



City

Black and Unhoused in Chicago: How Housing Segregation Fueled a Homegrown Crisis

Tacuma Roeback, Managing Editor

April 23, 2024



Almost seven out of 10 homeless persons in the city of Chicago are Black. They are either living under someone else’s roof, temporarily staying at a shelter or living on the streets.

However, experts say that it is no coincidence that, despite comprising nearly 30% of the total population, Black people are overrepresented among the city’s unhoused population.

The “epidemic” of Black homelessness in Chicago echoes back to the discriminatory policies that were in place when hundreds of thousands of African Americans headed north to the city during the Great Migration, which occurred over 50 years during the 20th Century.

Restrictive covenants prevented Blacks from moving to different parts of the city, so they were often constrained to substandard housing. Due to redlining, many were denied bank loans and insurance to purchase homes in their own communities.

The lack of access to affordable housing was so pronounced that even Martin Luther King, Jr., near the end of his life, helped lead the Chicago Freedom Movement, which inspired the Fair Housing Act of 1968.

Despite the passage of this landmark piece of legislation, which was to theoretically allow people of color the ability to live wherever they pleased, segregation has done the work that restrictive covenants and redlining used to do.

Thus, a persistent and predominant theme spanning generations continues to echo in the city of Chicago: Black people lacking access to safe, affordable housing.

The Chicago Defender recently participated in a journalism initiative with The Field Foundation, Public Narrative, and other area media o to explore why racism and segregation exist in Chicago and how their effects manifest today.

Below are the stories we produced for this important series:

Black and Unhoused in Chicago: How Housing Segregation Fueled a Homegrown Crisis



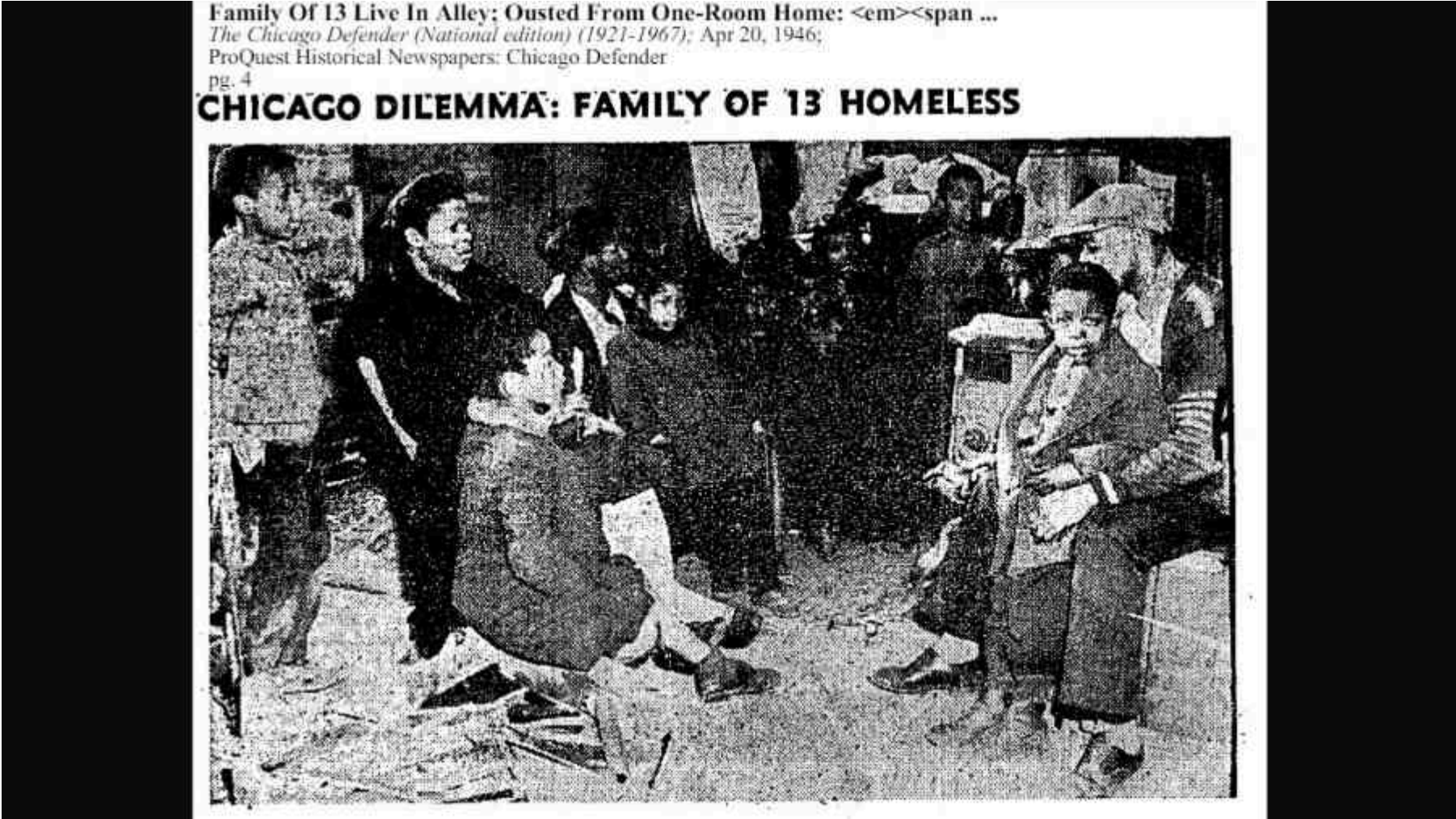
The video essay, ***Black and UnHoused in Chicago: How Housing Segregation Fueled a Homegrown Crisis (By Christa Carter-Williams)***, highlights what’s at stake concerning homelessness and the people on the verge of losing their homes.



Black and Unhoused: How Black Chicago’s Fight for Affordable Housing Echoes Through Generations (Story 1 by Tacuma Roeback) examines a critical historical moment in the city’s history when one man vowed to abolish restrictive covenants. His actions inspired a landmark literary work.



Chicago’s Enduring Legacy of the Black and Unhoused (Story 2 by Nicole Jeanine Johnson) takes a hard look at the impact of these acts of discriminatory housing practices, including the effects of the failure of a controversial referendum that would have addressed the homelessness and affordable housing scarcity.



Finally, **Legacy of Inequitable Housing Access: How a Black Family’s Story Echoes Today’s Fight (Story 3 by Tacuma Roeback)** focuses on the eviction of a Black Chicago family in 1946 and how their plight reverberates to this day.

This article is part of the Segregation Reporting Project, made possible by a grant from Healing Illinois, an initiative of the Illinois Department of Human Services and the Field Foundation of Illinois that seeks to advance racial healing through storytelling and community collaborations.

The project is inspired by “Shame of Chicago, Shame of a Nation,” a new documentary that addresses the untold legacy of Chicago’s systemic segregation.

Managed by Public Narrative, this endeavor enlisted five local media outlets to produce impactful news coverage on segregation in Chicago while maintaining editorial independence.

About Post Author



Tacuma Roeback, Managing Editor

Tacuma R. Roeback is the Managing Editor for the Chicago Defender. His journalism, non-fiction, and fiction have appeared in the Smithsonian Magazine, San Francisco Chronicle, Atlanta Journal-Constitution, The Tennessean, South Florida Sun-Sentinel, Phoenix New Times, HipHopDX.com, Okayplayer.com, The Shadow League, SAGE: The Encyclopedia of Identity, Downstate Story, Tidal Basin Review, and Reverie: Midwest African American Literature. He is an alumnus of the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University, Chicago State University, and Florida A&M University.

[See author's posts](#)

Tags: [Black and Unhoused](#) , [black homelessness](#) , [Bring Chicago Home](#) , [Chicago Coalition for the Homeless](#) , [Christa Carter-Williams](#) , [Nicole Jeanine Johnson](#) , [Tacuma Roeback](#)

Comments

From the Web



Violet Affleck's Transformation Has Been Stunning To See



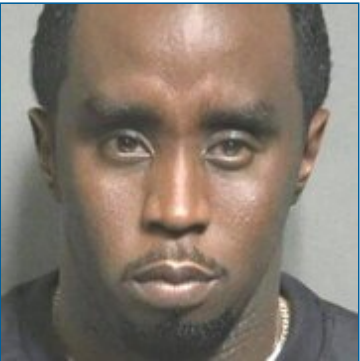
Rumors Are Swirling Around The Vice President's Marriage



Serena Sheds Light On Her Viral Super Bowl Halftime Show Cameo



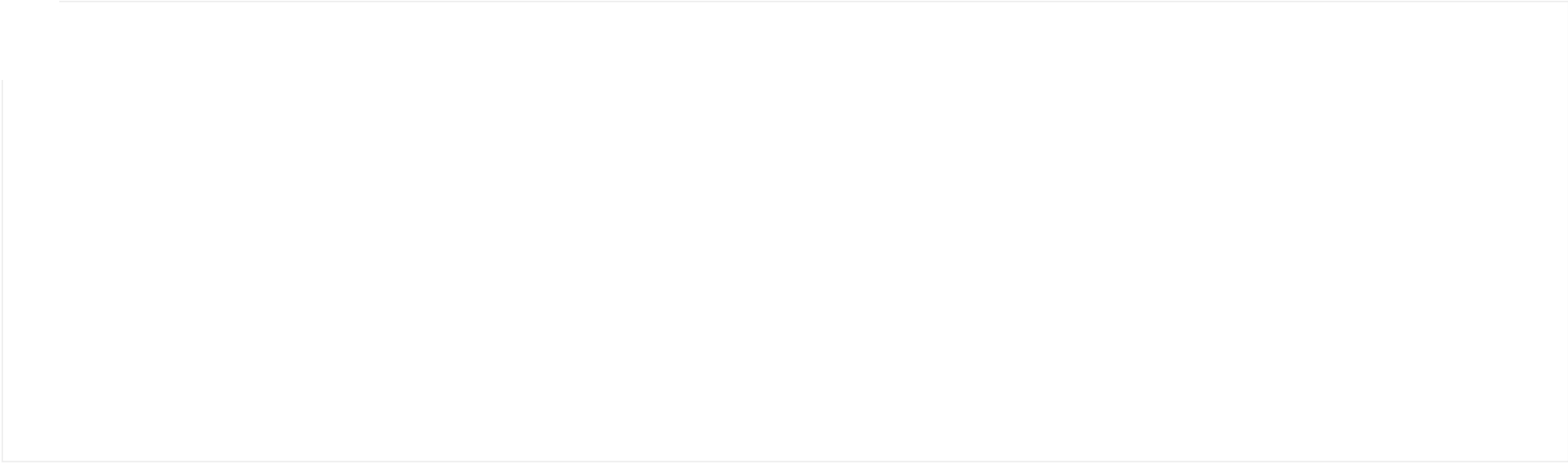
Tragic Details About Former CNN Anchor Lisa Ling That Are So Sad



Diddy's Lawsuit Explodes As List Of Celebrities Revealed



Britney Spears Joined By A Creepy Companion On Mexico Vacation



Stay informed with The Chicago Defender

Your email

Select the emails you would like to receive

- ☒ Digital Daily Newsletter
- ☒ Entertainment & Lifestyle
- ☒ Events
- ☒ Local News
- ☒ Exclusive Series
- ☒ Business News

Submit

ABOUT US

ADVERTISE WITH US

PRIVACY POLICY

SUBSCRIBE



Copyright © 2025. Real Times Media. All Rights Reserved.