

WE HAVE A DREAM: A WORLD WITHOUT RACISM

FEBRUARY, 2021 - Why Did Efforts at Equality Fail?

We opened with prayer.

The group discussed Harriet Tubman and her amazing fortitude and impact on so many lives.

We summarized the repetitious history of efforts to integrate followed by pushback and failure on a national level. Then we spent time on our horrendous Baltimore history. Our first comprehensive zoning ordinance to prevent integration was then copied across the nation. Our systems of education, transportation and criminal justice were battlegrounds. Mayors upheld that racial segregation was in the best interest of the city, and newspapers demonized black homebuyers as a “Negro Invasion”. Churches endorsed protective white agreements, and government agencies like the Health Department and Housing Authority colluded with them. Racist policies in Baltimore were exported and used across the nation.

The Federal government usually enforced the Jim Crow laws. The Department of Defense segregated the military; the Department of Agriculture did not stop land dispossession of black farmers; the Veterans Administration racially administered the GI Bill; the Social Security Administration left out black people until the 1950’s; the Environmental Protection Agency denied 95% of civil rights claims black people filed against polluters; and the Federal Housing Administration used restrictive covenants until 1948 and heavily insured homes in the suburbs. The 1954 Supreme Court *Brown vs. Education* decision affirmed that racial segregation in schools was unconstitutional, but despite that, some states barred black students from entering white schools; and disparity of educational funding continues even today. The Department of Transportation built super highways to the suburbs, thereby displacing black communities in its path. Many of these solidified the spatial racism we have today.

We covered black activists and freedom fighters who worked on a national scale to boost black lives and communities. Local students entered the black power movement and worked to desegregate a Baltimore community. There was progress with the 1974 Equal Credit Opportunity Act, the 1975 Home Mortgage Disclosure Act, and the 1977 Community Reinvestment Act to combat redlining, but segregationists always found a way around them.

Legislation and Supreme Court case law laid the groundwork for discriminatory and aggressive policing in 1965 and 1968. American apartheid became more subtle. After Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated and black communities erupted in 750 cities, President Lyndon Johnson signed the 1968 Fair Housing Act. But black political demands for freedom and justice were stopped by the “whitelash”. Both the FBI and local police used police repression and mass incarceration.

We discussed anti-busing battles and housing projects.

We discussed the medical atrocities throughout the 1900’s and the disproportionate illness of black Americans because of their living conditions. COVID 19 highlighted the continuing disparities in 2021.

Covering some of the atrocities of mass killings over the past decades, our study culminated with the hate crimes we lived through during the last five years. As a response to police killings of black people in several states, we also witnessed white people in growing numbers join the battle for justice.

A national reparations fund has been recommended for 25 years, promoted through HR 40. We discussed the complexities of the subject and how it has never progressed through Congress. We announced our March guest speaker, an authority on reparations, Dr. Lawrence T. Brown,

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and suggested the group read his book, The Black Butterfly: The Harmful Politics of Race and Space in America.

We went over some critical legislation in Maryland and asked for a sub-committee to compose letters to our representatives in support and asked for parishioners' consideration to take action.

We closed with prayer.