Making Slums and Suburbia in Black Washington During the Great Depression

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In April 1937, black Washingtonian Selma Thomas wrote Eleanor Roosevelt to say that she thought Maryland's "Greenbelt resettlement community" would be an "ideal place . . . to live." Thomas longed for a "modest little home" to help find security during the Great Depression because her husband, a parcel porter for Union Station, was unable to land "a job with a livable salary to care for" his family. While Greenbelt was designed for whites, Thomas seemed to think that even a racially restricted, inexpensive home set in green pastures would be akin to "paradise," allowing her and Mr. Thomas to gain economic stability and raise their "three lovely little ones."[1]

For many Americans like Thomas, an idyllic community on the outskirts of the city was important during the Depression, because at least a third of the nation's populace lived in impoverished conditions.[2] Government officials, social workers, and ordinary citizens, like Progressives before them, also believed that poor housing was a major contributing factor in the purported crime surge in cities.[3] The sanitary modern house and neighborhood were hallmarks of proper citizenship in the 1930s. Since scores of African American homes in urban centers were ramshackle and congested, many blacks did not meet that measure of society. African Americans who were fortunate enough to rent or own updated, spacious quarters in Washington, D.C., boasted of their elite status and the latest conveniences in their houses.[4] Yet they had to contend with the stigma of the slum because of the U.S. Supreme Court's decision to validate re-

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strictive covenants in its 1926 *Corrigan v. Buckley* ruling. These discriminatory covenants prevented blacks from purchasing, leasing, or occupying property in white neighborhoods.[5] Strained living arrangements exacerbated intraracial conflicts and caused some African Americans within the nation's capital to use the rhetoric and strategies of the larger society to distance themselves from their poor neighbors. Instead of adequately addressing policies that kept working-class blacks in low-quality shelter, members of the city's African American professional class deemed certain homes as threats to community and nation-building. Blacks who could afford to flee Washington, D.C.'s urban core moved to segregated housing tracts constructed near the district line to own a modern home surrounded by nature.

Suburban settlements, such as Kingman Park and DePriest Village-Capital View, housed upwardly mobile African Americans in Northeast D.C. in the early decades of the last century (See Figure 1). Marshall Heights, a suburb in the Southeast D.C. quadrant, attracted working-class blacks during the same time (See Figure 1). A select group of residents in DePriest Village-Capital View attempted to insulate themselves from "undesirables" and their neighbors in Marshall Heights. To demonstrate diligence and responsibility, a few Marshall Heighters tried to dissociate from Washington, D.C.'s alley residents. As a result, these Marshall Heighters helped to further marginalize poor urban dwellers. Moreover, black Washingtonians in Kingman Park, DePriest Village-Capital View, and the city's older communities embraced a deeply entrenched American notion that "good" housing and environments would make "good" or upstanding citizens.[6] Poor- and middle-class African Americans, who lived in the inner-city and suburban neighborhoods, used their dwellings as spaces of refuge to ward off "disreputable" elements. By equating "slums" with degeneracy, representing low-income residents as bad neighbors, and moving to new suburban tracts, various blacks in the nation's capital helped to stigmatize and ghettoize a segment of their community during the Great Depression.

Inner-City Threats

During the economic downturn, African Americans lived in all of Washington, D.C.'s four quadrants. However, they were concentrated in what is presently called the Shaw-U Street area located in the Northwest section of the city and in the Southwest neighborhood that was bordered by the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers, the Mall, and South Capitol Street (See Figure 1). From 1930 to 1940, blacks made up 55% to 62% of Shaw's total population and comprised 48% to 57% of the Southwest populace; by 1940, approximately 50% of the Washington, D.C.'s African American community lived in these localities.[7] Blacks were corralled together in older, rundown parts of the city. In many cases, the housing stock they inhabited was inferior and more expensive than the dwellings that were sold or rented to the city's white residents.[8]

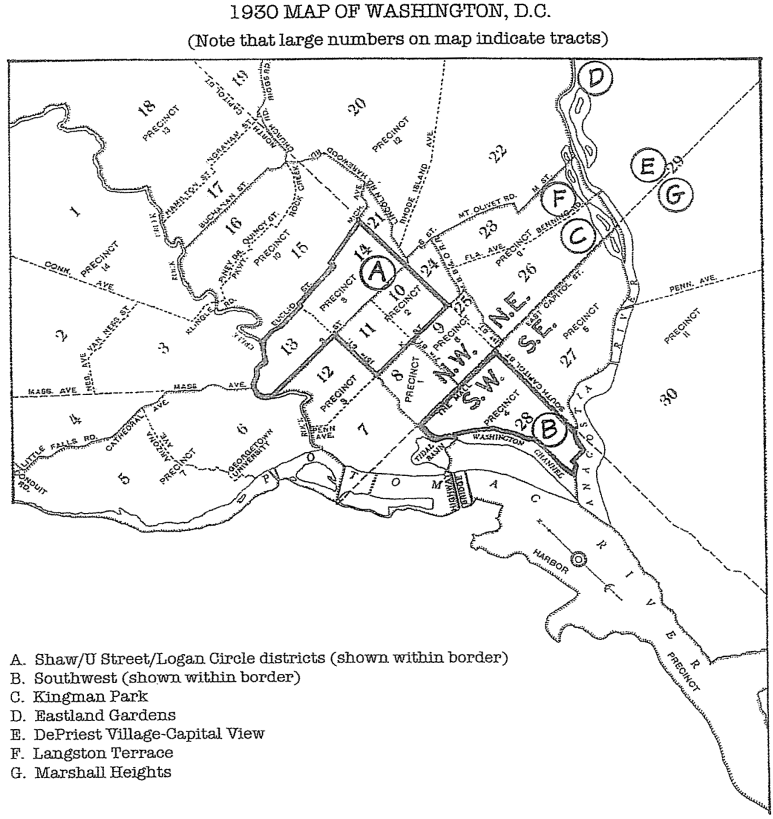

Figure 1: Illustration prepared by Sandra R. Heard, using a 1930 Precinct Map taken from; Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930, Population, Volume III, Part 1, 384, https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1930/population-volume-3/10612963v3p1ch04.pdf (accessed 10/2/2018).

The city's most underprivileged black citizens lived in alley tenements, which were typically owned by slumlords who charged exorbitant prices for cramped spaces with inadequate toilets, substandard lighting, and heating systems. However, African Americans who inhabited alleys were incredibly resilient in their efforts to navigate these harsh environments. Historian James Borchert has argued that alley residents successfully used southern traditions, built life-affirming communities, and devised various strategies to help brave the challenges of urbanization and racial and class discrimination.[9] African Americans who were trapped in the city's alleys relied on extended family

networks, took in boarders, washed clothes, and collected and sold discarded building materials to deal with extreme financial hardship. Many worked diligently to take care of themselves and their families, without assistance from the government or social service organizations. Washington, D.C.'s poorest residents even tried to keep their overcrowded quarters clean, though they often encountered rodents, lack of regular trash removal, poorly ventilated rooms, crumbling walls, and other dilapidated conditions in and around their homes. Moreover, alley dwellers heavily defended their neighborhoods from outsiders (white and black) to maintain control over their territory and keep their cultural values intact.[10]

Some critics of the city's "slums" assumed that alley dwellers' perceived refusal to appropriate mainstream cultural norms was a testament to their inability to adapt to "normal," and presumably healthier, ways of living.[11] Many of the city's residents also defined alley housing and other quarters that were available to low-income blacks as intolerable places that produced bad health and delinquency. Washingtonians were not alone in thinking that impoverished settings caused degeneracy and sickness. Researchers, journalists, social service workers, and ordinary Americans regularly claimed that environment played a key role in determining behavior and well-being.[12] Like Progressive reformers decades earlier, government administrators and other professionals focused much of their attention on "slums" during the economic crisis of the 1930s, because they believed these communities were impediments to raising upstanding families and building civil society.[13] Months before the stock market crash, African American sociologist William Jones claimed that there was a "surprisingly close relationship between the morbidity, mortality, and criminal conduct of Negroes in cities and their bad housing." For Jones, "the poorest and least resourceful sections" of Washington's black populace lived in back alleys, which cultivated and attracted a "certain kind of retrograde Negro . . . [who] did not wish to measure up to the white cultural standard" or refused to assimilate into mainstream society.[14] The only way to effectively deal with the alley resident, Jones suggested, was to clear the slums and replace them with new buildings. An updated, clean environment would purportedly "benefit . . . the entire [capital] city" by transforming a shiftless underclass into productive citizens or by encouraging underprivileged African Americans to behave more like the middle-class in "stable" settings.[15]

A few years after the Jones findings were circulated, black architect and Howard University professor Hilyard Robinson publicly declared that alleys in the United States were havens for wards of the state that threatened neighborhood stability. Robinson also claimed that America's slum dwellers were noticeably different from those he observed in Europe. The European alley residents possessed a sense of "tradition" and civic pride; their homes possessed a "rather charming quality of picturesque squalor," asserted Robinson, which helped to attract tourist traffic and dollars. On the contrary, he continued, alleys in the United States were occupied by a "very large number of very

poor colored people, and a few white people" who had become a "burden upon the public," because they were diseased transients who needed assistance and monitoring from social, religious, and government agencies.[16] By this, Robinson suggested that upwardly mobile residents wasted their money, time, and effort to reform the city's underclass populations, which purportedly refused to amend their unruly behavior or could not do so because they were morally, mentally, and physically incapacitated by their environment. Robinson further intimated that the only way that Washington, D.C., could remove its onerous slum-dwelling population would be to convert alley hovels into European-style villages that housed industrious working-class people.[17]

Throughout the 1930s, Washington, D.C.'s black journalists reported that racially designated areas of the city, with a high concentration of alley dwellings, spread tuberculosis that compromised the health and prosperity of the city's populace. The *Afro-American* attempted to debunk health officials' claim that the tuberculosis death rate was highest in the city's Northwest black communities. However, newspapermen concurred with the District Tuberculosis Association's classification of slum areas as centers of "concentrated misery and disease—the capital's tuberculosis sore spot[s]."[18] Relying on Jacob Riis's characterization of New York's slums at the turn of the twentieth century, reporters described alleys as wards "where the other half live[d]."[19] Alley dwellers who subsisted next to prominent African Americans were deemed hazardous to their more fortunate neighbors and the larger city. The "stench" from the alley was used as a rhetorical device to play into the prevalent view that homes of the underprivileged were filthy places that produced noxious fumes and other affronts that interfered with the comfort and everyday functioning of the black professional class.[20]

African American journalists who desired to reform the city's working-class population also targeted and maligned other areas of the city that accommodated the poor. Washington, D.C.'s black press frequently provided accounts of domestic disputes that occurred inside and around boarding homes, apartment buildings, single-family dwellings, and commercial buildings located in Shaw and other "Negro" sections of the city. Black homes were depicted as perpetual war zones, characterized by chaos and unrest. According to newspapers, African American men and women who lived in two- and three-story row houses on 6th, 6½, and I Streets NW stabbed, shot, and beat family members and perceived rivals with iron pipes and other weapons because of irreconcilable differences or suspected love affairs.[21] Headlines of street fights, muggings, seemingly random acts of violence or "black on black" crimes that took place in the Shaw District on Q, 14th, and V Streets NW further conveyed that racially marked areas in the city were dark places, brimming with terror.[22] African Americans were additionally charged with robbing unsuspecting citizens inside and outside their communities, organizing "burglary rings," or hoarding stolen merchandise in their homes. In the late 1930s, the *Afro-American* told of a police raid that took place in Precinct 2 at 255 K Street NW, which netted 17

black men and women, and confiscated "5,000 worth of loot" that was allegedly stolen from "homes in various parts of the northwest quadrant of the city."[23]

Velma Williams, president of the black-run Pleasant Plains Civic Association in the 1930s, was adamant that "laborers and other types of [sordid] people" brought unsanitary living habits to her community. Williams lived in a neighborhood located near Howard University and more or less bounded by 6th Street, Euclid Avenue, and 13th and Harvard Streets NW. Poor blacks (and their network of associates), according to Williams, were lazy, dirty, and immoral neighbors who let "their property rundown, [threw] paper and trash in the streets and [did] many other things below the standard of their community." She also claimed whites were somewhat justified in their use of restrictive covenants that barred African Americans when she admitted that she understood why "[white] people hat[ed] to see a Negro move into their neighborhood."[24]

Like Williams, other leading black Washingtonians denounced working-class African Americans who migrated to their communities, because they believed that association with those who did not share their values would ruin their reputations and jeopardize their social status. Howard University students, for instance, recorded "family histories" for E. Franklin Frazier's sociology course to document and analyze their family dynamics and community relations. In so doing, a few revealed that they thought their neighborhoods were deteriorating due to the influx of people of questionable character. Anacostia resident James G. Banks flatly admitted that his father, a Howard Law graduate and supervisor in the Treasury Department's Procurement Division, did not allow him to "mingle with certain kids" in his "neighborhood, [which] was gradually becoming occupied by Southern [black] migrants who were not at all desirable associates." African American migrants were objectionable, according to Banks, because they did not hold his father's middle-class status and values or were too poor to "dress comfortably" and too crude to "maintain a well-balanced home" that supposedly offered the best setting for rearing well-behaved children.[25]

African Americans who resided in poor neighborhoods also complained that "disreputable" people in their communities could have a negative impact on their families, particularly their children. To ward off potential injury, parents used their homes as places of refuge. They turned inward and isolated themselves from "undesirable" neighbors so that they could protect themselves from verbal or physical harassment and cultivate proper citizenship. Frazier and his team of researchers asked Mrs. Coleman, a striving Washingtonian who lived in a "slum section" of Southwest D.C. with her husband and children, if she were satisfied with her home. Coleman replied that she would have "preferred to live in Southeast," because the environment in her neighborhood "was so bad." She continued by disclosing that her "biggest trouble . . . was fighting against outside influence," like juvenile delinquents who would attempt to persuade her children to question authority, disobey rules, or "sprout wrong ideas."[26] By Southeast, Coleman most likely meant Anacostia. Anacostia was

technically a part of Washington, D.C., proper during the 1930s, but it contained a manmade park and reservoir, as well as a sizable working-class population that lived in modest homes set in country or rural surroundings.[27] Coleman's Southeast would likely not have included the area near the city's Navy Yard, because various black Washingtonians saw it as a dangerous slum district that could adversely affect its inhabitants.[28] Mrs. Douglas, a single mother and domestic servant who worked for a family during the day, lived with her son William at 326 L Street SE, about two blocks north of the Navy Yard. When talking with Frazier researchers about the Southeast D.C. quadrant, she reported that the young men in her community would no doubt damage her son if she allowed him to freely associate with them. According to Douglas, she kept William "home most of the time." Douglas added that she wanted to shield her son from the boys "around her neighborhood," whom she claimed would steal and "act so bad" or use "more cuss words in three seconds than she could think of all day when she was their age."[29]

Black Suburbia as Refuge

A significant number of Washington, D.C.'s black residents moved to newly built, segregated housing subdivisions to avoid what they perceived as disorderly inner-city neighborhoods. The city's white builders and developers ran ads throughout the 1930s to persuade African Americans to invest in new residential tracts named Kingman Park and DePriest Village-Capital View, located off Benning Road in the Northeast section of the city (See Figure 1).[30] Businessmen like Charles D. Sager, the builder for Kingman Park, and Raymond Evans, one of the owners of DePriest Village-Capital View, were among the few whites across the nation who offered attractive financing to help African Americans relocate to "colored" suburbs between World War I and World War II.[31] Historian Andrew Wiese has argued that it was sound business strategy for elite whites to lend to working- and middle-class blacks, enabling them to make affordable down payments and monthly installments to purchase homes in suburban settings. However, according to Wiese, it was also a way for the building and banking industries to maintain racial segregation in housing while appeasing blacks who wanted to escape urban ghettos and avoid interacting with whites and their discriminatory ways.[32]

In 1929, Sager established Kingman Park—bordered by H Street-Benning Road, the Anacostia River, and East Capitol and 15th Streets NE—because he "realized [that] there was a definite need for a place for the colored to live." Sager was certain that blacks "would much rather live together" in segregated modern communities "than meet all the opposition of . . . whites" who vehemently objected to living in integrated settings.[33] Howard University student Geraldine B. Alves resided in an aging city home in "the middle of a [predominantly mixed-income] white community." This living arrangement was vexing to Alves and her family from the 1920s through the 1930s, primarily because

she and her siblings "felt the sting of race hatred much earlier than [black] children" who were insulated "in Negro neighborhoods." According to Alves, her parents would not allow her to socialize with either the disreputable "poor whites" who lived on her block or the rowdy "Negro children" who lived on "one of those terrible short streets," a derisive connotation for a lesser-known road that ran behind the residences of elites.[34] She added that her mother advised her to "buy a house in a Negro community in the suburbs."[35] That is, Alves's mother believed that a middle-class black neighborhood at the city's edge was a better option for African Americans who could not stand to live among working-class blacks and bigoted whites of any economic background.

Sager portrayed Kingman Park as a "convenient in-town community with extensive park and school surroundings that furnish[ed] suburban advantages" to appeal to those who thought that mixed-income city spaces were anathema to their sensibilities and threatening to their children.[36] He catered to renters who linked homeownership with economic stability when he advertised that Kingman Park would solve the "family man's problem of furnishing [the] best housing for [the] least cost" and urged his audience not "to waste money for rent that [could] be used for purchase" in a "growing community."[37] Sager even tried to entice blacks who may have associated the middle-class suburb with exclusivity and respectability when he publicized that "over 200" of his homes had been sold to "discriminating people."[38] Sager ultimately sold the idea that blacks could become citizens through homeownership instead of remaining dependents who looked to government officials and landlords to provide shelter for them when he included the following Theodore Roosevelt quotation in one of his ads: "Every person who invests in a well-selected home in a growing section of a prosperous community adopts the way to independence."[39] By coupling homeownership with self-sufficiency and status, Sager tapped into a well-established American belief that the property owner was socially, economically, and morally superior to the renter. He implied that blacks could purchase citizenship or demonstrate that they were upstanding Americans who deserved equal access and treatment under the law because they, like many middle-class whites, opted to raise their families in single-family housing set in "extensive park" surroundings.[40]

In 1929, Washington, D.C., teacher Gertrude Cope established the Kingman Park Civic Association (KPCA), whose main goal was to help its members create a prosperous suburban black community. Sometime shortly after its founding, the KPCA joined the Federation of Civic Associations, an umbrella organization established in 1921 by black Washingtonians who were denied membership in the city's white-run Federation of Citizens Associations.[41] The KPCA's first successes as a group were securing "better light facilities, greatly improved streets, and an improvement of the [neighborhood's] sanitary conditions." Members of the agency convinced the D.C. Board of Education to build three new schools in their area amid the economic downturn. They accomplished this feat by showing that most Kingman Park residents were tax-

paying homeowners who apparently believed that modern educational facilities provided the proper teaching environment to mold children into respectable adults. In 1933, city officials gave KPCA "a silver cup" to commemorate the neighborhood's win for "the best kept lawns in the George Washington Bicentennial Garden Contest."[42] In as little as nine years, the KPCA had organized government lobbying and beautification efforts. Furthermore, the civic association had wielded sufficient influence in the nation's capital to make its neighborhood the thriving "in-town" community that Sager spoke of in the many ads he posted in the city's black newspapers. By 1938, Kingman Park was home to "300 satisfied" African American customers, described by a Frazier researcher as well-dressed "middle-class Negroes" with "spic and span" dwellings and yards and "inexpensive . . .Fords and Chevrolets."[43]

Located east of Kingman Park and bounded roughly by Benning Road and East Capitol, 53rd, and Blaine Streets NE, DePriest Village-Capital View was planned in the 1920s and 1930s for African American professionals (See Figure 1). The owners of the Capital View Realty Company, the builder for the subdivision, were whites who likely collaborated with prominent black businessman John Whitelaw Lewis and hired black real estate brokers to make the pitch to would-be homeowners.[44] Salesmen publicly referred to DePriest Village as the "City of Mansions" to attract those who cared about living in a prestigious neighborhood named after Oscar DePriest, a property owner in Washington, D.C.'s famed Ledroit Park neighborhood and the first African American, outside the South, to serve in the US Congress in the early twentieth century.[45] They also described DePriest Village as a neighborhood with "executive qualities" and "rigid restrictions" to reinforce that only a select few would be allowed the opportunity to purchase in the development.[46] Frequently, realtors marketed DePriest Village-Capital View as "Washington's Most Exclusive Colored Home Community," offering wide paved streets, shade trees, and access to water, sewer, gas, electricity, schools, churches, and stores.[47]

Realtors of DePriest Village-Capital View offered Federal Housing Administration (FHA) loans to clients, which helped to maintain the suburb's selectivity. This action also allowed prospective homeowners to purchase "new [semiattached] stone, steel [framed], [and] brick homes," equipped with oak floors, kitchens with built-in cabinets and electric clocks, tiled baths with tubs and showers, hot water heaters, and large basements that were suitable for recreation rooms.[48] It was not standard practice for the federal government to provide FHA funding to construct single-family housing in predominantly black areas inside or outside city limits. Sometimes, though, New Deal policymakers subsidized homebuilding in minority communities where citizens had demonstrated an unflagging commitment to rehabilitating their neighborhoods and achieving independence through homeownership.[49] Capital View Realty may have accessed FHA financing because it convinced government officials and the banking industry that federal housing dollars would be used to expand an elite black subdivision that was off limits to minorities who refused to or could

not display middle-class sensibilities in public and through home maintenance. That is to say, developers built FHA-approved homes because they successfully demonstrated that DePriest Village-Capital View was an "exclusive" suburb, not an aging inner-city district that housed "inharmonious racial and nationality groups."[50]

DePriest Village-Capital View, like Kingman Park, had an active citizens association, designed to maintain a sense of order and propriety in an upscale black settlement. According to O.W. McDonald, the president of the Capital View Citizens Association (CVCA), the principal goal of his organization in the 1930s was to protect the community from "undesirables." The group sponsored "Better Gardens" contests to remind residents to clean and beautify their surroundings. During the winter holiday season, the club organized neighbors to "decorate the exterior of their properties in the Christmas motif" to affect the appearance of a "Yuletide fairyland."[51] Homeowners were vested in protecting their real estate and making sure that their neighborhood was closed, or at least hostile, to those who did not abide by community standards. Nonetheless, the seemingly random violence that many middle-class Americans associated with urban zones and the laboring classes occasionally found its way to Washington, D.C.'s exclusive black suburb. The city's black press headlined that the Mills Brothers, famous African American radio singers, had been "mobbed in [a] fight" that took place at the dwelling of Mrs. Williams, a DePriest resident and a Howard University employee. Journalists specifically reported that Carroll Swann of Deanwood, a predominantly working-class community located in Northeast D.C., attacked the Mills Brothers because he believed that they "paid too much attention" to one of Williams's sisters. This action caused the Mills Brothers to retaliate by tackling Swann and giving him "a good beating." After the brawl, Williams's home was "completely wrecked," the Mills Brothers had "bruised heads and bodies," and Swann suffered a "black eye, and [a] possible fracture of the right arm." Conscientious community members no doubt perceived this incident of domestic violence as a stain on their development. As a result, they attempted to distance themselves from the debacle and reinstate their suburb's exalted image when they reputedly told the *Tribune*, "none of the participants" in the fight "were members of the DePriest Village colony."[52]

Years after the DePriest Village conflict, members of the CVCA denied a request from Marshall Heighters to join the CVCA in its bid for inclusion in the city's Federation of Civic Organizations. It seems that CVCA members rejected this request because they thought that Marshall Heighters were not wealthy enough or did not share the same ideas about home maintenance and neighborhood beautification. In 1935, Reverend James White, president of the Marshall Heights Citizens Association (MHCA), stated that the CVCA's charter prohibited its members from forming political alliances or simply affiliating with those who owned or built homes "costing less than $4,000." Since most of the houses in Marshall Heights were priced "anywhere from $50 up," his working-class community was forced to create "its own citizens association"

that was "separate . . . from any other group" so that its residents could solve their "distinctive problems."[53]

The main issues that confronted Marshall Heighters included a lack of indoor plumbing, a dearth of streetlights and paved roads, and inadequate public transportation. Although the community was established shortly after World War I, a significant number of Marshall Height's residents moved to the area during the Depression.[54] These migrants primarily came from the South and older neighborhoods in Washington, D.C. They settled in a rustic landscape, located south of DePriest Village-Capital View and bounded by 49th Street and Central and Southern Avenues SE (See Figure 1). At a "reunion of pioneers of Marshall Heights" that took place in the late 1970s, residents like Alice Hicks, who moved to the suburb from North Carolina in 1935, confirmed that her new community was a "wilderness" with "plenty of rabbits and rats" but "no streets, no lights, [and] no water."[55] Mostly skilled laborers and domestic servants, Hicks and other Marshall Heighters purchased plots for $100 or less and gradually built modest-sized houses when they had expendable income. A Frazier surveyor claimed that "most of the homes" in Marshall Heights were "so tiny" that he could not understand "how a single person could live in one, let alone a large family." This researcher also noticed that "land around the small box-like structures was highly cultivated," suggesting that many of the community's residents used their yards for small-scaled farming or subsistence gardening to provide food for their families in times of need.[56] For Marshall Heighters, erecting single-family houses on inexpensive land on the outskirts of the city was more attractive than and preferable to paying exorbitant rents to live in what they perceived as cramped, squalid, or low-quality apartments in urban centers. According to one resident (a domestic servant and wife of a truck driver), "it [paid] to live" in the suburbs because "for $30.00 a month," a black family "couldn't get half [as] much" space if they rented in a rooming house within the city.[57] Marshall Heighters were similar to other working-class blacks in American suburbs during the early twentieth century. As historian Weise asserts, African Americans with little income created "rustic landscapes" at the edge of US cities because they desired to fulfill their own "vision of suburb[ia]," which "emphasized domestic production, thrift, and family security, while exposing a lingering ambivalence about urban industrial life."[58]

Citizens of Marshall Heights understood their move to a semirural tract as a way for them to construct and own low-cost shelter in a countrylike setting, to show self-reliance, and to gain a semblance of economic stability. However, some affiliated with Washington's elite saw Marshall Heights as a "shantytown" or a miserable slum district that had the potential to spread disease. In February 1935, First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt toured the working-class suburb because she and other government officials were curious to know where "evicted" alley dwellers of Northwest and Southwest D.C. had "gone to live." She saw the sheds and two-story houses that Marshall Heighters inhabited as "more undesirable" than the alley hovels that had been razed by the federal government,

primarily because they were poorly constructed and had inadequate sewage lines.[59] Mrs. Little, a mother who lived in the community, took issue with the First Lady's characterization when interviewed by a reporter affiliated with the *Afro-American.* As Little told it, she and most of her neighbors "never lived in an alley" and freely chose to locate in Marshall Heights because "rents were too high in the city." Little further stated that she and her husband "felt that [they] could acquire land cheap . . . [in suburbia], construct a temporary house and add to [their] comfort" as their "income permitted." To show that Marshall Heights was a thriving community composed of decent, hardworking folks, Little was sure to let the public know that her family was "not on relief"; she also maintained that many of her neighbors were active participants in the community's "self-help cooperative groups."[60] The *Afro-American* spoke with other Marshall Heighters who, like Little, objected to outsiders' derisive depiction of their suburb. These unnamed "citizens," according to journalists, explicitly asserted that the "police and truant officers [did] not have much work in their community," implying that they thought that behavior, not physical appearance, determined whether an area was a "shantytown."[61]

In keeping with the spirit of displaying "good" behavior, self-determination, and citizenship, the MHCA eventually joined the Federation of Civic Associations in 1935. Under the leadership of White, the MHCA was successful at getting the Washington, D.C., government to install streetlights and pave some of the suburb's roads with cinders.[62] Social worker Mary Booker was president of the MHCA in the late 1930s when it persuaded the city's Public Utilities Transit Company to provide bus service through Marshall Heights and DePriest Village-Capital View to ensure that area children would have transportation to and from schools. During Booker's tenure, the group advocated equal voting rights for all Washingtonians when it supported the "Down with Taxation without Representation" campaign that was popular in the city during the Depression. Members of the association also called for the establishment of a "tuberculosis clinic at . . . Freedmen's Hospital," serving the city's entire African American populace.[63]

Conclusion

Many African Americans who resided in Washington, D.C., during the Great Depression readily adopted the ideology of the nation's middle class, not that of a racialized working-class minority, in their attitudes about housing.[64] Residents of Kingman Park and DePriest Village-Capital View, for example, established civic groups to help them create premier black suburbs within the city's limits. They did so largely because they embraced the middle-class notion that owning a well-maintained dwelling surrounded by a manicured lawn was a distinctive marker of respectability and status. Homeowners in Marshall Heights could not afford to build or buy homes that resembled those in Kingman Park and DePriest Village-Capital View. However, these working-class

African Americans also looked toward suburban environs to help them achieve and display the socioeconomic mobility and moral rectitude that they felt were unachievable if they lived in low-income urban areas. Marshall Heighters built "self-help" organizations to demonstrate autonomy and cooperation. They organized a citizens association to bring resources to their suburb, gain political power, and prove that they were upstanding residents, not dependents who were reliant on the state and others for survival. To cement their status as stakeholders in Washington, D.C., and distinguish themselves from poor blacks who lived in the inner city, residents like Little publicly refuted claims that Marshall Heighters were "evicted" alley dwellers who were on "relief." As a result, these working-class African Americans helped to further stigmatize their seemingly less fortunate counterparts who were trapped in decaying ghettos located in older sections of the nation's capital.

Blacks who resided in Washington, D.C., during the economic crisis also did not undergo the process of proletarianization that has been well-documented by historians. According to Joe William Trotter Jr., industrialization created black proletariats in manufacturing hubs during the interwar period; Trotter further asserts that these proletariats often collaborated with the established black bourgeoisie in industrial cities and both groups expressed their class interests in racial terms to combat the discrimination they encountered.[65] However, the city did not have a large working-class black population that toiled in factory settings during this time. Most African Americans in the nation's capital labored as underpaid government workers in the 1920s, and during the height of the Depression, a large percentage of the city's black residents held low-wage jobs in personal and domestic service.[66] Moreover, Washington, D.C., was a white-collar border city that did not receive a sizable migrant population during and immediately after World War I; by 1920, more than 80% of the city's African American populace were native Washingtonians and transplants from Maryland and Virginia who had lived in the area for at least a decade or more.[67] Blacks from Southern states increasingly flocked to the capital between 1930 and 1940, looking for jobs, housing, and relief from the federal government.[68] But the traditions and customs of these migrants did not supplant the middle-class ethos that was well established in the city before the Great Depression. There was also a visible working-class culture in the city's streets, dancehalls, and other public spaces because of unemployed African Americans' efforts to create recreational outlets and earn money during the economic downturn.[69] However, this working-class lifestyle was not necessarily the dominant or most pronounced culture within "Black Washington." Because some poor residents boldly flaunted their activities, African Americans who upheld middle-class ideas of respectability became even more vocal and public about their disdain for what they perceived as lowbrow behavior. This middle-class outlook was especially noticeable when black Washingtonians referred to impoverished areas of the city and when they worked to protect their homes from perceived outside threats.

Notes

1. Selma Thomas to Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, April 27, 1937, Washington, D.C., Unemployable, Folder 5, Box 119-1, Works Progress Administration, Moorland Spingarn Research Center, Howard University. When Selma Thomas contacted the First Lady, she rented on the fourth floor of the Henrietta Apartments, a Beaux Arts-inspired, five-story brick building located at 933 N Street NW in what is currently known as the Shaw District. Information on the architectural style of the Henrietta Apartments was gathered by street survey. See also Sanborn, District of Columbia, Washington, 1927–1928, Vol. 1, 1928, Sheet 70, Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress.

2. See Rosalyn Baxandall and Elizabeth Ewen, *Picture Windows: How the Suburbs Happened* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 51–77. Also refer to Franklin D. Roosevelt's 1937 inaugural address, in which he stated that "one-third of" the nation's population was "ill-housed, ill-clad, ill-nourished." Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Second Inaugural Address," January 20, 1937, Bartleby.com, accessed October 27, 2009, http://www.bartleby.com/124/pres50.html.

3. See, for example, "Crime Fostered by Bad Housing," *Washington Post*, June 3, 1934, R5; "Desperadoes Breed in Slums, New York City Survey Shows," *Washington Post*, July 31, 1934, 11; "Bad Housing Breeds Disease and Crime, Expert Declares," *Washington Post*, January 21, 1935, 12; and Isabel Vickers, "Crime and Slums," *Washington Post*, June 5, 1936, X8.

4. In the 1930s and 1940s, several of E. Franklin Frazier's Howard University students proudly maintained that they lived in well-furnished, two- or three-story brick homes that contained seven to ten rooms, indoor plumbing and electric lighting, and the latest modern appliances. See the following essays in Family Histories, *The Negro Family in the U.S.*, Research Projects, E. Franklin Frazier Papers, Moorland Spingarn Research Center, Howard University: Pauline L. Ellis, "The Family," circa 1930s or 1940s, Folder 22, Box 131-86; Essie J. Lark, "Family History," circa 1930s or 1940s, Folder 9, Box 131-88; and Emma L. Wilkins, "My Family History," June 5, 1946, Folder 6, Box 131-91.

5. "Corrigan v. Buckley." *Oxford Reference*, accessed December 3, 2018, http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095640691.

6. The notion that housing could positively or negatively affect behavior has been an established middle-class view in the United States since at least the mid- to late 1800s. For more on this topic, see Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 45–72; Gail Radford, *Modern Housing for America: Policy Struggles in the New Era* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); and Barbara B. Mooney, "The Comfortable Tasty Framed Cottage: An African American Architectural Iconography," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 61, no. 1 (2002): 48–67.

7. In 1930, blacks made up 55%, or 55,254, of the 100,051 people who lived in Precincts 2 and 8, the area currently known as the Shaw, U Street, and Logan Circle Districts. In 1930, S Street, North Capitol, Michigan/Euclid, Rock Creek Park, and 15th and K Streets NW bounded Precincts 2 and 8. In 1940, blacks made up 62%, or 76,779, of the 122,772 people who lived in Precincts 2 and 13, the area currently known as the Shaw, U Street, and Logan Circle Districts. In 1940, S Street, North Capitol, Michigan/Euclid, Rock Creek Park, and 15th and K Streets NW bounded Precincts 2 and 13. In 1930, blacks made up 48%, or 11,728, of the 23,965 people who lived in Precinct 4, the area known as Southwest and bordered by the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers, the Mall, and South Capitol Street. In 1940, blacks made up 57%, or 11,567, of the 29,343 people who lived in Southwest. In 1940, 93,603 of 187,266 black Washingtonians (or 49.9% or the city's total black populace) lived in Shaw and Southwest. See *Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930*, *Population, Volume III, Part 1* (Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1932), 384, 389, accessed December 18, 2008, http://www.census.gov/prod/www/abs/decennial/1930.htm, and *Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940, Population, Volume II, Part 1* (Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1943), 954–56, 969, accessed December 18, 2008, http://www.census.gov/prod/www/abs/decennial/1940.htm.

8. As early as 1929, African American sociologist Jones completed a housing study to partly urge real estate owners to recognize "fully the difficulty which Negroes [had] in securing houses with modern equipment at reasonable prices." Jones also recommended that builders should "provide a superior grade of material and workmanship" in the new apartments and single-family homes they intended to market to upwardly mobile African Americans to replace the usual expensive yet cheaply constructed dwellings that many were forced to occupy. See William Jones, *The Housing of Negroes in Washington, D.C.: A Study in Human Ecology* (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1929), 153. Mary E. Plummer echoed Jones in 1938 when she asserted in the *Courier*, the official organ for the black-run Pleasant Plains Civic Association, that African Americans spent much of their income on deteriorated real estate in urban centers because they could not find or were barred from acquiring modern homes in new residential developments. See Mary E. Plummer, "Symposium: The Economic Emancipation of Negroes in the District of Columbia," *Courier* 2, no. 3 (1938): 2, Church Publications, Folder 8, Box 131-111, *Negro Youth Study, Washington, D.C.*, Research Projects, E. Franklin Frazier Papers, Moorland Spingarn Research Center, Howard University. In addition, the *Washington Tribune* stated that black "people [were] the poorest paid

workers and the highest paying renters." See "Rents Are Too High," *Washington Tribune*, July 8, 1932, 8.

9. James Borchert, *Alley Life in Washington: Family, Community, Religion, and Folklife in the City, 1850–1970* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1982).

10. Ibid., 128–36.

11. Ibid., 73, 165, 195.

12. "Squalor and Grandeur," *Washington Post*, January 8, 1934, 6; "Crime Fostered"; "Desperadoes Breed"; "Bad Housing"; Vickers, "Crime and Slums"; "Children Gone Wrong," *New York Times*, October 3, 1936, 16; "NAACP Supports Wagner Housing Bill in Senate," *The Chicago Defender*, May 2, 1936; "Afro-Readers Say: Better Housing Needed," *Baltimore Afro-American,* August 21, 1937; and "Find Low Wages, Slums Are Breeders of Crime," *The Chicago Defender*, January 14, 1939.

13. For more on reformers and public officials' roles in equating slums with degradation and immorality from the late 1800s through the early 1900s, see Chad Heap, *Slumming: Sexual and Racial Encounters in American Nightlife, 1885–1940* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

14. Jones, *Housing of Negroes*, 25–26, 40–41.

15. Ibid., 52–55.

16. "Europe's Alleys Unlike Ours," *Afro-American, Capital Edition*, October 8, 1932, 13.

17. According to historian Kelly Quinn, Robinson was greatly influenced by Europe's modernist housing movement, which championed the idea that a state-sponsored, low-rise, garden-styled apartment community was the most affordable, humane, and architecturally appropriate way to house poor people in the early twentieth century. See Kelly Anne Quinn, "Making Modern Homes: A History of Langston Terrace Dwellings, A New Deal Housing Program in Washington, D.C." (Ph.D. diss., University of Maryland, College Park, 2007), 91–122. Robinson, like other professionals and experts of his time, also seemed to believe that environment and culture could create healthy or damaged psyches within black communities. For more on this topic, see Daryl Michael Scott, *Contempt and Pity: Social Policy and the Image of the Damaged Black Psyche, 1880–1996* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina Press, 1997), 35, accessed December 4, 2018, https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=v0cMCgAAQBAJ&pg=GBS.PT34.

18. "T.B. Death Rate Is Highest in Precincts 4 and 5, Chart Shows," *Afro-American, Capital Edition*, February 22, 1936, 12.

19. "Where the Other Half Lives," *Afro-American, Capital Edition*, January 11, 1936, 13.

20. "Stench Time," *Washington Tribune*, June 1, 1935, 4.

21. The *Tribune* reported that Wilbur Briscoe shot and killed Jesse Wood at his home on 1234 6th Street NW; The 1928 Sanborn Insurance Map shows Wood's home as a three-story, semiattached framed dwelling that sat between a similar three-story attached framed unit and the Mt. Zion Baptist Church. See "Married Lover Seeking Revenge Kills Wrong Man," *Washington Tribune*, January 20, 1933, 1, and Digital Sanborn Maps 1867–1970, Washington, D.C., 1927–1960, Vol. 1, 1928–Nov. 1959, Sheet 72, Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. The *Afro-American* told of Wallace Lewis who attacked his former lover Mary Bias with an iron pipe. At the time of the incident, Bias resided at 1229 6½ Street NW. The Sanborn map records 6½ Place NW as a two-story attached dwelling located a block west of 6th Street NW. See "Taximan Tells of Killing His Jilted Rival," *Afro-American, Capital Edition*, January 14, 1933, 6. The *Afro-American* also announced that Mary Rankin was fatally stabbed in front of 816 G Street NW and that William Archer fatally shot William Bean in front of Archer's home located at 2418 I Street NW. See "Girl Killed in Street Fight," *Afro-American, Capital Edition*, January 28, 1933, 4, and "Alleged Killer Held for Action of Grand Jury," *Afro-American, Capital Edition*, March 4, 1933, 23. The Sanborn map does not list 816 G Street but does show that the 800 block of G Street NW was heavily populated with offices and commercial buildings. The map described 2418 I Street NW as a three-story attached framed dwelling located approximately one block south of the inhabited alley known as Snows Court. See Digital Sanborn Maps 1867–1970, Washington, D.C., 1927–1960, Vol. 1, 1928–Nov. 1959, Sheets 15 and 42, Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress.

22. "Pistol Report Ends Chase of Suspects," *Washington Tribune*, January 20, 1933, 2, and "Week End Fights Send Several to Hospital," *Washington Tribune*, February 3, 1933, 1.

23. "Police Arrest 17 in Alleged Burglary Ring," *Afro-American, Capital Edition*, February 4, 1933, 4.

24. Velma Williams (president of the Pleasant Plains Civic Association), Interview with T.E. Davis, September 13, 1938, Interviews, Folder 7, Box 131-113, *Negro Youth Study, Washington, D.C.*, Research Projects, E. Franklin Frazier Papers, Moorland Spingarn Research Center, Howard University. When referring to poor blacks, Williams seemed to embrace the rhetoric of Progressive-era racial conservatives who believed that African Americans were inferior and unable to assimilate into white society because of their so-called pathological behavior. See Scott, *Contempt and Pity*, 27–30.

25. James G. Banks, "Family History," circa 1940s, Family Histories, Folder 9, Box 131-85, *The Negro Family in the U.S.*, Research Projects, E. Franklin Frazier Papers, Moorland Spingarn Research Center, Howard University.

26. Mrs. Coleman, Interview with Anonymous, circa 1930s, Notecards, Folder 4, Box 131-111, *Negro Youth Study, Washington, D.C.*, Research Projects, E. Franklin Frazier Papers, Moorland Spingarn Research Center, Howard University.

27. Howard Gillette states that before World War II, "Uniontown (now Old Anacostia) and Barry's Farm/Hillsdale (now Barry Farms) carried on in the manner of small towns, surrounded by open space. Many [black and white] residents kept gardens on their large lots and sold produce in central Washington. Although a few prominent Washingtonians lived in the area, such as D.C. Budget Director Walter L. Fowler as well as Frederick Douglass, most residents worked at blue-collar or laboring jobs." Howard Gillette Jr., "Old Anacostia: Washington's First Suburb," in *Washington at Home: An Illustrated History of Neighborhoods in the Nation's Capital*, ed. Kathryn Schneider Smith (Northridge, CA: Windsor Publications, 1988), 100.

28. One of Frazier's interviewers asked Rosella Hillman, a black teen who lived in Southwest D.C., what she thought of other parts of the city. Hillman stated the following: "I [like] Northwest—the people [are] friendly. My aunt lives in Northeast. I like Northeast—the people are very friendly there, but one place I wouldn't live is Southeast. The people fight and cut. They come up to you and want to start a fight." In addition, an anonymous Frazier interviewer described the Southeast neighborhood as "a slum area" that was "near the Navy Yard and an [unusual amount] of noise." The interviewer added that "without exception, all of the houses in the block [surveyed were] in need of major repairs." See Rosella Hillman, Interview with L. Lee, July 25, 1938, Interviews, Folder 11, Box 131-112, *Negro Youth Study, Washington, D.C.*, Research Projects, E. Franklin Frazier Papers, Moorland Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, and William Douglas, Interview with Anonymous, circa 1930s, Interviews, Folder 9, Box 131-112, *Negro Youth Study, Washington, D.C.*, Research Projects, E. Franklin Frazier Papers, Moorland Spingarn Research Center, Howard University.

29. See Douglas, Interview.

30. Ad: "Kingman Park Homes," *Washington Tribune*, June 30, 1933, 6; Ad: "Homes: Kingman Park," *Washington Tribune*, April 7, 1935, 5; Ad: "Ideal Home Site: Kingman Park Home," *Washington Tribune*, June 15, 1935, 12; Ad: Now Open, Model Home . . . Kingman Park," *Afro-American, Capital Edition*, August 19, 1939, 13; Ad: "Health, Wealth . . . DePriest Village and Capital View Homes," *Washington Tribune*, July 8, 1932, 5; Ad: "Happy Homes Are Built in DePriest Village, Capital View," *Washington Tribune*, June 24, 1932, 11; Ad: "Live In DePriest Village, Capital View: Washington's Most Exclusive Colored Home Community," *Washington Tribune*, June 17, 1932, 11; Ad: "DePriest Village: 'The City of Mansions,'" *Washington Tribune*, April 8, 1932, 6; Ad: "Individuality Is Shown in the Modern Home: DePriest Village, Capital View," *Washington Tribune*, July 1, 1932, 11; and Ad: "For Sale: Capital View-DePriest Village," *Washington Tribune*, November 25, 1932, 6.

31. Ad: "Kingman Park: Fifth Anniversary," *Washington Tribune*, July 27 1933, 11; Charles Sager (developer of Kingman Park), Interview with R.J.B., November 1938, Community, Folder 20, Box 131-111, *Negro Youth Study, Washington, D.C.*, Research Projects, E. Franklin Frazier Papers, Moorland Spingarn Research Center, Howard University; Ad: "De Priest Village, Capital View: Washington's Most Exclusive Colored Home Community," *Washington Tribune*, February 12, 1932, 15; "Realty Firm Will Build 50 Homes in City," *Washington Post*, October 14, 1934; Thomas M. Cahill, "The Week in Real Estate," *Washington Post*, April 9, 1939; and Ad: "You Enjoy Both a 'Townhouse' and a Countryhome When You Live in Capital View," *Afro-American, Capital Edition*, May 14, 1938, 3.

32. Andrew Wiese, "Black Housing, White Finance: African American Housing and Home Ownership in Evanston, Illinois, before 1940," *Journal of Social History* 33, no. 2 (Winter 1999): 429–60.

33. Sager, Interview.

34. Geraldine B. Alves, "Family History," July 7, 1944, Family Histories, Folder 2, Box 131-85, *The Negro Family in the U.S.*, Research Projects, E. Franklin Frazier Papers, Moorland Spingarn Research Center, Howard University. In addition, Jones stated that black Washingtonians who were "particularly concerned about their social position in the city tend[ed] to avoid short streets . . . because they [were] not sufficiently well known to give the desired dignity and status." Jones added that "the short street [did] not give as great an incentive to display as [did] the well-known long street, the homes of which [were] more before the eyes of the public." He further claimed that "a number of" black Washingtonians disclosed "that they would not live on short streets, either because they have to be apologized for, or are likely to be confused—in the minds of persons who are not acquainted with the city—with the alleys" (Jones, *Housing of Negroes*, 87–88).

35. Alves, "Family History."

36. Ad: "Homes: Kingman Park," *Washington Tribune*, April 7, 1933, 5.

37. Ibid.

38. "Kingman Park Homes."

39. Sager was quoting Theodore Roosevelt who, at some point in his career as New York governor or US president, stated the following: "Every person who invests in well-selected real estate in a growing section of a prosperous community adopts the surest and safest method of becoming

independent, for real estate is the basis of wealth" ("Kingman Park Homes," 6). Also see William H. Ten Haken, "Real Estate as a Marketable Commodity," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 148, no. 1 (1930): 19–25.

40. Jackson argues that since the mid-1800s, middle-class whites have equated homeownership with decency, success, permanency, and stability so as to differentiate themselves from the transitory urban renter. Jackson also states that upwardly mobile whites have historically expressed their citizenship or supposed exalted moral, social, and economic status in the United States through homeownership of single-family dwellings enclosed in ornamental yards. See Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 45–72.

41. See "With Civic Associations: No. 9—Ivy City Civic Association," *Afro-American, Capital Edition*, April 16, 1938; "With Civic Associations: No. 12—Southwest Civic Association," *Afro-American, Capital Edition*, May 21, 1938, 13; "With Civic Associations: No. 7—Brookland Civic Association," *Afro-American, Capital Edition*, April 2, 1938; and Marya McQuirter, "Claiming the City: African Americans, Urbanization, and Leisure in Washington, D.C., 1902–1957" (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 2000), 140–41.

42. "With Civic Associations: No. 8—Kingman Park Civic Association," *Afro-American, Capital Edition*, April 9, 1938.

43. Sager, Interview; Kingman Park, Survey by R.J.B., November 1938, Community, Folder 20, Box 131-111, *Negro Youth Study, Washington, D.C.*, Research Projects, E. Franklin Frazier Papers, Moorland Spingarn Research Center, Howard University; and Ad: "Ideal Home Sites: Kingman Park Home," *Washington Tribune*, June 15, 1935, 12.

44. *Memories of Capitol View* (Washington, D.C.: Capitol View Civic Association History Committee, 2010), accessed August 3, 2013, http://www.wdchumanities.org/docs/2010DCCHP/CapitalViewBrochure.pdf; "City of Mansions"; "Thomas C.R. Bragg of the Capital View Realty Company's Sale Force," *Washington Tribune*, June 17, 1932, 11; Ad: "Holiday Greetings," *Washington Tribune*, December 23, 1932, 5; "Realty Firm Will Build"; and "Week in Real Estate."

45. "City of Mansions" and Office of Planning, "Ledroit Park Historic District (Ledroit Park Historical Society)," accessed February 19, 2009, planning.dc.gov/planning/frames.asp?doc=/planning/lib/planning/ preservation/brochures/ledroit.pdf.

46. "City of Mansions."

47. Ad: "De Priest Village, Capital View," *Washington Tribune*, January 22, 1932, 15; February 12, 1932, 15; and April 22, 1932, 6; Ad: "Your Home in DePriest Village, Capital View," *Washington Tribune*, June 10, 1932, 11; "Live in DePriest Village"; "Happy Homes"; and Ad: "Health Is Wealth," *Washington Tribune*, July 8, 1932, 5.

48. Ad: "New Stone, Steel Brick Homes in Capital View," *Afro-American, Capital Edition*, March 26, 1938, 3; Ad: "Now Showing New Stone, Steel, Brick Homes: Capital View," *Afro-American, Capital Edition*, April 30, 1938, 5; and "'Townhouse' and a Countryhome."

49. According to Thomas Sugrue, after much public wrangling among local community groups, city planning officials, private developers, and the FHA, the federal government decided to subsidize single-family housing in a black settlement located in Detroit's Eight Mile-Wyoming area between 1940 and 1950. Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 63–72.

50. See the "De Priest Village, Capital View" and "City of Mansions" ads. In addition, Kevin Gotham points out that the 1934 Housing Act did not allow the FHA to lend to homeowners who lived in mixed-raced communities in the inner city because New Deal policymakers believed that providing mortgages to certain "racial and nationality groups" was a bad credit risk. Kevin Fox Gotham, "Racialization and the State: The Housing Act of 1934 and the Creation of the Federal Housing Administration," *Sociological Perspectives* 43, no. 2 (Summer 2000): 291–317.

51. "With Civic Association: No. 10—Capital View Association," *Afro-American, Capital Edition*, April 23, 1938, 19.

52. "Mills Bros. Mobbed in Fight: Famous Radio Artists Beaten in Fight at DePriest Village Party," *Washington Tribune*, January 20, 1933, 1–2.

53. Florence M. Collins, "Marshall Heights Folk Wary of Any Commercial Invasion," *Afro-American, Capital Edition*, March 2, 1935, 13.

54. Anne H. Oman, "Marshall Heights Settlers Recall the Birth of Their Neighborhood," *Washington Post*, December 15, 1977. Also see Becky M. Nicolaides, "'Where the Working Man is Welcomed': Working-Class Suburbs in Los Angeles, 1900–1940," in *Looking for Los Angeles*, ed. Charles G. Salas and Michael S. Roth (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institutes, 2001), pp. 57–96.

55. Ibid.

56. Marshall Heights, Survey and Interview with R.J.B., August 22, 1938, Interviews, Folder 2, Box 131-113, *Negro Youth Study, Washington, D.C.*, Research Projects, E. Franklin Frazier Papers, Moorland Spingarn Research Center, Howard University.

57. Ibid.

58. Andrew Weise, Places of Their Own: *African American Suburbanization in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 78, 67–93.

59. "Mrs. Roosevelt Tells of Trip To Inspect Slum Clearance," *The Evening Star*, February 4, 1935, B1; and "Alley Homes Were Better, She Avers," *Washington Times*, February 4, 1935, 13.

60. Florence M. Collins, "Marshall Heights Men's Self-Help Project Dies, but Women's Flourishes," *Afro-American, Capital Edition*, March 9, 1935, 13.

61. Collins, "Marshall Heights Folk."

62. Ibid.

63. "With Civic Associations: No. 6—Marshall Heights," *Afro-American, Capital Edition*, March 26, 1938.

64. Like other African Americans during the early 1900s, many black Washingtonians embraced what Evelyn Higginbotham calls the "politics of respectability" to uplift and gain political power for themselves and other members of their community in their attitudes about housing. According to Higginbotham, the politics of respectability was dually progressive and conservative, because it contested prevailing ideas of black inferiority and shored up middle-class ideas of respectability, such as hard work, cleanliness, and self-determination. For more on this topic, see Evelyn Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880–1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), and Randal Maurice Jelks, *African Americans in the Furniture City: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Grand Rapids* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006).

65. Joe William Trotter Jr., *Black Milwaukee: The Making of an Industrial Proletariat, 1915–45* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007), xi–xii. Many African Americans in Washington, D.C., did not form alliances across class lines to gain equality for black Washingtonians as a whole. In so doing, their actions countered that of blacks featured in Richard Thomas's *Life for Us Is What We Make It.* This monograph demonstrates how Detroit's elite and working-class African Americans forged tenuous bonds to build community and access freedom and progress between 1915 and 1945.

66. Historian Constance Green asserts that the nation's government employed approximately 70% of the city's 64,453 black workers in 1928. Green states that in 1928 there were more than 51,880 black Washingtonians employed by the federal government; messengers, charwomen (janitors), and other manual workers, earning an average of $1,234 a year, comprised most of the list. See Constance McLaughlin Green, *The Secret City: A History of Race Relations in the Nation's Capital* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1967), 203. The US Census reported that the average wage in the Washington, D.C., in 1925 was $1,571. See Paul F. Brissenden, *Earnings of Factory Workers, 1899–1927: An Analysis of Pay-Roll Statistics* (Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1929), 388. The census also reported that approximately 48% of the city's black labor force held jobs in domestic and personal service in 1930 and more than 60% of its blacks worked in domestic and personal service jobs by 1940. See *Fifteenth Census*, 388, and *Sixteenth Census*, 968.

67. I borrow the term "white-collar city" from Green's *Secret City.* By referring to Washington, D.C., as a white-collar city, the historian seems to have meant that in the 1910s and the 1920s, it was home to a significant number of salaried professionals who were affiliated with the federal government, universities, and private enterprises. In "Occupational Classes of Negroes in Cities," Frazier reported that in 1920, approximately 10% of the 64,453 gainfully employed black Washingtonians held white-collar jobs (professional, public services, and trade), 21% were skilled and semiskilled workers, and 69% were domestics or laborers. See Green, *Secret City*, 196, and E. Franklin Frazier, "Occupational Classes of Negroes in Cities," *American Journal of Sociology* 35, no. 5 (1930): 723. Also see *Fourteenth Census of the United States, Compendium, District of Columbia* (Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1924), 19, accessed March 7, 2010, http://www.census.gov/prod/www/abs/decennial/1920.htm.

68. Green, *Secret City*, 228. In addition, from 1930 to 1940, Washington, D.C.'s black populace went from 132,068 to 187,266. See *Fifteenth Census*, 385, and *Sixteenth Census*, 956.

69. McQuirter, "Claiming the City," 178–231.