



### WAYS TO MOVE THE NEEDLE

- Building racially diverse committees to start to redress segregation.
- Moving forward with race-conscious efforts.
- Reform inequitable property tax systems.
- Push organizations with a history of segregating communities to play their part to undo it.
- Use racially restrictive covenants to educate the public about the role of segregation in shaping their communities and what needs to be done to address it.

## JUST ACTION: Key Takeaways from Cinnaire's Discussion with Author Richard Rothstein

On September 13, 2023, [Cinnaire hosted acclaimed author Richard Rothstein](#) to discuss his new book co-authored by Leah Rothstein, [Just Action: How to Challenge Segregation Enacted Under The Color of Law](#). In that discussion, Richard shared with the audience that undoing the legacy of segregation will require a new civil rights movement, led by individuals in their own communities. While acknowledging the important role of national organizations, *Just Action* is about empowering individuals “who want to confront racial segregation and inequality but don’t yet appreciate the lever of power they hold in their own hands.”

This reference guide is intended to serve as a resource summarizing some of the tools that Richard and Leah Rothstein recommend in their book to dismantle segregation in our communities.

At Cinnaire, many of the communities we serve are highly segregated, and we know that our partners share our commitment to creating healthier communities for all people. We hope that this resource will help educate and inspire you to take action on that shared commitment.

### BUILDING RACIALLY DIVERSE COMMITTEES TO START TO REDRESS SEGREGATION

The segregation that exists in our communities today is the result of government-sponsored, race-based discriminatory policies and practices that denied equitable access to government programs and subsidies for home ownership to Black families and served as the basis for the creation of wealth in white families.

Although segregation has roots in federal policy, its impact is felt at the local level and we must begin there to redress it. We must act as citizens in our communities and reinvigorate a civil rights movement that brings community members of different races together.

Richard and Leah Rothstein highlight several local efforts of racially diverse committees working to combat segregation. They recommend [forming local committees](#) that are racially diverse to begin community action on segregation. They also recommend leadership structures including Black individuals as well as white.

*“Waiting for the President and Congress to act is an excuse to maintain the status quo. What we’re missing is not so much new policy ideas, but a reinvigorated civil rights movement”*

— Richard and Leah Rothstein

## MOVING FORWARD WITH RACE-CONSCIOUS EFFORTS

*Just Action* argues for individuals and communities to pursue two types of policies: (1) Policies to improve the resources in existing low-income Black neighborhoods and (2) Policies to open majority white neighborhoods to diverse residents.

To improve resources in existing low-income Black neighborhoods, Richard and Leah Rothstein consider the following threads: increasing housing opportunities and ensuring current residents benefit; ending defrauding Black families of wealth through exploitative contract sales; reforming property appraisal and tax assessments to improve generational wealth of Black families; and ensuring equitable investment in all communities by financial institutions.

To open majority white neighborhoods to Black individuals and families, *Just Action* recommends reforms to zoning codes, subsidies and housing choice vouchers; remedies sought from bankers, developers, builders, and real estate agents; and maintaining integrated communities and schools.

Visit [Just Action's blog for in-depth resources](#).

*This book “is aimed at [the] multitudes of supporters and followers who want to confront racial segregation and inequality but don't yet appreciate the levers of power they hold in their own hands. If more Americans rise to this occasion in their own neighborhoods, a civil rights movement can begin to erase this most serious blot on our national character, our residential apartheid.”*

— Richard and Leah Rothstein

## REFORM INEQUITABLE PROPERTY TAX SYSTEMS

In *Just Action*, Richard and Leah Rothstein argue that the way we calculate property values and assess taxes is racially discriminatory even if not done so intentionally. Homes owned by Black families are often over assessed and under appraised based on the research of *Just Action*. One suggestion from the conversation with Richard Rothstein was for more frequent assessments. Home values in majority white neighborhoods rise at a faster rate than homes in majority Black neighborhoods. As the gap between assessed value and appraised value grows, homes owned by Black individuals often pay a higher rate of taxes compared to homes owned by white individuals.

A collective movement of diverse neighbors is required to bring local change and remedy this discriminatory practice.

## PUSH ORGANIZATIONS WITH A HISTORY OF SEGREGATING COMMUNITIES TO PLAY THEIR PART TO UNDO IT

*Just Action* highlights numerous private enterprises that further segregated communities throughout their history. For example, banks, developers, and real estate agents added racially-restrictive clauses to deeds without being legally required or before government policies encouraged the activity. Many of these private companies still exist today. Some have developed diversity, equity and inclusion programs and are providing support to harmed communities. Yet, *Just Action* argues, **much more is needed**. Private enterprises that helped segregate our communities can assist in desegregating them by helping Black families access majority-white communities.

*“The best way to maintain hope is to win small victories that build on each other into larger and larger victories. The way to lose hope is to try and do the impossible and then fail and be defeated by overwhelming power.”*

— Richard and Leah Rothstein

## USE RACIALLY RESTRICTIVE COVENANTS TO EDUCATE THE PUBLIC ABOUT THE ROLE OF SEGREGATION IN SHAPING THEIR COMMUNITIES AND WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE TO ADDRESS IT

Restrictive covenants exist across the country and were formerly used to racially discriminate against homeowners or tenants and exclude families from communities. Although now illegal, these restrictions remain on deeds. *Just Action* encourages homeowners with restrictive covenants to modify their deed with an affirmative statement recognizing it includes illegal language that is inconsistent with the community's values. In doing so, the deed becomes a learning opportunity of racial injustice.