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## **Documentary Analysis**

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### **Documentary Analysis**

For several decades now, the United States has been known to wallow in the mire of racism. That is a fact that has been recognized both locally, in mainland America, and the international arena. To draw on this reality, both history and works of cinematography shed light on how deep racism is rooted in the government's principal sectors counting housing and education. This fact has continually led to discrimination based on color, referring to the historical and present barriers, policies, and biases that deter equitable access to education and housing by whites and people of color living in the United States. This paper will use the documentary “Race: The Power of an Illusion – The House You Live In” to demonstrate how race has shaped American policy towards education and housing and how it continues to influence our lives.

#### **How Race Has Shaped American Policy Towards Education and Housing**

The adage that one does not appreciate the things they have until it is withdrawn from them holds to these days. After viewing the movie, I imagined how everyone affected by race ought to thank the heavens for letting their births happen after establishing the Federal Housing Administration. During this period of 1930s, which led to the creation of this institution, suppose those consisting of minority groups in the United States, such as those with ethnic background and ancestral roots in South Korea, Morocco, and Africa, existed it is clear from the film that they would not have had the same opportunity of procuring a house as it happens today. When the veterans were in dire need of homes to accommodate their families, they had no other choice but to revolutionize the housing program the narrator refers to as the New Deal (ultramage1, 2019). The latter program led to the creation of the Federal Housing Administration, which,

contrary to most Americans' expectations, would result in many decades of racialization in opportunity, housing, and wealth.

According to sociologist Melvin Oliver, the Federal Housing Administration's main goal was to provide mortgages and backing for loans to the average Americans to enable them to procure homes (ultramage1, 2019). However, the houses provided under this program were expensive for the veterans who had to part with fifty percent of the sales price upfront to secure a new home. Ultimately, the Suburbia was born after the tax dollars facilitated single-family homes' creation as a mass-produced consumer item. It is the Suburbia that became the new name for the American dream. In essence, the Suburbia became a gem for the United States as it provided homes to veterans. Furthermore, the Suburbia offered generally low-priced houses, thus an affordable way for Americans to exist in a civilized community.

Nevertheless, at the core of the country's real estate business, race played a role of being a financial risk. It is this foundation laid in the 1930s that still underscore American housing today. In contrast to the Caucasian race, the minorities in the United States do not live the American Dream up to gratifying levels. Americans' inability to see through the skin color and failure for all races in the country to exist in unity and endeavor for the ample amount of success for all Americans dictates the treatment people of color acquire to own a home in the United States.

One thing is evident – the American institutions and policies are created and formulated to advantage particular groups in the country at others' expense. The evaluation of minority families that resided in the principally white neighborhoods was based on racial differences. The national appraisal system was significantly underscored by the racial aspect when assessing the real estate industry, just as the condition of property ownership in America. Everyone who resided in colored sections in America was impacted in one way or the other by the 1930's

national appraisal system, which color-coded various communities (ultramage1, 2019). As a result, housing discrimination based on race countersigned all real estate practices. For instance, both white and colored minorities were bound to be negatively affected when the predominantly white community exhibited some minorities that resided in their locality. According to this color-coding system's dictates, green represented an ideal place for having an all-white neighborhood, suburban, and lived miles away from minority areas (ultramage1, 2019).

On the other hand, red was accorded to communities that represented pure minority or the progression of transformation. That meant they were redlined and the larger piece of the pie of the housing loan was directed to the suburbanizing America. Hence, if any nonwhite was found in the new suburbs, they have been deemed a threat to the real estate values. These were the binding guidelines that FHA issued. Thus, being government guidelines, they were extensively adopted by the private housing industry.

In other words, the racial logic helped shape the American housing to run and operate based on the premise that an integrated neighborhood was intrinsically a bad risk. Notably, it posed a financial threat. Generally, such a setting was likely to be unstable both socially and economically (ultramage1, 2019). Community suburbanizing based on racial differences was just a terrible act in a systematically running community. Crime happens anywhere regardless of the racial group one resides. During this time, there was no guarantee of a suburbanized green community; therefore, both whites and nonwhites alike were bound to be affected.

Subsequently, racism has significantly contributed to how most Americans access education. The education aspect is directly tied to the racially instigated government policies and practices in American housing. Thus, the narrator points out that the white families' net worth grew exponentially as the homes within white communities were appreciated (ultramage1,

2019). However, for most nonwhites that resided in the urban neighborhood, they failed to gain equity because they paid rent as the housing market that was wide open to them was the rental market. Therefore, Conley submits to the viewer that living in America is not a matter of taste and preference but an issue of housing and wealth (ultramage1, 2019). Since most of the wealth owned by Americans is in the form of home equity, they can afford to finance their education. Since race determined how much wealth distinct individuals in America could have accumulated, the whites who moved to suburbs were subsidized in wealth accumulation. In contrast, the nonwhites, especially the Blacks, were divested.

The situation above meant that the racially discriminated parents, accompanying those affiliated to native American, Latino or African American, who could not afford to buy a home in the all-white segments of the United States, had no wealth to pass on their parents. Therefore, to the children of such parents, it would appear that their parents never worked hard to procure a house, give their affluent to them, make it possible for them to go to school and mortgage the house to safeguard that their kids had a debt-free college experience by financing their college education.

### **How Race Continues To Influence Our Lives**

A legal scholar, John Powell, points out that the redlining that the federal government nationalized and introduced was not a mere way of giving something to the whites but a means through which the government helped construct whiteness. Based on these sentiments, it can be deduced that racism has been inherently promoted and nurtured among Americans, whose impact continues to influence our lives today. Understanding the implications of racism today, necessitates conforming to Powell's proposition that the idea of whiteness primarily meant who

in the United States was included and was part of the white family, and the subsequent material repercussions (ultramage1, 2019).

Today, racial inequality in the United States has significantly contributed to the growing wealth distribution disparity or gap. This is both an influence as well as a consequence of racism in America. The average Black family is deeply buried in debts until their total assets or net-worth has become an eighth of that owned by the average white American. The disparity above has been growing since the Civil Rights accomplishments in the sixties to date. However, the explanation behind the widening wealth accumulation gap between the whites and nonwhites does not rest in aspects such as rates of earning, education, and saving rates, but the racial inequality legacy handed down from past generations. Consequently, racism has corroded American society's value of the character content and promoted the color aspect in which thousands of newborns are initiated annually. Conceivably, it is the wealth or net worth part that best captures the legacy of racial inequality in the United States, both in the past and present.

In conclusion, the documentary is a clear and comprehensive head start to understanding how race has shaped American policy towards education and housing, and how it continues to influence our lives. In particular, the selected episode helps one understand when racial equity was eroded in American society and was supplanted by the legacy of racial inequality. The national appraisal system color-coded Americans lead to discriminations that fundamentally could negatively affect the whites and the nonwhites alike. On the other hand, living the American Dream meant that the nonwhites had to excel above the racial boundaries and work extra hard to realize it for themselves and their progenies. Today, race continues to influence our lives through social and economic racial inequalities that have widened the wealth accumulation

gap between whites and nonwhites. Hence, the system reprises itself when newcomers are ushered to it annually.

### Reference

ultramage1. (2019). The Difference Between us (race). <https://youtu.be/OXEV0tqox9k>

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