

Process Paper

When choosing our topic, we began with the question “why is Chicago one of the most residentially segregated cities in the country today?”. Once we began researching residential segregation in Chicago, we realized that one of the biggest practices that contributed to the segregation of Chicago was racially restrictive covenants. We changed our question to focus on how racially restrictive covenants caused Chicago to become segregated. As we continued to research restrictive covenants, we began to understand how they may not have been the most effective tool in maintaining residential segregation, and began to research the role of private institutions. One of our other main research questions was “what efforts were made between the 1910s-1950s to combat racially segregated housing and how effective were these efforts?”.

For our research, we used the Virtual Encyclopedia of Chicago to locate articles surrounding our topic and Chicago during that time. Once we gained a better understanding of the context of Chicago during this time, we focused our research on topics such as racially restrictive covenants and the role of private institutions. Using online libraries such as JSTOR, we located many credible secondary sources that helped us form our argument. We used maps, news articles, documents and quotes from real estate agencies at the time, photographs, and books that documented specific stories from individuals at the time to expand on our argument and present more details. We also used the book *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago 1940-1960* by Arnold R. Hirsch to better understand the role of private institutions in creating the residential segregation in Chicago that persists today.

We chose to make a website to present our research because it presents our project in a cohesive manner. We wanted to direct the order in which the viewer reads the research to enhance the cause-and-effect nature of our project. We wanted to present the context first, followed by the creation of racially restrictive covenants, then the destruction of these covenants and the proceeding utilization of private institutions to maintain the residential segregation that was created. We believed that a website would allow us to show this chain of events as coherently and logically as possible, presenting the connections between topics to the viewer.

Our project incorporates the theme of “Breaking Barriers in History” because it focuses on the efforts to combat racially restrictive covenants and the impacts of these efforts. We went in depth on how racially restrictive covenants in Chicago created barriers to where Black Chicagoans were able to purchase homes, and how many Black individuals and organizations challenged these barriers in the search of better housing opportunities. While not all of these efforts were successful, and Chicago continues to be one of the most residentially segregated cities in the nation, these efforts demonstrate the perseverance of the Black community and the extent to which racist practices and actions have shaped the urban landscape of Chicago today.