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# **A Culture of Institutional Racism: Housing Policies During the New Deal Era**

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# Introduction

My thesis focuses on housing policies during President FDR's New Deal initiative. Using the theory of institutional racism and the method of policy analysis, I analyze how these policies exhibited discrimination, segregation, and prejudice towards the Black community.

Research question: To what extent did housing policies during President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal period exhibit discriminatory policies against African Americans? How has the implementation of these policies impacted the current relationship between the African American community and housing?

Thesis Statement: The housing policies legislated during the New Deal has disproportionately impacted the current relationship that Black Americans have with housing because of the racially discriminatory tone of these policies.

# Literature Review

01

Before the creation of the New Deal, certain housing policies already in place which exhibited discriminatory impacts

- There had been a build up of racially motivated housing policies that were present in America even before the New Deal Era and continued after it.

02

Policies enacted under the New Deal helped to further a culture of institutional racism

- The New Deal contained many policies that should have benefited all Americans, but further oppressed African Americans
- These policies encouraged the use of racial discrimination tactics to exclude African Americans from equal housing opportunities

03

Past housing policies have influenced the current relationship between the African Americans and housing

- Contributed the racial gap between African Americans and white Americans in the housing area
- Helped to suppress African Americans to inadequate housing developments, such as “projects” and “ghettos”

# Analytic Framework

The theory that was pulled directly from the literature is institutional racism. There are several points that are necessary when looking at the theory of institutional racism:

- The term describes when institutions within our society exhibit “discriminatory policies and practices”
- Examples of institutions include but are not limited to academic institutions, government institutions, public health institutions, and the criminal justice system
- The policies carried out by these institutions often always favor a certain group and/or class
- Institutional racism can be used interchangeably with the term “structural racism”
- It can best explain the impacts that past housing policies have had on the African American community; if we know what makes a policy inherently bad, we can work to fix it

# The Policy Analysis Method

## Problem Definition

The policy problem that has been identified is the presence of institutional racism in housing policies that were enacted during President FDR's New Deal era.

## Agenda Setting

Looking at which branches of government that are responsible for enacting and upholding these practices are essential in this analysis. As I research this, I also observe how the public, along with special interests groups, interact with this issue.

## Policy Development

A rather important step in the policy analysis method involves producing other policy options that would attempt to rectify the identified problem. After discovering other policy options, recommendations on which one

## Policy Implementation

Here, we attempt to apply the proposed policy recommendations. Certain factors must be kept in mind, such as whether one should make the issue public, any potential intended or unintended consequences, and how the involvement of the target population help or harm the proposal.

## Policy Evaluation

This last step involves evaluating the existing policies to further understand the implementations of said policies and analyze the solutions agreed upon by policy makers.

# Findings

There are two sets of findings that attempt to answer the posed question. The first set is the previously enacted housing policies, and the second set is Black Americans current experiences with housing. One ultimately impacts the other, as the upholding of certain discriminatory policies in turn affected the modern state of housing in the African American community.

## Legislated Housing Policies

- Exclusionary zoning laws
- Racial covenants
- The Federal Housing Act of 1934
- The Home Owners' Loan Act of 1933
- The Underwriting Manual
- GI Bill (AKA the Servicemen's Readjustment Act)
- Housing Act of 1949

## Impact on Modern Day Relationship w/ Housing

- The stereotype of Black Americans being "high risk" continues today
- African Americans are less likely to receive mortgage loans
- These maintained redlined areas have depreciated in value due to low investment during the New Deal period
- Previously redlined areas still experience an influence of African American residents in addition to other minority groups



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**Thank you!**

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