



For most there is a home but no place to call their own

## Negroes' No. 1 Problem In Detroit Is Still Housing

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keeping the lawn and garden, painting and slicking up the interior. His wife is already making slip covers and draperies against the day when he finds one.

"Sometimes it looks like I'll have to wait till somebody dies before I'll find a house," he said.

Like the slums, this non-white island of homes is bursting at the seams. Martin's only chance may be to buy into one of the all-white blocks adjacent. He is not too anxious to pioneer his way into that kind of trouble. Yet Martin X said, "My son will have it better."

RICHARD MARKS, executive director of the Mayor's Community Relations Commission, said:

"Despite the evidence of racial restrictions, prejudice, and at times open hostility . . . there has been an equally significant marked improvement in the attitudes which white and Negro citizens hold toward one another."

What has happened since 1943 to make Martin X and Richard Marks hopeful?

Two steps have been taken:

1—The United States Supreme Court ruled in 1948 against restrictive covenants in private housing, opening the home-buying market to Negroes.

2—In 1954 the United States Supreme Court ruled against Detroit for following a "character-of-the-neighborhood" policy and practice of racial segregation and discrimination in public housing projects. The Detroit Housing Commission then opened "Jeffries Homes to Negroes as well as whites and announced an open policy in its other projects.

To give a rosy report of the results of these two decisions as far as the Negro is concerned, however, would be misleading. Progress has come inch by inch.

The lifting of the restrictive covenant enabled thousands and thousands of Negroes to buy homes. They began buying the middle-aged, hand-me-down houses whites were leaving for the newer developments in the suburbs.

But as the Negroes moved in, the whites fled en masse.

One "psychological barrier" after another—including a wall of masonry erected against non-

Public housing projects were suggested by Herron Coakens, with 2,170 and Douglas Jeffries with 1,006. But still there are not enough of those new-looking units for those most-needful whites who need them most—the large families. A total of 1,113, most of them large families, was on the waiting list at the end of March.

Jeffries Homes, first to open to both races, has become almost of those applying under an "Slum clearance" plan under an ambitious City plan to clear the huge slum area known as "Gratiot-Orleans" for redevelopment into Lafayette

Park's glamorous glass middle and upper-middle class apartments, which will be interracially available to those who can afford them.

Many displaced slum-dwellers went into public housing. Many others crowded in with relatives in already crowded slums.

A FEW RANCH-TYPE home developments, mostly segregated, sprang up on the outskirts of the city. The ratio, in the tri-county area, is about 1/10 of one per cent, or one new home for Negroes to 3,000 for whites.

Mortgage money is hard for Negroes to get. The mortgage banker will not lend to the first Negroes moving into a white area. He won't lend much on old property. He blames his reluctance on the prejudices of other people who might withdraw their business from him if he did business with a Negro.

The phrases — that when Negro home-owners move in "property values drop," "neighborhoods decline," "trouble and resentment result"—follow the Negroes as they move past the borders of their crowded islands.

What actually has happened in Detroit?

SELLING PRICES and tax valuations in many cases have increased or held their own in the same proportion as have comparable properties in all-white sections.

A trip through Detroit's many all-Negro residential districts—from lower-middle to upper-middle class homes—discovers the property-decline

clique. One neighborhood after another shows beautiful upk —new porches, new fro paint jobs, lawns and landscaping.

Because non-whites had to pay more, compared to their income, they prize their homes more highly. Perhaps, as many people say, non-whites—both men and women—are better w their hands.

As ghettos grew, so did in racial neighborhoods. Detroit Negro population, always r diffused than in other ci has moved on into score neighborhoods that no b heard about. Nobody h about them because not bad happened.

Where white home-ov did not panic, where new old residents carefully n tained zoning standards—P erty values steadied and haps even rose a bit.

In these transition neigl hoods there was acceptance. often welcome.

ELSEWHERE—primarily the northwest section of city—"incidents" continu Last year there were 14—sev where incoming Negroes gu up newly-bought homes a fled back where they car from—seven where they stay

Mrs. Ethel Watkins, who moved in February to 12351 Cherrylawn, last non-white t weather demonstrations an threats against her, stays on in her home with 24-hour police protection.

Mrs. Rose Petrinsky, n eighbor who demonstrate against her, was convicted c disturbing the peace, charge court costs of \$25, and put o a year's probation.

The Watkins case spans i significant interval—betwee 1948, when the restrictive covenant was lifted, to the present, when the Law-State Civic Association in the Cherry lawn area is seeking to impos a new "restrictive covenan agreement."

The new covenant has not yet been tested. It would restrict rental or ownership to members of the association in good standing. It would provide enforcement by injunction or other legal process. Whether it is legal, whether it could work, is not yet known.

Northwest neighborhood associations are attempting to organize the improvement association pattern throughout the section.

Nevertheless, the Cherrylawn block white residents have not fled.

THE COMMUNITY Relations Commission summed up "positive community gains" from the painful incident:

"More clearly defined police action, with greater guarantees for the observance of law and order.

"Planned commitment to work for interracial harmony by all three faiths—Protestant, Catholic and Jewish.

"A movement within the Cherrylawn neighborhood itself to bring together those not in sympathy with the demonstrations."

Mrs. Watkins, who said when she came, "All I want is for my neighbors to say 'Good morning' to me," has found some neighbors who say "Good

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