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Codes 121

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### Reflection 9

Walter Johnson writes *The Broken Heart of America* and in his writing he speaks on Bartholomew. Bartholomew was a city planning commissioner for the city of St. Louis. Bartholomew had a clear vision for how St. Louis was supposed to look, and in his eyes St. Louis needed to be all one race, white. “All in all, Bartholomew’s 1947 *Comprehensive City Plan* provided a beginner’s guide to building a racist city” (Johnson 297). From writing this piece, Johnson uncovers how the Housing and Urban Development has been deeply rooted in the essence of racism and segregation of communities and cities, St. Louis being one of the major cities this has affected.

One of the first noticeable things about this chapter is its title, *Black Removal by White Approval*. This title speaks volumes on the issue at hand and this title also gives a slight insight before reading the chapter itself. Bartholomew found tearing down black neighborhoods as a tax revenue of “\$4 million a year” (Johnson 299). The media quickly picked up any story that Bartholomew wanted to be heard by the masses. The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* published an article titled “Cancerous Slum District Eating Away at the Heart of the City” (Johnson 302) shortly after Bartholomew had made a statement about black neighborhoods bringing down the revenue of St. Louis, therefore the only solution in his eyes was to demolish those neighborhoods.

An extremely racist practice called zoning was implemented in St. Louis in order to keep white people on the upper-hand for decades after this practice was banished. Zoning, by

## Sanders 2

definition, is “use of zoning ordinances to exclude certain types of land uses from a given community, especially to regulate racial and economic diversity. In the United States, exclusionary zoning ordinances are standard in almost all communities” (“Exclusionary Zoning”). Zoning was first used in St. Louis by Bartholomew when over 100 square blocks of black neighborhoods, consisting of “almost twenty thousand people, 95 percent of them Black” (Johnson 303) was destroyed.

As these people were forced to move out of their no longer existing neighborhoods, some wanted to try and “escape” to suburban areas of St. Louis, aka “white areas”. When the white civilians of these areas found this out, they moved further north in order to get away from the black folk, aka why present-day St. Louis stretches so far north. Zoning was also practiced in other major cities such as Louisville and Baltimore. The fact that zoning reached places as far as Maryland just shows how much of a national problem this was.

For digital project #3, having a grasp on zoning will help in understanding how and why Tower Grove is in the position it is in St. Louis compared to white suburbs such as Benton Park, St. Charles, or Ladue. Having read this piece by Johnson has opened my eyes to what to look for in Tower Grove, and what spots to make note of for the project.

Works Cited

“Exclusionary Zoning.” *Wikipedia*, 20 Oct. 2023. *Wikipedia*, [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Exclusionary_zoning&oldid=1181111854)

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