



Making Invisible Histories Visible

This activity was created for educators bringing students to the UNION's Undesign the Redline exhibit. The activity helps youth connect the issue of fair housing and segregation raised in the exhibit to local Omaha history. This content can easily be adapted for classroom use! Or, contact the UNION to schedule a field trip for your class: <https://www.u-ca.org/redline>

This Packet includes:

- Primary Source Artifacts A&B p. 2-5
- Short Version of Activity p. 6-8
- Long Version of Activity p. 9-11
- Background information p. 12

More information about redlining in Omaha can be found on the MIHV website:

<http://invisiblehistory.ops.org/StudentProjects/RedlininginOmaha/tabid/1335/Default.aspx>



Making Invisible Histories Visible

ARTIFACTS FOR USE WITH ACTIVITY

Artifact A. *Omaha Star* Article



Omaha Star - April 21, 1967 - page 3
April 21, 1967 | Omaha Star | Omaha, Nebraska | Page 3

THURSDAY, APRIL 20, 1967

Page Three

Youth Makes Plea for Fair Housing Bill

I've lived in living in the Housing Project, a 12-year old and full of tenants of the Housing Project. I've lived in the Housing Project, a 12-year old and full of tenants of the Housing Project.

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Transplanting and watering. Now that spring is actually here, all of us who love to garden are eager to begin.

Many will want a little longer, for the sun is warm the earth, especially to plant seeds.

However, some of us are ready to transplant seedlings or larger plants, now.

Seedlings should be transplanted as soon as their permanent soil is formed. There are the seed and fourth leaving to form. They are about to be planted, but they become large enough to become serious.

For even better results, transplant the seedlings to a transplant pot. Keep inside for a week and then plant the pot and the seedling. This gives the plants a head start in the open garden. Once plants are moved from this, have to transplant themselves.

Always water seedlings and avoid stress with when transplanted. Keep seedlings damp until they are established in their new home. When watering allow the water to run as freely as possible. Take the plants from the top and let the water penetrate deeply into the soil. Be careful not to water too much, as the plants will rot if the soil is too wet.

Some gardeners believe that using some type of mulch helps to keep the soil moist. You might try it in part of your garden. If it is successful, then mulch the remainder.

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ARTIFACT A, Typed Out.

Omaha Star, April 21, 1967, p. 3

Youth Makes Plea for Fair Housing Bill

"I'm tired of living in the Housing Project," a 13-year old girl told members of the Unicameral Legislature's Miscellaneous Subjects Committee Thursday afternoon at the State House in Lincoln. "If we play on the grass, we will get kicked out. If we play in the streets, the police get after us."

Rajuana Washington, 2008 North 30th Ave., explained to the Committee that when her family had attempted to find a home outside of the Negro ghetto "there was always some reason why they couldn't sell to us" when they found the family was Negro.

"LB358 would help us find a home," the Tech Junior High student declared. "I hope you will pass it."

Rajuana was one of an array of speakers who appeared before the Committee urging that Sen. Edward Danner's statewide fair housing practices bill will sent to the floor of the Unicameral for consideration. The Committee held the measure for further action.

An Omaha school teacher told the Committee that the restriction of the housing market to the Negro produces "staggering" overall effects on the child as well as the school community.

Marjorie Lennox, speaking for the Omaha Chapter of Links, Inc., explained most often when the child comes to school from those condition he is "tired and out-of-sort."

The lack of space, privacy and adequate fixtures in the home make life unpleasant for him," the Lothrop kindergarten teacher declared. "...How can he concentrate on learning history and the democratic way of life when he spent the night battling the rat around the bed he shares with his three or four brothers and

sisters. What possible identification could he with Tom, Susan and Pony and their sterile, orderly way of life?"

Miss Lenox asked, "Education, for what?"

"Does he see himself doomed to a slum existence after efforts of his family have failed to removed them from this environment solely because of the color of their skin," she further inquired. "Therefore, for what reason does a Negro slum-dweller need an education."

She explained that the school community is attempted many approaches to solve its problems, adding that the school cannot remove the child "from his environment . . . (nor) protect the child from peer group dynamics and slum conditions."

She said an open housing market "so those with the desire as well as the financial status could obtain dwellings suitable to their needs" would aid in relieving "overcrowded and unhealthy condition" and provide that "incentive and motivation for learning and responsible citizenship lacking now."

A Gering Nebr. Creighton University student told the Committee that LB 358 should become law because it is lawful, just, profitable and most of all, necessary."

Joe Masek, speaking for the 10-school Nebraska Intercollegiate Association for Human Relations, declared that "justice demands that the unfair distinction of being in a minority group should not be a barrier to rights which all citizens should demand and receive."

He said the Danner-sponsored measure would be an "obvious step forward in the alleviation of the ghetto problem" and provide "a key for breaking out of the vicious cycle of poverty and unemployment in which minority groups are caught."

Jack Clayter, executive director of the Omaha Urban League, told the

Committee that “adequate shelter is a basic need for individual and family life.”

We believe that every family should be free to select its shelter in accord with its interest, needs and finances and should not be limited in its bid into a total housing supply to achieve that goal.” Clayter asserted.

Clayter cited figures showing that 58 percent of the houses in the Negro ghetto in Omaha were built before 1939.

“Because of the high overcrowding and old houses in the Near Northside area, the Negro home buyer would have to look outside this area if he wishes to buy a decent, safe and sanitary home,” he said.

Harvey L. Anderson, personnel specialist with Northern Natural Gas Co., said that efforts to attract industry and recruit top flight Negro students into employment in Omaha is being hampered by the lack of fair housing legislation.

He pointed out that one of the first question potential Negro employees ask is

whether there is fair housing in practice in Omaha.

Anderson, who served as executive secretary of the Omaha Human Relations Board, explained that the greatest critical area is that of rentals, especially apartments.

A member of the Humans Relations Board declared that Omaha “is presently a very turbulent area . . . because of racial unrest and social discord.

Mylles E. Rheingrover, co-chairman of the Board’s housing committee, said in a prepared statement that “some of the causes of such unrest can be attribute to the any city’s history of racial segregation in respect to housing.”

He said there exists, “a concerted effort on behalf of certain interests to prevent residential mobility” and that because of this a fair housing bill is needed.

ARTIFACT B:

Omaha Star, April 4, 1967, p.1. "Off to Lincoln"





ACTIVITY 1: FAIR HOUSING IN OMAHA :

Objectives:

- Students will understand the human consequence of red lining through personal stories.
- Students will connect the housing issues caused by red lining to present issues facing young people.

Part I. Gathering Background Information

-Educator shows students the bus photo (ARTIFACT B).

-Educator has student group engage in a “History Detective Activity” with photo (don’t look at caption yet):

- Question for students: What is this artifact? (*Possible Answer: a black and white group photo.*)
- Questions for students: Who do you see in this photo? (*Possible Answer -integrated group of people. All ages. Bus.*)
- Q: Do you think this photo was taken yesterday? Do you see any clues that tell you how old this photo might be? (*Possible answers: black and white photo, older model bus, clothing worn by the people in the photo.*)
- Q: What time of year might it be? (*Possible answers: Everyone is wearing a coat or sweater, but not a winter coat.. could be fall or spring*)

-Educator asks students to read the accompanying caption. (Educator decides if this is done as a group or individually.)

- Q: What catches your attention in the caption? (*Possible answers: testifying about fair housing practices bill, 150 people traveled to Lincoln, Omaha Links sponsored the tour, Edward Danner sponsored the legislation.*)

-Educator lets folks know the photograph and caption appeared in the *Omaha Star* on April 4, 1967.

-Educator explains what “Fair Housing practices” means. (Fair Housing is an effort to use laws to stop the practices that kept African Americans living in certain parts of town. In Omaha, African Americans were forced to live in a small, deteriorating, neighborhood in North Omaha.

-Connecting photo back to the UnDesign the Redline exhibit: Structural Racism paragraph and the Restrictive Covenant paragraph

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Part II: The Need for Fair Housing in Omaha: Artifact Analysis

Educator shows students the *Omaha Star* article (ARTIFACT A). Have the group look at it quickly.

Can ask some starter “thinking like a historian” questions:

- Q: What is it? (*Answer: A newspaper article from the Omaha Star.*)

- Q: What year was it written? What date was it written? Is this date before or after the date of the photograph? (Answers: *April 21, 1967. The date is near the date of the photo, but after the fact- the article reports on what happened when the group testified in Lincoln.*)

- Educator tells group: A reporter from the Omaha Star covered the groups' visit to Lincoln to testify on behalf of Senator Danner's Fair Housing Legislation.

-Two options for Article Analysis: Short and Longer Option.

A. *SHORT OPTION-good for younger students*

Directions. Read the testimony of RaJuana Washington included in Artifact A, the 1967 "Omaha Star" article, "Youth Makes Plea for Fair Housing Bill". Lead students through the questions below. Students will then create an art project and/ or letter that sheds light onto contemporary issues facing young people today and that require youth activism.

Part 1: Rajuana's Testimony:

- Question: Who is RaJuana? How old is RaJuana? (A: *RaJuana is a young African American girl living in North Omaha. She is 13-years old.*)
- Question: Where does she live? What part of town is this? (A: *RaJuana lists her address as 2008 North 30th Ave.*) Additional info: *This was likely in the Pleasantview Projects. This is now part of the Highlander Development.*
- Q: Does RaJuana like where she lives? What is a problem she faces as a kid in her neighborhood? (A: *No. RaJuana would like to move. She is bothered by the police when she plays in the streets near her house. She is also not allowed to play in the grass near her house*)
- Q: What does RaJuana say has prevented her family from being able to move out of the housing project she lives in? (A: *RaJuana states that because her family is African American, whites won't sell her family a property outside of the Near Northside.*)
- Q. RaJuana testified about her situation to the Nebraska State Senate to try and create change. What did she want the Senate to do? (A: *RaJuana wanted the State Senators to pass a law that would outlaw practices, like redlining, that prevented her family from moving to the decent housing available outside of Omaha's African American neighborhood..*

-Part 2. Connecting RaJuana's story back to the UnDesign the Redline exhibit:

- *Structural segregation paragraph - Omaha's real estate industry forced RaJuana's family to stay living in the North Omaha.*
- *Logan Fontenelle Housing Project paragraph - just down the street from RaJuana's apartment mirrors her experience with overzealous policing in North Omaha's housing projects.*
- *Restrictive Covenant paragraph- Restrictive Covenants were one of the methods used to keep African American living in certain parts of town.*

Part 3: Making Connections to Contemporary Issues.

-Educator can brainstorm with students answers to the question: "What contemporary issues face young people in Omaha today?"

-Educator can have students write out what testimony the students could provide to the Nebraska State Senate about the contemporary issue they have identified.
(and/ or)

-Art provides another way to share a message about issues facing young people. Ask students to create a picture/ poster/ sign to accompany the testimony they would provide.



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ACTIVITY, VERSION 2. REQUIRES MORE TIME

B: READ EXCERPTS FROM TWO TESTIMONIALS FROM ARTIFACT A: RaJuana and Miss Lenox

Directions. Educator and students read the testimony of RaJuana Washington and Marjorie Lennox (included in Artifact A, the 1967 “Omaha Star” article, “Youth Makes Plea for Fair Housing Bill”). Lead students through the questions below. Students will then create an art project and/ or letter that sheds light onto a contemporary issues facing young people today that require activism.

Part 1a. Read RaJuana Washington’s Testimony

Educator asks the students:

- Question: Who is RaJuana? How old is RaJuana? (A: *RaJuana is a young African American girl living in North Omaha. She is 13-years old.*)
- Question: Where does she live? What part of town is this? (A: *RaJuana lists her address as 2008 North 30th Ave.*) Additional information: *This was likely in the Pleasantview Projects. This is now part of the Highlander Development.*
- Q: Does RaJuana like where she lives? What is a problem she faces as a kid in her neighborhood? (A: *No. RaJuana would like like to move. She is bothered by the police when she plays in the streets near her house. She is also not allowed to play in the grass near her house*)
- Q: What does RaJuana say has prevented her family from being able to move out of the housing projects? (A: *RaJuana states that because her family is African American, whites won’t sell her family a property outside of the Near Northside.*)
- Q. RaJuana testified about her situation to the Nebraska State Senate to try and create change. What did she want the Senate to do? (A: *RaJuana wanted the State Senators to pass a law that would outlaw practices, like redlining, that prevented her family from finding decent housing.*)

Part 1b. Read the testimony of Marjorie Lennox. Then, answer the following questions.



Mrs. Marjorie
Lennox
Links, Inc.
Omaha, Neb.
April 38

(Photo of Mrs. Lennox from Ebony Magazine, Jan. 1982)

Ask the students:

- Question: What does Marjorie Lennox do for work? (A: *She is a kindergarten teacher*)

- Q: At which school does Mrs. Lennox teach? (A: *She teaches at Lothrop Elementary.*) Educator could point out where this school is located and mention that the majority of the students were African American in the 1960s.
- Q. What are some of the living situations Ms. Lennox's students at Lothrop have to deal with because of overcrowded and poorer housing? (Answers could include: *three kids share a bed, rat infestations, unsanitary living environments*)
- Q. How does the lack of access to safe, decent, housing impact Mrs. Lennox's kindergarten students? (Answers could include: *students are tired and can't do their best work in school*)
- Q. What does Mrs. Lennox believe is the cause of the kindergartner's poor living situations? (Answers could include: *Due to redlining (including unfair housing practices/ segregation) African Americans in Omaha are forced to live in an older, poorly maintained part of town. African Americans were not allowed to live anywhere else.*)
- Q. What does Mrs. Lennox want to happen to change her students' living situation? (A: *She wants an open housing market in Omaha for African Americans. Mrs. Lennox wants the Senate to pass fair housing legislation that would make it illegal for people to refuse to sell or rent houses outside of North Omaha to African Americans.*)

-Part 2: Connecting RaJuana's story back to the UnDesign the Redline exhibit:

- *Structural segregation paragraph - Omaha's real estate industry forced RaJuana's family to stay living in the North Omaha.*
- *Logan Fontenelle Housing Project paragraph - just down the street from RaJuana's apartment mirrors her experience with overzealous policing in North Omaha's housing projects.*
- *Restrictive Covenant paragraph: Restrictive Covenants were one of the methods used to keep African American living in certain parts of town.*

Part 3. Higher Level Thinking. Additional Group Discussion Questions.

-How have the issues that RaJuana and Mrs. Lennox testified about in 1967 article improved over the decades that have passed?

-Do any of the issues that RaJuana and Mrs. Lennox testified to in 1967 remain a problem in Omaha in 2019?

-How are the issues faced by ReJuana and Mrs. Lennox the consequence of the redlining practices discussed in the UnDesign the Redline exhibit?

Part 4. Making Contemporary Connections.

-Educator can brainstorm with students answers to the question: "What contemporary issues face young people in Omaha today?"

-Educator can have students write out what testimony the students could provide to the Nebraska State Senate about the contemporary issue they have identified.

(and/ or)

-Art provides another way to share a message about issues facing young people. Ask students to create a picture/ poster/ sign to accompany the testimony they would provide.

*******Have Even More Time?**

Could divide group up into 5 sections and have each section read a different piece of the testimony. Share out whose testimony they read and what was that person's perspective was on the Fair Housing bill.



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Background information that could be helpful to the educator working through this exercise.

Great teaching resource about Omaha's African American history:
<https://invisiblehistory.ops.org>

Who is Senator Danner?

Senator Danner represented North Omaha in the Nebraska Legislature from 1963-1970.

During his time in state senate, he fought to improve housing conditions in North Omaha and for fair housing opportunities for African Americans. One of the ways he did this was through a Fair Housing Bill he introduced to the State Senate. Information on Senator Danner:

<https://invisiblehistory.ops.org/StudentProjects/2016StudentProjects/SenatorEdwardDanner/tabid/297/Default.aspx>

What are the Links?

The Links is an African American women's social organization. Omaha's branch was chartered on September 30, 1950. The Omaha Chapter eagerly became involved in effecting the new concerns and mid-century imperatives in human rights, social and racial justice.

<http://omahachapterlinksinc.org/chapter.html>

What is the "Omaha Star"?

The "Omaha Star" is an African American paper focused on covering issues and news related to and concerning Omaha's African American community. More information found here:

<https://invisiblehistory.ops.org/StudentProjects/2011StudentProjects/PressandNewspapers/tabid/157/Default.aspx>

What is the Fair Housing Act?

Federal Housing Act of 1968: The United States passed the Fair Housing Act into law in 1968. The Fair Housing Act of 1968 prohibited discrimination concerning the sale, rental and financing of housing based on race, religion, national origin or sex. Intended as a follow-up to the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the bill was the subject of a contentious debate in the Senate, but was passed quickly by the House of Representatives in the days after the assassination of civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr. The Fair Housing Act stands as the final great legislative achievement of the civil rights era.

More information: <https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/fair-housing-act>

Proposed Nebraska Fair Housing Act

Before the Federal Fair Housing Act was passed in 1968, Senator Danner attempted (unsuccessfully) to pass Fair Housing legislation in Nebraska.

More information: <https://nebraskalegislature.gov/education/danner.php>