only a few hundred of the sixty thousand who made up the Levittown community. But it set people thinking and created tensions between families and within families and between friends.

Concerned individuals organized a citizens' committee which tried to prevent violence, lessen tension, and create support for an American approach of fairplay. Although the tension continued for months, the Negro family was ultimately accepted, and within a year a second Negro family had moved in without incident.

The question is, what should the average American citizen do in such a community crisis? What should the average home owner think and feel and do when confronted by this kind of situation? It is happening all over America. It will occur in every community. It is the purpose of this pamphlet to help the in-

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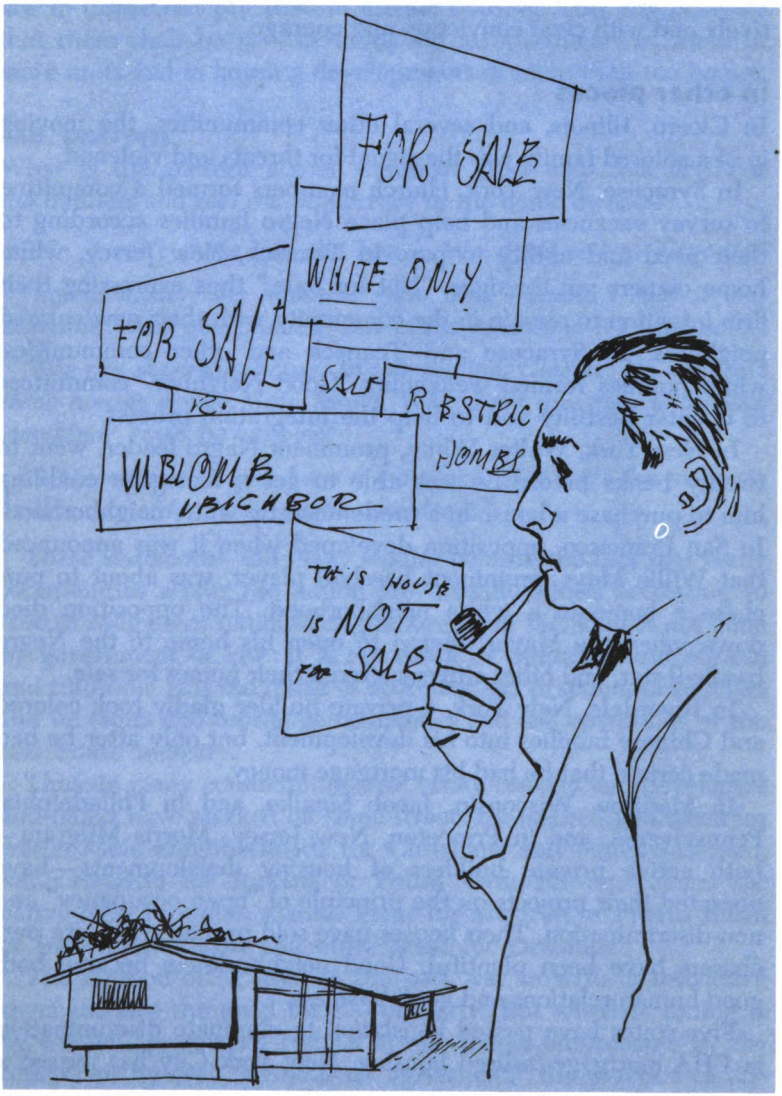

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dividual and the family face the facts realistically and constructively and with clear conviction and courage.

in other places

In Cicero, Illinois, and several other communities, the moving in of a colored family was the signal for threats and violence.

In Syracuse, New York, church members formed a committee to survey vacancies and help place Negro families according to their need and ability to pay. In Teaneck, New Jersey, white home owners put up signs, "Not for Sale," thus expressing their firm intention to remain in the community with their new colored neighbors. In Syracuse and Teaneck and other communities, white families formed welcoming "Good Neighbor" committees to counter hostility and to help the integration process.

In New York, Walter White, prominent Negro leader, went to twenty banks before he was able to get a mortgage enabling him to purchase a house in a predominantly white neighborhood. In San Francisco, opposition developed when it was announced that Willie Mays, prominent baseball player, was about to purchase a home in a white neighborhood. The opposition died down when the Mayor offered to open his home to the Negro baseball star, and other citizens offered their homes for sale.

In Riverdale, New York, a private builder gladly took colored and Chinese families into his development, but only after he had made certain that he had his mortgage money.

In Madison, Wisconsin, Jacob Sinaiko, and in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and in Princeton, New Jersey, Morris Milgram — both active private builders of housing developments — have operated their projects on the principle of "open occupancy" and non-discrimination. Their houses have sold profitably. White purchasers have been plentiful. Good neighborliness became both good human relations and good business.

Five states have passed legislation to eliminate discrimination in FHA mortgage-insured housing. New York City has passed a

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law to insure fair practices in private housing. This law provides that there shall be no discrimination in apartments of three or more units and in housing developments of more than ten homes.

the pattern

What is the pattern across America? And who sets it? Is it the builders and real estate industry or the home owners?

"No. I can't show you the house. We don't sell to Negroes."

"Sorry, mister, the house is gone. Yes, I know I said it was available when you phoned. But in the meantime it's been sold."

"We can show you houses in this section. Glad to. No we don't show houses across Main Street. Why don't you stay with your own kind? You'll be happier."

"No, we can't let you have a mortgage. If it were for property on this side of town, we might consider it."

These statements and many studies confirm the fact that many communities across the nation are actually zoned according to race or religion or national origin. Zoning of this kind is not done by government or law. It is the result of prejudice and custom and tradition. It is the result of attitudes and practices of builders and investors and mortgage companies and the operations of the real estate industry.

Thus, in many communities, real estate brokers and developers and banks have marked off some streets for colored and some for white, some neighborhoods for Christians and others for Jews, some districts for Italians or Polish Catholics and others for native-born Protestants, some areas for Mexican or Puerto Rican or Indian Americans and other areas for Orientals.

The method often used in the past was to write a restrictive covenant into the deed for the property. But whether zoning is by written agreements (which are no longer enforceable by the courts) or by oral "gentleman's agreement," the practice of dis-

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crimination is still widespread. It has been based upon the assumption that this is the way Americans want to live—that white and colored people do not want to live together as neighbors in the same neighborhoods or streets or developments. It has been based upon the belief that any change in this basic pattern of separation will mean deterioration of property values and neighborhood life.

the real estate industry

So firm has been this way of thinking in real estate circles that it has been written into the principles of real estate boards and into the real estate manuals of property appraisal and business policy. So strong has been the belief that this is the only sound and safe method of operation, that any individual owner or builder or real estate agent who might operate according to a different policy would feel the intense disapproval of the housing leaders of his community. In many communities he would be forced out of the real estate board. He might find himself boycotted by his colleagues and unable to do business in the community. He might be ostracized socially and financially. He might even be forced to leave town. Thus, the pressure to conformity is strong enough to overcome whatever impulse an individual might have to adopt a policy of non-discrimination and equality of opportunity in the housing market.

government officials and agencies

So effective is this practice of the real estate industry that federal and state and local government officials and agencies have in many instances accepted it as the pattern of their own operation. Housing agencies have often helped to strengthen the pattern of segregation by their own operations. Especially has this been true of some of the municipal housing authorities and some of the governmental appraisal and financing agencies. Manuals of instruction and directives to housing officials and staff

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workers have assumed this to be the practice. Only as citizens and civic agencies have begun to question and oppose discrimination have public officials realized that their responsibilities ought to be reexamined.

Such real estate and housing policies are not all due to prejudice. Many members of this great and important industry are without prejudice. Many operate according to the dominant practices because they think they have to yield to pressure. But many also regard them as sound business. They believe they are operating according to the wishes of the vast majority of the people who buy and sell or lease and rent housing. Many argue that if people outgrew their prejudices and were ready to live in mixed communities, the housing industry would have no reason to segregate. They will readily agree that we should judge every man as an individual on his own merit and that there should be freedom to buy and sell and rent in a free competitive market.

There are individuals and firms in the real estate field who have broken the pattern in recent years. Some have done so out of religious or democratic convictions. Others have felt that sound business required non-discrimination. They have held that capacity to pay, credit standing, and character references were the important measures of a good home owner or tenant. Many of them have profited by changing their policies.

home owners

Differences of opinion also exist among home owners. Some, prejudiced by their backgrounds, honestly believe in superior and inferior grouping of human beings. And other home owners desire to keep groups apart out of a desire to protect their religious beliefs, racial purity, or property investments. And there have also been home owners whose devotion to justice has led them to differ with their neighbors and to stand firmly for non-discrimination, sometimes at considerable personal risk and sacrifice.

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We owe it to ourselves not to make snap judgments. For our own sakes, we ought to ask ourselves some straight questions: What do we fear when a colored family – or a family of any minority group – moves into our street or neighborhood or housing development? Let's get our objections out into the open and see whether our fears are justified.

PROPERTY VALUES

Our home is our biggest investment. We saved for it. We may have invested our life savings. We have taken on a mortgage obligation. We have put a great deal of labor and love into making it a good home for our family. And we know that the value of our investment depends somewhat on our neighbors, who they are, how they live, and how they keep their houses. The value of our house depends on the value of property in the neighborhood. If the neighborhood goes down, all the property in the neighborhood will be worth less.

What will happen to property values if Negroes move into the community? Will our house go down in price?

What are the facts?

The facts are: *First,* that the price of property depends on the law of supply and demand, and since housing supply is more inflexible than most commodities, the important factor is usually the nature of the demand. *Second,* every scientific study, whether by public officials or housing experts or real estate appraisers, shows that when members of a minority group move into a neighborhood property values do not necessarily go down. Much depends on what the home owners believe and do.

These studies show that a non-white family moving into a previously all-white neighborhood does not directly affect property values. The property values will either go down, stay stable, or go up depending on the other forces at work in that neighborhood. If there is over-crowding and undermaintenance and in-

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adequate city services, the values are likely to go down. If the neighborhood is stable, the values will remain stable. And if the neighborhood is an attractive one where people are maintaining their property, values will go up. These facts were found to be true regardless of whether the community was all-white, all-Negro, or mixed.

panic selling

Of course, if home owners believe that the arrival of a colored family will bring a deterioration in property values, and if they panic and put up "For Sale" signs, their actions will glut the market and drive property values down. If they try to outdo one another in selling quickly, then the price decline will be sure and swift. But it is clear that what affects values is not the entrance of the non-white family but the panic selling by the previous residents.

The rumors which lead to such panic selling are often spread out of ignorance or bigotry. Occasionally, they are spread by those who hope to profit by buying up homes at low prices and reselling them for handsome profits. There are even real estate agents – fortunately very few – who spread the word that owners should sell because "values are bound to go down" and whose sole motive is to make commissions on property turnover. This is the danger – that the white owner, with his fears intensified, may join his neighbors in a headlong rush to unload his house on the market, thus creating the very fall in property values that the bigoted owner or the real estate agent had predicted!

If home owners, realizing that property values depend in part on their own behavior, decide not to sell, remain where they are, and accept their new neighbors, then property values will have the support of a stable market.

Studies show that property values can remain stable where there are other favorable factors and where the original owners really want to maintain their homes. It is the panic selling by

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. . . neglected and deprived in segregated areas.

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the old residents rather than the influx of the new that drives values down.

But what of the fears that colored people will destroy the qualities that make a community desirable; that they will overcrowd and undermaintain it; and that the result inevitably will be a slum? These fears are based upon the fact that in a number of cases of mass influx of colored families into a formerly solid white community, the area has become a slum.

when neighborhoods deteriorate

The distinction between the arrival of a single family and a mass influx lies in the fact that in the former case the area is usually stable and attractive and remains so. In the latter case the area is probably unstable or unattractive. The houses are old, outmoded and neglected. The center of social prestige has shifted to some other part of town. Either the new section has some improved housing or community design, or the old center is now off the beaten path or has been adversely affected by traffic or industry. Since the houses are not in demand, prices tend to drop, thus enabling families with lower incomes to come in. The coming in of low-income families, whether they be colored or white, means that the homes will not be kept up so well. And as the area deteriorates, more low-income families flood in. They are able to buy or rent cheaply because the area has run down. The presence of the colored families is not a *cause* but a *result* of property value decline. Unfortunately, many people confuse cause and effect.

stable communities

If the physical character of the housing and grounds is maintained, if city services support good neighborhood standards, property values will remain stable no matter who moves in. Neighborhoods where colored families or members of other minority groups move in, can and do maintain their values.

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Studies by Belden Morgan, Luigi M. Laurenti, Thomas L. Gillett, John Gerrity, and others (*see page 28*), reveal that property values do not necessarily go down. If the community is sound physically and desirable socially, it can absorb newcomers without suffering instability. Even where there is a temporary disturbance and conflict, the community usually stabilizes – and it stabilizes more surely and quickly when people understand the issues involved and recognize that they have nothing to fear economically from integration in housing.

KEEPING UP THE PROPERTY

Do colored families maintain, improve, or neglect the property they rent or purchase?

Here, again, most of us picture colored people as slum dwellers, as people who inevitably live in inferior housing or make the housing inferior. Thus we tend to think that the colored families who move into our neighborhood will destroy the houses they occupy and will make the area around our own homes less pleasant to live in.

Now, it is true that most colored people have lower incomes than the white population. Most colored people have suffered from inferior education and employment opportunities and lower living standards than the white part of the population. Prejudice, discrimination, and inequality of opportunity have shut them off from an equal share of the country's wealth. Most have had to live in poorer housing and in poorer neighborhoods than whites. And not only have they been herded into segregated areas, but they have been neglected and deprived in these areas. Social scientists agree that slums are caused by poverty, overcrowding, inferior maintenance, and neglect – not by racial or religious or nationality factors.

Despite prejudice and discrimination, many colored people have made progress in education and employment and are quite

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ready to pay for and eager to enjoy higher standards of housing and neighborhood life.

studies of mixed neighborhoods

A study of mixed neighborhoods in Kansas City, Missouri, shows that colored families who have moved into white neighborhoods have "pleasantly shattered" the stereotype that many whites have of the Negro community. They have improved the over-all physical appearance of the area. A family's interest in taking care of a home is not determined by the family's color. Before a colored family can afford to buy a house in an all-white neighborhood, and before they have the desire to move into such a neighborhood or suburb, they usually have achieved a level of education, employment, and aspiration that indicates they have just as much interest in keeping up their property as any other family. Also, as the first colored family to move into a white area, they usually feel that they would like to set a standard and contribute to better group relations. The purchase of the house may be a heavy investment for them and it may be made with great sacrifice. They have as much of a stake in their investment as their white neighbors, if not more.

Studies in California and Minnesota, in Indiana and Missouri, New Jersey and New York, reveal that colored families maintain their property in much the same way as the other people in the neighborhood, and that they are as interested as all other American families in "keeping up with the Joneses." In fact, they often outdo white families in their care of house, lawns, walks, and fences, planting flowers, painting and repairing and improving their property.

As early as 1944 the National Association of Real Estate Boards, reported: "Realtors with experience in Negro housing reported to the Association that, as a class, the Negro home buyer meets his payments faithfully – often more faithfully than other race groups in the same economic level – and that if his property

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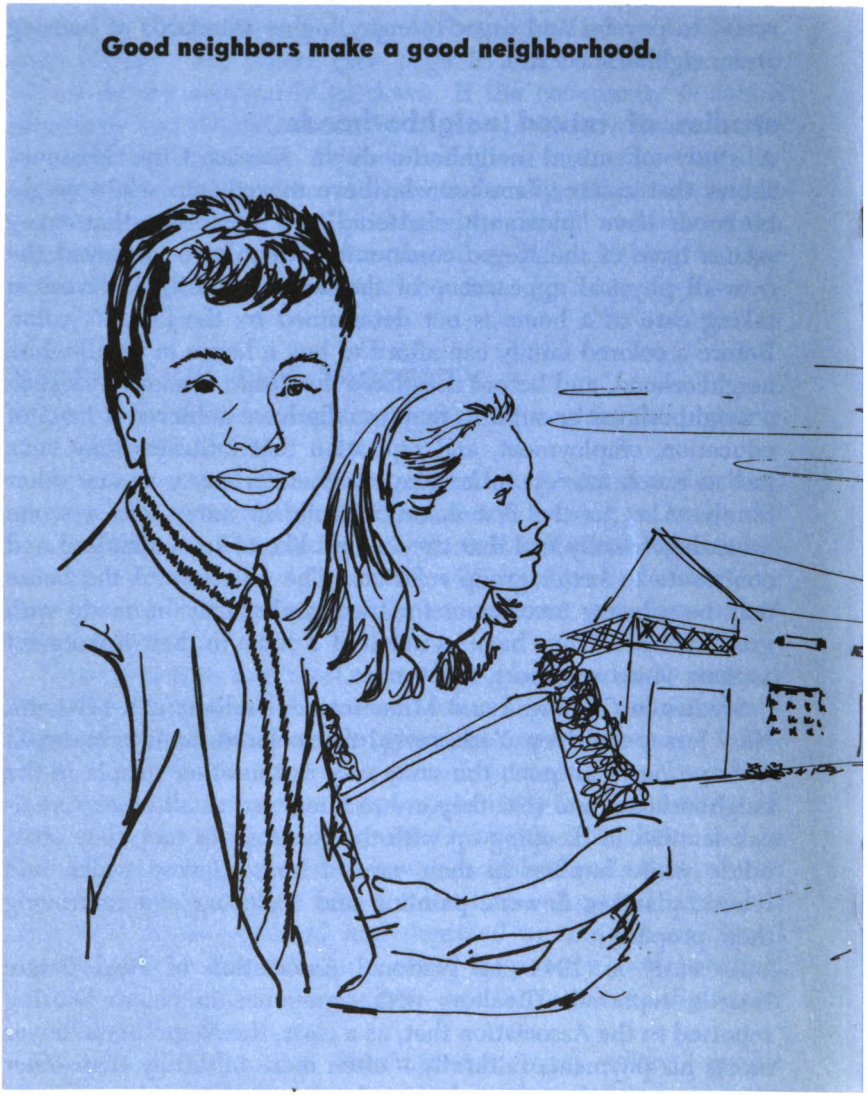

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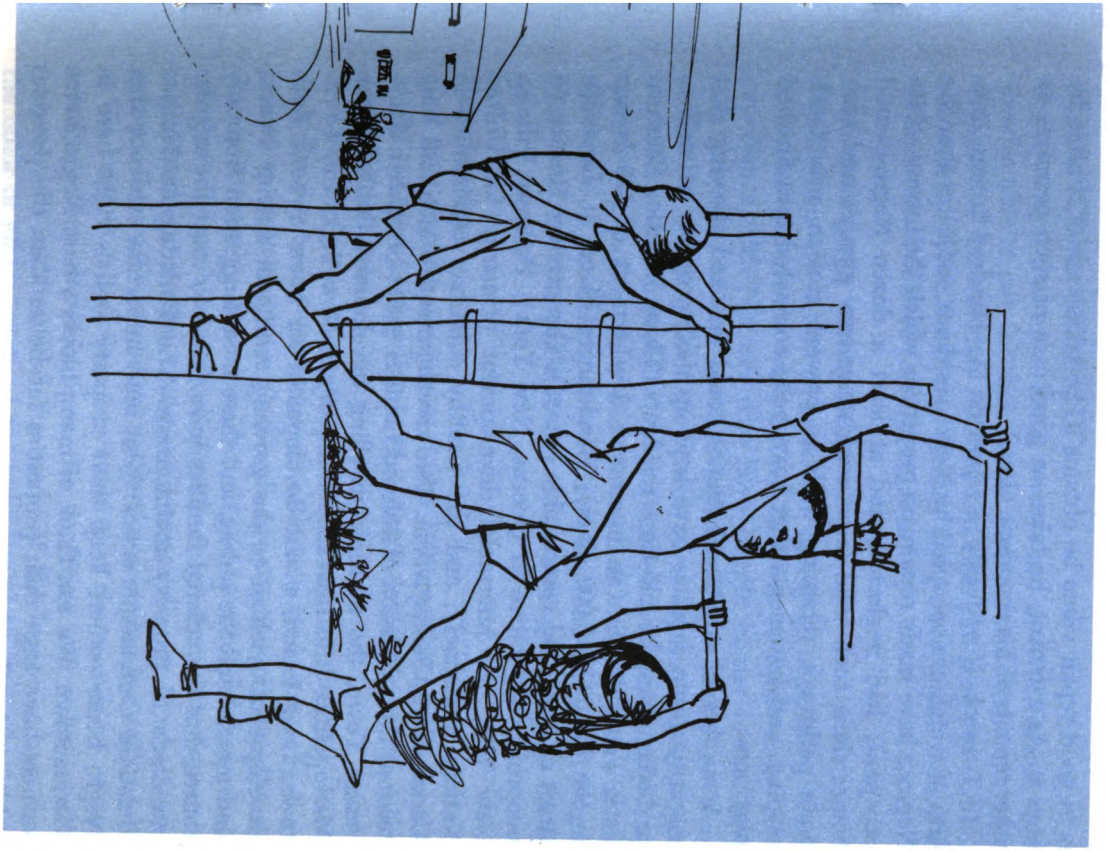

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is in good repair when he obtains it, he takes care of it after he buys it. As a tenant, he takes as good care of such premises as other tenants of his economic class."

In Teaneck, New Jersey, a report on five hundred homes, one-fifth of which are occupied by Negro residents, indicates that the Negroes have made repairs on properties which the former white occupants had neglected, and at least a dozen Negro-owned homes show such solid improvements as new garages and concrete pathways, retaining walls to prevent erosion, new landscaping, and basements that have been converted into finished playrooms.

A number of additional studies could be cited showing that minority group families have kept up their property as well as or better than the old-time residents. These include: Concord Park, Pennsylvania (an interracial development of 139 homes in the $12,000-$16,000 class); Windermere Place, St. Louis (a street of large and comfortable homes); Queensview Houses (a nonprofit cooperative in Queens, New York); Parkway Village, New York (an interracial development primarily for United Nations personnel); and the wealthy suburban community in Germantown, Pennsylvania. Two developments which had long resisted the admission of colored families could be added: Stuyvesant Town, the multiple dwelling development built by the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company in New York, and Levittown, Long Island, a vast development for home owners. Both developments yielded to the growing sentiment among owners and tenants and the public, and there is no suggestion from any source that the colored families have failed to meet the regular standards of property maintenance. The Philadelphia Human Relations Commission states: "Our most important evidence that Negro home owners keep their property well is right here in Germantown. We can think of many blocks where Negro home owners have kept their properties far better than the previous white owners."

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FINANCIAL STABILITY

One question that some home owners ask is: Will colored families be able to pay for their homes and maintain their mortgage obligations? Or will they fail and endanger the property and the community? Will banks and finance companies refuse money to an area where colored families move in?

the mortgage companies

The best answer is that of banks and mortgage companies which have had experience with colored families as credit risks. The experience with Negroes who have bought homes is excellent. The president of one of Philadelphia's largest mortgage companies has written, "Over the years a great segment of the Negro population has obtained the respect of leaders, simply and quietly, by paying their bills when due. Actually there is no difference in our delinquency records between white and Negro loans and we take pride in our below-average mortgage delinquency record."

the banks

Earl B. Schwulst, President of the Bowery Savings Bank, the world's largest savings bank, in a letter dated March 26, 1958, wrote as follows:

"Over the years the rate of delinquency on mortgage loans and the day-to-day problems of collection have naturally fluctuated to some degree with the change in economic conditions. To my knowledge, there has been no greater rate of delinquency, nor have the problems of collection been greater, with respect to mortgaged properties occupied interracially or by minority groups, than with respect to properties occupied by whites.

"In brief, it is my firm conviction that the soundness of any mortgage loan depends upon the condition and value of the property, its location, and the credit of the borrower, and that the color or ethnic origin of the borrower is irrelevant."

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As for the availability of mortgage money, it is significant that, despite the integration of colored families in many developments and in urban and suburban areas which were formerly restricted, mortgage money is available in these areas. And mortgage money is not lacking even in those areas where integration has taken place in private housing that is privately owned and privately financed.

open occupancy rentals

James H. Scheuer, owner and manager of substantial residential properties in New York and other sections of the country and member of the Real Estate Board of New York, had this to say when he testified before the general welfare committee of the New York City Council at City Hall on June 7, 1957, in support of anti-discrimination housing legislation:

"Private-enterprise sponsors of the much discussed Title I redevelopment housing are investing millions of dollars with the confidence that this housing, which by law must be integrated, will be successful. In various parts of the city middle-income housing projects enjoying Government assistance have adopted the non-discriminatory policies required by present law with evident success. Where an open occupancy rental has been tried, it has been successful, even in those projects whose sponsors openly rejected the possibility of successful integration only a few years ago. I might add that in many private apartment houses and in many neighborhoods, Negro and white families have been living side by side for decades."

Referring to the successful integration of colored families at Queensview and Kingsview, Mr. Scheuer said: "Some very hard-headed and practical New York businessmen are investing millions of dollars of cash equities in these projects which they know must be integrated, upon what I believe is their correct assumption that such projects, built to high design standards, will rent well and will be profitable."

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THE FEAR OF INUNDATION

"I am troubled about inundation," a typical property-owner declared. "If one colored family moves into an area, if they're the right kind of people, if they do good work and have good incomes and meet their obligations and act as good neighbors should, I see no objection and no difficulty. But the trouble is that when members of a minority group move in, whether it be colored or Catholic or Jewish or Puerto Rican or any other, what we get is inundation. They keep coming. The trickle becomes a river, and the river becomes a flood. All this talk about diversity and a balanced community, about people of different backgrounds being good neighbors, is utopian. What worries me is, will the whole neighborhood or the entire development become flooded with colored people? How do I know my family won't end up as the only white family in the neighborhood?"

This is a difficult question. But there are several things to keep in mind. First, it is well to remember, as we have already pointed out, that if the vast majority of white residents behave rationally and keep their homes, the neighborhood cannot change radically. It is a panic exodus that invites the flood. If residents resist pressures and stand firm against fear-creating rumors, and if they act in the spirit of the home owners in Philadelphia and Teaneck who put up signs in their windows, *"This House Is Not for Sale,"* inundation cannot happen.

Second, despite the recent improvement in the economic condition of the colored people, only a small proportion of the Negro population is in a position to buy homes in white middle-class districts. Negroes form about 10 per cent of the total national population. Where Negroes are concentrated in urban areas, only a few have high enough incomes to afford their own houses. Thus the fear of inundation is not entirely realistic. For example, in all of Metropolitan New York, with a Negro population of nearly a million, only 15,000 families can afford middle-class homes.

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Third, many colored families do not wish to purchase homes in white areas. They do not wish to spend too much on housing, for they have heavy obligations for education, health, and other purposes. They hesitate to move into white areas where they may not be welcome and where their families and their children may suffer rejection and hostility.

Finally, it should be noted that the more the walls of segregation are broken down, the less likelihood there is that large numbers of colored people or of any minority group will flood any one neighborhood. It is because of the denial of open access to the housing market that some groups tend to inundate particular neighborhoods once they open up. It need not happen. It will not happen when we have fair housing practices for all.

THE EFFECT ON CHILDREN

Some home owners will say, "If we are anxious about a colored family moving in, it isn't so much our property values we worry about. Our real worry is our children. Isn't it true that the children of colored families have less ability and will pull down the educational standards of the schools of the neighborhood? What of delinquency and social standards?" This question raises a real problem but one to which an encouraging reply can now be given.

Negro high school students have made remarkable scholastic progress in Washington, D.C. since the schools there were integrated. Reported to be "far below normal" in achievement tests shortly after being placed in formerly all-white schools, 12th grade Negroes a year later were ranking well in comparison with white students. At the end of the same one year period, 10th grade pupils recorded gains of up to four years in arithmetic and reading. Such progress was attributed to "excellent teachers" and help from the students' homes. There is no reason why similar progress should not be made wherever children come from

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neglected areas to better schools and to improved neighborhoods.

Intelligence and talent are not limited to any one group. Colored families who have the ability and desire to improve their way of life by moving into better housing and who are willing to make sacrifices for it, are usually as well endowed as the white families of the area. Indeed, the very fact that they have achieved higher incomes despite discrimination is evidence that their children are likely to be above-average in background and incentives.

educational standards

If the schools of the community are sound, they will test and grade each child according to his ability, and they will do so regardless of color or creed or national origin. Special problems due to differences of ability or previous educational training can be dealt with according to the needs of each child without pulling down the standards of education for all. The colored family which has taken the trouble to move into a predominantly white neighborhood is likely to have done so largely because it desires better educational opportunities and health standards for its children. If the previous schooling was inferior because of segregation and neglect, this family will be the first to cooperate in giving support to better education for its own and other people's children.

moral standards

Similarly, fears that children of minority groups will impair the safety of our children are unfounded or grossly exaggerated. Juvenile delinquency and violence are not confined to any racial or religious group. Moral standards are born of the home, of family life, of parent relations and of the support that homes, schools, churches and community forces give to a respect for whatever is good in life. Delinquency tends, therefore, to be particularly high in the slums where poor housing conditions strain family relations, and where schools are poor and commun-

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ity standards low. Segregated housing tends to aggravate those conditions. But delinquency and violence know no block or street boundaries. Like any disease, delinquency can become epidemic. Our children can be drawn into delinquent activity or can become the victims of the delinquent acts of others. Segregation is no defense. The best defense is good human relations, a genuine respect for differences. This develops best when children grow up together as friends in classroom and on the sport field.

For the individual child, the home and school have the responsibility of developing standards and character. For the community as a whole, the problem of social order, of abiding by the law, requires an honest and courageous attack on the true causes of delinquency. The failure to deal with the larger moral problem of contemporary American society should not be used as a justification for racial discrimination and segregation.

the fear of intermarriage

Deeper than the concern with property values and inundation is the fear that the presence of a colored family in the community may lead to interracial marriages. It is the same thought that lies behind resistance to school desegregation. Some parents ask questions such as: "If our children live next to children of other colors or religions or nationalities, will they not become playmates and affectionate friends? And if they grow up together will they not end by marrying one another?"

How can we deal with this issue frankly and realistically? Most people have a feeling of kinship with their own group and want their children to marry "their own kind." No one can quarrel with this. Parents who have pride in their own ancestry and treasure traditional values in the life of a people usually want their children to have the same pride and identification.

The fact is that the American people have been mixing in many ways in all areas of life and have been doing so without a great deal of intermarriage. Despite the common experiences of attend-

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ing public schools together, of participating in sports together, of riding buses and trains together, of shopping in the same stores and attending the same theatres, of working in the same factories and shops, and despite the numbers who actually live in the same streets, there is relatively little intermarriage.

Finally, it is only fair to point out that, whatever the objections to intermarriage, and whatever its problems, there is no scientific evidence that it is either unsound or evil.

SOCIAL STATUS AND PRESTIGE

Despite the facts cited above, some home owners feel that the presence of any minority group lowers the social standing of the community.

This, of course, is not true. In every group there are people of outstanding talent and culture and social prestige. They do not detract, rather they add status and prestige to their community, wherever they live. The Negro who holds a high position in the government, or the refugee with an accent who makes a unique contribution in the arts or sciences – these may bring great cultural and spiritual riches to a community. The quality of a community and the status and prestige of its families rest not on ancestry or color. They rest on the quality of persons, on the dignity and values of home life, and on the aspirations of those who live there.

too many risks and sacrifices?

Finally, the home owner may summarize the issues of mixed housing by saying: "I am impressed by the facts and viewpoints that have been brought to bear on the arguments against the entry of families of minority groups. But in every case there seems to be a risk. Property values *could* go down. Colored families *might* not all be equally careful of property upkeep. There *could* be an inundation unless the white families remain.

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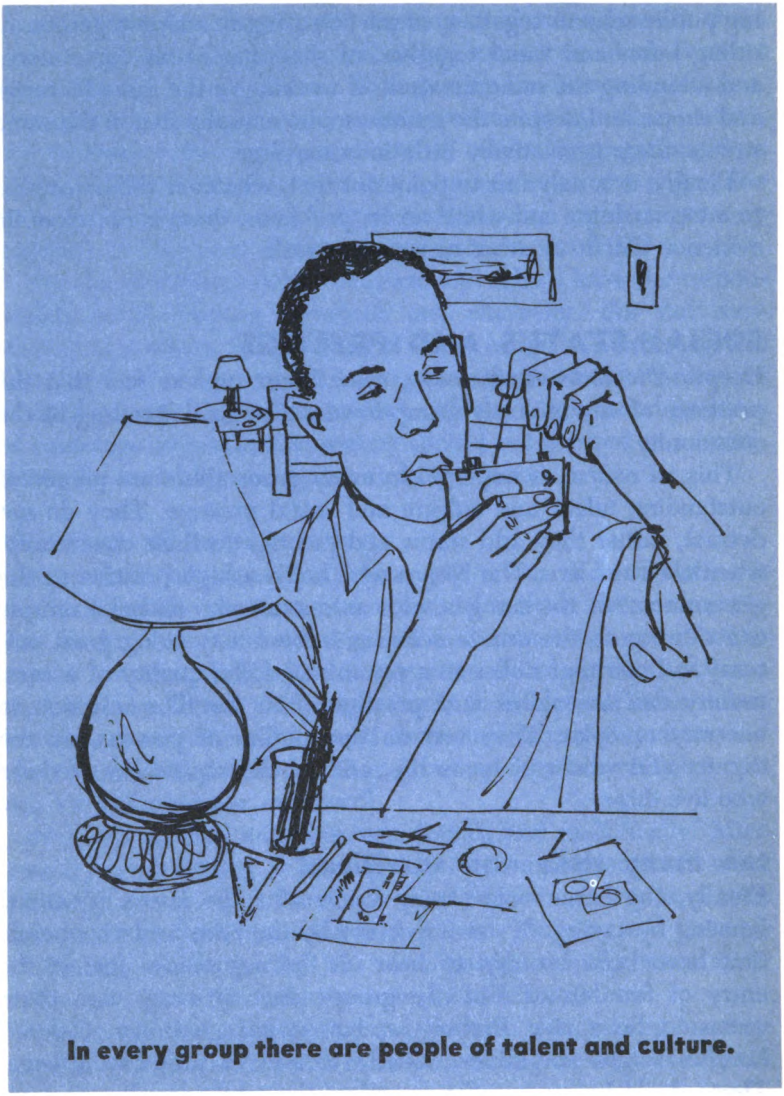

In every group there are people of talent and culture.

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My children *might* be hurt by the lowering of school standards, and they *might* be affected by delinquency, and they *might* be among those rare cases drawn into intermarriage. All these things that I fear are still possibilities. And when you say it depends on the home owners and it depends on me, I ask: Why should I have to carry the risk and make the effort and the sacrifice to try to help mixed housing succeed? Let others carry the burden. And if all the problems we now have are the result of past mistakes and neglects why should we have to face the issue and bear the brunt of the transition of this generation?"

THE CHOICE BEFORE US

What answer can we make except that we face a difficult reality? We cannot avoid our responsibilities.

How should the individual home owner defend his home and his investment and his family?

Should he fight the entry of minority groups which seem imminent?

Should he do nothing until something happens, then sell his property at a loss out of sheer panic, and move into another community which is still untouched by this problem?

Should he, the home owner, welcome the new family with good will and neighborliness?

First, he can make up his mind where he stands. He can make it his business to get the facts, think out the issues, and decide what he thinks is just and realistic and constructive for himself and others.

Second, he can call together his friends and those he has reason to believe are democratic and courageous people.

Together they may decide on the following steps:

Agree not to fight against the moving in of a colored family but see to it that, when it happens, it is done in such a way that a happy outcome is assured both the new family and the old-timers.

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- Make it clear that he and others will not offer their property for sale, will not panic and leave the community. They may even decide to put "Not for Sale" signs in their windows or organize a campaign of education based on the hard-headed argument that only by "staying put" can the stability of the neighborhood and the value of individual properties be maintained.
- Hold a meeting with real estate dealers to declare their intention of remaining in the area and to establish cooperation on a program for keeping the community stable.
- Work quickly to track down and answer all rumors and dispel any bigoted untruths or half-truths involving neighborhood affairs, and work together to take action against any individual or group that attempts to stir up trouble or use violence.
- Initiate through personal conversation and such other means as are possible a positive attitude toward respecting differences and a sincere attempt to live up to the American concept of good-neighborliness. Also, to use the local press and radio and TV stations to foster this spirit in the community.
- Form a welcoming committee to make certain that neighbors visit the new family and help them understand that they have friends and that they are expected to participate in community affairs and the building of a better life for all.

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organizations working for integrated housing

Assistance and advice in working for open occupancy housing are available from the organizations listed below. In many cases a local affiliate may be found in your community.

American Friends Service Committee, 20 South 12th Street, Philadelphia 7, Pa.

American Jewish Committee, 386 Fourth Avenue, New York 16, N. Y.

American Jewish Congress, 15 East 84th Street, New York 28, N. Y.

Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, 515 Madison Avenue, New York 22, N. Y.

AFL-CIO Civil Rights Committee. Charles S. Zimmerman, Chairman, 218 West 40th Street, New York 18, N. Y.

Catholic Interracial Council, 20 Vesey Street, New York 7, N. Y.

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 20 West 40th Street, New York 18, N. Y.

National Committee Against Discrimination in Housing, 35 West 32nd Street, New York 1, N. Y.

National Council of Churches, Department of Racial and Social Relations, 297 Fourth Avenue, New York 10, N. Y.

National Urban League, 14 East 48th Street, New York 17, N. Y.

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231. How to Choose a Camp for Your Child
225. Your Child's Safety
223. Homes for Foster Children
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