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The Color of Law

A FORGOTTEN HISTORY OF HOW
OUR GOVERNMENT SEGREGATED AMERICA
by **Richard Rothstein**

An explosive, alarming history that finally confronts how American governments in the twentieth century deliberately imposed racial segregation on metropolitan areas nationwide.

"The Color of Law is one of those rare books that will be discussed and debated for many decades. Based on careful analyses of multiple historical documents, Rothstein has presented what I consider to be the most forceful argument ever published on how federal, state and local governments gave rise to and reinforced neighborhood segregation."

—William Julius Wilson, author of *The Truly Disadvantaged*

Lauded by Ta-Nehisi Coates for his "brilliant" and "fine understanding of the machinery of government policy" (*The Atlantic*), Richard Rothstein has painstakingly documented how American cities, from San Francisco to Boston, became so racially divided. Rothstein describes how federal, state, and local governments systematically imposed residential segregation: with undisguised racial zoning, public housing that purposefully segregated previously mixed communities, subsidies for builders to create whites-only suburbs, tax exemptions for institutions that enforced segregation, and support for violent resistance to African Americans in white neighborhoods. He demonstrates that such policies still influence tragedies in places like Ferguson and Baltimore. Scholars have separately described many of these policies, but until now, no author has brought them together to explode the myth of de facto segregation arising from private prejudice or the unintended consequences of economic forces. Like *The New Jim Crow*, Rothstein's groundbreaking history forces us to face the obligation to remedy our unconstitutional past.

Richard Rothstein is a research associate at the Economic Policy Institute and a Fellow at the Thurgood Marshall Institute of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund and at the Haas Institute at the University of California–Berkeley. Formerly the national education columnist for the *New York Times*, he lives in California.

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