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From Covenants to Classrooms:
Uncovering the Impact of Racial Segregation on Education in St. Paul, Minneapolis, and Duluth

A Dissertation Submitted

by

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Abstract

Minnesota's history contains a narrative of segregation that not only shaped the physical landscape of its cities but also entrenched disparities in education and fractured communities. The racial covenants that first emerged in 1910 built the bedrock of housing segregation that led to segregated neighborhoods. The consequences of this systemic segregation extended beyond residential boundaries and infiltrated the corridors of education, where the harsh realities of racial imbalance often betrayed the promise of equal opportunity. By examining the interconnectedness of housing policies, school integration efforts, and community development, this study uncovers the roots of inequality and proves how Minnesota failed students of color in its attempt to address the schools and race challenge. This dissertation contends that the racial covenants that forced African Americans to live in select neighborhoods caused segregated schools, which the government neglected at both a state and local level. By the time the government began to address de facto segregation in the 1960s and 1970s, simply establishing a minority enrollment percentage for schools to meet was not enough. Central to this argument were the integration efforts of these decades, which, while aiming to dismantle the barriers of segregation, inadvertently burdened Black students with the responsibility of integration. Forced busing policies, coupled with the closure of predominantly Black schools, disrupted communities and exacerbated educational disparities. Furthermore, the construction of freeways, ostensibly for connectivity, disproportionately targeted Black neighborhoods, severing vital ties and deepening the wounds of segregation.

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Abbreviations

AME	African Methodist Episcopal
CCC	Civilian Conservation Corps
CWC	Cultural Wellness Center
DFL	Democratic–Farmer–Labor Party
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FCC	Federal Communications Commission
FHA	Federal Housing Act
HOLC	Home Owners' Loan Corporation
HRA	Housing and Redevelopment Authority
LCRM	Long Civil Rights Movement
MSR	<i>Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder</i>
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
NBC	National Broadcasting Company
NPL	Nonpartisan League
PIE	Parents for Integrated Education
TCOP	Twin Cities Ordnance Plant
WHO	Willard-Homewood Organization
WPA	Works Progress Administration

Chapter 1

Introduction

Principal and educator Mauri Friestleben earned nationwide attention during her career in the Minneapolis Public School system, most notably for her leadership in turning around low student achievement and disciplinary issues at Lucy Craft Laney Elementary School. Her work at Lucy Laney was chronicled in an award-winning feature-length documentary produced by KARE 11¹, "Love Them First: Lessons from Lucy Laney Elementary."² In 2019, Friestleben was hired as the new principal of North Community High School in Minneapolis. In an August 2019 Facebook post, Friestleben commented: "I am honored to have been chosen to lead North High through this next chapter of its strong, resilient, and powerful existence. Through legacy Academics, Arts, and Athletics and a foundation of belief, high standards, family, and pride - the future is beyond bright."³

North Community Senior High School is one of the thirty-six high schools in the Minneapolis Public School District. The school district has a total minority enrollment of ninety-seven percent, with sixty-seven percent of students facing economic disadvantages. Despite its state and national rankings being less than stellar, North Community Senior High School has updated its curriculum to include Advanced Placement courses and exams in U.S. history,

¹ KARE 11 is a television station licensed to Minneapolis, Minnesota, serving as the NBC affiliate for the Twin Cities area.

² Ben Garvin and Lindsey Seavert, *Love Them First: Lessons From Lucy Laney Elementary*, KARE 11, 2019, 1 hr. 20 min. <https://www.lovethefirst.com/>.

³ North High School, 2019, "From Principal Mauri Friestleben," Facebook, August 5, 2019. Accessed September 27, 2023. <https://www.facebook.com/MPS.North/posts/from-principal-mauri-friestleben-i-am-honored-to-have-been-chosen-to-lead-north-2577510375615445/>.

physics, art, and design. In 2019, the school also unveiled a new athletic field and an impressive radio studio. However, the school's AP participation rate stands at only thirty-one percent, with a zero percent passing rate on those exams.⁴ Minneapolis North has a longstanding history, spanning over 120 years and existing in various buildings located on the city's northside. While it was once predominantly attended by Jewish students, by 1982, both the school and the surrounding neighborhood had become predominantly African American.

Minneapolis has one of the worst educational disparities based on race. White students test four to five grade levels ahead of Black, Hispanic, and Native students and two and a half grade levels ahead of Asian students.⁵ This academic disparity mirrors the city of Minneapolis' liberal yet segregated past and present.⁶ Historic desegregation efforts worked only minimally to reduce high minority enrollments. Presently, initiatives aimed at desegregation, like magnet school programs, strive to draw students from across Minneapolis and its neighboring suburbs. While students now have the option to select their schools, this has led to a situation where just around half of the North Side's students opt for local schools like North. Consequently, a considerable number of families, including those from communities of color on the North side,

⁴ "North Community Senior High School," Education, U.S. News & World Report. Accessed April 22, 2023. <https://www.usnews.com/education/best-high-schools/minnesota/districts/minneapolis-public-school-district/north-community-senior-high-school-143753>.

⁵ Sarah Mervosh, "In Minneapolis Schools, White Families Are Asked to Help Do the Integrating," *New York Times*, November 27, 2021, Section A, Page 1, para. 26. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/27/us/minneapolis-school-integration.html>.

⁶ Rashad Grove, "White Students Are Integrating a Black High School in Minneapolis," *Ebony*, November 30, 2021. <https://www.ebony.com/white-students-are-integrating-a-black-high-school-in-minneapolis/>.

have chosen suburban and charter school alternatives, resulting in a decline in enrollment within the Minneapolis Public Schools system over the years.

To combat the disturbing trends of the achievement gap, low enrollment, and highly segregated schools, in 2021, Minneapolis announced a massive new school integration plan to overhaul and integrate its schools. In the history of school desegregation, the task of integrating predominately white schools has fallen on Black students. But as a result of the new plan, in Minneapolis, white students, some from well-to-do families, will carry the burden of integrating, a newer approach that a small group of urban districts across the country are embracing.⁷ The school integration plan included redrawing school zones, with about a third of students, 10,000 children of different races, assigned to new schools. In the first year of the school integration plan, only thirty of 440 North High students were white. Thirteen of the white students were in the freshman class, reducing the number of students of color from ninety-eight percent to ninety-three percent.⁸ A continued decrease in that number would demonstrate the success of the new integration plan.

At Minneapolis North, Principal Friestleben, a woman of mixed race who identifies as Black, recognized the challenges her school faced, including a history of declining enrollment and poor test scores. Nonetheless, she dedicated herself to meeting the needs of her students and, amidst the introduction of the new integration plan, she looked around with pride, acknowledging the strengths her school possessed. Research underscores that the de facto segregation of schools is a significant factor contributing to the glaring inequality within

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

America's education system, emphasizing the benefits of racially and socioeconomically diverse schools for all students. Given this well-established fact, why do the schools in Minnesota continue to exhibit such stark segregation today? The underlying issues of segregated neighborhoods and schools, and more crucially, their resolution, remain elusive. The enduring struggle for civil rights for Black Americans persists, with the early civil rights movement in Minnesota holding unique significance. Understanding its historical context is essential when examining the current state of affairs in the Twin Cities.

Minnesota in the Long Civil Rights Movement

The Civil Rights Movement holds a significant place in American history, representing a pivotal period marked by a multifaceted social and political campaign. This campaign aimed to eradicate institutional racism, segregation, discrimination, and disenfranchisement. Extensive research has been conducted to explore and understand this transformative era. However, determining the exact time frame associated with the 'Civil Rights Movement' remains a subject of ongoing debate. Broadly speaking, the Civil Rights Movement encompasses comprehensive efforts to secure equal rights and opportunities for African Americans in the United States. Its primary focus centered on combating racial segregation and discrimination, particularly in the Southern states, while striving for legal and social equality.

The commonly accepted time span for the Civil Rights Movement typically spans from the mid-1950s to the late 1960s. During this period, the movement gained remarkable momentum, achieving numerous landmark victories. These included significant milestones like the *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court case in 1954, the Montgomery Bus Boycott from 1955 to 1956, sit-ins and Freedom Rides in 1960 and 1961, the March on Washington for

Jobs and Freedom in 1963, as well as the monumental achievements of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.⁹

However, it is important to note that the struggle for civil rights did not end in the late 1960s. The fight for equality and justice has continued beyond this time period, with ongoing efforts addressing issues such as systemic racism, socioeconomic disparities, criminal justice reform, and voting rights in the United States. In recent years, some individuals and scholars have expanded the understanding of the Civil Rights Movement to include earlier and later periods, recognizing the interconnectedness of struggles for civil rights throughout history. This expanded view acknowledges the contributions of activists and movements that fought for racial justice before and after the commonly recognized period. It highlights the ongoing nature of the struggle for civil rights and the need for continued activism and reform.

There is a significant amount of research on what the Civil Rights Movement looked like in the South, from the Montgomery Bus Boycott to the Little Rock Nine to the Greensboro Sit-In. These active protests for justice and equality for African Americans under the system of Jim Crow were powerful movements. Over time, research focused on the Civil Rights Movement happening in the North, most often in reference to Northern cities such as Philadelphia, Chicago,

⁹ *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954): This Supreme Court ruling declared racial segregation in public schools unconstitutional, overturning the "separate but equal" doctrine established in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896). Montgomery Bus Boycott (1955-1956): Sparked by Rosa Parks' refusal to give up her bus seat to a white passenger, the boycott lasted for over a year and led to the desegregation of Montgomery's buses. Sit-ins and Freedom Rides (1960-1961): Activists organized nonviolent protests, such as sit-ins at segregated lunch counters and interracial bus rides to challenge segregation laws and practices. March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom (1963): This iconic event culminated in Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech and played a pivotal role in advocating for civil rights legislation. Civil Rights Act of 1964: This landmark legislation outlawed racial segregation in public places and employment discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. Voting Rights Act of 1965: Aimed at overcoming barriers to African American voting, this act eliminated discriminatory voting practices such as literacy tests and poll taxes.

Boston, or New York. What did this movement look like in Midwestern states, though? There seems to be a lack of published work on what the movement looked like in places like Minnesota. The research in this area is recent and more limited, which may be due to the fact that the Black population in Minnesota has been so small for so long. Still, the impact of racism, segregation, and discrimination in the state is the literature gap to which this research hopes to fill.

Historians continue to debate how to define the Civil Rights Movement. When historians first started writing about the Civil Rights Movement, they defined the movement as starting with *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954 and ending with the Civil Rights Act of 1964. In Minnesota, when did civil rights efforts begin? Historians such as Jacqueline Dowd Hall argue a much longer time period of study for the civil rights movement,¹⁰ and it seems that civil rights efforts began as early as the 1880s and 1890s. In Minnesota, this effort towards equality was a direct result of legislation and the practice of segregated housing and job discrimination that, unfortunately, was a part of the African American experience for many almost as soon as they settled in the state.

This paper aims to broaden the scope of recognition regarding the commencement of the civil rights struggle for African Americans, extending far beyond the commonly acknowledged timeframe of the mid-1950s to the late 1960s associated with the Civil Rights Movement. It posits arguments for tracing the origins of the Civil Rights Movement back to the late 1800s, acknowledging the protracted and continual battle for civil rights and racial equality in the United States, particularly in Minnesota. While acknowledging the prominence of the mid-

¹⁰ Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," *The Journal of American History* (Bloomington, Ind.) 91, no. 4 (2005): 1233-1263.

twentieth century phase of the Civil Rights Movement, this paper contends that its roots were established decades earlier.

The earliest presence of African Americans in Minnesota traces back to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Some African Americans served in the military or worked as fur traders and missionaries in the region. However, the number of African Americans remained relatively low until the mid-nineteenth century. During the mid-1800s, Minnesota experienced an influx of African Americans due to factors such as economic opportunities, abolitionist sentiment, and the Homestead Act of 1862, which allowed people to claim land in the state. Some African Americans migrated to Minnesota from nearby states like Illinois, Missouri, and Wisconsin, while others came from further distances, including the Southern states.

The civil rights movement in Minnesota has its roots in a century-long history of grassroots activism in the pursuit of racial justice. Dating back to the 1800s, African Americans have been a part of Minnesota's fabric, with some being native-born and others migrating from different states in search of better opportunities. Despite facing discrimination and inequality, they established resilient communities and institutions that enriched the state's cultural landscape. In the post-Civil War era, Minnesota gained recognition for its relatively progressive stance on race and civil rights compared to many other states, particularly those in the South. However, from the time African Americans first settled in Minnesota, they confronted various forms of discrimination, sparking ongoing efforts to combat these injustices. This paper acknowledges the enduring and impactful struggle for civil rights within the state and across the nation.

In discussing how the early civil rights movement was unique in Minnesota, examining some of the earliest efforts for equality is crucial. On the national level, the abolition movement

began in the first half of the nineteenth century. Historians point to its beginning with figures such as William Lloyd Garrison, who founded “The Liberator” in 1831, and Frederick Douglass who published his autobiography in 1845. The late 1800s witnessed the rise of the abolitionist movement in Minnesota, which aimed to end slavery and grant equal rights to African Americans. Prominent figures like Frederick Douglass, who visited Minnesota on several occasions, as well as Minnesotan abolitionists such as Dr. Calvin Goodrich, Thomas Hale Williams, and Ralph and Emily O. Goodridge Grey, were advocating for civil rights and social justice during this period. The movement laid the groundwork for future activism and challenged the notion of racial superiority.

Civil rights organizations emerged during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to combat racism and uphold African Americans' rights. The Minnesota Protective and Industrial League, Afro-American League, and Minnesota Citizen Civil Rights Committee are notable examples from this time. In 1902, the National Afro-American Council held its annual meeting, which distinguished figures like W.E.B. du Bois, Ida B. Wells, and Booker T. Washington attended. St. Paul attorney Fredrick McGhee orchestrated this convention. During this meeting, Du Bois and Washington differed over their ideologies regarding civil rights pursuits for Blacks. Eventually, Du Bois, McGhee, and other activists formed the Niagara Movement, which would later form the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, or NAACP, in 1910. The NAACP established local chapters in St. Paul in 1913 and Minneapolis in 1914.¹¹

¹¹ “African Americans in Minnesota,” *MNopedia*, Minnesota Historical Society. July 26, 2017. Accessed November 10, 2023. <https://www.mnopedia.org/african-americans-minnesota>.

Furthermore, early instances of civil rights progress are evident in legal landmarks. Notably, several legal proceedings in Minnesota during the late 1800s established significant civil rights precedents. A prime illustration is the case of *State v. Lewis*, a pivotal legal matter concerning the rights of African Americans, determined by the Minnesota Supreme Court in 1866. In its verdict, the court affirmed that the recently enacted Civil Rights Act of 1866 extended to Minnesota, thereby guaranteeing African Americans equal protection under the law. Another notable instance occurred in 1885 when a case addressing racial discrimination in public accommodations reached the Minnesota Supreme Court. Known as *State v. Hall*, this case centered on Fred Hall, an African American man who was refused service at a St. Paul hotel. The court's ruling deemed such discrimination unlawful under the Minnesota State Constitution, which upholds the principle of equal rights for all.

In 1898, the Minnesota Supreme Court rendered its decision in *Gundelfinger v. City of St. Paul*. This case centered on Joseph Gundelfinger, a Jewish man who contested a St. Paul ordinance restricting the sale of goods on Sundays. The court ruled in favor of Gundelfinger, asserting that the ordinance encroached upon his rights to religious freedom and equal protection under the law. Also in 1898, *State v. Bryant* addressed the issue of racial discrimination in jury selection. William Bryant, an African American man, stood accused of murder before an all-white jury. The Minnesota Supreme Court overturned his conviction, determining that the systematic exclusion of African Americans from juries violated the defendant's rights to equal protection and a fair trial.

These cases played a significant role in establishing essential precedents for civil rights in Minnesota during the late 1800s, addressing issues such as racial discrimination, equal

protection, and religious freedom. They helped shape the legal landscape and laid the groundwork for further advancements in civil rights in the state.

The culmination of early civil rights efforts in Minnesota manifested through the activism of African Americans and their allies, who staged protests and resisted racial discrimination in the late 1800s. While specific instances may be sparse, a handful of noteworthy occurrences stand out. The establishment of the Minnesota Colored Men's Suffrage Association in 1868 exemplifies this activism, as they diligently worked towards securing voting rights for African American men in the state. Through the organization of public gatherings, circulation of petitions, and lobbying of state legislators, they pursued their objectives with determination. Moreover, African American parents and activists in Minnesota fervently advocated for equal educational opportunities for Black children. A significant milestone occurred in 1888 when the Supreme Court of Minnesota ruled in favor of the Grants, a Black family, in their lawsuit against the city of St. Paul for denying their daughter access to a white school. This landmark decision effectively outlawed segregation in public schools, marking a significant victory in the fight for racial equality.

African Americans and their allies challenged racial segregation in public spaces, such as theaters and entertainment venues. In 1893, the St. Paul-based Afro-American League protested the segregation policy at the Exposition Building during a performance of the World's Columbian Exposition. Their activism contributed to the eventual integration of public spaces in Minnesota. There was also work done and protests against racial violence, including lynching. In 1899, St. Paul hosted the first National Afro-American Council, where attendees discussed strategies to combat lynching, advocate for civil rights, and promote racial uplift. Churches and fraternal organizations played a significant role in African American community organizing. The

AME Church and the Prince Hall Masons actively advocated for civil rights and supported the community.

While Minnesota might not have been as well-known for racial tensions as other regions during the late 1800s, African Americans and their allies actively participated in various forms of protest and resistance against racial discrimination, striving for equal rights and social justice. William D. Green, in his influential book covering civil rights in Minnesota in the fifty years after the Civil War, wrote, "As long as there was peace—and peace was possible since the Black population was very small and seldom had any of them broken the fragile calm—the problem of visible and volatile racial tension would not arise. In its absence, whites could allow themselves to think that there was no racial problem." However, Minnesota's "sincere embrace" of African American freedom, equality, and dignity was multifaceted and often paradoxical, myopic, and sometimes self-congratulatory. "Freedom" only seemed to mean being unshackled from chains of servitude, not having the means to pursue the full enjoyment of opportunity. "Equality" meant having access to the ballot but not being served at a restaurant downtown. "Dignity" meant that white men used the appellation of 'mister' to African American men with middle-class bearing while tolerating a society that demeaned the entire Black race. It was the nature of this kind of "sincerity" that characterized the tepid relations between Blacks and whites in Minnesota.¹²

Although the Black population in Minnesota was small, it seemed relatively well-integrated until the early 1900s. Before 1900, Minnesota had a small but growing African American population. The majority of African Americans in Minnesota at that time were descendants of free Blacks who had migrated to the state. However, there were also African

¹² William D. Green, *Degrees of Freedom: The Origins of Civil Rights in Minnesota, 1865–1912* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), ix.

Americans who migrated to Minnesota following the Civil War and during the Reconstruction era.

Before the turn of the century, Minnesota did not boast a substantial African American presence, yet a few remarkable individuals left their mark during this period. One such luminary was John Quincy Adams, hailing from Kentucky where he was born into slavery but later found his place in Minnesota. Adams garnered respect as a prominent figure within the African American community, dedicating himself fervently to the cause of civil rights and parity. It is imperative to acknowledge the varied experiences of African Americans in Minnesota during this era. While some grappled with discrimination and limited prospects, others thrived, establishing flourishing enterprises and enriching the state's cultural and political landscape.

History of Racial Covenants

As stated, the Black population in Minnesota was small yet relatively well-integrated until the early 1900s. Then, with the Great Migration, many Black families left the legal segregation and discrimination of the South and moved to northern cities, especially more so in the Midwest and West. Although Minnesota's Black population did not increase as much as the populations of other northern states, such as Illinois or Michigan, during this time, it rose by 149 percent.¹³ In 1900, around 5,000 African Americans were living in Minnesota. By 1970, at the end of the Great Migration, the number of Black residents had risen to nearly 35,000.¹⁴ Over time, racial covenants and racist real estate practices prevented Black families from securing

¹³ "African Americans in Minnesota," MNopedia, Minnesota Historical Society, July 26, 2017. Accessed November 10, 2023. <https://www.mnopedia.org/african-americans-minnesota>.

¹⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, Minnesota Census of the Population: Characteristics of the Population, June 1973. Report Number Volume 1, generated by Alexis Jones, using data.census.gov; <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>. (March 10, 2023).

loans to buy homes in certain parts of the Twin Cities or neighboring suburbs. These policies pushed them to live in places like north Minneapolis and the Rondo neighborhood of St. Paul. Developers, real estate agents, and local, state, and federal governments “prohibited Black Americans from realizing their full rights and opportunities as citizens. Governments and developers deliberately used discriminatory covenants to create segregated communities and build wealth for the white community at the expense of the Black community and other people of color.”¹⁵ In Minneapolis, the first racially restrictive deed appeared in 1910 and others soon followed with language that would become a common restriction: “No person or persons other than of the Caucasian race shall be permitted to occupy said premises or any part thereof...”¹⁶

When real estate attorneys wrote racially restrictive deeds like the one cited above, the cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul were not particularly segregated. However, covenants utterly changed the landscape of the Twin Cities. Over time, covenants pushed Black Americans into a few small areas of the city, and certain areas of the city became entirely white.¹⁷ As racial covenants spread and became more common, they impacted the structure of the Twin Cities. According to a Minnesota report, the Twin Cities are known for being affluent, generous, and progressive. There are dozens of organizations dedicated to serving people experiencing poverty.¹⁸ So why are racial disparities in the Twin Cities as significant as or more significant

¹⁵ “History,” The Just Deeds Project, February 23, 2021. <https://justdeeds.org/history/>.

¹⁶ Marguerite Mills and Mapping Prejudice Project, *Hennepin County Racially Restrictive Covenants*. Retrieved from the University of Minnesota Digital Conservancy, 2020. <https://hdl.handle.net/11299/217471>.

¹⁷ “History,” The Just Deeds Project.

¹⁸ Myron Orfield and Will Stancil, "Why Are the Twin Cities So Segregated?," *Mitchell Hamline Law Review* 43, no.1 (2017): 7-8.

than racial disparities in any part of the nation? Why are schools and neighborhoods more segregated than regions with similar racial and economic characteristics?

Legal protection against housing discrimination came slowly across the nation and its enforcement was even slower. In 1948, the United States Supreme Court ruled in *Shelley v. Kraemer* that racial covenants were unenforceable and violated the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.¹⁹ In 1953, Minnesota's state legislature banned using racial covenants in house deeds.²⁰ In 1968, the Fair Housing Act, part of the landmark Civil Rights Act signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson, made racial covenants and discriminatory housing practices illegal across the nation.²¹

Yet, the effects are still impacting the Twin Cities today. By the late 1900s, three relatively small Twin Cities areas contained the largest concentrations of Black residents: the Near North and Southside neighborhoods of Minneapolis and the Rondo neighborhood of St. Paul. The neighborhoods north and south of Rondo Avenue were always diverse, extending south into today's Summit-University neighborhood and north to University Avenue. But by the 1950s, about eighty-five percent of Saint Paul's African American population lived in these neighborhoods.²² Similarly, in the city of Duluth, about two hours north of the Twin Cities, an

¹⁹ *Shelley v. Kraemer*, 334 US 1 (1948).

²⁰ *Minnesota Statutes 1953, Section 507.18, Subdivision 1.*

²¹ Congress. "Civil Rights Act of 1968." Government. U.S. Government Publishing Office, March 14, 2022. <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/COMPS-343>.

²² Jane McClure, "Rondo Neighborhood," *Saint Paul Historical*, <https://saintpaulhistorical.com/items/show/160#:~:text=Most%20of%20the%20original%20Rondo,the%20Best%20Western%20Kelly%20Inn>.

early industrial history began as Europeans settled in the area and began businesses around the abundance of valuable resources, such as iron and timber. Over time, these resources, along with access to the transcontinental railway lines and the location on a Great Lake, made Duluth a national center for shipping and manufacturing. By 1920, Duluth was home to a small Black community. However, due to restrictions on where they could live, African Americans settled on the west half of the city, close to the industry and factories. The west side of Duluth became home to a more diverse, working-class population.

According to an NBC News report, the Twin Cities area has seen an increase in highly segregated schools over the past twenty-five years.²³ Highly segregated schools refer to schools where at least ninety percent of the students are not white. Even while schools are growing more diverse in some ways, they remain highly segregated by race and class. A recent report examining Minnesota's persistent education achievement gaps underscores a statewide crisis: "the educational disparities are deep, wide, and persistent."²⁴ The same problems can be seen with the two high schools in Duluth: the East side, more affluent and academically successful and the West side, more diverse and economically disadvantaged with lower test scores and graduation rates.

²³ Erin Einhorn and Nigel Chiwaya, "How Minneapolis Re-Segregated Its Schools and Set the Stage for a National Crisis," *NBC News*, NBCUniversal News Group, August 31, 2020. Accessed December 10, 2022. <https://www.nbcnews.com/specials/minneapolis-re-segregated-schools-set-the-stage-national-crisis/>.

²⁴ Rob Grunewald and Anusha Nath, "A Statewide Crisis: Minnesota's Education Achievement Gaps," MN Report. Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, October 11, 2019. Accessed November 10, 2023. <https://www.minneapolisfed.org/~media/assets/pages/education-achievement-gaps/achievement-gaps-mn-report.pdf>.

Historically, school integration in the Twin Cities area saw success primarily due to state and regional policies rather than a federal court mandate. Two key initiatives played pivotal roles in this achievement. Firstly, a program mandated regional municipalities to create affordable housing, curbing the exclusion of low-income families—predominantly families of color—from suburban areas. Secondly, a state law prohibited districts from disproportionately concentrating students of any single race within a particular school. Schools facing significant imbalances in Black, white, or Latino student populations risked losing state funding, thus promoting more balanced demographic distributions within districts. In the 1980s and 1990s, these policies fell apart, due to policy changes, lack of commitment, and difficulty in implementation, leading to the highly segregated system we see today.²⁵ For instance, many Black parents protested the closing of neighborhood schools and the busing of their children, schools had a difficult time meeting integration requirements, and in 1991, a Supreme Court ruling granted judges broad discretion to terminate integration programs if they deemed a district had complied in good faith.²⁶ As a result, desegregation court orders started to be overturned, one by one. Ultimately, then, this dissertation asks the question, how did racial covenants and housing discrimination that emerged in the early twentieth-century impact patterns of residential segregation in the Twin Cities and Duluth, and what was the impact on Minnesota’s education system?

Civil Rights Movement Historiography

The historical recording of the fight for Black civil rights began as early as the 1960s and 1970s. Historians wrote about civil rights as a political movement in these early works and focused on the prominent leaders and national significance. Examples of this “classical” phase of

²⁵ Einhorn and Chiwaya, “How Minneapolis Re-Segregated,” 2020.

²⁶ *Board of Education of Oklahoma City v. Dowell*, 498 U.S. 237 (1991).

civil rights historiography include Janet Harris, a historian focused on race, gender, and literature, and her work *The Long Freedom Road: The Civil Rights Story* (1967),²⁷ as well as work by August Meier and Elliott M. Rudwick, two accomplished historians of the modern African American experience. Their works on the topic include *CORE: a Study in the Civil Rights Movement, 1942-1968* (1973)²⁸ and *Along the Color Line: Explorations in the Black Experience* (1976),²⁹ both of which discussed topics such as Black nationalism, nonviolent action, the changing patterns of interracial violence in the twentieth century, and the ways African American leaders functioned and coped with racism in their quest to ensure the rights of full citizenship for African Americans. Historians often dated this classical phase of the movement from the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision to the passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964. This early, dominant narrative chronicles a short civil rights movement.

Early works often focused only on the South, such as Howell Raines's *My Soul is Rested: Movement Days in the Deep South Remembered* (1977),³⁰ an oral history of the civil rights movement, and Mary Aickin Rothschild's *A Case of Black and White: Northern Volunteers and the Southern Freedom Summers, 1964-1965* (1982).³¹ Scholars such as Timothy Tyson Jr., a

²⁷ Janet Harris, *The Long Freedom Road: The Civil Rights Story* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967).

²⁸ August Meier and Elliott M. Rudwick, *CORE: a Study in the Civil Rights Movement, 1942-1968* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973).

²⁹ August Meier and Elliott M. Rudwick, *Along the Color Line: Explorations in the Black Experience* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2002).

³⁰ Howell Raines, *My Soul is Rested: Movement Days in the Deep South Remembered* (New York: Putnam, 1977).

³¹ Mary Aickin Rothschild, *A Case of Black and White: Northern Volunteers and the Southern Freedom Summers, 1964-1965* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1982).

writer and historian who specializes in the issues of culture, religion, and race associated with the civil rights movement, in his work with co-author David S. Cecelski *Democracy Betrayed: The Wilmington Race Riot of 1898 and Its Legacy* (1998),³² demonstrates the long tradition of armed self-defense in the South.³³ This was Tyson's first book, but he went on to publish more on the topic of civil rights in the South, including *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams and the Roots of Black Power* (1998),³⁴ *Blood Done Sign My Name* (2004),³⁵ and *The Blood of Emmett Till* (2017).³⁶

The next generation of scholars in the 1970s and 1980s focused on local communities, including Aldon D. Morris's *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change* (1986).³⁷ His work focused on the civil rights struggles of the 1950s and 1960s specifically but highlighted the essential role of the local Black community organizations that were the real power behind the Civil Rights Movement. Over time, historians began to study the civil rights movement in the North as well, such as in *Freedom North: Black Freedom*

³² David S. Cecelski and Timothy B. Tyson, *Democracy Betrayed: The Wilmington Race Riot of 1898 and its Legacy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

³³ Katarina Keane, "New Directions in Civil Rights Historiography," *History* 44, no. 1 (2016): 1.

³⁴ Timothy B. Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams and the Roots of Black Power* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

³⁵ Timothy B. Tyson, *Blood Done Sign My Name: A True Story* (United States: Crown, 2007).

³⁶ Timothy B. Tyson, *The Blood of Emmett Till* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2017).

³⁷ Aldon D. Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change* (London; New York: Free Press, 1984).

Struggles Outside the South, 1940-1980 (2003),³⁸ edited by the author of numerous books and articles on the civil rights and Black Power movements Jeanne Theoharis and activist and journalist Komozi Woodard. Theoharis offers this central interpretation in her introduction, arguing the need for fuller inclusion of Northern activism. Additional studies of the civil rights movement in the North include historian Roger Lane's *Roots of Violence in Black Philadelphia, 1860-1900* (1986)³⁹ and demographer Donald J. Bogue's *Militancy for and Against Civil Rights and Integration in Chicago: Summer 1967* (1969).⁴⁰ Thomas Sugrue, in his work *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North* (2008),⁴¹ outlined the history of nonviolent community organizing in the North.⁴² His work highlights the Northern quest for racial equality in states from Illinois to New York and how the intense Northern struggle differed from and was inspired by the fight in the Southern states.

In due course, historians expanded the dates of the Civil Rights Movement, such as Manning Marable's *Race, Reform, and Rebellion: The Second Reconstruction in Black America, 1945-1990* (1991).⁴³ His later editions of this work expanded these dates even further and argued for the continued fight for civil rights. In *Days of Hope: Race and Democracy in the New Deal*

³⁸ Jeanne Theoharis and Komozi Woodard, *Freedom North: Black Freedom Struggles Outside the South, 1940-1980* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

³⁹ Roger Lane, *Roots of Violence in Black Philadelphia, 1860-1900* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1986).

⁴⁰ Donald J. Bogue, *Militancy for and Against Civil Rights and Integration in Chicago: Summer 1967* (Chicago: Community and Family Study Center, University of Chicago, 1969).

⁴¹ Thomas J. Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North* (New York: Random House, 2008).

⁴² Keane, "New Directions in Civil Rights Historiography," 2016.

⁴³ Manning Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion: The Second Reconstruction in Black America, 1945-1990* (United Kingdom: University Press of Mississippi, 1991).

Era (1996) by Patricia Sullivan,⁴⁴ she traces the rise and fall of the movement in the 1930s and 1940s, when an alliance of whites and Blacks, individuals, and organizations, formed a coalition to present a radical alternative to the conservative politics prevalent in the South. Also focusing on this earlier period, Nancy Weiss's *Farewell to the Party of Lincoln: Black Politics in the Age of F.D.R.* (1984)⁴⁵ examined the dramatic shift of Black voters from the Republican to the Democratic party in the 1930s. Well-known civil rights historian Steven F. Lawson, in his work *Running for Freedom: Civil Rights and Black Politics in America since 1941* (1997),⁴⁶ also argued for expanded dates of the movement. He argued that the civil rights movement took place predominantly between 1954 and 1968 and should be viewed as a discrete entity yet embedded within a Black struggle for freedom as old as the nation itself.

Works emerging in the early 2000s also recognized the long trajectory of civil rights, such as Kevin Boyle's *Arc of Justice: A Saga of Race, Civil Rights, and Murder in the Jazz Age* (2004),⁴⁷ which delved into issues of race, discrimination, and the pursuit of justice in a racially divided 1920s America. Similarly, Jonathan Rosenberg's *How Far the Promised Land? World Affairs and the American Civil Rights Movement from the First World War to Vietnam* (2006),⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Patricia Sullivan, *Days of Hope: Race and Democracy in the New Deal Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

⁴⁵ Nancy J. Weiss, *Farewell to the Party of Lincoln: Black Politics in the Age of FDR* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1983).

⁴⁶ Steven F. Lawson, *Running for Freedom: Civil Rights and Black Politics in America since 1941* (Chichester, England: Wiley Blackwell, 2015).

⁴⁷ Kevin Boyle, *Arc of Justice: A Saga of Race, Civil Rights, and Murder in the Jazz Age* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2004).

⁴⁸ Jonathan Rosenberg, *How Far the Promised Land? World Affairs and the American Civil Rights Movement from the First World War to Vietnam* (United States: Princeton University Press, 2018).

dated the start of the movement even earlier in the 1910s. He argued that the men and women who struggled to win equality for Black Americans used world affairs, especially wars, to advance their cause from 1914 to the 1960s. Similarly, Kate Masur's *Until Justice Be Done: America's First Civil Rights Movement, from the Revolution to Reconstruction* (2021)⁴⁹ dated the start of the civil rights movement as early as the 1800s. She chronicled the history of the movement for equal rights that battled racist laws and institutions in the North and South decades before the Civil War.

Few essays on the civil rights movement have had the enduring impact and broad reach of historian Jacquelyn Dowd Hall's 2005 article, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past."⁵⁰ This seminal work introduced the concept of the long civil rights movement, or LCRM, which challenges traditional narratives by emphasizing the movement's duration and impact. While conventional historiography had typically traced the movement's origins to events like the *Brown v. Board of Education* case in 1954, figures like Martin Luther King Jr., or legislation such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, Hall expanded the timeline to encompass the activism of the 1930s and 1940s. Moreover, she argued against viewing the fight for equality as having a definitive endpoint, pointing to ongoing struggles like the Black Lives Matter movement as contemporary manifestations of the civil rights struggle.

Beginning in the early 2000s and continuing to the 2020s, historians also recorded a combination of the national and local aspects, focusing on the ideological roots and dynamics

⁴⁹ Kate Masur, *Until Justice be Done: America's First Civil Rights Movement, from the Revolution to Reconstruction* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc, 2021).

⁵⁰ Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement," 2005.

between races and sexes, such as in historian David J. Garrow's *Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference* (2004)⁵¹ and gender historian Jennifer Lombardo's *Unsung Heroes: Women of the Civil Rights Movement* (2020).⁵² Many other historians also provide thorough studies of the work of Black women specifically and their role in the Civil Rights Movement. Works include Barbara Welke's *Recasting American Liberty: Gender, Race, Law, and the Railroad Revolution, 1865–1920* (2001),⁵³ Martha S. Jones's *All Bound Up Together: The Woman Question in African American Public Culture, 1830-1900* (2007),⁵⁴ Kate Masur's *An Example for All the Land: Emancipation and the Struggle over Equality in Washington, D.C.* (2010),⁵⁵ and Janette Thomas Greenwood's *First Fruits of Freedom: The Migration of Former Slaves and Their Search for Equality in Worcester, Massachusetts, 1862-1900* (2010).⁵⁶

In other methodologies, Gavin Wright, an economic historian, sought to understand the outcomes of the civil rights movement from a quantifiable perspective, that of economic improvement for Black and white Southerners, in his works *Old South, New South: Revolutions*

⁵¹ David J. Garrow, *Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference* (New York: Open Road Integrated Media, 2015).

⁵² Jennifer Lombardo, *Unsung Heroes: Women of the Civil Rights Movement* (New York, New York: Lucent Press, 2020).

⁵³ Barbara Young Welke, *Recasting American Liberty: Gender, Race, Law, and the Railroad Revolution, 1865-1920* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

⁵⁴ Martha S. Jones, *All Bound Up Together: The Woman Question in African American Public Culture, 1830-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

⁵⁵ Kate Masur, *An Example for all the Land: Emancipation and the Struggle Over Equality in Washington, D.C.* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

⁵⁶ Janette Thomas Greenwood, *First Fruits of Freedom: The Migration of Former Slaves and their Search for Equality in Worcester, Massachusetts, 1862-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

in the Southern Economy Since the Civil War (1986),⁵⁷ *The Mosaic of Economic Growth* (1996),⁵⁸ and *Sharing the Prize: The Economics of the Civil Rights Revolution in the American South* (2013).⁵⁹

Great Migration Historiography

The Great Migration, which took place between 1910 and 1970, when millions of African Americans migrated from the rural South to the urban areas of the North, Midwest, and West, is also critical to consider for this dissertation. The historiography of the Great Migration has evolved, but it is essential to consider when analyzing the shifting demographics of the Twin Cities in Minnesota. As the Great Migration unfolded, there was very limited research on the subject. Primary sources such as newspapers, personal accounts, and sociological surveys provide valuable insights that can be used to better understand the experiences of African Americans during this period. Works from sociologists such as Robert E. Park and Ernest Burgess's *The City* (1925)⁶⁰ and Gunnar Myrdal's *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (1944)⁶¹ offered initial analyses of the migration patterns and their social implications. During the 1960s and 1970s, the Civil Rights and Black Power movements

⁵⁷ Gavin Wright, *Old South, New South: Revolutions in the Southern Economy Since the Civil War* (New York: Basic Books, 1986).

⁵⁸ Gavin Wright, *The Mosaic of Economic Growth* (United States: Stanford University Press, 1996).

⁵⁹ Gavin Wright, *Sharing the Prize: The Economics of the Civil Rights Revolution in the American South* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2013).

⁶⁰ Robert E. Park and Ernest Burgess, *The City* (United States: University of Chicago Press, 1925).

⁶¹ Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (United Kingdom: Harper & Brothers, 1944).

influenced the historiography of the Great Migration. Works from scholars such as Langston Hughes's *The Big Sea: An Autobiography* (1963),⁶² Gilbert Osofsky's *Harlem: The Making of a Ghetto* (1963),⁶³ Allan Spear's *Black Chicago: The Making of a Negro Ghetto, 1890–1920* (1967),⁶⁴ John Hope Franklin's *Racial Equality in America* (1976),⁶⁵ and Lawrence Levine's *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (1977)⁶⁶ focused on the cultural impact of the migration, highlighting the emergence of new forms of Black identity, music, literature, and artistic expression in the urban centers. They emphasized the role of the Great Migration in fostering a sense of Black pride and empowerment.

In the 1980s and 1990s, scholars like Joe William Trotter Jr., James Grossman, and Nicholas Lemann shifted historiography's focus towards the economic and social factors driving the Great Migration. Trotter's *Black Milwaukee: The Making of an Industrial Proletariat, 1915–1945* (1985)⁶⁷ and *The Great Migration in Historical Perspective: New Dimensions of Race*,

⁶² Langston Hughes, *The Big Sea: An Autobiography* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1963).

⁶³ Gilbert Osofsky, *Harlem: The Making of a Ghetto: Negro New York, 1890–1930* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963).

⁶⁴ Allan H. Spear, *Black Chicago: The Making of a Negro Ghetto, 1890–1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967).

⁶⁵ John Hope Franklin, *Racial Equality in America* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1976).

⁶⁶ Lawrence W. Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).

⁶⁷ Joe William Trotter, *Black Milwaukee: The Making of an Industrial Proletariat, 1915–1945* (United States: University of Illinois Press, 1985).

Class, and Gender (1991),⁶⁸ Grossman's *Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners and the Great Migration* (1989),⁶⁹ and Lemann's *The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and How it Changed America* (1991)⁷⁰ examined the push and pull factors, including economic opportunities in Northern industries, the impact of World War I and World War II on job availability, racial violence and discrimination in the South, and the desire for political and social freedom.

In recent decades, scholars have paid more attention to gender and family dynamics within the Great Migration. They explored African American women's and families' experiences, shedding light on their challenges, their roles in shaping community life, and how gender intersected with race in the migration process. Works from historians such as Darlene Clark Hine's *A Shining Thread of Hope: The History of Black Women in America* (1991),⁷¹ Ira Berlin's *The Making of African America: The Four Great Migrations* (2010),⁷² and Mary Pattillo's *Black on the Block: The Politics of Race and Class in the City* (2010)⁷³ contributed significantly to this aspect of the historiography. Furthermore, works like James W. Loewen's *Sundown Towns: A*

⁶⁸ Joe William Trotter, *The Great Migration in Historical Perspective: New Dimensions of Race, Class, and Gender* (United States: Indiana University Press, 1991).

⁶⁹ James R. Grossman, *Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners, and the Great Migration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

⁷⁰ Nicholas Lemann, *The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and how it Changed America* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991).

⁷¹ Darlene Clark Hine, *A Shining Thread of Hope: The History of Black Women in America* (United States: Broadway Books, 1991).

⁷² Ira Berlin, *The Making of African America: The Four Great Migrations* (New York: Viking, 2010).

⁷³ Mary Pattillo, *Black on the Block: The Politics of Race and Class in the City* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

Hidden Dimension of American Racism (2005)⁷⁴ and Naa Oyo A. Kwate's *White Burgers, Black Cash: Fast Food from Black Exclusion to Exploitation* (2023)⁷⁵ explore the deepening racism and inequalities spreading through the United States outside the traditional South.

More recent historiography on the Great Migration sought to place it within broader global and comparative contexts. Scholars, such as Isabel Wilkerson's *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration* (2011)⁷⁶ and her work *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents* (2020),⁷⁷ as well as Jessica Bell Brown and Ryan N. Dennis's *A Movement in Every Direction: A Great Migration Critical Reader* (2022)⁷⁸ have examined migration patterns and experiences of other diaspora communities, such as early European immigrants or Mexican Americans, to draw parallels and understand the unique aspects of African American migration. This comparative approach helped provide new insights into the social, economic, and political dimensions of the Great Migration, enriching the research on this transformative period in African American history.

⁷⁴ James W. Loewen, *Sundown Towns: A Hidden Dimension of American Racism* (United States: New Press, 2005).

⁷⁵ Naa Oyo A. Kwate, *White Burgers, Black Cash: Fast Food from Black Exclusion to Exploitation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2023).

⁷⁶ Isabel Wilkerson, *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration* (New York: Random House, 2010).

⁷⁷ Isabel Wilkerson, *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents* (United Kingdom: Random House Publishing Group, 2020).

⁷⁸ Jessica Bell Brown and Ryan N. Dennis, *A Movement in Every Direction: A Great Migration Critical Reader* (Baltimore, MD: Baltimore Museum of Art, 2022).

Midwest Historiography

Concerning regional history, the Midwest's historiography has been neglected or overlooked for a long time. The region has gained increasing recognition historically, socially, culturally, economically, and politically. There is a lack of historical research on the Midwest compared with other regions like the South, New England, and even the West. In the early twentieth century, Frederick Jackson Turner was an American historian known for his frontier thesis and was the first historian to pay attention to the Midwest. He published several essays on what he called the "Middle West," including chapters in his 1920 work *The Frontier in American History*, such as "The Middle West" and "Middle Western Pioneer Democracy."⁷⁹ His work became foundational for a group of scholars sometimes referred to as the Prairie Historians, many of whom were from the region.

These early scholars focused on European immigrants' exploration and regional settlement. They celebrated the pioneering spirit of settlers, portraying the Midwest as a land of opportunity and progress, including works such as Lois Kimbell Mathews Rosenberry's *The Expansion of New England: The Spread of New England Settlement and Institutions to the Mississippi River, 1620- 1865* (1909),⁸⁰ Balthasar Henry Meyer and Caroline Elizabeth MacGill's *History of Transportation in the United States before 1860* (1917),⁸¹ Solon J. Buck's *The Granger Movement: A Study of Agricultural Organization and Its Political, Economic and*

⁷⁹ Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1920).

⁸⁰ Lois Kimball Mathews Rosenberry, *The Expansion of New England: The Spread of New England Settlement and Institutions to the Mississippi River, 1620-1865* (United States: Houghton Mifflin, 1909).

⁸¹ Balthasar Henry Meyer and Caroline Elizabeth MacGill, *History of Transportation in the United States Before 1860* (United States: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1917).

Social Manifestations, 1870-1880 (1913),⁸² or his "The Progress and Possibilities of Mississippi Valley History" in the *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* (1923),⁸³ and Thomas J. Wertenbaker's "The Molding of the Middle West" in the *American Historical Review* (1948).⁸⁴ They emphasized the area's agricultural development, the growth of towns and cities, and the role of transportation in connecting the Midwest to the rest of the nation. This viewpoint often overlooked or marginalized the experiences of Native American tribes displaced by European settlement.

In the mid-twentieth century, scholars challenged the earlier narratives and offered more nuanced interpretations of the Midwest's history, including Joseph Kinsey Howard's "New Concepts of Plains History" in the *Montana Magazine of History* (1952),⁸⁵ Harry N. Scheiber's *The Old Northwest: Studies in Regional History, 1787-1910* (1969),⁸⁶ Marshall Smelser's "Tecumseh, Harrison, and the War of 1812," in the *Indiana Magazine of History* (1969),⁸⁷ and

⁸² Solon J. Buck, *The Granger Movement: A Study of Agricultural Organization and its Political, Economic, and Social Manifestations, 1870-1880* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1913).

⁸³ Solon J. Buck, "The Progress and Possibilities of Mississippi Valley History," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* X, no. 1 (1923): 5-20.

⁸⁴ Thomas J. Wertenbaker, "The Molding of the Middle West," *American Historical Review* 53, no. 2 (1948): 223-234.

⁸⁵ Joseph Kinsey Howard, "New Concepts of Plains History," *Montana Magazine of History* 16, no. 5 (1952): 16-25.

⁸⁶ Harry N. Scheiber, *The Old Northwest: Studies in Regional History, 1787-1910* (United States: University of Nebraska Press, 1969).

⁸⁷ Marshall Smelser, "Tecumseh, Harrison, and the War of 1812," *Indiana Magazine of History* 2, no. 65 (March 1969): 25-44.

Kenneth R. Walker's *A History of the Middle West from the Beginning to 1970* (1972).⁸⁸

Additionally, works such as Raymond Boryczka and Lorin Lee Cary's *No Strength Without Union: An Illustrated History of Ohio Workers, 1803-1980* (1982),⁸⁹ Donald Critchlow's *Socialism in the Heartland: The Midwestern Experience, 1900-1925* (1986),⁹⁰ Emma Lou Thornbrough's *The Negro in Indiana before 1900: A Study of a Minority* (1993),⁹¹ and Jon Gjerde's *The Minds of the West: Ethnocultural Evolution in the Rural Middle West, 1830-1917* (1999)⁹² examined issues such as ethnic diversity, labor movements, and social conflicts overlooked or downplayed in earlier accounts.

Historians brought race in the Midwest to the forefront of research by studying social history and social movements like the Civil Rights Movement, which is discussed heavily throughout this paper. Gender and class were also prominent issues in social history during this period, such as in Leslie Schwalm's *Emancipation's Diaspora: Race and Reconstruction in the Upper Midwest* (2009).⁹³ Other historians' work, such as David R. Meyer's "Midwestern Industrialization and the American Manufacturing Belt in the Nineteenth Century" in *The*

⁸⁸ Kenneth R. Walker, *A History of the Middle West from the Beginning to 1970* (Lexington, MO: Pioneer, 1972).

⁸⁹ Raymond Boryczka and Lorin Lee Cary, *No Strength Without Union: An Illustrated History of Ohio Workers, 1803-1980* (United States: Ohio Historical Society, 1982).

⁹⁰ Donald Critchlow, *Socialism in the Heartland: The Midwestern Experience, 1900-1925* (United States: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986).

⁹¹ Emma Lou Thornbrough, *The Negro in Indiana Before 1900: A Study of a Minority* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993).

⁹² Jon Gjerde, *The Minds of the West: Ethnocultural Evolution in the Rural Middle West, 1830-1917* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

⁹³ Leslie A. Schwalm, *Emancipation's Diaspora: Race and Reconstruction in the Upper Midwest* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

Journal of Economic History (1989),⁹⁴ Jon C. Teaforde's *Cities of the Heartland: The Rise and Fall of the Industrial Midwest* (1993),⁹⁵ and Brian Page and Richard Walker's "From Settlement to Fordism: The Agro-Industrial Revolution in the American Midwest" in *Economic Geography* (1991)⁹⁶ examined the effects of industrialization and urbanization. Among the topics discussed in these works was the impact of agriculture's decline on the region.

Eventually, the Midwest's historiography became more diverse and multifaceted. Among the topics explored by researchers were religion, marginalized groups, and globalization's impact on the region, such as Philip Barlow and Mark Silk's *Religion and Public Life in the Midwest: America's Common Denominator* (2004),⁹⁷ Richard C. Longworth's *Caught in the Middle: America's Heartland in the Age of Globalism* (2008),⁹⁸ Christopher P. Lehman's *Slavery in the Upper Mississippi Valley, 1787-1865: A History of Human Bondage in Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin* (2011),⁹⁹ and John R. Van Atta's *Securing the West: Politics, Public Lands, and*

⁹⁴ David R. Meyer, "Midwestern Industrialization and the American Manufacturing Belt in the Nineteenth Century," *The Journal of Economic History* 49, no. 4 (1989): 921–37.

⁹⁵ Jon C. Teaforde, *Cities of the Heartland: The Rise and Fall of the Industrial Midwest* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1993).

⁹⁶ Brian Page and Richard Walker, "From Settlement to Fordism: The Agro-Industrial Revolution in the American Midwest," *Economic Geography* 67, no. 4 (1991): 281–315.

⁹⁷ Philip L. Barlow and Mark Silk, *Religion and Public Life in the Midwest: America's Common Denominator?* (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 2004).

⁹⁸ Richard C. Longworth, *Caught in the Middle: America's Heartland in the Age of Globalism* (United States: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2008).

⁹⁹ Christopher P. Lehman, *Slavery in the Upper Mississippi Valley, 1787-1865: A History of Human Bondage in Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin* (United States: McFarland, Incorporated, Publishers, 2011).

the Fate of the Old Republic, 1785-1850 (2014).¹⁰⁰ Several of these authors and others challenged the idea that the Midwest is predominantly homogeneous, pointing out regional differences and complexities.

In addition to the experiences of Indigenous tribes native to the area, such as the Ottawa, Ojibwa, Illinois, Miami, Huron, Dakota, or Sioux, later scholars also commented on the diversity of immigrant communities and the differences between urban and rural living, including Andrew R. L. Clayton and Susan E. Gray's *The Identity of the American Midwest: Essays on Regional History* (2001),¹⁰¹ R. Douglas Hurt's *The Big Empty: The Great Plains in the Twentieth Century* (2011),¹⁰² Jon K. Lauck's "Why the Midwest Matters" in *The Midwest Quarterly* (2013),¹⁰³ and his work *The Lost Region: Toward a Revival of Midwestern History* (2013).¹⁰⁴ In addition, the Midwest became researched for its political significance as researchers examined the region's political trends and voting patterns. In presidential elections, particularly in 2016, the role of the Midwest as a "swing" region has been discussed, such as in Jon K. Lauck and Catherine

¹⁰⁰ John Robert Van Atta, *Securing the West: Politics, Public Lands, and the Fate of the Old Republic, 1785-1850* (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014).

¹⁰¹ Andrew R. L. Clayton and Susan E. Gray, *The Identity of the American Midwest: Essays on Regional History* (United States: Indiana University Press, 2001).

¹⁰² R. Douglas Hurt, *The Big Empty: The Great Plains in the Twentieth Century* (United States: University of Arizona Press, 2011).

¹⁰³ Jon K. Lauck, "Why the Midwest Matters," *The Midwest Quarterly* 54, no. 2 (2013): 165.

¹⁰⁴ Jon K. Lauck, *The Lost Region: Toward a Revival of Midwestern History*. (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2013).

McNicol Stock's *The Conservative Heartland: A Political History of the Postwar American Midwest* (2020).¹⁰⁵

Historiography of Minnesota

The study of Minnesota's history shares many similarities with the exploration of the Midwest's past. Early narratives of Minnesota were predominantly crafted by Euro-American settlers, who focused on the exploration and settlement of the region. These accounts often romanticized the endeavors of pioneers, missionaries, and fur traders, portraying Minnesota as a realm of opportunity and advancement. Works such as Alexander Ross's *The Red River Settlement: Its Rise, Progress, and Present State* (1856),¹⁰⁶ John Fletcher Williams's *History of Ramsey County and the City of St. Paul: Including the Explorers and Pioneers of Minnesota and Outlines of the History of Minnesota* (1876),¹⁰⁷ and Jacob Vradenberg Brower's *Minnesota: Discovery of Its Area, 1540-1655* (1903)¹⁰⁸ exemplify this trend, highlighting the triumph of civilization over the untamed wilderness.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a group of historians known as the "Minnesota School" emerged. Led by scholars like William Watts Folwell and Warren Upham, they sought to develop a more comprehensive approach to Minnesota history. In works such as

¹⁰⁵Jon K. Lauck and Catherine McNicol Stock, *The Conservative Heartland: A Political History of the Postwar American Midwest* (United States: University Press of Kansas, 2020).

¹⁰⁶Alexander Ross, *The Red River Settlement: Its Rise, Progress, and Present State: With Some Account of the Native Races and Its General History, to the Present Day* (United Kingdom: Smith, Elder and Company, 1856).

¹⁰⁷John Fletcher Williams, *History of Ramsey County and the City of St. Paul: Including the Explorers and Pioneers of Minnesota and Outlines of the History of Minnesota* (Minneapolis, MN: North Star Publishing Company, 1876).

¹⁰⁸Jacob Vradenberg Brower, *Minnesota: Discovery of Its Area, 1540-1665* (United States: H. L. Collins, 1903).

C. J. Posey's "The Influence of Geographic Factors in the Development of Minnesota," in *Minnesota History Bulletin* (1918),¹⁰⁹ Upham's *Minnesota Geographic Names: Their Origin and Historic Significance* (1920),¹¹⁰ Floyd Perkins and Dudley Brainard's *Minnesota: Its Geography, History and Government* (1948),¹¹¹ and Folwell's *A History of Minnesota* (1956-69),¹¹² they emphasized the geographical factors that shaped the state's development. The Minnesota School also started to pay more attention to the experiences of Native American tribes and recognized their contributions to the region's history.

In the mid-twentieth century, historians explored the history of labor and social movements in Minnesota. Works such as Arthur Naftalin's dissertation thesis at the University of Minnesota, "A History of the Farmer-Labor Party in Minnesota" (1948),¹¹³ Robert L. Morlan's *Political Prairie Fire: The Nonpartisan League, 1915-1922* (1955),¹¹⁴ John Earl Haynes's *Dubious Alliance: The Making of Minnesota's DFL Party* (1984),¹¹⁵ and William Millikan's *A*

¹⁰⁹ C. J. Posey, "The Influence of Geographic Factors in the Development of Minnesota," *Minnesota History Bulletin* 2, no. 7 (1918): 443-453.

¹¹⁰ Warren Upham, *Minnesota Geographic Names: Their Origin and Historic Significance* (Saint Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1920).

¹¹¹ Floyd Perkins and Dudley Brainard, *Minnesota: Its Geography, History and Government* (New York, New York: Allyn and Bacon, 1948).

¹¹² William Watts Folwell, *A History of Minnesota* (Minnesota: Minnesota Historical Society, 1956-1969).

¹¹³ Arthur Naftalin, "A History of the Farmer-Labor Party in Minnesota," PhD diss., University of Minnesota, 1948.

¹¹⁴ Robert Loren Morlan, *Political Prairie Fire: The Nonpartisan League, 1915-1922* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1955).

¹¹⁵ John Earl Haynes, *Dubious Alliance: The Making of Minnesota's DFL Party* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

Union Against Unions: The Minneapolis Citizens Alliance and Its Fight Against Organized Labor, 1903-1947 (2001)¹¹⁶ examined the impact of industrialization, immigration, and labor struggles on the state's working-class communities.

More contemporary approaches to Minnesota history expanded the field to include social and cultural aspects. Scholars explored ethnicity, gender, religion, and popular culture to understand Minnesota's past better. This interdisciplinary approach helped to uncover diverse experiences and perspectives, contributing to a more inclusive and nuanced historiography. The role of women, minorities, and marginalized groups in shaping Minnesota's history also gained attention over time, including Theodore Blegen and Philip D. Jordan's *With Various Voices: Recordings of North Star Life* (1949),¹¹⁷ Hyman Berman's *Jews in Minnesota* (2002),¹¹⁸ and David Vassar Taylor's *African Americans in Minnesota* (2002).¹¹⁹ The emergence of digital technologies also influenced the study of Minnesota's history. Interactive Mapping tools, online collections, and digital archives have made historical research more accessible. Digital history projects, such as the University of Minnesota's *Mapping Prejudice* project or the Minnesota Historical Society's "MNopedia," provided new platforms for sharing and disseminating historical knowledge.

¹¹⁶ William Millikan, *A Union Against Unions: The Minneapolis Citizens Alliance and Its Fight Against Organized Labor, 1903-1947* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2001).

¹¹⁷ Theodore Blegen and Philip D. Jordan, *With Various Voices: Recordings of North Star Life* (United States: Itasca Press, 1949).

¹¹⁸ Hyman Berman, *Jews in Minnesota* (United States: Minnesota Historical Society Press-Ips, 2009).

¹¹⁹ David Vassar Taylor, *African Americans in Minnesota* (St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2002).

As stated previously, the rise of social history and the influence of the Civil Rights Movement in the Midwest brought attention to issues of race, gender, and class. The study of civil rights in Minnesota has been recent and very limited, possibly due to the small number of Black Americans living in the state for much of Minnesota's history. There are, however, significant dissertations on the fight for equal rights in Minnesota, including dissertation candidate Michiko Hase's "W. Gertrude Brown's Struggle for Racial Justice: Female Leadership and Community in Black Minneapolis, 1920-1940" (1994)¹²⁰ and Meagan A. Manning's "Committing a Movement to Memory: Media, Civil Rights, and American Collective Memory" (2015).¹²¹ Other significant works on civil rights in Minnesota include writings from William D. Green. He devoted his career to writing about race and Minnesota and published four books: *A Peculiar Imbalance: The Fall and Rise of Racial Equality in Early Minnesota* (2008),¹²² *Degrees of Freedom: The Origins of Civil Rights in Minnesota* (2015),¹²³ *The Children of Lincoln: White Paternalism and the Limits on Black Opportunity* (2018),¹²⁴ and *Nellie Francis: Fighting for*

¹²⁰ Michiko Hase, "W. Gertrude Brown's Struggle for Racial Justice: Female Leadership and Community in Black Minneapolis, 1920-1940," PhD dissertation. University of Minnesota, 1994.

¹²¹ Meagan A. Manning, "Committing a Movement to Memory: Media, Civil Rights, and American Collective Memory," PhD dissertation. University of Minnesota, 2015.

¹²² William D. Green, *A Peculiar Imbalance: The Fall and Rise of Racial Equality in Early Minnesota* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2008).

¹²³ William D. Green, *Degrees of Freedom: The Origins of Civil Rights in Minnesota, 1865–1912* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015).

¹²⁴ William D. Green, *The Children of Lincoln: White Paternalism and the Limits of Black Opportunity in Minnesota, 1860–1876* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018).

Racial Justice and Women's Equality in Minnesota (2021).¹²⁵ Others wrote about the personal struggle for civil rights in Minnesota. Fondly referred to as the "First Lady of Minnesota Civil Rights," community organizer and activist for African American rights, Josie Johnson provided a first-hand account of her struggle for equal rights in her autobiography *Hope in the Struggle: A Memoir* (2019).¹²⁶

In specifically looking at Minnesota's social history, research is focused on the experiences and interactions of ordinary people, including cultures, social structures, institutions, and everyday lives. Historians have explored various themes within Minnesota social history, reflecting changing historiographical trends and the evolving understanding of the state's past. Early historical narratives of Minnesota, such as the ones listed above, paid little attention to the social dynamics of everyday people. Early social history focused on ethnicity and immigration, as in the early twentieth century Minnesota experienced significant immigration, particularly from Scandinavia, Germany, and other European countries. Historians such as June Holmquist in her work *They Chose Minnesota: A Survey of the State's Ethnic Groups* (1981)¹²⁷ examined the experiences of these immigrant communities, their contributions to the state's development, and the challenges they faced in adapting to American society. In the early 2000s, the People of Minnesota series published by the Minnesota Historical Society Press began releasing works on specific groups of people in Minnesota, such as Carlton Qualey's *Norwegians in Minnesota*

¹²⁵ William D. Green, *Nellie Francis: Fighting for Racial Justice and Women's Equality in Minnesota* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2021).

¹²⁶ Josie Johnson, *Hope in the Struggle: A Memoir* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019).

¹²⁷ June Drenning Holmquist, *They Chose Minnesota: A Survey of the State's Ethnic Groups* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1981).

(2002),¹²⁸ Kathleen Neils Conzen's *Germans in Minnesota* (2003),¹²⁹ and Anne Gillespie Lewis's *Swedes in Minnesota* (2004).¹³⁰

Starting in the 1970s, the field of women's history gained prominence, leading to the exploration of women's roles and contributions in Minnesota. Historians examined women's suffrage movements, activism, and their involvement in various social, cultural, and political spheres. Research such as Barbara Stuhler and Gretchen Kreuter's *Women of Minnesota: Selected Biographical Essays* (1977),¹³¹ Barbara Stuhler's *Gentle Warriors: Clara Ueland and the Minnesota Struggle for Woman's Suffrage* (1995),¹³² and Linda Mack Schloff's *And Prairie Dogs Weren't Kosher: Jewish Women in the Upper Midwest Since 1855* (1996)¹³³ highlighted the diverse experiences and challenges faced by women in different periods of Minnesota's history.

One critical aspect of social history relevant to this dissertation was the civil rights era, which sparked a renewed interest in studying social movements, race relations, and activism in Minnesota. Historians examined the experiences of African Americans, Native Americans, and other marginalized communities, documenting their struggles for equality and justice. They also

¹²⁸ Carlton Chester Qualey, *Norwegians in Minnesota* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press-Ips, 2010).

¹²⁹ Kathleen Neils Conzen, *Germans in Minnesota* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2009).

¹³⁰ Anne Gillespie Lewis, *Swedes in Minnesota* (St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2009).

¹³¹ Barbara Stuhler and Gretchen Kreuter, *Women of Minnesota: Selected Biographical Essays* (St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1998).

¹³² Barbara Stuhler, *Gentle Warriors: Clara Ueland and the Minnesota Struggle for Woman Suffrage* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1995).

¹³³ Linda Mack Schloff, *And Prairie Dogs Weren't Kosher: Jewish Women in the Upper Midwest Since 1855* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1996).

explored the impact of social movements, such as the fight for racial desegregation in Minnesota. This dissertation is about the racial covenants and redlining in the Twin Cities of Minnesota that emerged in the Progressive Era. The limited historiography on the impact of racial covenants and housing discrimination in Minnesota has been a more recent focus, but includes dissertation work from doctoral candidates such as Brittany Lewis's 2015 work "Manufacturing Urban America: Politically Engaged Urban Black Women, Renewed Forms of Political Censorship, and Uneven Landscapes of Power in North Minneapolis, Minnesota,"¹³⁴ Kari McClure Mentzer's 2022 "Birthing Minnesota: The Associations of Structural Racism and Neighborhood Characteristics with the Health of Minnesota's Birthing Population, Pregnancy through Postpartum,"¹³⁵ or even Thadeus Joseph Shio's 2006 "Housing Experiences of Somali Immigrants in the Twin Cities, Minnesota: A Housing Careers Perspective."¹³⁶ In recent decades, there has been a shift towards local and community studies within Minnesota social history. Historians have focused on specific communities, neighborhoods, and regions within the state to examine their unique social dynamics, cultural practices, and the intersection of local and broader historical processes. This approach allows for a more distinct understanding of the complexities of Minnesota's social history.

¹³⁴ Brittany Lewis, "Manufacturing Urban America: Politically engaged urban black women, renewed forms of political censorship, and uneven landscapes of power in North Minneapolis, Minnesota," PhD dissertation. University of Minnesota, 2015.

¹³⁵ Kari Mentzer, "Birthing Minnesota: The Associations of Structural Racism and Neighborhood Characteristics with the Health of Minnesota's Birthing Population, Pregnancy through Postpartum," PhD Dissertation. University of Minnesota, 2022.

¹³⁶ Thadeus Joseph Shio, "Housing experiences of Somali immigrants in the Twin Cities, Minnesota: A housing careers perspective," PhD Dissertation. University of Minnesota, 2006.

A brief historiography on the history of racial equality in Duluth, Minnesota is important to consider as well, since the topic stands outside of much of the research done on the metropolitan Twin Cities. While not exclusive to the city of Duluth, William D. Green's book *Degrees of Freedom: The Origins of Civil Rights in Minnesota, 1865-1912* (2015)¹³⁷ covers race relations in Minnesota, including Duluth. Richard Hudelson and Carl Ross's book *By the Ore Docks: A Working People's History of Duluth* (2006)¹³⁸ offers insights into the labor history of Duluth, including the experiences of immigrant and minority workers in the city's industries. Michael Fedo's *The Lynchings in Duluth* (2016)¹³⁹ provides a comprehensive account of the 1920 lynching of three African American men in Duluth, providing insight into the historical context, events leading up to the lynching, and its aftermath, a brutally significant event in the history of Black Americans in Duluth. Similarly, John D. Wright's book *Duluth's History of Lynching: 'Getting Even' and 'Legitimate Justice'* (2018)¹⁴⁰ examines the Duluth lynchings within the broader context of racial violence and vigilantism in the United States. He explores the social, economic, and political factors that contributed to the lynching and its impact on the Duluth community.

¹³⁷ William D. Green, *Degrees of Freedom: The Origins of Civil Rights in Minnesota, 1865–1912* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015).

¹³⁸ Richard Hudelson and Carl Ross, *By the Ore Docks: A Working People's History of Duluth* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

¹³⁹ Michael W. Fedo, *The Lynchings in Duluth* (St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2016).

¹⁴⁰ John D. Wright, *Duluth's History of Lynching: 'Getting Even' and 'Legitimate Justice'* (London, United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

Racism and Real Estate Historiography

As this dissertation examines the impact that racial covenants and residential segregation have had, it is important to examine the historiography of racism in real estate nationwide, as there has been much analysis on this topic done by historians, economists, and sociologists. There have been numerous scholars who have conducted research on this topic, shedding light on discriminatory practices, segregation, and unequal access to housing opportunities based on race. Early historiography on racism in real estate often focused on the period of racial segregation under Jim Crow. These studies examined the emergence of racially restrictive covenants, contractual agreements that prohibited the sale or rental of property to individuals of certain racial or ethnic backgrounds. Rose Helper's *Racial Policies and Practices of Real Estate Brokers* (1969),¹⁴¹ George Lipsitz's *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics* (1998),¹⁴² Jeffrey D. Gonda's *Unjust Deeds: The Restrictive Covenant Cases and the Making of the Civil Rights Movement* (2015),¹⁴³ and Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor's *Race for Profit: How Banks and the Real Estate Industry Undermined Black Homeownership* (2019)¹⁴⁴ investigate how racism and white privilege shaped housing policies and access to homeownership.

¹⁴¹ Rose Helper, *Racial Policies and Practices of Real Estate Brokers* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1969).

¹⁴² George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998).

¹⁴³ Jeffrey D. Gonda, *Unjust Deeds: The Restrictive Covenant Cases and the Making of the Civil Rights Movement* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015).

¹⁴⁴ Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, *Race for Profit: How Banks and the Real Estate Industry Undermined Black Homeownership* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2019).

Another significant aspect of the historiography is the examination of federal housing policies and their impact on racial segregation. Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton's *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass* (1993),¹⁴⁵ Tom Sugrue's *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (1996),¹⁴⁶ and Richard Rothstein's *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America* (2017)¹⁴⁷ each examine the role of government policies, such as redlining, racially restrictive covenants, and discriminatory lending practices, in perpetuating residential segregation and racial inequality, as well as the consequences of segregation on communities. Scholars explored the interconnections between housing, education, and wealth disparities, illustrating how historical racial inequalities in real estate have had long-lasting effects on social and economic mobility.

Similarly, Ira Katznelson's *When Affirmative Action Was White: An Untold History of Racial Inequality in Twentieth Century America* (2006),¹⁴⁸ Kevin Kruse's *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (2013),¹⁴⁹ and Matthew Lassiter's *The Silent Majority:*

¹⁴⁵ Douglas S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1993).

¹⁴⁶ Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1996).

¹⁴⁷ Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of how our Government Segregated America* (London; New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, a division of W.W. Norton & Company, 2017).

¹⁴⁸ Ira Katznelson, *When Affirmative Action was White: An Untold History of Racial Inequality in Twentieth Century America* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006).

¹⁴⁹ Kevin Michael Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2013).

Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South (2013)¹⁵⁰ all examine aspects of racial discrimination and segregation in the United States during the mid-twentieth century. Specifically, they address how discriminatory practices were embedded within various policies and social structures, leading to the perpetuation and even reinforcement of racial inequalities despite the civil rights movement's efforts to dismantle segregation and discrimination. Kruse and Lassiter's work focus on cities or areas of the South specifically.

Along these lines, this dissertation will examine the impact of racial covenants and residential segregation on Minnesota's public education system. There are several dissertation articles written about Minnesota education as well, including Ramona Lee (Milczark) Fadness's 2000 "Comparative Study of Two Urban and Suburban Schools: Minnesota Basic Standards Tests,"¹⁵¹ Jennifer Lynn Trost's 2016 "Uneven Access: Dual Enrollment Programs and Students of Color in Minnesota,"¹⁵² and Heather Lindstrom's 2018 "Teaching Inside the Box: A Phenomenological Study of Correctional Teachers Working in Segregation/ Restrictive Housing Units."¹⁵³ The literature gap that this research hopes to fill, though, is making the connection between the racial covenants that emerged in the Progressive Era and the highly segregated public school system seen today in Minnesota.

¹⁵⁰ Matthew D. Lassiter, *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013).

¹⁵¹ Ramona Lee (Milczark) Fadness, "Comparative Study of Two Urban and Suburban Schools: Minnesota Basic Standards Tests," PhD dissertation. University of Minnesota, 2000.

¹⁵² Jennifer Lynn Trost, "Uneven Access: Dual Enrollment Programs and Students of Color in Minnesota," PhD diss., University of Minnesota, 2016.

¹⁵³ Heather Jileen Lindstrom, "Teaching Inside the Box: A Phenomenological Study of Correctional Teachers Working in Segregation/Restrictive Housing Units," PhD diss., University of Minnesota, 2018.

Methodology and Conclusions

The researcher's primary methodology for conducting research and analysis in this area includes investigating social and cultural historical issues based on chronology. The research will reconstruct and interpret circumstances and events to better understand the sources of contemporary problems. Historical investigation will begin far enough back in time to determine distant causes' roles in generating the currently observed impact. Evidence will come mainly from historical sources such as newspaper articles, personal accounts, sociological surveys, legislation, and Supreme Court rulings, as well as historical and contemporary statistical analysis. This analytical approach will help reexamine legislative, housing, and educational records to check the assertions against evidence or data. This historical data will guide the historical questions and research procedures.

This dissertation seeks to fill a significant historiographic gap: it will touch multiple methodologies as a Midwest Civil Rights, cultural, social, and educational partisanship contribution to the body of scholarship. Exploring the connection between racial covenants and the fight for Civil Rights in Minnesota sheds light on their impact on the Twin Cities, the long-lasting racial inequity in the state, and the highly segregated schools and neighborhoods seen today, along with the high educational achievement gap based on race. In the records of Minnesota's history lies a narrative of segregation that not only shaped the physical landscape of its cities but also entrenched disparities in education and fractured communities. The racial covenants that first emerged in 1910 built the bedrock of housing segregation that led to segregated neighborhoods, perpetuating cycles of inequality that persist to this day. The consequences of this systemic segregation extend far beyond the confines of residential boundaries, infiltrating the corridors of education where the harsh realities of racial imbalance

often betray the promise of equal opportunity. By examining the interconnectedness of housing policies, school integration efforts, and community development, this study uncovers the roots of inequality and proved how Minnesota failed students of color in its attempt to address the schools and race challenge.

This dissertation contends that the historical legacy of housing segregation in Minnesota continues to reverberate through its educational institutions and communities, perpetuating cycles of disadvantage for marginalized populations. The racial covenants that forced African Americans to live in select neighborhoods caused segregated schools, which the government neglected at both a state and local level. By the time the government began to address de facto segregation in the 1960s and 1970s, simply establishing a minority enrollment percentage for schools to meet was not enough. Central to this argument were the integration efforts of these decades, which, while aiming to dismantle the barriers of segregation, inadvertently burdened Black students with the responsibility of integration. Forced busing policies, coupled with the closure of predominantly Black schools, disrupted communities and exacerbated educational disparities, evidenced by continued low test scores and high dropout rates among children of color. Furthermore, the construction of freeways, ostensibly for connectivity, disproportionately targeted Black neighborhoods, severing vital ties and deepening the wounds of segregation.

Understanding the history, causes, and impact of racial covenants and housing segregation in the Twin Cities is vital to understanding the structure of Minneapolis-St. Paul today and why schools and neighborhoods look the way they do. The urban development of Duluth similarly influences its public education system. Significantly, this trend in Minnesota is not unique to the state, but reflects a broader, nationwide trend of segregation and discrimination. By studying how systemic segregation impacts homeownership, income, and schools in

Minnesota today, one can observe reflections of what occurred throughout the nation during this time.

Chapter Two will explore the early history of African Americans in Minnesota and answer the question of when Minneapolis and St. Paul became the foundation of the Black community. The Progressive Era and the racial covenants that began to emerge in the 1910s will provide a specific focus on understanding better examples of housing segregation that developed. Over time, racial covenants laid the groundwork for contemporary patterns of residential segregation. By the latter half of the twentieth century, three relatively small areas had developed large concentrations of Black residents: the Near North and Southside neighborhoods of Minneapolis and the Rondo neighborhood of St. Paul. There is a direct linkage between those developments and today's modern zoning plans. This chapter will explore the patterns of residential segregation in the Twin Cities, answering the question of how racial covenants spread and impacted the structure of the Minneapolis-St. Paul region. Lastly, this chapter will look at the history of education in the state and then explore the connection between segregated neighborhoods and the increase in highly segregated schools over the past twenty-five years.

Chapter Three will explore St. Paul's unique educational history of being the only school district in Minnesota with a policy legally segregating Black students from white. It will also uncover the impact of residential segregation that forced African Americans into the Rondo neighborhood and then the decision to demolish the area for freeway construction, which not only severed physical connections but also fractured the social bonds that bound the community together. By analyzing the effects of segregation in schools such as Maxfield Elementary, Webster Magnet School, Central High School, and Benjamin E. Mays School, this chapter will illuminate the intersectionality of housing segregation, educational disparities, and freeway

construction in shaping the trajectory of St. Paul's Black community.

Chapter four will seek to uncover and explain the impact of segregation on both housing and education for Black residents of Minneapolis, confined to areas such as the South Side and the Near North neighborhoods. The chapter explores how these neighborhoods, just like the Rondo neighborhood, were shattered by the intrusion of highways, slicing through predominantly Black homes and businesses, and how historically Black schools, including Central High School, North High School, Bryant Junior High School, Field Elementary, and Bethune Elementary, bore the brunt of school integration plans. The research will lay bare the reality of Minneapolis's segregated public schools, where minority enrollments far exceeded district averages, and the disparities in educational quality, as evidenced by low test scores and high dropout rates among children of color in Minneapolis.

Chapter Five will prove that the barriers marginalized communities face can be explained by Duluth's intertwined histories of segregation, education, and urban development. Where chapters three and four uncovered the history of segregation in housing and its impact on education, along with the impact of freeways and school integration plans in the large, metropolitan cities of St. Paul and Minneapolis, chapter five, in contrast, focuses on Minnesota's historically third-largest city of Duluth. The chapter will discuss Duluth's unique geography and history of segregation and its impact, revealing the extent of racism and redlining in what started as a small industrial town in the far reaches of the Upper Midwest, a region often overlooked because the history of racism in the South and large metropolitan areas of the North looms so large. Despite differences in geography and scale, chapters three, four, and five will illuminate the enduring impact of segregation in Minnesota's cities of St. Paul, Minneapolis, and Duluth and the consequences seen in their school systems.

Chapter 2

Navigating the North Star State: African American Struggles for Equality in Minnesota from Reconstruction to Today

On May 25, 2020, George Floyd, a forty-six year-old African American resident of Minneapolis, Minnesota, found himself at the heart of a tragic incident in a city supposedly known for its hospitality and warmth, often referred to as “Minnesota Nice.” Accused of using a counterfeit twenty-dollar bill, Floyd's encounter with the police turned fatal as officers wrestled him to the ground. The nation witnessed in horror as one officer pressed his knee against Floyd's neck for a harrowing eight minutes. The resulting outrage swiftly engulfed not only Minneapolis but cascaded across the state and beyond, igniting protests in numerous cities across the United States. In the ensuing months, the unrest persisted, marked by loss of life, property, and a profound disillusionment with the notion of progress towards racial equality and justice in the nation.¹⁵⁴

As the nation watched, a general feeling of helplessness set in; already, the coronavirus had taken fundamental freedoms of public “normalcy” away. The wearing of masks, the limitations of services, the postponing or closing of entertainment venues and events, and the shuttering of places of worship combined to create a surreal blending of mourning, fear, anger, and frustration, with little if any help from news pundits, career politicians, or even clergy. In Minnesota and across the nation, individuals found themselves grappling with pivotal questions like, “How did we get here?” and “What can we do about it?” Delving into the history of the Civil Rights Movement in Minnesota provides insights into these inquiries and sheds light on the tireless efforts of activists striving for racial equality and justice since the era of Reconstruction.

¹⁵⁴ Evan Hill, et al., “How George Floyd was Killed in Police Custody,” *The New York Times*, May 31, 2020, updated January 24, 2022.

This chapter delves into the historical journey of African Americans in Minnesota, exploring their activism and the development of residential segregation. It then investigates the relationship between racial covenants and Minnesota's current state of education. The early history of African Americans in Minnesota spans several centuries and is a complex and multifaceted story. Although their presence and contributions have often been overlooked or marginalized, African Americans played a significant role in shaping the state's history.¹⁵⁵ This chapter traces the progress and persistent challenges African Americans encountered in living in Minnesota, outlining the fight by activists for equal treatment and protection under the law, specifically in the areas of housing and education, from Reconstruction through today.

In Minnesota, the fight for racial justice unfolded from relentless grassroots activism and unwavering determination, driven by pioneering leaders such as Fredrick L. McGhee, Lena O. Smith, Nellie Stone Johnson, Reverend Denzil A. Carty, Harry Davis, Josie Johnson, and

¹⁵⁵ The civil rights movement in Minnesota grew out of a century of grassroots efforts in a long struggle for racial justice. There are significant dissertations on the fight for equal rights in Minnesota, including dissertation candidate Michiko Hase's "W. Gertrude Brown's Struggle for Racial Justice: Female Leadership and Community in Black Minneapolis, 1920-1940" (1994) and Meagan A. Manning's "Committing a Movement to Memory: Media, Civil Rights, and American Collective Memory" (2015). Other significant works on the role of African Americans in Minnesota history include writings from William D. Green. He devoted his career to writing about race and Minnesota and published four books: *A Peculiar Imbalance: The Fall and Rise of Racial Equality in Early Minnesota* (2008), *Degrees of Freedom: The Origins of Civil Rights in Minnesota* (2015), *The Children of Lincoln: White Paternalism and the Limits on Black Opportunity* (2018), and *Nellie Francis: Fighting for Racial Justice and Women's Equality in Minnesota* (2021). Community organizer and activist Josie Johnson provided a first-hand account of her struggle for equal rights in her autobiography *Hope in the Struggle: A Memoir* (2019). The limited historiography on the impact of racial covenants and housing discrimination in Minnesota includes dissertation work from doctoral candidates such as Brittany Lewis's 2015 work "Manufacturing Urban America: Politically Engaged Urban Black Women, Renewed Forms of Political Censorship, and Uneven Landscapes of Power in North Minneapolis, Minnesota," Kari McClure Mentzer's 2022 "Birthing Minnesota: The Associations of Structural Racism and Neighborhood Characteristics with the Health of Minnesota's Birthing Population, Pregnancy through Postpartum," and Thadeus Joseph Shio's 2006 "Housing Experiences of Somali Immigrants in the Twin Cities, Minnesota: A Housing Careers Perspective."

countless others. From the 1930s onward, these visionaries, alongside the resilience of Black churches, the increased impact of Black newspapers, and the legal advocacy of dedicated organizations, waged a protracted battle against the forces of segregation and discrimination. As the civil rights movement gained momentum, the scars of residential segregation in the Twin Cities, as well as in Duluth, bore testament to a profoundly entrenched divide perpetuated by the presence of racial covenants written into property deeds and discriminatory housing practices. These divides not only delineated neighborhoods but also set the stage for pervasive segregation in educational institutions, where attendance zones mirrored the lines of segregation in housing.

Recent reports have cast a harsh spotlight on the disturbing trend of increasing school segregation within the Minnesota metropolitan area. Despite claimed progress in achieving educational equity, the widespread existence of highly segregated schools highlights ongoing challenges in addressing persistent inequalities, which can be traced directly to Minnesota's school integration plan of the 1960s and 1970s—the Department of Education set parameters for schools around minority enrollment percentages, which they tied to funding. Schools created busing plans to integrate white and Black schools to meet the percentage requirements. However, students of color bore the brunt of integrating predominantly white schools, with many bussed out of Black neighborhoods, resulting in the closure of numerous predominantly Black neighborhood schools. Furthermore, while schools worked to keep the right racial mix, many did not insist that the school serve their students of color in the same way they served their white students.

To World War I

To first develop the historical narrative, examining specific individuals who exemplified this struggle is essential. One such figure is George Bonga, recorded as the first Black person to

reside in what would become the state of Minnesota. He was born on December 10, 1802, in the region that eventually became Minnesota; his father, Pierre Bonga, worked as an African American fur trader and his mother, Monique, belonged to the Ojibwe (Chippewa) tribe. George actively pursued a career as a fur trader and became a respected guide and translator.¹⁵⁶ George Bonga's birthplace is thought to be in present-day Duluth, Minnesota, or its vicinity, although specific details are not well-documented. Bonga played a significant role in the early history of the fur trade in the Minnesota region and helped foster relations between Native American tribes and European-American traders. For example, during his life, George married two Ojibwe women, strengthening the bonds between mixed racial and cultural groups, trading companies, and Native Americans.¹⁵⁷

According to historical accounts, George's grandfather, Jean Bonga, was transported to the North by a British officer following the American Revolution. Upon the officer's demise, Jean was granted freedom, subsequently building a family and immersing himself in the fur trade. He passed down his legacy to his descendants, including his son and grandsons. Notably, Minnesota attained statehood only in 1858. Nevertheless, George Bonga's birth and his significant contributions to the region's narrative mark him as a noteworthy figure, recognized as the first Black individual born in the territory that would later become the state of Minnesota.

The Bonga family did not stand alone as a Black family in Minnesota. Since its establishment as a state in 1858, Minnesota prohibited slavery through its Constitution, which

¹⁵⁶ George Bonga, "The Letters of George Bonga," *Journal of Negro History* 12, no. 1 (January 1927): 42.

¹⁵⁷ "Bonga, George (ca. 1802–1874)," MNopedia, Minnesota Historical Society, October 29, 2012. Accessed June 4, 2023. <https://www.mnopedia.org/person/bonga-george-ca-1802-1874>.

declared, "there shall be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude in the state,"¹⁵⁸ affirming Minnesota's commitment to being a free state upon its admission to the Union. Consequently, African Americans flocked to Minnesota in search of better prospects and a brighter future. According to United States census data, Minnesota's population in 1850 included a Black population of zero point six percent. They numbered only thirty-nine in 1850, yet by the end of the decade, the territory's African American population had increased to 259.¹⁵⁹ While the Black population in early Minnesota may have been relatively small, it made significant contributions to the state's social, cultural, and political landscape. Black individuals were among the early settlers in Minnesota during the nineteenth century, and Black churches played a crucial role in the lives of early Black Minnesotans. These churches provided spiritual and social support and often served as centers for community organization and activism. Prominent Black churches, such as St. Peter Claver Church in St. Paul, have a rich history in Minnesota.

Even before the Civil War, groups of African Americans migrated to Minnesota. They settled in various regions of southeastern Minnesota during the early 1800s and then journeyed northward along the Mississippi River. Some sought refuge from the hardships of slavery, while others pursued opportunities in this "free" land.¹⁶⁰ For many, the prospects in Minnesota revolved around acquiring farmland, while others aspired to become barbers. For instance, a man named Ben Day exemplified this pursuit by actively participating in the Faribault Chorus and

¹⁵⁸ Constitution of the State of Minnesota, art. 1, sec. 2.

¹⁵⁹ William D. Green, "Minnesota's Long Road to Black Suffrage, 1849-1868," *Minnesota History* 56, no. 2 (1998): 70.

¹⁶⁰ Carter Godwin Woodson, An Excerpt from *A Century of Negro Migration* (Digital Public Library of America, 1918), 168-169.

operating a barbershop in Faribault.¹⁶¹ Despite the northern ideals of freedom, the Minnesota legislature passed several laws in 1840 and 1850 curbing the rights of Black Americans in the state. In 1849, lawmakers granted suffrage rights to "persons of a mixture of white and Indian blood" who "adopted the habits and customs of civilized men," but no one moved to consider Black Minnesotans the same right.¹⁶² There was an exponential impact. By outright denying Black men the right to vote, the law also barred them from serving on county juries, since jurors were selected from voting lists, and barred them from serving as referees in civil cases because such candidates had to be qualified as jurors. A subsequent law in 1853 prohibited Black participation in town meetings. While white Minnesota legislators passing these laws might have argued they were not racist but logical increments of citizenship, these laws perpetuated intentional systemic anti-Black sentiment, and their cumulative effect increasingly restricted the rights of Minnesota's free Black inhabitants.

The allure of free land offered by the Homestead Act of 1862 enticed many immigrants traveling to Minnesota, particularly those from Germany and Scandinavia, drawn to the state's fertile soil and promising prospects. While some African Americans attempted to take advantage of this opportunity for individuals to claim and settle public land, most African Americans faced challenges and limitations that affected their ability to benefit fully from the act's provisions. African Americans faced pervasive racial discrimination and prejudice during this period, both on a systemic and individual level. They encountered significant barriers in their efforts to claim

¹⁶¹ *Ben Day (Center) With Other Members of the Faribault Chorus*, 1882, Photograph, Rice County Historical Society Archives, <https://rchistory.org/?s=ben+day>.

¹⁶² Green, "Minnesota's Long Road," 70; "From Minnesota. St. Paul, Aug. 23." *Northern Independent*, August 28, 1862.

and settle land. Discrimination in the form of segregated communities, limited access to resources and opportunities, and racist attitudes among white settlers hindered African Americans from fully participating in the homesteading process. Despite the obstacles, some African Americans in Minnesota and other parts of the country managed to homestead and build communities successfully. They established self-sufficient farms, churches, schools, and mutual aid societies, creating a support network within their communities.¹⁶³ For Minnesota, the act caused a surge in population, resulting in rapid agricultural expansion, the establishment of new towns and communities, and a flourishing of activity.

The year 1865 was characterized by turbulent events. The American Civil War had come to an end after four terrible years. Abraham Lincoln was handily reelected president but assassinated within a few months. Radical Republicans prepared a series of reconstruction laws in Congress but clashed with Lincoln's successor, Andrew Johnson of Tennessee, a Democrat, and former slaveholder whose temperament led to a heated battle between the executive and legislative branches. The end of slavery in 1865 ushered in a new era of uncertainty for Americans, and Black Americans waited to see whether their freedom could translate into full citizenship. A significant transformation occurred within the United States during this Reconstruction Era that lasted from the American Civil War until 1877. During this time, the United States grappled with integrating millions of newly freed African Americans into the established social, political, and labor systems. While Reconstruction had many positive benefits in the North, such as rapid industrialization, increased opportunities, and economic flourishing, there was also widespread racism, discrimination, and segregation towards newly freed Blacks.

¹⁶³ B. F. Crary, "Minnesota Conference and Slavery," *Northern Independent*, November 8, 1860.

In Minnesota, by 1868, when the state finally approved Black suffrage after a protracted struggle, approximately 700 Blacks were living in the state.¹⁶⁴

In the aftermath of the Civil War, some African Americans moved to Minnesota in search of better economic prospects and an escape from oppressive racial conditions. The majority of them settled in urban areas like Minneapolis and St. Paul. It was then, during the era of Reconstruction, that Minnesota underwent notable changes and developments. Before Reconstruction, the African American population in the state was relatively small compared to other regions. Though Minnesota's rebuilding process differed from that of the Southern states, it encountered unique challenges and obstacles during the post-Civil War period. Although Minnesota did not confront the same challenges related to slavery and racial tensions as the Southern states, it was not exempt from racial discrimination and inequality. Despite being a free state, instances of prejudice and segregation prevailed, particularly towards African Americans and indigenous communities. Discriminatory practices in housing, employment, and education limited opportunities for minority groups.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, Minnesota legislators passed major legislative milestones to advance civil rights for African Americans. Many of these laws paralleled the national narrative of Reconstruction when the federal government attempted to rebuild the Southern states and address the issues of slavery, civil rights, and the reintegration of Southern states into the Union. Ratified in 1865, the Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution abolished slavery throughout the United States.¹⁶⁵ That same year in Minnesota, the

¹⁶⁴ Green, "Minnesota's Long Road," 70.

¹⁶⁵ Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, passed by Congress on January 31, 1865, and ratified on December 6, 1865.

Act Prohibiting Racial Discrimination in Public Places was passed.¹⁶⁶ This law aimed to prevent racial discrimination in public accommodations, such as hotels, restaurants, and theaters. It made it illegal to deny access to services based on a person's race.

Nationally, in 1865, Congress enacted the establishment of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, aimed at providing aid, education, and assistance to newly emancipated African Americans, facilitating their transition to freedom. Additionally, in 1866, Congress passed a Civil Rights Act in response to the implementation of Black Codes by Southern states, which curtailed the rights and liberties of African Americans. This Act aimed to ensure equal rights and legal protection for all citizens, irrespective of race or color. Similarly, in 1868, the Fourteenth Amendment was incorporated into the U.S. Constitution, conferring citizenship upon all individuals born or naturalized in the United States, including formerly enslaved individuals, and guaranteeing them equal protection under the law. In January 1868, the Minnesota Legislature voted to ratify the Fourteenth Amendment, securing the voting rights and political participation of its citizens.¹⁶⁷ Subsequently, in March of the same year, Minnesota lawmakers narrowly passed the Equal Suffrage Amendment, granting Black men in the state the right to vote, hold public office, and serve on juries.¹⁶⁸ This made Minnesota one of the few states to voluntarily extend suffrage to Black citizens prior to the enactment of the Fifteenth

¹⁶⁶ Act Prohibiting Racial Discrimination in Public Places (1865), Pub. L. No. 123, 39th Cong., 1st Sess. (1865).

¹⁶⁷ U.S. Constitution, Fourteenth Amendment, 1868.

¹⁶⁸ Constitution of the State of Minnesota, amend. 1, 1868.

Amendment, which, ratified in 1870, prohibited the denial of voting rights based on race, color, or previous servitude.¹⁶⁹

The Republican Party dominated Minnesota's politics during Reconstruction. A vital part of the party's platform was supporting African American rights and ensuring their political participation. Minnesota became the first state to ratify the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, which granted citizenship rights to African Americans and provided equal protection under the law. In 1865, in a vote strictly along party lines, Republicans in both houses of the Minnesota legislature passed a bill that proposed a referendum to strike the word "white" from the suffrage provision in the state constitution. The bill passed despite strong opposition from the Democrats. With the Black population of Minnesota only a fraction of one percent of the total population, the issue was one of principle, not of political expediency. Still, there were notable achievements regarding early civil rights activity for African Americans in the state. In the political discussion surrounding Black suffrage, the Minnesota House received a petition on January 10, 1865, signed by members of the Golden Key Club, a literary organization for Black men in St. Paul.¹⁷⁰ This action marked the first concerted effort by Minnesota's Black population to secure its voting rights. R. T. Grey, M. Jernigan, and Ed James, three of the principal signers, would become officers of the Sons of Freedom, Minnesota's first statewide Black civil rights organization.¹⁷¹ Then, in 1866, the Republican-controlled state legislature adopted a series of

¹⁶⁹ U.S. Constitution, Fifteenth Amendment, 1870.

¹⁷⁰ *St. Paul Daily Press*, 20 Jan. 1865. For information on the Golden Key Club, see *St. Paul Daily Press*, 8 Jan. 1865.

¹⁷¹ William D. Green, *A Peculiar Imbalance: The Fall and Rise of Racial Equality in Early Minnesota* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2008), 70.

resolutions by expressing the belief “that Southern traitors, vanquished in arms, were still hostile.”¹⁷² Thus the legislature demanded that freedom and civil rights be granted to all people, regardless of race, declaring that Minnesota would look to Congress for the actual policy of Reconstruction.

During Reconstruction, Minnesota witnessed some critical political and social changes. The state saw an increase in African American migration, with many freed slaves moving to Minnesota seeking better opportunities and a chance to escape racial discrimination in the South. African Americans settled primarily in urban areas such as St. Paul and Minneapolis, where they faced challenges related to racial segregation and limited economic opportunities. The success of the fight for Black suffrage campaign showed the value that some of Minnesota’s most prominent leaders placed on Black citizenship. This success made African Americans optimistic about confronting their race's immense challenges. Still, “even with the ballot their small numbers undercut their ability to leverage the potential of a Black voting bloc into real political power. Indeed, the ballot alone could not help them attain full opportunity.”¹⁷³ As Richard Kluger wrote about the national condition of African Americans, “[T]he Black man was clearly going to need help to make his freedom a fact as well as a right.”¹⁷⁴

According to William D. Green, the situation was no different in Minnesota. Black citizens still needed the support of influential white Republicans. In this period, “Black

¹⁷² Minnesota, *House Journal*, 1866, 295–97; Minnesota, *Senate Journal*, 1866, 242.

¹⁷³ Green, *Degrees of Freedom*, 70.

¹⁷⁴ Richard Kluger, *Simple Justice: The History of Brown V. Board of Education and Black America's Struggle for Equality* (United Kingdom: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2011), 43.

Minnesotans, like African Americans throughout the North, began to celebrate racial pride through organized social and educational activities, and as a community without capital, they relied on white patrons for many such activities."¹⁷⁵ During this period, the Sons of Freedom, Minnesota's first statewide Black civil rights organization, helped address critical issues such as jobs skills, property ownership, and record-keeping of educational progress. These three areas, in particular, were where Black Minnesotans faced discrimination, and for a people recently emancipated from slavery, living in a society that stigmatized them because of their Black skin, equality in these areas could potentially make all the difference.

In 1869, Minnesota legislation took crucial steps towards desegregating public schools, making it one of the first states to prohibit racial segregation in public schools explicitly. The passing of this legislation marked a significant milestone in ensuring equal educational opportunities for all students.¹⁷⁶ The passing of the "Act to Authorize the Establishment of Separate Schools for Colored Children" in 1867 had allowed school districts to create separate schools for African American students if they wished to do so.¹⁷⁷ However, this legislation neither mandated nor required the establishment of segregated schools. In 1869, Minnesota legislation backtracked, addressing the issue of school segregation with the passage of the "General School Law." This law prohibited racial discrimination in schools and affirmed that all children, regardless of race or color, had the right to attend public schools.

¹⁷⁵ Green, *Degrees of Freedom*, 70.

¹⁷⁶ Minnesota, General Laws of Minnesota, 1869, Chapter XX, "Desegregation Act," § 1.

¹⁷⁷ Minnesota, Laws of Minnesota, 1867, Chapter XX, "Act to Authorize the Establishment of Separate Schools for Colored Children," 1.

While this law marked a significant step toward desegregation, its implementation varied across different school districts in the state. In practice, some school districts in Minnesota persisted in maintaining segregated schools despite the legal changes. These schools, often underfunded, offered inferior educational opportunities compared to their white counterparts. African American students encountered substantial barriers to accessing quality education, often attending under-resourced and segregated schools. Discrimination was a fact of life in the Minneapolis and St. Paul school districts and the Twin Cities at large. The desegregation of schools in Minnesota was a gradual and complex process that extended well beyond 1869. The Civil Rights Movement in the mid-twentieth century was crucial in further advancing desegregation efforts across the United States, including in Minnesota. Overall, while Minnesota school districts took some specific measures to address school segregation in 1869, achieving complete and effective desegregation of schools in the state required many more years of legal and social activism.

Great Migration to Minnesota

At the end of the Civil War, Republican Senator Waitman T. Wiley of West Virginia recognized that the federal government could not realistically secure for freedmen and -women the full enjoyment of new opportunities if they were to stay in the South.¹⁷⁸ Rather, freedmen and -women should relocate to Northern and western states. Wiley proposed an amendment authorizing the Commissioner of the Freedmen's Bureau to initiate correspondence “with the Governors of States, the municipal authorities of the States, with the various manufacturing

¹⁷⁸ Green, *Degrees of Freedom*, 51.

establishments, and farmers and mechanics,” to begin the process of relocation.¹⁷⁹ He argued that the government should provide homes for newly freed people, as well as employment at fair compensation and equal treatment.¹⁸⁰ Wiley argued that this would not only benefit the newly emancipated populations, but areas of Northern and western states that had labor shortages due to workers off fighting in the Civil War. He wrote, “It seems to me that here is a proposition which will accomplish more good for the freedmen, find them more homes and better compensation and with a great deal less trouble and expense, than the whole machinery when it is in the fullest operation will ever find for them upon the abandoned plantations in the South.”¹⁸¹ While the amendment never passed, many agreed with Wiley’s sentiments.

What made an amendment such as the one proposed by Wiley even more untenable was the widespread anti-Black sentiment in the North. Since the start of emancipation efforts in 1862, “Black migration to the North had been a controversial issue, and though many freedmen had made their way north, there was strong opposition to government actions to assist their relocation.”¹⁸² Thus, Minnesota’s Black population remained small. By 1870, 759 African Americans, many laborers, lived in Minnesota.¹⁸³ Forty years later, eight point seven percent of the African American population in Minnesota lived in rural areas. Still, Black families operated

¹⁷⁹ *Congressional Globe*, 38th Congress, 1st sess., Senate, June 28, 1864, 3329.

¹⁸⁰ Green, *Degrees of Freedom*, 51.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸² Green, *Degrees of Freedom*, 55.

¹⁸³ David V. Taylor, “Blacks,” in *They Chose Minnesota: A Survey of the State’s Ethnic Groups*, ed. June Drenning Holmquist (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1981), 87, citing U.S. Census 1860-80.

only twenty-nine farms out of 156,137. The families, or operators, owned only sixteen of these, and the “combined acreage owned by Blacks was only 2,362, a decrease of nearly 2,000 acres from 1900.”¹⁸⁴ While numerous Norwegian, Swedish, German, Welsh and English immigrants settled on Minnesota’s farmland in the late 1800s, no settlements of Black homesteaders existed during the same period.¹⁸⁵

In each of the two decades after 1860, the Black population of Minnesota more than doubled. From a total of 259 Blacks in the state in 1860, the number rose to 759 in 1870 and 1,564 in 1880. Ramsey County, home to the state’s largest city of St. Paul, was the area of greatest concentration, with 198 Black residents in 1870 and 491 in 1880, followed closely by Hennepin County, where the city of Minneapolis is located, with 190 Black residents in 1870 and 476 by 1880. In 1870, four counties contained 484 out of the 759 Black residents in the state, or almost sixty-four percent; in 1880, five counties contained 1,132 out of a Negro population of 1,564, or seventy-two percent.¹⁸⁶ The concentration of Black families and individuals in St. Paul and Minneapolis became increasingly apparent through the Reconstruction era.

Although Blacks occasionally settled in other Minnesota counties and towns, their history in the state continued primarily in Ramsey and Hennepin Counties, particularly in what now constitutes the Twin Cities. Many African American men, in particular, were also recruited to Duluth in northeastern Minnesota. As early as 1869, African Americans moved north to help build portions of the railroad in Duluth. The April 1870 census described the city’s population as

¹⁸⁴ David V. Taylor, “Blacks,” 87.

¹⁸⁵ Green, *Degrees of Freedom*, 61.

¹⁸⁶ United States Census, 1870, Compendium, (Washington, 1872), 12, 60; United States Census, 1880, Compendium, Part 1, (Washington, 1883), 356.

predominantly male and foreign, with a higher concentration of African Americans than many other industrial Minnesota towns. At least a quarter of the city's African American population had come to Duluth to work at the steel plant before and after World War I, encouraged by recruiters who scoured the South, promising good jobs to all.

The high concentration of Blacks in the Twin Cities, though, increased the contact between whites and Blacks and among Blacks themselves and made for solidarity where little or none had existed.¹⁸⁷ In response to the increasing Black population, social, cultural, and religious institutions multiplied. By the mid-1880s, literary societies, women's clubs, fraternal associations, and civil rights groups were all present. The success of the *St. Paul Appeal*, an African American newspaper founded in 1885, most obviously measured the health of the community.¹⁸⁸ Originating to serve as a news and information outlet for the growing educated Black community in the upper Midwest, the newspaper aimed to provide both local and national news coverage while also serving as a platform for promoting Black-owned businesses through local advertising. Although initially launched in St. Paul, *The Western Appeal*, dropping *Western* from its title in 1889, rapidly expanded its readership to encompass Minneapolis. Interestingly, *The Appeal* was decidedly Republican in tone, a stance that often was at odds with the views of its intended audience. Although the Republican Party dominated Minnesota's politics during Reconstruction, never voting Democratic from statehood until 1932, since then, it heavily leaned Democratic, with only three exceptions in 1952, 1956, and 1972 when it voted Republican.

¹⁸⁷ Earl Spangler, "A History of the Negro in Minnesota," PhD diss., University of Oklahoma, 1961, 55.

¹⁸⁸ Jon Butler, "Communities and Congregations: The Black Church in St. Paul, 1860-1900," *The Journal of Negro History* 56, no. 2 (1971): 119.

The Appeal, at its start, included personal news of interest for the Black community in the area, such as marriage announcements and obituaries. Regular columns on the African American community, along with advertising for African American merchants and services like hotels, restaurants, and barber shops, were also featured. However, *The Appeal* became one of the most successful African American newspapers in the Midwest when it began writing forceful editorials for the rights of African Americans. The editor and sole proprietor, John Quincy Adams, brought new life and vitality to the newspaper.¹⁸⁹ Over time, however, with Adams' ties to the Republican Party and after siding with Booker T. Washington in the split between Washington and Du Bois, the newspaper became less relevant politically and regionally.¹⁹⁰ In 1925, the newspaper merged with the *Northwestern Bulletin*, another Black-owned newspaper in St. Paul. However, shortly after the merger, they shut down, ending one of the longest-running publications of its kind in the upper Midwest.

Groups such as literary societies, civil rights groups, and fraternal associations were rivaled in age and activity by the community's oldest religious institutions, Pilgrim Baptist Church, founded in 1864, and St. James African Methodist Episcopal Church, founded in 1877. One of Minnesota's oldest African American churches, Pilgrim Baptist Church, was located in St. Paul. In 1863, a group of around fifty escaped enslaved people led by Robert Thomas Hickman began worshiping together. They migrated from Boone County, Missouri, to St. Paul, traveling via the Underground Railroad during the Civil War. They referred to themselves as "pilgrims" as they journeyed by boat and organized themselves as a church upon arrival and

¹⁸⁹ "About *The Appeal*. [volume] (Saint Paul, Minn.) 1889-19??," *Library of Congress*. <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83016810/>.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

settlement in St. Paul. In 1928, the church moved to a new building located in the Rondo neighborhood of St. Paul, struggling after the construction of Interstate 94 divided the neighborhood in the late 1950s.¹⁹¹ Leaders of Pilgrim Baptist actively and outspokenly fought against discrimination and advocated for equality in education, pushing for the integration of schools in the Twin Cities, helping African Americans achieve the right to vote, and supporting pedestrian bridges over Interstate 94. Descendants of the original group of "pilgrims" who migrated via the Underground Railroad still worship at Pilgrim Baptist today.¹⁹²

Similarly, St. James African Methodist Episcopal, or AME, Church is a historically Black church claiming to be the first African American-founded church in Minnesota. The church's website traces its roots back to 1863, the year of the Emancipation Proclamation, describing how the church was born as an outgrowth of prayer meetings among the free men and women of African descent residing in the city known then as St. Anthony Falls (today Minneapolis).¹⁹³ The church relocated several times due to the expansion of the Interstate highway system. The church leadership was a strong advocate for equality, partnering with political and other faith-based organizations in the areas of fair housing and providing for the needs of the community they served. With support from churches working with civil rights groups, women's groups, and fraternal associations, Blacks "gained educational and political rights...and took a more active

¹⁹¹ The events and impact of the construction of Interstate 94 through the predominantly black neighborhood of Rondo in St. Paul is discussed in detail in chapter three.

¹⁹² Kayla Schott-Bresler, "Pilgrim Baptist Church, Saint Paul, Minnesota (1863-)," *BlackPast.org*. April 29, 2014. <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/pilgrim-baptist-church-saint-paul-minnesota-1863/>.

¹⁹³ "Mother St. James AME Church," Accessed September 27, 2023. <https://www.motherstjames.com/about.html>.

interest in their own welfare, one that was often shared by those who guided the social and political destinies of the state and community.”¹⁹⁴ Over time, Blacks became “better integrated into the civic and political life of Minnesota.”¹⁹⁵

The Minnesota Civil Rights Act of 1872 expanded upon the earlier act of 1865 and extended protection against racial discrimination to other areas, including housing and employment. It was one of the earliest comprehensive civil rights laws in the United States. Then, in 1885, the Equal Accommodations Act was passed, which allowed African Americans equal access to all public places, such as restaurants and hotels.¹⁹⁶ While these acts were excellent progress in theory, in reality, they were often not enforced. For instance, in 1897, William Hazel, already a noted architect and stained-glass artist, was refused a hotel room in St. Paul because he was Black. When he protested, authorities arrested him, though he quickly filed a lawsuit and won.¹⁹⁷ While the jury decided in favor of Hazel, he was awarded only twenty-five dollars in damages plus nineteen dollars in costs.¹⁹⁸ At the time, many Black leaders concluded that “the sentiment of the white community in fact had been tested and that it had failed, as

¹⁹⁴ Spangler, “A History of the Negro in Minnesota,” 57.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁶ *Equal Accommodations Act*, Public Accommodations Law 363A.11, *Minnesota Statutes* (1885).

¹⁹⁷ Green, *Degrees of Freedom*, 154-156.

¹⁹⁸ *William A. Hazel v. Michael E. Foley & Thomas J. Foley (Foley Brothers)*, 25515 Civil Court of the Second Judicial District, State of Minnesota, Judgment, October 17, 1887, Ramsey County Courthouse, St. Paul.

indicated by the meager award.”¹⁹⁹ Hazel’s award was far from sufficient to cover the expenses incurred.

At the same time as the Hazel case, another case in Minneapolis was ongoing involving a Black man named Hamilton, who had assaulted a white man for defaming the honor of his wife. An all-white jury acquitted Hamilton.²⁰⁰ The *Western Appeal*, a noted African American weekly newspaper published in St. Paul, Minnesota, proudly commented, “These two cases are the most important ones which have occurred in the history of the twin cities in years, and we have won both, thank God!”²⁰¹ Legislative actions during the 1800s demonstrate Minnesota’s early attempts at commitment to civil rights. While there were undoubtedly ongoing challenges and struggles, these laws laid the foundation for equal treatment and protection under the law for all citizens.

During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Minnesota’s Black population made tremendous social and economic progress. They by no means achieved full equality, but they witnessed significant improvement over the conditions of their predecessors. Examples of this progress included expanding publications and increasing participation in politics. A few entered colleges, both on the undergraduate and graduate levels. Black professional men became respected leaders in the community. Employment opportunities improved, but not without instances of discrimination and restriction. Furthermore, the outbreak of the First World War during this period gave Black men an opportunity to show their patriotism and to take pride in

¹⁹⁹ *Western Appeal*, October 22, 1887, 1, columns 1-2. See also Taylor, “John Quincy Adams,” 292 n36.

²⁰⁰ Green, *Degrees of Freedom*, 156.

²⁰¹ *Western Appeal*, October 22, 1887, 1, column 1.

the fact that some, although with continued discrimination and great difficulty, became commissioned officers.²⁰²

By 1890, the Black population of Minnesota had grown to 3,683, representing an increase of 2,119 from 1880. These numbers also indicated a relatively high birth rate since twenty-seven point five percent were Minnesota-born in 1890 as opposed to twenty-four point four percent in 1880.²⁰³ Migration into Minnesota from other parts of the country also added to the population. Undoubtedly, “the end of Reconstruction and the subsequent reestablishment of white supremacy in the South led many [Blacks] to migrate to Minnesota and other northern states. Further economic progress and the passage of favorable civil rights legislation (and conversely the absence of restrictive legislation) also contributed to the migration of [Blacks] to Minnesota.”²⁰⁴ From the 1890s to the 1920s, the United States underwent intense social and political reforms aimed at improving the ills of society. However, bettering the plight of African Americans continued, for the most part, to be ignored. African American reformers then decided to use this time to expose and fight for equal rights, including activists such as Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. Du Bois, Ida B. Wells, and many others.

The subsequent presentation of Civil Rights activist biographies provides background and understanding for the public reading about their lives and impact. In Minnesota, prominent, well-educated men like Frederick L. McGhee led the fight for equal rights. Born into slavery in Mississippi, McGhee became the first Black lawyer in the state of Minnesota. His family escaped

²⁰² Spangler, “A History of the Negro in Minnesota,” 82.

²⁰³ United States Census, Abstract. 1890, (Washington, 1896), 11.

²⁰⁴ Spangler, “A History of the Negro in Minnesota,” 82-83.

slavery during the Civil War with Union troops and settled in Tennessee, where Fredrick earned his education, eventually graduating with a law degree from Knoxville College in 1885.

Overcoming many of the barriers recently freedmen faced during Reconstruction, McGhee was determined to succeed and make a difference for himself and his family. Moving with his brothers to Chicago, he trained under experienced lawyers, met his wife, got married, and then moved to Minnesota, where he became the first Black lawyer in the state admitted to the bar. Upon arrival in Minnesota, he settled in St. Paul and bought a house on University Avenue.²⁰⁵ St. Paul was quickly becoming the state's social and cultural center for African Americans. In Minnesota, he was a criminal defense lawyer and became one of the most famous trial lawyers in the Twin Cities at the time.

Upon achieving statehood in 1858, Minnesota swiftly plunged into the turmoil of the Civil War and the Dakota War of 1862. When McGhee arrived in the state, the illusion of opportunity existed for Blacks in Minnesota. Notably, Minnesota spearheaded Black suffrage rights, marking a significant milestone. Throughout the 1880s, Minnesota offered a relatively less hostile environment for Black residents compared to the South.²⁰⁶ Black men enjoyed voting rights, held public office, and experienced greater social integration with whites than their counterparts in Southern states. However, despite strides in the economic, political, and

²⁰⁵ *Frederick McGhee House*, 1918, in St. Paul Historical (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society), ID 114. The home is no longer there, but it was quite the showplace at the time.

²⁰⁶ David V. Taylor, "John Quincy Adams: St. Paul Editor and Black Leader," *Minnesota History* 43, (Winter 1973): 283, 291.

educational spheres following civil rights legislation in the 1870s and 1880s, the social standing of most Black Minnesotans remained largely unchanged.²⁰⁷

McGhee's life and impact in Minnesota are very early examples of civil rights advocacy for African Americans. As early as the late 1880s, McGhee was attempting to improve the lives of his fellow African Americans. He knew firsthand the horrors of slavery but also the opportunities that could be and were beginning to be available to Black men. As an attorney, McGhee worked to make a difference in the lives of individual African Americans, defending them and their legal rights.²⁰⁸ Considered his most famous case, McGhee successfully secured clemency for Lewis Carter on November 26, 1889. Carter was a Black soldier for the Union Army, falsely accused of a crime. McGhee was able to prove Carter's innocence and win clemency.²⁰⁹

McGhee was also an active member of his community and church. He attended St. Peter Claver Church, first located on Market & 5th, where the Saint Paul Hotel is today. However, in 1892, the Saint Peter Claver congregation grew and needed to move to a larger church. The congregation purchased land at Rice Street, near University Avenue and McGhee's home. However, some of the neighbors in the area were against the purchase and use by African

²⁰⁷ Kevin J. Golden, "The Independent Development of Civil Rights in Minnesota: 1849-1910," *William Mitchell Law Review* 17, no. 2 (1991): 456-457.

²⁰⁸ Minnesota Civil Rights Committee, Fredrick L. McGhee, and Adam Matthew, "Address of the Minnesota Civil Rights Committee to the American Public," (Digital Firm Appeal, St. Paul, Minnesota, 1891). Report of a committee of African Americans living in Minnesota in which they describe their effort to challenge the constitutionality of segregated coach laws.

²⁰⁹ Lewis Carter, Frederick L. McGhee, and the United States, "Court Martial and Pardon Petition Rr-1188 Carter Lewis 6w4" (Record Group 153 Judge Advocate General (Army), Dept. of Dakota, Fort Snelling, Minnesota, 1889).

Americans, so instead, the new church was built near the streets of Farrington and Aurora. McGhee was one of the members who signed the church's incorporation documents in 1892.²¹⁰ Interestingly, McGhee is remembered as being a convert to Catholicism at a time when African Americans were overwhelmingly Protestant.²¹¹

In the broader scope of the Civil Rights Movement, McGhee left his most enduring imprint at the national level. Collaborating with influential early civil rights figures like W.E.B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington, McGhee forged significant connections and partnerships in the pursuit of African American advancement. Together, they played instrumental roles in founding the National Afro-American Council, the nation's inaugural civil rights body, established in 1898 in Rochester, New York.²¹² McGhee played an essential role in organizing the council's national gathering in St. Paul in 1902. However, tensions emerged during the conference, resulting in a divergence of views between Washington and McGhee regarding the council's trajectory. Ultimately, Washington assumed leadership of the organization, prompting McGhee to sever ties with both the Afro-American Council and Washington in 1903.²¹³

Following these developments, in 1905, McGhee embarked on the monumental task of establishing the Niagara Movement, assuming the role of its chief legal officer. This movement

²¹⁰ Minnesota Secretary of State, *Incorporation Document for the Church of St. Peter Claver*, Colonel Samuel Hardy and Frederick L. McGhee (St. Paul, Minnesota: Minnesota Secretary of State, 1892).

²¹¹ Paul D. Nelson, *Fredrick L. McGhee: A Life on the Color Line, 1861-1912* (Saint Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2017), 4.

²¹² Green, *Degrees of Freedom*, 204.

²¹³ Booker T. Washington, *Booker T. Washington Correspondence, 1903-1916, 1933 and undated* (David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University).

held immense significance as it laid the groundwork for the subsequent formation of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1909. The Niagara Movement advocated for a more assertive approach in combating racial discrimination and segregation, thus serving as a precursor to the broader civil rights movement. In a speech, Du Bois attributed the inception of the Niagara Movement to McGhee, affirming, “The credit for founding the organization goes to F. L. McGhee, who initially proposed it.”²¹⁴

McGhee was one of the early activists who helped to surrender the character and resources of the fight for civil rights in Minnesota to the needs of the growing national struggle.²¹⁵ The amount of discrimination faced by Blacks in the state seemed insignificant when compared to the enormous obstacles faced by Southern Blacks, such as the lack of the right to vote. What Minnesota's Blacks had gained in the early fight for civil rights at the state level, “they gained by their own efforts in spite of their limited numbers and resources. At the turn of the century, they were prepared to direct their efforts toward the national movement.”²¹⁶ Although the African American fight to end discrimination did not immediately result in changes to federal legislation, it did bring about several impactful changes for African Americans. Washington, Du Bois, Wells, McGhee, and countless others contributed to this effort, which ultimately paved the way for the protests of the Civil Rights Movement sixty years later.

²¹⁴ William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, *W. E. B. Du Bois Speaks: Speeches and Addresses*, (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), 144.

²¹⁵ Golden, "Civil Rights in Minnesota," 465.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

Through World War II

Throughout the first two decades of the twentieth century, Blacks in Minnesota encountered both progress and persistent challenges. From 1900 to 1910, another significant increase in the Black population was recorded, as the census of 1910 listed 7,084 Blacks in Minnesota.²¹⁷ Even with the rise, by 1910, the Black population constituted merely zero point three percent of Minnesota's total, mirroring the percentage from 1890. While there was an increase in the number of Blacks in the state, the state's population overall was increasing at a rate that did not reflect a more equal status for Black citizens. However, "better civil rights protection through favorable legislation at the turn of the century and further progress in industry and employment" helped increase the Black population in the state.²¹⁸ For instance, the 1920 census recorded 8,809 Black individuals in Minnesota, marking an increase of 1,725. Although this uptick was relatively significant, it paled compared to previous increases. The Black population still represented only zero point four percent of Minnesota's total, showing only a marginal increase.²¹⁹ The increase after 1910 was, according to Spangler, "undoubtedly the result of movement to the North during World War I when a premium was placed upon unskilled labor. This migration to the North began in 1915 and continued unabated until 1918, reaching its maximum in 1917."²²⁰

²¹⁷ United States Census, Abstract, 1910, (Washington, 1913), 601.

²¹⁸ Spangler, "A History of the Negro in Minnesota," 84.

²¹⁹ United States Census, Abstract, 1920. (Washington, 1923), 151.

²²⁰ Spangler, "A History of the Negro in Minnesota," 84.

The population figures for 1910 and 1920 illustrate how Blacks concentrated in Minnesota's industrial and urban areas during the first quarter of the twentieth century. In 1910, there were 3,144 Blacks in St. Paul and 2,592 in Minneapolis. A decade later, the figures for the same cities were 3,376 in St. Paul and 3,927 in Minneapolis.²²¹ In other words, in 1910 and 1920, eighty-eight percent of Minnesota Blacks were living exclusively in what is today referred to as the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul. Since Black families and individuals began arriving in the state, this condition existed, and it has continued. The Black population of Minnesota, like that of virtually every other northern state, was overwhelmingly urban historically, and that has not changed significantly. According to Spangler, “this concentration affected social problems arising from race contact and also created more political repercussions than if there had been a dispersal of Blacks throughout the rural areas of the state. Very few Blacks went to rural areas in the Upper Midwest, and Minnesota was no exception.”²²²

Despite Minnesota's Black population experiencing a minor increase compared to states like Illinois or Michigan, it still rose by 149 percent during that period.²²³ In 1900, approximately 5,000 African Americans resided in Minnesota, but by the end of the Great Migration in 1970, this number had escalated to nearly 35,000.²²⁴ Similar to the Civil War era, African Americans

²²¹ United States Census, Abstract, 1910, (Washington, 1913); United States Census, Abstract, 1920, (Washington, 1923).

²²² Spangler, “A History of the Negro in Minnesota,” 86.

²²³ “African Americans in Minnesota,” MNopedia, Minnesota Historical Society, July 26, 2017. Accessed November 10, 2023. <https://www.mnopedia.org/african-americans-minnesota>.

²²⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, Minnesota Census of the Population: Characteristics of the Population, June 1973. Report Number Volume 1, generated by Alexis Jones, using [data.census.gov](https://data.census.gov/cedsci/); <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>. (10 March 2023).

arrived in the state and actively sought employment in factories and mills located in major cities such as Minneapolis and St. Paul, effectively addressing labor shortages. Many Blacks relocating to Northern cities fared relatively well during the boom years of the Reconstruction Era, working and ascending in many cases to the middle class.²²⁵ However, the bulk of the population remained “trapped in urban poverty and confined in inferior housing and menial and unskilled jobs.”²²⁶ In Minnesota, additional challenges for the Black community included the influx of European immigrants and discrimination by employers and unions alike.²²⁷

Thus, the Progressive Era in Minnesota was not necessarily a time of progress as it did not lead to significant change for African Americans regarding racial equality and civil rights. One indication of some progress for the Black population was the expanding number of professional men who pursued their careers in Minnesota and became leaders in many local and national civil rights organizations. An outstanding example is Frederick L. McGhee, discussed previously. The increased number of Black lawyers, doctors, ministers, and editors reflected a greater college enrolment among young Blacks. In absolute terms, this figure was small, for while many schools could not legally exclude Blacks, there were ways to reject or discourage them. Many of the earlier Minnesota Black leaders attended colleges outside of Minnesota. Nevertheless, the increasingly greater number of Black college graduates, with their higher status in the community and greater possibilities for advancement, had its impact upon the state.²²⁸ Yet,

²²⁵ Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 472.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*

²²⁷ *Ibid.*

²²⁸ Spangler, “A History of the Negro in Minnesota,” 99.

despite the broader progressive reform movements of the time, racial discrimination and segregation persisted in many aspects of life for African Americans in the state during significant events such as the Progressive Era, World War I, and the onset of the Great Migration.

Racial discrimination sometimes escalated into violence, as tragically exemplified on June 15, 1920, in Duluth, Minnesota. False accusations led to the arrest of six young Black men, accused of raping a white woman. That night, a mob forcibly seized Elias Clayton, Elmer Jackson, and Isaac McGhie from the Duluth city jail, lynching them. The following day, the Minnesota National Guard arrived to restore order and safeguard the remaining three Black prisoners. Despite outward calm, fear gripped Black residents, who remained indoors, barricaded behind locked doors, wary of further violence.²²⁹ The nationwide outcry echoed in newspaper headlines, with many shocked that such brutality occurred in Minnesota, a northern state. The *Chicago Evening Post* wrote of the event, “This is a crime of a Northern state, as Black and ugly as any that has brought the South in disrepute. The Duluth authorities stand condemned in the eyes of the nation.”²³⁰ An article in the *Minneapolis Journal* accused the lynch mob of putting “an effaceable stain on the name of Minnesota,” stating, “The sudden flaming up of racial passion, which is the reproach of the South, may also occur, as we now learn in the bitterness of humiliation in Minnesota.”²³¹

²²⁹ “Duluth Lynchings,” Minnesota Historical Society, Accessed July 28, 2023. <https://www.mnhs.org/duluthlynchings/lynchings>.

²³⁰ Chicago Evening Post quoted in “Minnesota’s Disgrace,” *The Appeal* (St. Paul, Minnesota), June 19, 1920, p 2.

²³¹ “The Duluth Disgrace,” *Minneapolis Journal*, June 17, 1920, p. 18.

The outrage extended to many white and Black residents of Duluth. Prominent Black citizen Milton W. Judy, a dentist, expressed deep shame, declaring, “Duluth has suffered a horrible disgrace, a blot on its name that it can never outlive.”²³² Reverend William M. Majors of St. Marks A.M.E., a pivotal institution in the city's Black community, joined other clergy in condemning the lynchings, demanding severe punishment for the mob members. The *Duluth Ripsaw* echoed these sentiments, vehemently denouncing the lynchings and calling for a “thorough house-cleaning” and “elimination of every yellow member” of the police department who failed to protect the Black men from the mob.²³³ The lynchings left many Black residents enraged and horrified, prompting some to leave Duluth. Between 1920 and 1930, while Duluth's overall population increased by 2,000 people, the Black population decreased by sixteen percent.²³⁴ Some relocated to the Twin Cities, while others sought refuge in more distant locales, such as California.

Black residents who stayed in Duluth established a local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. The formation of the Duluth Branch of the NAACP took place in September of 1920 and boasted an initial membership of sixty-nine

²³² “Duluth’s Sad Experiment,” *National Advocate* (Minneapolis, Minnesota), July 3, 1920, p. 1.

²³³ “The City’s Shame,” *The Duluth Ripsaw* (Duluth, Minnesota), June 26, 1920, p. 2.

²³⁴ US Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920*. Volume III (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1922), 508; US Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930*. Volume III (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1932), 1203.

individuals.²³⁵ Their inaugural speaker was Dr. W.E.B. Du Bois, who addressed a sizable audience in Duluth on March 21, 1921.²³⁶ The lynching served as a catalyst for Minnesota's African American community to advocate for a state law against such atrocities. Nellie Francis, a prominent activist of African heritage from St. Paul, spearheaded the initiative. Enacted on April 21, 1921, the legislation authorized the dismissal of law enforcement officers who failed to safeguard individuals in their custody from mob violence. Furthermore, the law mandated compensation for the families of lynching victims.²³⁷ The passage of this legislation marked a significant triumph for Minnesota's African American community.

The African American community in Minnesota, much like marginalized groups nationwide, endured considerable hardships during the economic downturn known as the Great Depression, spanning from 1929 to the late 1930s. Widespread unemployment and poverty characterized this era, with African Americans bearing a disproportionately heavy burden. They frequently found themselves at the forefront of layoffs or faced barriers to employment opportunities. Particularly in the industrial and agricultural fields, Black workers grappled with dire financial straits, struggling to secure employment to sustain themselves and their families. Throughout Minnesota, pervasive racial discrimination and segregation compounded these challenges, with many employers showing preference for white workers. Such biases deepened

²³⁵ National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, *Eleventh Annual Report of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, For the Year 1920* (New York: National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, January 1921), 21, 32-33.

²³⁶ Ethel Ray Nance, *Oral history interviews of the Minnesota Black History Project, 1970-1975*, Minnesota Historical Society; "Races Dependent Upon Each Other, Says Dr. Du Bois," *Duluth Herald*, March 22, 1921, 11.

²³⁷ "Duluth Lynchings," Minnesota Historical Society, Accessed July 28, 2023. <https://www.mnhs.org/duluthlynchings/lynchings>.

existing disparities in unemployment. Moreover, Black employees often received inferior wages compared to their white counterparts, exacerbating the struggle to navigate the economic crisis.

Despite facing significant challenges, the Black community in Minnesota, like many others across the country, showed remarkable resilience and strength during the Great Depression. Churches, fraternal organizations, and community groups played a crucial role in supporting and assisting those in need. Mutual aid societies and charitable organizations helped provide struggling families with food, clothing, and other essential resources. The hardships experienced during the Great Depression spurred increased activism and organization within the Black community in Minnesota. African Americans, along with other marginalized groups, began to demand social and economic justice more forcefully. Civil rights organizations such as the NAACP gained momentum during this period, advocating for equal rights and fair treatment.

Now, many historians date the Civil Rights Movement from the mid-1950s to the late 1960s. The Long Civil Rights Movement argues the length and influence of the Civil Rights Movement.²³⁸ Jacquelyn Dowd Hall's article "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past" (2005) challenged the conventional narrative that typically associates the beginning of the Civil Rights Movement with milestones such as the *Brown vs. Board of Education* case in 1954, Martin Luther King Jr., the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Instead, Hall argued that the movement's origins trace back to the 1930s and 1940s.

The Civil Rights Movement in Minnesota grew from a century of grassroots efforts, constituting a long struggle for racial justice. Leaders from the Black community in Minnesota,

²³⁸ John A. Salmond, "'The Long and the Short of it': Some Reflections on the Recent Historiography of the Civil Rights Movement," *Australasian Journal of American Studies* 32, no. 1 (2013): 53.

such as Fredrick L. McGhee, previously discussed in this paper, as well as Lena O. Smith, Nellie Stone Johnson, Reverend Denzil A. Carty, Harry Davis, and Josie Johnson, discussed subsequently in detail, led the battle. As early as the 1930s, they actively coincided with ministers and congregations of black churches bringing their people together. Black newspapers served as trusted voices for Minnesota's diverse Black communities, championing voices and stories that might have otherwise gone unheard. Legal organizations also actively took up the fight for racial justice. At the core of these battles were the fights against segregation, discrimination, police brutality, and lynching.

At the end of World War II, after Black soldiers had risked their lives to save the world, they returned to Minnesota only to find themselves deprived of fundamental civil rights and equality. At this time, civil rights activists' scattered, grassroots efforts began to consolidate into a more significant, unified effort. The Minnesota NAACP and Urban League chapters joined other national organizations to work toward full equality for African Americans. Using political, judicial, economic, and legislative means, activists fought housing and education discrimination, racially motivated violence, Black unemployment, and racial discrimination in public areas. There was widespread housing discrimination in the Twin Cities, and racial violence occurred when Blacks moved into white neighborhoods. The first Black female attorney in Minnesota, Lena O. Smith, challenged discrimination in court. But discrimination continued.

During the 1920s and 1930s, Lena O. Smith gained prominence as a civil rights lawyer and activist. She made significant contributions toward securing civil rights for minorities in the Twin Cities. Smith arrived in Minneapolis with her family in 1907 at age twenty-one. Smith's career challenged the Twin Cities' racial norms before becoming a lawyer. In downtown Minneapolis, she co-owned a hair salon with a white woman. Then, she became a realtor, a

profession known for its blatant racial prejudice and the restriction of the sale of homes to African Americans. Driven by the racism in real estate practices, Smith pursued her legal education at Northwestern College of Law, graduating in 1921. She joined the ranks of only nine known African American attorneys practicing law in Minneapolis between 1890 and 1927. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, she was the sole African American woman with a law practice in the Twin Cities.²³⁹

In 1925, Smith was crucial in establishing the Urban League in Minneapolis. By 1930, she achieved another milestone by becoming the first woman president of the Minneapolis NAACP. She worked hard as an attorney to ensure equal protection under the law for the Black community in the Twin Cities. In the 1930s, amidst the Great Depression, the federal government implemented various relief programs to address the economic crisis, such as the New Deal programs initiated by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. During the Great Depression, African Americans in Minnesota, like many other Americans, faced severe economic hardships. Unemployment rates soared, and poverty was widespread. African Americans often experienced discrimination and limited access to employment opportunities, exacerbating their financial struggles. The New Deal implemented various programs to address the economic crisis, and some of these initiatives positively impacted African Americans. The Works Progress Administration (WPA) and Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) provided job opportunities for many individuals, including African Americans, in construction, public works projects, and conservation efforts. These programs helped alleviate some of the economic difficulties faced by African Americans in Minnesota.

²³⁹ Peter J. DeCarlo, "Smith, Lena Olive (1885–1966)," MNopedia. Minnesota Historical Society, April 4, 2014. Accessed December 8, 2023. <https://www.mnopedia.org/person/smith-lena-olive-1885-1966>.

However, these programs were not consistently administered fairly to Black communities by the government. Discrimination and segregation persisted within relief efforts, with African Americans frequently encountering fewer benefits and more significant obstacles in accessing relief funds, job opportunities, and housing assistance. This pattern extended across Minnesota and mirrored conditions nationwide. Despite occasional positive shifts, racial discrimination and segregation endured, limiting African Americans' access to housing, education, and public amenities, thus hindering their overall advancement. Employment and military service were also marked by discrimination, although the onset of World War II presented some avenues for African Americans to serve in the armed forces and improve their social standing. The experiences and progress of African Americans between the 1920s and the 1960s varied significantly; while some individuals managed to make strides and capitalize on opportunities, others continued to face formidable barriers and systemic disadvantages.

A key civil rights activist and labor organizer in the 1920s, 30s, and 40s was Nellie Stone Johnson, who was born and raised in Minnesota and grew up on a dairy farm near Hinckley. She was the oldest of seven children, and she recalled in an interview that the Johnson family was the only Black family in the area at the time.²⁴⁰ Even though few Blacks lived and owned land in northern Minnesota, Johnson remembers that she thought her family life growing up was pretty good. She states, “I heard about people not having enough to eat and a place to live, but this never occurred to me that it really happened to people, because as far as I remember we always had plenty enough to eat, milk to drink, and plenty of chickens to eat and everything else. We

²⁴⁰ Nellie Stone Johnson, Minnesota Civil Rights Activist, Interview by David Vassar Taylor, (Minneapolis, MN, July 15, 1975), 3.

butchered our own beef and all of our pork.”²⁴¹ She grew up in a home with solid support for education - her grandmother and mother were teachers, and her father was a school board member at the school she attended.

At the age of seventeen, she left home to move to Minneapolis. After finishing her studies, she opened Nellie's Shirt and Zipper Repair in the Lumber Exchange Building.²⁴² While owning and operating a business, Johnson continued her interest in politics and education. She served on the Minnesota Higher Education Board and participated in public service to advance minority concerns and equal opportunities for all people. She led workers' rights and organized labor in the 1930s and 40s, becoming the founder and organizer of the Hotel and Restaurant Employees International Union, Local 665. She would serve as the Union's first woman vice-president, as well as the first woman vice-president of the Minnesota Culinary Council.²⁴³ Most significantly, she was the first Black person elected to citywide office in Minneapolis when, in 1945, she won a seat on the Minneapolis Library Board.²⁴⁴

Johnson helped to shape Minnesota politics for over seventy years, such as helping to form the Minnesota Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party or DFL. Her father had been one of the organizers of the Farmer-Labor Party. Johnson remembered that “he was probably one of the

²⁴¹ Ibid, 4.

²⁴² Elizabeth M. Wehrwein, *Nellie Stone Johnson at Nellie's Shirt and Zipper repair, Lumber Exchange Building 1035, Minneapolis*, 1980, in *Minneapolis: Minnesota Historical Society*, November 1980, 04028-18A.

²⁴³ Nellie Stone Johnson and David Brauer, *Nellie Stone Johnson: The Life of an Activist, as told to David Brauer* (St. Paul: Ruminator Books, 2000), 88.

²⁴⁴ La Shawn B. Kelley, *Inspiring African American Women of the Civil Rights Movement: 18th, 19th, and 20th Centuries*, (United Kingdom: Xlibris US, 2015): 82.

charter members in the state of Minnesota because he was very interested in the Nonpartisan League movement, which came out of North Dakota prior to the Farmer-Labor Party.”²⁴⁵ She recalled that was the beginning of her interest as well because she read all the publications from the NPL, even distributing literature for the League on her way to school. Eventually, she was a part of merging the Democratic Party and the Farmer-Labor Party, where she stated, “I was very excited about it. We were able to give working people the right to organize and Black people the right to go to school and work and not be hung from the nearest tree.”²⁴⁶

As a DFL State Executive Board Member, Johnson made a lasting legacy. She helped to create the state and local Fair Employment Practices departments.²⁴⁷ These would later become the Minneapolis Civil Rights Commission, which promotes and protects the civil rights of the people of Minneapolis, and the state Human Rights Department, which serves as the state's civil rights enforcement agency. Johnson would never feel that her work was done. In later years, she was often interviewed about her life and accomplishments. In an interview with the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, she stated, "I'm still very much a radical. I've always defined a radical as someone not satisfied with the status quo. And I'm definitely not satisfied with the status quo. Sixty-five percent unemployment in the Black community – how can I not be a radical?"²⁴⁸ Even up until a few years before her death, she said, "I'm not going to quit. There is too much to do. People need

²⁴⁵ Johnson, Interview by Taylor, 5-6.

²⁴⁶ Chuck Haga, “50 years, few cheers. In busy election year, DFL birthday passing quietly,” *Star Tribune*, April 15, 1994, 1 (B).

²⁴⁷ Ethel V. Mitchell, *Contributions of Black Women to Minnesota History* (United States: Mason Publishing Company, 1977), 82.

²⁴⁸ James Lileks, “They still see red – Nellie Stone Johnson” *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, 1 May 1988, 6 (E).

jobs, equality, education. We still need to organize to learn how the economics and politics drive everything in life. Can't stop now."²⁴⁹

Johnson has been honored with awards and statues for her service to the community and the Civil Rights Movement. In 1989, her supporters established a scholarship in her honor. Most recently, on November 21, 2022, Johnson was honored with a statue erected at the Minnesota State Capitol, which is the first statue of a woman ever erected on Capitol grounds.²⁵⁰ There is also an elementary school named after her, Nellie Stone Johnson Community School, located at 807 27th Avenue North in Minneapolis. Nellie Stone Johnson was one of Minnesota's most influential forces in the civil rights and labor movements.

World War II, as mentioned previously, brought significant changes and opportunities for African Americans as well. The war effort created a demand for labor, and many African Americans migrated to industrial centers, including Minnesota, to work in defense industries. Under the Lend-Lease Act, the government authorized hiring private contractors to construct and operate government-owned ammunition manufacturing facilities. Companies swiftly erected new factories and converted existing ones for wartime purposes, such as the Twin Cities Ordnance Plant (TCOP) in New Brighton, Minnesota, approximately ten miles north of Minneapolis and St. Paul. In addition to supplying troops overseas, the TCOP created new opportunities within

²⁴⁹ Denise Johnson, "After 90 years, Nellie Stone Johnson going strong to push her cause," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, 2 December 1995, 13 (A).

²⁵⁰ Dana Ferguson, "'The woman of the century': Nellie Stone Johnson honored with Minnesota Capitol statue," *MPR News*, November 21, 2022.

the domestic workforce. At its peak in July 1943, the plant employed 26,000 people, equivalent to about one percent of Minnesota's population.²⁵¹ Over half of these workers were women.

The TCOP was also fully integrated and employed over 1,200 African American men and women, over twenty percent of the state's entire Black population at the time.²⁵² The Black press and the Minneapolis and St. Paul chapters of the National Urban League, a civil rights organization, had long campaigned for employers to hire African Americans for higher wages and promotion opportunities. They had limited success until World War II when wartime labor shortages lowered racial barriers to jobs. The influx of Black workers also led to the growth of communities and increased social interactions. In June 1941, Executive Order 8802 also helped by banning discrimination based on "race, creed, color, or national origin" in the defense industries. While many defense plants resisted or refused to enforce this policy, the TCOP led the way to provide equal opportunities for Black workers at all levels.

Two members of the Minneapolis Urban League pioneered the fair employment practices at the TCOP: Cecil E. Newman, a Black civic leader and newspaper publisher, and Charles L. Horn, the white president of the FCC. Horn refused to segregate Black workers or prevent them from becoming supervisors.²⁵³ In 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt visited TCOP and asked Horn about the plant's uncharacteristically high percentage of women and people of color.

²⁵¹ Jade Ryerson, "Twin Cities Ordnance Plant: Integrating the WWII Workforce," National Parks Service. Last modified October 12, 2022, para. 3. <https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/twin-cities-ordnance-plant-integrating-the-wwii-workforce.htm>

²⁵² Ibid, para. 5.

²⁵³ Ibid, para. 6.

Impressed by the plant and by Horn, Roosevelt appointed Horn to the Fair Employment Practices Committee, which had the task of enforcing Executive Order 8802 across the country.²⁵⁴

Minnesota in the Civil Rights Era

In the post-World War II era, African Americans in Minnesota, like elsewhere in the nation, became more active in civil rights movements. They organized protests, demonstrations, and legal challenges to fight against segregation and discrimination. After World War II, African Americans migrated significantly from the rural South to northern cities, including Minnesota. This influx of African Americans into urban areas led to changes in the demographics of these cities, such as Minneapolis and St. Paul, and the further growth of African American communities. Like other parts of the country, housing discrimination was prevalent in Minnesota. African Americans faced redlining and restrictive covenants that prevented them from buying homes in specific neighborhoods, contributing to the development of segregated communities.

In the 1950s and 1960s, significant civil rights leaders did exceptional work to bring the Black community in the Twin Cities together and picked up the fight for racial equality and justice. One of these leaders was Reverend Denzil A. Carty, an Episcopal priest and civil rights leader who fought against discrimination in Minnesota, particularly in St. Paul. Born in St. John's, Antigua, in the British West Indies, he moved to and received his education and seminary degree in New York. In the 1930s, Carty served three different New York City parishes and, in World War II, served as captain and chaplain of the 512th Port Battalion in Europe. Eventually, after his return to America, Carty settled in St. Paul, Minnesota, in 1950 and served as the rector of St. Philip's Episcopal Church, a Black congregation in the Summit-University neighborhood.

²⁵⁴ Ibid, para. 8.

He served from 1950 until his retirement in June 1975. He died only a short time later, on August 24, 1975.

The fight for civil rights in Minnesota in the 1950s, as in many states across the United States, began to increase. Black soldiers, like Carty, risking their lives to defend the ideals of American freedom and democracy, would return from combat in Europe and begin to demand the equality and fundamental civil rights they deserved. The NAACP and the Urban League, including their Minnesota chapters, used legal, judicial, legislative, and political means to fight for full equal rights for African Americans. Often, ministers and congregations of Black churches were essential to this struggle and orchestrated legal challenges in the courts. For instance, “fighting for desegregation and against discrimination and the denial of the legitimate claim to equal human and civil rights were acts of courage in the prevailing climate of police brutality and lynching.”²⁵⁵

According to one account from Earl A. Neil, an African American Civil Rights worker in Minnesota and a member of Reverend Carty’s congregation, racism in Minnesota was pervasive and no less damaging than in Southern states like Mississippi, where he was from. Neil would declare that the only difference between Minnesota and Mississippi was 700 miles; “there wasn’t overt hostility; but you knew your place. There were very few Black people in Minnesota. You couldn’t step out your door without encountering white people. Many institutions and housing developments were segregated until after World War II was over.”²⁵⁶ Neil was thankful for the work of the Reverend Denzil Carty, who was active in civil rights in Minnesota.

²⁵⁵ Minnesota Civil Liberties Union Records, African American Civil Rights Movement, Gale Family Library, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, Minnesota.

²⁵⁶ Adrienne M. Dale, "Earl A. Neil, African American Civil Rights Reformer: A Profile," *Anglican and Episcopal History* 75, no. 1 (03, 2006): 74.

Carty used his role as rector of St. Philip's Episcopal Church to participate in several civil rights organizations, including the American Legion, Department of Minnesota, Fair Employment Practices Commission, NAACP, St. Paul Urban Coalition, St. Paul Urban League, St. Paul Housing and Redevelopment Authority, St. Paul and Minnesota councils of human and civil rights, and the St. Paul Opportunities and Industrialization Center.²⁵⁷ His generous work for the benefit of the Black community in the Twin Cities is recorded in local newspaper stories in the *Minneapolis Star*. Important headlines for civil rights in Minnesota during the 1960s and 1970s showcased Carty's speaking events, activism, and significant developments for African Americans in the state. For instance, a *Minneapolis Star* newspaper article from April 29, 1964, states, "At State Capitol Rotunda Meeting, Prayers Offered for Civil Rights Bill."²⁵⁸ This act, signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson, was a landmark civil rights and labor law that outlawed discrimination based on race. The significance of this *Minneapolis Star* article and others like it is how it places Carty at the center of the height of the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s.

Carty even met and worked alongside Martin Luther King Jr. In a newspaper clipping from January 21, 1957, a photographer took a photo after an event where Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. gave an address. The image captures the day after the NAACP Officer's dinner at the St. Croix Valley Country Club. In the picture, Reverend Denzil A. Carty is standing behind

²⁵⁷ Walter R. Scott, ed, *Minneapolis Negro Profile: A Pictorial Resume of the Black Community, Its Achievements, and Its Immediate Goals* (New York, NY: Scott Publishing Company, 1969): 103-104.

²⁵⁸ "At State Capitol Rotunda Meeting, Prayers Offered for Civil Rights Bill," *Minneapolis Star*, April 29, 1964.

Martin Luther King Jr.²⁵⁹ The article was published in the *Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder* (MSR), the oldest Black-owned newspaper in Minnesota and one of the longest-standing, family-owned newspapers in the country. Interestingly, the history of St. Croix Valley Country Club also plays a significant role in civil rights history, as it served as a haven for Black residents during a time of segregation and discrimination. The St. Croix Valley Country Club was home to NAACP chapter meetings and celebrations. Most notably, King and Carty attended the event held on January 20, 1957, when the St. Paul Branch of the NAACP installed new officers and discussed the moral aspects of segregated housing.²⁶⁰

Reverend Denzil A. Carty was an NAACP board member, local civil rights activist, and leader who fought for equity in housing, the workplace, and public schools. For just one example, Reverend Carty supported the Minnesota Fair Housing Act in 1961, which legally prohibited housing discrimination in Minnesota. Today, one can visit Carty Park at 705 Iglehart Avenue in Saint Paul and enjoy picnic tables, BBQ grills, two playground areas, a half-court basketball court, and two tennis courts.²⁶¹ The park is named after Carty, an essential Minnesota civil rights leader.

Another key Minnesota civil rights activist was businessman William Harry Davis, who grew up in Minnesota during the Great Depression. He eventually left behind a legacy of promoting equal rights for African Americans and tolerance for difference among all. Before

²⁵⁹ “They Greeted Alabama Jimcero Boycott Leader,” *Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder*, January 21, 1957.

²⁶⁰ “St. Paul NAACP Installs Officers at Dinner Meet,” *St. Paul Recorder*, January 22, 1957.

²⁶¹ “Carty Park,” Saint Paul, Minnesota, State Government Facilities, Accessed December 10, 2022. <https://www.stpaul.gov/facilities/carty-park>.

that, though, he was just a kid playing on Sumner Field in Minneapolis with other children from the neighborhood²⁶² and spending many days at the Phyllis Wheatley Settlement House.²⁶³ Davis recalled, “They called them settlement houses instead of community centers because, like Phyllis Wheatley, they had all the multi-services. Usually on the second floor, they had rooms for homeless people.”²⁶⁴ This home gave Davis and many other children a safe place to go after school and continue their education.

At the house, instructors taught Davis boxing as exercise and sport, aiming to discourage street fighting and provide self-defense training. Davis recalled in an interview, “I got involved in the Golden Gloves when I was at Phyllis Wheatley, when I got to be a teenager. There used to be gangs like there are now—but it was totally different. We didn’t have guns or knives. You’d have territory.”²⁶⁵ Davis founded the center's competitive boxing program during the 1940s and won most boxing championships for the upper Midwest region. Davis became the region's most successful coach and vice president of the Golden Gloves, positively impacting the lives of many in his community.

Outside his immediate community, Davis did a lot of work overcoming racial prejudice to become a humanitarian. During the racially turbulent 1960s, he became the founding chief executive of the Minneapolis Urban Coalition, a nonprofit advocacy organization for

²⁶² Joseph Zalusky, *Boys playing on Sumner Field in Minneapolis*, 1936, in *MPR News* (Minneapolis: Minnesota Historical Society, 1936).

²⁶³ *Exterior view of the Phyllis Wheatley House*, 1931, in *Phyllis Wheatley House*, Minneapolis (Minneapolis: Minnesota Historical Society, 1931).

²⁶⁴ W. Harry Davis, Minnesota businessman and civil rights activist, interview by Kari Morehouse, Minneapolis, MN, November 13, 1997.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

communities of color, and one of the first Black executives at a major Twin Cities corporation. He also led a historic church merger, served for twenty years on the city's school board, founded a bank, served on the U.S. Olympic boxing committee, and campaigned as the city's first Black mayoral candidate.²⁶⁶

Davis was extensively involved in the American civil rights movement. He had a long career at the *Star Tribune* from 1973 until he retired in 1987, using his work in the news to make a difference for the people of Minneapolis and earning numerous civic service awards. He also headed the local NAACP and chaired the local effort for the War on Poverty.²⁶⁷ As the first African American to run for Mayor of Minneapolis in 1971, Davis was a DFL-endorsed candidate. However, nothing prepared Davis for what he would encounter when he entered the race. Following the racially divided 1960s, it was clear that some city residents were not ready for a Black mayor. Davis recalled, "Our house was observed by uniformed police officers twenty-four hours a day, our phones were tapped by the FBI because of phone calls, our mail was gone through because of hate mail. My wife endured calls that threatened her life and my life and our children's life, just because I wanted to be mayor."²⁶⁸ Davis lost the election but won the respect and admiration of many for his work and attitude during the campaign.

His work made a resounding impact on Minnesota for all people. In an interview with Davis, the interviewer read a quote from the former mayor of Minneapolis, Art Naftalin, who

²⁶⁶ W. Harry Davis, *Overcoming: The Autobiography of W. Harry Davis* (Afton, Minnesota: Afton Historical Society Press, 2002).

²⁶⁷ W. Harry Davis, July 30, 2007, Phyllis Wheatley Community Center, <https://web.archive.org/web/20070730064643/http://www.pwccenter.org/memorial.asp?id=18>.

²⁶⁸ Benson, Lorna. *Harry Davis: A Life of Accomplishment*. Minneapolis, Minnesota: MPR News, 2006, <https://www.mprnews.org/story/2006/08/11/harrydavisobit>.

said of Davis, “Harry was willing to be a human bridge between Black and white when this city really needed one. I shudder to think what might have happened if that bridge had not been there.”²⁶⁹ Today, the W. Harry Davis Foundation in Minneapolis serves as a charitable organization supplying money, goods, or services to the poor.²⁷⁰ It also honors other civil rights activists in Minnesota, such as Nellie Stone Johnson in 1988, for their service to the community. There is also a school named after Davis, the W Harry Davis Academy in Minneapolis, where his legacy lives on for future generations.

Still alive in 2024, Josie Johnson is a legacy for her civil rights work in Minnesota. She spent her life fighting for equal rights and treatment for Blacks in politics, education, and beyond. Johnson’s involvement in civil rights causes began at a young age. Born and raised in Houston, Texas, in the 1940s, she accompanied her “politically active father as he worked to unionize railway dining-car waiters and as he gathered signatures for a petition to overturn a state poll-tax law preventing Black people from registering to vote.”²⁷¹ She eventually moved to Minnesota in the mid-1950s and continued her “social justice activism, joining the Urban League, the NAACP, the League of Women Voters. Later she worked for the League of Women Voters and the Minnesota Civil Rights Department to see passage of a state Fair Housing bill, six

²⁶⁹ W. Harry Davis, 2003, “W. Harry Davis on Leadership (The Mary Hanson Show),” Interview by Mary Hanson, March 2003.

²⁷⁰ “W. Harry Davis Foundation in Minneapolis, Minnesota (MN).” Nonprofitfacts.com - tax-exempt organizations. W Harry Davis Foundation. Accessed December 10, 2022. <http://www.nonprofitfacts.com/MN/W-Harry-Davis-Foundation.html>.

²⁷¹ Cynthia Boyd, "Josie Johnson and Ellen O'Neill: Different Lives but both Devoted to Fighting Racism," *MinnPost.Com*, Apr 26, 2013.

years before Congress established a similar federal law.”²⁷² Johnson also launched numerous mentorship programs for young people of color, developed fair housing and employment programs, led community development and revitalization efforts, and counseled countless leaders across the community, including mayors, governors, and university presidents.²⁷³

In her memoir, Johnson recounts how her parents blessed her with love and a sense of security. She writes, “They raised me in a community where I felt protected. They talked with me and helped me learn who we were as a people. By teaching me to respect all people and to understand that in our struggle all contribute, they modeled for me how to love without hate. I inherited my values and my sense of duty and love for our people from my parents. These values have been a thorough and constant guide in my life.”²⁷⁴ Described by the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* as the "First Lady of Minnesota Civil Rights," Johnson is one of Minnesota’s most well-known civil rights activists.²⁷⁵ Shouldering the cause of social justice, Johnson fought for fairness for Black Minnesotans in education, employment, voting, and housing.

There are numerous ways in which Johnson fought for Civil Rights in Minnesota from the 1950s to today. In 1963, Johnson attended the March on Washington in Washington D.C.,

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ Laura Bloomberg, "Josie Johnson: Risk Taker, Trailblazer, Equality Champion, Role Model," *MinnPost.Com*, Oct 19, 2018.

²⁷⁴ Josie Johnson, *Hope in the Struggle: A Memoir* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019) ix-x.

²⁷⁵ Interview with Josie Johnson, The History Makers, August 11, 2002, <https://www.thehistorymakers.org/biography/josie-johnson-39>.

holding the Minnesota delegation sign and marching.²⁷⁶ The March on Washington was a massive protest march in August of 1963 when 250,000 people gathered in front of the Lincoln Memorial. The event hoped to bring the nation's attention to the reality that a century after emancipation, African Americans continued to face challenges and inequalities. It is well-known today for Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech. Johnson would also become the first Black person on the University of Minnesota Board of Regents in 1971.²⁷⁷ Johnson helped found the African American Studies department at the University of Minnesota and taught as one of the first faculty members, teaching a course on Black families in white America.

Additionally, during the politically charged years of anti-Vietnam War protests, Johnson would not sit quietly on the sidelines. She spoke at an antiwar rally at Coffman Union at the University of Minnesota on January 19, 1973.²⁷⁸ There, she urged the crowd to dedicate themselves not just to this moment but to a long-term commitment to significant societal changes. Johnson would also remain a longtime ally and supporter of politicians fighting for the same causes, such as Democratic Senator and Vice President Walter Mondale of Minnesota and Democratic President Barack Obama. Johnson's legacy brought the civil rights movement into the twenty-first century. She continues to speak, support, and advocate for civil rights. In a recent video posted by the Minneapolis Police, Johnson gave remarks about the significance of the

²⁷⁶ Marty Nordstrom, *Josie Johnson with two other delegates to the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, 1963*, in *Hope in the Struggle: A Memoir* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019), 233.

²⁷⁷ John Croft, *The First Black person on the University of Minnesota Board of Regents, 1971*, in *Hope in the Struggle: A Memoir* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019), 234.

²⁷⁸ John Croft, *Anti-War Rally at Coffman Union at the University of Minnesota, 1973*, in *Hope in the Struggle: A Memoir* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019), 234.

election of Medaria Arradondo, who served as the Chief of the Minneapolis Police Department. He was elected in 2017, serving until 2022 as the first Black chief of the MPD. In her address, she states,

Do you know at eighty-six years old the fact that I could live long enough to see the first Black president elected and now the first Black chief of the police chief for the city of Minneapolis seems almost unbelievable. For me, it represents the struggle that we have been not only actively engaged in, emotionally engaged in, but educationally engaged in. To promise our children that the struggle that is before us all will yield this kind of result. Not only to have a chief who cares about us, appreciates the history of what this position means, but suggests to our children that the belief system that we've had as a people can pay off if we continue the struggle, continue the belief, and then support our chief.²⁷⁹

Johnson deeply understands the historical context behind the fear of authority among Black Americans. However, she chooses to emphasize the hope and courage that propel the cause forward. Undoubtedly, Johnson has left a lasting impact on the state of Minnesota and the entire United States. Her legacy carries on the efforts of her predecessors and underscores the ongoing need to address inequality, dismantle barriers to opportunity, and foster equal chances for all to thrive.²⁸⁰

Patterns of Residential Segregation in the Twin Cities

The issue of civil rights is an essential topic for all people to understand. The presentation of these biographies provides background and understanding for the public reading about the lives and impact of these civil rights activists. The work for racial equality in Minnesota is far from over. Recent findings on the state of racial equity in Minnesota showed that the median Black family in the Twin Cities area earns \$38,178 a year, which is less than half of the median

²⁷⁹ Josie Johnson, "Remarks from Dr. Josie Johnson," August 19, 2017, Minneapolis Police, 3:24. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zmjoY8-5BjQ>.

²⁸⁰ Bloomberg, "Josie Johnson," 2018.

white family income of \$84,459 a year.²⁸¹ This income inequality gap is one of the largest in the nation.

Furthermore, the state of Minnesota has the second most significant income inequality gap between Blacks and whites in the entire nation. There are more statistics: the Black poverty rate in the Twin Cities area was twenty-five point four percent, which is over four times the white poverty rate of five point nine percent; while about three-quarters of white families in the Twin Cities own homes, only about one-quarter of Black families do; in 2019, the incarceration rate of Blacks in the Twin Cities area was eleven times that of whites; and Minnesota has one of the nation's worst education achievement gaps between Blacks and whites - in 2019, it ranked 50th when it comes to racial disparities in high school graduation rates.²⁸² This data is concerning. A vast wealth gap, driven by segregation, redlining, evictions and exclusion, separates Black and white America.²⁸³ These numbers may account for the persistent, troubling, rising sense of unfairness, frustration, desperation, and anger that exploded in Minnesota after the murder of George Floyd. While it is critical to analyze and understand the work of activists whose lives made a difference for so many citizens of Minnesota, it is equally important to recognize that there must be others to pick up the torch and continue the fight for racial equality and justice.

²⁸¹ Greg Rosalsky, "Minneapolis Ranks Near the Bottom For Racial Equality," *MPR News: Planet Money*, June 2, 2020.

²⁸² *Ibid.*

²⁸³ Trymaine Lee, "A Vast Wealth Gap, Driven by Segregation, Redlining, Evictions and Exclusion, Separates Black and White America," *The New York Times Magazine*, Aug. 14, 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/racial-wealth-gap.html>.

Understanding Black history in Minnesota holds importance, but a significant aspect of this research is exploring when the cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul emerged as the center of the Black community. In St. Paul, the lines of demarcation among groups of people, primarily related to the African American community, were relatively rigid and reflected in the city's residential patterns. For example, "a sign posted on a house in a German neighborhood in the fourth ward stated that 'nigger tenants' were not wanted."²⁸⁴ The physical growth of the emerging Black neighborhood was greatly limited by the ethnicity of the residential neighborhoods surrounding the commercial district where most poor Blacks lived. On all sides of the commercial district, ethnic groups zealously guarded neighborhoods almost as if they were sovereign territories.²⁸⁵ These early residential cleavages between Blacks and immigrant groups and the desperation of the underclass "no doubt instilled within Black Minnesotans the belief that survival depended on staying out of trouble and among their own kind."²⁸⁶ In the decades following the Civil War, ethnic neighborhoods often formed as the locus of social and cultural activity in Minneapolis and St. Paul, although the cities were not particularly segregated. Tenement enclaves existed, but there was no discernable pattern of residential segregation. Much of the population, both Black and white, was clustered residentially close to the cities' cores.²⁸⁷ It

²⁸⁴ Green, *Degrees of Freedom*, 115.

²⁸⁵ David V. Taylor, "Pilgrim's Progress: Black St. Paul and the Making of an Urban Ghetto, 1870-1930," PhD thesis, University of Minnesota (March 1977), 43-44.

²⁸⁶ Green, *Degrees of Freedom*, 115.

²⁸⁷ Taylor, "Pilgrim's Progress," 32.

would not be until the first decade of the twentieth century that the Minneapolis and St. Paul Black communities began to challenge the state hegemony seriously.²⁸⁸

Even in the early 1900s, a numerically small and segmented Black community worshiped with white congregations, attended schools (some segregated), worked in low-paying skilled to unskilled occupations, and were, for the most part, politically disenfranchised.²⁸⁹ here was no evidence of a community social life independent of the white community. However, over time, “the foundations for a community semi-independent of the surrounding white milieu had been laid.”²⁹⁰ The divide in neighborhoods, congregations, and schools was not necessarily only driven by whites. After slavery, as more African Americans moved from the South to Northern states like Minnesota, escaping Jim Crow laws and seeking better economic opportunities, they sought to create their own community institutions such as churches, social clubs, and businesses to foster a sense of belonging and support. During this period, “two Black congregations had been founded, segregated education abolished, the franchise extended, and social, recreational, and organizational activities organized.”²⁹¹ The key to this development was, in part, the liberalization of the political climate in Minnesota.

Although discrimination certainly still existed, most of the legal prohibitions against Blacks had been abolished by 1870. Another factor was the increased numbers in the state’s Black population due to the Great Migration. Due to racial discrimination, Black individuals

²⁸⁸ Ibid, 35.

²⁸⁹ Ibid, 36.

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

²⁹¹ Ibid.

often faced limited access to white-owned businesses and services. In response, Black entrepreneurs started their own businesses to serve the needs of their community. For instance, residents established newspapers, grocery stores, barbershops, and restaurants within the Black neighborhoods of Minneapolis and St. Paul. Black business communities emerged, and educated Black professionals were increasingly recruited to serve the needs of the growing population.²⁹² Additionally, Blacks in Minnesota sought to create cultural centers and organizations to celebrate their heritage, provide support, and foster unity. Organizations like the Phyllis Wheatley House in Minneapolis, founded in 1924, served as a social center providing various programs for African Americans, including educational and recreational activities. Black communities were increasingly established and thrived in segregated environs.

A noteworthy factor in the creation and increase of segregated communities was the rejection of Black families attempting to relocate to specific neighborhoods. Racial housing covenants and redlining played a role in preventing Black families from purchasing homes in neighboring suburbs and even certain areas of the Twin Cities, which pushed them into specific neighborhoods, notably the Near North and Southside neighborhoods of Minneapolis and the Rondo neighborhood of St. Paul.

In Minnesota and across the nation, developers, real estate agents, and local, state, and federal governments “prohibited Black Americans from realizing their full rights and opportunities as citizens. Governments and developers deliberately used discriminatory covenants to create segregated communities and build wealth for the white community at the

²⁹² Ibid, 37.

expense of the Black community and other people of color.”²⁹³ In Minneapolis, the first racially restrictive deed appeared in 1910 when Henry and Leonora Scott sold a property on 35th Avenue South to Nels Anderson. The deed contained what would become a common restriction: “...the premises shall not at any time be conveyed, mortgaged or leased to any person or persons of Chinese, Japanese, Moorish, Turkish, Negro, Mongolian or African blood or descent.”²⁹⁴

When real estate attorneys wrote racially restrictive deeds like the one cited above, Minneapolis and St. Paul were not particularly segregated. However, covenants would utterly change the landscape of the Twin Cities. Racially restrictive deeds became more and more commonplace, even advertised in newspapers.²⁹⁵ Over time, Black Americans were pushed into a few small areas of the city, and certain areas of the city became entirely white.²⁹⁶ As racial covenants gained traction, they left an indelible mark on the layout of the Twin Cities. As discussed, the Twin Cities boast a reputation for affluence, generosity, and progressiveness, yet the persistence of significant racial disparities raises perplexing questions. Despite numerous organizations committed to assisting the impoverished, why do these disparities endure? What factors contribute to the heightened segregation of schools and neighborhoods in the Twin Cities compared to areas with comparable racial and economic profiles? These questions can, in part,

²⁹³ “History,” The Just Deeds Project, February 23, 2021. <https://justdeeds.org/history/>.

²⁹⁴ “History,” Just Deeds, 2021.

²⁹⁵ Advertisement placed by Edmund G. Walton in the *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*, January 12, 1919.

²⁹⁶ “History,” Just Deeds, 2021.

be answered by racial covenants, at times sanctioned by local governments, which laid the groundwork for these trends of residential segregation.

Before 1910, the Twin Cities were not particularly segregated. But, according to the University of Minnesota's Mapping Prejudice project, “a shift occurred in many neighborhoods through racial covenants—legal contracts embedded in property deeds to prevent people who weren't white from buying or occupying land.”²⁹⁷ Racial covenants were thought up and implemented by the real estate industry, as they worked to reshape urban planning in the early 1900s. The trend of improving cities prominent in the Progressive Era included parks, community gardens, playgrounds, garbage collection, and, ultimately, new commissions and zoning. Unfortunately, these efforts in the Twin Cities and many Northern cities were “guided by an urban planning orthodoxy founded on White supremacy. One of its central tenets was that mixed-race residential areas were hazardous and should be eliminated.”²⁹⁸

This idea was then codified in 1924 in the National Association of Real Estate Boards Code of Ethics, which stated that “a Realtor should never be instrumental in introducing into a neighborhood a character of property or occupancy, members of any race or nationality, or any individuals whose presence will clearly be detrimental to property values in that neighborhood.”²⁹⁹ In the Twin Cities, certain neighborhoods became entirely white even as the

²⁹⁷ Mapping Prejudice. The University of Minnesota. Accessed January 26, 2023. <https://mappingprejudice.umn.edu/>.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ National Association of Real Estate Boards, “1924 Code of Ethics,” National Association of Realtors Archives, June 6, 1924. <https://www.nar.realtor/about-nar/history/1924-code-of-ethics>.

population of Black people grew. The pushing of Black residents into smaller sections of the city laid the groundwork for the contemporary patterns of residential segregation that exist today and their extensive impact.

In 1953, Minnesota banned the use of racial covenants in house deeds.³⁰⁰ In 1968, the Fair Housing Act, part of the landmark Civil Rights Act signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson, made racial covenants and discriminatory housing practices illegal across the nation.³⁰¹ Yet, the effects are still impacting the Twin Cities today. By the late 1900s, three relatively small Twin Cities areas contained the largest concentrations of Black residents: the Near North and Southside neighborhoods of Minneapolis and the Rondo neighborhood of St. Paul. The neighborhoods north and south of Rondo Avenue were always diverse, extending south into today's Summit-University neighborhood and north to University Avenue. But by the 1950s, about eighty-five percent of Saint Paul's African American population lived in these neighborhoods.³⁰² In Minneapolis, Blacks lived on the near Northside along Sixth and Lyndale Avenues North; at Seven Corners, where Washington, Fifteenth Avenue, Nineteenth Avenue, and Cedar Avenue intersect; and on the Southside, between Nicollet and Chicago Avenues and Thirty-fourth and Forty-sixth Streets. A Black enclave also developed in the Shingle Creek

³⁰⁰ *Minnesota Statutes 1953, Section 507.18, Subdivision 1.*

³⁰¹ Congress. "Civil Rights Act of 1968." Government. U.S. Government Publishing Office, March 14, 2022. <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/COMPS-343>.

³⁰² Jane McClure, "Rondo Neighborhood," *Saint Paul Historical*, <https://saintpaulhistorical.com/items/show/160#:~:text=Most%20of%20the%20original%20Rondo,the%20Best%20Western%20Kelly%20Inn>.

neighborhood near Fiftieth Street and Humboldt Avenue North. Blacks lived in the Rondo neighborhood in St. Paul, south of University Avenue, from Rice Street to Lexington Parkway.

As demonstrated, Minnesota, like many other states, has a history of racial segregation and discriminatory housing policies. Practices such as redlining and racially restrictive covenants contributed to the segregation of neighborhoods in cities like Minneapolis and St. Paul. Segregation in neighborhoods often leads to school segregation because school attendance zones are typically drawn based on residential areas. When specific neighborhoods are racially or economically segregated, the schools serving those areas tend to reflect that segregation. The housing discrimination practices that began in the Progressive Era have impacted Black Americans throughout history, and the effects still reverberate today. Despite its reputation for prosperity and progressive politics, the Twin Cities rank as the fourth worst metropolitan area for Black Americans.³⁰³

Chronicling how, in the early 1900s, racial housing covenants in Minnesota cities blocked home sales to minorities, establishing patterns of inequality that persist today, one article states that there is a clear and direct “linkage between those practices in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and today’s modern zoning plans.”³⁰⁴ For example, Minneapolis, one of the cities where racially restrictive deeds were prominent during the early twentieth century, to

³⁰³ Greg Miller, “When Minneapolis Segregated,” *Mapping the Segregation of Minneapolis*, Bloomberg, January 8, 2020. Accessed February 21, 2023. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-01-08/mapping-the-segregation-of-minneapolis>.

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

this day has the most significant homeownership gap of any city in the United States.³⁰⁵

According to an NBC News analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data of estimates from the 2014-2018 five-year American Community Survey, the Twin Cities area reports the white homeownership rate at seventy-six point three percent and the Black homeownership rate at only twenty-five point two percent.³⁰⁶ Today, the gap in homeownership rates between Black and white Americans is wider than it was before the Civil Rights movement.

The impact that racial covenants have had today is immeasurable. Owning land or a home has wider-reaching social and economic consequences. The effect can be generational. Experts say that the consequences of not owning a home are enormous. It often leaves a family with the inability to “reach other pillars of the American dream, like tapping into home equity to start a business, survive a job loss or a medical emergency or pay for a child's college education.”³⁰⁷ Not owning a home also makes it harder for Black children to become adult homeowners.³⁰⁸ There is still hope. What is exceptional about Minneapolis is its efforts to reckon with its history of discrimination. No other American city has had as comprehensive a covenant

³⁰⁵ Nigel Chiwaya and Janell Ross, “The American Dream While Black: Locked in a Vicious Cycle,” *NBC News*, NBCUniversal News Group, August 3, 2020. Accessed December 10, 2022. <https://www.nbcnews.com/specials/american-dream-while-black-homeownership/index.html>.

³⁰⁶ “The Metro Areas with the Largest Homeownership Gap between Blacks and Whites,” U.S. Census Bureau data via National Historical Geographic Information System, generated by NBC News, using data.census.gov; <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>.

³⁰⁷ Chiwaya and Ross, “The American Dream While Black,” 2020.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

research project as Mapping Prejudice, an effort to identify and map racial covenants and expose the structural racism that shaped the Twin Cities.³⁰⁹

Over the years, there have been efforts to address residential and school segregation through initiatives like fair housing laws, affordable housing programs, and school integration efforts. However, progress in reducing segregation can be slow and uneven. Minnesota is home to some of the most significant racial disparities in the country in terms of homeownership, as this paper has already discussed, as well as access to education. While the state is known for its stellar public education system - low dropout rates, high test scores, and low student-to-teacher ratios - it also has one of the highest achievement gaps between white and Black students. Perhaps this is a logical conclusion. Where one lives determines where one works. Where one works determines where one's children go to school. A Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis report found that Minnesota has some of the largest achievement gaps in the nation, no doubt a direct result of segregated housing.³¹⁰ This paper endeavors to explicitly unravel this causal relationship.

Highlighting the Minneapolis metropolitan area as a microcosm, recent reports have underscored the alarming trend of increasingly segregated schools over the past quarter-century.³¹¹ Highly segregated schools refer to schools where at least ninety percent of the

³⁰⁹ Miller, "When Minneapolis Segregated," 2020.

³¹⁰ Rob Grunewald and Anusha Nath, "A Statewide Crisis: Minnesota's Education Achievement Gaps," MN Report, Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, October 11, 2019. Accessed November 10, 2023. <https://www.minneapolisfed.org/~media/assets/pages/education-achievement-gaps/achievement-gaps-mn-report.pdf>.

³¹¹ Erin Einhorn and Nigel Chiwaya, "How Minneapolis Re-Segregated Its Schools and Set the Stage for a National Crisis," *NBC News*, NBCUniversal News Group, August 31, 2020.

students are not white. Despite a semblance of diversity, these educational institutions remain markedly divided along racial and socioeconomic lines. A recent report examining Minnesota's persistent education achievement gaps underscores a statewide crisis: "the educational disparities are deep, wide, and persistent."³¹² Historically, the success of school integration in the Twin Cities was because of state and regional policies, not a federal court order. One was a program that required regional municipalities to develop affordable housing. That prevented the suburbs from excluding low-income families more likely to be families of color. The second was a state law that barred districts from concentrating too many students of any one race in any one school. If any school had significantly more Black, White, or Latino students than the district, the district could lose state funding.

In the 1980s and 1990s, these policies fell apart, due to policy changes, lack of commitment, and difficulty in implementation, leading to the highly segregated system visible today.³¹³ The lack of commitment by districts was the result of parent outcry from both white and Black parents. Some white parents were against integration and many Black parents actively protested the closure of neighborhood schools and the busing of their children. Additionally, schools struggled to meet integration requirements so, in 1991, when a Supreme Court ruling

Accessed December 10, 2022. <https://www.nbcnews.com/specials/minneapolis-re-segregated-schools-set-the-stage-national-crisis/>.

³¹² Grunewald and Nath, "A Statewide Crisis," 2019.

³¹³ Einhorn and Chiwaya, "How Minneapolis Re-Segregated," 2020.

granted judges broad discretion to terminate integration programs if they deemed a district had complied in good faith, desegregation court orders began to be overturned, one by one.³¹⁴

Today, the Minneapolis Public School District contains ninety-six schools and 32,722 students. The district's minority enrollment is seventy percent, the student-to-teacher ratio is fifteen to one, and thirty-seven point five percent of students are economically disadvantaged (on free or reduced-price lunch). Additionally, in the district, forty-two percent of elementary students tested at or above the proficient level for reading, and forty percent tested at or above that level for math. Thirty-eight percent of middle school students tested at or above the proficient level for reading, and thirty-two percent tested at or above that level for math. Thirty-nine percent of high school students tested at or above the proficient level for reading, and twenty-three percent tested at or above that level for math. For high school college readiness, the district averaged thirty-one point six on a zero to one hundred index value and reported a fifty-three point eight percent graduation rate.³¹⁵

In comparison, the St. Paul Public School District contains one hundred schools and 34,928 students. The district's minority enrollment is eighty percent, the student-teacher ratio is fifteen to one, and fifty-one point six percent of students are economically disadvantaged (on free or reduced-price lunch). Additionally, thirty-six percent of elementary students in the district tested at or above the proficient level for reading, and thirty-three percent tested at or above that

³¹⁴ *Board of Education of Oklahoma City v. Dowell*, 498 U.S. 237, 1991.

³¹⁵ "Minneapolis Public School District," Education, U.S. News & World Report. Accessed March 10, 2023. <https://www.usnews.com/education/k12/minnesota/districts/minneapolis-public-school-district-100071>.

level for math. Also, thirty-three percent of middle school students tested at or above the proficient level for reading, and twenty-three percent tested at or above that level for math. Forty-six percent of high school students tested at or above the proficient level for reading, and twenty-nine percent tested at or above that level for math. For high school college readiness, the district averaged thirty-four point three on a zero to one hundred index value and reported a fifty-seven point seven percent graduation rate.³¹⁶

In looking at public schools in Minnesota, the Twin Cities are home to half of the worst low-income schools in the state. Of the forty-seven low-performing Title I schools identified for three years of comprehensive support from the state Department of Education, the Twin Cities claim twenty-four.³¹⁷ A new system of assessing the performance of Minnesota's schools has identified these forty-seven schools across the state that are in urgent need of extra support. Rather than judge school performance solely on test scores, this new system of assessment, known as the North Star Accountability System, has been designed to create "more equitable and well-rounded" opportunities for students.³¹⁸ The North Star system looks at five factors when determining overall performance:

- 1) Achievement and progress on reading tests over time
- 2) Achievement and progress on math tests over time

³¹⁶ "St. Paul Public School District," Education, U.S. News & World Report. Accessed March 10, 2023. <https://www.usnews.com/education/k12/minnesota/districts/st-paul-public-school-district-104201>.

³¹⁷ Josh Verges, "St. Paul, Minneapolis Account for Half of Minnesota's Worst Schools, Data Show," *Pioneer Press*, August 30, 2018. <https://www.twincities.com/2018/08/30/st-paul-minneapolis-account-for-half-of-minnesotas-worst-schools-data-show/>.

³¹⁸ "North Star System," School and District Accountability, Minnesota Department of Education, July 2022. <https://education.mn.gov/MDE/dse/account/>.

- 3) English language proficiency
- 4) Graduation rates
- 5) Consistent attendance.

More than half of the underperforming schools are in the Twin Cities, including ten in the St. Paul Public Schools District and eight in the Minneapolis Public School District (see Table 1). The schools range from one hundred percent minority student enrollment to the lowest at eighty-three percent minority student enrollment. Similarly, the schools enroll anywhere from fifty-one percent to ninety-two percent of economically disadvantaged students, with an average of just under eighty percent.

Table 1. Minnesota's Lowest Performing Schools in Minneapolis-St. Paul as of July 2022

School Name	Location	Math	Reading	Minority %	Economically Disadvantaged
Anishinaabe Academy	Minneapolis	7.5	9.9	98%	87%
Bethune Elementary	Minneapolis	17.1	13.4	91%	84%
Bryn Mawr Elementary	Minneapolis	26.4	21.4	84%	76%
Cityview Community	Minneapolis	9.5	12.6	89%	88%
Hall International	Minneapolis	12.0	14.6	91%	92%
Jenny Lind Elementary	Minneapolis	30.1	23.6	85%	71%
Sheridan Elementary	Minneapolis	22.1	20.1	83%	51%
Wellstone International High	Minneapolis	0.0	0.0	97%	82%
Benjamin E. Mays Magnet	St. Paul	20.0	19.3	93%	87%

Cherokee Heights Elementary	St. Paul	20.2	18.4	72%	59%
Dayton's Bluff Elementary	St. Paul	16.5	15.7	88%	87%
Eastern Heights Elementary	St. Paul	26.4	26.6	91%	79%
Frost Lake Elementary	St. Paul	22.8	24.9	93%	77%
Highwood Hills Elementary	St. Paul	21.2	19.9	92%	88%
John A. Johnson Elementary	St. Paul	12.5	14.4	89%	89%
LEAP High School	St. Paul	1.3	1.2	100%	76%
Maxfield Elementary	St. Paul	15.6	15.3	88%	85%
Obama Elementary	St. Paul	15.5	13.8	89%	80%

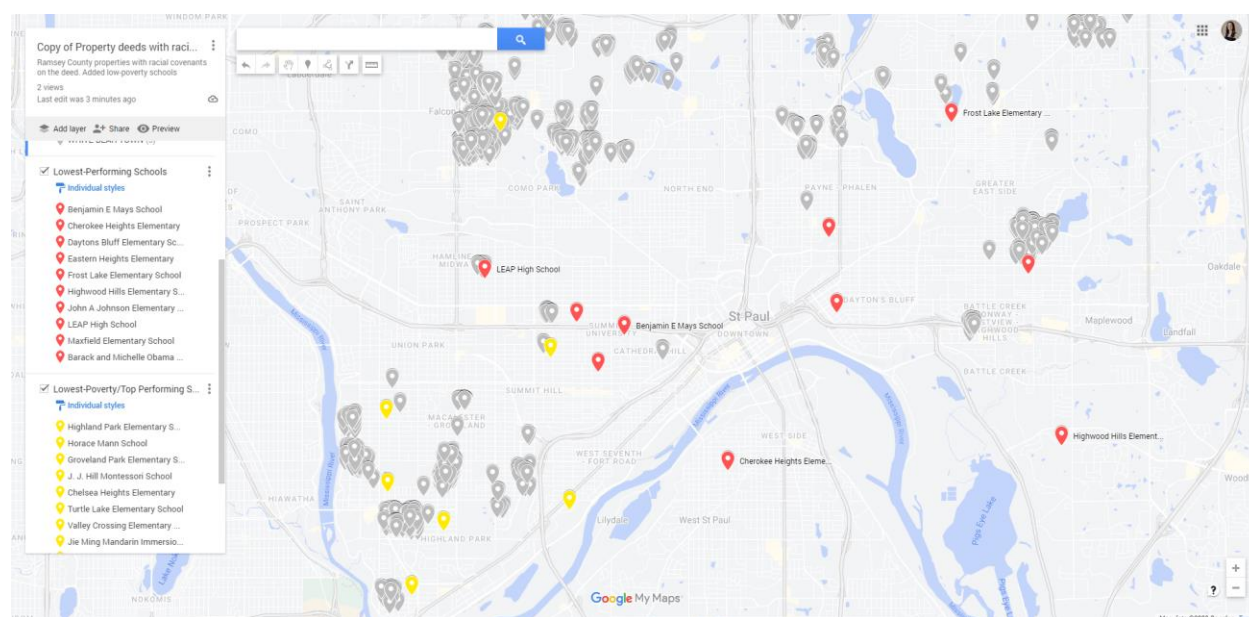
Source: Minnesota Report Card. <https://education.mn.gov/MDE/dse/account/>.

The next logical step in this research was to cross-reference these low-performing schools with the racial covenants that emerged in the Twin Cities predominantly from 1910 to 1955. To do this, data was pulled from the University of Minnesota's Mapping Prejudice project.³¹⁹ The 26,000 racial covenants that Mapping Prejudice volunteers have found so far are accessible via their website and are available for open access download as shapefiles, spreadsheets, and static cartography. Both Hennepin County (Minneapolis) and Ramsey County (St. Paul) had a

³¹⁹ Mapping Prejudice, The University of Minnesota. Accessed January 26, 2023. <https://mappingprejudice.umn.edu/>.

downloadable CSV file showing the location of racial covenants recorded. These CSV files were then uploaded to Google Maps. Two layers were then added to the Google Map: 1) the location of the lowest-performing schools as listed in Table 1 and 2) the highest-performing schools in the Twin Cities, according to the Minnesota Report Card.³²⁰ The visual result was shocking (see Figures 3.1 and 3.2).

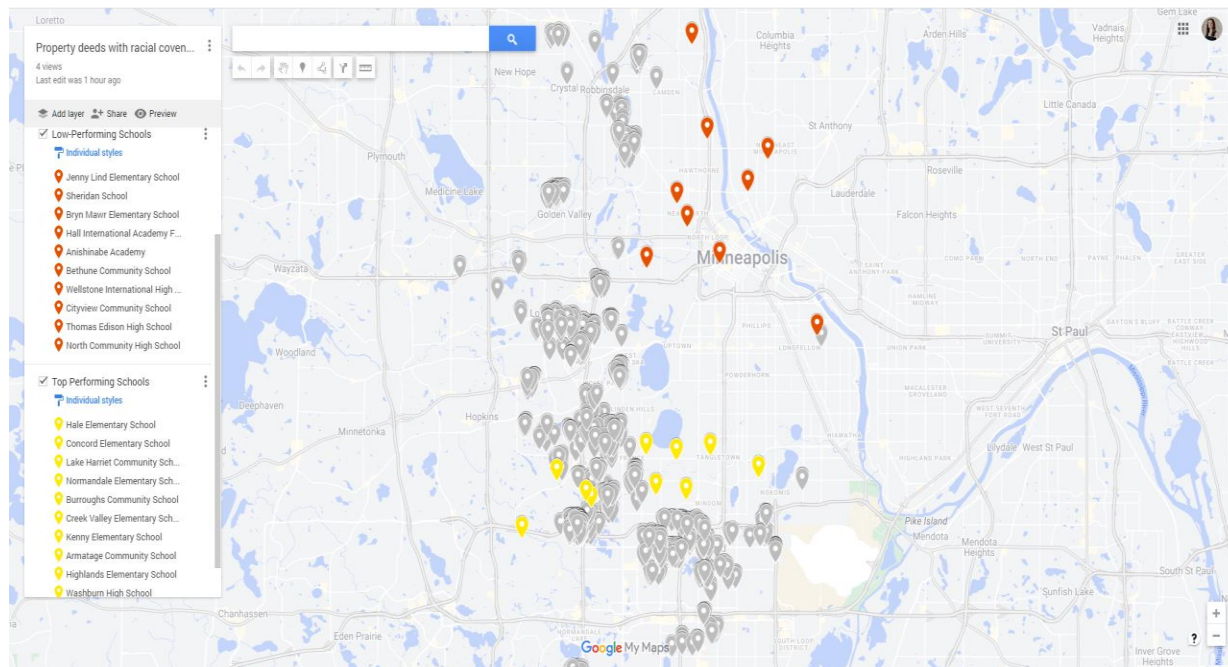
Figure 3.1 Property Deeds with Racial Covenants, Ramsey County, With Schools Added



Source: Google Maps. “Property Deeds with Racial Covenants, Ramsey County, With Schools Added.” Created March 8, 2023.

³²⁰ Minnesota Report Card. Minnesota Department of Education. Accessed March 10, 2023. <https://rc.education.mn.gov/#mySchool/p--3>.

Figure 3.2. Property Deeds with Racial Covenants, Hennepin County, With Schools Added



Source: Google Maps. “Property Deeds with Racial Covenants, Hennepin County, With Schools Added.” Created March 8, 2023.

What should be shockingly clear from the visuals is how the locations of the property deeds with racial covenants (gray markers) correspond with the higher-performing schools in the Twin Cities today (yellow markers). Areas with increasingly white-only housing pushed out diverse residents, resulting in the concentration of almost every high-performing school in those regions. On the map, where red markers denote the location of the lowest-performing schools, there is an apparent absence of properties with racial covenants, suggesting historically predominantly Black neighborhoods. If one compares these maps to the three predominant areas stated previously in this paper that came to contain the largest concentrations of Black residents, another clear correlation arises. The Near North and Southside neighborhoods of Minneapolis and the Rondo neighborhood of St. Paul are among the three areas where the map shows a concentration of lower-performing schools.

Establishing this apparent correlation between segregated housing and underperforming schools today underscores the vital importance of understanding why and how this occurred. In the years before Minnesota became a territory, white and Black children attended Minneapolis-St. Paul schools, side-by-side. By the late 1850s, the St. Paul Board of Education formally segregated the city's schools, separating white and Black children. This segregation remained in force (legally) until 1869. Between 1849 and 1962, the Minnesota Board of Education developed a comprehensive design program still reflected in fifty remaining elementary, junior high, and high schools in the Twin Cities, the oldest dating from 1883. Nearly thirty of the fifty remaining schools date from 1910 to 1930 when student enrollment rose from more than 45,000 to 88,000.³²¹ These dates are significant, as they were also when racial covenants and segregated housing began to emerge and take hold in the Twin Cities neighborhoods. As student enrollment rose and new school buildings were constructed, the fact that segregation was illegal did not ensure that the schools achieved meaningful integration. The total number of public schools reached seventy-six when World War I halted construction. By the early 1930s, the cities had more evenly distributed public schools. With slowing immigration and birth rates, student enrollment peaked in 1933, then steadily and significantly declined by 1949, with school buildings closing as a result. The postwar baby boom eventually pushed school enrollment back up, which led to a program of school expansion.³²²

³²¹ Carole Zellie, "Minneapolis Public Schools Historic Context Study," Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission (Landscape Research, April 2005), 2. https://mpshistory.mpls.k12.mn.us/uploads/mplspublicschoolstdy_2005.pdf.

³²² *Ibid*, 5.

In 1963, Michigan State University did a study of the Twin Cities public school system. The study combined neighborhood and educational analysis and addressed what it called the “socio-economic character” of the community, notably the loss of population to the suburbs, the growing diversity of the population, the tendency for some pupils to move frequently, and the areas of low income.³²³ Fascinatingly, the report mentioned a means of improving the school districts by taking measures to reduce segregated housing, and resulting segregated educational facilities were also detailed.³²⁴ In the report, freeway development, and urban renewal, mentioned previously in this paper, were scrutinized for their points of contact with the schools and communities. Public schools in the Twin Cities, built between 1849 and 1962, showcase the evolution of the city’s education system and embody exemplary national planning and design principles. However, beneath the surface of this progress lies a conflict: the influence of wealthier versus less affluent areas and its effect on educational funding.

The historical and legal context of public schools in the United States shapes Minnesota’s school finance system. Public education in the United States is the legal responsibility of the state government. In Minnesota, as in most states, the state constitution delegates the legislature responsible for public schools. Minnesota’s constitution, regarding education, states:

The stability of a republican form of government depending mainly upon the intelligence of the people, it is the duty of the legislature to establish a general and uniform system of public schools. The legislature shall make such provisions by taxation or otherwise as will secure a thorough and efficient system of public schools throughout the state.³²⁵

³²³ Joseph McNicholas and Donald J. Leu, *Planning for the Future: Minneapolis Public Schools* (Lansing, Michigan: Michigan State University, 1963), 103.

³²⁴ *Ibid*, 3-4, 18-19.

³²⁵ Constitution of the State of Minnesota, art. 8, sec. 1, 1858.

Minnesota charges responsibility for the day-to-day operation of schools to local school districts, whose powers and duties are prescribed by state statute. Historically, the primary source of revenue for running schools has come from the property taxes levied by the school boards governing the school districts.³²⁶

After 1900, small amounts of additional state funding supplemented the revenue from property taxes to aid school districts. Over time, this Minnesota state foundation aid program “provided all districts a flat grant per pupil unit (a pupil unit is a weighted enrollment measure) and provided some districts an additional “equalized” amount that varied inversely with a district’s property valuation.”³²⁷ By the 1960s and 70s, state aid accounted for funding forty-three percent of the cost of running schools, but school spending per student varied widely from district to district. Local property taxes rose rapidly in all districts in the late 1960s, and the school tax rate varied widely among districts. To understand education finance, one must be familiar with Minnesota’s property tax terminology and its two types of property tax bases used to compute and spread school district levies. A levy is a tax imposed on property. In Minnesota, an assessor values each parcel of property, referring to this value as the estimated market value. Referendum market value is the taxable market value of all taxable property in the school district, excluding two classes of property: seasonal recreational properties and agricultural lands.³²⁸

³²⁶ Tim Strom, “Minnesota School Finance: A Guide for Legislators,” MN House Research, MN House of Representatives (October 2022), 2. <https://www.house.mn.gov/hrd/pubs/mnschfin.pdf>.

³²⁷ Ibid.

³²⁸ Ibid, 17.

The resulting difference in local property wealth would impact school districts' ability to achieve and maintain successful schools. A neighborhood or district with higher property values would gain more funding through a levy or referendum. Furthermore, more affluent housing areas may have an easier time passing levies because the residents are less concerned about being able to afford the increased taxes and more likely to vote in favor of the levy referendums to improve their schools. Less affluent areas may be less likely to be able to afford an increase in taxes. Moreover, families are not building long-term stability through real estate equity in poorer areas where fewer people own their homes.

In a recent example from 2022, in South Washington County, located on the outskirts of St. Paul, voters rejected a \$462 million referendum for school expansions. The ten-year plan would have raised property taxes to construct two new elementary schools, expand three high schools, and renovate schools throughout the district. It would have also closed Newport Elementary, the district's most diverse elementary school.³²⁹ The levy was voted down, with sixty-six percent of voters casting no ballots and only thirty-four percent voting to approve the referendum.

In contrast, in 2017, in the Wayzata Public School District, one of the state's more affluent and high-performing schools, voters approved all three school funding requests on the referendum ballot. Wayzata Public Schools report seventy-nine percent of elementary students testing at or above the proficient level for reading and eighty-two percent testing at or above that level for math. Also, eighty-two percent of high school students tested at or above the proficient

³²⁹ Becky Z. Dernbach, "South Washington County Voters Reject School Referendum," *Democracy and Politics*, *Sahan Journal*, August 10, 2022. <https://sahanjournal.com/democracy-politics/south-washington-county-school-referendum-newport-elementary-2/>.

level for reading, and seventy-nine percent tested at or above that level for math. Their high school graduation rate is ninety-six point nine percent, students on free or reduced lunch are six point four percent, and English Language Learners account for only three point six percent of the student body.³³⁰ In their passed referendum, voters overwhelmingly approved renewing and increasing the operating levy for ten years to provide an additional five and a half million dollars per year to maintain class sizes, provide students with needed support services, manage growing enrollment and stabilize the district budget, approve seventy million dollars in bond funding to address the district's growth and facilities needs for capacity, safety, and academics, and renew the technology levy for ten years, which was four million dollars per year to help maintain technology for students and staff.³³¹ While these are recent examples, the impact of the affluence of a neighborhood on the spending for its students is tremendous.

Since funding relies on income and property taxes, it threatens poorer neighborhoods and causes funding disparities. Wealthier districts collect more for funding, often resulting in low-income areas with the highest needs receiving the least available resources, quality learning facilities, and even qualified teachers. In the Twin Cities, as certain neighborhoods became entirely white and Black residents were pushed into smaller sections of the city, contemporary patterns of residential segregation developed. As highly segregated areas received fewer opportunities and benefits, schools faced an increasing funding disparity. For the students living in these areas, many children enter school already behind their more privileged peers. While

³³⁰ "Wayzata Public School District." Education. U.S. News & World Report. Accessed March 10, 2023. <https://www.usnews.com/education/k12/minnesota/districts/wayzata-public-school-district-103798>.

³³¹ "Referendum 2017," Wayzata Public Schools, November 7, 2017. Accessed September 27, 2023. <https://www.wayzataschools.org/district/referendum-2017>.

school should provide the opportunity to catch up, the reality is that most never do. Education policy and funding decisions must be adapted to help each child who comes to school to learn, no matter the district, find success. This is no easy task, and the racial covenants and housing discrimination that emerged in the Progressive Era and their impact on patterns of residential segregation in the Twin Cities have not made things easier. However, bringing about awareness of why the Twin Cities are so segregated and how that has clearly impacted Minnesota's education system is perhaps a start to rectifying some of the problems.

Chapter 3

St. Paul, Minnesota: “The Most Livable City in America”

Rondo stood as a thriving Black community within St. Paul, Minnesota, renowned for its tight-knit community bonds and rich cultural tapestry. However, in the 1950s, plans emerged from both local authorities and the National Inter-Regional Highways Committee to pave the way for Interstate 94. This expansive highway, stretching 259 miles through the heart of Minnesota, linked key urban hubs like Moorhead, Alexandria, St. Cloud, Minneapolis, and Saint Paul, bridging the expanse from North Dakota to Wisconsin.

The plans to connect Minneapolis and St. Paul, specifically, had been in motion since the 1920s but “took hold in 1944 due in part to a proposal by the National Inter-Regional Highways Committee – a creation of then President Franklin Delano Roosevelt.”³³² After World War II, the nation transitioned from mass transit to automobiles, driven by increased personal finances and urban sprawl. The Twin Cities experienced a fifty-eight percent increase in automobile registrations from 1947 to 1950, leading to growing levels of gridlock.³³³ The need for additional roadway options arose from the simple necessity of helping more people reach their increasingly distant destinations, giving rise to the highway systems.

Minnesota’s early development featured the major cities of St. Paul, Minneapolis (then known as St. Anthony), and Stillwater. Even before Minnesota attained statehood, officials designated St. Paul as the seat of government, while Stillwater secured the state prison, and St.

³³² Matt Reicher, “The Birth of a Metro Highway (Interstate 94),” *Reconnect Rondo* (Sept. 10, 2017): para. 1.

³³³ *Ibid*, para. 2.

Anthony became home to the public university. The highway plan aimed to provide residents access to the University of Minnesota and facilitate an easier route to the State Capitol, thereby connecting the major cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul.³³⁴ The highway plans prioritized seamless travel between these two key locations.

The St. Anthony Route, considered the best option, almost immediately became the chosen route to run between University and Marshall Avenues. However, many ignored the problem that this route ran straight through the heart of the Rondo and Prospect Park neighborhoods. The Rondo neighborhood, in particular, thrived during the first half of the twentieth century as a home to Black families and individuals migrating from downtown Saint Paul. It housed the largest Black community in St. Paul and exemplified Black social entrepreneurship, academic excellence, and a vibrant arts culture. This community provided a critical haven for Black residents in Minnesota's Twin Cities during the peak years of de facto segregation and the Civil Rights Movement.³³⁵

St. Paul city engineer George Harrold opposed the St. Anthony Route plan, correctly predicting that the new highway build would decimate these long-established neighborhoods, essentially cutting the life out of them. Instead, his proposal recommended routing the highway a mile north of University Avenue, paralleling the existing railroad lines, dubbing it the Northern Route. This route would leave the neighborhoods intact.

³³⁴ *Pioneer Press* (Saint Paul), November 1, 1945.

³³⁵ Jimmie Briggs, "Before the Highway: Saint Paul, Minnesota," *AARP Livable Communities* (Feb. 1, 2023): para. 1.

Ultimately, government officials chose the St. Anthony Route, citing its efficiency.³³⁶ Officials argued that the Northern Route went too far out of the way and that inconvenienced drivers would not adequately use it, meaning that it would not divert the congested traffic enough. Also, because people would spend additional driving time to get to the Northern Route, the streets would need to be repaired more often – costing the city more money. Highway Department officials felt the “unfortunate reality of their task was that they needed to place convenience above the social impact of their plan and that their decision was the best one for the growth of the area. In their opinion the desired lines (defined as the shortest or most easily navigated path between two points) created by their plan would best serve the people that used the new highway.”³³⁷

Sadly, in their pursuit of convenience, Minnesota legislators made a devastating decision for the Black communities that this new highway impacted. With the passage of the Federal-Aid Highway Act in 1956, the construction of Interstate 94 began.³³⁸ Thousands of families and hundreds of Black-owned businesses were forced to relocate, with immeasurable financial and cultural loss. Homes, businesses, and community institutions, like schools, were destroyed. Before the highway's construction, Rondo had its own schools, including Monroe Elementary School and Mechanic Arts High School. These schools provided a sense of belonging and cultural identity for African American students in the neighborhood. However, with the construction of the highway, these schools were closed or relocated, and many students were

³³⁶ Information Report to the Planning Board Regarding the Proposed Central Routing of the "East-West Highway": submitted and approved by the board, May 12, 1950.

³³⁷ Reicher, “Birth of a Metro Highway,” para. 5.

³³⁸ Minnesota Statutes, Chap. 161.17, subd. 2.

forced to attend schools in other neighborhoods, often facing racial discrimination and unequal educational opportunities. This displacement disrupted the continuity of education for many African American students and had long-term implications for their educational attainment and opportunities.

St. Paul's history includes a poignant narrative of systemic segregation and its profound repercussions on housing and education. The St. Paul school district was the only school system in Minnesota with a policy legally segregating Black students from white. The segregated Black schools had outdated textbooks, inadequate supplies, poorly maintained buildings, and limited access to extracurricular activities compared to schools for white students. The demolition of the Rondo neighborhood was also a stark testament to the devastating impact of freeway construction, which not only severed physical connections but also fractured the social bonds that bound the community together.

Against this backdrop of upheaval, St. Paul's educational landscape bore witness to the effects of segregation, as exemplified by the stark disparities evident in schools such as Maxfield Elementary, Webster Magnet School, Central High School, and Benjamin E. Mays School. Through an examination of these historically and predominantly Black schools, this chapter illuminates the intersectionality of housing segregation, educational disparities, and freeway construction in shaping the trajectory of St. Paul's Black community.

When the Supreme Court ruled in *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954 that the establishment of separate public schools for Blacks and whites was unconstitutional, the decision did not provide direction on how segregation in public schools should be ended. This led to upheaval and turbulence for St. Paul Schools, including student sit-ins and walk-outs, as well as protests from parents and the Black community. After being bussed out of their neighborhoods

under the new integration plans, students of color in predominantly white schools felt that the faculty and curriculum did not adequately acknowledge the fact that a growing percentage of the school was Black, with diverse backgrounds and unique needs. Drawing upon archival research, oral histories, and critical analysis, this chapter argues that the displacement caused by highway construction, coupled with the unbalanced school integration efforts, disrupted the continuity of education for many students of color in St. Paul and had long-term implications for their educational attainment and opportunities.

Making the Segregated City

Decades before the disruptive impact of highway construction cleaved through Black neighborhoods, educational division existed in the city of St. Paul - a poignant illustration captured in the legal endeavors of attorney Fredrick McGhee and the subsequent controversy surrounding the education of African American children at the Crispus Attucks Home near Mattocks Elementary in 1909. That year, McGhee's efforts resonated in a case highlighting the intersection of race, neighborhood, and education. At the heart of this narrative lay the Crispus Attucks Home, a sanctuary for orphaned African American children, faced with relocation near Mattocks Elementary, a predominantly white public school. As plans unfolded to integrate these children into Mattocks, the outcry from white parents for separate instruction reverberated through the community. This stark division, discussed in further detail later, underscored prevailing sentiments of segregation in education. This historical backdrop epitomizes the challenges and complexities that marked the fight for equal education during this era and beyond.

Over time, for example, the once-flourishing Rondo community deteriorated, isolated by an uncrossable highway. This project, like many similar projects across the United States during

that era, exemplified the intentional disregard for the welfare of the Black community. Even with the continued construction of I-94 from Brooklyn Center through north Minneapolis completed in 1984, the highway cut through a primarily Black and working-class neighborhood. These choices and patterns cannot be ignored or considered unintentional, as they speak volumes about the historical injustice and deliberate actions taken by policymakers that affected marginalized communities. The construction of highways often disrupted and dismantled thriving neighborhoods, disproportionately impacting Black and working-class areas. Data from the Department of Transportation shows more than a million people were displaced nationwide during federal highway construction, including Black neighborhoods in St. Paul, Minneapolis, and Duluth.

The disregard for the welfare of Black communities such as the Rondo neighborhood reflects systemic issues that persisted during that era, shaping the landscape and social fabric of many regions in the United States. The impact on the Rondo community extended beyond physical displacement and isolation. The division caused by the highway led to the disruption of essential services, such as access to schools, housing, healthcare, and employment opportunities. The elementary school in the Rondo neighborhood fell to the freeway construction.³³⁹ One can only imagine how the separation caused by the highway might have severed crucial ties between students and teachers or disrupted after-school programs and mentorship opportunities. Reverend Floyd Massey and Timothy Howard, acting as representatives for the Rondo–St. Anthony Improvement Association negotiated with city and state officials to oppose the construction of an elevated freeway segment between Western and Lexington Avenues. Despite their efforts,

³³⁹ Map of the Interstate 94 corridor, 1965. From Alan A. Altshuler's *The City Planning Process: A Political Analysis* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1965). <https://www.mnopedia.org/event/neighborhood-resistance-i-94-1953-1965>.

around 600 families from Rondo, predominantly working-class, were displaced from their homes. Despite attempts by leaders to advocate for a fair housing ordinance, they were unsuccessful in garnering support from city officials. The lack of political influence, coupled with racial and class prejudices, left the Rondo community in a vulnerable position.

The story of Rondo serves as a powerful reminder of the historical challenges faced by Black communities in Minnesota and the United States as a whole regarding educational segregation, but it also highlights the resilience and determination of those who fought for justice and equality in education. The situation in the Rondo neighborhood parallels similar instances across the United States during this era. Throughout the 1950s, 60s, and beyond, the development of highways and infrastructure in the nation often had significant social and economic consequences for communities, particularly marginalized groups. In New York City, the Cross Bronx Expressway built between 1948 and 1972, was the first highway built through a crowded urban environment in the U. S. The result of its construction was the displacement of thousands of residents, mainly from low-income and predominantly Black and Hispanic neighborhoods like the South Bronx. This construction physically divided communities and led to economic decline in the affected areas.³⁴⁰ In Los Angeles, the construction of the Interstate 710 freeway in 1964 led to the displacement of communities in neighborhoods like Boyle Heights and East Los Angeles, primarily Latino communities. The freeway construction

³⁴⁰ Justin Sanchez, "Glory in Destruction: The Cross-Bronx Expressway and the Effects on Bronx Residents," *Academia* 1, no. 1 (2017).
https://www.academia.edu/32745579/Glory_in_Destruction_The_Cross_Bronx_Expressway_and_the_Effects_on_Bronx_Residents.

physically cut through these neighborhoods, leading to social fragmentation and economic challenges.³⁴¹

Similarly, in Atlanta, the construction of highways like Interstate 20 in 1957 and later Interstate 75/85 in 1984 destroyed predominantly African American neighborhoods, including areas like the Old Fourth Ward, where Martin Luther King Jr. lived. This construction led to the displacement of residents and the loss of numerous historical and cultural landmarks.³⁴² In Detroit, highway construction, mainly the I-375 freeway, caused the demolition of predominantly Black neighborhoods and disrupted communities. The result was the loss of homes and businesses, exacerbating existing economic disparities. When I-375 was built, it “cleaved apart and all but destroyed the vibrant Black community of Black Bottom.”³⁴³ Historian Jamon Jordan said the influential area was thriving, with Black-owned businesses, restaurants, and movie theaters. He claimed, “I-375 was built due to the 1956 Federal Interstate Highway Act. Many of these interstate highways would destroy, disrupt and wipeout African American business districts and African American residential communities.”³⁴⁴ Lastly, in San Francisco, the construction of the Embarcadero Freeway in the late 1950s and the removal of the Embarcadero and Fillmore neighborhoods disproportionately affected communities of color,

³⁴¹ California State Assembly. "Relating to the Seaside Freeway." 1959 Session of the Legislature. *Statutes of California* (House Resolution). State of California. Ch. 144 p. 3502.

³⁴² State Highway Department of Georgia (1952). *System of State Roads* (PDF) (Map). Scale not given. Atlanta: State Highway Department of Georgia. OCLC 5673161. Retrieved December 1, 2023.

³⁴³ Larry Spruill, “The Future of the I-375 Boulevard Project and the History Behind It,” *Local 4 Detroit*, June 15, 2021. <https://www.clickondetroit.com/news/local/2021/06/15/the-future-of-the-i-375-boulevard-project-and-the-history-behind-it/>.

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

leading to displacement and the loss of cultural hubs.³⁴⁵ As demonstrated, what happened to Rondo was not an isolated incident, but rather a microcosm of systemic issues and intentional actions that adversely impacted Black and working-class communities across the country. The patterns of infrastructure development consistently marginalized these communities, and what happened in Rondo reflected a more extensive, nationwide trend.

In examining the complex tapestry of Minnesota's history, the focus turns from the physical infrastructure that traversed Black communities to the social and educational infrastructure that intersected their lives. Just as the highways carved through neighborhoods, the legacy of segregated education left indelible marks on the collective memory of Minnesota. To truly understand the experiences and challenges faced by these communities, it is essential to explore how educational institutions mirrored and perpetuated the racial divisions that persisted throughout the state's history. Exploring the ramifications of segregated housing on education in Minnesota delves into a layered narrative deeply entrenched in the state's socio-political fabric. Segregated housing did not merely create physical divides; it orchestrated a systematic barrier to quality education for Black communities. Beyond the mere presence of separate schools, the educational system perpetuated disparities through unequal funding, resource allocation, and curriculum quality. These institutions became microcosms of societal segregation, impeding academic growth, social mobility, and access to opportunities. Moreover, the psychological impact of attending under-resourced schools in segregated areas perpetuated a cycle of limited

³⁴⁵ Ken McLaughlin, "Construction photos of the Embarcadero Freeway taken in January 1958, when the project was a year away from opening," *The Chronicle* (1958). <https://www.sfchronicle.com/oursf/article/1958-photos-of-the-Embarcadero-Freeway-A-13970285.php>.

aspirations and diminished prospects, perpetuating a cycle of inequality that echoed through generations.

An Education in Jim Crow

Since statehood, segregation and discrimination have persistently marred Minnesota's educational history. Despite the motto of St. Paul today as “the most livable city in America,” many African Americans throughout history found it unlivable. Similarly, despite the emphasis and importance of education for the residents of St. Paul, those beliefs did not always transfer to African American students. Harriet Bishop, renowned as the founder of St. Paul's inaugural public and Sunday schools, also distinguished herself as a social reformer, land agent, and writer. In 1847, she ventured out into the frontier to educate immigrants, settlers, and Native Americans in the area. In 1856, city leaders included her first school when forming the Saint Paul Public School system. That first year, there were three teachers and 150 students, many of whom were immigrants in the primary grades. Students stayed in a grade until they mastered the material. At the first meeting of the Board of Education on June 10, 1856, they adopted a phrase from Greek philosopher Menander, “Teach youth. Men cannot be taught.”³⁴⁶ The St. Paul Board of Education saw the need for a larger building and paid \$8,433 of their own money to build a school on the crossing of Eighth St. and Olive St. Washington's schoolhouse, named after America's first president, contained four classrooms for 240 students.

³⁴⁶ St. Paul Public Schools, “SPPS Celebrates 150 Year Anniversary” (video), September 15, 2022. Accessed January 15, 2024. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bRCIfZHP5SM&t=82s>.

The initial school board was personally responsible for the schools. They built two new schools in 1857. While the Civil War raged in the South, the St. Paul Board of Education opened a new school named the Colored Children's School. It was near the post office, meaning it was downtown, which meant that anybody attending that school had to walk or take public transit. The children did not have access to public transportation. There were horse cars there, but children never rode them, so they had to walk.³⁴⁷ Many Black children chose not to attend or to attend irregularly.

In October 1865, the all-white St. Paul Board of Education adopted a resolution stating, “the mingling of children of African descent with those of white parentage is obnoxious to the views and feelings of a large portion of our citizens.”³⁴⁸ St. Paul subsequently attempted to segregate Black children with a provisional and largely ineffective policy of creating a separate school if thirty Black children wanted a formal education. The policy was ineffective primarily due to the number of children; in 1865, St. Paul contained around 4,800 children between ages five and twenty-one. Forty-five of those children were of African descent.³⁴⁹ Due to the limited count of only forty-five Black children in the city, establishing a segregated school that mandated a minimum of thirty Black children became nearly impossible to both create and enforce. While the St. Paul school district was the only school system in Minnesota with a policy segregating Black students from white, the message behind the ruling of separate but equal was damaging.

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

³⁴⁸ St. Paul Board of Directions, “Minutes,” 1865.

³⁴⁹ Green, *Degrees of Freedom*, 71.

St. Paul could not afford separate yet adequate facilities for its Black students, so often teachers ignored the policy and allowed Black children into their classrooms, with the administration looking the other way.³⁵⁰ With the recent Civil War, being unable to afford separate but equal school facilities was not unique to Minnesota; this trend was common throughout the South and the nation. The "separate but equal" doctrine, ruled in the 1896 Supreme Court case *Plessy v. Ferguson*, allowed for segregation if facilities provided for different races were deemed "equal." However, in reality, the facilities provided for African American students were far from equal to those provided for white students. State and local governments in the South, just as in St. Paul, routinely allocated what limited resources they had to provide even significantly fewer resources to schools serving Black students. The segregated Black schools had outdated textbooks, inadequate supplies, poorly maintained buildings, and limited access to extracurricular activities compared to schools for white students.

In 1867, in St. Paul, after the adoption of the resolution of a separate but equal school system, Superintendent John Mattocks secured a school building for Black children.³⁵¹ He stated, "The colored school would be in operation this week."³⁵² Almost immediately, the district neglected the maintenance and operation of the school while allowing it to run with an average of twenty students. Only a small handful of Black parents sent their children to the substandard colored-only school. During this era of legal segregation, opinions, and desires among Black

³⁵⁰ Green, *Degrees of Freedom*, 71.

³⁵¹ Judith Holschlag, "St. Paul School Moves Into Use Again," *The Minneapolis Star*, November 1, 1965, 7B. <https://startribune.newspapers.com/article/the-minneapolis-star-hphs-st-paul-sch/36216646/>.

³⁵² Green, *Degrees of Freedom*, 72.

parents regarding education varied. Generally, many Black parents advocated for equal access to quality education in integrated schools, seeing it as a means to provide their children with better opportunities and resources. In Minnesota, as in other parts of the US, there were efforts by Black communities to challenge segregation and advocate for integration in schools. By the time organizations like the St. Paul chapter of the NAACP were founded, the legal separation of Black and white students in the city had concluded, yet these groups and individuals played a significant role in fighting for desegregation and equal educational opportunities for Black students.

Still, opinions within the Black community varied, and it is essential to note this diversity. Some Black families in 1869, just as some parents in 2022, preferred segregated schools for various reasons, including concerns about racial hostility, fear for the safety of their children, and the desire to maintain a sense of community and cultural identity.³⁵³ The funding disparities between Black and white schools in St. Paul were deliberate, reflecting a broader systemic effort to maintain racial inequality and disenfranchise African American communities. When the segregation policy became more resolute, there was stricter enforcement of the color barrier in schools. Teachers could no longer “feign ignorance of whether a certain percentage of African American children were enrolled” in their classes and could no longer disregard the policy.³⁵⁴ The new enforcement of the policy prohibited children of African descent from sharing

³⁵³ Becky Z. Dernbach, “St. Paul Public Schools is one of the most diverse districts in the state. Increasingly, parents prefer segregation,” *Sahan Journal*, January 6, 2022. <https://sahanjournal.com/education/st-paul-public-schools-families-black-asian-hmong-white-increasingly-choose-segregation/>.

³⁵⁴ Green, *Degrees of Freedom*, 72.

classrooms with white children.³⁵⁵ In 1861, the Minnesota legislature stipulated that every township would have its own school district. Town supervisors automatically became school trustees, while town clerks and treasurers assumed roles as school officials. This township plan lasted only a year, when in 1862, the legislature adopted the neighborhood plan, which firmly established the district system of public schools — a system still in existence today.³⁵⁶ The neighborhood plan established that school attendance depended on the neighborhood of residence, except for Black children, who were required to attend segregated schools starting in 1867. Even early in its statehood years, Minnesota's education was progressive. In 1868, Governor William R. Marshall reported that Minnesota had more school buildings than any other state with a comparable population and taxable property.

Yet, the newly enforced segregated school buildings had abysmal conditions. Regardless of where they lived in the city, Black children in St. Paul had to go to the only segregated school open to them.³⁵⁷ St. Paul Superintendent John Mattocks secured a site in Morrison's Building on Jackson Street, opposite the Methodist church.³⁵⁸ Some Black families moved closer to the school or were already living in nearby areas. Over time, Jackson Street would become the

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

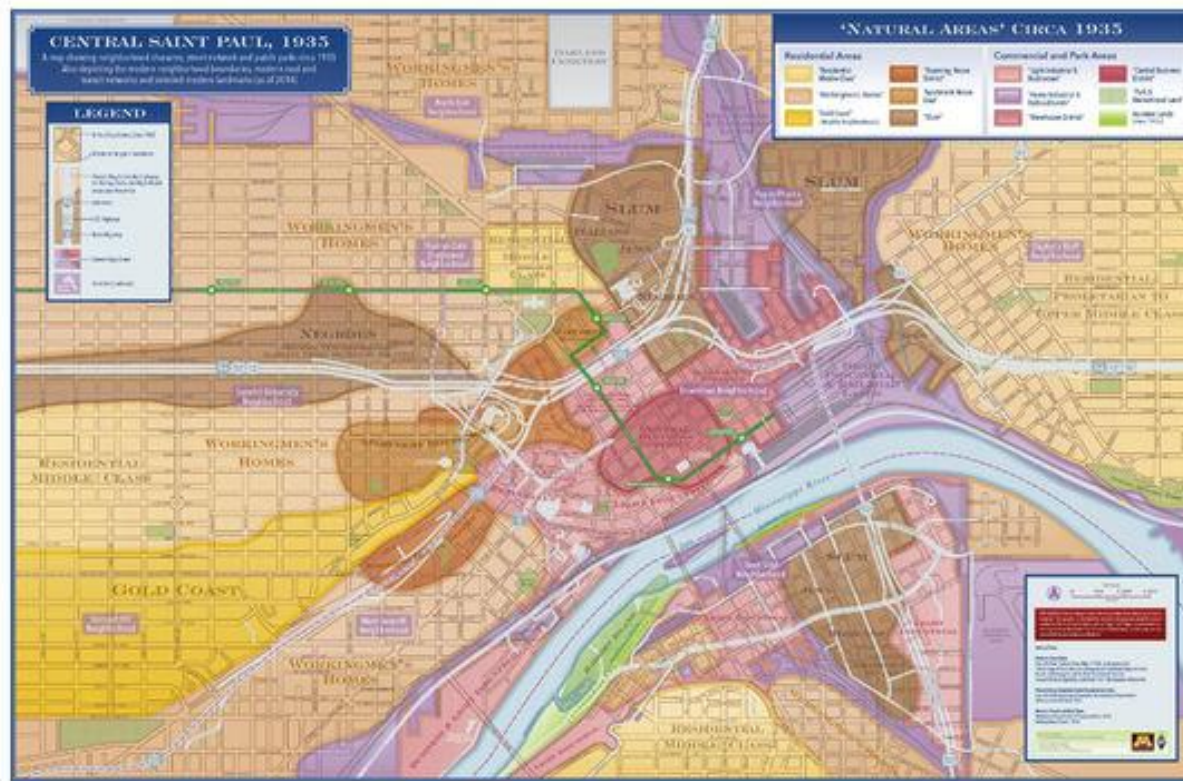
³⁵⁶ "A History of the State Department of Education in Minnesota," *Minnesota State Department of Education*, 1967. <https://mn.gov/mnddc/past/pdf/60s/67/67-AHO-MDE.pdf>.

³⁵⁷ Green, *A Peculiar Imbalance*, 188.

³⁵⁸ "Our History," *The Recovery Church*. Accessed January 15, 2024. <https://www.therecoverychurch.org/buildings.html>.

dividing line in St. Paul housing between the “slum” where Italians, Jews, and “Negroes” lived and the residential middle class.³⁵⁹

Figure 3.3 City of St Paul ‘Natural Areas’ Map (1935)



Source: “Social Saga of Two Cities: An Ecological and Statistical Study of Social Trends in Minneapolis and St. Paul” by Calvin F. Schmid, Council of Social Agencies, published 1937, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

In November 1867, the St. Paul *Daily Pioneer*, Minnesota’s first daily newspaper founded in 1849 by James M. Goodhue, exposed the dilapidated conditions at the segregated school:

³⁵⁹ Calvin F. Schmid, “Social Saga of Two Cities: An Ecological and Statistical Study of Social Trends in Minneapolis and St. Paul,” Council of Social Agencies, published 1937, Minneapolis, Minnesota. Updated by Geoff Maas, July 6, 2014, commissioned by The University of Minnesota-Rochester Community Collaboration.

The colored children of this city are excluded from the free schools which are located in convenient and comfortable buildings, well-supplied with maps, charts, blackboards, and the usual equipment of such institution, and are placed in a separate department, which is devoted to people of color...Some of the windows have been broken out, the plastering is falling off and the keen air of winter will find entrance in many a crack and cranny. To keep out a part of the cold that would otherwise find entrance, the windows had been partly boarded up, so that while the benefit of increased warmth is attained, the disadvantage of a decreased light has to be submitted to.³⁶⁰

Without the proper equipment and resources, without even light and warmth (“especially critical to newly arrived Southern-born children during Minnesota winters”³⁶¹), eventually, Black children in St. Paul effectively lost access to education because no teacher was willing to teach them. District records reflected that less than half of St. Paul’s African American schoolchildren attended classes.³⁶² Not long after passing the law to segregate schools, in 1869, Minnesota legislators voted to pass a law discontinuing school segregation in St. Paul, the city with the largest concentration of Black residents, and throughout the state, although no other cities had formally attempted segregated school buildings.

Throughout the antebellum years, people widely viewed public education in the North and West as a transformative force that would pave the way for a promising future. Prominent figures like Horace Mann and Henry Barnard, staunch advocates of compulsory education, asserted that public schools played a crucial role in fostering civic-mindedness and promoting a sense of national unity. They believed these institutions not only disseminated humanitarian and egalitarian values but also facilitated the integration of individuals from diverse ethnic, religious,

³⁶⁰ St. Paul *Daily Pioneer*, November 30, 1867.

³⁶¹ Green, *Degrees of Freedom*, 72.

³⁶² *Ibid.*

and racial backgrounds, ultimately contributing to a more cohesive society. Moreover, proponents argued that public education would enhance human efficiency by creating a more informed electorate, particularly in a nation that embraced universal male suffrage. Consequently, people came to regard access to public education as the inherent right of every citizen.³⁶³

The North and West widely embraced the recognition of public education as a fundamental entitlement. However, there was considerable uncertainty regarding whether the evolving demographics of these regions should be reflected in the composition of public school classrooms. The path towards racially integrated schools was a complex and winding one. Despite the prevailing egalitarian sentiments of the era, children from affluent and privileged backgrounds typically received their education from elite schools, often private academies or public schools located in middle- or upper-class neighborhoods. Consequently, the term "public school" came to be associated with institutions attended by working-class children. In Northern and Western cities, these populations were predominantly white, and diversity was primarily understood in terms of religion and ethnicity, with little consideration given to class and race. The question of whether to integrate Black children into these schools posed a challenging dilemma, apparently even for advocates of African American rights.³⁶⁴

Northern states, like Minnesota, assisted Black education in the ten years after the Civil War. Gradually, though, the optimism of Reconstruction faded; "Northern whites had a hard time

³⁶³ Ibid, 74.

³⁶⁴ Ibid.

sustaining interest in the fate of freedmen with their own world shaken by economic depression, political corruption, and violent class conflict, all bitter by-products of the North's industrialization."³⁶⁵ Over time, many northern whites came to agree with Southern whites who insisted that Blacks proved incapable of anything but the most rudimentary learning.³⁶⁶ Under the newly emerging Social Darwinist theory, as well as the emerging Progressive Era, predicated on white supremacy and class supremacy, academics explained how people of the world were set in a rigid hierarchy of development, with Anglo-Saxons at the top, immigrant masses in the middle, and Blacks at the bottom.³⁶⁷ Ministers, authors, judges, and politicians echoed the sentiment. Republican Theodore Roosevelt concluded, "A perfectly stupid race can never rise to a very high plane. The Negro, for instance, has been kept down as much by lack of intellectual development as by anything else."³⁶⁸ Thinking and teaching such as this would be most detrimental to the fight for civil rights and equality.

It follows, then, that despite Minnesota legislation officially ending school segregation, white parents rejected desegregated education. The St. Paul *Daily Pioneer* reported that with the passing of desegregation laws, the education of white children was being sacrificed for the benefit of Black students. An article stated, "There is no room for [Black students] now, many

³⁶⁵ Kevin Boyle, *Arc of Justice: A Saga of Race, Civil Rights, and Murder in the Jazz Age* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2007), 74.

³⁶⁶ Foner, *Reconstruction*, 144.

³⁶⁷ Boyle, *Arc of Justice*, 75.

³⁶⁸ Roosevelt quoted in David L. Lewis, *W.E.B. Du Bois: A Biography 1868-1963* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2009), 276.

white pupils having already been refused admission for want to accommodations.”³⁶⁹ This was just another guise for racism. The subterfuge would continue. In Twin Cities schools, white parents harassed Black parents trying to enroll their children, yet newspapers and the school district claimed that school integration was a failure because Black children did not want to learn with white children.³⁷⁰ The *Pioneer* printed about the 1869 desegregation law,

“The fact stares us in the face, that nearly all of the colored pupils of this city [St. Paul], were deprived of the means of obtaining an education through the public schools, by this law. It would seem that such evidence as this would be sufficient as warranted to openly repeal. [The law] is impertinent and worse than unnecessary in its inception, and is wholly wrong and injurious in the operation. It really deprived the colored people in this city of the opportunity of educating their children and that is sufficient cause to warrant its repeal.”³⁷¹

It is interesting, or perhaps appalling is a better word, how quickly the newspaper forgot its 1867 description of the state of separate but “equal” schools in St. Paul.

Over time, the enforcement of school integration would be tested. In 1909, attorney Fredrick McGhee, discussed previously in further detail, litigated a case concerning the education of Black school-age children. The Crispus Attucks Home in St. Paul served as a dwelling for African American children who were orphaned or neglected. When the Home needed relocation, it moved to an open area near Mattocks Elementary, a one-room public school predominantly serving white students. The intention was to educate the children of Crispus Attucks at this nearby institution. However, in the summer of 1909, white parents voiced their demands to school authorities, urging them to divide Mattocks into two rooms or construct an

³⁶⁹ St. Paul *Daily Pioneer*, March 14, 1869.

³⁷⁰ Green, *Degrees of Freedom*, 84.

³⁷¹ St. Paul *Daily Pioneer*, April 13, 1869.

additional room. Their insistence was rooted in the belief that the Black children required separate instruction.³⁷² The *Pioneer Press* commented on the case, “It would be illogical to take half the colored orphans and put them under the same teacher. In fact, the natural thing to do, would be to have all the orphans in one room under one teacher.”³⁷³

In the face of angry, protesting parents, the school board upheld the language and spirit of the statute that banned school segregation. They ruled to comply with the law, saying that McGhee’s arguments during the case were unnecessary because the law was clear. In response, McGhee stated that “in his twenty years of civil-rights work in Minnesota and around the country he had learned a few things. One of them was that African Americans could never afford to assume that the law would be enforced to protect their rights and privileges. Experience had taught him that Black people must assert those rights, not assume them, even in Minnesota.”³⁷⁴

In education, a pattern of racially segregated schools has existed in the Twin Cities since at least 1954, the year the Supreme Court declared segregation unlawful in *Brown v. Board of Education*.³⁷⁵ This educational segregation resulted both because of residential segregation³⁷⁶

³⁷² Green, *Degrees of Freedom*, 298.

³⁷³ St. Paul *Pioneer Press*, September 1, 1909, 14.

³⁷⁴ Green, *Degrees of Freedom*, 298-299.

³⁷⁵ 347 U.S. 483 (1954).

³⁷⁶ This topic will be addressed further in this paper. Racial discrimination in housing remained legal until the Federal Fair Housing Act was passed in 1968. Segregation in Twin Cities neighborhoods largely resulted from deliberate housing discrimination. Low-income housing, primarily occupied by Black and other minority individuals, was restricted to areas Near North and Southside Minneapolis until 1969. (Before 1962, it was common practice for members of the Board of Realtors to show houses in specific areas only to minority individuals).

and because of specific Twin Cities school board policies relating to the size and location of schools, attendance zones, enrollment and transfer policies and teacher assignments.³⁷⁷

Restrictive deeds and redlining made it difficult for non-white people to purchase property and whole blocks became subject to these restrictions in Minneapolis and St. Paul. Such covenants made it nearly impossible for individuals, especially African Americans, to acquire stable and affordable housing, which in turn affected educational and job opportunities for future generations.

The relationship between segregation in schools and neighborhoods is closely intertwined. Segregated neighborhoods naturally create segregated schools within them. However, there is also a reciprocal influence from school characteristics to the neighborhoods. Prospective residents, especially families with children, consider the quality of local schools when deciding where to reside. Consequently, when schools undergo racial or social changes—and historical evidence indicates that schools can transform rapidly—it can expedite the transition of neighborhoods.

Conversely, schools that remain stably integrated can contribute to the stability of neighborhoods. Integrated neighborhoods tend to exhibit greater resilience in metropolitan areas that have implemented comprehensive school integration programs.³⁷⁸ Understanding housing

³⁷⁷ Cheryl W. Heilman, "Booker v. Special School District No. 1: A History of School Desegregation in Minneapolis, Minnesota," *Law and Inequality: A Journal of Theory and Practice* 12, no. 1 (December 1993): 129.

³⁷⁸ G. J. Palardy, "Differential school effects among low, middle, and high social class composition schools," *School Effectiveness and School Improvement* 19, 1 (2008); G. J. Palardy, "High school socioeconomic segregation and student attainment," *American Educational*

and school policy is crucial to ensure effective coordination between the two spheres, particularly when considering equity issues.

As demonstrated at the beginning of this chapter, when the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956 provided government funding to cities to build more highways and freeways due to the increase in the use of automobiles, the Twin Cities had a choice to make - where to build these new highways that would link the downtowns of Minneapolis and St. Paul? The Department of Transportation proposed at least two options: a northern route along abandoned railroad tracks or a central route right through Rondo, the majority-Black neighborhood in St. Paul. They chose the latter and began construction on I-94, “splitting the community and bulldozing its business district. Some Rondo residents battled the construction in the courts; others were forcibly removed by police; still, others accepted lowball offers for their homes and moved away. The process changed Rondo forever.”³⁷⁹ This displacement of families, businesses, and organizations had a far-reaching negative impact on the Black community in St. Paul.

By the 1930s, Rondo housed half of St. Paul’s Black population. Fueled by the flourishing railway industry and local businesses, Rondo’s Black families spanned upper-middle, middle, and working-class backgrounds. Integrated schools like Central High School, Maxfield Elementary School, and parochial schools, although with significantly larger Black populations compared to other Twin Cities schools, fostered a relatively high level of education and literacy

Research Journal, 50, no. 4 (2013); Gary Orfield, “Schools More Separate: Consequences of a Decade of Resegregation,” *The Civil Rights Project*, Harvard University, July 2001.

³⁷⁹ Rebecca S. Wingo and Amy C. Sullivan, “Remembering Rondo: An Inside View of a History Harvest,” *Perspectives on History*, American Historical Association, March 1, 2017. <https://www.historians.org/research-and-publications/perspectives-on-history/march-2017/remembering-rondo-an-inside-view-of-a-history-harvest>.

among minority residents. This inclusivity, in turn, drew Southern Blacks who encountered severe racial prejudice and violence.³⁸⁰ Over time, this entrenched residential segregation in St. Paul significantly influenced various aspects of life, particularly education. Schools attended by Black children in the late nineteenth century and into the twentieth century included Maxfield Elementary School, McKinley Elementary School, John Marshall Junior High/High School, and Webster Elementary School, which merged in 1975 to become the Webster Magnet School, Central High School, and Saint Paul Mechanics Arts High School.³⁸¹ In the later twentieth century, schools were also formed by the Black community for Black students in St. Paul, such as Benjamin E. Mays school, built near the Rondo neighborhood after the construction of I-94, and the destruction and forced relocation of many families. This divide manifested in several ways, such as in the following school examples, chosen to highlight the effect that concentrations of Black residents had on forming highly segregated schools. The schools selected to illustrate these ideas include Maxfield Elementary, Webster Magnet School, Central High School, and Benjamin E. Mays School.

Maxfield Elementary: Historical Background

The first of this series of studies includes Maxfield Elementary School. Maxfield has a long history in the St. Paul Black community. According to the St. Paul Public Schools website,

³⁸⁰ Ehsan Alam, “Rondo Neighborhood, St. Paul,” *MNopedia*, Minnesota Historical Society. Accessed October 17, 2023. <https://www.mnopedia.org/place/rondo-neighborhood-st-paul>.

³⁸¹ *Saint Paul African American Historic & Cultural Context, 1837-1975*, January 28, 2018, Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission, <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/25aaf4a7929840c1866b39c3753c8bfe>.

Maxfield has been in the Rondo neighborhood for over 130 years.³⁸² The school is named after Louis H. and James T. Maxfield, who were in the wholesale flour, grain, and provisions business, according to R. L. Polk and Company's 1879 St. Paul City Directory.³⁸³ James also served two non-consecutive terms as Saint Paul Mayor in the 1860s and 1870s. Founded in 1890, the school has been a significant part of the local community, providing education and opportunities for students in the area.³⁸⁴ The school first opened in 1890 at St. Albans Street and St. Anthony Avenue and then later moved a few blocks west to 380 North Victoria Street in 1955. As stated, throughout the nineteenth century, education in St. Paul was integrated due to the relatively small community with a high degree of diversity and inter-reliance among its residents. There seemed to be little reason or even ability to separate children by race in so few classrooms, despite St. Paul's attempt to legally separate white and Black students from 1865 to 1869, when Minnesota legislators voted to pass a law discontinuing school segregation in St. Paul, the city with the largest concentration of Black residents.

St. Paul's residents demonstrated this integration and inter-reliance through their participation in social and educational gatherings. For instance, on April 17, 1902, the *Minneapolis Journal*, published an announcement stating, "The kindergartners of St. Paul and Minneapolis will celebrate Froebel's birthday Saturday afternoon at the Maxfield school, St. Paul. This is the great annual fete of the kindergartners, and a large number of them will meet at

³⁸² *Maxfield Elementary School*, 2024, Saint Paul Public Schools. Accessed January 27, 2024. <https://www.spps.org/maxfield>.

³⁸³ *Victoria Not-So-Secret*, May 20, 2014, Saint Paul by Bike, <https://saintpaulbybike.com/2014/07/26/victoria-not-so-secret/>.

³⁸⁴ Atum Azzahir, "Maxfield Elementary School celebrates 125th year anniversary," *Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder*, May 5, 2016. <https://spokesman-recorder.com/2016/05/05/maxfield-elementary-school-celebrates-125th-year-anniversary/>.

Sixth street and First avenue S to take the interurban car leaving at 2 o'clock.”³⁸⁵ Kindergartens in Minneapolis and St. Paul, regardless of race, descended on Maxfield Elementary for this celebration.

However, with population increases, conditions at Maxfield only deteriorated over time despite the money that should have been going into the school to accommodate the population surge. The teachers at Maxfield went on strike in 1946 to address these issues. The teachers demanded an emergency federal census, which they believed would show a 50,000 population gain since the 1940 federal count. With this much increase, the school should have automatically received an additional \$1,500,000 yearly expenditure, permitted by the city council within the thirty dollars per capita spending limit.³⁸⁶ The PTA group also urged immediate court action seeking to have federal and state aid money excluded from the thirty dollars per capita spending limitation. “By taking these two steps, the St. Paul city council could send that city’s 1,160 striking teachers back to their classrooms,” claimed *The Minneapolis Star*.³⁸⁷ Considered by some historians to be the first organized teachers’ strike in the nation, it was overall successful as the striking teachers enjoyed both strong solidarity and widespread public support from the start.

³⁸⁵ “Celebrate Froebel’s Birthday,” *The Minneapolis Journal*, April 17, 1902, 8. Friedrich Froebel (born April 21, 1782, Ober Weissbach, Thuringia, Ernestine Saxony [now in Germany]—died June 21, 1852, Mariantal, near Bad Liebenstein, Thuringia) was a German educator who was the founder of the kindergarten and one of the most influential educational reformers of the 19th century.

³⁸⁶ “Efforts to Settle St. Paul Strike Stall,” *The Minneapolis Star*, November 27, 1946, 3.

³⁸⁷ Ibid.

Fewer than twenty-five teachers and principals out of 1,165 crossed picket lines to work.³⁸⁸ At Maxfield, students, teachers, and administrators banded together to support this effort. A photograph from November 1946, seen in Figure 3.4, depicts Earsel and Earl Neal, Maxfield students, Grace Carlson, a PTA member, Reverend Clarence T. R. Nelson, pastor of Camphor Memorial Methodist church and a PTA member, Milton Siegel, field representative of the United Packing House Workers, who attended Maxfield in the early 1920s, and Leon McGibbon, principal of Maxfield at the time holding signs in the picket line in support of the strike. The strike ended when both sides backed a charter amendment that raised per capita city spending from thirty dollars to forty-two dollars, with eighteen dollars set aside for school funding.

Figure 3.4 There Was Variety in the Picket Line (1946)



Source: "Efforts to Settle St. Paul Strike Stall," *The Minneapolis Star*, November 27, 1946, 3.

³⁸⁸ Curt Brown, "1946 St. Paul teachers' strike got everyone's attention," *Star Tribune*, February 3, 2018, <https://www.startribune.com/1946-teachers-strike-got-everyone-s-attention/472516213/>.

One of the most significant disruptions Black students experienced in St. Paul was the process of integration that began in the 1950s. In 1954, the Supreme Court decided *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, which ruled that the establishment of separate public schools for Blacks and whites under state laws was unconstitutional. However, the decision did not provide direction on how segregation in public schools should end, which led to upheaval and turbulence for St. Paul Schools.

In 1955, as plans were underway to construct a freeway through the heart of the Rondo area, Maxfield Elementary relocated a few blocks west to 380 North Victoria Street, its current location. Historian David Vassar Taylor highlights that the construction of the new Maxfield Elementary School resulted from "intense lobbying by the Black community." Their goal was to replace the old, hazardous Maxfield building with a new one while keeping it situated in the Rondo neighborhood.³⁸⁹

Although the Supreme Court ruled *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954, the 1964 Civil Rights Act provided additional guidance on implementing integrated schools. The St. Paul Board of Education began the process of integration following the 1964 Civil Rights Act by redistricting, constructing new schools, and offering open enrollment. Busing as an integration method was only implemented when the other efforts proved unsuccessful in reaching integration goals.³⁹⁰ In 1964, the St. Paul School Board was denounced at a public hearing on racial imbalance at five city schools. The public hearing was held on July 23 at Maxfield School and was the third on the Committee on Racial Imbalance in St. Paul schools. According to *The*

³⁸⁹ *Saint Paul African American Historic & Cultural Context*, 2018.

³⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

Minneapolis Star, “the seventeen-member committee was set up by the St. Paul school board, after a visual count of pupils in city schools showed that Negro and other minority-group children (five point nine percent of total school enrollment) are concentrated in two high schools and three elementary schools.”³⁹¹ The article went on to say “About ninety-three per cent of pupils at Maxfield School are Negroes.”³⁹² At this Thursday night public hearing, more than 150 people attended, two-thirds of them African American and most of them parents of school children in the district. Don Lewis, president of the St. Paul chapter of the NAACP, spoke that night, saying, “If the St. Paul board of education had taken forthright steps two years ago, we wouldn’t be sitting in this room tonight.”³⁹³ Lewis called for three school board actions to address segregation in St. Paul schools, including regular review of residential shifts, a timetable to end racial imbalance in the schools, and open enrollment in all schools.

The St. Paul school board did not take up these ideas. In fact, conditions at Maxfield deteriorated even further for the predominantly Black elementary school. In 1966, another officer of the NAACP expressed concern about overcrowding at Maxfield and the lack of a hot lunch program. June Shagaloff, the education director for the NAACP, prompted by St. Paul NAACP president Don Lewis, sent a telegram to St. Paul School Superintendent Donald W. Dunnan, criticizing school officials for permitting classes to be held in the Maxfield school gymnasium and for stopping a hot lunch program at the school so that the gym could be used for classroom purposes. According to a newspaper article from the *Star Tribune*, “Maxfield school, in the

³⁹¹ “School Board Lashed at St. Paul Hearing,” *The Minneapolis Star*, July 24, 1964, 9A.

³⁹² *Ibid.*

³⁹³ *Ibid.*

Selby-Dale area, was forced two weeks ago to use the building's gymnasium for classrooms because of an unexpected increase of thirty-two pupils."³⁹⁴ Don Lewis, who two years previously had called out the St. Paul school board for their inaction, again claimed that the board showed a "lack of foresight" and should have been aware of the influx of new students to the school that year.³⁹⁵

In response to the overcrowding issues, Superintendent Dunnan claimed that the principal of Maxfield, Ramon S. Firnstahl, had already called an emergency meeting of parents to discuss the problem. To the ninety parents or guardians who attended that meeting, solutions for the overcrowding were presented, such as busing some older students to other schools or building temporary buildings on school grounds. However, Mrs. James Thomas, president of the Maxfield PTA, said that many of the parents attending the meeting feared these solutions, believing they would only "compound the segregation problem."³⁹⁶ The 1966 article in the *Star Tribune* ended with the statement, "Maxfield is considered a de facto segregated school."³⁹⁷

Busing was ultimately the solution chosen, yet one month later, on October 4, 1966, a *Minneapolis Star* article titled "Busing of Negroes to School Is Issue" revealed that the temporary solution was not proving effective. The article states that Black students from Maxfield School were bussed to Hancock School in St. Paul's Midway and the issue was

³⁹⁴ Susan Stocking, "NAACP Aide Assails Crowding, No Hot Lunch at St. Paul School," *Star Tribune*, September 20, 1966, 15.

³⁹⁵ Ibid.

³⁹⁶ Ibid.

³⁹⁷ Ibid.

becoming a factor in a state senate race.³⁹⁸ Daniel Slater, listed as a Conservative representative, claimed that there was “great unrest” when Hancock School students were beaten when ten and eleven-year-olds were bussed there from the overcrowded Maxfield School.³⁹⁹ There was no evidence provided to support this claim, but the de facto segregation of Maxfield had an important impact throughout the city of St. Paul.

Segregated neighborhoods, resulting in segregated schools, continued to be a challenge for St. Paul. However, some thought that the solution to integration was possible and would not take much time. In 1967, St. Paul’s Board of Education and a volunteer citizens’ group began a campaign to eliminate de facto segregation in the school system by fall 1968.⁴⁰⁰ Their strategy involved a fleet of buses that would transport more than 700 children from what the newspaper called “ghetto elementary schools” to white schools sprinkled throughout the city, with the idea that the children would be absorbed by schools with unused classroom space.⁴⁰¹ The ‘ghetto’ schools highlighted in the article included 400 ‘Negro’ students, intermingled with Indian, Mexican, and white children.⁴⁰² The volunteer citizens’ group in collaboration with the school board was known as Parents for Integrated Education, or PIE. The group formed in the school year of 1956-66 and by 1967, PIE was in the final phase of a three-year demonstration project

³⁹⁸ Paul Presbrey, “Busing of Negroes to School Is Issue,” *The Minneapolis Star*, October 4, 1966, 43.

³⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁰ Finlay Lewis, “‘De Facto’ Segregation Is St. Paul Target,” *Star Tribune*, September 3, 1967, 6B.

⁴⁰¹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰² *Ibid.*

they had planned to prove that integration was economically and educationally feasible. In Figure 3.5, the map highlights their plan for busing students from heavily Negro to all-white schools. Listed in the image as the ‘Ghetto Schools’ are both Maxfield and McKinley Elementary Schools, as well as Hill and Webster. Where school board busing is shown moving students to neighborhood schools North of the predominantly Black Rondo neighborhood, PIE planned to bus students to neighborhood schools southwest of the Rondo neighborhood.

The school board’s plan for the 1967-1968 school year was to bus all the students who would normally attend McKinley Elementary, which had been closed in 1966 due to integration efforts, to nine schools serving predominantly white neighborhoods. The board’s consultant for intercultural education, Dr. Norma Jean Anderson, stated at the time that this meant that “about 525 pupils will leave the ghetto each day and return each night during the school year.”⁴⁰³

Whether this was a positive or negative aspect was not clear in the article, but for Dunnan, the St. Paul schools superintendent and other school officials, this plan put the district very close to de facto segregation being wiped out for all practical purposes. There was just one final hurdle that needed to be negotiated.

That hurdle was Maxfield School with “458 Negro pupils included in its 483-pupil enrollment.”⁴⁰⁴ Dunnan and the school board planned to close Maxfield in the 1968-1969 school year and bus all 483 students into white neighborhood schools. They even had a plan for the school building, which had been updated in 1955 and planned to convert the building with its modern facilities into a temporary headquarters for a proposed city Center for Learning that

⁴⁰³ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid.

would provide special services and materials for all city schools. If Maxfield closed, Dunnan claimed, “there will be no schools remaining in St. Paul’s elementary and secondary school system with a majority of Negro students.”⁴⁰⁵ The decision on closing Maxfield was still being debated, however.

Figure 3.5 De Facto Segregation and Busing



Source: Finlay Lewis, “‘De Facto’ Segregation Is St. Paul Target,” *Star Tribune*, September 3, 1967, 6B.

Even over a year later, the decision to close Maxfield had not been made. According to a 1968 *Star Tribune* article, “St. Paul school officials are taking a second look at plans to close the Maxfield Elementary School next year and bus its predominantly Negro student body to schools

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid.

in white neighborhoods.”⁴⁰⁶ Opposition to closing Maxfield and busing its students in 1968 came primarily from the League of Concerned Women, an organization that included several Black mothers wanting to retain Maxfield as their neighborhood school. One league member, Mrs. JoAnne Favors, commented in the article, “We just don’t feel that we should be the ones who are always being bussed.”⁴⁰⁷ The organization, along with support from the Committee for Intercultural Education, sent a letter to the superintendent protesting the possible closing of Maxfield. Alternative options presented in the letter included reverse-busing of white children into the Summit University area neighborhood. There was also a clear desire for new schools built in the Summit-University area, a Black principal and “many more” Black teachers, with the reduction of the teacher-student ratio so that teachers could spend more one-on-one time with students.⁴⁰⁸ Ultimately, the school board decided to keep Maxfield open, in part because of the Black mothers advocating for maintaining the neighborhood school, and implement a voluntary busing program for students in the top three grades at the school to nearby predominantly white neighborhoods.⁴⁰⁹ The goal of the busing program was to make available classroom space that would offer remedial training to students throughout the city.

⁴⁰⁶ Finlay Lewis, “St. Paul School Busing Plans Under Review,” *Star Tribune*, April 16, 1968, 17.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁸ Paul Presbrey, “5 Negroes Protest busing of Children to White Schools,” *The Minneapolis Star*, February 28, 1968, 1B.

⁴⁰⁹ Finlay Lewis, “St. Paul Offers Busing from Maxfield School,” *Star Tribune*, April 17, 1968, 23.

By the 1970s, there was mounting pressure for Black families to keep their children enrolled in Maxfield and to not volunteer to bus them out of the neighborhood. According to a *Minneapolis Tribune* article, “some twenty Black youngsters have returned to St. Paul’s Maxfield School, which has a ninety-eight percent Black student body.”⁴¹⁰ In 1971, about 110 students were being bussed to seventeen predominantly white elementary schools outside the Summit-University neighborhood, but there was mounting pressure among parents to return their children to Maxfield. Parents also asked the school board to make improvements and additions to the school. One parent, James Shelton, stated on the issue of school improvements for Maxfield, “White folk just don’t do the necessary projections for Black folk.”⁴¹¹ The pressure for parents to return to Maxfield came from the sentiment that busing should be equal between Black and white students - that it should not only be the responsibility of Black students to be bussed. Mrs. Venear Broden, president of the Maxfield Interested Parents and mother of two children at the school stated, “Maybe it shouldn’t be an all-colored school, but unless they bus kids in here and make an even exchange, they can’t call in integration.”⁴¹²

Less than a year later, integration was still an issue for the St. Paul school district. Under the direction of the new superintendent George Young, new plans were drafted to desegregate the ninety-eight percent minority Maxfield school. The plan included pairing the school with the predominantly white districts of Drew and Galtier schools. A new school would be built on the

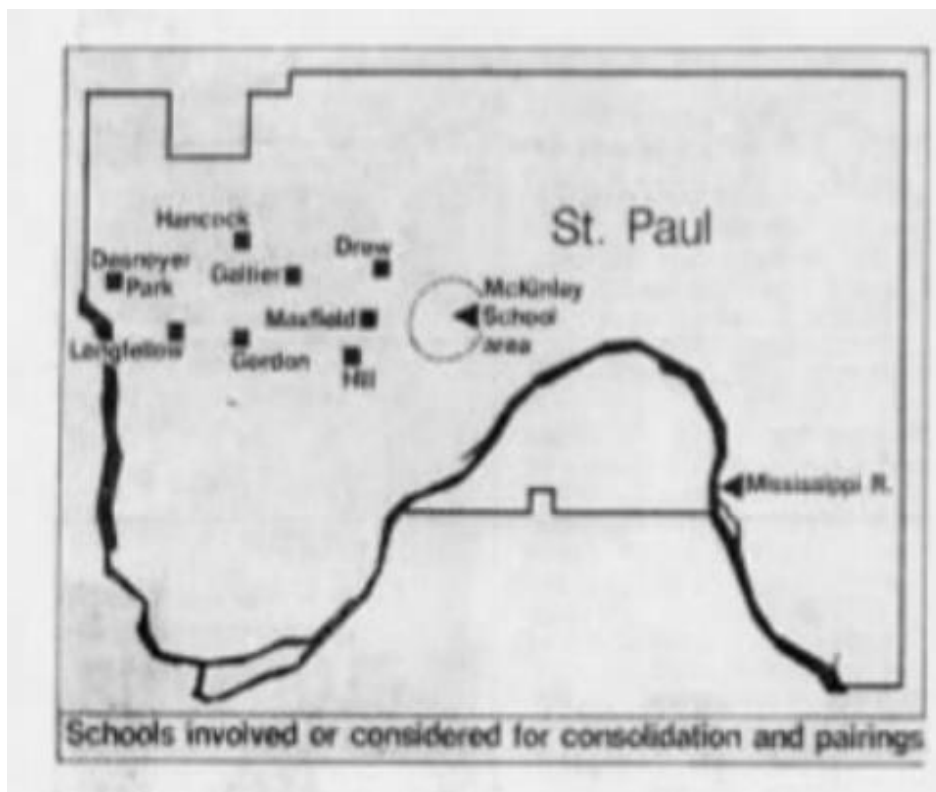
⁴¹⁰ Sharon Blinco, “Black children return to Maxfield School,” *Minneapolis Tribune*, June 2, 1971, 1B.

⁴¹¹ *Ibid.*

⁴¹² *Ibid.*

Galtier site, and an addition constructed to the Maxfield school to accommodate all of the students. Additionally in the plan, Young commented that if the Hancock school attendance were also included in the pairing, that the minority figure of this new school plan would be brought down to twenty-three percent.⁴¹³

Figure 3.6 School Pairing to Change St. Paul's Maxfield Plan



Source: Greg Pinney, "Pairing to change St. Paul's Maxfield Plan," *Star Tribune*, December 8, 1972, 8B.

With this additional school pairing plan for desegregation, two schools, combining Black and white students, would open in late 1974. The plan would also help account for updating school buildings and replacing condemned school buildings. However, this school pairing idea received opposition from a citizen advisory committee in St. Paul. The committee stated it would

⁴¹³ "St. Paul Adopts Pairing Proposal," *The Minneapolis Star*, December 6, 1972, 4A.

prefer to have separate schools in each of the Maxfield, Galtier, Drew, and Hancock neighborhoods, or as a second choice, paired schools at Maxfield and Galtier. They preferred that to a single large school at Maxfield.⁴¹⁴ The school board opposed the first idea of building schools in each neighborhood, as that would leave the minority enrollments as they were and not help with desegregation. At the time, Maxfield was nearly all Black and the three other school districts ranged from eighty-eight to ninety-five percent white.⁴¹⁵ Ultimately, the plan for desegregation was never passed due to opposition, and the student body at Maxfield remained predominantly Black. Parents, however, got to keep the neighborhood school that they repeatedly advocated for over the years.

The neighborhood school that was lost to Black parents in the Rondo neighborhood was McKinley Elementary. The school resembles the history of Maxfield Elementary Schools in several ways. The school opened in 1903 at 485 Carroll Street, not far from Maxfield and also located in the predominantly Black Rondo neighborhood. However, unlike Maxfield, the school was closed in 1966 due to integration efforts. The *Star Tribune* reported in 1967 that “the first major step that the school board took in implementing its integration policy was to order the closing of McKinley School - an institution that last year had an enrollment of 430 students, eighty-eight per cent of whom were Negro.”⁴¹⁶ Parents of students at McKinley had opposed the closing of their neighborhood school.

⁴¹⁴ Greg Pinney, “Pairing to change St. Paul’s Maxfield Plan,” *Star Tribune*, December 8, 1972, 8B.

⁴¹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁶ Lewis, “‘De Facto’ Segregation,” 1967.

When the desegregation plan of pairing Maxfield with other predominantly white schools in the area, the citizens committee recommended bringing students from the old McKinley School area to the paired schools. Apparently, some administrators found that plan “puzzling” because the McKinley group was at least eighty percent Black and would only raise the minority enrollment at the paired schools, which was the whole purpose of the reconfiguration plan.⁴¹⁷ Since the school closed in 1966, McKinley students - about 400 of them - had not had their own school (about six years at the time of the pairing plan) and were being bussed every day to various buildings outside of their neighborhood. Administrators consented to the citizens committee to study the McKinley recommendation.⁴¹⁸ In 1972, the abandoned school building was destroyed by a fire.

Maxfield Elementary: The School

As of July 2022, the student population of Maxfield Elementary School is 255 and the school serves PK-5. At Maxfield, three percent of students scored at or above the proficient level for math, and eight percent scored at or above that level for reading. The school’s minority student enrollment is eighty-eight percent. The student-teacher ratio is eleven to one, which is better than that of the district. The student population is made up of forty-seven percent female students and fifty-three percent male students. The school enrolls eighty-five percent

⁴¹⁷ Pinney, “Pairing to change St. Paul’s Maxfield Plan,” 1972.

⁴¹⁸ Ibid.

economically disadvantaged students. There are twenty-three equivalent full-time teachers and zero full-time school counselors.⁴¹⁹

Maxfield Elementary School is among the four schools situated in the St. Paul Promise Neighborhood. The other three are Benjamin E. Mays, Jackson Elementary, and St. Paul City. St. Paul Promise Neighborhood (housed at Amherst H. Wilder Foundation) is a transformative education partnership that puts children on the pathway to college and career success. Using a school-based approach, St. Paul Promise Neighborhood supports children at four partner schools in the Frogtown, Rondo, and Summit-University neighborhoods of St. Paul,⁴²⁰ all of which are in historically Black neighborhoods. St. Paul Promise Neighborhood partners with organizations to deliver families a comprehensive, culturally competent, two-generation strategy. They use education, community engagement, wraparound services, and civic engagement tools to pave pathways of opportunities for children. St. Paul Promise Neighborhood's North Star is that the people who live in the promise neighborhood are thriving - no exceptions - and have a fair chance to participate, prosper and reach their full potential. St. Paul Promise Neighborhood imagines a community that promises opportunity to all children and families.

⁴¹⁹ “Maxfield Elementary School,” Education. U.S. News & World Report. Accessed January 15, 2024. <https://www.usnews.com/education/k12/minnesota/maxfield-elementary-school-218984>.

⁴²⁰ *Saint Paul Promise Neighborhood*, 2024, Minnesota Department of Education: Whole Family Systems Initiative. <https://mn.gov/dhs/whole-family-systems/site-pages/cohort-1/saint-paul-promise-neighborhood/#:~:text=Saint%20Paul%20Promise%20Neighborhood%20>.

Maxfield Elementary: The Neighborhood

Maxfield Elementary School opened in 1890 at St. Albans Street and St. Anthony Avenue in St. Paul and later moved to 380 North Victoria Street in 1955. According to Maxfield's school website,

“Located in the Summit-University area, Maxfield Elementary School provides a unique educational experience that combines best practices in academics with a focus on the urban learner. We've been in the Rondo neighborhood for over 125 years, taking our children through many challenges as the City of St. Paul, and even our country have changed. That's why former students now teach at Maxfield or send their children and grandchildren to learn in the same community they did. Through great teaching, student leadership opportunities, technology, science, and the arts, Maxfield Elementary School provides students in grades Pre-K through five with a well-rounded educational program.”⁴²¹

Beginning in 2011, the principal, teachers, students, parents, elders, and community members of Maxfield joined together with a desire to usher in a new chapter of the school's history. They hoped to restore the school to the glories of the old Rondo community's proud historical past and heritage, when parents and students fought to maintain a neighborhood school and took pride in its achievements. This return to pride and progress gained momentum and cohesion when Maxfield partnered with the Cultural Wellness Center (CWC) in 2011.⁴²² The need for change was recognized by administration, teachers, parents, and community members as they recognized the tragically low academic performance, low attendance rates, and record high behavioral incidents, which were nearing the worst in the entire state.⁴²³ Many felt that there was no hope

⁴²¹ *Welcome to Maxfield Elementary*, 2024, Saint Paul Public Schools. Accessed January 15, 2024. <https://www.spps.org/domain/8990>.

⁴²² Azzahir, “Maxfield Elementary School,” *Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder*, 2016.

⁴²³ *Ibid.*

for reversing the downward spiral that Maxfield students were in; “the teachers and their entire education system’s resources described feeling powerless to the deeply engrained forces that was fueling the pain and degradation on a significant group of our African American future leaders.”⁴²⁴ However, recent efforts to make a change and make a difference has been on the school’s and community’s agenda. They published their solutions, stating the following as the major issues Maxfield was facing:

“We know with precise awareness what forces were at work to prevent young Black children being capable of the transformation we are now witnessing in Maxfield. We know only culture can counteract the severity and uncontested wrath of the environments the children are ever experiencing. The nearly hopeless reality Maxfield staff and teachers were facing in their attempt to educate Black children, is being faced by nearly every other predominantly Black school in America. The failure is not in the children, it is in the curriculum, the methods of delivering the knowledge, and the de-culturalized knowledge itself.”⁴²⁵

To address the issues, Maxfield Elementary School has made successful changes and record their results:

“Over the past two years, student suspensions at Maxfield elementary school decreased by forty-four percent. Students at Maxfield improved reading scores by six percent and math scores by nine point nine percent in one year. Over the past three years, Maxfield Elementary School has achieved a 350 percent increase in parents attending annual goal-setting conferences for their children. Maxfield experienced a twenty-seven percent increase in attendance at family night in one year. Over the past two years, incidents of physical fighting at Maxfield decreased by forty-six percent.”⁴²⁶

⁴²⁴ Ibid.

⁴²⁵ Ibid.

⁴²⁶ Ibid.

Maxfield school and community recognize an important conclusion that rings true - the nearly hopeless reality Maxfield staff and teachers are facing in their attempt to educate Black children, is being faced by nearly every other predominantly Black school in America. The history of segregated communities and efforts for integration being placed on the Black community are two of the major reasons why.

Webster Magnet School: Historical Background

The second of this series of studies includes Webster Magnet School. John Marshall Junior High and High School opened in 1924 at Holly Avenue and Grotto Street, St. Paul, in the Summit-University neighborhood where both Maxfield and McKinley were located. Webster Elementary School opened in 1926 at 707 Holly Avenue, St. Paul, near Webster Park. The two schools merged in 1975 to become the Webster Magnet School. In 2009, the school voted to rename itself Barack and Michelle Obama Service Learning Elementary. At the time, Webster had more African American students than any other school in the city except Central High School, yet Obama's status as the first Black president was not a big part of the naming conversation, interestingly.⁴²⁷

Both John Marshall and Webster Elementary had a high number of minority students enrolled, although not quite as high as the numbers seen at Maxfield or McKinley Elementary schools. School board figures showed that "Marshall Junior High School is second to Maxfield in terms of Negro enrollment. The figure there is about forty per cent."⁴²⁸ In the 1950s, these

⁴²⁷ Doug Belden, "St. Paul's Webster Magnet Elementary chooses Obama name to reflect school's focus on service learning," *Pioneer Press*, May 1, 2009, updated November 12, 2015. <https://www.twincities.com/2009/05/01/st-pauls-webster-magnet-elementary-chooses-obama-name-to-reflect-schools-focus-on-service-learning/>.

⁴²⁸ Lewis, "'De Facto' Segregation," 1967.

numbers and the neighborhood where the schools were located was a concern for some parents; “a matter of serious concern to the community is the reported conduct of certain Marshall junior high school pupils as they go to and from school.”⁴²⁹ Faculty members and law enforcement called for the cooperation of parents in working out the problem and held a meeting on the issue, with guest speaker T.R. Salmon, the principal of John Marshall. The article rang out, “If you have children attending Marshall junior high school, you won’t want to miss this important meeting.”⁴³⁰ The schools also struggled in the 1960s and 1970s with absentee administrators and the proposal of the construction of liquor stores near the schools, among other things.⁴³¹

The process of school integration in St. Paul was intensified by the transition of John Marshall High School to a junior high school in 1953. Marshall had originally been a junior high school until 1937, when it began adding a grade each year until 1940 when it became a full high school. At the time that Marshall reverted to a junior high school in 1953, the majority of Black high school students attended Marshall, and had to choose between either the largely white Central High School or Mechanic Arts High School. A small number of Black students already attended Central High School but faced racism and discrimination.⁴³² Integration was also

⁴²⁹ Mildred Jordan, “St. Paul Spotlight,” *St. Paul Recorder*, January 20, 1956, 8.

⁴³⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴³¹ “Opposition to St. Paul Principal to Continue,” *The Minneapolis Star*, August 14, 1968, 5C; Peter Ackerberg, “City finally may begin polishing ‘special jewel,’” *The Minneapolis Star*, March 3, 1977, 13B.

⁴³² *Saint Paul African American Historic & Cultural Context*, 2018.

difficult on African American educators. Black teachers lost jobs or had to transfer to other schools, while white teachers were able to remain at the same schools.⁴³³

The merging of Marshall and Webster was the result of plans to desegregate. Webster, located in the heart of Summit-University area, at the time of the merger had a minority enrollment of sixty-eight point five percent. Under Minnesota Board of Education guidelines that number had to be reduced to thirty percent by 1976. The desegregation proposal would make Webster a “magnet” school for eight other schools in the area, including Adams, Highland, Mattocks, Linwood, Homecroft, Mann, Edgumbe, and Jefferson.⁴³⁴ The plan, which was carried out over the following year, included remodeling Webster and the former Marshall Junior High School, which were located on the same block, and connected them to form a large elementary learning center at 707 Holly Avenue. A much larger issue beginning in the late 1970s after the merging of Marshall and Webster to form Webster Magnet School, was affirmative action. In 1977, as in many of the state’s school districts, declining student enrollments and a tighter rein on tax money made layoffs inevitable in St. Paul and at Webster, twenty-three of fifty teachers received layoff notices.⁴³⁵ Besides deciding the size of the layoff, the St. Paul school board had to decide how to make them. They asked themselves the question, “should [layoffs] be based solely on seniority - a posture favored by labor unions - or should minority teachers be exempted

⁴³³ October 2016 Community Meeting.

⁴³⁴ “Method to desegregate school gets St. Paul OK,” *The Minneapolis Star*, May 22, 1974, 6F.

⁴³⁵ Lynda McDonnell, “Layoffs Sting Teaching Staffs,” *Star Tribune*, May 22, 1977, 1B & 16B.

- a view endorsed by Black community groups?"⁴³⁶ The school board decided to base layoffs on the second option, resulting in white teachers with seniority being laid off while minority teachers with far less experience not being laid off. They justified their actions with Local Twenty-Eight of the Minnesota Federation of Teachers, which states that the contract, based on seniority, can be modified to prevent violations of the board's affirmative-action program. The issue became very divisive at Webster Elementary School.

The decisions made surrounding integration and the merging of schools, like what happened with John Marshall Junior High and High School, trickled up to impact high grade levels, such as St. Paul Mechanics Arts High School. The school, formerly known as Manual Training High School, opened in 1911, and located near the Rondo neighborhood, it was a prominent school for St. Paul's Black students. The program began at St. Paul High School in 1886 and moved to the former Madison Elementary School building. Then, land was purchased in 1907 for the new Mechanic Arts High School building and construction was completed in 1911, with the school opening at its third location at Central Avenue and Aurora Street. The building contained thirty-four classrooms.

When John Marshall High School transitioned to a junior high school in 1953, the predominantly Black student body had to choose between either the largely white Central High School or Mechanic Arts High School. Many chose Mechanic Arts in order to stay closer to their neighborhood. Eventually, the school was consolidated with Central and Washington Tech High Schools in 1976 due to declining attendance and the drive to integrate schools. Construction of a new school, a consolidation of Central and Mechanic Arts high schools, was proposed to reduce

⁴³⁶ Ibid.

the percentage of minority students in both schools, in compliance with state regulations. Part of the reasoning behind the consolidation and issues of integration was over the construction of a pool. School administrators in St. Paul recommended that a swimming pool be part of the new Central-Mechanic Arts high school because they feared racial violence if students used the city-built Oxford pool across the street.⁴³⁷

The construction of a pool played a significant role in the consolidation and integration challenges faced by the Central-Mechanic Arts High School. The fear of racial violence, as expressed by St. Paul school administrators, underscores the complex social dynamics that influenced decisions regarding facility planning. The desire to provide a separate pool within the new school reveals concerns about segregation and safety, shedding light on the broader context of racial tensions during that time. Eventually, the abandoned Mechanic Arts building was used to house the Open School, as well as learning centers, which were developed to integrate the student population in the district. These programs persisted until the demolition of the building in 1980.

Webster Magnet School: The School

As stated, Webster Magnet Elementary was renamed Barack and Michelle Obama Service Learning Elementary in 2009. As of July 2022, the student population of Obama Service Learning Elementary is 244 and the school serves PK-6. At Obama Service Learning Elementary, five percent of students scored at or above the proficient level for math, and fifteen percent scored at or above that level for reading. The school's minority student enrollment is eighty-nine percent. The student population is made up of forty-seven percent female students

⁴³⁷ Hillary Johnson, "St. Paul divided over pool," *Star Tribune*, June 19, 1975, 1B.

and fifty-three percent male students. The school enrolls eighty percent economically disadvantaged students. There are twenty-five equivalent full-time teachers and two full-time school counselors.⁴³⁸ The school is listed on Minnesota’s lowest-performing schools.

Webster Magnet School: The Neighborhood

Summit-University is a neighborhood in St. Paul, that stretches roughly from University Avenue in the north, Lexington Parkway to the west, Summit Avenue to the south and to the east along John Ireland Boulevard, Kellogg Boulevard and Marion Street. This area is home to what remains of the old Rondo neighborhood. As seen at the start of this chapter, Rondo was the center of Saint Paul’s African American community since the Civil War but was broken apart by the construction of Interstate 94 in the 1960s. The school integration process in the 1960s coincided with the destruction of the Rondo community as a result of the construction of I-94, as well as the activism of the broader Civil Rights movement, making for a very turbulent time.

By 1920, the majority of African Americans in St. Paul lived along and around Rondo Avenue, and by 1940, “nearly ninety percent of Saint Paul’s Black population lived in the general area of low-cost housing stretching from the Rondo area east to the Capitol environment.”⁴³⁹ According to one source, the intense housing shortage experienced by Blacks in the years following World War I played a significant role in the concentrated presence of the community in this area.⁴⁴⁰ The scarcity of housing for Blacks primarily stemmed from restrictive

⁴³⁸ “Obama Service Learning Elementary,” Education. U.S. News & World Report. Accessed January 15, 2024. <https://www.usnews.com/education/k12/minnesota/obama-service-learning-elementary-208472>.

⁴³⁹ *Saint Paul African American Historic & Cultural Context*, 2018.

⁴⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

housing covenants. These covenants prohibited the sale of housing to African Americans in numerous areas and also limited economic opportunities.⁴⁴¹ The situation worsened due to competition from returning World War I veterans and a large migration of African Americans from the South to urban cities like St. Paul between 1915 and 1920, driven by the pursuit of employment opportunities.⁴⁴²

When the Rondo neighborhood was demolished, more than seventy-five percent of those forcefully displaced were Black, comprising around 600 African American families. Although the Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) offered relocation services to displaced community members, redlining and racial discrimination, as well as a desire to remain near friends, family, and what was left of the community, prompted many to remain in the area, just south and west of where Rondo had been.⁴⁴³ The widespread migration of white residents to the suburbs during this period created additional housing opportunities in the Summit-University neighborhood. This allowed Black families to fulfill their desire to stay close to the core of their community. In choosing to stay, Black families fought for the construction, retention, or improvement of their neighborhood schools, like Maxfield or Webster Elementary schools.

⁴⁴¹ David Vassar Taylor, *African Americans in Minnesota* (St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2002), 32.

⁴⁴² David V. Taylor, "Pilgrim's Progress: Black St. Paul and the Making of an Urban Ghetto, 1870-1930," PhD thesis, University of Minnesota, March 1977.

⁴⁴³ *Saint Paul African American Historic & Cultural Context*, 2018.

Central High School: Historical Background

The third of this series of studies includes Central High School. The school was founded in 1866 as Saint Paul High School and it is one of the oldest high schools in Minnesota. The first school building was a small building on Exchange Street in downtown St. Paul and enrolled only a handful of students. In 1870, two students, Fannie Hayes and A. P. Warren, became the first two students to graduate from Saint Paul High School. The school was renamed to Central High School in 1879 and that year the high school graduated twenty-eight students.⁴⁴⁴ The first Black person to graduate from high school in St. Paul was Minnie T. Farr in 1881. At the St. Paul Central High School graduation ceremony, she delivered the salutatory address in French at the Opera House in St. Paul, listed in the newspaper the following morning as the “colored graduate” and the student who received the highest percentage proficiency in language.⁴⁴⁵ The paper praised her, saying, “The young lady spoke a selection in French, her delivery and pronunciation having all the proficiency of one to the manner born.”⁴⁴⁶ Minnie was also the first Black school teacher in St. Paul, teaching at Lincoln School for nineteen years. She paved the way for her younger sister, Bessie, who also taught in St. Paul.

⁴⁴⁴ “St. Paul High School Graduating Class,” *Star Tribune*, June 23, 1879, 4.

⁴⁴⁵ “Exercises of the Graduating Class at the Opera House Last Night,” *The Saint Paul Daily Globe*, June 25, 1881, 2.

⁴⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

Figure 3.7 St. Paul High School, Tenth and Minnesota, St. Paul, 1886.



Source: Minnesota Historical Society.

In 1888, Central came under fire in the St. Paul community for being too aristocratic. At a Town Hall meeting, citizens called out the problem of Central High School being an aristocratic institution in the aristocratic part of the city: “that poor people were unable to attend the present high school; that the poor were compelled to pay for advantages for the rich; that it was a case of taxation without representation; that having no high school facilities prevented many people from locating in that section of the city; that the poor man could not send, as he could not afford to pay car fare.”⁴⁴⁷ The school was not only too aristocratic, but racist. Lizzie Etta Bell was a Black student at St. Paul Central High School in the 1890s. She stated “that in those days Negroes and Indians were not encouraged to go to school. In fact, they were pressured to drop out. If they refused, they were given low grades and severe discipline.”⁴⁴⁸ However, Bell

⁴⁴⁷ “It’s Aristocratic: The Central High School an Aristocratic Institution for the Rich,” *Star Tribune*, March 31, 1888, 4.

⁴⁴⁸ Peg Meier, “Women Who Put Life Into History,” *Star Tribune*, March 12, 1991, 1E & 2E.

refused to quit. At the end of four years, the school administrators decided that she was not ready to graduate. The principal told her she had learned enough and would not benefit by having an education. He told her, “The others aren’t getting diplomas. Why do you have to have one?”⁴⁴⁹ Determined, Bell stayed at Central one more year, with her father constantly fighting for her right to stay and graduated with a diploma in 1894. Eventually, Central High School moved to its current location at Marshall Avenue and Lexington Parkway North in 1912. The new \$500,000 building held 1,400 students who began classes there in the 1912-1913 school year.⁴⁵⁰

Like many schools across the United States, Central High School dealt with issues of racial integration during the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s. At the time that Marshall, discussed previously in this paper, reverted to a junior high school in 1953, the majority of Black high school students attended Marshall High School. They were forced to choose to attend either the largely white Central High School or the Mechanic Arts High School. A small number of Black students already attended Central High School, but faced racism and discrimination.⁴⁵¹ Constance Jones Price, telling her story in *Voices of Rondo*, recalled how people had little empathy for the decision many Black students were forced to make with the school integration realignment plan, stating, “the school administrator responded that students were ‘dying to get in to Central.’”⁴⁵² Price replied, “‘We’re dying to get out.’ We were desperate. We wanted a social

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁰ “St. Paul High School Moves,” *Star Tribune*, April 8, 1912, 8.

⁴⁵¹ *Saint Paul African American Historic & Cultural Context*, 2018.

⁴⁵² Kate Cavett, *Voices of Rondo: Oral Histories of Saint Paul's Historic Black Community* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 141.

life as well as a good environment to be in where there wasn't all this racism."⁴⁵³ Scott Price, another Black student attending Central High School during this time recalled, "It was a pretty tough transition for a lot of people, a lot of fights and things. A lot of racial tension ... [the white students] didn't want them [the Black students] there."⁴⁵⁴

In 1968, racial tensions came to a head. The principal of St. Paul Central High School, Malcolm Smiley, was given a list of demands from some of his faculty members and students. Students threatened a sit-in at the school if the demands were not met. Some of the demands Smiley felt they could satisfy, including curriculum changes and a reading program.⁴⁵⁵ However, demands presented by a group of Black students had Smiley wondering if students would be satisfied with his response and how many students might be involved in the sit-in. The listed demands included exclusion of racist teachers and the hiring of more Black faculty members, reinstatement of students who had been expelled and the institution of a student court in which students would be tried by their peers, and student and parent participation in setting up curriculum, with "special attention to the fact that nearly a quarter of the school's 1,600 students are Negroes."⁴⁵⁶ A few faculty members had also made separate demands, including a call for more teachers, smaller classes, additional assistant principals and counselors, and the establishment of a grievance committee to handle difficulties relating to the students, staff, or community.

⁴⁵³ Ibid, 141.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid, 106.

⁴⁵⁵ Mike Hill, "St. Paul High Ponders List of 'Demands,'" *Star Tribune*, December 11, 1968, 39.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid.

The sit-in, planned for Thursday, December 12, 1968, was at first called off. Response to the list of demands from the St. Paul superintendent, Donald Dunnan, had mixed results. Dunnan answered the demand from students to include a wider group of parents and students in curriculum decisions would be met. However, in response to the demand for a student court, Dunnan said that “student discipline could not be delegated to students.”⁴⁵⁷ Dunnan also said that an elective course in Black history would be offered next semester and that the reading program would be established. Overall, students complained that the response was all talk and no action, but held off the sit-in for a day, indicating that it still might be held later.

The following day saw nearly 400 St. Paul Central students walk out of the building to express their dissatisfaction with administration’s response to their demands. The racially mixed group of protestors wanted more done to support Black students and wanted the curriculum to be tailored to the school’s racial situation.⁴⁵⁸ The remainder of the school year was not smooth. Larry Clark, a Black Central senior and spokesman of the sit-in claimed to have told Dunnan, “There should have been humanity and freedom in the school system a long time ago and this wouldn’t have happened. The kids are restless and tired of what’s going on so they sat down. They want an education.”⁴⁵⁹ Ultimately, some of the demands were met and students went back to class - a new principal was hired, who agreed to address many of the grievances, Black teachers were recruited (only two of the seventy teachers at the time had been African

⁴⁵⁷ Mike Hill, “St. Paul School Sit-In Set Today Is Called Off,” *Star Tribune*, December 12, 1968, 21.

⁴⁵⁸ Catherine Watson, “More Than 300 Walk Out at St. Paul Central,” *Star Tribune*, December 13, 1968, 19.

⁴⁵⁹ Mike Hill, “Noisy Sit-in Closes St. Paul Central: Students Seek Action on Black Demands,” *Star Tribune*, December 14, 1968, 6.

American), and the first full-time social worker in the district was hired. Central High School has been a hub for community events, cultural exchanges, and educational forums, contributing significantly to the fabric of St. Paul's community life.

Central High School: The School

As of July 2022, Central Senior High School is one of twenty-six high schools in the St. Paul Public School District and is ranked twenty-sixth within Minnesota. Students have the opportunity to take Advanced Placement coursework and exams. The AP participation rate at Central High School is sixty-two percent. The total minority enrollment is fifty-nine percent, and forty-three percent of students are economically disadvantaged. Of the minority enrollment, twenty-eight point nine percent of students are Black, thirteen percent are Asian, eight point nine percent are Hispanic, seven point two percent are two or more races, and zero point eight percent are American Indian/Alaska Natives.

This data provides a comprehensive snapshot of Central High School in St. Paul and is significant when discussing segregated schools and the legacy of segregated neighborhoods for several reasons. While the high percentage of minority enrollment, fifty-nine percent, indicates that Central High School is a racially segregated school, demonstrated previously in the section on the school's historical background was the reality that this change in diversity happened over time. There were many setbacks and obstacles for Black students integrating into Central and today, Black students make up only twenty-nine percent of the student body. As Central became more diverse, it reflected broader patterns of residential segregation in St. Paul, where neighborhoods were divided along racial lines, leading to segregated schools. Where the school is located today, discussed subsequently, is just outside of the Rondo neighborhood, which was

home to the highest concentration of African Americans in St. Paul. Additionally, the significant portion of economically disadvantaged students, forty-three percent, highlights the socioeconomic challenges faced by many students attending Central. This understandably affects educational outcomes and exacerbate existing achievement gaps, contributing to the perpetuation of segregation and inequality.

Interestingly, the relatively high AP participation rate, sixty-two percent, suggests that Central offers opportunities for advanced coursework and academic achievement. However, it would be essential to investigate whether this opportunity is equally accessible to all students, particularly those from minority or economically disadvantaged backgrounds. These statistics underscore the enduring legacy of segregated neighborhoods in St. Paul and their impact on the composition and dynamics of local schools. Historical patterns of discrimination, redlining, and unequal access to resources have contributed to the concentration of minority and economically disadvantaged populations in certain areas, shaping the demographic makeup of schools like Central High School.

Central High School: The Neighborhood

Central High School grew out of the need for continued education for the growing student body in St. Paul. In 1866, due to student request, two rooms on the third floor of the Franklin School Building, located at Broadway and Tenth Streets in downtown St. Paul, were set aside as high school classrooms. Befitting its location at the center of the city, Central High School was located directly in the downtown neighborhood, in what came to be the warehouse district. In the 1935 Schmid map, which was created much after the founding of Central High School, the first building was located right on the corner of the neighborhood labeled ‘Slum –

Italians, Jews, and Negroes.’⁴⁶⁰ By 1935, one can determine that this area had become more highly diverse and working-class.

In 1872, with increased interest in the secondary education opportunity, the school was moved to a new building, the Lindeke Building, located at 7th and Jackson Streets. The school still did not exist as its own independent site; it occupied the second floor of the Lindeke building. This move was minor, though, and the school was still located in downtown St. Paul, in the central business district.⁴⁶¹ Finally, in 1883, the school moved to 10th and Minnesota Streets, becoming the first high school built in St. Paul. This move still kept the school close to the center of the city. However, as industry and residences began moving farther out from the river and from downtown, this new area home to the high school was considered more of a transitional neighborhood, containing businesses, light industry, and residential.⁴⁶²

The most significant building move for Central High School came in 1912, when the student body outgrew the building on 10th and Minnesota. The new school was built in 1912 on the corner of Marshall and Lexington Avenues. This proved to be the largest move away from downtown and a considerable change in location compared to previous building moves. The corner of Marshall Avenue and Lexington Parkway is not even listed on the Schmid 1935 map, as it was too far out of the center of the city, which is ironic since the name of the school remained Central High School. However, if the Schmid map were to continue, the school was located on the border between the section of the map labeled “Negroes – ‘Rondo Neighborhood’

⁴⁶⁰ Schmid, “Social Saga of Two Cities,” 1937.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid.

⁴⁶² Ibid.

(Largest Negro Section in City)” and “Workingmen’s homes,” yet slowly appearing to merge with the “Residential Middle Class.”⁴⁶³ This location is significant because Central High School was not historically diverse after its founding. Over time, with location moves, population changes, and the work of integration, Central would become much more diverse.

Benjamin E. Mays School: Historical Background

The last of this series of studies includes Benjamin E. Mays School. After the construction of I-94, and the destruction and forced relocation of many families, the St. Paul community established Benjamin E. Mays School in 1977, now located just south of the new highway. The school is named after Benjamin E. Mays, an influential African American educator, minister, scholar, and civil rights activist, known for being a mentor to Martin Luther King Jr. In the September 7, 1977, *Star Tribune* article, the opening of the school was announced. The article, “St. Paul Fundamental School Will Open with Enough Students,” stated,

Two weeks ago, the proposed St. Paul fundamental school was in trouble. It was short of students and three out of four of the students who were enrolled were Black, which probably would have violated state regulations on racial balance. But after some frantic recruiting, the school opened Tuesday with enough students and a racial balance to make school officials predict success.⁴⁶⁴

In 1977, the school was known as the Benjamin E. Mays Learning Center and its creation was the result of more than three years of work by a citizens group known as the Benjamin E. Mays Learning Center Board. This group was largely from St. Paul’s Black community.

⁴⁶³ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁴ Gregory W. Pinney, “St. Paul Fundamental School Will Open with Enough Students,” *Star Tribune*, September 7, 1977, 1B 15. The details of the requirements for the racial balance for schools in the 1970s is discussed in detail in the subsequent section.

In 1977, the opening of the Benjamin E. Mays School was part of a national back-to-the-basics movement, which a large share of America's parents supported (fifty-seven percent in one poll).⁴⁶⁵ That same year, Minneapolis also opened two public fundamental schools with a total of 771 students enrolled and 230 additional applicants who were waitlisted. However, in St. Paul, only about one hundred students were enrolled in the fundamental school option. This "back to the basics" approach that emerged in education in the 1970s was the decade's best advertising slogan, a theme for mass media editorials and political oration, and an emotional topic for boards of education and PTA meetings.⁴⁶⁶ The idea was for more and better reading, writing, and arithmetic instruction, the three R's. At the movement's height, demands also arose for drill, recitation, more homework, stricter discipline, and the teaching of patriotism. Some school districts, like seen with Minneapolis and St. Paul, instituted alternative schools devoted to the three Rs, with history taught by chronology and science by memorization. Some schools also believed that students required a set of basic skills to get along in the world after graduation that went over and above the three Rs. This included needed skills for citizenship, employment, family life, consumerism, and enjoyment of the arts.

In 1977, with the opening of this predominantly Black fundamental school, Benjamin E. Mays enrolled about 200 students in kindergarten, and grades one, two, and three, as the school only had primary grades that first year. Of the 117 students who showed up for school on the first day of classes in grades one, two, and three, sixty of them were from minority groups, giving the school a fifty-one percent minority enrollment. That exceeded the maximums in state

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁶ Ben Brodinsky, "Something Happened: Education in the Seventies," *The Phi Delta Kappan* 61, no. 4 (1979): 238–41. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20385422>.

regulations, which allowed no more than thirty percent ordinarily and no more than forty percent under special circumstances.⁴⁶⁷

To get around this requirement, St. Paul school officials did not count Benjamin Mays as a separate school. In 1977, it was housed in the south wing of Jefferson Elementary School at 90 S. Western Ave. This was in a predominantly white neighborhood and had its own student body. In counting all the students in the building together, the school had only about a thirty percent minority enrollment, meeting the regulations. At the time, the Education Commissioner Howard Camsey stated that the school most likely was out of compliance. But he also argued that the Benjamin Mays center may deserve special consideration because it was an optional program where parents were trying to get a certain kind of education for their children. According to the news report, Camsey stated, “Can we say that, if eighty percent whites opt then its good but that if sixty percent minorities opt for it, it’s not a good program? My concern is for the child and parents who opted for the program - and they just happen to be minority in this case.”⁴⁶⁸

The center was designed to emphasize the three R’s, spending more time on the basics, with parents in the area concerned about reading and writing. One teacher, Barbara Anderson, stated, “We’ll be spending the majority of the time on the basics. And we’ll be teaching for mastery. We won’t be passing the child on unless he is succeeding.”⁴⁶⁹ Additionally, the principal, Charmaine Robinson, claimed that discipline would be stressed at the school, taught

⁴⁶⁷ Pinney, “St. Paul Fundamental School,” 9B 23.

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid.

largely through a course called character education.⁴⁷⁰ Yet while the school opened by the effort of Black parents for their children to receive a back-to-the-basics education, the inequality of education still permeated. At the start of the school year with the opening of the center, regular textbooks were not available, so students were using a set of old Addison-Wesley math books.⁴⁷¹ Ironically, these were the most popular textbooks of the New Math era, which is what most back-to-the-basics supporters were trying to get away from.

Benjamin E. Mays School: The School

As of July 2022, Benjamin E. Mays School is a magnet school located in Saint Paul, MN, which is in a large city setting. The student population of Benjamin E. Mays Magnet is 333 and the school serves PK-5. At Benjamin E. Mays Magnet, eight percent of students scored at or above the proficient level for math, and twelve percent scored at or above that level for reading. The school's minority student enrollment is ninety-three percent. The student population is made up of forty-one percent female students and fifty-nine percent male students and the school enrolls eighty-seven percent economically disadvantaged students. While the school is a magnet school that quickly fills up their enrollment,⁴⁷² the problems with academics abound and academic recovery is still a priority for many students.⁴⁷³ With the numbers they have regarding

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁷¹ Ibid.

⁴⁷² Maureen M. Smith, "Space looks tight at hot St. Paul schools," *Star Tribune*, February 26, 1998, B5.

⁴⁷³ Anthony Lonetree, "Here's how St. Paul schools are spending pandemic funds," *Star Tribune*, April 19, 2023, B1.

test scores, the school was listed on Minnesota’s lowest-performing schools. Those statistics do not just happen.

Benjamin E. Mays School: The Neighborhood

While Benjamin E. Mays School first opened in the south wing of Jefferson Elementary school in a predominantly white neighborhood, it eventually moved to its own location at 560 Concordia Avenue in Saint Paul. It is near the intersection of Carroll Avenue and Mackburn Street South. In referencing the 1935 Schmid St. Paul City Map, this places the school in a predominantly historically Black neighborhood, the “Largest Negro Section in the City.”⁴⁷⁴ In the figure below, the box squared off in red is the location of the current Benjamin E. Mays School.

Figure 3.8 City of St Paul ‘Natural Areas Map’ (1935) with highlights

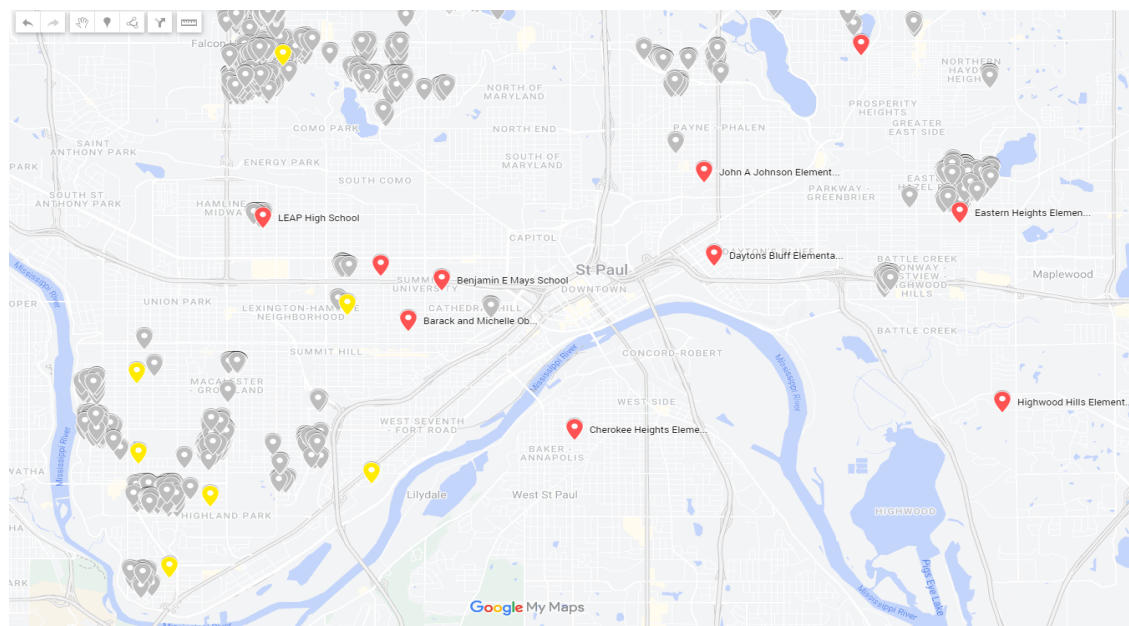


Source: “Social Saga of Two Cities: An Ecological and Statistical Study of Social Trends in Minneapolis and St. Paul” by Calvin F. Schmid, Council of Social Agencies, published 1937, Minneapolis, Minnesota. *Reprinted with added red markings by this author.*

⁴⁷⁴ Schmid, “Social Saga of Two Cities,” 1937.

Similarly, when examining the school’s location in reference to the housing covenants created in the twentieth century in St. Paul, it can be seen clearly that Benjamin E. Mays School is located in an area without any historical housing deeds or racial covenants. As white neighborhoods expanded to the south of where Benjamin E. Mays School is currently located, such as the Highland Park area and the Macalester-Groveland neighborhood, Black residents were pushed to live in predominantly Black areas, such as along the Summit University strip or Rondo neighborhood. As exemplified in the figure below, over time, due to racial covenants, certain areas of St. Paul became almost exclusively white while others became exclusively Black.

Figure 3.9 Google Map of St. Paul with racial covenants (gray), highest-performing schools (yellow), and lowest-performing schools (red).



Source: Google Maps. “Property Deeds with Racial Covenants, Ramsey County, With Schools Added.” Created March 8, 2023.

https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/edit?mid=10IEXY_5TCcSxF0fv6tgg5tAJ8gT4Rks&usp=sharing.

Today, people still perceive historically white areas as safer and superior. For instance, in a travel magazine updated on September 7, 2023, travelers were asked, “Thinking about moving

to St. Paul? Minnesota's capital city is one of the best places to live, thanks to its affordable housing options, historic areas, green space, and more. If you're thinking of settling down in the Twin Cities metro, consider one of these safe and affordable neighborhoods in St. Paul!"⁴⁷⁵ The magazine then listed the following cities: 1) Como, 2) Greater East Side, 3) Highland Park, 4) Macalester-Groveland, and 5) Saint Anthony Park. Perhaps not surprisingly, each of these five areas was historically widely covered in racial covenants and housing deeds, as shown in the figure above. Although *Brown v. Board of Education* and numerous other legal cases dismantled official barriers to African Americans attaining equal education, realizing this ideal has always been challenging and complex. Examining the continued segregation in St. Paul, as exemplified by the Rondo neighborhood and Benjamin E. Mays School, is just one example of continued de facto segregation that ties together neighborhoods and the local schools in the Twin Cities. Exploring the establishment of a school for Black children in a predominantly Black neighborhood unveils the intricate web of unintended consequences, reinforcing segregation patterns and raising critical questions about the perpetuation of societal divisions despite noble intentions.

In conclusion, the history of highly segregated schools in St. Paul, particularly those within the Rondo neighborhood, serves as a poignant illustration of the profound impact of freeway construction and racial covenants on shaping segregated communities. By the 1930s, Rondo had emerged as a vibrant hub for St. Paul's Black population, boasting a diverse socio-economic landscape supported by the thriving railway industry and local businesses. Integrated schools like Central High School and others played a crucial role in fostering education and

⁴⁷⁵ "Safe, Affordable Neighborhoods in St. Paul," *City Guides*, September 7, 2023. <https://www.extraspace.com/blog/moving/city-guides/safe-affordable-neighborhoods-st-paul/>.

literacy among minority residents, attracting Southern Blacks seeking refuge from racial prejudice. However, entrenched residential segregation fueled by discriminatory practices led to the formation of schools predominantly attended by Black children, such as Benjamin E. Mays School, established after the construction of I-94 and the subsequent displacement of families from the Rondo neighborhood. This division profoundly affected various aspects of life, particularly education, as evident in the highly segregated nature of schools like Maxfield Elementary, Webster Magnet School, Central High School, and Benjamin E. Mays School. Thus, analyzing the evolution of these schools provides valuable insights into the enduring legacy of systemic racism and its impact on marginalized communities.

Chapter 4

Minneapolis, Minnesota: *En Avant* (Forward)

What happened to the neighborhood of Rondo in St. Paul was not a standalone issue, but a terrible trend mirrored nationwide. In the 1950s, Minneapolis witnessed a similar upheaval of predominantly Black neighborhoods like Rondo due to freeway construction. The bustling community of Southside, home to many African American families, fell victim to the expansion of Interstate 35. This once-thriving area boasted businesses, churches, and a vibrant social scene, but the arrival of the freeway shattered its cohesion.

Racially discriminatory housing practices, reinforced by redlining and racial covenants, had already marginalized minority communities, concentrating them in specific areas. Planners decided to route I-35 through South Minneapolis, demolishing over fifty square blocks of predominantly Black homes and businesses. Decision-makers ignored residents in the process, and the freeway's construction sliced through the heart of the neighborhood.

The impact was profound. The freeway became a physical and psychological barrier, dividing the community and disrupting its social fabric. This local tragedy echoed a national trend, where freeway construction systematically displaced Black communities across the country. Today, the legacy of freeway construction still lingers. Black residents and people of color are more likely to live near freeways, exposing them to health risks from polluted air. The story of Southside serves as a stark reminder of the enduring impact of systemic racism on urban development and community well-being.

Through a critical analysis of historical narratives and legal precedents, this chapter seeks to uncover and explain the impact of segregation on both housing and education, echoing the broader patterns of racial injustice prevalent across the United States. Faced with discriminatory

housing practices and urban planning policies, Black residents of Minneapolis were confined to areas such as the South Side and the Near North neighborhoods, which burgeoned into the city's most prominent and thriving Black communities by the 1960s. Yet, the promise of community and belonging was shattered by the intrusion of highways slicing through predominantly Black homes and businesses.

Amidst the upheaval wrought by freeway construction, Minneapolis's educational landscape mirrored the realities of segregation and inequality. Historically Black schools, including Central High School, North High School, Bryant Junior High School, Field Elementary, and Bethune Elementary, bore the brunt of underinvestment despite overcrowded populations. In the quest for educational equity, the landmark case of *Booker v. Special School District No. 1* emerged as a pivotal moment in the struggle against segregation. Judge Larson's decision laid bare the reality of Minneapolis's segregated public schools, where minority enrollments far exceeded district averages, underscoring the district's culpability in fostering racial segregation. The impact of racial segregation, first seen in housing and then entrenched in the very fabric of the educational system, became glaringly evident in the disparities in educational quality, as evidenced by low test scores and high dropout rates among children of color in Minneapolis.

Making the Segregated City before World War II

Family and home life are critical components of African American identity, shaped by individual family life and support from the surrounding community. The Black population in Minneapolis during the late nineteenth century was initially small, with only 160 individuals recorded in the 1870 census. However, by 1900, the number had increased to 2,592, further

rising to 4,176 in 1930 and reaching 4,646 in 1940.⁴⁷⁶ During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, “Black people resided in every ward in the city.” However, that soon changed. Minnesota's first racially restrictive deed was in Minneapolis in 1910, when Henry and Leonora Scott sold a property on 35th Avenue South to Nels Anderson containing language restricting all but white homebuyers from purchasing the home.⁴⁷⁷ When racially restrictive deeds were first written, the city of Minneapolis was not particularly segregated. However, covenants would utterly change the city’s landscape. Racially restrictive deeds became more and more commonplace, even advertised in newspapers.⁴⁷⁸

Over time, Black Americans were pushed into a few small areas of the city, and certain areas of the city became entirely white.⁴⁷⁹ Blacks began living predominantly on the near Northside along Sixth and Lyndale Avenues North; at Seven Corners, where Washington, Fifteenth Avenue, Nineteenth Avenue, and Cedar Avenue intersect, much of which is now covered by I-35W and other development,⁴⁸⁰ and on the Southside, between Nicollet and Chicago Avenues and Thirty-fourth and Forty-sixth Streets.⁴⁸¹ A Black enclave also developed in the Shingle Creek neighborhood near Fiftieth Street and Humboldt Avenue North. Snelling Avenue, with adjacent portions of Minnehaha and Hiawatha Avenues, became one of the

⁴⁷⁶ Schmid, *Social Saga*, 172, and 1885 Minnesota State Census, Minneapolis schedules.

⁴⁷⁷ “History,” Just Deeds, 2021.

⁴⁷⁸ Advertisement placed by Edmund G. Walton in the *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*, January 12, 1919.

⁴⁷⁹ “History,” Just Deeds, 2021.

⁴⁸⁰ The issue and impact of the construction of I-35 is discussed later in this paper.

⁴⁸¹ David V. Taylor, “Blacks in Minnesota,” 78.

relatively few areas of early twentieth-century Minneapolis where African Americans established a long-term community with a high rate of home ownership.

Tall elevators and mills characterized the backdrop of the bustling neighborhood along Snelling Avenue, with small factories interspersed between houses at the northern edge. Most houses were constructed before 1925, and industrial expansion eventually eliminated all but one residence from the 3000 and 3200 blocks of the avenue. Throughout its history, Snelling Avenue has also been home to many European immigrants, including Germans, Swedes, and Norwegians.⁴⁸²

The 1895 census recorded three African Americans and their families living on Snelling Avenue. J. A. McCoy, thirty-four, a musician and native of Tennessee, was at 3015 Snelling Avenue. His wife was a native of Germany. At 3034, William H. Howard, twenty-eight, a coachman and musician, was a native of Maryland. His wife Emma, twenty-six, was German. At 3036, Virgil Peebles, a thirty-three-year-old native of New York, lived with his Swedish-born wife and two children. He listed his employment as a clerk. By 1900, Peebles and McCoy were living elsewhere in the city, but Howard appears to have been the pioneer who remained and was still living on Snelling Avenue in 1930.⁴⁸³ By 1900, he listed his employment as a music teacher.⁴⁸⁴ Like many other African Americans in the area, William Howard owned his house.

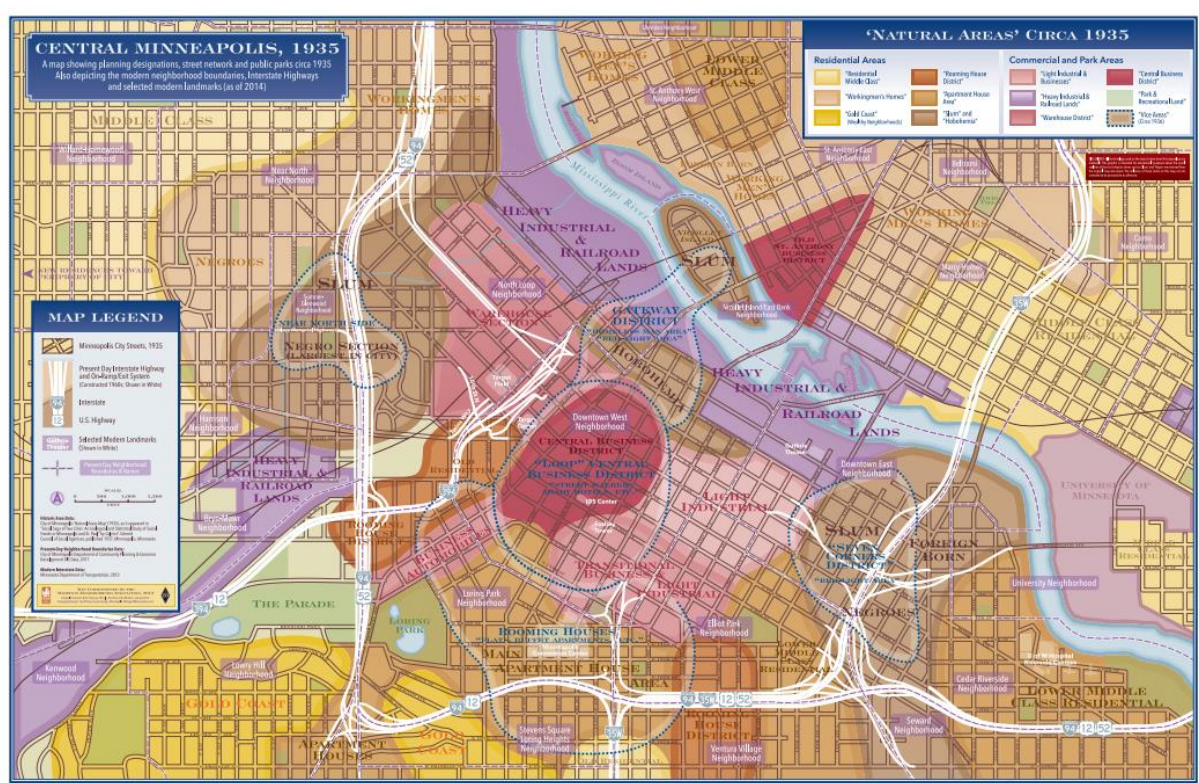
⁴⁸² 1900, 1910, 1920, 1930 U.S. Census, Hennepin County, Minneapolis, Ward 12.

⁴⁸³ 1895 and 1905 Minnesota State Census of Population; 1900 and 1930 U.S. Census, Hennepin County, Minneapolis, Ward 12.

⁴⁸⁴ 1900 Minneapolis City Directory; 1930 U.S. Census, Hennepin County, Minneapolis, Ward 12. (Census-takers typically recorded residents as “Neg” for Negro or “Mu” for mulatto, but occasionally persons previously recorded were later classified as white. This is true of Howard, who appears as white in the 1930 census.)

In 1935, Calvin F. Schmid conducted an ecological and statistical analysis of social trends in Minneapolis and St. Paul, focusing on the significant growth of these cities, with Minneapolis being the largest. As part of his findings, he created a map illustrating the 'natural areas' of the city, delineating residential, commercial, and park areas. Within this map, he conspicuously identified areas predominantly inhabited by Black or foreign-born residents, designating them as "slums" or "hobohemia" (see Figure 4.1). A year later, areas labeled "vice areas" were added to the map, marking them unsafe. Notably, every predominantly Black area of Minneapolis was circled.

Figure 4.1 City of Minneapolis 'Natural Areas' Map (1935)



Source: "Social Saga of Two Cities: An Ecological and Statistical Study of Social Trends in Minneapolis and St. Paul" by Calvin F. Schmid, Council of Social Agencies, published 1937, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

The modest growth of employment opportunities for African Americans in Minneapolis coincided with the wartime economy between 1915 and 1920, when “recruiters scoured the South for Blacks willing to move to northern industrial centers in return of promises of free transportation, higher wages, and a better standard of living.”⁴⁸⁵ Few jobs in private industry, however, were open to African Americans before World War II. For many on Snelling Avenue, the railroad provided a level of job security. In 1930, early in the Depression, a higher percentage of African Americans in Minneapolis were employed than native- or foreign-born whites. During the 1930s, however, many African Americans were unemployed; in part, this was because whites occupied the domestic jobs they formerly held. During this period, restrictive housing covenants were used to “contain and isolate Blacks.”⁴⁸⁶ Snelling Avenue and the surrounding area provided a place where home ownership was possible.

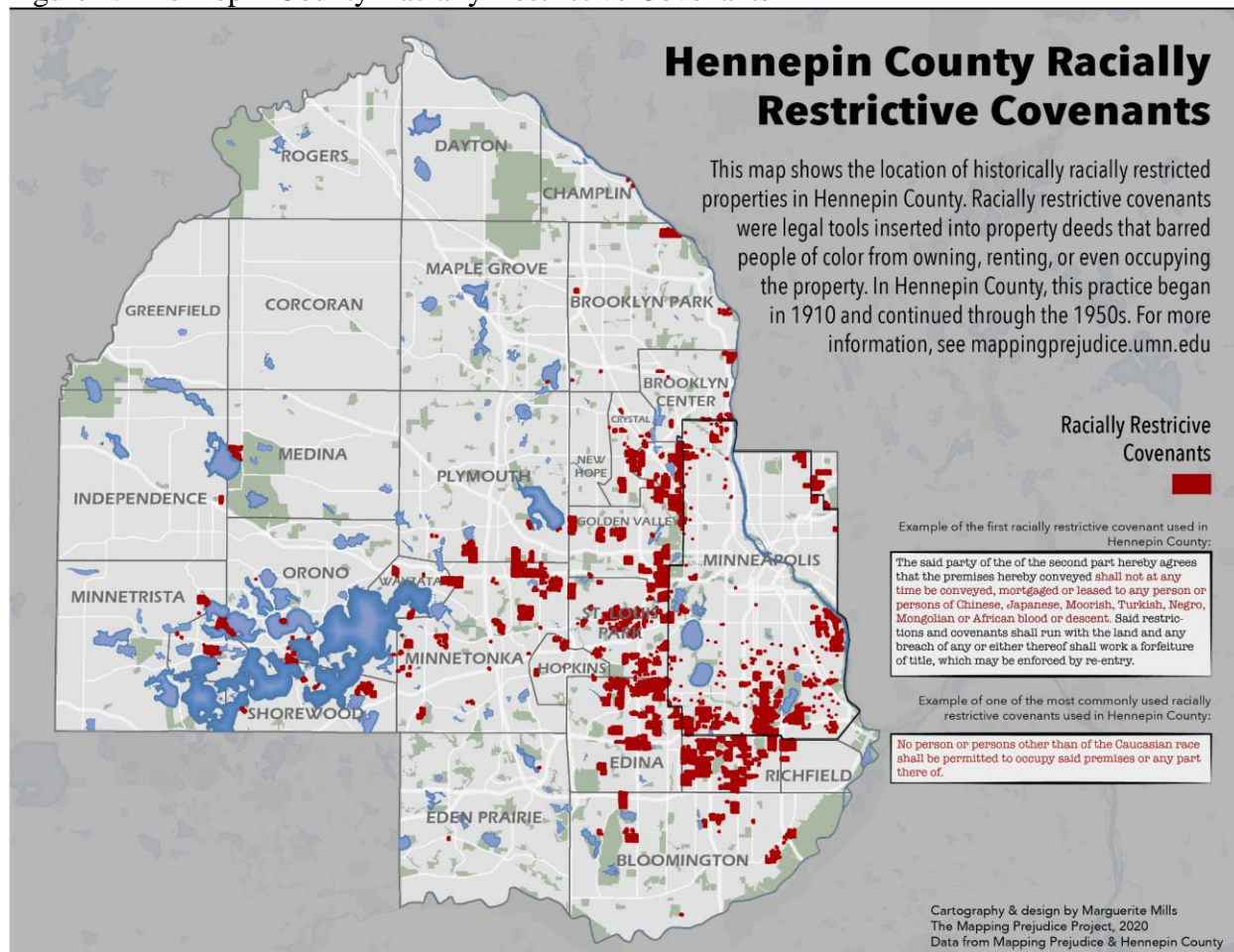
With the dawn of redlining and racial covenants in Minneapolis in the early twentieth century, the highest African American populations were in areas 55411, known as the Near North, and 55407, in south-central Minneapolis, the Powderhorn neighborhood. Covenants rapidly proliferated across Minneapolis, St. Paul, and the nearby suburbs for decades, imposing restrictions on housing access for people of color. Adding to the challenge of racial covenants, real estate steering further exacerbated the situation. This practice involved realtors guiding Black homebuyers towards existing Black neighborhoods, effectively limiting the chances of communities of color integrating into predominantly white neighborhoods. Redlining in the 1930s further devalued many neighborhoods where people of color could live. The Old Southside Black community was one of the few integrated areas for communities of color in the

⁴⁸⁵ Taylor, *African Americans in Minnesota*, 30.

⁴⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 32.

city. While Powderhorn was not historically Black or very diverse, more and more Black families began to move to Powderhorn with the emergence of racial covenants pushing them out of the western areas of the city (see Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2 Hennepin County Racially Restrictive Covenants



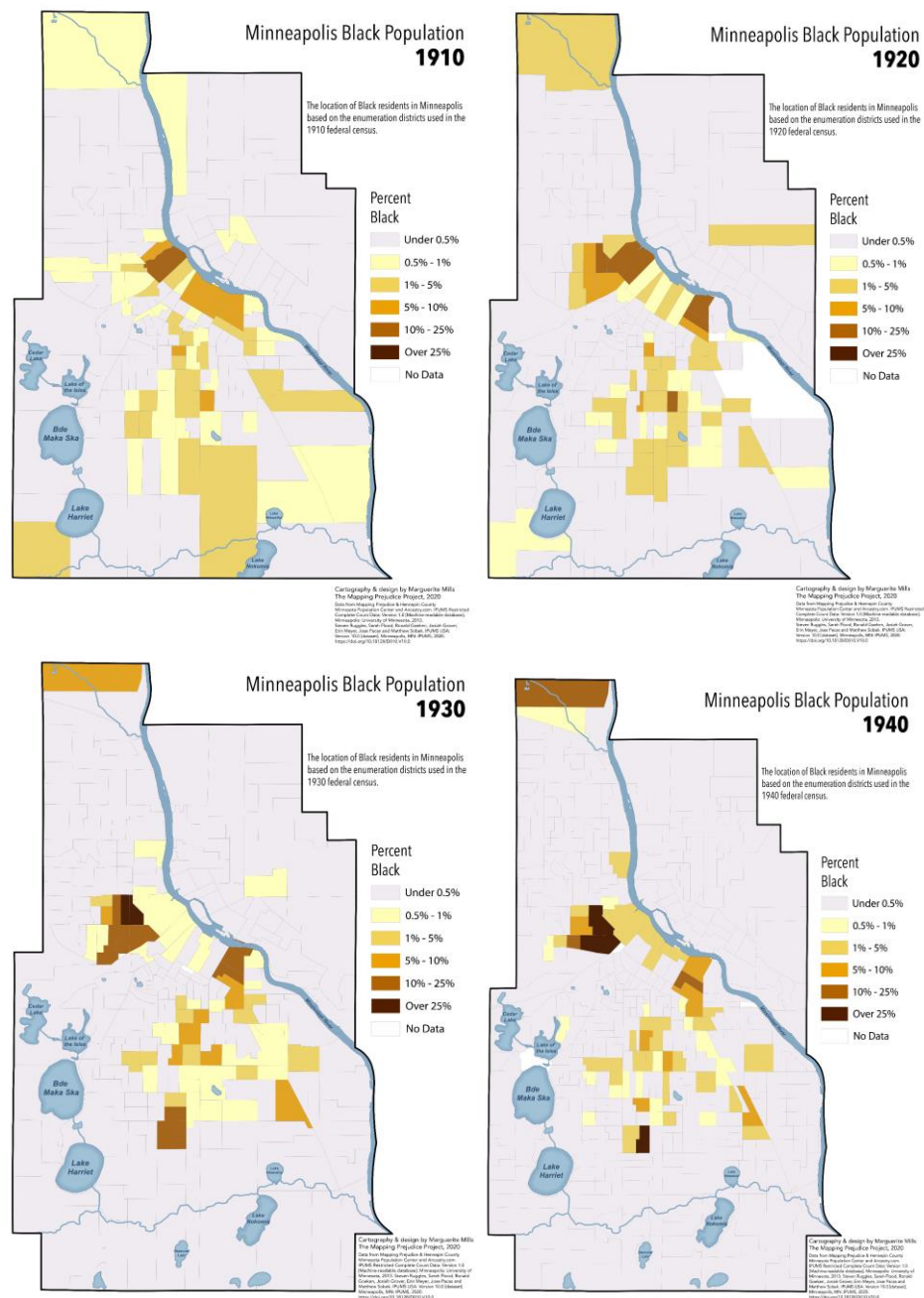
Source: Marguerite Mills and Mapping Prejudice Project, *Hennepin County Racially Restrictive Covenants*. Retrieved from the University of Minnesota Digital Conservancy, 2020. <https://hdl.handle.net/11299/217471>.

As seen in Figure 4.2, the western and northeastern sides of the cities came to be largely white due to the racial covenants. Black families moved into the central parts of Minneapolis.

Additionally, as demonstrated in the following figures, between 1910 and 1940, Black

Minnesotans became increasingly concentrated in the Near North and Southside neighborhoods of Minneapolis (see Figure 4.3).

Figure 4.3 Minneapolis Black Population, 1910-1940



Source: Marguerite Mills and Mapping Prejudice Project, *Freeways Minneapolis Black Population*. Retrieved from the University of Minnesota Digital Conservancy, 2020.
<https://hdl.handle.net/11299/217472>.

African Americans in Minneapolis “did not live or go to Northeast Minneapolis...and other areas were also known to be forbidden. [They] understood the boundaries of where they could exist.”⁴⁸⁷ Over time, there came to be a clear and recognizable racial wealth divide in the city of Minneapolis. As Blacks were forced into certain areas available to them due to restrictive covenants, predominantly Black communities formed.

One instance illustrating the formation of Black neighborhoods was Seven Corners, identified as a "slum" area and "Hobohemia" on the 1934 Schmid map. However, this area did not remain predominantly Black. During the 1930s, African Americans began relocating to South Minneapolis, spurred by an influx of Black individuals from Southern states in the demographic phenomenon known as the "Great Migration." The city's third Black neighborhood emerged on the Southside, spanning between East Thirty-Fourth and Forty-Sixth Streets and from Nicollet Avenue to Chicago Avenue. Initially settled by Swedes and Norwegians, this area attracted many African Americans. Interestingly, its status as a core community declined in the 1920s due to the impact of Prohibition on the entertainment district. By the 1940s, numerous Scandinavians had settled in the area, leading to its nickname "Snoose Boulevard." In the 2010s, the Central, Bryant, and Regina neighborhoods constituted what was historically referred to as the Southside.⁴⁸⁸

⁴⁸⁷ LaJune Thomas Lange and Antonia Apolinário-Wilcoxon, *Citywide Community Engagement for a Minneapolis African American Historic and Cultural Context Study*, Minneapolis, Hennepin County, Minnesota, April 2022, 17.

⁴⁸⁸ Tina Burnside, “The History of Minneapolis' Southside African American Community,” Arts & Culture MNopedia, MinnPost, January 19, 2021. Accessed February 21, 2023. <https://www.minnpost.com/mnopedia/2021/01/the-history-of-minneapolis-southside-african-american-community/>.

As more and more African Americans moved to South Minneapolis, many settled south of Lake Street to 50th Street, between Lyndale and Elliott and Chicago. A high concentration of significant individuals grew up around 38th Street, specifically on Clinton.⁴⁸⁹ In the early twentieth century, a thriving African American community developed along Snelling Avenue, between 36th and 46th streets East. The Southside, a stable community of working and middle-class African Americans, featured a tight-knit neighborhood with many homes owned by residents. Old Southside was a neighborhood that working- and middle-class Black Minneapolisians called home. One resident of the area stated that the Black middle class in the Old Southside “owned their homes, had pretty houses, lawns and gardens.”⁴⁹⁰ Another remarked that the neighborhood “helped to build a stable child-rearing environment for people of color as they migrated to the city.”⁴⁹¹ However, the attitude toward the Southside began to change as more and more African Americans moved into the area. A 1936 map of the city, put together by the Homeowners Loan Corporation, evaluated Minneapolis’s neighborhoods. The assessors stated,

“This area running north and south along 4th Avenue South was once a very substantial and desirable area for homes about forty years ago. A gradual infiltration of negroes and Asiatics has occurred on 4th Avenue South, beginning at approximately Franklin Avenue moving south to approximately 38th street. During the past twenty years business has encroached in the area between Franklin and 24th. Many of the business places are made over dwellings. Very much rehabilitation is necessary. The street car line extends out to the 48th street and although the colored people have not moved much beyond 38th street, development of 4th avenue, south of 38th street, have been very slow because of the

⁴⁸⁹ Lange and Apolinário-Wilcoxon, *Minneapolis African American Historic and Cultural Context Study*, 2022, 17.

⁴⁹⁰ Ernest Lee Lloyd, “How Routing an Interstate Highway through South Minneapolis Disrupted an African American Neighborhood,” PhD dissertation, Hamline University, 2013.

⁴⁹¹ *Ibid.*

continued colored trend southerly and the fact that the street car runs into the loop in Minneapolis through the heavily populated colored section. Fifth Avenue on the east and Clinton on the west of 4th avenue are affected by a large colored population on the avenue. Because of the influence of the class of people on 4th Avenue extending over and into C-8, its desirability for residential purposes is seriously affected.”⁴⁹²

In an example of the severe redlining, racism, and mistreatment of African Americans, in 1931, Arthur and Edith Lee bought a two-bedroom home in south Minneapolis. The Lees were Black; the neighborhood was white. Despite threats from the neighborhood association, they moved into the home in July, along with their 6-year-old daughter. A group of neighbors offered to repurchase the home for three hundred dollars more than the Lees had paid. The family declined.⁴⁹³ In July, thousands of people assembled in protest, yelling and throwing rocks at the Lees’ home, even killing their dog. This went on for three days. Even the *Minneapolis Tribune*, now the *Star Tribune*, a leading source for Minnesota news, reported that “definite progress” was being made in negotiations over the sale of the house and reported favorably that the Lees would move soon, perhaps within a week.⁴⁹⁴

Gathering at the Lee residence, friends of the family valiantly contested for their right to own their home in the neighborhood, enduring a two-year legal battle. Arthur, employed at the post office, found support from his postal colleagues who actively safeguarded his home, taking shifts during the course of the lawsuit. Represented by Lena O. Smith, a prominent civil rights

⁴⁹² Robert K. Nelson, LaDale Winling, et al., "Mapping Inequality: Redlining in New Deal America," edited by Robert K. Nelson and Edward L. Ayers, *American Panorama: An Atlas of United States History*, 2023. https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/map/MN/Minneapolis/area_descriptions/D6#loc=12/44.9726/-93.2631.

⁴⁹³ “Home Stoned in Race Row,” *The Minneapolis Tribune*, July 16, 1931, A1. <https://startribune.newspapers.com/paper/star-tribune/4474/>.

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid.

lawyer and activist from the 1920s and 1930s, the Lees found a powerful advocate in their legal pursuit. Smith, who became the first African American woman licensed to practice law in Minnesota in 1921, held the unique distinction of being the only African American woman practicing law in the state until 1945. Serving as the NAACP's prosecuting attorney in the case, Smith played a crucial role in securing the right for the Lees to remain in their home. Despite this victory, persistent threats and unrest led the Lees to eventually relocate to another neighborhood.

The core of the Black community, centered on Fourth Avenue South, held a lively Black business hub at Thirty-Eighth Street and Fourth Avenue. This area flourished with over twenty Black-owned enterprises from the 1930s to the 1970s. Established in 1934 by Cecil Newman, the *Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder*, originally the *Minneapolis Spokesman* and the *St. Paul Recorder*, claims the title of Minnesota's oldest continuously running Black newspaper. It made its home in the Southside neighborhood at 3744 Fourth Avenue South in 1958.⁴⁹⁵ Southside was also a welcoming community to new arrivals in the 1960s.

However, what happened to the Rondo neighborhood is not the only example of the building of freeways impacting public education for predominantly Black neighborhoods and families. The Southside, at the time home to the city's largest concentration of African American families in Minneapolis, was also torn apart by freeway construction in the 1950s to make room for I-35.⁴⁹⁶ Residents of Southside formed a tight-knit community with businesses, churches, a

⁴⁹⁵ Tina Burnside, "The History of Minneapolis' Southside African American Community," Arts & Culture MNopedia, MinnPost, January 19, 2021. Accessed February 21, 2023.

⁴⁹⁶ Location of Interstate Freeways, Comparative Analysis of Alternative Freeway Locations, January 1959. Minnesota. Department of Highways. Published Records and Reports. Minnesota Historical Society. <http://www2.mnhs.org/library/findaids/gr01313.xml>.

school, and social clubs.⁴⁹⁷ Yet, practices like racial housing and choices like freeway construction and the resulting neighborhood destruction had profound physical and psychological impacts. Racist property clauses and housing discrimination perpetuated enduring patterns by excluding minorities from specific areas of a city and concentrating them elsewhere. These practices were reinforced by redlining, refusing a loan to specific groups of people because they live in an area deemed a poor financial risk - a determination frequently based on race more than any other factor. Real estate agents and federal housing programs in the 1930s promoted these discriminatory home lending practices. They later impacted other significant decisions on city building projects, with continued impact from decades-old racial covenants.

The construction of Interstate 35W extended northward to Downtown Minneapolis, passing directly through Old Southside and Powderhorn Park. The construction of the I-35W corridor in South Minneapolis began in 1959, resulting in the demolition of over fifty square blocks of predominantly Black homes and businesses. The freeway's route was determined by planners and engineers without involvement from local residents, disregarding the existence of an integrated neighborhood.⁴⁹⁸ The I-35W project significantly impacted the Southside Black community, as it divided the area, segregated schools, and created a barrier between the east and west sides of the freeway. The clear division of homes and neighborhoods by the new freeway construction can be seen in a clip from *The Minneapolis Morning Tribune* on November 11, 1962 (see Figure 4.4).

⁴⁹⁷ Burnside, "History of Minneapolis' Southside," 2021.

⁴⁹⁸ Lloyd, "Highway through South Minneapolis," 2013.

Figure 4.4 The trench excavated for 35W in South Minneapolis.



Source: “The trench excavated for 35W in South Minneapolis,” *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, November 11, 1962, 1.

This local instance mirrored national patterns of freeway displacement and the disruption of Black communities. “By the 1960s, federal highway construction was demolishing 37,000 urban housing units each year [...] and a large proportion of those dislocated were African Americans, and in most cities the expressways were routinely routed through Black

neighborhoods.”⁴⁹⁹ In 1960, when the local interstates 35W, 94, and State Highway 55 were being constructed, the freeway routes disrupted twenty-seven percent of Minneapolis’ white population while inversely disrupting eighty-two percent of the Black population. Many African American communities were compelled to inhabit these areas due to the imposition of restrictive racial covenants in 1910. These neighborhoods were often labeled as "blighted" because a majority of the residents were African American, and they had been subjected to redlining and systematic disinvestment since the 1930s. The construction of freeways resulted in direct and disproportionate losses of residential and commercial property owned and occupied by Black residents. Research shows that even today, Minneapolis' Black residents and other people of color are more likely to reside near a freeway, a circumstance linked to various adverse effects, including increased health problems stemming from impaired air quality.⁵⁰⁰

Black Minneapolis in the Civil Rights Era

Highways, slum clearance, and urban redevelopment were closely intertwined in formulating postwar urban policies. Early advocates of interstate construction saw the new urban expressways as a means of rejuvenating the central city by removing "blighted" housing. The Bureau of Public Roads had been endorsing such ideas since the 1930s, and many pre-1956 urban expressways implemented these concepts. Following the landmark 1956 interstate

⁴⁹⁹ Raymond A. Mohl, “The Interstates and the Cities: Highways, Housing, and the Freeway Revolt,” *Poverty & Race Research Action Council*, 2002, 2.

⁵⁰⁰ Minneapolis City Planning, *Policy 48: Freeway Remediation: Recover and repurpose space taken by construction of the interstate highway system in Minneapolis and use it to reconnect neighborhoods and provide needed housing, employment, greenspace, clean energy and other amenities consistent with City goals*. Minneapolis: Minneapolis 2040, October 25, 2019.

highway legislation, highway officials executed expressway plans that resulted in the demolition of a substantial number of low-income, inner-city housing, particularly in Black neighborhoods. This was often due to lower land acquisition costs and minimal political opposition, especially in Southern cities. State highway officials and local elites sometimes exploited these opportunities to advance racial agendas. Across the nation, the expressways that cut through central cities and the inner beltways outlined in interstate planning typically followed paths of least resistance through Black communities.⁵⁰¹

Housing discrimination based on race-imposed restrictions on the options available to Black residents displaced by the construction of 35W, limiting their choices for finding a new home. Although there are not a lot of historical records indicating where Black residents moved when they were forced to relocate, a few historical papers can provide some clues. In March of 1964, Mr. and Mrs. North, a Black couple, who had lived at 2522 4th Ave S for a decade, reported to the *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune* that they objected to moving into “another ghetto,” which Mrs. North felt was in the making, just a few blocks south of their home.⁵⁰² They wanted to ensure that their children could grow up in an integrated neighborhood. In November of that year, the *Minneapolis Tribune* reported that along the path of 35W from 18th Street to 32nd Street, forty-two Black families were moved southward, remaining in the city’s “quasi-ghetto section” between Nicollet and Chicago Avenues south of 42nd Street.⁵⁰³

Policymakers in Minnesota were aware of the relocation issue that Black residents faced. Cy Magnusson, Assistant on Housing and Relocation, sent a memorandum dated October 15,

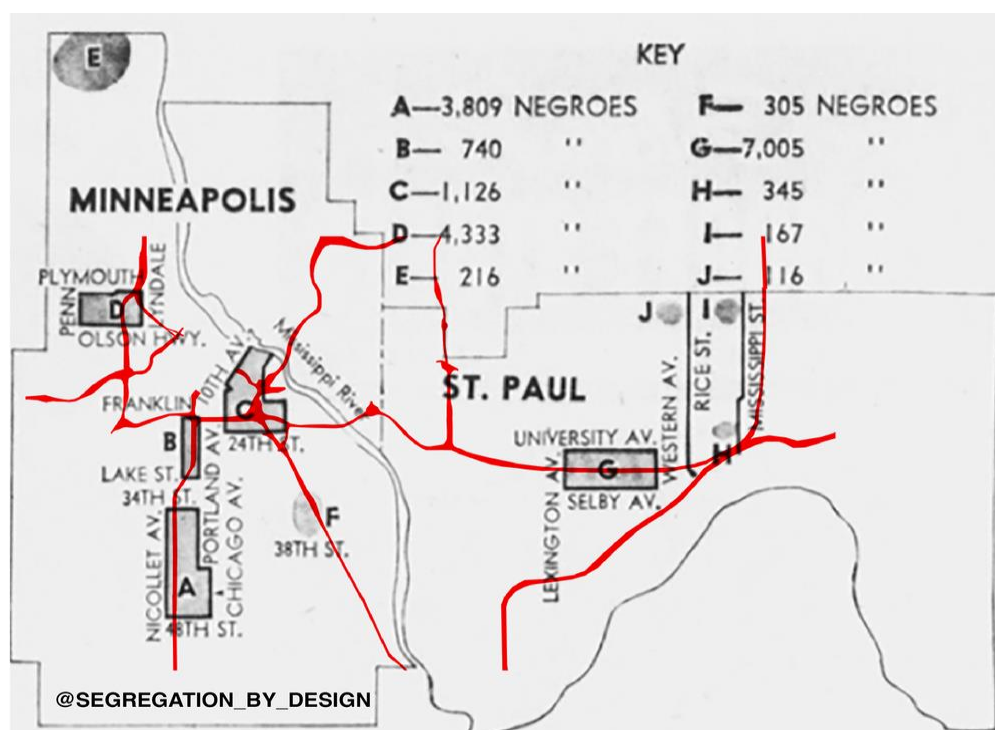
⁵⁰¹ Mohl, “The Interstates and the Cities,” 2002.

⁵⁰² “Road Paved with Heartaches,” *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*, March 8, 1964.

⁵⁰³ “The Negro and Urban Renewal,” *The Minneapolis Tribune*, November 8, 1964.

1957, to Governor Orville Freeman, in which he included how housing and relocation had become a “very sensitive problem among the colored folks in St. Paul. As the time draws near for moving because of freeway construction, the anxiety of these folks becomes more intense. Housing for negroes is critical.”⁵⁰⁴ The awareness of the plight of Black residents by policymakers did not change the plans. As seen in Figures 4.5 and 4.6, the construction of freeways was systematically chosen based on areas with higher concentrations of Black residents, building segregation into the design of Minnesota’s highway system.

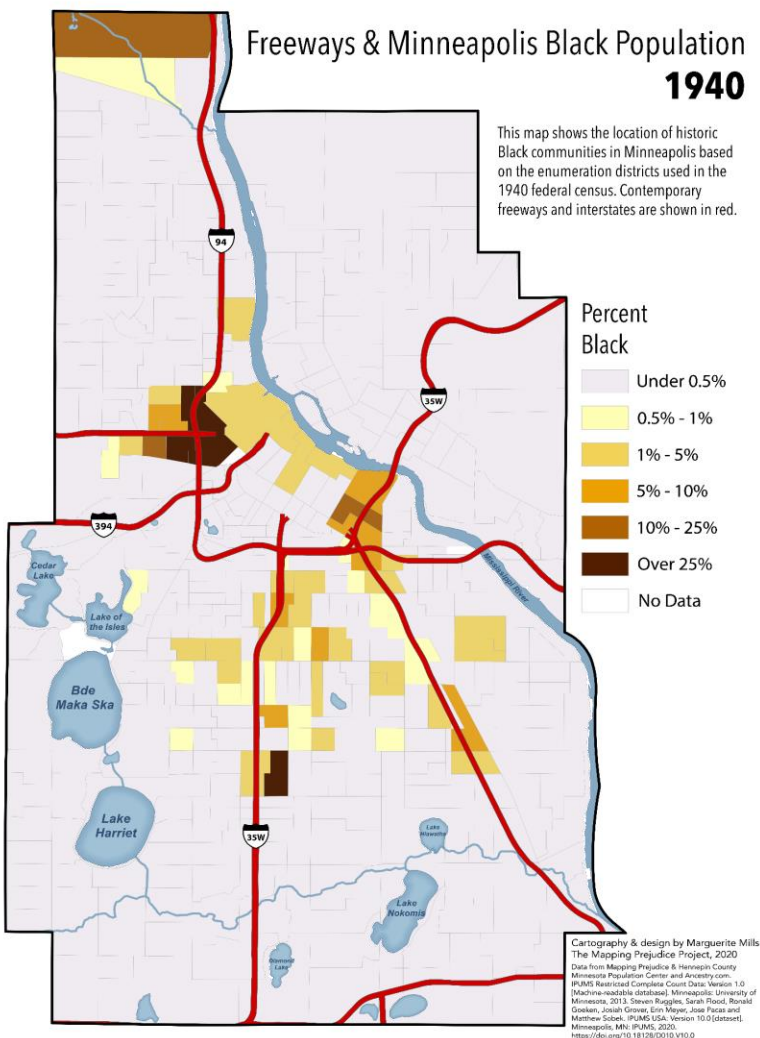
Figure 4.5 Overlay of the I-35 Freeway Route



Source: Adam Paul Susaneck, *Minneapolis: I-35W Construction*, Accessed January 20, 2024, Segregation by Design. Accessed January 21, 2024. <https://www.segregationbydesign.com/minneapolis/i35-construction>.

⁵⁰⁴ Governor Orville Freeman Files. Minnesota Historical Society.

Figure 4.6 Freeways & Minneapolis Black Population, 1940



Source: Marguerite Mills and Mapping Prejudice Project, *Freeways Minneapolis Black Population*. Retrieved from the University of Minnesota Digital Conservancy, 2020. <https://hdl.handle.net/11299/217472>.

The other well-known neighborhood that became predominantly home to African Americans was North Minneapolis. The Shingle Creek neighborhood, named for the meandering Shingle Creek that flows through its residential boundaries to the Mississippi River, where roofing shingles were transported in the late 1800s and early 1900s, became one of the early settlements of African Americans. Founded in 1923, Pilgrim Rest stands as the oldest and sole

African American church linked to the early settlers of the Shingle Creek area. Subsequently, the congregation acquired two lots at the junction of 51st Avenue North and James Avenue North, where the current church building resides.⁵⁰⁵ Many African Americans also settled at 8th and Bryant Avenues North and Sumner Field.

Another neighborhood open to Black settlement was the Willard-Homewood Neighborhood. The neighborhood, colloquially known as WHO, was roughly the area one mile east of the city limits between 23rd Avenue North and Olson Highway. It was founded by Helen Starkweather, Van White, and George Nelsen, who was white but married to Vivian Jenkins-Nelsen, who was Black. Vivian Jenkins-Nelsen moved to Minneapolis from Omaha, and her experience with segregated housing was not good. She remembers,

“I first lived with a friend from college over in Bryn Mawr. And I didn't know I was the first Black person to live in there. And it was awful. It was a fourplex, was pretty new at the time. And my roommate found it and she was white, from college. So people complained, you know, 'you're walking too loud', stuff like that. They did things like unpin my clothes on the line and let them drop down into the dirt and grass. One morning I came out and my new Pontiac, somebody had taken like a screwdriver and just destroyed the ignition. I had to get a new starter and a whole bunch of stuff. My car had to be towed. And then I was very nerve wracked, of course, living there and one day I came out, I was just about 20-21. I came out and somebody had put a pile of dog shit in my car, right under the driver's seat. So my first impression of Minneapolis was not good.”⁵⁰⁶

After moving out of Bryn Mawr, she began looking for other housing, but recalls,

“I didn't know anything about the divisions in neighborhoods or who lived in them and so forth... There was a sign that said apartment for rent, on that nice brick building - it may have eight apartments in it, newish. And this older lady came out and it said ring the bell, so I rung. She said, 'oh, it's been rented'. I said 'Oh, oh, okay'. So I went away. I had to go up and down Glenwood quite a bit. The sign was still up there a week later. So I stopped

⁵⁰⁵ Lisa Drew, “Shingle Creek’s History,” *The Shingle Creek Neighborhood in Minneapolis*, 2022.

⁵⁰⁶ Vivian Jenkins-Nelsen: A Strain of Hope interview. Interview by Malaika Hankins, *A People's History of the Homewood Neighborhood*, July 29, 2018. <https://nrcc.org/homewoodhistory>.

by and I said 'if the apartment isn't rented, I'd like to look at it'. And she said 'No, it's rented. I just haven't taken the sign down'. And being the hot-head that I was, I took the sign down and handed it to her."⁵⁰⁷

WHO began as a collective organization to rehabilitate neighborhood housing stock from 1969 to 1977. The FHA 235 program, designed to enable low-income families to purchase a house with reduced down payment and monthly mortgage payments compared to other loan sources, contributed to some of the housing problems in the Willard-Homewood area. Unfortunately, too many of the houses bought under the 235 program needed significant repairs, something that lower-income people were not in a financial position to make.⁵⁰⁸ In the late 1960s and early 1970s, a substantial influx of Black residents, primarily young, settled in Willard-Homewood. This demographic shift led to the minority student population surpassing fifty percent by 1970, despite Blacks constituting only twenty-eight percent of the area's total population. Recognizing the neighborhood's challenges, three residents—Starkweather, White, and Nelson—took action. From spring 1969 to winter 1970, they spearheaded efforts to engage the community and negotiate with authorities, aiming to establish a formal organization fostering widespread resident involvement in community planning.⁵⁰⁹ By 1977, the WHO community had organized a thriving, collective neighborhood.

Ultimately, the largest number of Minneapolis' African American population lived in the Near North, especially along Plymouth Avenue. Since the early 1900s, the Near North

⁵⁰⁷ Jenkins-Nelsen interview, 2018.

⁵⁰⁸ Douglas Ellingson, *Housing Rehabilitation and Neighborhood Self-Determination: The Willard-Homewood Experience, 1969-1977*.
<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/577d670b1b631b591bf0ce4d/t/5b3555cdf950b745b90c897b/1530222033459/Willard-Homewood+Organization.pdf>.

⁵⁰⁹ Ibid.

community in Minneapolis had been characterized by a significant African American presence. By 1960, one-third of Minneapolis' African Americans lived here. Marked by its unique businesses, organizations, and culture, it continues to serve as a focal point for African American life in Minnesota in the twenty-first century. The Near North Side historically had been a haven for marginalized communities, mostly due to its proximity to downtown and affordable housing. Initially, in the early twentieth century, a considerable portion of the Twin Cities' Jewish population was concentrated in the Near North neighborhood, particularly along Plymouth Avenue and the present-day Olson-Memorial Highway area. However, amid World War I and the emergence and spread of racial covenants, a migration trend emerged as residents shifted from well-established neighborhoods like Seven Corners near the University of Minnesota to the South Side and the North Side. The Sumner Field public housing project, for instance, maintained segregation, yet its inhabitants, including both white Jewish and Black residents, generally coexisted harmoniously.

Increasingly more Black residents settled into the Near North neighborhood. Amid the Great Migration, when many African Americans first arrived in Minnesota, they frequently encountered a lack of access to the community-based agencies available to white counterparts. In response, Black churches, social organizations, as well as barber and beauty shops, played a crucial role in offering support. The Phyllis Wheatley Settlement House, established in 1924, emerged as one such place, serving as a recreation center specifically designed for African American children.

By 1960, the Near North had become the city's largest Black community. The longtime Jewish community living in the area began to move out of the area, mostly to suburbs like St. Louis Park. Blacks accounted for eight percent of the community's total population, but Near

North's African American population was fifty-five percent.⁵¹⁰ Exactly what happened to the Rondo neighborhood in St. Paul and the Southside in Minneapolis occurred yet again in the historically Black Near North neighborhood. The city was bisected by the widening of Olson Memorial Highway I-94 cut off the North Side from downtown. Without consent from the community, the construction of the highway was approved by two state agencies. The construction took much longer than anticipated, bothering the residents of the neighborhood with loud noises and inconveniences. The project involved the construction of a six point two-mile stretch of I-94 from Highway 12 in Minneapolis north to Interstate Highway 694 in Brooklyn Center. State highway officials originally hoped to complete that segment in 1970, yet by 1978, it had yet to be completed "because of various problems."⁵¹¹ Both the delay and the existence of the highway severely affected the vitality of local businesses on the south side of the street.

In 1967, Plymouth Avenue erupted in racially charged civil unrest, fueled by persistent racial discrimination and frustration over the neglect of the Near North area by the city. The division caused by the widening of Olson Memorial Highway through Near North further exacerbated tensions. Accounts differ on the origins of the 1967 incidents. Some witnesses point to the mistreatment of a Black woman by police during the Aquatennial parade as the triggering

⁵¹⁰ Eric Hankin-Redmon, "How Near North came to be one of Minneapolis' largest black communities," *MinnPost*, January 20, 2020. Accessed December 10, 2022. <https://www.minnpost.com/mnopedia/2020/01/how-near-north-came-to-be-one-of-minneapolis-largest-black-communities/>.

⁵¹¹ "Accord Is Reached in I-94 Construction Through North Side," *Minneapolis Tribune*, October 26, 1978.

event.⁵¹² Around 11:30 p.m. on July 19, a group of African American citizens moved north from the parade site to Plymouth Avenue, where they protested discrimination and mistreatment by the police. During the unrest, some individuals in the crowd engaged in vandalism, looting, and arson, targeting stores on Plymouth Avenue. There were instances of arson, as well as throwing rocks, bottles, and assault, with some incidents involving the throwing of Molotov cocktails. To control the crowds and limit damage, the city deployed police forces equipped with riot helmets and shotguns. Firefighters faced challenges as they tried to extinguish fires amid a barrage of rocks and bricks thrown by the gathering crowds.

By the early morning of July 20, approximately ten Plymouth Avenue stores had been vandalized and two had been completely destroyed by fires. Local hospitals treated around ten people, and thirteen African American citizens, including children, were arrested. Another round of violence erupted later that day. In response, the mayor requested Minnesota National Guard troops to occupy the area until tensions subsided. Six hundred guardsmen were deployed in round-the-clock shifts, with 150–250 stationed on Plymouth Avenue for over a week. Violence continued sporadically on July 20 and 21, near Plymouth Avenue, before gradually diminishing. The three-day period saw eighteen fires, thirty-six arrests, three shootings, twenty-four injuries, and damage totaling four point two million dollars. At least four of the arrests involved white citizens, but there were no fatalities.⁵¹³ Throughout the demonstrations, participants expressed frustration with discrimination against African Americans on the Northside, primarily directing

⁵¹² Susan Marks, “Civil Unrest on Plymouth Avenue, Minneapolis, 1967,” *MNopedia*, Minnesota Historical Society, accessed January 21, 2024. <http://www.mnopedia.org/event/civil-unrest-plymouth-avenue-minneapolis-1967>.

⁵¹³ *Ibid.*

their anger at symbols of white authority, including businesses and property. The local press tackled systemic causes, including alienation and racism, and urged community leaders and policymakers to take action to prevent future violent incidents.

A Legacy of Racialized Public Education

Highlighting the Minneapolis metropolitan area as a microcosm, recent reports have underscored the disconcerting trend of the worst Black poverty rates in the United States, as well as increasingly segregated schools over the past quarter-century.⁵¹⁴ Highly segregated schools refer to schools where at least ninety percent of the students are not white. Despite a semblance of diversity, these educational institutions remain markedly divided along racial and socioeconomic lines. A recent report examining Minnesota's persistent education achievement gaps underscores a statewide crisis: "the educational disparities are deep, wide, and persistent."⁵¹⁵ Historically, the success of school integration in the Twin Cities was because of state and regional policies, not a federal court order. One was a program that required regional municipalities to develop affordable housing. That prevented the suburbs from excluding low-income families more likely to be families of color. The second was a state law that barred districts from concentrating too many students of any one race in any one school. If any school had significantly more Black or white or Latino students than the district as a whole, the district

⁵¹⁴ Erin Einhorn and Nigel Chiwaya, "How Minneapolis Re-Segregated Its Schools and Set the Stage for a National Crisis," *NBC News*, NBCUniversal News Group, August 31, 2020. Accessed December 10, 2022. <https://www.nbcnews.com/specials/minneapolis-re-segregated-schools-set-the-stage-national-crisis/>.

⁵¹⁵ Grunewald and Nath, "A Statewide Crisis," 2019.

could lose state funding. In the 1980s and 1990s, these policies fell apart, leading to the highly segregated system visible today.⁵¹⁶

Today, the Minneapolis Public School District contains ninety-six schools and 32,722 students. The district's minority enrollment is seventy percent, the student-to-teacher ratio is fifteen to one, and thirty-seven point five percent of students are economically disadvantaged (on free or reduced-price lunch). Additionally, in the district, forty-two percent of elementary students tested at or above the proficient level for reading, and forty percent tested at or above that level for math. Thirty-eight percent of middle school students tested at or above the proficient level for reading, and thirty-two percent tested at or above that level for math. Thirty-nine percent of high school students tested at or above the proficient level for reading, and twenty-three percent tested at or above that level for math. For high school college readiness, the district averaged thirty-one point six on a zero to one hundred index value and reports a fifty-three point eight percent graduation rate.⁵¹⁷

When examining the history of education in Minneapolis, the city established its first schools in the early nineteenth century. These were often one-room schoolhouses catering to the growing population's needs. The first school was opened in 1834 by Reverend J.D. Stevens. The school was on the shores of Lake Harriet and started with only four students, but was created for the children at Fort Snelling, as well as Native children from Cloud Man's band of Mdewakanton Dakota. As the city expanded, it built more schools to accommodate the increasing number of

⁵¹⁶ Einhorn and Chiwaya, "How Minneapolis Re-Segregated," 2020.

⁵¹⁷ "Minneapolis Public School District," Education, U.S. News & World Report. Accessed March 10, 2023. <https://www.usnews.com/education/k12/minnesota/districts/minneapolis-public-school-district-100071>.

students. In 1849, the first private, or subscription school, opened in St. Anthony, which merged with Minneapolis in 1872. In 1851, Mary Schofield opened the first school on the west side of the Mississippi River. Then, in 1857, Minneapolis' first public school building, Union School, opened, located on the East Side of 3rd Avenue between south 4th and 5th Streets. As settlers moved into the area, more educational opportunities opened. The first high school was Central Union High, which opened in 1857. By 1874, there were six school buildings in Minneapolis with an enrollment of 2,907 students and four school buildings in St. Anthony - part of Minneapolis since 1872 - with an enrollment of 900 students. In 1878, it was decided by legislative act that the two community's school boards would be joined and represented by one Board of Education. This Board managed all the public schools in the city of Minneapolis. By 1922, the Minneapolis school system had a total enrollment in elementary, junior high, and high school of more than seventy thousand.

When examining how race played a role in education in Minneapolis, for several decades, the public schools did not have any Black teachers or superintendents. It was not until 1947 that the Minneapolis Public School System hired the first African American elementary school teacher. Mary Jackson Ellis, initially denied the position due to her race, eventually got the job with the support of a few advocates. Cecil Newman, founder of the *Minneapolis Spokesman* and the *St. Paul Recorder*, the longest-running Black newspaper and business in Minneapolis, spoke to then-mayor Hubert H. Humphrey on her behalf, and she was hired. She taught Kindergarten at Hawthorne and Hale schools and developed her own curriculum for teaching very young children.⁵¹⁸ Dr. Hallie Hendrieth Smith was also hired by Minneapolis Public Schools as an

⁵¹⁸ "Minneapolis Teacher Authors Text-book For Use by Instructors of Tiny Tots," *Minneapolis Spokesman*, September 23, 1955.

elementary school teacher. She was later promoted to principal where she served for twenty-seven years until she retired in 1981. Specific examples of discrimination in education are even more horrendous as one examines the experiences of individual teachers in the district. When Dr. Joyce Jackson began her teaching career in 1952, the school district hired her as the only Black teacher in a predominately white south-central Minneapolis school. Despite her expertise lying elsewhere, like other Black teachers hired by the district in the 1950s, she was placed in a special education role. After hiring her, the school administration assigned every Black student to Jackson's classroom for the “educable mentally retarded.”⁵¹⁹

Minneapolis, like many other cities in the United States, faced issues of segregation in its schools. In the mid-twentieth century, efforts were made to address racial segregation and promote integration. Historically Black schools in Minneapolis, like in many other parts of the United States, were established during the era of segregation when racial segregation was prevalent in education. These schools were created to serve the African American community. One notable support for these schools and the African American children was the Phyllis Wheatley House, an African American settlement house and community center in Minneapolis. It played a significant role in providing education and social services to the Black community. The division resulting from segregation became evident through various manifestations, as demonstrated in the following school instances. These cases were specifically chosen to not only underscore the impact of Black population concentrations in shaping highly segregated schools, but more so the impact of the inadequate school integration plans of the 1960s and 1970s in

⁵¹⁹ Heilman, "Booker v. Special School District No. 1," 130.

Minnesota. The schools highlighted to elucidate these concepts include Central High School, North High School, Field Elementary School, and Bryant Junior High School.

Central High School

Central High School in Minneapolis holds the distinction of being the first public high school in the city. Its origins trace back to the 1860s when Union Elementary School expanded its curriculum to include high school-level education. In 1878, the Minneapolis Board of Education marked a significant milestone by inaugurating the first dedicated building for Central High School, which opened at 11th Street & 4th Avenue South. As the population of Minneapolis grew, the student body at Central outgrew the building, forcing the school to relocate in 1914 to 34th Street East and 4th Avenue South, near the Powderhorn neighborhood. It was one of many new high schools of its era, which also included East (1900), West (1907), North (1915), Edison (1922), and Roosevelt (1922).⁵²⁰ The school featured an innovative approach to education: “realistic” vocational training designed to help the students “get somewhere.” According to an article from the *Minneapolis Journal* in 1914, book learning at Central was supported by actual practice. Newspapers bragged that the curriculum was a success in keeping “many boys in school who would otherwise leave at the end of the seventh or eighth grades” because it gave them “a knowledge that their parents perceive to be of the highest practical advantage...manual training.”⁵²¹ Boys learned about carpentry, machine work, forge

⁵²⁰ “Central High, The First Public High School in Minneapolis,” *Hennepin History Museum*, Minneapolis, MN, September 2, 2020. <https://hennepinhistory.org/from-the-archives-central-high-the-first-public-high-school-in-minneapolis/>.

⁵²¹ “Extend Manual Training,” *The Minneapolis Tribune*, December 28, 1889, 4.

work, and other mechanical trades, while girls were offered courses on cookery, sewing, and housekeeping designed to make them “competent wives.”⁵²²

For much of its early history, Central was predominantly white, especially at its first location. As the school relocated to the vicinity of the Powderhorn neighborhood, it underwent a transformative shift in tandem with the increasing diversity of its surroundings. By 1956, *The St. Paul Recorder*, a Black-run newspaper, celebrated two Black senior students at Minneapolis Central, Earle F. Kyle Jr., one of two valedictorians, and Antoinette Hughes, an Honor Student.⁵²³ In the fall of 1960, Mary Micheau, a Black girl, and Kathy Smith, a white girl, were chosen as attendants to the Minneapolis Central High School Homecoming Day Queen.⁵²⁴ The following fall at Central, which had “a good sized Negro enrollment but where the majority of the students are white, a Negro student was named Homecoming Queen by the student body.”⁵²⁵ The Black-owned newspaper went on to say, “These manifestations of fairmindedness of college and high school students of the Twin Cities makes one proud of our area. Such demonstrations show the innate decency and fairness of the young people...The example set by these incidents are not lost on other areas of the nation.”⁵²⁶

⁵²² “‘Realistic’ Vocational Training Makes Competent Housewives of Schoolgirls,” *The Minneapolis Journal*, December 16, 1914.

⁵²³ “Earle Kyle Jr., Is Valedictorian at Mpls. Central Hi,” *St. Paul Recorder*, June 8, 1956, 1; “Honor Student at Mpls. Central,” *St. Paul Recorder*, June 8, 1956, 1.

⁵²⁴ “Lovely Attendants to the Homecoming Queen,” *St. Paul Recorder*, October 21, 1960, 1.

⁵²⁵ “Significance of Homecoming Kings & Queens,” *Minneapolis Spokesman*, October 27, 1961, 2.

⁵²⁶ *Ibid.*

Despite positive examples of integration at Central, conditions for Black students were far from perfect. In 1968, fights and racial disturbances at Central resulted in four arrests and one injury.⁵²⁷ Tensions spread to Bryant Junior High School, about three blocks from Central, where many Black students from Central gathered after the incident. The fights reportedly started from tension building between Black and white students, calling each other names and threatening each other. The school integration plan for Central and other schools in Minneapolis was often not agreed upon by both the school district and the Black community members. The Citizens League, made up of Black parents, leading Black intellectuals, and professionals, found that the integration plan proposed by the school district was lacking.⁵²⁸ The quality of education, not only the minority enrollment and racial balance, was an important question. The committee saw “a quality crisis in the low test scores and high dropout rates of children of color,” and “the schools-and-race challenge as not primarily to keep the racial mix right but equally to insist that schools serve their students of color as well as they serve whites.”⁵²⁹ The league wanted to try new methods. Their plan for desegregation was to take away barriers and that the way to enact change and ensure good schools and good education for all students stemmed from teachers willing to work hard and make a difference.

Central continued to serve the needs of Minneapolis students all the way into the 1980s before closing in 1982. The reasons for closure cited were the age of the building and the cost to remodel it, along with an insufficient population to support it. Eighteen other public schools in

⁵²⁷ “Disorder at Central High Leaves 1 Hurt, 4 Arrested,” *Star Tribune*, September 20, 1968.

⁵²⁸ “A many-hued debate on race and schools,” *Star Tribune*, December 10, 1988.

⁵²⁹ *Ibid.*

Minneapolis also closed that year. However, what is unique about the closure of Central was the construction of I-35W that began in 1959. The construction demolished over fifty square blocks and created divisions among Southside residents. Further changes occurred in the 1980s and the 2000s, as the neighborhood suffered from rising crime, severe economic conditions, and the crack cocaine epidemic. Yet, one of the main factors in the decline of the neighborhood can be attributed to the closing of the last local school, Central High School, in 1982, which destroyed the neighborhood's cohesiveness.

North High School

Another high school significant to the discussion of race and education is Minneapolis North High School, discussed at length in Chapter 1 of this paper. Minneapolis North High School was founded in 1888 as the first high school in North Minneapolis and opened its first building in 1896 at 17th Avenue North between Girard and Fremont Avenues. Prior to 1888, North Side residents in Minneapolis had to attend Central High School over twelve miles away if they wanted a high school education. In a column of the *Minneapolis Chronicle*, W. J. Abernathy advocated vigorously for the construction of a high school on the North Side. He suggested, "First, that a 12-room building be erected – not an elaborate and costly one like the present High School (Central) – but a substantial structure...Second, the building being erected, let such rooms as are needed be devoted strictly to high school work."⁵³⁰ A petition supported by many North residents was presented to the Board of Education and a school began on Emerson Avenue between Eighteenth and Nineteenth Avenues North. A few high school classes were offered

⁵³⁰ *A Great Tradition, 1888-2021*, North High School. Accessed January 19, 2024. <http://www.weststpaulantiques.com/northhighschool661.html>

beginning January 1, 1889, in a building known as the Logan School, which has since been razed.

Finally, after years of construction, the new North High opened its doors on September 29, 1896, to students in grades eight through twelve. Additions to the school were added in 1908 and 1910. North High had a fire on June 18, 1913, consuming most of the school, with only the northeast wing escaping serious damage. The source of the first is believed to have been traced to the “wood shop where sawdust was left in containers with oily rags. The blaze started early that day and continued into the afternoon before firemen finally got it under control... When the fire was finally extinguished, two firemen lay dead, and North had incurred such damage that it was clearly unusable.”⁵³¹ The school was reconstructed and finished in 1915, with North students attending the old Central High School building during the reconstruction. Interestingly, the “Street Railway ran special cars to take North pupils to the old Central building without transfer; however, they charged them the usual fare.”⁵³² Eventually, the school moved to a new location in 1972-1973 at Irving Avenue North between 14th and 16th Avenues (see Figure 4.7).

⁵³¹ Ibid.

⁵³² Ibid.

Figure 4.7 Remains of Minneapolis North High School



Source: Larry Schreiber, “Remains of Minneapolis North High School,” *Minneapolis Star*, March 7, 1974.

To review what was stated in Chapter 1, North High School is one of the thirty-six high schools in the Minneapolis Public School District. The school district has a total minority enrollment of ninety-seven percent, with sixty-seven percent of students facing economic disadvantages. Despite its state and national rankings being less than stellar, North Community Senior High School has updated its curriculum to include Advanced Placement courses and exams in U.S. history, physics, art, and design. In 2019, the school also unveiled a new athletic field and an impressive radio studio. However, the school's AP participation rate stands at only

thirty-one percent, with a zero percent passing rate on those exams.⁵³³ Minneapolis North has a longstanding history, spanning over 120 years and existing in various buildings located on the city's northside. While it was once predominantly attended by Jewish students, by 1982, both the school and the surrounding neighborhood had become predominantly African American.

Minneapolis North is surrounded by a community with a greater density of poverty compared to other areas in the city. Like many schools across the United States, North High School went through the challenges of desegregation and integration during the Civil Rights Era. This period marked significant changes in the racial composition of the student body, yet the school made headlines most recently with its massive new school integration plan in 2021 to overhaul and integrate its schools. In the history of school desegregation, the task of integrating predominately white schools has fallen on Black students. But as a result of the new plan, in Minneapolis, white students, some from well-to-do families, will carry the burden of integrating, a newer approach that a small group of urban districts across the country are embracing. The school integration plan included redrawing school zones, with about a third of students, 10,000 children of different races, assigned to new schools.

Field Elementary School

In the 1950s and 1970s, community leaders pushed to improve education in Minnesota for Black students, with desegregation efforts reaching a climax in 1970. Although St. Paul was the only school district that had legally enforced school segregation, other school districts in Minnesota were often just as segregated. The Minneapolis School Board's first efforts at

⁵³³ "North Community Senior High School," Education, U.S. News & World Report. Accessed April 22, 2023. <https://www.usnews.com/education/best-high-schools/minnesota/districts/minneapolis-public-school-district/north-community-senior-high-school-143753>.

desegregation consisted of closing a primarily Black grade school. Like most early plans, the idea was to “redistribute” Black students.⁵³⁴ By the mid-1970s, the district was in the middle of a major desegregation plan to redistribute buildings and classes. By the fall of 1973, the district had 58,833 students. Of these, 10,428 – seventeen point seventy-two percent - were minority students. The percentage of minority students in the schools varied from a low of one-half of one percent to a high of more than eighty-eight percent. In 1966, Warrington School at 37th Street and Clinton Avenue South, with a ninety-eight percent Black student enrollment, was closed. In 1967, the board adopted its first “human relations guidelines” and, under pressure from Black parents, began its urban transfer program, allowing voluntary transfers for racial balance. In 1970, the Minnesota Board of Education issued guidelines setting a thirty-percent minority limit for student enrollment in any school. In April of 1971, seventeen Minneapolis schools were found “unacceptable” by the state board. That fall, the district began its first school pairing, linking virtually all-white Hale School with heavily Black Field School.

Back in 1964, the Minneapolis School District added seven new classrooms to Field Elementary School in order to maintain Field as the identifiably 'Black school' in south central Minneapolis while keeping the schools adjacent to Field one hundred percent white. The following year, the district added another portable classroom at Field, even though two of the nearby "white" schools - Hale and Northrup - were under-enrolled.⁵³⁵ Minnehaha Creek and Parkway worked as a Mason-Dixon line or color line that separated the ‘whites only’ space of

⁵³⁴ “Here’s how desegregation has gone in Minneapolis,” *Minneapolis Tribune*, May 12, 1974, 19A.

⁵³⁵ Heilman, “Booker,” 129-130.

south Minneapolis from the creek to the city's Southern border. As shown in Figure 4.8, the city of Field, located north of the Parkway, contained few racial covenants, whereas the city of Hale, located south of the Parkway, was filled with them.

Figure 4.8 Map of Racial Covenants Near Minnehaha Parkway



Source: Mapping Prejudice, September 2023.

Field Elementary was the neighborhood elementary school for families generally residing South of 42nd Street, North of Minnehaha Creek, West of Cedar Avenue, and East of Nicollet Avenue, an area with few to no restrictive covenants. Upon completing sixth grade, most students attended Ramsey Junior High School (currently Ramsey Fine Arts School) and Washburn High School. It was not until 1971, through a tremendous effort by residents, both Black and white parents, that Field School was paired with Hale Elementary School. Field

became the upper campus containing grades four, five, and six, while Hale was the lower campus with grades kindergarten, first, second, and third. The pairing of the two schools was part of the district-wide effort to desegregate Minneapolis schools. In the years preceding the merger, the issue of school desegregation divided the city. Parents of students both supported and opposed the pairing, which was a cautious effort to address school segregation perpetuated by the racial boundaries created by widespread redlining practices in the Twin Cities.⁵³⁶ Field and Hale schools have remained partnered ever since, although today, students at Field and Hale are predominately white.

In April of 1972, the Minneapolis board adopted a desegregation plan, dealing largely with staff training and curriculum development. In May, a court case examined the failure of school districts to comply with integration laws. On May 24, 1972, U.S. District Judge Earl R. Larson held the Minneapolis school district in violation of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution in *Booker v. Special School District No. 1*. When Judge Larson rendered his decision, it was undisputed that the Minneapolis public schools were segregated by race. Three of the district's elementary schools - Hay, Bethune, and Willard - had minority enrollments exceeding seventy percent at a time when less than ten percent of the district's students were Black. Judge Larson found that the school district's actions had increased and fostered racial segregation.

⁵³⁶ Mara Klecker, "Museum exhibit examines 1971 desegregation effort in Minneapolis schools," *Star Tribune*, May 9, 2022.

Bryant Junior High School

In 1973, the Minneapolis School Board adopted a reorganization-decentralization plan incorporating desegregation. The purpose was to broaden the idea of neighborhoods, replace or eliminate obsolete buildings, and group students in buildings serving a narrow age range. Junior high schools were desegregated that fall. Bryant Junior High School, now the Sabathani Community Center, was a junior high many African American students attended. The school was named after William Cullen Bryant, an American poet and journalist. In 1898, a permanent building for the school was built at East 37th Street between 3rd and Clinton Avenues South. An addition to the school was later added in 1903. Located in the Powderhorn neighborhood, the school became a natural feeder school for Central High School, also located in the neighborhood. Located in the Southside of Minneapolis, the proximity of the school to family homes may have allowed parents to be more involved. But that did not curb the Black-white divide.

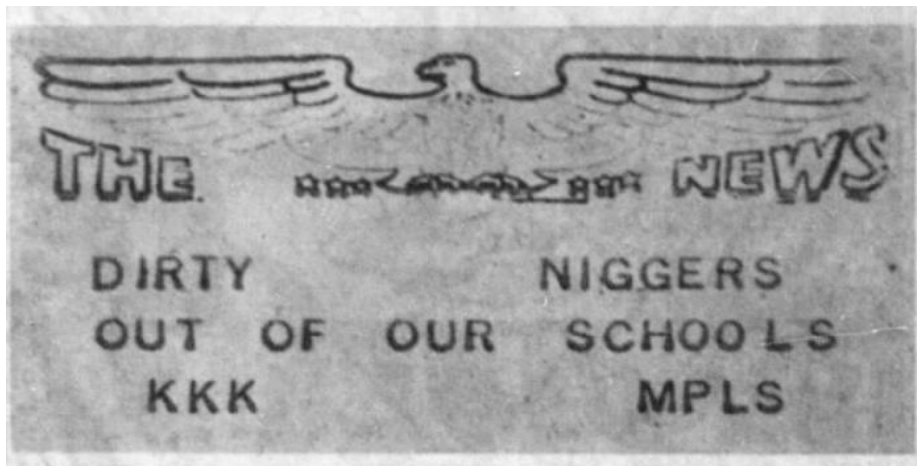
Polletta McDavid lived all her life on the near Southside of Minneapolis. When she was young, many of her playmates were white, but when she was sixteen and attending Central High School, she spent most of her time with Black friends. Despite the fact that Central was sixty-three percent white when she attended in 1973, a lot of students at Central spent most of their time with people of their own race.⁵³⁷ McDavid recalled that her playmates changed when her family moved from the old Adams School area, where she was the only Black student in her class, into the old Warrington and Bancroft areas, where there were more Black families. She recalls, “It came down to ‘Black power’ and stuff like that and Black and whites fighting.”⁵³⁸

⁵³⁷ “Black, white students’ racial-mixing experiences differ,” *Star Tribune*, February 11, 1973.

⁵³⁸ *Ibid.*

McDavid attended Bryant Junior High School in seventh grade and said of her experience, “As the Black power started moving down further - you know - it was getting greater...the Black people tended to hate the whites more and more. It built up, and there were riots at Bryant. If something happened at Central, it happened at Bryant.”⁵³⁹ There were at times horrible and terrifying threats of violence. Distributed at Bryant Junior High School in September of 1958, a “hate-missile” from the KKK of Minneapolis called for the removal of Black students from the city public schools (see Figure 4.9). Superintendent Rufus Putnam alerted the police department and school authorities to keep a sharp lookout for cars and people seen loitering suspiciously in the vicinity of Minneapolis schools, but such intolerable material should never have been created, let alone distributed at a junior high school.

Figure 4.9 Prankster of “Faubusite”?⁵⁴⁰



Source: “Prankster of ‘Faubusite’?,” *St. Paul Recorder*, September 12, 1958.

⁵³⁹ “Black, white students’ racial-mixing experiences differ,” *Star Tribune*, February 11, 1973.

⁵⁴⁰ The term “Faubusite” is likely a reference to Orval Faibus, who was the Governor of Arkansas and became known for his opposition to the desegregation of schools during the Civil Rights Movement in the United States. Faibus gained national attention in 1957 when he resisted the integration of Little Rock Central High School, leading to a confrontation with federal authorities. The term “Faubusite” may be used to describe someone who supports or follows the segregationist views and policies associated with Orval Faibus.

Desegregation in the 1970s brought about intense discussion as the Minneapolis School Board designed a plan to create racial balance in the city's schools. In the fall of 1973, full-scale desegregation saw school buses carrying students to eight of the city's fifteen junior high schools. Most often, Black students were bussed out of their neighborhoods and into predominantly white schools to increase minority enrollment there. Both Bryant and Ramsey Junior High Schools in south Minneapolis were affected by the program.⁵⁴¹ Additionally, Lincoln Junior High School was closed, a predominantly Black school located in North Minneapolis. The following year, the plan was designed to extend to elementary schools as well, but integration started and was felt most at Minneapolis junior high schools.⁵⁴²

In the fall of 1974, elementary schools were desegregated as well, under Judge Larson's order. Construction of a new Webster School was planned, which would combine Hall Elementary School and Bethune Elementary School, a school with heavy minority enrollment while phasing out elementary classes from Sheridan School and closing Prescott School.⁵⁴³ However, by this time, the building program was not complete. The district planned to delay that until the fall of 1975, but Judge Larson ruled in April of 1974 that it must desegregate by the given deadline of 1974. The district anticipated having its desegregation program complete in 1975.

The decision in the *Booker* case and the efforts of desegregation had a significant effect on the students, teachers, administrators, and parents associated with the Minneapolis Public

⁵⁴¹ "School desegregation begins," *Star Tribune*, September 6, 1973.

⁵⁴² Joe Blade, "Integration felt most at city's junior highs," *The Minneapolis Star*, September 5, 1973, 8A.

⁵⁴³ "14 meetings set on desegregation," *Star Tribune*, March 28, 1972.

Schools, particularly as highlighted in schools such as Central High School, North High School, Field Elementary, and Bryant Junior High. Similar to many other school desegregation cases, the *Booker* lawsuit sparked intense controversy. The court-mandated solution of affirmative action, which involved the transportation of children through school buses, faced opposition from numerous parents and emerged as a critical topic in school board elections. Additionally, most often, Black students were the ones bussed out of Black neighborhoods to integrate into mostly white schools. Issues of desegregation and integration continued to play a prominent role in educational policy in the coming decades. In facing the challenges of understanding the vital history of the issue and the connections between neighborhood and school segregation, an admonition from Judge Larson in the *Booker* case resonates: "I should remind the School Board and School officials that whether or not this Court retains jurisdiction, they still have an obligation to respect the Constitution of the United States, which requires equal protection of the law for all of our citizens regardless of race...This is not an effort to assess blame; it is an effort to vindicate plaintiffs' rights. Blame for segregation rests firmly on the shoulders of all of us."⁵⁴⁴ The court would monitor a desegregation plan for the Minneapolis Public School District until 1983, when the Minnesota Department of Education assumed the duty of monitoring Minneapolis Public Schools' efforts to desegregate.

⁵⁴⁴ Heilman, "Booker v. Special School District No. 1," 14.

Chapter 5

Duluth, Minnesota: Zenith City

The city of Duluth, Minnesota's long, thin development along Lake Superior, forms a clear demarcation. To the west lies the historic working-class districts, once bustling with factories and a steel mill. In contrast, the eastern side is predominantly residential, boasting highly affluent areas, such as the opulent mansions adorning the shores of Lake Superior along London Road. Nestled between these two regions is the downtown area, with the Central Hillside neighborhood perched just above. In past years, the city has been home to three high schools: one in the east, one in the west, and one centrally located. That all changed with the closing of Duluth Central High School in 2011. Left behind was East High School, wealthy, highly ranked, with a high graduation rate, and white and Denfeld High School in the west, with a high percentage of students economically disadvantaged, a lower graduation rate, poorly ranked in the local area, and the state, and with a much higher minority enrollment percentage. What the closing of Duluth Central High School revealed was the troubling legacy of redlining and racial prejudice, exemplified by the stark disparity between East High School's affluence and academic success and Denfeld High School's struggle with economic inequality, lower academic performance, and higher minority enrollment—a poignant reminder of the enduring impact of historical injustices on educational opportunities.

Through archival research and critical analysis, this chapter proves that the barriers marginalized communities faced can be explained by Duluth's intertwined histories of segregation, education, and urban development. Chapters three and four uncovered the history of segregation in housing and its impact on education, along with the impact of freeways and school integration plans in the large, metropolitan cities of St. Paul and Minneapolis. Chapter five, in

contrast, focuses on Minnesota's historically third-largest city of Duluth and its unique geography and history of segregation and its impact. It reveals the extent of racism and redlining in what started as a small industrial town in the far reaches of the Upper Midwest, a region often overlooked because the history of racism in the South and large metropolitan areas of the North looms so large. Despite differences in geography and scale, all three chapters illuminate the enduring legacy of segregation in Minnesota's cities and schools.

Duluth's history reflects entrenched divisions and enduring disparities rooted in the impact of housing and school segregation. The closure of Duluth Central High School in 2011 illustrated the impact of redlining and racial prejudice, revealing apparent disparities between affluent, predominantly white schools in the East and disadvantaged, higher minority enrollment schools in the West. The construction of I-35 further demonstrated these inequalities, dividing the city along racial and socioeconomic lines. The highway sliced through the poorer, disadvantaged half of the city while sparing the wealthier, whiter neighborhoods with the resources to fight its disruptive effects. This juxtaposition underscores the intersectionality of race, class, and urban development in shaping the trajectory of Duluth's communities and schools.

Segregating Duluth Before World War II

Duluth, Minneapolis, and St. Paul are all significant cities in the state of Minnesota, each with its own unique history and development. Duluth developed alongside, yet in its own unique way, Minneapolis and St. Paul. Where the Twin Cities - Minneapolis and St. Paul - were established along the Mississippi River, and their early growth was fueled by water-powered milling and industry, the first European settlers to Duluth were attracted by the region's natural resources and its location along Lake Superior. Minneapolis developed as a milling and

lumbering center due to its proximity to the falls of the Mississippi River, which provided waterpower for mills. It later diversified its economy with industries such as flour milling, manufacturing, and commerce. St. Paul also had a strong connection to the river trade and early transportation routes. It became a hub for transportation and commerce, serving as a landing point for steamboats and later as a railroad center. Duluth's early economy, in contrast, was centered around shipping and extracting natural resources. The city became a major port on Lake Superior, exporting iron ore, timber, and other goods.

The evolving demographic landscape of Minnesota's key cities, evident from the 1860 census data, underscores the remarkable transformation of St. Paul, Minneapolis, and Duluth into bustling urban hubs, each playing distinct yet significant roles in the economic and social fabric of the state. In the 1860 census, St. Paul boasted a total population of 20,030. It was the seventy-third largest city in the United States, the only city in Minnesota listed in the top one hundred largest cities. Minneapolis was the second largest city in 1860, with a population of 13,006. Duluth was the eleventh largest city, with a meager population of 3,131.⁵⁴⁵ Yet, business and investment in Duluth began to thrive. The Twin Cities grew and diversified economically. They became major cultural, commercial, and industrial centers with thriving urban environments. The arrival of railroads in the late nineteenth century further boosted Duluth's economic importance, connecting it to other parts of the country and facilitating the transportation of goods. By 1900, Minneapolis had moved to Minnesota's number one largest city, with a population of 202,718 and an annual growth rate of two point one percent, St. Paul was number two with a population of 163,065 and an annual growth rate of two percent, and Duluth became Minnesota's third

⁵⁴⁵ *Table XXV of the Ninth Census of the United States*, U.S. Census Bureau, 1860.

largest city, with a population of 52,969, but a four point eight percent annual growth rate.⁵⁴⁶

Duluth would retain its reputation as Minnesota's third largest city for much of the twentieth century, having a significant impact on the state's economy, politics, and development despite its location 150 miles north of the Twin Cities.

In 2024, Duluth remained Minnesota's fifth largest city, with Minneapolis claiming the privilege of the largest city, followed by St. Paul. The Twin Cities have consistently grown in population and economic significance, becoming major metropolitan areas. While Duluth experienced growth, it did not reach the population levels of Minneapolis and St. Paul. The cyclical nature of industries like mining and shipping has influenced its economy and population. While Duluth, Minneapolis, and St. Paul all played crucial roles in the economic development of Minnesota, they evolved differently based on their geographical locations, economic activities, and transportation networks. Duluth, with its focus on shipping and natural resources, developed in a distinctive manner compared to the more diversified economies of Minneapolis and St. Paul. Yet what the three major cities in Minnesota's history have in common is the discriminatory practice of redlining in their neighborhoods. While overt redlining was officially outlawed, its legacy persisted, particularly its impact on education.

Duluth, Minnesota, is a port city on the shores of Lake Superior. Duluth, the largest metropolitan area and the largest U.S. city on a lake, is located at the westernmost point of the Great Lakes. It is connected to the Atlantic Ocean through the Great Lakes Waterway and St. Lawrence Seaway, and the Port of Duluth holds the distinction of being the world's farthest inland port accessible to oceangoing ships. The Anishinaabe, Ojibwe, and Dakota tribes were the

⁵⁴⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, *Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900*, 1900.
<https://www.census.gov/library/publications/1901/dec/vol-001.html>

first known inhabitants of the Western Lake Superior region, and it was not until the 1650s or 1660s that the first Europeans explored the area. Contact between Europeans and Native tribes revolved around the fur trade. The city, named "Duluth" in 1856, pays homage to Frenchman Daniel Greysolon, Sieur du Lhut, who arrived in 1679 to establish fur trade routes and is widely regarded as the area's first known European explorer.

George Bonga, recorded as the first Black person to reside in what would become the state of Minnesota, was born in present-day Duluth or its vicinity. His father, Pierre Bonga, worked as an African American fur trader, and his mother, Monique, belonged to the Ojibwe (Chippewa) tribe. George worked as a fur trader, guide, and translator. George's grandfather, Jean Bonga, came to the North with a British officer after the American Revolution and gained freedom upon the officer's death. Jean founded a family, participated in the fur trade, and transmitted his legacy to his sons and grandsons.

Despite a challenging beginning marked by an 1857 economic crash and a scarlet fever epidemic in 1859, Duluth thrived with the discovery of valuable resources, initially copper and later iron ore and lumber. Financiers, entrepreneurs, and investors quickly took advantage of the abundance of valuable resources like iron and timber. The city's fortunes were further boosted by financier Jay Cooke, who convinced the Lake Superior & Mississippi Railroad to choose Duluth as its northern terminus. This strategic decision, coupled with the city's port, facilitated efficient transportation and quickly made Duluth a nationally important center for shipping and manufacturing. Duluth was also the only port with access to both the Atlantic and Pacific oceans.

By 1868, Duluth experienced a booming economy, with the lumber, railroad, and mining industries flourishing to the extent that the influx of workers could barely meet the demand. The founder of Duluth's first newspaper, Dr. Thomas Preston Foster, coined the expression "The

Zenith City of the Unsalted Seas." The nickname and eventual city motto highlighted Duluth's geographical location on the western tip of Lake Superior, the largest of the Great Lakes and freshwater, hence the "unsalted seas." "Zenith City" suggested a peak or high point, emphasizing Duluth's significance and prominence in the region. The nickname was a poetic and descriptive way of expressing the city's location and importance within the context of the Great Lakes. In 1869, Duluth was the fastest-growing city in the country and was expected to surpass Chicago.⁵⁴⁷ Duluth's population at the start of 1869 consisted of only fourteen families and predominantly male workers; by the middle of that year, over 3,500 people had settled in the area.

In 1871, a canal was excavated in Duluth to facilitate easy access for ships entering the harbor. During the 1900s, Duluth's port surpassed New York City's annual tonnage handling. The canal created a separation between Minnesota Point (Park Point) and the city, leading to the original mode of access to Park Point being a ferry. The Aerial Ferry Bridge was constructed in 1904 and 1905, providing a unique transportation method. Passengers and vehicles were transported across via a robust gondola, making this bridge distinct and sharing similarities with only one other bridge in Rouen, France. In 1929 and 1930, a 386-foot-long suspension lift, now used by cars, was added to the Aerial Lift Bridge. Rising 138 feet in just fifty-five seconds, it is the world's largest and fastest lift bridge.

In 1873, Jay Cooke's empire collapsed, triggering a stock market crash that nearly erased Duluth from the map. However, by the late 1870s, Duluth experienced a resurgence fueled by the ongoing prosperity in lumber and mining, coupled with the completion of railroads. As the twentieth century approached, the city experienced another period of prosperity. Between 1900

⁵⁴⁷ Richard Hudelson and Carl Ross, *By the Ore Docks: A Working People's History of Duluth* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 2.

and 1920, Duluth's population nearly doubled, reaching 100,000 residents.⁵⁴⁸ It evolved into a flourishing community with active small-business loans, robust commerce, and a bustling trade scene. Mining operations persisted in the Mesabi Range, and the shipment of iron to mills in Ohio continued as a vital trade well into the twentieth century. Over time, Duluth nurtured an economy dominated by steel, along with mining and shipping. Still, the single largest employer in the city was Minnesota Steel, owned by the US Steel Corporation, along with its two subsidiaries, the Oliver Mining Company, and the Pittsburgh Steamship Company.

The city was also highly diverse, particularly for an area like northern Minnesota. Thirty percent of Duluth's population were foreign-born. Large numbers of Scandinavians, Poles, Italians, Finns, Slavs, Germans, Russians, and other Europeans migrated to Duluth, seeking employment in factories, shipyards, and railroads. West Duluth, a working-class neighborhood, became home to many of these immigrants. Duluth's Black community in 1920 numbered only 495,⁵⁴⁹ but this was still significantly higher than other similar cities outside of Minneapolis and St. Paul, such as Austin, Minnesota, in the southern part of the state. While the number of African Americans numbered 3,376 in St. Paul and 3,927 in Minneapolis by 1920, the size of the Black population in Duluth was significantly more prominent than in places like Austin, a similarly industrial town, where there were only a dozen African Americans in a total population

⁵⁴⁸ US Bureau of the Census, *Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900*. Volume 1. (Washington, D.C., 1901), 457; US Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920*. Volume III (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1922), 508.

⁵⁴⁹ US Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920*. Volume III (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1922), 508.

of more than 12,000 in 1920.⁵⁵⁰ Tellingly for the city, however, “there was only one Black dentist (who eventually left), a couple of Black lawyers (who worked out of their homes), and one Black police officer. And compounding all of this, most downtown restaurants would not serve African Americans...while movie theaters restricted Blacks to seats in the first rows or up in the balcony.”⁵⁵¹

At least a quarter of the city’s African American population had come to Duluth to work at the steel plant before and after World War I, encouraged by recruiters who scoured the South, promising good jobs to all. Little did these newcomers realize at the time that the company had an ulterior motive in recruiting them. One of the driving forces behind their recruitment was to quell calls for higher wages and impede any efforts to form a union. The company owners operated under the assumption that Black workers would be more willing to accept lower pay and less inclined to engage in organizing efforts.⁵⁵²

Against a backdrop of economic exploitation, a tragic event unfolded on June 15, 1920, casting a dark shadow over Duluth's history. False accusations led to the arrest of six young Black men accused of raping a white woman. That evening, a mob forcibly removed three of them—Elias Clayton, Elmer Jackson, and Isaac McGhie—from the Duluth city jail and lynched them. Following this horrendous incident, the Minnesota National Guard arrived the next day to secure Duluth and protect the three surviving Black prisoners. Although the city's streets were calm afterward, not everyone felt safe. Black residents remained indoors, locking their doors,

⁵⁵⁰ Chad Montrie, ““In That Very Northern City,”” *Minnesota History* 67, no. 2 (2020): 73.

⁵⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵² *Ibid.*

fearful of further violence.⁵⁵³ Throughout the nation, the lynchings made headlines in newspapers, and many were shocked that such an atrocity had occurred in Minnesota, a northern state. The *Chicago Evening Post* wrote of the event, “This is a crime of a Northern state, as Black and ugly as any that has brought the South in disrepute. The Duluth authorities stand condemned in the eyes of the nation.”⁵⁵⁴ An article in the *Minneapolis Journal* accused the lynch mob of putting “an effaceable stain on the name of Minnesota,” stating, “The sudden flaming up of racial passion, which is the reproach of the South, may also occur, as we now learn in the bitterness of humiliation in Minnesota.”⁵⁵⁵

The outrage extended to many white and Black residents of Duluth. Prominent Black citizen Milton W. Judy, a dentist, expressed deep shame, declaring, “Duluth has suffered a horrible disgrace, a blot on its name that it can never outlive.” Reverend William M. Majors of St. Marks A.M.E., a pivotal institution in the city's Black community, joined other clergy in condemning the lynchings, demanding severe punishment for the mob members. *The Duluth Ripsaw* echoed these sentiments, vehemently denouncing the lynchings and calling for a “thorough house-cleaning” and “elimination of every yellow member” of the police department who failed to protect the Black men from the mob. The lynchings left many Black residents enraged and horrified, prompting some to leave Duluth. Between 1920 and 1930, while Duluth's overall population increased by 2,000 people, the Black population decreased by sixteen percent.

⁵⁵³ “Duluth Lynchings,” Minnesota Historical Society, Accessed July 28, 2023. <https://www.mnhs.org/duluthlynchings/lynchings>.

⁵⁵⁴ Chicago Evening Post quoted in “Minnesota’s Disgrace,” *The Appeal* (St. Paul, Minnesota), June 19, 1920, p 2.

⁵⁵⁵ “The Duluth Disgrace,” *Minneapolis Journal*, June 17, 1920, p. 18.

Some relocated to the Twin Cities, while others sought refuge in more distant locales, such as California.

Black residents who stayed in Duluth established a local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. The formation of the Duluth Branch of the NAACP took place in September of that year and boasted an initial membership of sixty-nine individuals. Their inaugural speaker was Dr. W.E.B. Du Bois, who addressed a sizable audience in Duluth on March 21, 1921. The lynching served as a catalyst for Minnesota's African American community to advocate for a state law against such atrocities. Nellie Francis, a prominent activist of African heritage from St. Paul, spearheaded the initiative. Passed on January 20, 1921, and enacted on April 21, 1921, the Minnesota Anti-Lynching Bill authorized the dismissal of law enforcement officers who failed to safeguard individuals in their custody from mob violence. Furthermore, the law mandated compensation for the families of lynching victims.⁵⁵⁶ The passage of this legislation marked a significant triumph for Minnesota's African American community.⁵⁵⁷

Although the lynching motivated Black and white residents of Duluth to organize a branch of the NAACP and provoked the state legislature to pass an antilynching law, it also led to the founding of one of the largest Ku Klux Klan Klaverns in the state and caused a hardening of the color line. In the face of these worsening circumstances, compounded by job losses during the Great Depression, African Americans chose to leave the area. This migration led to a significant decline in their population, dropping from 416 individuals in 1930 (among 101,000

⁵⁵⁶ House File 325, 42nd Minnesota Legislature, 1921, 'An Act Relating to the Crime of Lynching; Providing a Penalty Therefor,' Minnesota State Archives.

⁵⁵⁷ "Duluth Lynchings," Minnesota Historical Society, Accessed July 28, 2023. <https://www.mnhs.org/duluthlynchings/lynchings>.

residents) to 314 a decade later, despite the overall population remaining relatively stable. Those who stayed behind faced exclusion from residing in most parts of the city and were restricted to only a few menial occupations.⁵⁵⁸

Duluth, like many parts of the country, faced widespread housing discrimination, especially in the early to mid-twentieth century. Practices like redlining, where services or loans were denied based on race or ethnicity, were common. African Americans and other minority groups often found themselves restricted to specific neighborhoods due to explicit segregation or discriminatory actions by real estate agents and lenders. This resulted in limited access to improved housing and economic opportunities for these communities. Black people received fewer than one percent of all mortgages approved in the U.S. between 1930 and 1960. And when it came to financing through the Federal Housing Administration, ninety-eight percent of all the loans made between 1934 and 1962 went to white homebuyers.⁵⁵⁹

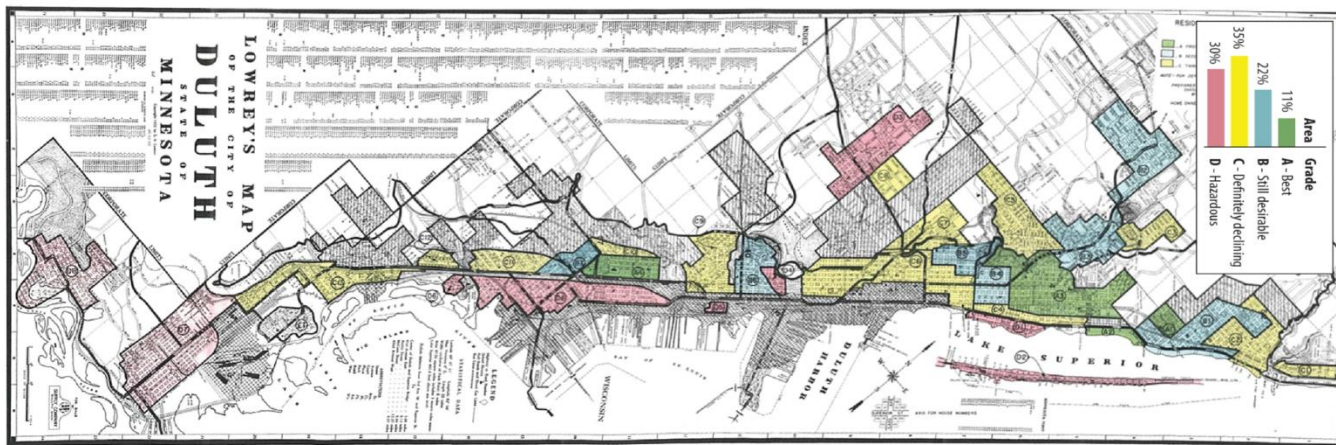
A 1936 map of the city put together by the Homeowners Loan Corporation evaluated Duluth's neighborhoods. It sorted them into four color-coded categories, using a consistent letter grade and color scheme for residential areas. "A," "First Grade," or "Best" areas were colored green. The HOLC described A areas as "hot spots," where reputable mortgage lenders with ample funds were ready to provide maximum loans, possibly up to seventy-five to eighty percent of the appraisal. "B," "Second Grade," or "Still Desirable" areas were colored blue. The HOLC described B areas as "still good" but not as "hot" as A areas. These were neighborhoods where reputable mortgage lenders may tend to keep commitments slightly lower, typically around

⁵⁵⁸ US Census Manuscripts 1920, 1930, and 1940.

⁵⁵⁹ Peter Passi, "Legacy of redlining lingers in Duluth: Lending policies led to housing inequities that persist," *Duluth News Tribune*, February 9, 2022.

sixty-five percent of the appraisal, or ten to fifteen percent under the limit. "C," "Third Grade," or "Definitely Declining" areas were colored yellow. According to the HOLC, C neighborhoods were marked by "obsolescence [and] infiltration of lower grade population." In these Third grade or C areas, reputable mortgage lenders adopted a more conservative approach and kept commitments below the lending ratio for the A and B areas. "D," "Fourth Grade," or "Hazardous" areas were colored red. The HOLC described D areas as "characterized by detrimental influences in a pronounced degree, undesirable population or an infiltration of it." They recommended lenders "refuse to make loans in these areas [or] only on a conservative basis." (See Figure 5.1). Grade D areas shaded in red are now commonly referred to as "redlined areas."⁵⁶⁰

Figure 5.1 Lowrey's Map of the City of Duluth, State of Minnesota, 1936



Source: Robert K. Nelson, LaDale Winling, et al., "Mapping Inequality: Redlining in New Deal America," edited by Robert K. Nelson and Edward L. Ayers, *American Panorama: An Atlas of United States History*, 2023. <https://s3.amazonaws.com/holc/tiles/MN/Duluth/1936/holc-scan.jpg>.

⁵⁶⁰ Robert K. Nelson, LaDale Winling, et al., "Mapping Inequality: Redlining in New Deal America," edited by Robert K. Nelson and Edward L. Ayers, *American Panorama: An Atlas of United States History*, 2023. <https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining>.

HOLC's field agents and real estate professionals maintained that the presence of African Americans, immigrants, and to a lesser extent, working-class whites, undermined home values and mortgage security. They adhered to the guidelines established by Frederick Babcock, a key figure in early twentieth-century real estate appraisal standards, who espoused this belief in his *Underwriting Manual*, when he stated, "The infiltration of inharmonious racial groups tend to lower the levels of land values and to lessen the desirability of residential areas."⁵⁶¹ These grades served as a mechanism for redlining, creating obstacles that made it challenging or even impossible for individuals in specific regions to secure mortgage financing and achieve homeownership. While a significant number of areas designated as "hazardous," indicated by the color red on City Survey maps, were predominantly white, they disproportionately impacted neighborhoods with diverse ethnic backgrounds. However, the severe consequences of redlining were most profoundly felt in communities of color. African American neighborhoods, in particular, were consistently labeled as "hazardous," irrespective of the income or social class of their residents. Even the mere presence of a few families of color often led to the implementation of redlining practices.

In the city of Duluth, building around the shores of Lake Superior, geography played a vital role in the city's development. Duluth expanded outward along the ridge and lakeshore, diverging from the typical concentric ring development pattern. Growth occurred sporadically, with development emerging in various areas where the terrain permitted. Duluth, like many other cities in the United States, has a complex history of racism and discrimination in housing. As the

⁵⁶¹ Frederick Babcock, *Underwriting Manual*, Title II, Section 203, National Housing Act (1936).

city grew, alongside racism and redlining practices, segregation in housing and neighborhoods became more prominent. For instance, many African Americans came to Duluth to work at the steel plant. Minnesota Steel built company housing in what became known as Morgan Park in 1915, advertising the new neighborhood to the African Americans they recruited in the South. Publicly, company officials declared that there would be “no race segregation” there.⁵⁶² In reality, stark racial and ethnic segregation occurred, including the complete absence of African Americans in Morgan Park, even though more than 100 resided in Gary in 1920.⁵⁶³ Gary was the adjacent “shantytown” to Morgan Park that developed because Blacks were excluded from living in the company housing. On the HOLC 1936 map, the area is labeled with the following information, “This is Morgan Park, a residential section, built by the United States Steel Corporation for its better class of employees, most of whom considered the section undesirable from a residential standpoint. Construction is entirely concrete blocks. The Steel Company owns all houses therein - hence no classification.”⁵⁶⁴ Important to the area’s designation is that the Park was built for the company’s “better class of employees.” At the time, this statement meant that it was exclusively white.

The Morgan Park adjacent neighborhood of Gary-New Duluth became racially diverse as many African Americans settled in neighborhoods within walking distance to their jobs in the

⁵⁶² Montrie, ““In That Very Northern City,”” 72.

⁵⁶³ Duluth Budgeteer, “Morgan Park: The little 'industrial suburb' that could,” *Duluth News Tribune*, April 12, 2007.

⁵⁶⁴ Nelson, Winling, et al., "Mapping Inequality," 2023.
https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/map/MN/Duluth/area_descriptions/E1#loc=13/46.6874/-92.1834.

lumber mills, grain elevators, and factories that sprouted up along the St. Louis River southwest of downtown. On the HOLC 1936 map, this area was labeled, stating, “This is New Duluth and Gary. Purely a real estate development which gained impetus from the adjoining steel plants. New Duluth is at least fifty years old, and Gary is from twenty to twenty-five years old. The district is occupied largely by foreigners and some negroes. Despite the class of security and occupants, there exists a high regard for home ownership among most of the foreigners in this area.”⁵⁶⁵ Over time, realtors directed more and more Black homebuyers to the Gary area, where other African Americans already owned homes.

The other significant area labeled in red was a heavily built-up area along the waterfront on the western side of the city. While the area was not a neighborhood with its own name, it was labeled on the 1936 HOLC map with the following information, “the southern portion is rather heavily built up. The entire area, between railroads and industrial plants along the waterfront, is occupied by laborers from these industrial enterprises. Most of the houses are nearly fifty years in age. Foreigners and negroes predominate in this section.”⁵⁶⁶ Workers from nearby plants often occupied homes in this area. However, these homes were not desirable because of the heavy industry in the area. The western half of the city, particularly along the waterfront, became heavily populated by industry, industrial workers, and laborers, many of whom were immigrants - “foreigners” - or African Americans.

⁵⁶⁵ Nelson, Winling, et al., "Mapping Inequality," 2023.
https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/map/MN/Duluth/area_descriptions/D7#loc=13/46.6732/-92.2074.

⁵⁶⁶ Nelson, Winling, et al., "Mapping Inequality," 2023.
https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/map/MN/Duluth/area_descriptions/D6#loc=12/46.733/-92.1252.

Where the wealthier occupants of Duluth could afford to move away from all of the factories and industry, they settled in areas that developed into charming, valuable, highly sought-after neighborhoods. Since the early factories were powered by coal, Black smoke often billowed into the air, polluting the surrounding area. Increasingly, the city's wealthier residents migrated east, away from the pollution, building large homes and imposing mansions overlooking Lake Superior. Duluth's northeast area, just off the waterfront, became home to the city's wealthier white population. The 1936 HOLC map describes the area as the best residential section in Duluth, "having the favorable influence of Congdon Park, which divides it; the golf club and the lake. It is not too far removed from the business district...The age of the construction is from new up to thirty years, but the older properties are well preserved. There has been some new development in this area. Sales in this area, both in number and value, have been far ahead of any other district in the city. Houses in this area are almost entirely owner occupied."⁵⁶⁷ Even more valuable, a narrow strip farther northeast on the shore of Lake Superior contained three large estates, among the most expensive in Duluth. The map describes the area as having "a few homes of the better class, with prospects of additional development in the near future. The location of these homes on the lake shore is a particularly favorable influence."⁵⁶⁸

Additionally, another area, occupied by business and professional people, was situated in the northeast section of the city with "a favorable influence of a golf course and the nearby Lake

⁵⁶⁷ Nelson, Winling, et al., "Mapping Inequality," 2023.
https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/map/MN/Duluth/area_descriptions/A3#loc=12/46.7869/-92.0702.

⁵⁶⁸ Nelson, Winling, et al., "Mapping Inequality," 2023.
https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/map/MN/Duluth/area_descriptions/A2#loc=12/46.7869/-92.0702.

Superior...The area is well preserved with all modern improvements and public utilities. Values in this area have held up as well as in any other section of the city and give promise of an early comeback, as well as appreciation in amount equal to any other portion of the city.”⁵⁶⁹ While there was one area in the western section of Duluth considered the best residential section, occupied almost entirely by the industrial working class, “considered a very choice lending territory, due not only to the type of security, but the integrity displayed, generally, by the class of people living therein,”⁵⁷⁰ the city became divided along an east-west line.

The East-West Divide in Duluth

Two contrasting areas developed within the city. One was characterized by business and professional occupants in the northeast, boasting amenities like a golf course and Lake Superior, with sustained property values and promising prospects for future appreciation. This eastern side, due to racial segregation and redlining, became exclusively white. A complicated combination of violence, frequent intimidation, deceptive practices by realtors, and other extralegal means was employed to uphold a color line, keeping African Americans on the western side of the city. African Americans became clustered in the Gary-New Duluth area, Central Hillside, and Downtown areas, barred from the surrounding white areas. The West side of Duluth came to be characterized as the working class, racially diverse part of the city above the St. Louis River. In contrast, the East side came to be the city’s whiter, more prosperous end, overlooking Lake

⁵⁶⁹ Nelson, Winling, et al., "Mapping Inequality," 2023.
https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/map/MN/Duluth/area_descriptions/A1#loc=12/46.7869/-92.0702.

⁵⁷⁰ Nelson, Winling, et al., "Mapping Inequality," 2023.
https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/map/MN/Duluth/area_descriptions/A4#loc=12/46.7869/-92.0702.

Superior. The ring around downtown, where significant early construction happened, remained one of the poorest areas of the city. From there, the east side followed a fairly steady transition up the income ladder, moving east into Congdon. 14th Avenue East was considered a cutoff point for people of color.

As demonstrated in both the cities of St. Paul and Minneapolis, the impact of freeway construction in the 1950s and 1960s had severely negative impacts on the predominantly minority communities that city planners chose to build the roads through. The highway program coincided with the urban renewal initiatives of its time. These initiatives sought to eliminate housing and businesses considered inferior, replacing them with modern developments and convenient routes for the increasing number of residents moving out to the suburbs. However, these new suburban communities were predominantly white due to discriminatory real estate practices and exclusive access to low-interest loans. Meanwhile, highway construction often targeted Black neighborhoods, justifying it by claiming lower land prices, which, in turn, were influenced by government policies like mortgage redlining that discouraged investment in Black areas. In Duluth, the impact of freeways is most clearly seen in the construction of Interstate 35.

I-35, which stretches from Duluth, Minnesota, all the way south to Laredo, Texas, has had a significant impact on Duluth since its construction. The highway was built primarily to improve transportation infrastructure, enhance connectivity between regions, and facilitate economic development. While the freeway enhanced Duluth's connectivity with other parts of Minnesota and neighboring states and provided a faster and more efficient route for travelers and goods moving through the region, it also posed challenges. The construction had a negative impact on minority communities on the west side of the city, amplified the east-west divide, and exacerbated existing social, economic, and environmental inequalities in the city.

The highway was authorized in 1956 and the first segment opened in 1958, eventually extending from Duluth through the Twin Cities, Faribault and Owatonna to Albert Lea and into Iowa, continuing southward to the Gulf of Mexico; the highway reached Duluth in 1971.⁵⁷¹ As construction plans were drawn in the 1960s and maps laid out for the path of the highway, the interstate was intended only to run far enough into Duluth to make the connection with Superior, Wisconsin via the newly constructed Blatnik Bridge. This route was initially intended to end in Lincoln Park, on the west side of the city. Between 1967 and 1973, the interstate was built from Boundary Avenue down through Duluth's western neighborhoods and into downtown.⁵⁷² The original plan for the freeway was to slice through downtown Duluth and proceed along a substantial elevated concrete barrier by the shores of Lake Superior until it reached 10th Avenue East. However, witnessing the devastation inflicted on Duluth's west side, the east side citizens, more affluent, prominent members of society with numerous resources, and also predominantly white, formed a committee to stop construction into the east side. The Citizens for Integration of Highway and Environment was formed in the early 1970s and organized around finding an alternate route for the freeway.⁵⁷³ The committee was successful: the “freeway ends abruptly at 26th Avenue East where traffic merges into the 2-lane London Road. The project was funded to

⁵⁷¹ “First Link of Federal Highway in State Ready,” *The Winona Daily News*, August 12, 1958, 7.

⁵⁷² “Revisiting Highway 61: Mapping Interstate 35's Impact on Duluth, Minnesota,” *The Duluth Waterfront Collective*, 2023. <https://www.highway61duluth.com/revisitinghighway61>.

⁵⁷³ “Revisiting Highway 61,” 2023.

extend all the way to the Two Harbors Expressway, but the city's east-side residents were successful in keeping the freeway out of their neighborhood.”⁵⁷⁴

The Interstate construction reduced the time it took to drive across Duluth by thirteen minutes and the city's scenic location on Lake Superior became more easily reachable for visitors from other parts of Minnesota and beyond, boosting the local tourism industry. The highway also provided easier access to suburban areas, leading to residential and commercial expansion along its corridor. This expansion contributed to the growth of suburbs and increased property values in certain areas. However, these areas were historically white, with a long, sad history of redlining and racial practices having an even further impact on the economically disadvantaged and more historically Black west side of Duluth. Furthermore, while the building of the freeway saved people thirteen minutes of drive time, the negative effects were substantial: 529 homes were demolished, 109 businesses were destroyed, 1,713 people were displaced, and \$3,532,523 in annual property tax revenues were lost.⁵⁷⁵ These consequences fell most heavily on the West side's working-class, minority population.

The Unfolding of School Segregation

Duluth, like many other cities in the United States, has a complex history of racism and discrimination in housing and education. In Duluth's Woodland neighborhood on the east side, the average life expectancy surpasses ninety years. Conversely, in the Lincoln Park neighborhood on the west side, located just six miles away, the average person's lifespan is only

⁵⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁵ Ibid.

sixty-nine years. This striking contrast of twenty-one years in life expectancy is encapsulated in a mere twelve-minute drive. According to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, this stark reality emphasizes the geographical and generational disparities between Duluth's more working-class, racially diverse west side, situated above the St. Louis River, and the city's whiter, more affluent east end, which overlooks Lake Superior.⁵⁷⁶

These disparities manifest across various aspects of life, spanning health, income, and housing. However, they are particularly pronounced in the realm of education. Denfeld High School on the west side exhibits significantly lower graduation rates and test scores compared to East High School on the east side. The enduring divisions between the two sides of town can be traced back to the redlining and discriminatory real estate practices in Duluth, dividing the east and the west sides of town. Examining how Duluth's public school system developed is important to understand the east-west divide that became so pronounced over time.

The earliest school in what is now the Duluth area was the missionary school opened in 1835 by Reverend E. F. Ely and his wife in Fond du Lac. The first regular school was held in Mr. Ely's house in 1856, with eight or ten children. The Merritt family were foundational in the development of Duluth and had discovered merchantable ore and opened the Mesabi range to industry. Within three years, they owned several mines and had built a railroad leading to immense ore docks in Duluth. They were on the cusp of controlling a mining empire in northern

⁵⁷⁶ Dan Kraker, "In Duluth, schools struggle to bridge city's long-standing east-west divide," *North Star Journey*, March 28, 2022.

Minnesota but lost everything to business titan John D. Rockefeller.⁵⁷⁷ Alfred Merritt, of the important Merritt family, recalls of early education in Duluth,

“The first public school on the North Shore of Lake Superior was held the winter of 1856. The teacher was paid by the parents in proportion to the number of pupils sent; Merritt's five - Leonidas, Alfred, Lewis, Cassius and Androus; Ely's five - Frank, Alfred, Henry, Allie, and Jane; Wheeler's two - Martyn and Elizabeth; also Christian Hoffenbecker, now of Eagle Harbor, Michigan. My brother Jerome was our teacher and he was a very able teacher...”⁵⁷⁸

In 1857, school for these students was meeting in the new frame school. In January 1858, a school district was formed for “New Duluth,” although there was no settlement there at the time. There were thirty-eight children in the district in 1858 between the ages of four and twenty-one, and in the following year, there were forty-nine.⁵⁷⁹ The Duluth school district was formally organized in 1870. On April 6, 1878, an application was submitted for the addition of a high school, making it eligible for financial assistance under the provisions of a legislative act approved on March 9, 1878, titled “An Act for the Encouragement of Higher Education.”⁵⁸⁰ This application was approved on September 6, 1879, resulting in the first high school opening in Duluth, Central High School. The school district continued to grow. In 1871 there were 712 pupils, 341 boys and 371 girls, who were enrolled in five schools. The next year’s census showed 865 children between the ages of five and twenty-one. By 1900, the school district had

⁵⁷⁷ Peter J. DeCarlo, “The Merritt family helped put the ‘iron’ in Iron Range,” Arts & Culture MNopedia, *MinnPost*, February 11, 2014.

⁵⁷⁸ J. R. Carey, 908 East Boulevard, Duluth, Minnesota, letter to Miss Callie Merritt, in “School Days in Early Oneota,” prepared for the St. Louis County Historical Society, April 29, 1952.

⁵⁷⁹ Hazel Arline Hanson, “A Historical Study of the Duluth Public School System to 1900,” PhD diss., University of Minnesota, Duluth, Minnesota, 1955, 4.

⁵⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 13.

9,492 students with 238 in Central High School. By May fifth of that year, there was an increase of 217 students enrolled, with the total number of students in the Duluth Public School district at about 10,000.⁵⁸¹

As demonstrated at the start of the chapter, Duluth showcases a distinct divide: the West, once industrial, now residential; the East, affluent with lakeside mansions. Downtown lies between, with Central Hillside above. Closing Duluth Central High in 2011 highlighted stark contrasts: East High, wealthy and successful; Denfeld High, economically challenged with lower academic performance and higher minority enrollment. This underscored the enduring impact of historical injustices on educational opportunities, revealing a troubling legacy of redlining and racial prejudice. Discrepancies in tax revenue can exacerbate the disparities in educational opportunities between schools in Duluth. In areas with higher property values, such as the affluent East side with its lakeside mansions, there tends to be more tax revenue generated, which can be allocated to fund schools. These schools often have access to better resources, facilities, and educational programs due to their higher funding levels. On the other hand, in areas with lower property values, like the West side, which was once industrial and now primarily residential, there may be less tax revenue available to fund schools. This can result in schools like Denfeld High, which serves an economically challenged community with lower academic performance and higher minority enrollment, receiving fewer resources and facing greater challenges in providing quality education to their students.

Furthermore, historical injustices such as redlining and racial prejudice have likely contributed to the concentration of poverty and underinvestment in certain neighborhoods, which

⁵⁸¹ Ibid, 18.

can perpetuate the cycle of unequal educational opportunities. Even if efforts are made to address these disparities through programs like school funding formulas or targeted interventions, the legacy of historical injustices can continue to shape the distribution of resources and opportunities in the education system. In recent years, students on the western side of Duluth attend a variety of elementary schools, one such being Stowe Elementary, but then filter into Lincoln Park Middle School and Denfeld High School. This chapter will now compare the historical background and school experience of students on Duluth's west side typically and historically attending Stowe Elementary, Lincoln Park Middle School, and Denfeld High School with the east side student experience at Lakeside Elementary or Lester Park Elementary, Ordean East Middle School, and East High School.

Stowe Elementary School

The first Stowe Elementary School building was constructed in 1892. Stowe was situated in an area known as New Duluth, right next to the Gary neighborhood. Gary was the adjacent "shantytown" to Morgan Park that developed because Blacks were excluded from living in the company housing that led to the construction of Morgan Park. Gary-New Duluth became racially diverse as many African Americans settled in the neighborhood due to the proximity to their jobs in the lumber mills, grain elevators, and factories. The New Duluth area provided the city of Duluth with nearby level ground adjacent to the already robust industry in the city. Charles Lovett and other investors incorporated the Village of New Duluth in 1891 and his company soon sprouted up "two sawmills, a slash-and-door factory, a furniture factory, a refrigerator plant, and Atlas Iron & Brass Works. The land company put infrastructure in place, building roads, houses, retail stores, hotels, and churches by the fall of 1891. The next year it built a

school on the southeast corner of Ninety-Seventh Avenue West and McCuen Street.”⁵⁸² The school was first known as the New Duluth School and the structure that housed the building was a two-story Romanesque Revival edifice, square in shape, constructed of brick and accented with brownstone trim. A square tower, topped with a pyramidal cap, extended from the northwest corner. The school had two classrooms on each floor and a capacity of 168 students.

The New Duluth School opened on September 12, 1892, with three teachers instructing grades one through six. The following April, the *Duluth News Tribune* described the school as “flourishing.”⁵⁸³ Unfortunately, the economic boom that had given life to New Duluth soon ended abruptly. The Panic of 1893, a nationwide economic depression, led to the failure of New Duluth’s industries. New Duluth was annexed to the city of Duluth, along with other surrounding towns impacted by the economic depression. The *1894 Report of the Board of Education of the City of Duluth, Minnesota*, noted that the New Duluth school would come under the jurisdiction of the Board of Education of the City of Duluth on “the 1st of January 1895, as it will then be under city limits. This will, of course, necessitate considerable additional work in examining the schools of that suburb, and some thought as to the grading and general requirements of the district.”⁵⁸⁴ The following year’s *Board of Education report* referred to “New Duluth School (or

⁵⁸² Tony Dierckins and Maryanne C. Norton, “Stowe Elementary,” in *Duluth's Grand Old Architecture 1870-1940: Buildings, Houses, Bridges, Landmarks* (Duluth, MN: Zenith City Press, 2022).

⁵⁸³ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁴ *Report of the Board of Education of the City of Duluth, Minnesota* (United States, 1894), 23.

Stowe).⁵⁸⁵ While most of the schools acquired through the 1894 annexation retained the names of the villages that had originally built them, like New Duluth, Stowe Elementary School's teachers had requested the name change in honor of American author Harriet Beecher Stowe. Upon the approval of the name change, Stowe became the first Duluth school named for a woman.⁵⁸⁶ The northern portion of New Duluth was renamed Gary, and when the steel plant opened in 1915, Gary-New Duluth was filled with new residents, many of them African Americans.

With the population surge in 1915, with many of the new residents Black or immigrants, changes were made to Stowe School. A recommendation was made by the school committee "to have public play grounds properly supervised in operation...New Stowe school at Gary and New Duluth."⁵⁸⁷ Community concerns about the student population at the Stowe School continued to rise. In 1918, the school's janitor resigned due to student behavior. A news article cited the following as reasons,

"a series of persistent writings of obscene sentiments, words and pictures on the white walls in the toilets...There were pictures of nude women with exaggerated physiques. Even the fair names of Prin. Chadwick and Miss Bohlke, his assistant, were linked with vile stuff, characteristic of low groceries and brothels...It is alleged that an unruly set of boys is growing up at the Stowe school."⁵⁸⁸

By 1920, Stowe was overcrowded. The school board determined that the first seven grades would remain in session at Stowe school for the following school year, but that the twenty-five

⁵⁸⁵ Ibid, 2.

⁵⁸⁶ Dierckins and Norton, "Stowe Elementary," 2022.

⁵⁸⁷ "Recommendations Made," *The Labor World*, Duluth, Minnesota, March 27, 1915.

⁵⁸⁸ "Janitor Tidball Resigns," *The Duluth Rip-Saw*, March 23, 1918, 4.

eighth-grade students would attend the Morgan Park School. The all-white Morgan Park community was not happy with the decision. They questioned, “Since the Stowe school was here before the Morgan Park school was built and as the Stowe has always had a larger number of pupils than the Morgan Park school, why should the latter have such advantages as enumerated?”⁵⁸⁹ Part of the board’s decision to send eighth-grade Stowe students to Morgan Park was also the plan to offer home training, workshop, typewriting, domestic arts, electricity, and French, which were at the time not being offered at Stowe. They questioned, “Why is one city school operated differently from another?”⁵⁹⁰

The community complained that in the recent past, the school board had given away the old Stowe school property in New Duluth, which would have worked to serve as additional space for the overfull Stowe school. Parents were also concerned that “by the time of the opening of the next school year the probabilities are that the Morgan Park school will also be overcrowded.”⁵⁹¹ These complaints appear to have resulted in the decision to build additions to Stowe School and maintain the student population in the community. In August of 1921, additions to the Stowe school were being made, but “work on the seven-room addition to the Stowe school [was] progressing slowly and may not be completed when the schools open.”⁵⁹²

⁵⁸⁹ Ransom Metcalfe, “Timely and Pertinent Query - Why?,” *The Duluth Rip-Saw*, February 21, 1920, 2.

⁵⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹² “Non-Union Shop Cause of Delay,” *The Labor World*, August 6, 1921, 6.

The school board and the community worried about whether Stowe would be completed and ready for classes to begin in September.

Over time, Stowe School continued to develop a diverse population, with African American graduates of the school highlighted in the 1938 newspaper.⁵⁹³ It also fell into disrepair. In the 1940s, community members called on the school board to “start repairing Stowe school before it is completely ruined.”⁵⁹⁴ Stowe School was even abandoned by the board of education and converted into housing units by the welfare board when the cost of operating them became too high, and the population and industry were in decline in Duluth.⁵⁹⁵ Eventually, the Stowe school would be reinstated, and the current Stowe Elementary School still exists on the west side of Duluth in the Gary-New Duluth neighborhood. The new school building was constructed in 1994 on the site of a prior 1915 school building at 101st Avenue West and Stowe Street. As of 2022, the student population of Stowe Elementary was 253 and the school serves PK through fifth grades. At Stowe Elementary, only thirty-seven percent of students scored at or above the proficient level for math, and fifty-two percent scored at or above that level for reading. The school is not nearly as diverse as schools in the Twin Cities, with a minority student enrollment of twenty percent, but the school enrolls fifty-five percent economically disadvantaged students. The school ranks sixth out of the nine elementary schools in Duluth.⁵⁹⁶

⁵⁹³ Zillah M. Waters, “From the Head of the Lakes: Duluth News,” *St. Paul Recorder*, June 10, 1938, 4.

⁵⁹⁴ “Mother Cites Need for More Grade Schools,” *Star Tribune*, February 26, 1946, 4.

⁵⁹⁵ “Abandoned Again,” *The Minneapolis Star*, July 2, 1949, 7.

⁵⁹⁶ “Stowe Elementary,” Education. U.S. News & World Report. Accessed January 27, 2024. <https://www.usnews.com/education/k12/minnesota/stowe-elementary-223920>.

Lincoln Park Middle School

Historically and still today, many students who attended Stowe Elementary School continued their education at Lincoln School in West End, known today as Lincoln Park Middle School. The Lincoln Park School was originally built in 1888-1889 at 2424 West Fifth Street and was first an elementary school. The school opened in 1889 with twelve rooms and a capacity of 504 students. In 1904, due to cramped classrooms, an addition was made to the school building, marking the first of many such expansions that would take place over the next one hundred years.⁵⁹⁷ Additions were built in 1915, 1930, 1951, 1959, 1994 and 1999. Other construction projects occurred in 1966, 1979, 1992, 1993 and 2000. In 1915, a junior high school was built behind Lincoln Elementary School, with a simple corridor connecting the two.⁵⁹⁸

The school became Lincoln Junior High in 1915, and a tower similar to the one at Historic Old Central High School marked the original building.⁵⁹⁹ A focus of Lincoln School in the early 1900s was preparing its students for factory or industry work. Lincoln offered classes in “blue print reading, shop mathematics for woodworkers, layout work for ventilation for sheet metal workers, dressmaking, cooking and household mathematics.”⁶⁰⁰ The diversity of the West side of Duluth can also be seen in the early twentieth century. Courses in English “for the benefit

⁵⁹⁷ Tony Dierckins and Maryanne C. Norton, “Lincoln Elementary,” in *Duluth's Grand Old Architecture 1870-1940: Buildings, Houses, Bridges, Landmarks* (Duluth, MN: Zenith City Press, 2022).

⁵⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁹ John Lundy, “Lincoln Park School, set to close, has been heart of its neighborhood,” *Duluth News Tribune*, May 22, 2011.

⁶⁰⁰ “Gymnasium Work Given,” *The Labor World*, August 30, 1919, 3.

of foreigners” were offered at several schools in West End and West Duluth and the boarding houses at Gary.⁶⁰¹ Lincoln Elementary closed in 2011 as part of the Duluth School District’s new facilities plan, the same plan that also saw the close of Central High School. Lincoln Park Middle School remained, though, and opened in a new location in 2012 at 3215 West Third Street.

Today, Lincoln Park Middle School, with a student population of 596, serves as a transitional environment for students moving from elementary to high school. The school accommodates grades six through eight. At Lincoln Park Middle School, twenty-six percent of students scored at or above the proficient level for math, and thirty-nine percent scored at or above that level for reading. The school’s minority student enrollment is thirty-nine percent. The student-teacher ratio is seventeen to one, which is worse than that of the district. The school enrolls fifty-four percent economically disadvantaged students.⁶⁰²

Denfeld High School

After graduating from Lincoln Park Middle School, Duluth’s west side students attend Denfeld High School. In 1905, West Duluth's only high school was situated within Irving Elementary School. The upperclassmen occupied a designated floor known as Duluth's Industrial High School. When the school moved into its current MacArthur West school building at 725 North Central Avenue in 1915, its name was changed to honor Robert E. Denfeld, superintendent of Duluth schools from 1885 to 1916. During his tenure, the number of schools in Duluth increased from seven to thirty-four. Denfeld was instrumental in creating a two-year program to

⁶⁰¹ Ibid.

⁶⁰² “Lincoln Park Middle School,” Education. U.S. News & World Report. Accessed January 27, 2024. <https://www.usnews.com/education/k12/minnesota/lincoln-park-middle-school-265199>.

train teachers, which eventually grew to become the University of Minnesota Duluth. The current building was constructed of red brick and limestone at a cost of \$1,250,000 and opened in September 1926.⁶⁰³

Denfeld High School has a long history of proving itself to the community. One of the high school's goals was to gain credibility through the classes it offered; "part of the reason why the class was so small was that West Duluth and the city were skeptical that the school was fully accredited to send students to college," Denfeld High School Social Studies teacher Joe Vukolich said. According to Vukelich, the school had to reassure the community of its quality to gain students repeatedly.⁶⁰⁴ The one-floor industrial school lasted until 1915, when the Duluth industrial plant boom started increasing the number of high school students in the area. Denfeld High School hastily opened a new school building for its students on North Central Avenue on September fifteenth after one major accident during construction.⁶⁰⁵

In 1924, the freshman class elected an African American student, William Johnson, as the class president. This was a fascinating feat, considering it took another thirty years before the U.S. Supreme Court officially integrated schools.⁶⁰⁶ The fact that an African American student was not only enrolled in the school but also elected to a position of leadership by his peers challenges the narrative of racial division and highlights the potential for inclusivity and equality

⁶⁰³ *Denfeld High School History*, 2024, Denfeld High School Hunters. <https://denfeld.isd709.org/about-us/history>.

⁶⁰⁴ Blakely Everett, "The roots of Denfeld High School in West Duluth," *The Statesman*, March 15, 2012.

⁶⁰⁵ "Carpenter Hurt at New Denfeld School," *The Labor World*, March 28, 1914, 6.

⁶⁰⁶ Everett, "The roots of Denfeld High School, 2012.

within educational institutions. It underscores the importance of individual agency and meritocracy in shaping social progress, even in the face of systemic barriers, but also exemplifies the fact that the west side of Duluth was more diverse than the east. In 1926, a new building was constructed, and Denfeld High School moved to its current location at 401 North 44th Avenue West.

Today, Denfeld High School is ranked 226th out of 400 ranked schools in Minnesota. According to the school website, the city of Duluth, with a population of nearly 85,000, offers diverse business, professional, and industrial services to northeastern Minnesota. Denfeld High School serves approximately the western half of the city and has been in operation since 1905. The school serves students in grades nine through twelve, and the total student enrollment is 965. The total minority enrollment is thirty-two percent, and forty-five percent of students are economically disadvantaged. The school has a twenty to one student-teacher ratio, and the graduation rate is seventy percent, which is well below the state median. The school is underperforming in test scores compared to the district and the state, with a mathematics test score of twenty-nine percent, a reading test score of forty-eight percent, and a science test score of forty-five percent.⁶⁰⁷ While Denfeld High School has a long history and serves a significant portion of Duluth's population, it faces challenges in academic achievement and graduation rates, particularly when compared to state and district benchmarks.

Today, more than three-quarters of the city's Native and Black populations live on the west side of Duluth. Two-thirds of people living in poverty live in western Duluth. The dividing

⁶⁰⁷ "Denfeld High School," Education. U.S. News & World Report. Accessed January 27, 2024. <https://www.usnews.com/education/best-high-schools/minnesota/districts/duluth-public-school-district/denfeld-high-school-10766>.

line between the east and west sides is officially 14th Avenue East. School planners say that is the center of the district's student population. Yet, it steers twice as many students of color to Western schools and about three times as many low-income students who qualify for free or reduced lunches.⁶⁰⁸ The significance of the situation in Duluth lies in its reflection of deeply entrenched socioeconomic and racial disparities, which are unfortunately prevalent in many cities across the United States. The fact that more than three-quarters of the Native and Black populations reside on the west side of Duluth highlights historical patterns of residential segregation. This segregation stemmed from discriminatory housing practices such as redlining and racial covenants, which have had lasting effects on communities. The concentration of poverty on the west side of Duluth, with two-thirds of people living in poverty residing there, underscores the economic challenges faced by these communities. This concentration can exacerbate issues such as limited access to quality education, healthcare, and employment opportunities.

The delineation of 14th Avenue East as the dividing line between East and West also highlights educational inequalities. Despite being designated as the center of the district's student population, it disproportionately channels students of color and low-income students to schools in western Duluth. This perpetuates a cycle of disadvantage, as schools with higher concentrations of marginalized students often face resource shortages and struggle to provide quality education. The disparities observed in Duluth are not isolated incidents but rather symptomatic of broader systemic inequities rooted in historical and structural factors such as racism, economic inequality, and educational policies.

⁶⁰⁸ Bob Kelleher, "Duluth ponders the societal consequences of school closures," *MPR News*, June 14, 2007.

Compared to the West, schools on Duluth's east side developed very differently. As the city of Duluth grew, people were needed to work in the booming industries. Immigrants and African Americans were often recruited to work in the area and began arriving as early as 1869 to help build portions of the railroad in Duluth. The April 1870 census described the city's population as largely male and foreign; the city was comprised of eighty percent men and sixty percent immigrants. The census listed over thirty-three percent Swedish, fifteen percent English, Danish, Scottish, Swiss, French, Belgians, Luxembourgers, Austrians, and one Australian, thirteen percent Norwegians, Germans, Irish, and Canadians, two Jewish men, and eleven African American men.⁶⁰⁹ During the 1880s waves of immigrants poured into Duluth and would continue doing so for the next thirty years. While a select few were recruited for specific skilled jobs, most of Duluth's immigrants were unskilled laborers. The skilled and professional transplants to Duluth lived north and east of downtown. Families of unskilled laborers, many immigrants and African Americans by the early 1900s, settled in undeveloped areas, mostly in the West End, close to mills and docks where they could find work.

The East side of Duluth was not only affluent and reserved for the white, skilled professionals, but over time, residents continued to move farther east away from the industry and factory smoke billowing in the West End. The 1936 map of the city put together by the Homeowners Loan Corporation which evaluated Duluth's neighborhoods listed the east hillside as the best residential section in Duluth, with parks, the golf club, and the lake. The area description also highlighted the benefit that the neighborhood was not too far removed from the

⁶⁰⁹ Tony Dierckins and Maryanne C. Norton, "Duluth's Immigrant Patters: 1869-1920," in *Duluth's Grand Old Architecture 1870-1940: Buildings, Houses, Bridges, Landmarks* (Duluth, MN: Zenith City Press, 2022).

business district. In time, the construction of a streetcar line prompted many of the neighborhood's wealthy residents to move even farther east.⁶¹⁰ The Lester Park Line, operated by the Duluth Street Railway Company and also referred to as the Lakeside Line, offered streetcar service from Twenty-second Avenue East to Sixty-first Avenue East.⁶¹¹ Direct access, for those who could afford it, out to the new neighborhoods of Lakeside and Lester Park allowed the affluent residents of Duluth a prestigious residential area with access to the city's downtown. The Village of Lakeside was first its own independent city, but on January 1, 1893, Duluth annexed the Lakeside, and Lakeside and Lester Park became Duluth neighborhoods. Part of the agreement on the city of Duluth's part was to maintain the charter over Lakeside that prohibited the sale or manufacture of alcohol within its borders, which had stemmed from Lakeside's Protestant leaders' active involvement in the Temperance movement.⁶¹² The neighborhood wanted to maintain its reputation as a dry and moral reputation, perhaps in direct contrast to Duluth's diverse, "immoral" West End.

Lakeside Elementary and Lester Park Elementary

Lakeside and Lester Park became Duluth's easternmost neighborhoods when they were annexed in 1893. Upon annexation, the village schools became part of the Duluth School District. The year before the annexation, the community built an elementary school along the 5400 block of Otsega Street. The "four-room, two-story wood-frame Lester Park

⁶¹⁰ Peter Passi, "Duluth Hillside home up for recognition as local landmark," *Duluth News Tribune*, March 13, 2023.

⁶¹¹ Tony Dierckins and Maryanne C. Norton, "Lakeside & Lester Park," in *Duluth's Grand Old Architecture 1870-1940: Buildings, Houses, Bridges, Landmarks* (Duluth, MN: Zenith City Press, 2022).

⁶¹² *Ibid.*

Elementary...stood on a foundation of local stone and featured a three-story, four-sided tower with a pyramidal cap.”⁶¹³ The increasing population quickly surpassed the capacity of the school building, prompting a four-room addition. The school accommodated grades one through six until 1918. Junior high students residing in Lester Park attended Lakeside Elementary School, which catered to grades one through eight.

Through the 1920s, Lakeside and Lester Prairie remained prominent, well-kept neighborhoods, which in turn contributed to the educational success of their students. In contributing to the war effort in World War I, the Lakeside community was able to “do their bit,”⁶¹⁴ pointing to the continued wealth of the neighborhood. In 1920, repairs and improvements, like corrections to the ventilation or the roofing material, were built into the Lakeside and Lester Prairie schools to keep them running successfully and smoothly.⁶¹⁵ In the 1940s, Duluth’s population had decreased, businesses had closed, and other schools across the city had fallen into disrepair. While Lester Park School remained open, they felt the impact as well, cutting teachers due to “lack of pupils and reduction in enrollment of pupils in the school district.”⁶¹⁶ As part of the Duluth School District's Facilities Plan in 2010, a new Lester Park Elementary School was built. This new school now serves students from both Lester Park and

⁶¹³ Ibid.

⁶¹⁴ “Money Pouring In for Red Cross Work From All Minnesota,” *The Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, June 29, 1917, 7.

⁶¹⁵ “Lester Park School,” *The Duluth Rip-Saw*, July 13, 1918, 3; “Crushed Rock,” *The Duluth Rip-Saw*, January 7, 1922, 2.

⁶¹⁶ “2 Teachers Win Appeal on Tenure: High Court Orders New Trial,” *The Minneapolis Star*, December 31, 1942, 1.

Lakeside. Lakeside Elementary School had closed in 1993, and the 1918 Lester Park Elementary was demolished in 2011 to make space for the new school's recreational field.⁶¹⁷

Today, Lester Park Elementary serves 543 students in grades Kindergarten through five. At Lester Park Elementary, seventy-three percent of students scored at or above the proficient level for math, and seventy-seven percent scored at or above that level for reading. The school's minority student enrollment is eleven percent, with 'Two or More Races' accounting for six point four percent and only point six percent 'Black or African American' students. The school enrolls thirteen percent economically disadvantaged students, and it holds the honor of being recognized as the number one ranked elementary school in the Duluth Public School District.⁶¹⁸ Lester Park Elementary's high proficiency levels in math and reading, coupled with its low minority student enrollment and economically disadvantaged population, reflect the privileged and predominantly white demographic of its surrounding neighborhoods. This demographic advantage stemming from the history of redlining in Duluth contributes to the school's status as the number one ranked elementary school in the Duluth Public School District.

Ordean East Middle School

Upon finishing grade five at Lester Park Elementary School, students matriculate into Ordean East Middle School, the only middle school on the East side of Duluth. The school was first built in 1926 as a junior high, serving students in grades seven, eight, and nine. The school was located east of the East Hillside at 2900 East Fourth Street in the Congdon Park neighborhood. The neighborhood was recognized as one of the most desirable residential

⁶¹⁷ Dierckins and Norton, "Lakeside & Lester Park," 2022.

⁶¹⁸ "Lester Park Elementary," Education. U.S. News & World Report. Accessed January 27, 2024. <https://www.usnews.com/education/k12/minnesota/lester-park-elementary-244447>.

neighborhoods in the city, and Ordean East became a school for the wealthier, white population on the eastern side of the city, in the same fashion as Lakeside and Lester Prairie Elementary Schools. The school was named after Albert L. Ordean, a pioneer in Duluth and wealthy banker in the city who helped industrialists like James J. Hill invest in the area.

With the 2012 Duluth Public School building restructuring, the renovated East High School became the Ordean East Middle School. The legacy of the grandeur and money spent on the east side school buildings can still be seen. One article quoted Ordean East's Principal Gina Kleive saying, "You can't help but smile when you walk through and you see these nice clean spaces with the modern cabinetry in some areas, and you walk a little further down and you still see the wood floor and the wood trim and the old China hutch in a teacher's office. I think the architects did a fantastic job keeping the traditional design and incorporating the remodel."⁶¹⁹ In the newly renovated school building, original light fixtures were refitted, the mosaic tile backsplashes of the drinking fountains and oak cabinetry can be found throughout the school, and the expensive hardwood floors and trim point to the legacy of money and investment into the east schools.

The student population of Ordean East Middle School is 1,022, as of 2024, and the school serves grades six through eight. At Ordean East Middle School, forty-five percent of students scored at or above the proficient level for math, compared to Lincoln Park Middle School on the west side's twenty-six percent. Sixty-one percent of students scored at or above the proficient level for reading, again compared to Lincoln Park's thirty-nine percent. Where Lincoln Park's minority enrollment is thirty-nine percent, Ordean East's minority student enrollment is only

⁶¹⁹ Jana Hollingsworth, "Duluth's new middle schools ready for their debut," *Duluth News Tribune*, August 18, 2012.

fourteen percent, with six point one percent of that including students designated as ‘two or more races.’ Lincoln Park enrolls fifty-four percent economically disadvantaged students, while Ordean East only enrolls fifteen percent.⁶²⁰ Ordean East Middle School's higher proficiency levels in both math and reading, along with its lower minority enrollment and economically disadvantaged student population compared to Lincoln Park Middle School, reflect the socioeconomic and racial disparities between the east and west sides of the city. These differences suggest that Ordean East Middle School serves a more privileged and predominantly white student body, due to its historical legacy and contributing to its academic performance relative to Lincoln Park Middle School.

East High School

For students moving through Lester Park Elementary and Ordean East Middle School, their high school experience occurs at East High School, located at 301 North 40th Avenue East. East High follows the same trajectory as Lester Park Elementary and Ordean East Middle School in terms of the legacy of wealth, redlining, and racial profiling in the historic East neighborhoods. The school first opened its doors in 1927 as a junior high school for 950 students, with the business and population boom necessitating more schools and new construction. Overlooking Lake Superior, East quickly gained national attention when it was called "one of the most beautiful and delightfully situated schools in the Northwest" by the *Chicago Tribune*.⁶²¹ In 1950, the school became a senior high school to accommodate the

⁶²⁰ “Ordean East Middle School,” Education. U.S. News & World Report. Accessed January 28, 2024. <https://www.usnews.com/education/k12/minnesota/ordean-east-middle-school-266821>.

⁶²¹ *Welcome to Duluth East*, 2024, Duluth East High School. <https://dulutheast.isd709.org/about->

growing student population. The first graduating class from East High received their diplomas in the spring of 1951. Even according to the school's own website, strong community support over the years has provided East with the facilities it needed to provide a world-class education to its students. The first major remodeling project of the school took place in the early 1950s, followed by major renovation projects in the early 1970s and late 1980s.⁶²²

East High School is ranked very highly both locally and within the state on their performance on state-required tests, graduation, and how well they prepare students for college. Where Denfeld High School on the west is ranked 226th out of 400 ranked schools in Minnesota, East High is ranked eighty-sixth. The school serves 1,513 students in grades nine through twelve. At East High, the total minority enrollment is twelve percent, and fourteen percent of students are economically disadvantaged, compared to Denfeld's thirty-two percent minority enrollment and forty-five percent economically disadvantaged students. Where Denfeld is underperforming in test scores,⁶²³ East High boasts a mathematics proficiency score of forty-six percent, a science proficiency score of sixty-six percent, and a reading proficiency score of seventy-five percent - higher test scores than that of the district and the state. East High also has a graduation rate of ninety-two percent, which is around the state median.⁶²⁴ The stark performance contrast between

us#:~:text=THE%20FOUR%20INSCRIPTIONS&text=Overlooking%20Lake%20Superior%2C%20East%20quickly,of%20a%20modern%20public%20school.

⁶²² Ibid.

⁶²³ Denfeld High School is underperforming in test scores compared to the district and the state, with a mathematics test score of 29%, a reading test score of 48%, and a science test score of 45%. Their graduation rate is 70%, which is well below the state median.

⁶²⁴ "East High School," Education. U.S. News & World Report. Accessed January 28, 2024. https://www.usnews.com/education/best-high-schools/minnesota/districts/duluth-public-school-district/east-high-school-10767#students_teachers_section.

East High School and Denfeld High School in Duluth reflects systemic disparities stemming from the city's history of redlining and racial profiling. East's higher ranking and academic success can be attributed, at least in part, to its lower minority enrollment and economic disadvantage rates, which correlate with better access to resources and support. This underscores the enduring impact of past discriminatory practices on educational outcomes in the region.

One prominent issue with educational disparity and the impact of redlining in both Minneapolis and St. Paul was school integration in the 1960s and 1970s, which led to issues over schools and busing. School integration in Duluth, like in many other parts of the United States, has a complex history marked by efforts to desegregate schools and promote equal educational opportunities for all students. Duluth faced its own challenges and initiatives regarding school integration. One significant event in Duluth's history of school integration occurred in the 1970s when the city, like many others across the nation, grappled with implementing court-ordered desegregation plans. These plans aimed to address racial disparities in education by integrating schools that had previously been segregated by race, particularly prominent when comparing the east and west sides of the city. In 1971, the Duluth School Board adopted a plan for desegregation that involved busing students to achieve racial balance across schools. This decision was met with both support and opposition from various segments of the community. Some saw it as a necessary step toward achieving equality in education, while others criticized it for disrupting neighborhoods and communities.

In June of 1971, WDIO reporter Stu Stronach did a series of special reports on the then-ongoing process of desegregating the Duluth public school system. The report highlighted how desegregation in Duluth or anywhere is going to have several effects beyond education; "It's going to force some families to deal with their own attitudes about race. Some dislocation is

going to result; people are going to be moved around and no matter what the final plan, it is bound to cost some money.”⁶²⁵ In the report, differing viewpoints on the issue were considered. One such viewpoint was from a parent of a student in the district who was a part of the volunteer task force to make decisions regarding integration for the Duluth Public School District. The unnamed parent stated on the issue,

“We are nothing more or less than a group of concerned parents. If I may put it personally, I volunteered for the task force because I happen to have a child in school - Emerson School to name it. We, as individuals, as people, were probably all opposed to change to one degree or another. We did send out a survey. One of our committees sent a survey to the teachers... There is a certain opposition to change... We might attribute this all to the lack of desire to change, but I think if we're being honest or if I were to be honest with myself, I would have to relate it to a certain degree of racism, if you want to use the word. Bigotry, if you want to use the word. We tend, although we won't admit it even to ourselves, sometimes to treat different people differently, and I think this is the whole idea of the civil rights legislation is to bring these divergent societies together and through the intermingling, everyone's experiencing a learning experience and growing because of it.”⁶²⁶

Another member of the Duluth Public School District said on the topic of desegregation,

“Here in Duluth, it's a very complicated issue. We are going to desegregate these schools. It's probably going to be necessary that we move outside of these boundaries and that naturally brings on a great deal of turmoil, feelings, and animosities from parents. Black parents and low-income white parents feel that their kids are getting a good education here. The busing thing becomes a very complex thing... parents not only would like to maintain that neighborhood concept of a school, but they also would have feelings about our Blacks or our low income coming into the area. So you can see when we look at the whole situation, we find that it's very complex and one of the things that we definitely need here in trying to solve this problem is the support of the community and also the community must realize that the situation is not and will not be as simple as it has been in other areas.”⁶²⁷

⁶²⁵ Stu Stronach, “Desegregation of Duluth Public Schools | 1971 | WDIO Revisited” (YouTube video). Originally published June 1971. Re-published June 24, 2021. Accessed January 21, 2024. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=02-cGLe0abY>.

⁶²⁶ Ibid.

⁶²⁷ Ibid.

Desegregation efforts in Duluth, similar to those in other cities, posed significant challenges. Issues emerged regarding the logistics of busing students, and some parents and community members opposed the changes. The WDIO report proposed that a building program would help the desegregation efforts. It was evident that the design for Duluth's desegregation plan, formulated in the summer of 1971, would profoundly affect the community physically, socially, and psychologically. Moreover, ongoing discussions debated the effectiveness of these efforts in tackling the underlying issues of racial inequality in education.

Over time, the landscape of school integration in Duluth has undergone changes, influenced by shifts in demographics, alterations in educational policies, and continuous efforts to foster diversity and inclusivity in schools. However, segregation persists as a problem within the Duluth Public School District. Notably, the East-West divide within the district underscores the disproportionate enrollment of students of color and those receiving free or reduced lunch in western Denfeld and Lincoln Park Middle School. Disparities in test scores between these schools and Ordean East Middle School and East High School also raise concerns. While strides have been made, ensuring equitable access to quality education for all students remains an ongoing objective for both the community and its educational institutions.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

When discussing the Civil Rights Movement, the natural discussion first centers around Jim Crow in the South and the efforts of incredible leaders in their fight for racial equality. The organized effort by Black Americans to end racial discrimination and gain equal rights under the law was vital in areas across the nation, yet people tend to naturally gravitate toward the history of Civil Rights in the South. When the discussion extends beyond the South and considers the Civil Rights Movement in the North, the research centers around cities in the Northeast, such as Philadelphia, Boston, or New York. There is limited research on what this movement looked like in Midwestern states. Most often, the first Midwestern cities discussed in relation to civil rights might be Chicago, St. Louis, Detroit, or perhaps Topeka due to its role in the prominent *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*. What should be understood is that the Midwest has always been a site of Black political activism, though perhaps not as widely discussed and with a lack of published work. This dissertation has proven the significance of the Civil Rights Movement in Minnesota.

Minnesota holds an excellent reputation in many areas. It consistently ranks highly in various polls and surveys, often regarded as one of the best places in America to live. With good schools, excellent housing, and low unemployment, Minnesota stands out as an attractive location. As far back as the Civil War, Minnesota was often recognized for its progressiveness on matters of race and civil rights compared to other states, particularly those in the South. Minnesota is known for being affluent, generous, and progressive. Numerous organizations are committed to serving individuals facing poverty. So then, why are racial disparities in the Twin Cities as significant as or more significant than racial disparities in any part of the nation? What

factors contribute to the greater segregation of schools and neighborhoods in areas with comparable racial and economic attributes?

Since African Americans first called Minnesota their home, they faced discrimination. Despite its reputation for prosperity and progressive politics, the Twin Cities rank as the fourth worst metropolitan area for Black Americans. Minneapolis has the largest homeownership gap of any city in the United States. The Twin Cities area reports the white homeownership rate at seventy-six point three percent and the Black homeownership rate at only twenty-five point two percent. Presently, the disparity in homeownership rates between Black and white Americans is more pronounced than it was prior to the Civil Rights movement. Additionally, Minnesota ranks second in the nation for income inequality between Blacks and whites. In the Twin Cities area, the poverty rate among Black individuals stands at twenty-five point four percent, over four times higher than the white poverty rate of five point nine percent. While approximately three-quarters of white families own homes, that contrasts starkly with the one-quarter of Black families who do. Additionally, in 2019, the incarceration rate for Blacks in the Twin Cities area was eleven times greater than that for whites.

The same trends can be seen in education. The state is known for its stellar public education system - low dropout rates, high test scores, and low student-to-teacher ratios. However, Minnesota ranks among the states with the most significant education achievement gaps between Blacks and whites. In 2019, it occupied the fiftieth position concerning racial disparities in high school graduation rates. The Twin Cities area has seen an increase in highly segregated schools over the past twenty-five years. Highly segregated schools refer to schools where at least ninety percent of the students are not white. Even while schools are growing more diverse in some ways, they remain highly segregated by race and class.

The statistics present a worrisome picture. These figures are undoubtedly linked to the enduring and escalating feelings of injustice, frustration, desperation, and rage that erupted in Minnesota following the tragic death of George Floyd. While it is crucial to delve into the efforts of activists who have positively impacted countless lives in Minnesota, it is just as vital to recognize the need for others to carry on the fight for racial fairness and equity. This paper pays homage to the lengthy and impactful struggle for Civil Rights both locally and nationally. Significantly, the prevalence of segregation and discrimination in Minnesota mirrors a broader nationwide trend. Examining the effects of systemic segregation on homeownership, income, and schools in the state offers insight into historical patterns observed across the nation. Therefore, what factors have contributed to the segregation evident in neighborhoods and schools across the Twin Cities and Duluth today? This dissertation outlines five pivotal findings.

Firstly, the racial covenants that first developed in 1910 in Minneapolis and then spread to other parts of the state limited African Americans to select neighborhoods. In St. Paul, a thriving community developed in the Rondo neighborhood; in Minneapolis, Black Americans found community in the Southside neighborhood and the Near North; in Duluth, African American workers settled in near their jobs on the west side of the city.

Secondly, freeway construction was one of the critical factors that led to the decimation of each of these neighborhoods. Supposedly chosen as the most direct route from one point to another, highways were often routed through Black neighborhoods, where land was cheap and political opposition low. Homes, businesses, and community institutions, like schools, were destroyed, setting off long-term impacts on disadvantaged, minority neighborhoods and highly segregated schools into the twenty-first century.

Thirdly, in the wake of the *Brown v. Board of Education* verdict in 1954, schools found themselves compelled to confront the issue of segregation and strive for remedies. In Minneapolis, the journey toward desegregating schools commenced in 1972, though groundwork had been laid as early as 1967 with the Board of Education's adoption of initial human relations guidelines and the initiation of a voluntary urban transfer program. By 1970, Minnesota had established desegregation guidelines, imposing a thirty percent cap on minority student enrollments linked to funding. By April 1971, seventeen Minneapolis schools were flagged for non-compliance with state standards, prompting the state to mandate the district to devise a desegregation strategy. Subsequently, in August 1971, a lawsuit was filed in Federal District Court, alleging the school district's de jure segregation of students and staff. In May 1972, the court ruled in favor of unlawful segregation, necessitating the implementation of a plan crafted by the Board of Education, inclusive of submitting biannual progress reports to the court. A strikingly similar narrative unfolded in St. Paul and, likewise, in Duluth, where in 1971, the School Board adopted a busing-oriented desegregation plan aimed at achieving racial equilibrium across schools, marking a significant conclusion.

Fourthly, a vital component of the integration plans was busing to meet the minority enrollment requirement percentage. To do this, students of color were most often bussed out of Black neighborhoods and integrated into predominantly white schools. Some predominantly Black neighborhood schools, such as McKinley Elementary or Warrington School, were closed completely. Parents and community members spoke openly about their resistance to the closing of neighborhood schools, but often, their demands were ignored, and the work of integrating predominantly white schools fell disproportionately on Black students.

Fifthly, a key reason why integration efforts of the 1960s and 1970s failed students of color was not directly addressing the quality crisis in the low test scores and high dropout rates of children of color. The focus of the integration plan was to keep the right racial mix in schools. The Board of Education believed this plan would be completed in three years, yet today, schools in the Twin Cities are more segregated than they were during the Civil Rights Movement. What the integration plan failed to accomplish was to insist that schools serve their students of color as well as they served their white students. In failing to teach African American students adequately and appropriately while making them feel safe, heard, and represented in predominantly white schools, Minnesota's plan for integration failed the schools and race challenge.

The focus of this study is narrow and historical. Therefore, there are many avenues for further study. The exploration of the origins and impacts of racial covenants in Minneapolis and other cities in Minnesota shed light on how these policies shaped urban development patterns and contributed to racial segregation. However, future research in examining the legal, social, and economic factors behind the implementation and enforcement of these covenants could provide a deeper understanding of their long-term consequences on marginalized communities.

In the evaluation of school desegregation efforts, the focus centered around busing plans. In assessing the busing policies and neighborhood school closures, with more time, qualitative studies could document community perspectives on these policies, including their experiences with displacement, resistance, and advocacy for educational equity. More extensive quantitative analyses could examine the demographic shifts in schools and neighborhoods following busing initiatives, as well as the educational outcomes for students affected by these changes.

Additionally, further examination of the implementation and outcomes of school desegregation efforts in Minneapolis, St. Paul, and Duluth could assess the effectiveness of

various strategies in achieving racial equity in education. Comparative studies could investigate differences in policy approaches, community engagement practices, and educational outcomes across different cities and school districts. Longitudinal analyses could also track the persistence of racial disparities in education over time and identify persistent barriers to integration and academic achievement.

Ultimately, these conclusions presented in this paper reveal the extent of racism, discrimination, and segregation in the far reaches of the Upper Midwest, a region often overlooked because the history of racism in the South and in large metropolitan areas of the North looms so large. The segregation in housing not only delineated neighborhoods but set the stage for the pervasive segregation witnessed in educational institutions, where attendance zones mirrored the lines of segregation in housing. Most importantly, these conclusions highlight the ways in which the limited efforts on the part of Minnesota state school boards worked to fully integrate Black and white students. School boards looked to fulfill minority enrollment quotas by pulling students of color out of their neighborhoods and into unfamiliar territory at a time when actual change could only have been realized through dismantling barriers and ensuring equitable access to quality education for all students. Seventy years after *Brown*, Minnesota is still struggling to fulfill *Brown*'s mandate and the promise of equal educational opportunities for its children.

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