

2C) Combating Blockbusting and Red-Lining

Helpful Vocabulary

Blockbusting- efforts by real estate brokers to take advantage of racial prejudice to frighten white families into selling their homes at below market value so that the brokers can resell them to Black families and make high profits.

Red-Lining- efforts by banks and real estate brokers to restrict African American home buyers and renters to specific communities.

State Will Air Charges of Blockbusting, *Newsday, September 1, 1962*

North Bellport -- A blockbusting charge by a local civic group is slated to get a hearing in the near future by the state agency empowered to suspend or revoke the real estate license of any firm found forcing scare selling. New York Secretary of State Caroline K. Simon said yesterday that she plans to order the hearing although the exact date is not set. . . An investigator from her office has been doing field work here this month in response to a charge by the North Bellport Taxpayers Association that two real estate firms had tried to force quick turnovers of homes from white to Negro families by warning that a Negro influx was descending on the area anyway.

LI Group Finds Realty Bias, *Newsday, January 21, 1963*

Huntington -- A civil-rights committee, which sent Negro and white members posing as prospective home buyers to real estate brokers in this township over the weekend, charged yesterday that 19 of the 20 brokers tested discriminated against Negroes. The group said it would send its findings to state officials to seek interdisciplinary action. The Huntington Township Committee on Human Relations said about 35 Negro and white members visited 21 Huntington brokers Saturday. Mrs. Joyce Insolia, co-chairman of the committee, said the prospective white buyers were shown numerous homes by brokers who had told Negro customers that they had no houses to show or had taken them on tours of homes in substantially Negro neighborhoods.

Roosevelt Clergymen Unite To Halt Alleged 'Fast Sales' "Block Busting' in Real Estate

Roosevelt Press, March 29, 1963

The eight clergymen serving the various congregations in Roosevelt have organized the Roosevelt Community Relations Council to fight what they consider illegal practices in promoting the sale of real estate in the community such as the "fast sell" and "block busting." They have been discussing the real estate situation for a couple of months, and have issued "A Message of Vital Importance from the Clergyman of Your Community."

"The Block Buster is a dealer in real estate who gets people scared about property values by promoting rumors of invasion by minority groups such as Negroes. He buys up their property for a song and resells for a large profit. He tries to panic a great number of families into listing their homes. He charges unethically high commissions and fees. His tools are ignorance, fear, falsehoods, and rumors."

"It is our feeling that if you are part of our churches and are aware that the clergymen and community leaders are concerned with the problem of unethical real estate companies, together we can discourage their activities in Roosevelt."

Hub Neighbors Group Fights Block Busters, *Hempstead Beacon, October 30, 1963*

The Hempstead Neighbors Committee added another facet to their campaign of maintaining residential property values in the village, as they lashed out in rebuttal of rumors that tend to depreciate property values and picture Hempstead as not being a desirable community.

The group, whose spokesman is frequently the Rev. Richard R. Rangoon, has been hard at work on an anti-block busting campaign. They are waging a war on real estate brokers who use either unethical or illegal practices. Their attempts to reverse the white to Negro residential pattern in order to maintain a racial mixture in the area have met with considerable success.

Negro Pastor "Rakes" Hemp. Neighbors Com., *Hempstead Beacon, October 30, 1963*

The Rev. Dr. V. Loma St. Clair, pastor of the Jackson Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church of Hempstead, . . ."raked over the coals" the Hempstead Neighbors Committee, headed by the Rev. R.R. Rangoon, . . . for making restrictive covenants and gentlemen's agreements for the purpose of keeping Negroes and other minorities out of their residential area.

Dr. St. Clair stated, "that the Committee's charges of blockbusting and panic selling against the local real estate brokers is nothing more than a farce and a smoke screen to hide their real motives and intentions, which are to keep more Negroes from moving into the community and to restrict, contain and to fence into certain sections, those that are already living in the village." The pastor stated, "that every person should be able to live where his heart desires . . .without regard to his race, color or national origin."

State Aims at Block-Busters, *Hempstead Beacon, November 20, 1963*

New York Secretary of State John Lomenzo told a group of local civic leaders last week that he would start mailing out letters to nearly 100 real estate brokers in the Hempstead area warning them to stop unwanted solicitation of homes. He has already taken similar action with Queens brokers in connection with block-busting tactics.

Court Backs State Unit in Freeport Apt. Bias, *Newsday, March 30, 1965*

Mineola -- State Supreme Court Justice Daniel Albert upheld yesterday a State Human Rights Commission finding that the owners of a Freeport apartment house had discriminated against a Negro woman. Albert said that there was sufficient evidence for the commission's finding that Mrs. Catherine Crum had been the victim of discrimination. Albert said in his written opinion that there was no point in ordering the owners to rent the apartment to Mrs. Crum now because she and her family had already taken another apartment.

Black Family Fights L.I. Housing Bias, *New York Times, September 30, 1970*

Massapequa, L.I., Sept. 30 -- The house looked like almost any other being built, but large chunks of concrete had been broken out of the foundation, the chimney flue had been knocked down and a newspaper story had been nailed to the frame. The story told of the troubles encountered by the owners of the partially built house--Mr. and Mrs. Willie Early of Jamaica, Queens. The black family had been subjected to vilification (slander and abusive statements) and their new \$40,000 brick-and-shingle ranch home . . . had been vandalized since it became known that they were going to move into this virtually all-white South Shore area.

After construction started last spring, the Early family and their three daughters ranging in age from 3 to 11, visited the site to take photographs for their album of the house in its construction stages. To their dismay, they found painted on the foundation such epithets as "Nigger Go Home."

Because the area is largely Roman Catholic, the Human Rights Commission sought the intercession of the Catholic Interracial Council to help ease the problem. The Commission on Interracial Affairs for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Rockville Centre then brought the matter to the attention of local parishes. After the matter was brought to the attention of the community in a local newspaper, homeowners outside the immediate neighborhood rallied to the support of the black family. Parishioners in local Catholic and Lutheran churches pledged their aid for the Earlys and the Massapequa Coalition of Racial Concern is considering having its members patrol the house site in the evening hours.

Questions:

- 1- How did real estate agencies profit from blockbusting?
- 2- What evidence is provided of housing discrimination by real estate agents and landlords?
- 3- What problem did the Early family face in Massapequa? How did the community respond to these problems?
- 4- In your opinion, should government agencies become involved with who a real estate agent or a homeowner sells or rents property to? Explain your answer.