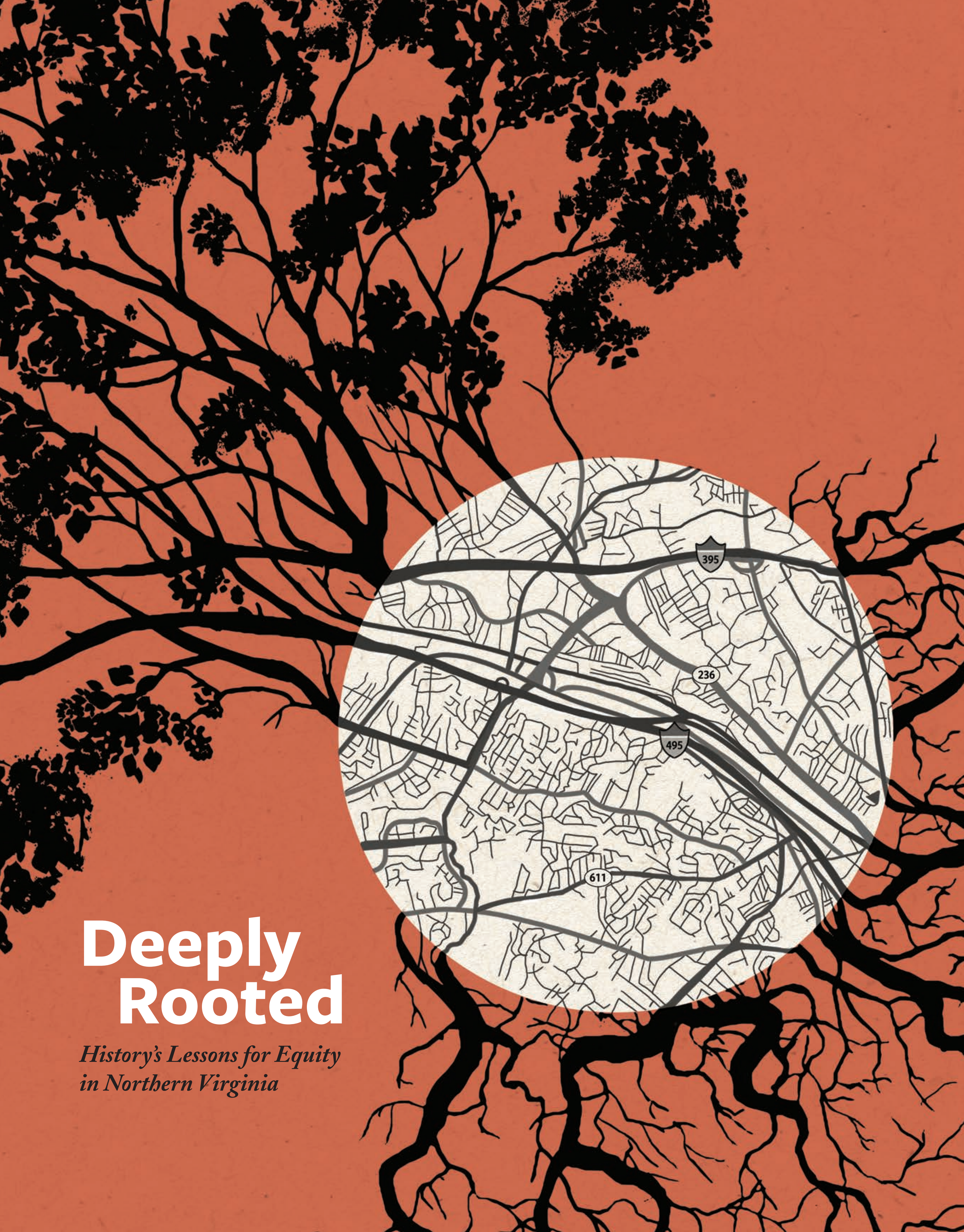


# Deeply Rooted

*History's Lessons for Equity in Northern Virginia*

# The Islands Of Disadvantage

Today's health disparities reflect deep social divides in Northern Virginia. Decades of public health research have shown that education, income, housing, and other social conditions are powerful determinants of life expectancy and disease rates. Disparities in these living conditions, along with the harmful health effects of chronic exposure to discrimination, are products of the history recounted here and are chiefly responsible for the large gaps in life expectancy that exist today in Northern Virginia.

## About The Project

*Deeply Rooted: History's Lessons for Equity in Northern Virginia* chronicles Black experiences in Northern Virginia over the past 400 years. It is based on historical research conducted by the Center on Society and Health in consultation with a 14-member advisory panel and with assistance from local libraries and private collections. This report builds on a previous report, *Getting Ahead: The Uneven Opportunity Landscape in Northern Virginia*, in which the Center identified census tracts in Northern Virginia with poor health outcomes. This project aims to explore the historical roots of those "islands of disadvantage." This report generally cites statistics for Northern Virginia or, when appropriate, the Commonwealth. National data are cited only when local statistics were unavailable. For more information about this project and additional stories of displacement, resilience, and resistance in Northern Virginia, visit **historyfortomorrow.org**.

While this report focuses on Black communities, we hope that future research will detail the history of other groups, from the Indigenous peoples who first occupied the region to Latinx and Asian Americans and other immigrants — all of whom have shaped modern-day Northern Virginia.

## Acknowledgments

The Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) Center on Society and Health produced this report for the Northern Virginia Health Foundation.

The Virginia Commonwealth University Center on Society and Health is an academic research center that studies the health implications of social factors — such as education, income, neighborhood and community environmental conditions, and public policy. Its mission is to answer relevant questions that can "move the needle" to improve the health of Americans, by presenting work in formats and venues that are useful to decision-makers and change agents. The Center pursues these goals through collaboration with scholars in different disciplines at VCU and other institutions, and by nurturing partnerships with community, government, and private-sector stakeholders.

The Northern Virginia Health Foundation makes strategic grants to non-profit organizations that address the health care needs of residents of Northern Virginia, with particular emphasis on those who live in Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun, and Prince William counties and the cities of Alexandria, Fairfax, Falls Church, Manassas, and Manassas Park. The Foundation focuses its grantmaking on those organizations that address the Foundation's priorities and promote its values.



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### *Reflections on the Past, for a More Equitable Future*

This report recounts history, not only to revisit a distant past that today's Northern Virginians may not recall but also to explain why current conditions exist. Recalling how past policies have shaped the present reminds us that changing today's policies can improve the future.

Courtesy of the Arlington Photographic Documentary Project, photo by Lloyd Wolf.

Crossing guard and students on South Kenmore Street, in the Green Valley area of Arlington, 1980.

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James H. Thomas, 23, of Washington D.C. boards the bus for a trip to Virginia on June 4, 1946, the day after the U.S. Supreme Court struck down the Virginia law that mandated racial segregation of interstate buses.

**Opposite:** Parade along Queen Street, in front of the Capitol Theater. The Capitol was the first theater for Black patrons in Alexandria, and continued to serve the Black community throughout the era of segregation. Alexandria, 1950.



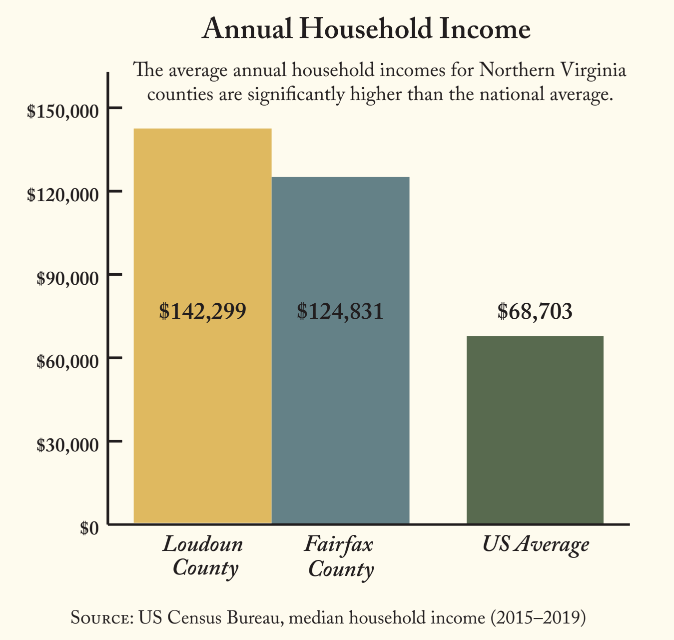
▲ Reprinted with permission of the DC Public Library, Star Collection © Washington Post
▼ The American Legion William Thomas Post 129, photographer unknown.

# Introduction

The Northern Virginia[1] suburbs of Washington, DC are among the wealthiest in the nation. For example, annual household income in Loudoun County and Fairfax County averages $142,299 and $124,831, respectively, well above the U.S. average ($68,703). But the region's prestige and affluence mask deep inequities. Pockets of extreme disadvantage exist amid the wealth. In 2017, the Northern Virginia Health Foundation commissioned a study by the Center on Society and Health at Virginia Commonwealth University, which documented a 17-year gap in life expectancy across Northern Virginia. It identified 15 "islands of disadvantage," clusters of census tracts where residents—disproportionately people of color—face austere living conditions that take years off their lives.

Many "islands of disadvantage" have struggled for decades, while other communities thrived, fueling a false narrative that the residents themselves are responsible for their plight. However, a closer look at history paints a different picture. The boundaries of these neighborhoods, along with their demographic composition and economic status, are products of policies that choked off resources to communities, creating an inevitable downward spiral. Policies of exclusion and segregation had the combined effect of preventing people of color from finding better lives elsewhere and facilitating the disproportionate concentration of wealth in white communities.

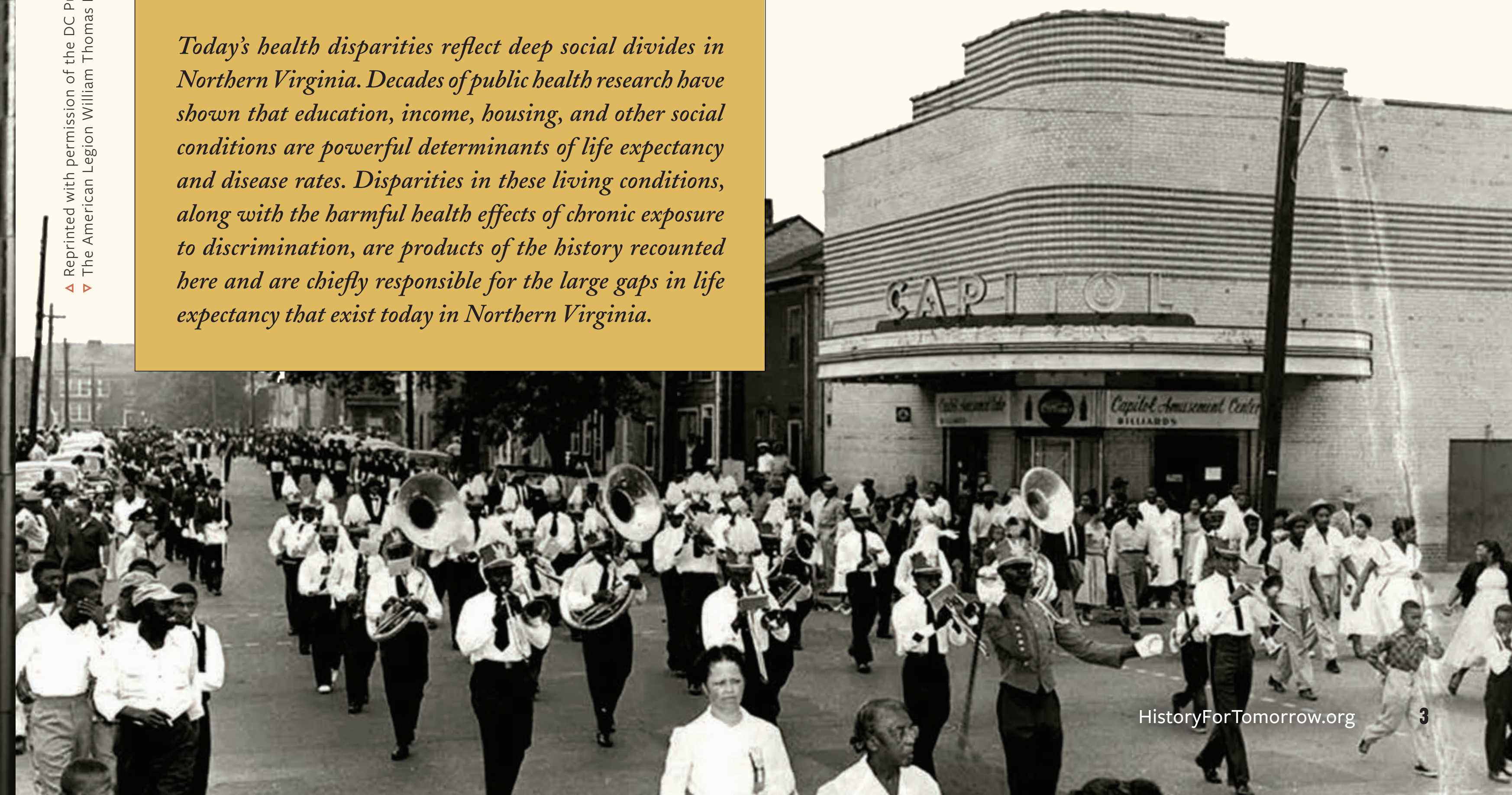
*Today's health disparities reflect deep social divides in Northern Virginia. Decades of public health research have shown that education, income, housing, and other social conditions are powerful determinants of life expectancy and disease rates. Disparities in these living conditions, along with the harmful health effects of chronic exposure to discrimination, are products of the history recounted here and are chiefly responsible for the large gaps in life expectancy that exist today in Northern Virginia.*




**Source:** US Census Bureau, median household income (2015–2019)

This report recounts that history, not only to revisit a distant past that today's Northern Virginians may not recall but also to explain why current conditions exist. Recalling how past policies have shaped the present reminds us that changing today's policies can improve the future. The central thread of this history is racism—interpersonal and structural—and the consequences of practices that embrace a "hierarchy of human value." This report chronicles African American (hereafter referred to as "Black") experiences in Northern Virginia over the past 400 years.

1. In this report, Northern Virginia is defined as the City of Alexandria, Arlington County, Fairfax County, Loudoun County, and Prince William County (and the independent cities they include, such as Fairfax City, Falls Church, Manassas, and Manassas Park).



# Colonialism:
## the Birth of Systemic Privilege

The affluence of Northern Virginia can be traced to 1649, when King Charles II of England rewarded his supporters with large land grants across the region, seized from the Indigenous peoples who had lived there for centuries. These British landowners, who were wealthy upon arrival to the colony or made their fortune through land acquisition, had surnames like Fairfax, Culpeper, Lee, Washington, and Mason. The wealth they accumulated and passed to their heirs relied on the forced labor of enslaved Africans. Enslavement also enabled these white landowners to amass political power, becoming members of the House of Burgesses, governors, and Founding Fathers. Historical figures from Northern Virginia who signed the Declaration of Independence (Francis Lightfoot Lee and Richard Henry Lee), led the Revolutionary War (George Washington), and drafted the Virginia Constitution (George Mason IV) were all men who enslaved people, and so were their ancestors. Four generations of the Lee family enslaved Black men, women, and children before Confederate General Robert E. Lee was even born.

> *Over generations, white people went to lengths to secure their advantages: they adopted systems, institutional structures, and policies that helped them grow their wealth, retain power, cloister themselves in white communities, and keep people of color from entering their neighborhoods, schools, and workplaces.*

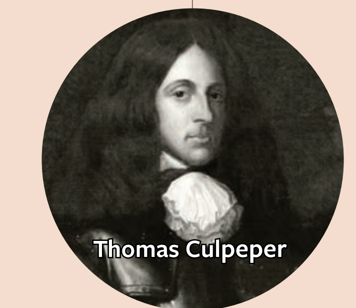
In time, tobacco plantations gave way to wheat and dairy farms and then to suburban development and the posh homes of Northern Virginia's social elite. Here lived not only local politicians but also U.S. Senators, generals, and cabinet secretaries. Over generations, white people went to lengths to secure their advantages: they adopted systems, institutional structures, and policies that helped them grow their wealth, retain power, cloister themselves in white communities, and keep people of color from entering their neighborhoods, schools, and workplaces. Systems of exclusion and discrimination pushed Indigenous and Black people out of places that were their homes for generations. These efforts erected the architecture of systemic privilege—opening doors of opportunity for some people to pursue education, careers, and more prosperous lives, while closing the doors for others. Policies of exclusion and systemic racism inflicted damage that has cascaded across generations, literally drawing the map of where Black people and neighborhoods of concentrated poverty are found today.

**The history of wealth and property in Colonial Virginia casts a long shadow.** Here, tobacco plantations, relying on enslaved labor, eventually gave way to wheat and dairy farms and then to suburban development and the posh homes of Northern Virginia's social elite in places like Great Falls and McLean.

**Left and below:** Today's Northern Virginia was once part of the "Northern Neck Proprietary," a massive 5 million-acre land grant (shaded) that King Charles II gave his supporters in 1649.

## The Importance of **Generational Wealth**

As is true today, social standing and political power in the colonies revolved around individual wealth. Much of the land in Northern Virginia was obtained by Thomas Culpeper (1635–1689,) governor of Virginia, and inherited by his grandson, Thomas Fairfax (1693–1781). Fairfax, living in England, appointed land agents to manage his property, such as Robert "King" Carter (1662–1732) who acquired 300,000 acres and became the richest man in Virginia, and later his cousin, William Fairfax (1691–1757). These men used their inherited wealth to buy more land and become key parts in the shaping of Virginia—this wealth, and influence, was then passed down to family members for generations.



# Black Oppression & Resilience in Northern Virginia

*The Black experience in Northern Virginia is the story of a battle of wills. Policies of exclusion met with the determination and resilience of the Black community to circumvent barriers and carve out opportunities.*

This battle first played out in the fight for I. freedom itself and later for the rights to II. build wealth and buy property, III. obtain an education, IV. find jobs, and V. win civil liberties. Each of the following five sections highlights that history, helps explain the disparities we see today, and outlines policies that can reverse inequities in these domains.

More than a hundred Black high school students, supported by several dozen white students, took over a National Socialist White People's Party rally in Alexandria on November 15, 1970.

Reprinted with permission of the DC Public Library, Star Collection © *Washington Post*.

Arlington police officers search Dion T. Diamond (left) and Laurence Henry before charging them with trespassing for staging a desegregation sit-in at a Howard Johnson's restaurant in Arlington on June 10, 1960.

**Right:** Civil rights demonstrators (also pictured to the left), seeking to be served at a Howard Johnson's restaurant in Arlington, were led away by police after being arrested for trespassing.



# Freedom & Safety

*Freedom of movement is not fully possible when the innocent activities of daily life—from driving a car to entering a store—threaten the physical safety of Black people.*

The Black experience in Northern Virginia began without freedoms. Africans first arrived in the 1600s as chattel (property), and the enslaved population grew in numbers in the 18th century. Between 1749 and 1782 alone, the enslaved portion of the Fairfax County population grew from 28% to 41%. Although late 18th century Virginia allowed some enslaved people to gain their freedom, lawmakers tightened their grip in the early 1800s, passing laws to re-enslave free Blacks if they did not leave the Commonwealth and prohibiting Blacks (free or enslaved) from congregating.[2] Northern Virginia became a center of the domestic slave trade, shipping enslaved Blacks from the port of Alexandria to Southern destinations. By the start of the Civil War, Virginia had the largest enslaved population of any Confederate state. Although the 1860s brought an end to chattel slavery and early Reconstruction expanded civil rights, the ensuing backlash of Jim Crow laws and practices terrorized Black families and quashed social, economic, and political rights. In Northern Virginia, those laws and practices affected every aspect of life. Black passengers were beaten on trolley cars for the slightest infractions, the Ku Klux Klan was active, and public lynchings occurred in Leesburg and Alexandria from the late 1870s into the early 20th century.

Freedom of movement is not fully possible when the innocent activities of daily life—from driving a car to entering a store, especially in mostly white areas—induce suspicion, microaggressions, and perceived threats to the physical safety of Black people. The chronic stress this induces among victims of discrimination has known harmful effects on physical and mental health.

2. At certain times before the retrocession of 1847, the eastern edge of Northern Virginia was within the boundaries of the District of Columbia, where the Black population enjoyed greater freedoms than those in the Commonwealth.

Reprinted with permission of the DC Public Library, Star Collection © Washington Post.

**Black families in Northern Virginia were also repeatedly displaced from their homes and land:**

- In 1863 the Federal government opened Freedman's Village, a thriving community for newly freed Blacks on the Arlington estate of Robert E. Lee. The Village had farms, jobs, and a school serving up to 900 students. But the government reversed its decision in the 1880s and began evicting families to free up the land for military use.
- Black communities were displaced in the 1920s when Lee Highway was routed through the Fall's Church enclave of Tinner Hill.
- In 1942, the Federal government invoked eminent domain and razed two Black communities, East Arlington and Queen City, to build roads leading to the Pentagon. In the latter example, displaced Black families were moved into trailer camps and newly constructed public housing.
- The construction of Shirley Memorial Highway cut a path through Green Valley in South Arlington, and Lincolnia, near what became Landmark Mall.
- In the 1950s and 1960s, suburban development displaced Black families in the Fort Ward and Seminary communities of Alexandria.
- The largely African-American village of Willard, in Loudoun County, was razed to build Washington-Dulles International Airport. As we discuss later, historically Black communities were also displaced by exclusionary housing policies, pricing pressures, and physical threats.

*See more on p.14*

Young people influenced by the American Nazi Party confront Dion Diamond at a civil rights sit-in at the Cherrydale Drug Fair in Arlington, June 10, 1960.

Reprinted with permission of the DC Public Library, Star Collection © *Washington Post.*

Too often, Black people face threats from law enforcement itself. The fraught relationship between the police and Black people dates back to the slave patrols of the 1700s that controlled the movement of Blacks and administered punishment. Over time, similar groups enforced Black Codes and Jim Crow laws, which criminalized even innocent behaviors. For example, under 19th century "vagrancy" laws, Black people could be arrested for not carrying proof of employment.

People of color continue to be targeted by police today. According to the NAACP, a Black person is five times more likely to be stopped without just cause than a white person, and many are mistreated or killed. Police misconduct occurs throughout the United States, including Northern Virginia. For example, in 2017, U.S. Park Police pursued, shot, and killed Bijan Ghaisar, a man of Iranian descent, after he drove away from a minor vehicle collision in Alexandria. Racism within the criminal justice system extends beyond policing; it affects convictions and sentencing. In 2016, Black people accounted for 60% of Virginia's prison population but only 19% of the population at large. And once Black people acquire a criminal record, they are more likely than white criminals to carry the consequences throughout life. Studies show that white ex-offenders are more likely to be hired than Black ex-offenders.

**Lynchings in Northern Virginia** were often covered by newspapers throughout the state and typically included graphic details about the killings that are abhorrent today. While some outlets were more sympathetic to lynching victims, such as the Evening Star's reporting on the lynching of Benjamin Thomas in 1899 (right,) many Southern newspapers fed into a false narrative about Black people, using dehumanizing terms to label victims and assuming the victims' guilt, while using sympathetic language to depict white mobs.

The article on the left, printed in the November 9, 1889 issue of the Richmond Dispatch, includes factual inaccuracies and gross mischaracterizations of the events leading to the victim's arrest—common tactics that media outlets at the time used to justify or soften these killings. The victim, Orion (not Owen) Anderson, was a 14-year-old boy in Leesburg who played a prank on his neighbor by scaring her—he did not commit the assault described in the news article. He was then arrested, charged with assault, and murdered by a vigilante mob before standing trial. Witnesses to the event denied being able to identify any members of the mob and no one was ever arrested or charged in the murder of Orion Anderson.

**From left to right:** Article describing the lynching of 14-year-old, Orion Anderson in Leesburg. Richmond Dispatch, Nov 9, 1889. Article describing the lynching of 16-year-old, Benjamin Thomas in Alexandria. Evening Star, Aug 10, 1899. Images source: Racial Terror: Lynching in Virginia (https://sites.lib.jmu.edu/valynchings/).



# THEY HANGED HIM.

## HOW A LYNCHING WAS CONDUCTED IN LOUDOUN COUNTY.

**Horses with Muffled Feet and a Bogus Prisoner--Swung from a Derrick.**

[Special telegram to the Dispatch.]

LEESBURG, VA., November 8.—On Wednesday evening, October 30th, in the neighborhood of Hamilton, in this county, about dusk a school-girl fifteen years of age was assaulted by a negro boy while on her way home from the Hamilton Academy. Her screams and struggles alarmed the fiend, and fearing that he could not accomplish his purpose he left her and returned to Hamilton. The child reported the assault and declared she believed the negro scoundrel was one Owen Anderson, but that he was disguised so that she could hardly tell. He was taken in charge at once and brought before her, but she failed to identify him. On Thursday morning a search was made on the ground of the attempted assault, and near the place an old guano-sack was found, which the brute evidently used to disguise himself. It was brought before him and having told several tales he confessed his horrible attempt and was forthwith sent to the Leesburg jail to await the action of the grand jury. This morning the community was considerably excited when they learned that Anderson had been taken by a number of men from the jail and hanged on a derrick at the old railroad depôt. About 1 oclock the party of about twenty-five or thirty men disguised entered the town on horseback, and from the noiseless stepping of their horses the presumption is the feet of the horses were muffled or unshod. One of the lynchers was tied and conducted to the jail by two of his companions as a prisoner. The alleged guards rang the bell. Deputy-Sheriff Laycock, the jailer, raised a window and asked who they were. They replied they had a prisoner. He came down and opened the door and admitted them. Then he went into the jail and unlocked the door leading to the cells to admit, as he believed, the prisoner. He stepped in the hall and one of the *posse* said they wanted that negro Anderson. The jailer said, "You cannot get him." He was seized and the keys were taken from him, when one whistled and a crowd of twenty rushed in and captured the prisoner and took him out. They had taken axes, crowbars, and sledges from one of our blacksmith shops to use in case they were needed. The jailer was not able to identify any of the party. The bogus prisoner and the two who had him in charge were not disguised, but were strangers to the county. The prisoner was taken down Church street to the depôt, where one of the *posse* on horseback put the rope through the hook on the derrick, and Anderson was raised up and was dead in a few minutes. Several pistol-shots were fired into his body. One ball struck in the head, one in the body, and one in the leg. The parties then left by the Middleburg road. They are all unknown. The party who paid the penalty of his admitted crime in this case had made two other attempts of a similar nature in that neighborhood.

Coroner Hockett had the body taken down and it was placed in a freight-car standing near by. The body was placed in charge of the Sheriff.

# MOB'S ACT DEPLORED

## Citizens of Alexandria Regard It as a Disgrace.

## DENIAL OF PUBLISHED REPORTS

## Leading Citizens Not Participants in the Affair.

## THE VICTIM BURIED

Special Dispatch to The Evening Star.

ALEXANDRIA, Va., August 10.—After the disorderly and riotous scenes of the early week Alexandria has returned to its normal condition. While nerves had been at a high tension for two days the natural reaction has set in, and citizens generally express sorrow and humiliation at the horrible work of Tuesday night, when Ben Thomas was lynched.

Many of the leading citizens with whom a reporter for The Star has conversed have denounced the lynching in emphatic language as a disgrace to the city. From many quarters protests are heard against the statements that the leading citizens were most prominent in the affair. The mob which lynched Thomas, it is urged, was a miscellaneous congregation, in the ranks of which were to be found many who were not Alexandrians. A large majority of the better class of citizens feel that a dark blot has been placed on the fair page of the city's history.

Up to an early hour this morning the excitement occasioned in anticipation of a negro uprising had not subsided. Citizens in squads patrolled the principal streets and congregated on the public corners. Everybody was armed and ready for a conflict should any hostile movement on the part of the blacks be made. Special policemen were sworn in, while every regular officer was at his post.

The station house was a center of interest. There the uneasy people drifted again and again through the night, eager to learn of any new developments.

**Unfounded Rumors.**

Several messages were received at headquarters of negro gatherings at various obscure points. These warnings received prompt attention, but nothing alarming came to light.

About 11 o'clock a telephone message was received from Washington stating that a mob of colored people had gathered in the vicinity of Waterloo, in the county, and were preparing to invade the city. But little credence was given to these reports, as upon investigation so many had proved groundless.

Mayor Simpson issued orders against the holding of colored balls last night. As a result twenty-five or thirty colored people who had come down from Washington, presumably for attendance on these social affairs, were compelled to return.

Capt. James E. King of the Alexandria Light Infantry assembled his men in Armory Hall at 7:30 o'clock last evening. The arms and ammunition for which he had telegraphed arrived from Richmond on the 3 o'clock train. The company was, therefore, well armed and equipped. The men lay upon their arms almost the entire night. Late in the night Capt. King sent a telegram to Adjt. Gen. Nalle in Richmond announcing that the command had been under arms by orders from the mayor, and would probably disband by 2 a.m.

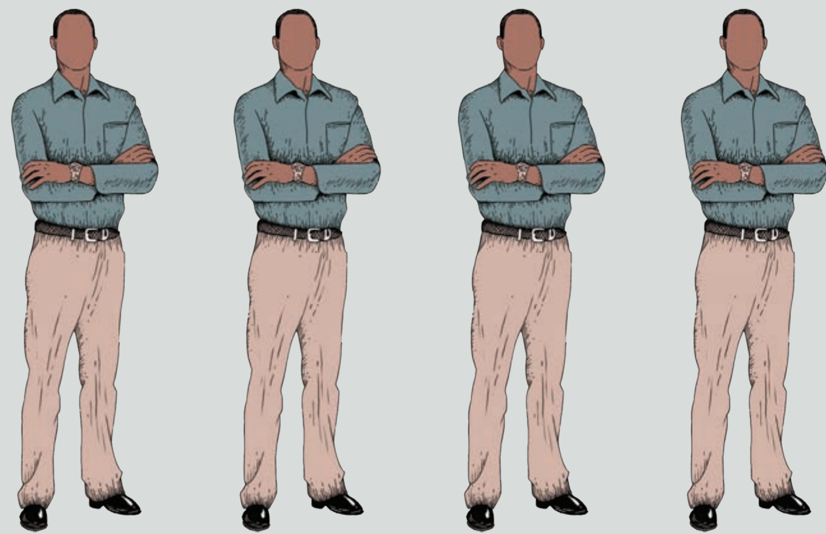
Mayor Simpson was active and alert during the night, keeping in touch with the police and military and alive to the state of affairs. Notwithstanding all the fears and apprehensions, the night wore away without the slightest aggressive movement by the colored people.

**Thomas' Remains Buried.**

The remains of the unfortunate negro, Benjamin Thomas, were quietly interred this morning at 10 o'clock in Penny Hill. Since the lynching Tuesday night his body had lain in Demaine's undertaking rooms on King street. Here it was visited by hundreds. Considering Thomas' violent death, his features were surprisingly natural in appearance. He was only slightly bruised about the head, and his neck was swollen. Elizabeth Thomas, his mother, refused to receive the remains at her home. She could not bear to look upon her boy, she said, and would have nothing to do with his funeral. No incident of interest attended the burial.

In Arlington County, a **Black motorist** is

# 4 TIMES MORE LIKELY



to be stopped by police than a **white motorist**.

Source: Virginia Department of State Police, Criminal Justice Information Systems, Data Analysis & Reporting Team, 2021.

# Changing the Future

*Leaders in Northern Virginia should ensure that all residents have a voice and can participate in decision-making and leadership. Initiatives aimed at improving the safety of people of color in Northern Virginia are urgent. No group should be victims of hate crimes and violence.*

- Particular priorities are addressing systemic racism in law enforcement and criminal justice to eliminate racial bias in apprehension, conviction, sentencing, and incarceration.
- All law enforcement agencies in Northern Virginia should accelerate efforts to address implicit bias, eliminate police misconduct, and aggressively prosecute hate crimes.
- Some efforts are already underway. For example, in 2015, Fairfax County created an independent Police Civilian Review Panel and Independent Police Auditor, initiated a body camera program, and launched ***Diversion First***, a program that offers alternatives to incarceration for people with mental illness, developmental disabilities or substance use disorders.
- Sentencing reforms are also necessary, including those recommended in 2020 by Governor Northam's Commission to Examine Racial Inequity in Virginia Law (Table 1). Restorative justice[3] is also necessary for formerly convicted people, including the removal of barriers to housing, employment, and voting.

3. Restorative justice focuses on relationship-building and repairing past harms by trying to reconcile with victims and the community at large.

| Table 1. Criminal Justice Reforms Recommended by Commission to Examine Racial Inequity in Virginia Law |
|---|
| Require the Sentencing Commission to report sentencing outcomes by race and ethnicity; require courts to publish racial and other demographic data of all low-level offenses. |
| Document results of pretrial hearings, bail decisions, and pretrial incarceration, including breakdowns by race. |
| Prevent the Compensation Board from considering the volume of felony cases when calculating the Commonwealth Attorney's office resourcing. |
| Propose legislation that addresses the impact of mandatory minimum sentencing on racially disproportionate rates of incarceration. |
| Propose legislation that fosters restorative practices like expungement, clemency, sentence reductions, and retroactive sentencing. |
| Abolish or limit felony disenfranchisement by amending or repealing Article II, Section I of the Virginia Constitution. |
| Source: The Commission to Examine Racial Inequity in Virginia Law. *Identifying and Addressing the Vestiges of Inequity and Inequality in Virginia's Laws, 2020.* |

# STORIES OF DISPLACEMENT

Above: "Army 'Blitz' Levels Arlington Area," this photo, from the April 18, 1942 edition of the Washington Star, features the shell of a house being removed to make way for roads that would surround the Pentagon which is seen in the background.

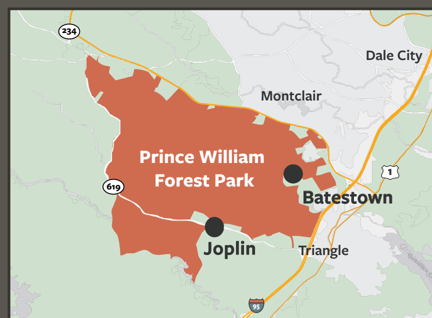
▵ Reprinted with permission of the DC Public Library, Star Collection © Washington Post.

**Displacement is a familiar feature of Black history. Entire communities have been destroyed by invoking eminent domain, the government's power under the law to take land and even level communities for "the good of the public." This authority has been used to build government facilities, highways, and even private single family homes on land where Black families once lived. Black communities have also been displaced by gentrification, which has priced families out of neighborhoods they've occupied for generations.**

## Joplin & Batestown

### (1800–1940's)

In 1800, more than 40% of Prince William County's residents were enslaved. However, freed Black people, such as Henry Cole—the largest Black landholder in Prince William County—and Sally Bates, established 19th century communities such as Batestown and Joplin. These enclaves disappeared completely by the 1940s when the federal government evicted residents to establish a recreational area that would become Prince William Forest Park.



▵ Left: Courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC-DIG-ppmsca-34829.
▵ Right: Courtesy of the DC Public Library Commons

## Freedman's Village

### (1863–1900)

When President Abraham Lincoln passed legislation in 1862 to free all those who were enslaved in the District of Columbia, large numbers of enslaved peoples started to flee to the District. In 1863, the government chose the site of Confederate General Robert E. Lee's Arlington plantation to establish Freedman's Village, a community for Black people seeking protection and to avoid a potential humanitarian crisis. Support for the Village shifted after the war, and the government tried many times to close what had become a thriving Black community. They finally succeeded in evicting the population in 1900. The site is now part of Arlington National Cemetery.

Above, left to right: Black adults and children read books in front of a barracks building at Freedman's Village. As many as 900 students were educated at the Village school. Photographed between 1862 and 1865, Arlington National Cemetery, where Freedman's Village once stood.

▿ Left: Courtesy of the Arlington Public Library
▿ Right: U.S. Bureau of Public Roads.

## Queen City/East Arlington

### (1890's–1942)

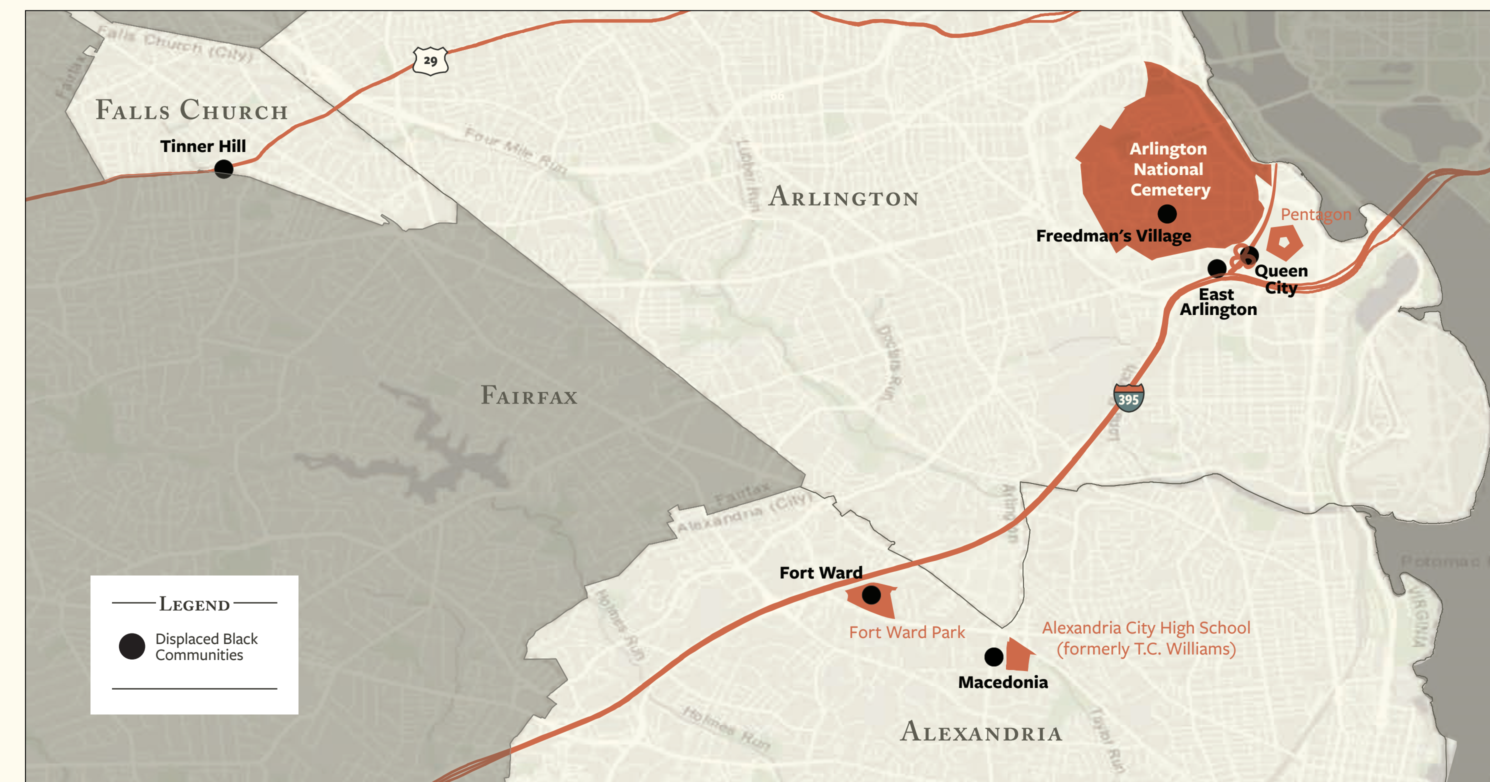
When the Federal government closed Freedman's Village, many of its residents moved to other Black enclaves in Arlington, among them Queen City and neighboring East Arlington. The roads were unpaved and lacked street lights, sidewalks, curbs and gutters. Many households lacked electricity or sewer pipes. Nevertheless, by 1940, East Arlington was a vibrant community, home to 903 individuals and 218 households. In February 1942, as part of the construction of the Pentagon, the federal government condemned Queen City and East Arlington to build a highway cloverleaf near the facility. The residents were given until March to evacuate, a nearly impossible task, especially because wartime housing in the area was extremely limited. With much petition and lobbying on their behalf by First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, the government provided the families with temporary trailers in nearby Johnson's Hill and Nauck until they could find permanent housing.

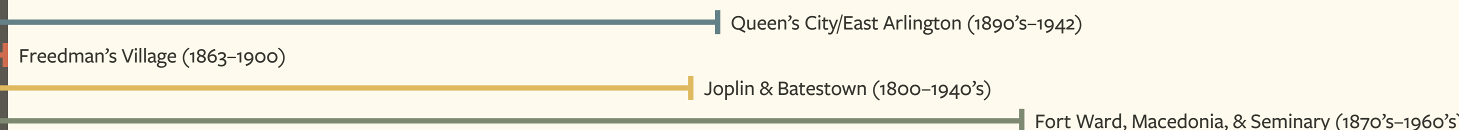
Above, left to right: An unpaved street in Queen City, Aerial photo of Shirley Highway with Pentagon in the background, 1952.The area where Queen City once stood is now occupied by the "three-leaf clover" part of the highway adjacent to the Pentagon.

## Fort Ward, Macedonia, & Seminary

### (1870's–1960's)

Named after its location on the remains of a Civil War fortification, Fort Ward, "The Fort" was a small Black community that emerged in the 1870s in what was then eastern Fairfax County. Because of its close proximity, The Fort was also part of the larger Fairfax Seminary community, which consisted of both Black and white residents, and an area known to Black residents as Macedonia. But in the 1950s and 1960s, Alexandria started buying the property of Black residents to establish the Fort Ward Park and Museum as part of the city's celebration of the 100-year anniversary of the Civil War. And to enable the construction of T.C. Williams High School, named after a racist school superintendent who fought desegregation, the city invoked eminent domain to uproot the residents of Macedonia.



Advocates for open housing in Northern Virginia march through Alexandria on October 8, 1966, the first day of a three-day, 14-mile trek.

**Below:** Civil rights demonstrators in Arlington staged a sit-in at the rental office of Buckingham Apartments on June 9, 1966, demanding fair access to rental property.

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# Wealth Building & Property

*In a country where land is the prime financial asset for wealth-building—policies have persistently thwarted the efforts of Black families to buy and retain land or homes.*

The Black-white wealth gap has lasted generations because—in a country where land is the prime financial asset for wealth-building—policies have persistently thwarted the efforts of Black families to buy and retain land or homes. This was never for lack of effort by prospective Black property owners. In the 1800s, formerly enslaved Black families were eager to buy land, build houses, and open businesses. They built dozens of enclaves, stretching from western Prince William County to the Alexandria waterfront.[4] However, when the turn of the 20th century brought expanded railroad, trolley, and road service from the District of Columbia into Northern Virginia and heightened demand for suburban housing, developers and politicians aggressively sought land belonging to Black families. In 1912, Virginia authorized "segregation districts," making it legal for local governments to segregate neighborhoods, an action taken by the city of Falls Church in 1915. When the U.S. Supreme Court banned such ordinances in 1917, white communities in Arlington County and Fairfax County enacted restrictive covenants that prohibited sales to "non-Caucasian" buyers. Zoning policies, discriminatory lending practices that prevented Black buyers from obtaining mortgages, pricing pressures, and physical threats kept Black families from buying property in more affluent white areas and segregated the Black population into smaller enclaves.

*Continued on p.20*

4. In the early 1800s, formerly enslaved people established a number of Black communities in Alexandria such as "The Bottoms," "Hayti," "The Berg," and "Uptown."

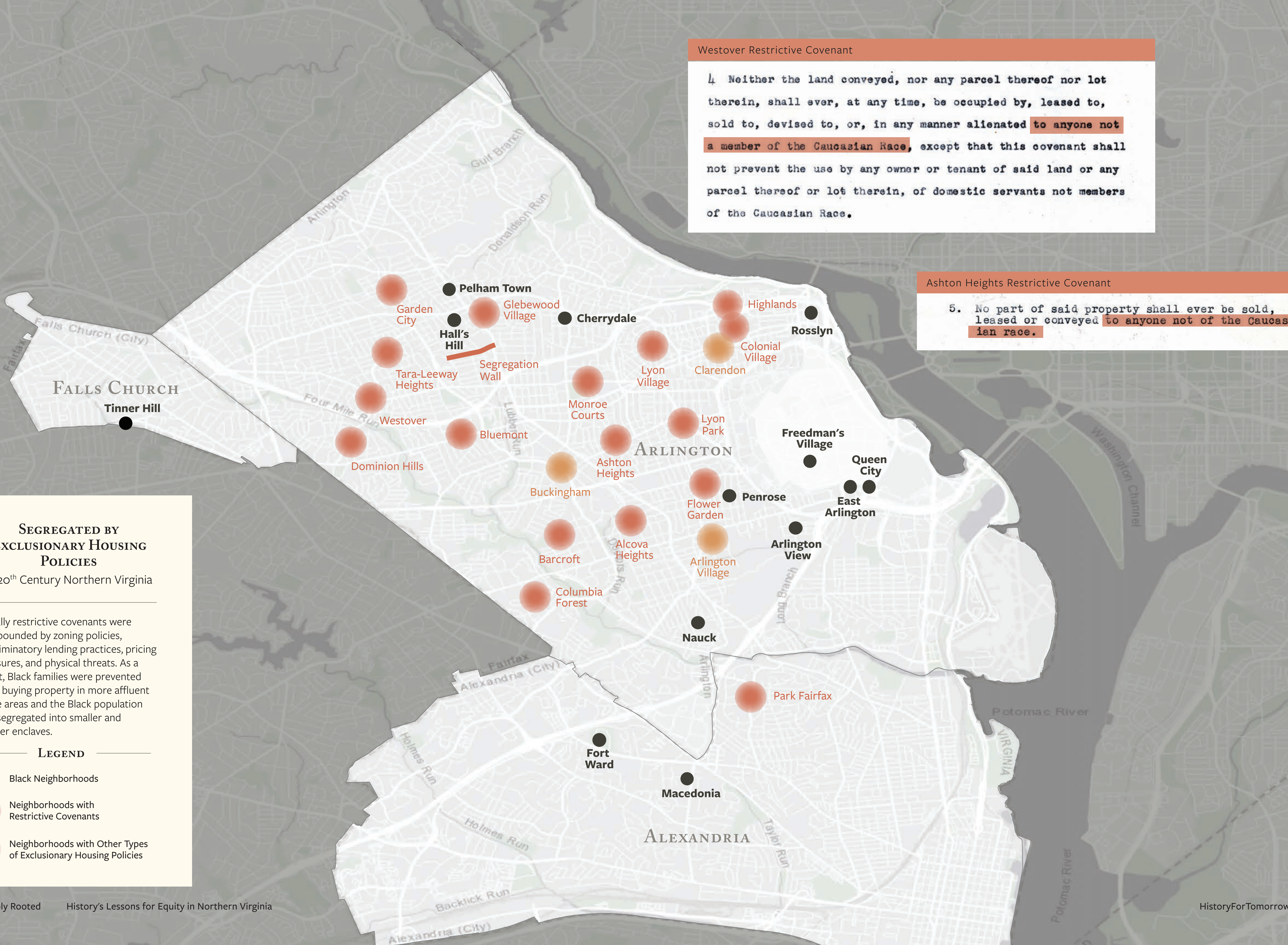
# Segregated by Exclusionary Housing Policies

in 20th Century Northern Virginia

Racially restrictive covenants were compounded by zoning policies, discriminatory lending practices, pricing pressures, and physical threats. As a result, Black families were prevented from buying property in more affluent white areas and the Black population was segregated into smaller and smaller enclaves.

## Legend

- Black Neighborhoods
- Neighborhoods with Restrictive Covenants
- Neighborhoods with Other Types of Exclusionary Housing Policies




### Westover Restrictive Covenant

4 Neither the land conveyed, nor any parcel thereof nor lot therein, shall ever, at any time, be occupied by, leased to, sold to, devised to, or, in any manner alienated to anyone not a member of the Caucasian Race, except that this covenant shall not prevent the use by any owner or tenant of said land or any parcel thereof or lot therein, of domestic servants not members of the Caucasian Race.

### Ashton Heights Restrictive Covenant

5. No part of said property shall ever be sold, leased or conveyed to anyone not of the Caucasian race.

Restrictive Covenants courtesy of the Center for Local History, Arlington Public Library.

At the intersection of North Culpeper Street and 17th Street North in Arlington, remnants of a wall that once extended from North Edison Street to North Glebe Road. The wall was constructed in the 1930s to physically separate the white neighborhood of Woodlawn (now Waycroft-Woodlawn) from the historically Black neighborhood of Hall's Hill. Photo by Carol Woolf.

*Continued from p.17*

White communities figuratively and literally walled off these Black enclaves. Still standing today are remnants of a wall that white residents of Arlington's Waycroft-Woodlawn neighborhood built in the 1930s to separate themselves from the adjacent Black community, Hall's Hill-High View Park. White control of public utilities and transportation stifled economic growth in Black communities. Decades after paved roads eased access to white subdivisions, Black communities were still served by dirt roads and went without municipal services such as sewage, water, and street lights. In the 1930s and 1940s, it was common for residents of Black enclaves like Hall's Hill to place lanterns in their windows to light the streets at night.

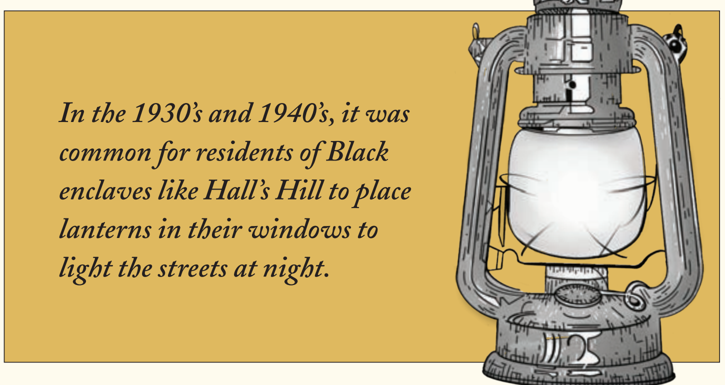
Black homeowners with limited educational opportunities, few job options, and depreciating property values often lacked the finances to modernize their homes. Federally subsidized mortgages that became available in the 1930s were approved almost exclusively for white buyers and routinely denied to Blacks, especially those seeking homes outside of "redlined" areas.[5] The disinvestment and resulting housing decay in Black neighborhoods played into the hands of developers and politicians, who rebranded Black enclaves as "blight," cited violations of housing codes, and authorized developers to clear Black properties for new construction. By World War II, suburban development, restrictive covenants, and discriminatory lending had pushed Arlington's once widely dispersed Black population into three small enclaves, and the 19th century Black communities that once dotted Fairfax County and Loudoun County were gone.

5. Redlining takes its name from a practice of the Federal Housing Administration, beginning in the 1930s, to deny mortgages in areas near Black populations, often shaded red on maps, while subsidizing mortgages in white areas.

The G.I. Bill widened the wealth gap by helping a generation of white veterans obtain college tuition and home loans to launch middle-class lives, while greatly limiting those opportunities for Black veterans.[6] Despite the housing boom, Northern Virginia's supply of housing that is affordable did not keep pace with population growth. The growth of largely white suburbs in the outlying areas of Northern Virginia led to the expansion of interstate highways throughout Northern Virginia. Planners routed these highways through Black neighborhoods, creating corridors of low-priced property, especially along Shirley Memorial Highway and Interstate 95, which were zoned for high-density housing. In the 1960s and 1970s, people of color came to represent a larger share of the population along these corridors, occupying the garden and tower apartment communities of West Alexandria (Shirley-Duke, Beauregard) and the no-frills housing subdivisions that were built along Interstate 95 in Prince William County between Woodbridge and Dumfries. It is in these census tracts that Northern Virginia's largest Black populations are now located. In some of these tracts, Black people account for approximately half of the population. The census tracts with Northern Virginia's lowest life expectancy (75 years) are also here. In many of the census tracts lining the interstate corridor of West Alexandria and Prince William county, median household income is below $70,000 per year and is as low as $49,786 per year in one Dumfries tract.

6. By extension, the G.I. Bill's preferential support for white students served to underwrite historically white colleges and universities at the expense of historically Black schools, which were already underfunded.

*In the 1930's and 1940's, it was common for residents of Black enclaves like Hall's Hill to place lanterns in their windows to light the streets at night.*

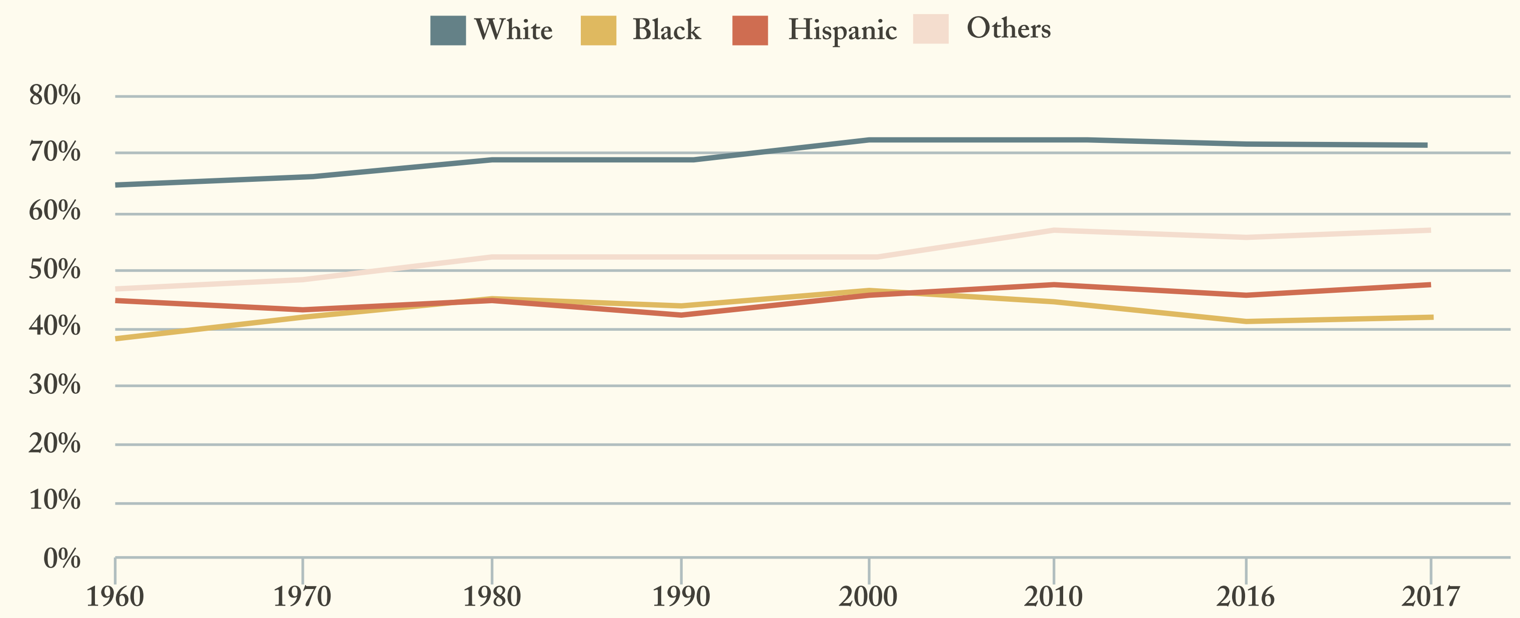


White families in high-income areas of Northern Virginia have benefited to varying degrees from inherited wealth. Although some people of high socioeconomic status worked their way up from poverty, a large number of successful white families benefited from the property ownership, education, savings, promotions, and other systemic advantages that societal structures offered their parents and prior generations. Many Black people of the same era were systematically denied these resources for upward mobility and, lacking the transgenerational transfer of wealth that occurred in successful white families, were often at an economic disadvantage before they were even born. The widening of the Black-white wealth gap that occurred after World War II was less about determination, resilience, and hard work—which existed in all racial groups—than the structural conditions set by society, often rooted in systemic racism, and the insidious ways wealth inequality has been allowed to compound over time.

Although the Fair Housing Act of 1968 brought major reforms to housing discrimination based on race, the practice did not disappear and has, instead, evolved into what exists today. As of 2017, prospective Black homeowners were denied mortgages at a rate 80% higher than that of white applicants. The gap between Black and white homeowners is even wider today than it was in 1960. Although gains in Black homeownership rates were made in the decades after the Fair Housing Act, they were erased in the 21st century. Black people were more vulnerable than whites to predatory lending, were more likely to fall victim to the 2008 housing market crash, and benefited less from the economic recovery that followed the Great Recession.

The rising costs of homes in Northern Virginia remain a major problem for low- and moderate-income families. Two-thirds of low-income Northern Virginians are "severely burdened" by the cost of housing and over half of burdened households are non-white. This signals two things: that the area has an insufficient supply of housing that is affordable and that the current distribution of wealth denies many residents the income they need to cover the cost of living. Zoning policies have also contributed to racial segregation. By setting aside large parts of the region for high-price, single-family housing, and because racially discriminatory policies limit the wealth of Black households, zoning laws serve to exacerbate racial segregation. Pricing pressures continue to restrict property ownership among Black families who lack the inherited wealth of white buyers. Today, many neighborhoods in Virginia are more racially segregated than they were 50 years ago. In sum, today's low rate of Black homeownership, racial disparities in access to market-rate housing, and the places where those homes are concentrated, can be traced to sustained and deliberate historical forces.

## Homeownership Rates by Race or Ethnicity in the United States




**Source:** Decennial Census, American Community Survey, and Urban Institute.

Civil rights demonstrators parade outside the rental office of Buckingham Apartments on June 9, 1966, demanding fair access to rental property.

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▿ Courtesy of the Center for Local History, Arlington Public Library.

The Arlington Courier

Northern Virginia's Largest Newspaper

Vol. III—No. 17 | Entered as second-class matter at Arlington, Virginia. | Arlington, Va., Thursday, August 11, 1938 | Published Every Thursday in Arlington County, Virginia. | Price 5c Per Copy

ROW HOUSES CONDEMNED

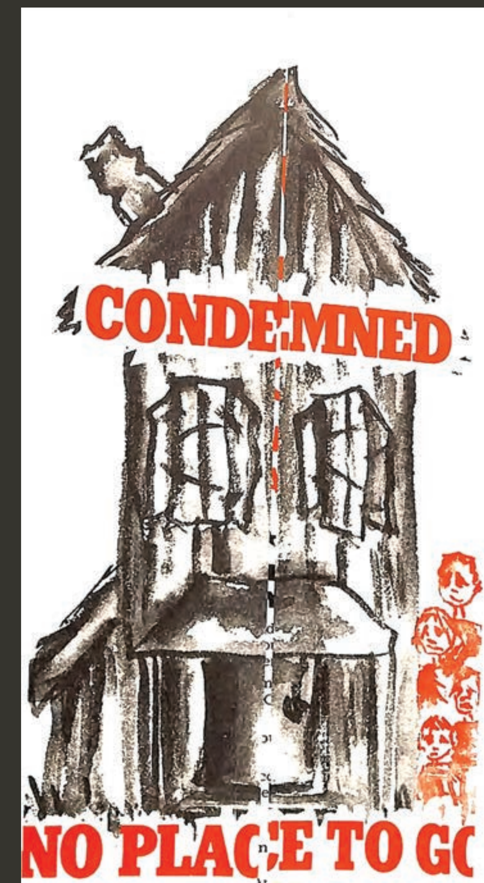
★ ★ ★ ★

CIVIC FEDERATION MASS MEETING DEMANDS THAT THEY BE STOPPED

★ ★ ★ ★

Colonel Garnett's Broadside Is Applauded By Monarchs, Lions, Rotarians, Kiwanians

ABOVE: A 1938 local news headline covering the proposed ban on rowhouses because they would detract from the "single-family character" of Arlington. Residents of rowhouses were often people of color. Headline from the *Arlington Courier*, 1938.
BELOW, LEFT AND RIGHT: Brochure distributed by the League of Women Voters, promoting the establishment of a redevelopment and housing authority in Fairfax County, 1965.




NO TAX RISE; NO COUNTY BONDS

Federal funds have already been appropriated for planning and construction of low-rent housing by local authorities. Rents must cover operating and management costs. The Authority's housing program will not cause any bond obligation on the county.

28 YEARS OF FEDERAL TAXES. BUT NO HOUSING

We have helped pay for over a half million housing units in other communities through our Federal taxes. This is our chance to receive something in return for our tax dollars.

COUNTY CONTROLLED

The County Board of Supervisors appoints five local citizens to run the Authority. The Board of Supervisors must approve the housing proposed by the Authority. Projects must comply with local building codes, zoning and master plans. Rents, income limits, and residence requirements are all determined locally.

AUTHORITY CONTRIBUTES REVENUE

While the County would not tax housing owned by the Authority, approximately 10% of rents would be paid to the County as the Authority's share of the cost of regular municipal services.

UNLESS YOU VOTE YES ON NOV 2

☒ FOR A REDEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING AUTHORITY

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

THIS AUTHORITY IS NECESSARY BECAUSE:

County long-term residents are being forced from their homes by housing code enforcement and suburban development.

Those low-income families displaced cannot afford housing in the County or metropolitan area.

Private builders have not been able to construct low-cost housing.

The County should not continue to displace these workers and their families without ensuring they have a place to go.

A local Redevelopment and Housing Authority using Federal funds can provide truly low-rent housing.

ALL WILL BENEFIT

*Families with low incomes* will be able to afford decent housing for the first time. .

*Fathers* will be able to keep their jobs in the area. .

*Mothers* will have more money to feed and clothe their families, when housing costs are reduced.

*Children* will be given a "head start" at school, with better conditions at home enabling them to study and get a good night's sleep.

*The elderly*, most often victims of poverty, can live in housing designed for their special needs, with social and medical services readily at hand.

*County taxpayers* will benefit from reduced health and welfare costs as improved housing conditions, lower disease rates, and lower rents help families remain independent.

*Private employers and county government* can better retain lower skilled workers in essential service operations. At present these workers cannot find housing in the area or are being forced to leave. Many become discouraged at having to commute long distances to work, and quit.

*Private contractors* will build the housing for the Authority, and thus will be able to serve the low income market while making a fair profit.

RESIDENCE REQUIREMENTS CUSTOMARY

Our local Authority can, and most authorities do, set up residence requirements to ensure that the housing is built for Fairfax County residents.

*For Further Information Call:* League of Women Voters—Fairfax Area, SO 8-9327 *or* Fairfax County Citizens for Adequate Housing, JE 4-4085.

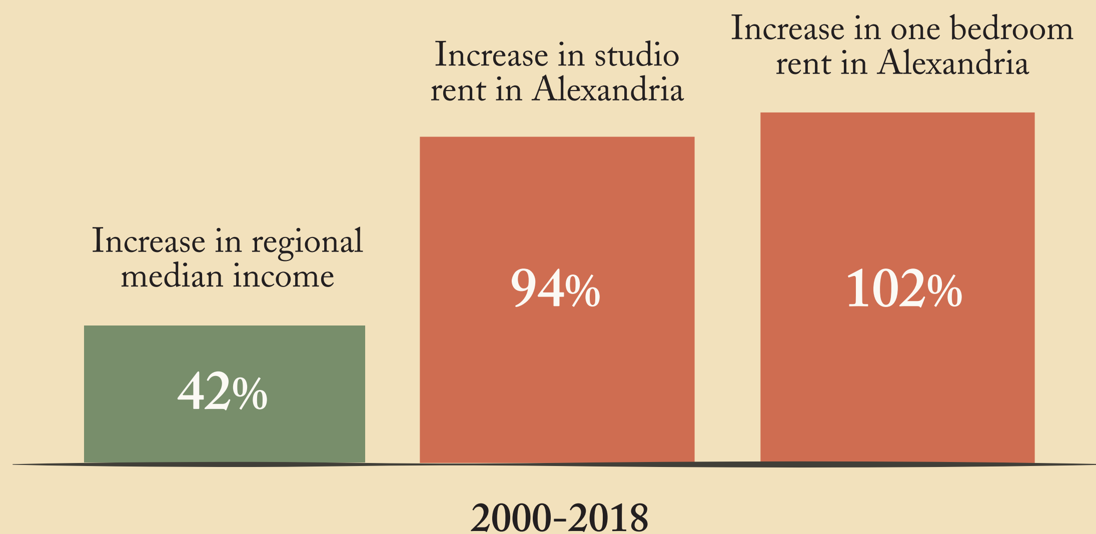
# TWO-THIRDS

of low-income Northern Virginians are **"severely burdened"** by the cost of housing.

# OVER HALF

of burdened households are **non-white.**

SOURCE: Data from Unequal Burden, Community Foundation for Northern Virginia, 2021.

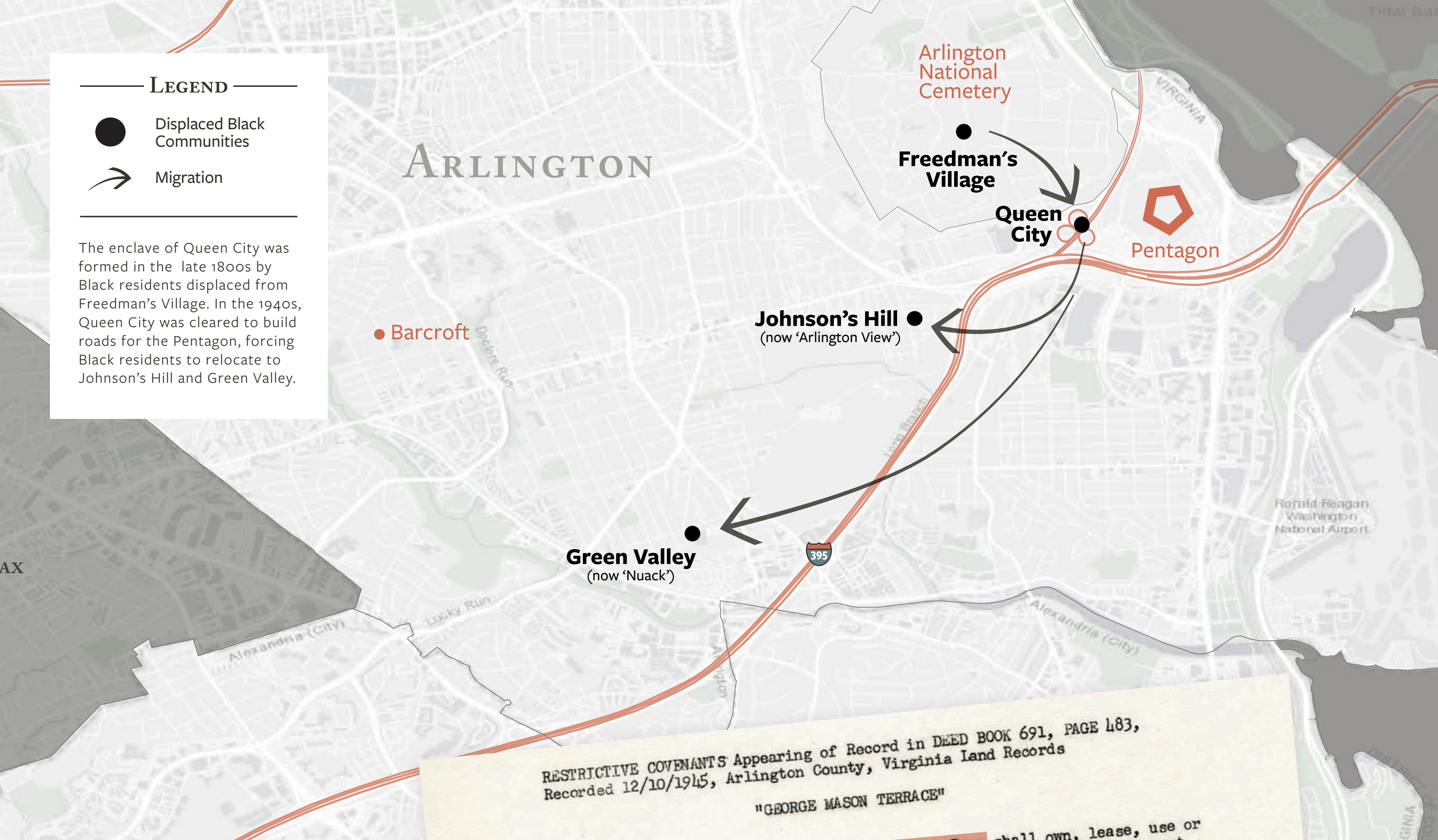



SOURCE: HUD; City of Alexandria 2018 Annual Apartment Survey.

# CHANGING THE FUTURE

*Policies to reduce racial inequities in wealth distribution and property ownership in Northern Virginia are a recognized priority of state and local governments.*

- For example, in 2020 a Governor's commission recommended imposing state limits on exclusionary zoning in localities, adopting more effective inclusionary zoning, and increasing allocations to the Virginia Housing Trust Fund, which provides low-interest loans for housing projects.
- Local jurisdictions and the private sector—including developers and investors—must pursue efforts to broaden access to housing that is affordable, including promoting the development of mixed-income neighborhoods and limiting requirements for single-family, detached homes. In 2019, the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments set worthy targets for the optimal amount, location, and cost of new housing units, which local governments should embrace.
- Land banks, which exist elsewhere in the Commonwealth, can transform vacant, abandoned property into productive use.
- The financial sector can help by expanding access to full-service banking in communities of color and abolishing discriminatory and predatory lending practices.
- Low-income families require more assistance to maintain housing stability, a need that local governments in Northern Virginia have been working to address. For example, Arlington County's initiative, *Housing Arlington*, has created funds for affordable housing investment and county loans, established a housing conservation district with market-affordable housing, and arranged rental assistance for low-income households. Other counties in Northern Virginia are also working to address the housing crisis, although all acknowledge that more must be done.
- Jurisdictions should expand enrollment in housing choice voucher programs, and ensure that such vouchers provide access to decent, stable housing by, for example, requiring or incentivizing landlords to accept them. State and local jurisdictions should also develop more comprehensive programs to prevent evictions and their consequences, and should pursue reforms of landlord-tenant laws.
- More systemic policies are needed to address the racial wealth gap. One promising strategy being explored in many U.S. cities is to invest in "baby bonds," which are held in trust until children reach adulthood. Municipalities can also target reparations toward housing needs. For example, the city of Evanston, Illinois awarded $25,000 to eligible Black households to be used for home repairs or as down payments on property.




RESTRICTIVE COVENANTS Appearing of Record in DEED BOOK 691, PAGE 483, Recorded 12/10/1945, Arlington County, Virginia Land Records

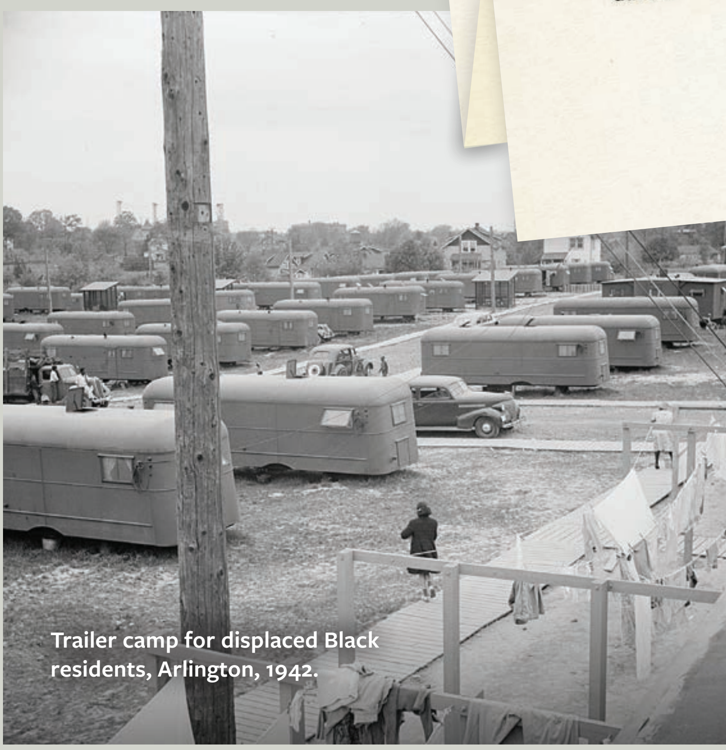
"GEORGE MASON TERRACE"

1) No persons of any race other than the Caucasian Race shall own, lease, use or occupy any building or any lot, except that this covenant shall not prevent occupancy by domestic servants of a different race domiciled with an owner or tenant.

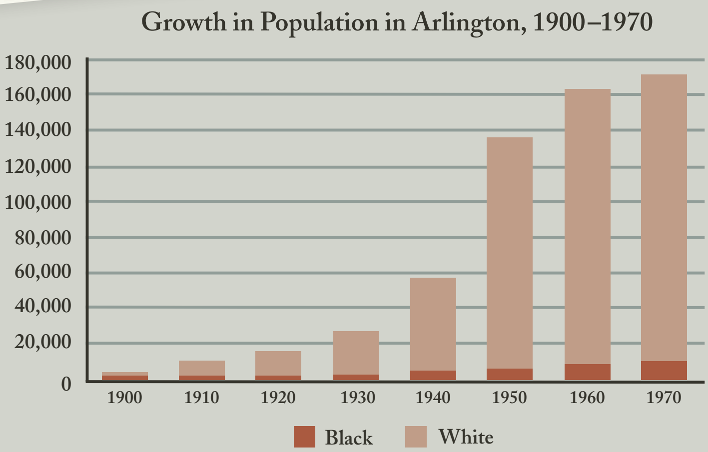
right to prosecute any proceedings at law or in equity against any person violating or attempting to violate any of the covenants and restrictions herein contained and either to prevent him from so doing or to recover damages or other dues for such violation.

* * * * *

**Right:** Excerpt of restrictive covenant for George Mason Terrace, a development in the Barcroft neighborhood of Arlington.



Trailer camp for displaced Black residents, Arlington, 1942.




**Above:** The development of Arlington into a suburb attracted increasing numbers of white people and forced the Black population into small enclaves. Source: Perry N., et al. *Southeastern Geographer*, 2013.

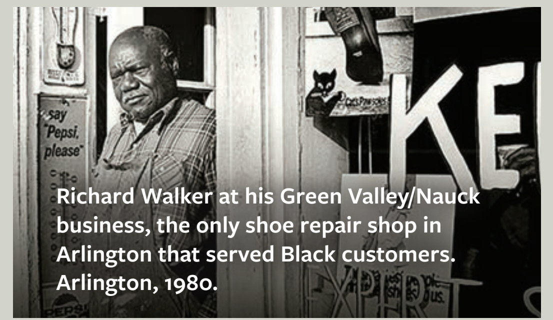
◄ Restrictive covenant courtesy of the Center for Local History, Arlington Public Library. Trailer camp photo courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC-DIG-fsa-8c34624. Photo by Marjory Collins.
► Bottom photo courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC-DIG-fsa-8c34636. Photo by Marjory Collins. All others courtesy of the Arlington Photographic Documentary Project, photo by Lloyd Wolf.

# A Closer Look: South Arlington

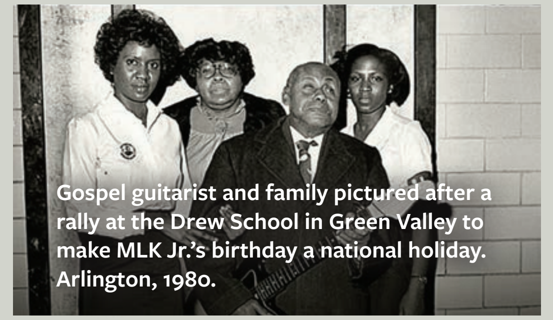
The areas **now known as Nauck** and **Arlington View** once consisted of plantations. After the Civil War, freed slaves bought land and built communities in what was **then known as Green Valley** and **Johnson's Hill**, respectively. When rail service arrived at the turn of the 20th century and Green Valley expanded into Douglass Park, it became Arlington's largest—albeit highly segregated—Black community. Blacks were unwelcome in surrounding white communities, such as Alcova Heights and Barcroft. For example, in the George Mason Terrace section of Barcroft, a 1945 **restrictive covenant** prevented people who were not "Caucasian" from owning, leasing, using, or occupying buildings or lots. The county spent little on utilities or road service for the Black community. Water, sewer, and electricity did not reach Johnson's Hill until 1942, and a dead end was left on Nauck's 16th Street, effectively cutting off access to the area's main thoroughfare, Walter Reed Drive.

In the 1940s, Nauck and Arlington View lost land to construction of the Pentagon and Shirley Memorial Highway. Mud from the project was dumped in Johnson's Hill, and both communities became sites for **trailer camps** and public housing for displaced Black families. Although residents met these challenges with resilience, as when they **formed the nation's first cooperative to buy public housing projects** after World War II, the community's infrastructure suffered from disinvestment. Roads crumbled and overcrowding increased as Arlington's Black population, pushed out of other areas, moved there. Nauck's population grew by more than 17% between 1950 and 1960. A 1966 *Washington Post* article described its homes as "little more than shacks," noting white middle-class homes that stood across the street. Rising housing costs made it too costly for Black families to remain. In the 1990s, many sold their land to developers building luxury townhomes, often at prices that were too low to rebuy in the area. Nonetheless, Black people still constitute a substantial share (30% or more) of the population of Nauck and Arlington View, but many live in challenging conditions. Whereas median household income in Arlington County averages $120,071 per year, it is only $70,000–80,000 per year in Arlington View and Nauck and below $50,000 per year in two Douglass Park census tracts, too little for Northern Virginia's high cost of living. Decades of segregation and disinvestment have left their mark. A 2015 article about the wealth divide in Arlington noted that the average price for a home was $417,592 in Nauck but $1.5 million in Lyon Village, where restrictive covenants once banned sales to Blacks. In a county where life expectancy is as high as 88 years, life expectancy in the Forest Glen neighborhood off Columbia Pike is as low as 77 years.

Chinn Brothers Funeral Home. Green Valley/Nauck, Arlington, 1979.




Richard Walker at his Green Valley/Nauck business, the only shoe repair shop in Arlington that served Black customers. Arlington, 1980.



Gospel guitarist and family pictured after a rally at the Drew School in Green Valley to make MLK Jr.'s birthday a national holiday. Arlington, 1980.

Arlington trailer camp occupant tending to his wartime "victory" garden, 1942. A clear act of patriotism in the midst of overt discrimination and government-sanctioned displacement.

Female student raising her hand in a science classroom at Hoffman-Boston school, 1950s.

**Opposite:** Students wait for the opening bell of the school year at the newly integrated Fort Myer elementary school, September 7, 1954.



# Education

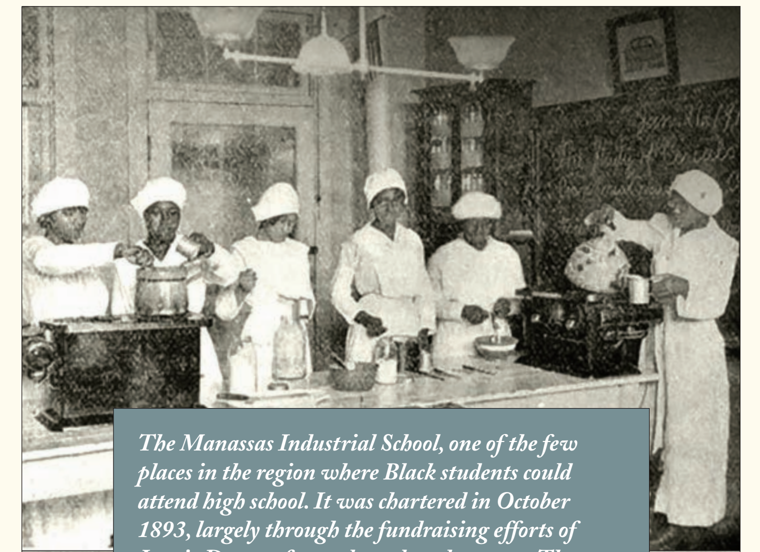
*For generations, Black families have been striving for educational opportunities as a chance at upward mobility, but students of color still face multiple barriers to quality schooling.*

For enslaved people, education was a chance at freedom and upward mobility, which is why Virginia forbade education during enslavement.[7] After Emancipation, freed Black families quickly established schools for Black students across the region, but they received little support from local government. The 1870 law that established Virginia's public school system required separate facilities for white and Black children, and Black schools received little funding, thereby ensuring that facilities, curriculum, teacher salaries, and educational outcomes would suffer. Schools for Black children were often one-room, overcrowded buildings that offered few grade levels, "castoff" books and furniture from white schools, outhouses, and little heat. Many Black students who wanted to attend high school rode trolleys and buses to Washington, D.C. or to the Manassas Industrial School.

In the 1940s and 1950s, Black parents in Northern Virginia turned to the courts to demand better funding for Black schools and the right to enroll their children in white schools, but progress was slow. Virginia led a group of southern states in a movement known as "Massive Resistance," refusing to honor *Brown v. Board of Education*, the 1954 U.S. Supreme Court decision that prohibited school segregation. In 1956, Virginia passed "emergency" legislation that empowered the governor to close schools that were under court order to integrate, defund schools that did integrate, and give tuition grants to white parents who enrolled their children in private schools later known as "segregation academies." A state board limited how many Black pupils could transfer to white schools, citing the psychological burden on white students and other racist criteria. Television news cameras were rolling in February 1959 when four Black children received police protection upon entering Arlington's Stratford Junior High School, the first Virginia school to desegregate.

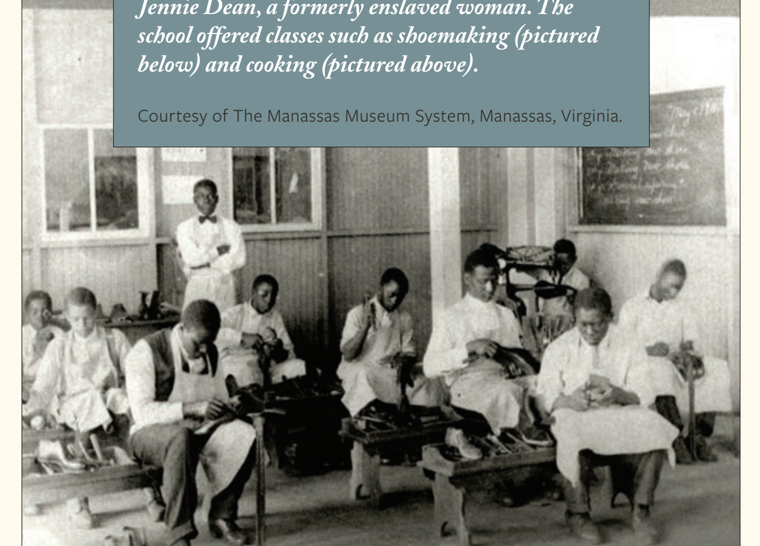
7. More educational opportunities were available to Black students in the District of Columbia which, until 1846, included parts of Alexandria and Arlington County.

▲ Restrictive covenant courtesy of the Center for Local History, Arlington Public Library.
▼ Reprinted with permission of the DC Public Library, Star Collection © Washington Post.



*The Manassas Industrial School, one of the few places in the region where Black students could attend high school. It was chartered in October 1893, largely through the fundraising efforts of Jennie Dean, a formerly enslaved woman. The school offered classes such as shoemaking (pictured below) and cooking (pictured above).*

Courtesy of The Manassas Museum System, Manassas, Virginia.



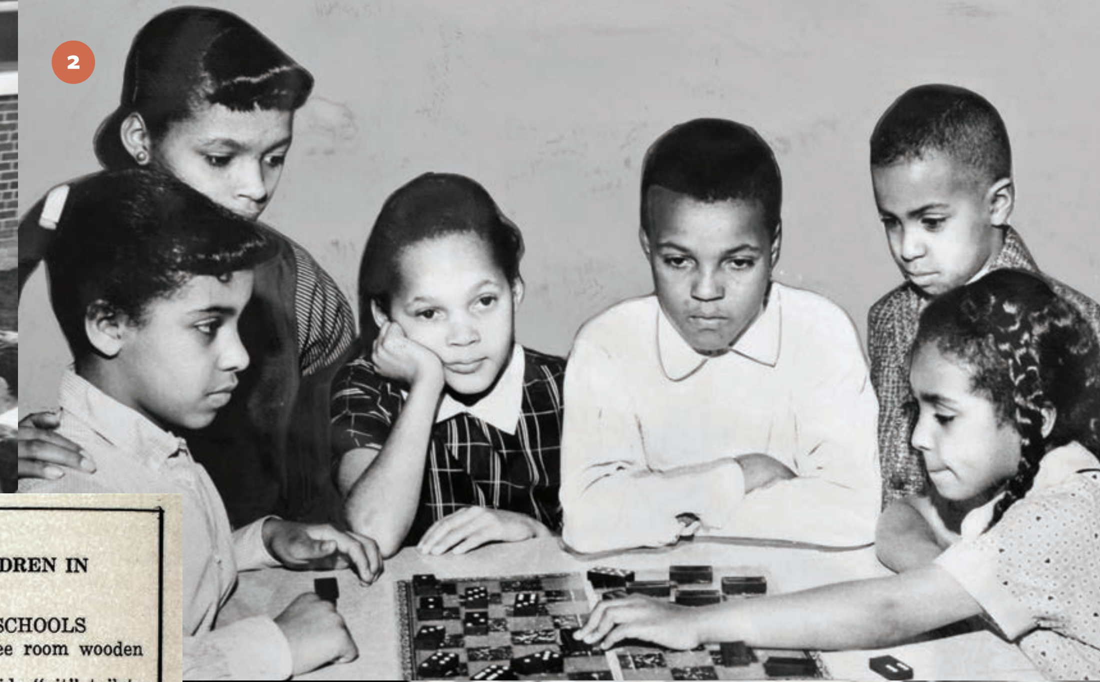
Although the 1964 Civil Rights Act prohibited school segregation based on race, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 1974 that school districts were generally not required to desegregate. White parents moved to outlying areas of Northern Virginia where schools had fewer minorities. This "white flight," combined with exclusionary zoning and housing prices that kept people of color from joining them, heightened the racial segregation of neighborhoods (and classrooms). Although graduation rates among Black students have since increased, educational disparities persist. For example, the proportion of white and Black 8th graders in Fairfax County who passed the 2018–2019 Standards of Learning examination for mathematics was 91% and 74%, respectively. Students of color are more likely to be in schools that are inadequately funded, cannot retain teachers, and offer fewer advanced classes.

School segregation is worsening in Virginia. A student's zip code matters—educational resources and outcomes are connected to a child's neighborhood, largely because schools are funded by property taxes. The disparity in local tax revenue for schools, combined with residential segregation, ensures that middle- to high-income, predominantly white school districts, which typically require fewer resources to succeed, receive more funding than schools in low-income, mostly minority neighborhoods with greater needs. In addition to disparities between districts, segregation within districts is also prevalent and is estimated to contribute to at least half of all multiracial school segregation in Virginia.

The ability of Black students to obtain an education is also impacted by society's tendency to criminalize Black people, which often starts

1. White supremacists seized a meeting room at Annandale High School on April 30, 1954, forcing a Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) workshop on integration to move outside onto the school lawn; 2. Students affected by an upcoming court order to end segregation in Alexandria public schools play together on February 4, 1959, days before entering formerly all-white schools; 3. Black children and their parents leave the Alexandria courthouse on September 8, 1958 after being denied an injunction to end segregation of the city's schools. At the time, Virginia state law required the closure of any public school system that admitted Black students to white schools, as part of Virginia's "massive resistance" to the Brown v. Board of Education decision; 4. A building in Arlington selected to serve as a whites-only school in the event the state of Virginia closed Arlington's public schools to resist desegregation, July 17, 1958. Whites-only "segregation academies" became common across the South. Note the misspelling ("grammer") on the sign. CENTER: Table contrasting resources for white and Black schools in 1935 and 1945 school board budgets. From a flyer written by the civil rights activist Edwin Bancroft (E.B.) Henderson and distributed by the Fairfax County NAACP to call attention to school conditions that were separate but hardly equal. The flyer appears in Henderson's *History of the Fairfax County Branch of the NAACP.*

Photos 1–4 Reprinted with permission of the DC Public Library, Star Collection © *Washington Post.* Center photo: Printed with the permission of the Tinner Hill Heritage Foundation, Inc: Henderson Family Collection



**OUR DISGRACE AND SHAME**

**SCHOOL FACILITIES FOR NEGRO CHILDREN IN FAIRFAX COUNTY**

| WHITE SCHOOLS | NEGRO SCHOOLS |
|---|---|
| 1 All brick or stone, except 4 wooden buildings | 1 One to three room wooden buildings |
| 2 Have running water, janitorial service, inside toilets, central heating | 2 All have outside "pit" toilets for teachers and children, no running water; all stoves in the rooms |
| 3 Children ride in heated busses. | 3 No janitorial service—teachers do all cleaning, haul water, make fires |
| | 4 Three schools have no water on premises |
| | 5 Some children walk from 4 to 6 miles to school |
| | 6 Buses are old and rickety and are not heated. |

**HOW SCHOOL FUNDS ARE SHARED**

In 1935 the School Board sought a grant of $153,022.50 from PWA and a bond issue (which was defeated) to raise $187,027.50. Of this total of $340,050.00 it was proposed to spend for:

WHITE SCHOOLS....................$330,750—97.4 per cent
COLORED SCHOOLS ................ 9,000— 2.6 per cent

In 1935 this county owed the State Literary Fund $188,739.32 (all of which had been spent on white schools). In that year the colored population of the county was 19 per cent.

The 1945-46 PROPOSED budget provided among other items:

| FOR WHITE SCHOOLS | | FOR COLORED SCHOOLS |
|---|---|---|
| Administration | $18,380 | 0 |
| Operation of School Plant (Salary of janitor, light, telephone and fuel) | 80,350 | ? |
| Capital Outlay | $745,000 | $45,000 |

The following proposed expenditures of a proposed loan from the State Literary fund were approved:

| WHITE SCHOOLS | COLORED SCHOOLS |
|---|---|
| $50,000 for Herndon High School | 0 |
| $40,000 for 2 classrooms, wash room and cafeteria at Vienna | 0 |
| $20,000 for 2 classrooms at Lincolnia | 0 |
| $10,000 to complete 2 classrooms at Groveton | 0 |
| $40,000 additional was secured to add elementary rooms to Madison School | |

with youth. The "school to prison pipeline" is a major problem in Virginia; in 2011–2012, Virginia schools referred Black students to police and courts at three times the national average. This process starts early; within K–12, school suspension and other forms of punishment disproportionately affect Black students, and carry long-term consequences for educational outcomes. In the 2015–2016 school year, Black students in Fairfax County were three times more likely to be suspended than white students.

Barriers to education continue beyond primary and secondary education. Tuition costs, standardized tests that favor whites, and biased admission policies exacerbate disparities in higher education. Most Black parents have not acquired or inherited the family savings that enable many white families to pay for college, in part because of the barriers they and their ancestors faced in gainful employment and property ownership. As a consequence, at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, advances in Black students' enrollment have been accompanied by some of the lowest persistence rates, highest undergraduate dropout rates, highest borrowing rates, and largest debt burdens of any racial group. In Fairfax County, 74% of white adults, but only 46% of Black adults, hold a Bachelor's degree. Even with a bachelor's degree, Black professionals in the United States who are aged 25 to 34 earn 15% less than the average earnings of all bachelor's graduates of the same age, and their unemployment rate is two-thirds higher. These economic challenges, in turn, affect their ability to afford housing and the high cost of living in Northern Virginia.

BELOW: Lance Newman (far left) and Ronald Deskin (second to left) leave Stratford Junior High School with other students, two days after the school became the first integrated school in Virginia. The two boys were among the first four Black students admitted by the formerly all-white school, 1959.

Reprinted with permission of the DC Public Library, Star Collection © Washington Post.

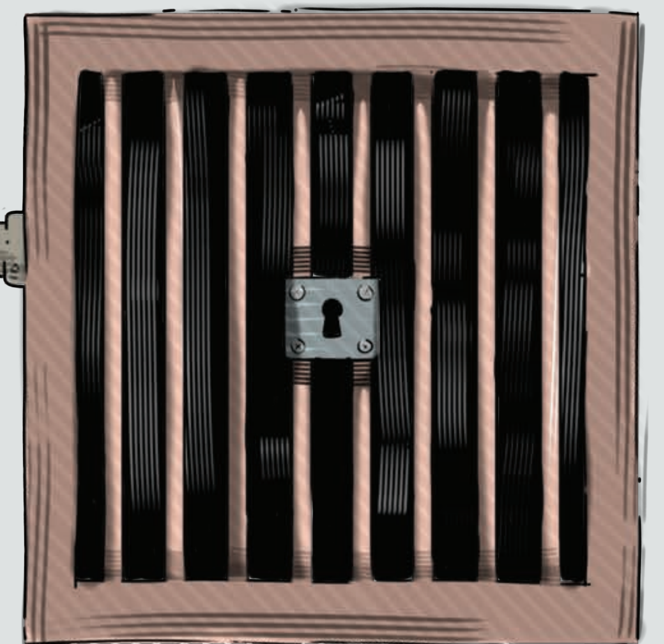
The **"school to prison pipeline"** is a major problem in Virginia.

**In 2011–2012,** Virginia schools referred Black students to police and courts at **three times the national average.**

Source: The US Department of Education Office of Civil Rights data collection on school discipline.

**In the 2015–2016 school year,** Black students in Fairfax County were **three times more likely** to be suspended than white students.

Source: Fairfax County Public Schools, Student Behavior, Discipline, and Disproportionality: Phase 3 Executive Summary, 2019.



In Fairfax County,

**74%**

**of white adults**

**but only**

**46%**

**of Black adults**

hold a

**Bachelor's degree.**

SOURCE: Fairfax County. Fairfax Economic Success Strategic Plan, 2019.

# CHANGING THE FUTURE

*School districts in Northern Virginia should strengthen initiatives to reduce dropout rates among students of color, increase high school graduation rates, and prepare students adequately for college or vocations.*

- State and local governments can promote policies at the school district level by working to adjust attendance boundaries to increase diversity, update funding formulas to deal adequately with fiscal needs, invest adequately in under-resourced school divisions, and expand broadband access throughout Northern Virginia.
- More proactive efforts are needed to disrupt the school-to-prison pipeline and address racial bias in disciplinary suspensions, such as abolishing zero-tolerance policies, eliminating punishment for subjective offences, removing police officers from schools, and implementing programs for restorative justice. Fairfax County, for example, has focused on supporting positive behavior, increasing availability to apprenticeships and career academies that provide work experience, and expanding advanced academic programs; other jurisdictions should consider similar strategies.
- An important goal that can reduce bias in disciplinary suspensions and improve educational outcomes is to increase the diversity of the teacher workforce, which in many Northern Virginia jurisdictions is overwhelmingly white. Increasing the likelihood that students of color will interact with teachers who look like themselves is known to improve educational outcomes.
- Maintaining a diverse workforce requires not only hiring more teachers of color but also enacting policies to retain them, such as easing debt burdens, changing the school culture to create a more welcoming climate for teachers (and students and families) of color, and requiring recurring cultural-competency training as part of the teacher certification process.
- Students of color may also benefit from mentorship programs, as studies suggest that a student's personal connection with a teacher or another adult may influence college persistence and success.
- Expanding access to early childhood education and addressing health inequities among students of color are also effective strategies to improve educational outcomes. Several Northern Virginia jurisdictions are exploring the feasibility of community school or "whole school" models that address the social, emotional, physical, and academic needs of students.
- Initiatives to prioritize access to college for students of color—including reducing tuition costs, addressing biases in standardized testing and admission decisions, providing free two-year college, and reducing student loan burden—should be implemented. And Governor Northam's proposal for a tuition-free community college program for low- and middle-income students should move forward.

# STORIES OF RESILIENCE

**Black history is a story of resilience in defiance of displacement and discrimination. From the 1800s onward, Black families have been determined to establish communities and open businesses, churches, and schools. With little help from local governments, and often deprived of basic utilities such as electricity or plumbing, Black residents came together to find solutions. Oral histories from residents of these communities tell stories of folks looking out for one another and a strong sense of community.**

Some Black contractors built homes for Black families that white builders turned away. Two formerly enslaved men, Henry Holmes and William Butler, became developers, building the Butler-Holmes subdivision in the Penrose section of Arlington in 1882. And Richard Drew, an Arlington carpenter, put his son through medical school. **Dr. Charles Drew (1904–1950) pioneered blood transfusion** for the military and became known as "the father of blood banking."

ABOVE: Cartoon for the Office of War Information describing Dr. Charles Richard Drew, by Charles Alston, 1943. National Archives.

When the Union Army occupied Alexandria early in the Civil War, **the Black community began opening schools at a remarkable speed, led by women such as Anna Bell Davis, Mary Chase, Jane Crouch, and Harriet Jacobs.** The Columbia Street School and Saint Rose Institute opened in 1861; the First Select Colored School, Beulah Normal and Theological Institute, and Leland Warring school in 1862; the Union Town School, Sicles Barracks School, and Newtown School in 1863, and the Jacobs Free School in 1864.

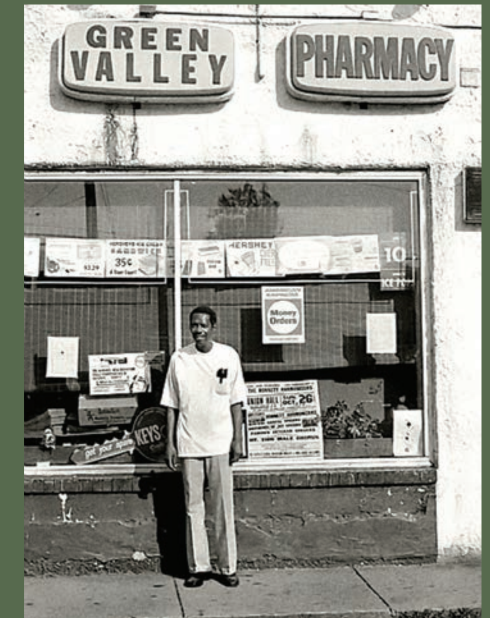
ABOVE: Portrait of Harriet Jacobs, 1894. Wiki commons, public domain.

Students at the Fairfax African American school, established in the 1870s, used an outhouse and relied on a pot-bellied stove for heat; **in the winter, the students' dedicated teacher, Minnie Hughes, was known to pour hot water from a kettle to warm their hands.** Hughes received no regular pay until 1916, and then received $8 per month.

**The success of the prominent Syphax family of Arlington** began when George Washington Parke Custis, the grandson of Martha Washington, manumitted his enslaved maid, Maria Carter Syphax. The Syphax family acquired 17 acres of his Arlington plantation in 1866, where they built a house and farm. Maria's son William went on to work in the U.S. Department of the Interior, and John served as a delegate to the Virginia legislature.

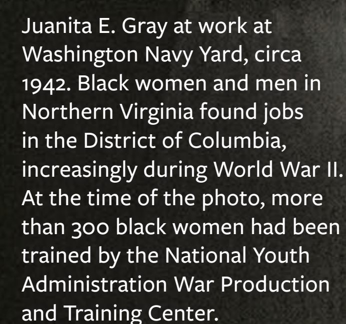
ABOVE: Portrait of Maria Carter Syphax, 1870 Wikicommons, public domain.

LEFT: Portrait of William Syphax, son of Maria and Charles Syphax. Wikicommons, public domain.




Levi Jones, whose parents were enslaved by George Washington, bought land in Green Valley and built a house in 1844. **His family and the Black settlers who followed** after the Civil War were resourceful in accumulating property and building a thriving Black community that included churches and schools. The success stories included William Augustus Rowe, a former slave who became a district representative; Selina Gray, the former maid for Robert E. Lee's wife, who acquired land that became "Gray's subdivision" in 1913; her son Harry Gray, a mason who had a 30-year career in the U.S. Department of the Interior; and Howard University School of Pharmacy graduate **Leonard "Doc" Muse** (pictured above) owner of Green Valley Pharmacy, a fixture of the Nauck community and likely the first Black-owned pharmacy in Arlington. Muse opened the pharmacy in 1952, during a time when most pharmacies did not welcome the Black community.

ABOVE: Leonard "Doc" Muse in front of Green Valley Pharmacy, 1980. Courtesy of the Arlington Photographic Documentary Project, photo by Lloyd Wolf.



Juanita E. Gray at work at Washington Navy Yard, circa 1942. Black women and men in Northern Virginia found jobs in the District of Columbia, increasingly during World War II. At the time of the photo, more than 300 black women had been trained by the National Youth Administration War Production and Training Center.

Courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC-USE6-D-008265. Photo by Roger Smith.

# Jobs

*In a pattern that has lasted generations, Black jobseekers have often found themselves at the bottom of the employment ladder, confronted by a white society that resisted their upward climb.*

Freed Blacks were eager to find jobs, earn money, and buy land, but—in a pattern that has lasted generations—often found themselves at the bottom of the employment ladder, confronted by a white society that resisted their upward climb. Blacks have faced formidable barriers to employment, including limited access to education, fewer job options, and racial prejudice in hiring, salary, and promotions. After the Civil War, most found jobs in unskilled labor or domestic work, while others used skills learned during enslavement or vocational training to work in trades. They worked at the shipyards on Alexandria's waterfront, Arlington's brickyards, and the dairy farms, mills, and estates in Fairfax County. Some opened their own small businesses catering to customers who were unwelcome in white establishments. Unfortunately, white violence, especially in the early 1900s, destroyed many thriving Black businesses, along with whatever wealth their owners had accumulated. Many Black workers found stable employment in the federal government as clerks or in other low-level civil service jobs, but they often earned too little to accumulate wealth. In 1938, about 90% of Black federal workers in Washington, D.C. were custodians.

As the late 20th century brought a shift from manufacturing to a knowledge economy, the Black population was at a distinct disadvantage because of systemic barriers to education (see earlier) and the hiring discrimination Black applicants faced even when they were qualified. This continue today. Even with similar resumes, studies have found that Black workers are far less likely to get called for an interview, and once hired are more likely to experience racism and wage discrimination at the workplace. Black men make 22% less than similarly qualified whites, and Black women make 12% less than white women. Blacks are underrepresented in professional schools and well-paying jobs, deepening the Black-white wealth gap. Since 1970, median income for Black households in Virginia has rarely exceeded 70% of the state average. Nationwide, the average wealth of Black households is less than 10% that of white households. While Blacks constitute 13% of the U.S. population, they hold less than 3% of its wealth. Tight finances and few savings have left most Black families without an economic cushion for hard times and more vulnerable to food or housing insecurity and compromised health when crises (like the COVID-19 pandemic) occur. What remains is a vicious cycle. As families work hard to create better lives for their children, Black children are more likely than their white counterparts to backslide into a lower economic group as adults.

**Top:** Black laborers at the coalyard wharf in Alexandria, during the Civil War. The port was a major shipping center for the coal industry and an employer of Black workers.
**Bottom:** Members of the Cafeteria and Restaurant Workers Union at the Pentagon, 1964. Beginning in the 1930s, the predominantly Black United Cafeteria Workers Local 471 union played a progressive role throughout its history.
**Opposite:** The Alexandria Urban League pickets a liquor store on May 15, 1969 to press the state liquor agency to hire more Black workers into front line positions. At the time, only three Black clerks were employed throughout the 40 Northern Virginia ABC stores.

▲ Courtesy of Scurlock Studio Records, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution.
▲ Courtesy of the National Archives.
▼ Reprinted with permission of the DC Public Library, Star Collection © *Washington Post*.

Black men make

22% LESS THAN

similarly qualified whites.

Black women make

12% LESS THAN

white women.

SOURCE: National data, Pew Charitable Trusts, 2016. The (Very) Few Places With No Black-White Income Gap.

Black people are underrepresented in professional schools and well-paying jobs, deepening the Black-white wealth gap.

# CHANGING THE FUTURE

*In addition to efforts to improve educational attainment among youth (see earlier education section), vocational training programs are needed to help workers transition to 21st century jobs.*

- A study that was conducted for Fairfax County included a number of recommendations for creating pathways to such jobs (Table 2).
- Employers in Northern Virginia can reduce job inequities by observing equal opportunity regulations to eliminate racial bias in hiring and promotions
- Employers in Northern Virginia can also reduce job inequities by offering workers a wage that keeps pace with the region's high cost of living, adequate and affordable health insurance, and employee-sponsored retirement programs. Policies to address the loss of such benefits in the gig economy are increasingly important.

| Table 2. Equitable Growth Profile recommendations for job creation in Fairfax County |
|---|
| Implement sectoral workforce strategies that connect workers with low education levels to high-quality training programs. |
| Ensure public investments in roads, transit, sewers, and other community infrastructures are made in ways that create job opportunities |
| Remove barriers and implement strategies to help minority-owned businesses expand. |
| Leverage the economic power of large anchor institutions, like hospitals and universities, for community development. |
| SOURCE: PolicyLink and the University of Southern California Program for Environmental and Regional Equity. *Equitable Growth Profile of Fairfax County, 2015.* |

# STORIES OF RESISTANCE

**Resistance is an act that goes farther back than the Civil Rights movement. Enslaved peoples resisted their enslavers' grip by pursuing education. Those who were formerly enslaved resisted Jim Crow and their descendents resisted the silencing of their voices and demanded to be heard. Today, movements are resisting systemic racism, sparking a national conversation about race, and putting pressure on institutions to re-examine their policies and history.**

## Dion Diamond

In the summer of 1960, Dion Diamond, a civil rights activist and student at Howard University, sat at the "whites only" lunch counter in Arlington.

*"We desegregated that entire area within two weeks, and I don't know if you've seen it, but there's this picture. In fact, it's in the closet. George Lincoln Rockwell, of the American Nazi Party, came in and surrounded us as we had the sit-in, and it was just amazing. I'm surprised that I didn't panic. It's amazing when you're young and reckless. I call it youthful exuberance."*

— Dion Diamond
(LOC Oral History with David Cline. See photo described above on p.46)

LEFT: Dion Diamond at the Drug Fair at Glebe Road and Pershing Drive in Arlington, June 23, 1960.Reprinted with permission of the DC Public Library, Star Collection © Washington Post.

## In October 1966,

in an effort to garner public attention to the housing crisis, **hundreds of protesters marched along the I-495 Beltway** and other major thoroughfares and through segregated neighborhoods, holding sit-ins and picketing private apartment developments **to demand "Equal Opportunity Rentals."**

RIGHT: Protestors on a four-day, 66-mile march around the Beltway, June 1966.Reprinted with permission of the DC Public Library, Star Collection © Washington Post.

## In February of 1959,

four students from the nearby Hall's Hill neighborhood stepped into **Stratford Junior High School in Arlington and became the first students to desegregate a public school in the Commonwealth of Virginia.** The historic day came after years of pressure from Black parents and the NAACP, who fought for their children's access to better schools.

ABOVE: Opening day at Arlington's Stratford Junior High School, September 1, 1959. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC-DIG-ds-04916. Photo by Warren K. Leffler.

## In the late 1800s,

Joseph and Mary Tinner bought land in Falls Church. In the early 1900s, **Joseph Tinner and E.B. Henderson fought local segregation laws and founded the first rural branch of the NAACP in the United States.** Tinner served as president. The construction of Lee Highway was routed through this enclave in the 1920's.

ABOVE: Tinner family at their home in the late 1800s. Courtesy of the Tinner Hill Heritage Foundation.

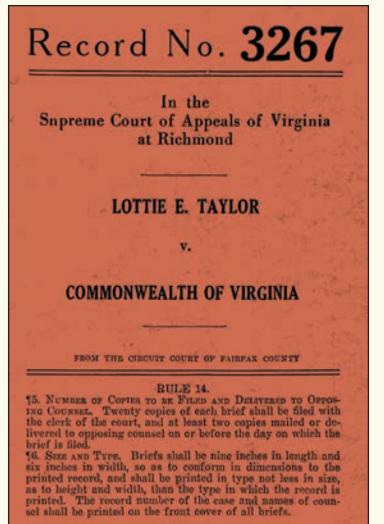
## In a staged event in 1939,

**five Black men were arrested for reading books in Alexandria's whites-only library**, prompting the city to open a library for Black patrons.

RIGHT: Black men are arrested and led away by police after conducting a sit-in at the all-white public library in Alexandria, August 21, 1939. Courtesy of the Alexandria Black History Museum

## In 1946,

three months after the U.S. Supreme Court banned segregation on interstate public transport (*Morgan v. Virginia*), a Black commuter, **Lottie Taylor, sat in the front of a bus traveling from Washington, D.C. into Northern Virginia.** Taylor was forcibly removed by Fairfax Police and charged with disorderly conduct, but she won the case in the Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals (*Taylor v. Virginia*).



Record No. 3267

In the
Snpreme Court of Appeals of Virginia
at Richmond

LOTTIE E. TAYLOR

v.

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

FROM THE CIRCUIT COURT OF FAIRFAX COUNTY

RULE 14.

¶5. NUMBER OF COPIES TO BE FILED AND DELIVERED TO OPPOSING COUNSEL. Twenty copies of each brief shall be filed with the clerk of the court, and at least two copies mailed or delivered to opposing counsel on or before the day on which the brief is filed.

¶6. SIZE AND TYPE. Briefs shall be nine inches in length and six inches in width, so as to conform in dimensions to the printed record, and shall be printed in type not less in size, as to height and width, than the type in which the record is printed. The record number of the case and names of counsel shall be printed on the front cover of all briefs.

ABOVE: Virginia Supreme Court Ruling, *Lottie E. Taylor v. Commonwealth of Virginia*, 1948, ruled in favor of Ms. Taylor. Courtesy of the Washington and Lee University School of Law Scholarly Commons.

## Such legal successes met with backlash.

The Klan resurged in the 1950s and the American Nazi Party was founded in Arlington. **In 1960,** Nazi enthusiasts confronted Black activists at lunch counter sit-ins in Arlington.

Civil rights activist Dion Diamond is confronted by American Nazi Party chief George Lincoln Rockwell at a sit-in at the Cherrydale Drug Fair in Arlington, June 10, 1960.

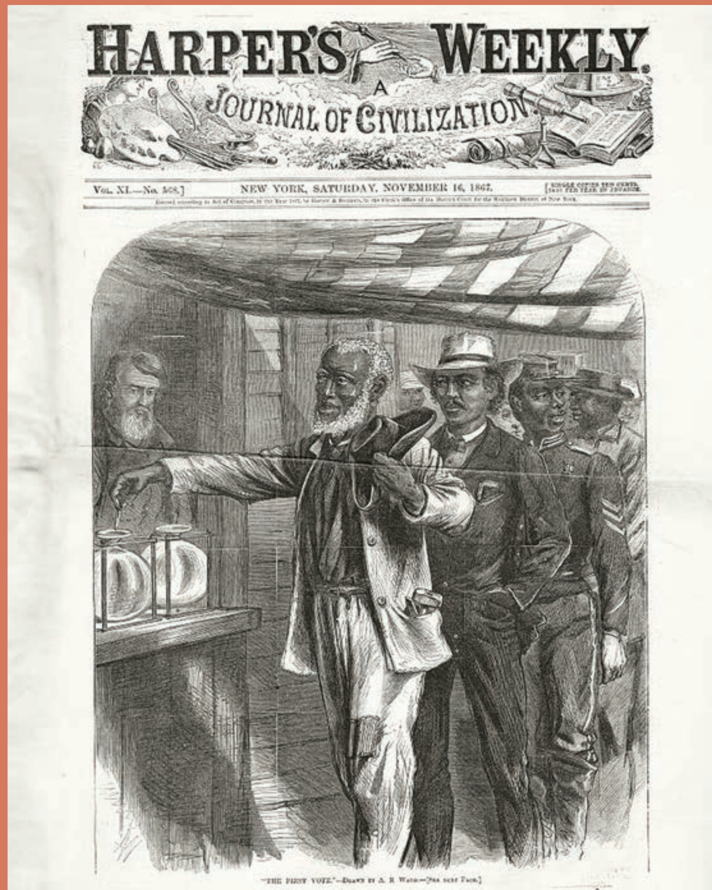
Below: Gwendolyn Greene (later Britt) sits at the People's Drug Store counter during a sit-in protest in Arlington, June 9, 1960.

Reprinted with permission of the DC Public Library, Star Collection © Washington Post.

# Civil Liberties

*The right to free speech, privacy, the ballot box, and fair court trials has never been fully extended to Black communities.*

Civil liberties include the right to free speech, privacy, the ballot box, and fair court trials, among others. These liberties have never been fully extended to Black communities. Emancipation and Reconstruction won temporary civil liberties for the Black population, but as early as the 1870s, Virginia passed laws to suppress votes by imposing poll taxes and literacy tests and denying votes to men convicted of petty crimes. After the 1896 U.S. Supreme Court ruling, *Plessy v Ferguson*, permitted segregation of public facilities that were "separate but equal," the pace of Jim Crow laws and practices intensified. Virginia adopted a new constitution in 1902 with the goal of Black disenfranchisement and got immediate results. The number of eligible Black voters in Virginia dropped from 147,000 in 1901 to about 10,000 in 1905. Virginia legalized segregation of trolley cars, trains, prisons, and public events. Black-white intermarriage, which had been banned for centuries, was elevated to a felony crime. The Klan became more active in the 1920s. In 1930, Arlington politicians changed voting procedures to prevent Black candidates from taking office.




NO WHITE MAN TO LOSE HIS VOTE IN VIRGINIA.

This Assurance Given by Men Who Are Most Competent to Speak with Authority.

A Meeting was Held in Richmond on October 17, 1901, at which Chairman Ellyson Presided and Hon. John Goode and Mr. Montague Made Speeches—All Three Declared the Policy of the Convention in Language That Cannot Be Mistaken. Great Enthusiasm Aroused.

STATE CHAIRMAN ELLYSON.

"The best men in this Commonwealth have been selected as the representatives of their people in the convention. They will not fail to be responsive to the wishes of their constituents, for every Democrat in that convention knows that the convention would never have been held but for the desire of the white people of this Commonwealth to have enacted such a constitutional provision as would take away from the negro the right to vote, and at the same time preserve to the white men of the Commonwealth their right of suffrage.

"I have enjoyed the best opportunities for frequent conferences and consultation with the members of the convention on this question. I think I know their views as well as any other man in the State, and I do not hesitate to give to you and through you to the white men of this Commonwealth both my personal and official assurance that that convention has the fixed and unalterable intention of enacting a clause which will accomplish the end I have just mentioned and which will forever remove the negro as a factor in our political affairs and give to the white people of this Commonwealth the conduct and control of the destinies which they have the right to shape and determine.

"The Democrats of Virginia have always kept the pledges made to the people and they will not fail to do so in this instance."—Hon. J. Taylor Ellyson, Chairman of the State Democratic Committee.

HON. JOHN GOODE.

"The Democratic party is pledged in its platform to eliminate the ignorant and worthless negro as a factor from the politics of this State without taking the right of suffrage from a single white man, and speaking for my colleagues in the convention, I solemnly declare to you that they will keep that pledge to the letter."—President Goode of the Constitutional Convention.

HON. A. J. MONTAGUE.

"The Democratic party, through its representatives in the convention, is slowly, but surely, framing a law that will so effectually exclude the idle, shiftless and illiterate of the negro race from the suffrage that the gates of republican wrath cannot prevail against it. The trouble with our opponents is that they realize now that we will accomplish this and keep the pledge that no white man will be disfranchised. I stand here and declare it, for I do know it is the truth."—Hon. A. J. Montague, Democratic nominee for Governor.

**Above, left:** An image entitled, "First Vote," from the cover of the November 16, 1867 issue of Harper's Weekly, depicts Black men proudly casting their votes Above, right: Summary of speeches on October 17, 1901 by officials offering assurances that provisions of the constitutional convention would protect the white vote. Below: Notice, from the 1950's, that Virginia state law mandates racial segregation of buses.

VIRGINIA STATE LAW
REQUIRES ALL
COLORED PASSENGERS
TO RIDE IN REAR OF BUS
CITIZENS RAPID TRANSIT CO.

▵ Left: Courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC-DIG-ppmsca-31598. Illustration by A.R. Waud;
▵ Right: Provided by the University of Virginia Library, Broadside 1901.N68. C Courtesy of the Center for Local History, Arlington Public Library.

▵ Courtesy of Library of Virginia, Special Collections, Broadside 1901. N68.

TO BECOME A QUALIFIED VOTER

STEP 1. PAY ALL POLL TAX DUE:

$1.50 for one year, plus small interest.
3.00 for two years, plus small interest.
4.50 for three years, plus small interest.

A. POLL TAX THAT MUST BE PAID NOW: 1956, 1957 and 1958.

B. POLL TAX DEADLINE: May 3, 1958.
To vote in the July Primary
To vote in the November General
(Elections)

STEP 2. REGISTER:

IT IS AS EASY AS COUNTING ON YOUR FINGERS

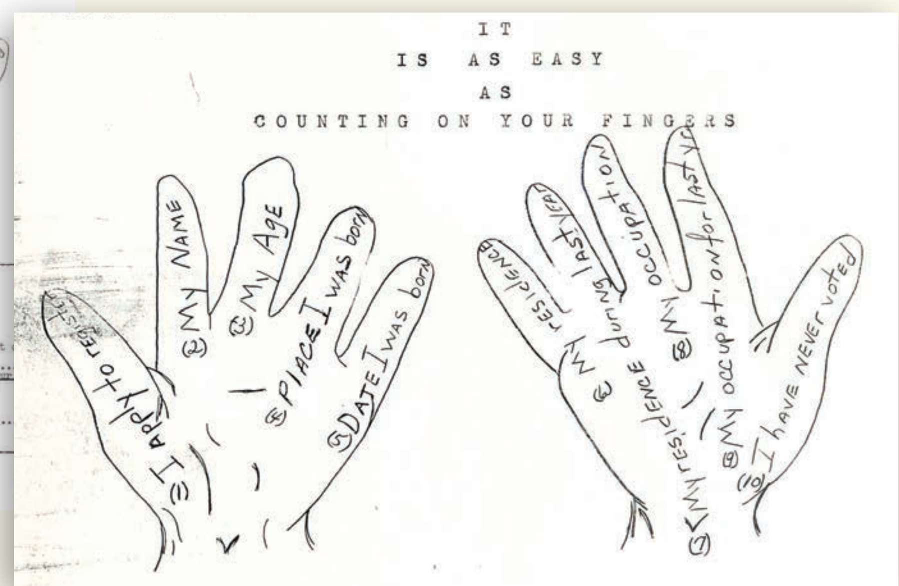
LEARN THESE TEN POINTS BEFORE YOU GO TO REGISTER

Be able to write a letter stating them, for example:

I, (1) ........................ (Your name) (2), age 21, (3) apply to register. I was born in Maintown, Any state, (4) on January 2, 1937 (5). I live in ............, Virginia, (6) at or near ................. I have lived there for the past year. (7) I am a .................. (Your occupation) (8), and have worked as such for the past year. (9) I have never voted. (10)

.............................. (Sign Your Name)

REMINDER: To remain a qualified voter your poll tax must be paid each year between November 5 and December 5. Price: $1.50.




1958 flyer on the ten requirements to become a qualified voter. The first is to "pay all poll tax due." To remain a qualified voter, the poll tax had to be paid every year between November 5 and December 5.

As these attacks on civil liberties increased, the Black community organized to counteract these efforts. Falls Church activists E. B. Henderson and Joseph Tinner fought against Arlington's 1915 segregation ordinance and founded the nation's first rural branch of the NAACP. In a staged event in 1939, five Black men were arrested for reading books in Alexandria's whites-only library, prompting the city to open a library for Black patrons. In 1946, three months after the U.S. Supreme Court banned segregation on interstate public transport (*Morgan v. Virginia*), a Black commuter, Lottie Taylor, sat in the front of a bus traveling from Washington, D.C. into Northern Virginia. Taylor was forcibly removed by Fairfax Police and charged with disorderly conduct, but she won the case in the Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals (*Taylor v. Virginia*).

Such legal successes met with backlash. The Klan resurged in the 1950s and the American Nazi Party was founded in Arlington. In 1960, Nazi enthusiasts confronted Black activists at lunch counter sit-ins in Arlington. Although the 1960s brought the Civil Rights Act (1964), Voting Rights Act (1965), and the legalization of interracial marriage in *Loving v. Virginia* (1967), racism in Northern Virginia lived on. Northern Virginia realtors "steered" Black buyers from white neighborhoods. They engaged in block-busting—selling property to Blacks at inflated prices, agitating white homeowners about their neighborhood becoming a "slum," and then buying their homes at below-market prices.

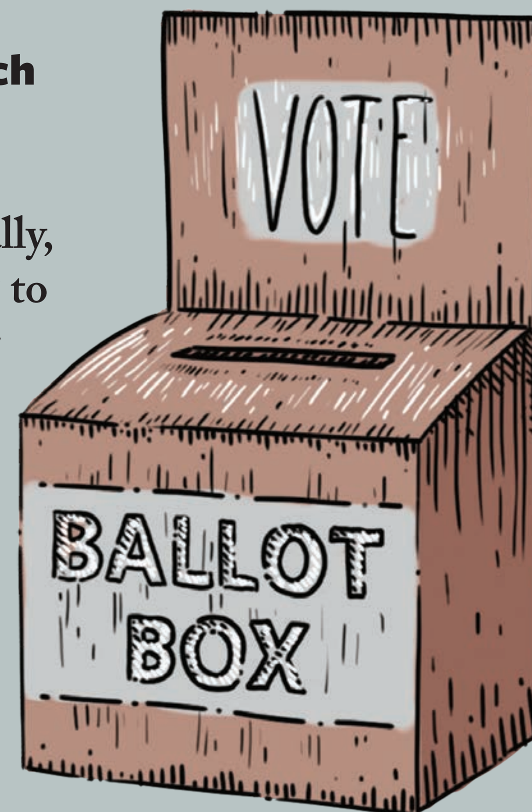
Today, discrimination and implicit bias persist in most facets of modern life and, as noted earlier, these stresses are harmful to health. Recent years have brought greater attention to institutional racism—such as its role in police misconduct, sentencing, and mass incarceration—but it persists and continues to claim lives. Throughout U.S. history, restricted access to the ballot and political office has prevented Black people from holding power and implementing policies to help their communities. Although we no longer see literacy tests and poll taxes, more subtle forms of voter suppression continue and are increasing in many states. People of color now face a resurgence in white supremacy and political efforts to erode civil liberties.

# While Virginia has made progress in expanding voting rights...

**Such as being the first Southern state to adopt its own Voting Rights Act, there is still work to be done to expand access to the ballot.**

Nationally, minorities and low-income voters **are much more likely** than whites to report transportation issues on Election Day. Additionally, Black voters are **less likely** to request absentee ballots out of distrust of the system, distrust that has been justified recently in North Carolina where Black voters were **twice as likely** to have mail-in ballots rejected.

Source: *All Alexandria Resolution*




# Changing the Future

*The Commonwealth of Virginia and Northern Virginia jurisdictions should actively oppose efforts to roll back existing civil rights protections and continue working toward social justice for people of color.*

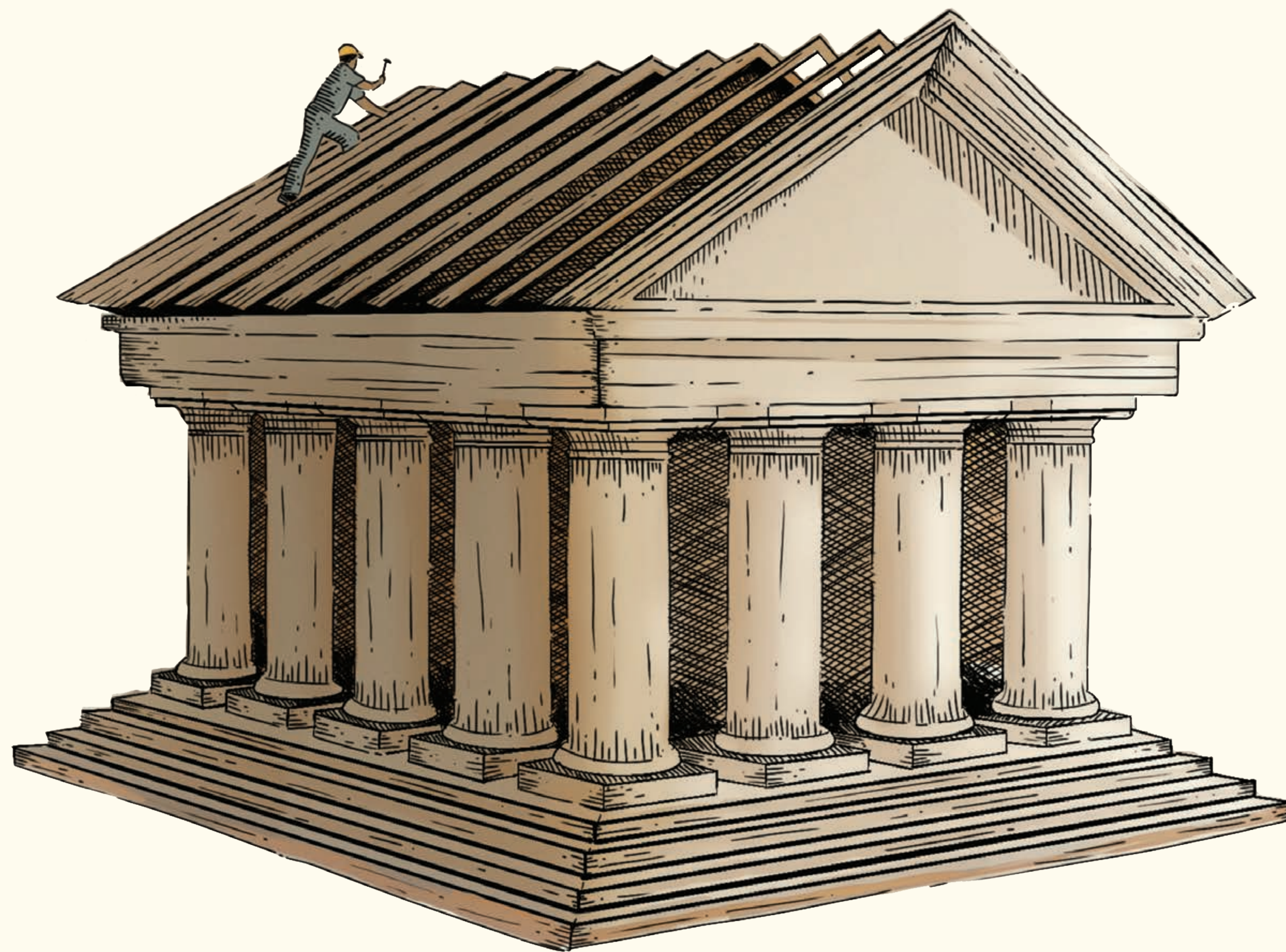
- In sharp contrast to disturbing trends in other states, the Commonwealth recently passed laws to expand voting rights, such as repealing the state's voter ID law, permitting 45 days of no-excuse absentee voting, making Election Day a state holiday, and enacting automatic voter registration when driver's licenses are issued.
- Restoring voting rights to formerly incarcerated people and ending gerrymandering remain unfinished business.
- A number of government agencies, corporations, and other employers are taking steps to help reduce discrimination by conducting implicit bias training and applying an equity lens to their practices.
- These efforts can be expanded to include introspective audits to assess the degree of discrimination to which employees and clients are exposed and to identify potential remedies.
- Local governments have already begun this effort. For example, in 2017 the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors and School Board adopted ***One Fairfax***, a policy to "consider equity in decision-making and in the development and delivery of future policies, programs, and services." The policy focuses on 17 areas, including community and economic development, housing, education, environment, and transportation. In January 2021, the city of Alexandria adopted the ***ALL Alexandria Resolution*** to emphasize equity in public policy (Table 3).
- Other Northern Virginia jurisdictions should take similar steps, while also conducting racial equity audits of proposed legislation and budgets.

| Table 3. ALL Alexandria Resolution |
|---|
| Ensure that race and social equity is incorporated and centered in all planning. |
| Implement and sustain structures and systems to advance race and social equity. |
| Align and implement policy efforts designed to advance race and social equity goals. |
| Ensure accountability mechanisms related to the progression and transparency of work to advance race and social equity. |
| Source: City of Alexandria, Resolution Number 2974, *All Alexandria: Committing to Race and Social Equity.* |

# Conclusion

The first step in addressing racial inequities in any community is to acknowledge the past, with honest and full transparency. It is important for the residents of Northern Virginia, and their leaders, to understand and come to terms with the history of the oppression and accomplishments of Black people, as this report has attempted to review. Such introspection is necessary to expose the vestiges of systemic racism, both in outdated laws that remain "on the books," in current and proposed policies, and in misguided narratives about the origins of disadvantage and poor health in communities of color. The lesson of history is clear: if past policies created those inequities, today's policies can change the future. And while federal policy contributed to, and still shapes, local dynamics, that should not stop local governments and stakeholders from acting now on their own equity agenda.

Bold action is required to redress embedded structures of racial hierarchy, and both white and non-white people must come together to reimagine systems that emphasize fair and respectful treatment of everyone, regardless of background. The work must involve data analysis to identify gaps and authentic engagement of communities in devising solutions that respect their lived experiences. The history of Northern Virginia records atrocities and discrimination but also documents the inspiring resilience and resourcefulness of people of color to overcome barriers to opportunity and build better lives for themselves and their children. As reflected in the slogan, "Nothing About Us Without Us," meaningful solutions to improve equity must be designed with everyone at the table. Working together—with collective action, persistence, and resolve—Northern Virginia can make racial inequity a thing of the past.



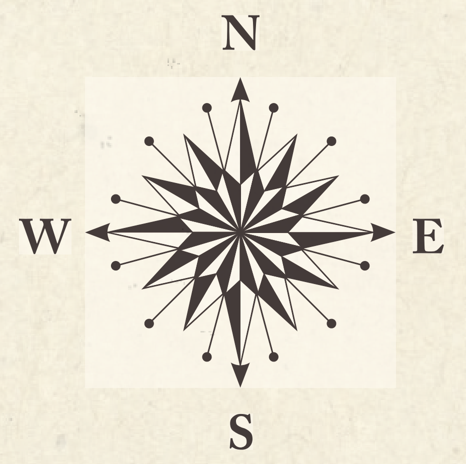
# Recommended Reading

*This report is drawn from more than 100 sources and documents. Please visit the document on our website for full access to detailed citations.*


- **A view from Hall's Hill: African American community development in Arlington** by Lindsey Bestebreurtje. Published in 2015 in *Arlington Historical Magazine* (15:3, pages 19–32).
- **Built by the People Themselves: African American Community Development in Arlington, Virginia, From the Civil War Through Civil Rights** by Lindsey Bestebreurtje. Doctoral dissertation for George Mason University, 2017.
- **Beyond the plantation: freedmen, social experimentation, and African American community development in Freedman's Village, 1863–1900** by Lindsey Bestebreurtje. Published in 2018 in *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* (126:3, pages 334–365).
- **A Guide to the African American Heritage of Arlington County, Virginia, 2nd ed.** Produced in 2016 by the Department of Community Planning, Housing, and Development, Arlington, VA.
- **Black resilience in Alexandria** website published in 2020 by Nia Jordan (https://tinyurl.com/4b9h6ub7).
- **Finding the Fort: A History of an African American Neighborhood in Northern Virginia, 1860s–1960s** by Krystyn R. Moon. Report for the University of Mary Washington, 2014.
- **The African American Housing Crisis in Alexandria, Virginia, 1930s–1960s** by Krystyn R. Moon. Published in 2016 in *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* (124:1, pages 28–68).
- **Eminent domain destroys a community: leveling East Arlington to make way for the Pentagon** by Nancy Perry. Published in 2015 in *Urban Geography* (37:1, pages 1–21).
- **We didn't have any other place to live: residential patterns in segregated Arlington County, Virginia** by Nancy Perry, Spencer Crew, and Nigel M. Waters. Published in 2013 in *Southeastern Geographer* (53:4, pages 403–27).
- **African American life in Arlington, Virginia, during segregation: a geographer's point of view** by Nancy Perry. Published February 21, 2019 in *The Metropole*.
- **Building the Federal Schoolhouse: Localism and the American Education State** by Douglas S. Reed. Published in 2014 by Oxford University Press.
- **Free Negroes in Northern Virginia: An Investigation of the Growth and Status of Free Negroes in the Counties of Alexandria, Fairfax and Loudoun, 1770–1860** by Donald M. Sweig. Doctoral dissertation for George Mason University, 1975.
- **Freedom is Not Enough: African Americans in Antebellum Fairfax County** by Curtis L. Vaughn. Doctoral dissertation for George Mason University, 2014.

VIRGINIA

Loudoun Co.

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