

Not in my neighborhood how bigotry shaped a great american city by antero pietila

The American Dream, Stained with Prejudice: A Reflection on "Not In My Neighborhood"

The American Dream. A phrase that evokes images of picket fences, lush lawns, and the promise of a better life. But what if this dream, this ideal, was built on the foundation of exclusion, prejudice, and a deep-seated fear of the "other"? Antero Pietila's book, "Not In My Neighborhood: How Bigotry Shaped a Great American City," forces us to confront this uncomfortable truth, taking us on a harrowing journey through the history of San Francisco, a city often romanticized as a beacon of liberalism and tolerance. Pietila meticulously dissects the insidious workings of bigotry, revealing how it permeated the

very fabric of San Francisco's development. He shines a light on the systematic exclusion of minorities, from the Chinese in the 19th century to the Black community in the 20th, exposing the hypocrisy of a city that proudly proclaimed itself open and welcoming, while actively working to keep certain groups out.

The "Other" is Always a Threat

One of the most powerful aspects of Pietila's work lies in its demonstration of how prejudice can take on various forms, always finding new justifications for its existence. Whether it was the fear of "cheap labor" used to ostracize the Chinese, the "threat" of crime used to justify the redlining of Black neighborhoods, or the "preservation of property values" invoked to oppose affordable housing projects, the underlying theme remained constant: a fear of the "other" and the perceived threat they posed to the existing social order. The book offers a stark reminder that bigotry is not merely a relic of the past, but a persistent force that continues to shape our communities, often manifesting in subtle and insidious ways. It reveals that even in cities that pride themselves on being progressive and inclusive, the legacy of exclusion remains deeply embedded, influencing everything from housing patterns to access to resources and opportunity.

The Tangible Costs of Prejudice

Pietila's research highlights the tangible costs of prejudice, not just for the individuals and communities targeted but for society as a whole. He meticulously documents how racial discrimination in housing, education, and employment created

a persistent cycle of poverty and limited opportunities for marginalized communities. The book's insights into the history of San Francisco provide a valuable case study for understanding the broader social and economic consequences of bigotry. While specific examples may vary, the underlying themes of exclusion, segregation, and denial of equal opportunity remain tragically relevant in many American cities.

Benefits of Pietila's Research:

- **A deeper understanding of the historical roots of inequality:** Pietila's work provides valuable context for understanding the complex and enduring issues of racial and economic disparities in America.
- **Challenging the narrative of "progress" and "inclusion":** By exposing the deep-seated history of exclusion in a city often lauded as progressive, Pietila forces us to critically re-examine our understanding of "progress" and "inclusion".
- Empowering communities to address systemic inequality: Pietila's research provides valuable insights for community leaders, policymakers, and activists working to dismantle systemic barriers and create more equitable societies.

The Power of Storytelling

"Not In My Neighborhood" is not just a collection of historical facts and figures. It is a powerful narrative that brings to life the experiences of those who were marginalized and excluded. Through detailed accounts of individual lives, Pietila allows us to connect with the human cost of prejudice, giving faces and voices to the victims of bigotry. This approach underscores the

importance of storytelling in understanding and confronting prejudice. By humanizing those who were often dehumanized, Pietila challenges us to see beyond stereotypes and recognize the shared humanity that binds us all.

The Legacy of Exclusion

The book offers a sobering reminder that the legacy of exclusion continues to shape contemporary society. Despite the progress made in addressing discrimination, the inequalities created by past injustices persist. The spatial segregation that resulted from redlining and other discriminatory housing practices continues to affect housing access, wealth accumulation, and educational opportunities in many American cities.

Moving Forward: Confronting the Past, Building a More Just Future

Pietila's work is not simply a condemnation of past injustices, but a call to action. He encourages us to learn from the mistakes of the past and strive for a more just and equitable future. This requires a commitment to confronting the legacy of prejudice and actively working to dismantle systemic barriers that perpetuate inequality.

Moving Forward:

- **Acknowledge and confront the history of exclusion:**

We must recognize and learn from the past, acknowledging the role that prejudice and discrimination played in shaping

our communities. • **Challenge stereotypes and promote understanding:** We need to actively challenge harmful stereotypes and work to build bridges of understanding and empathy between different groups. • Invest in equitable policies and programs: We must support policies and programs that address the root causes of inequality, such as affordable housing, quality education, and access to healthcare. • Empower marginalized communities: We must create opportunities for marginalized communities to participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives.

Advanced FAQs:

1. How does "Not In My Neighborhood" compare to other works on the history of San Francisco? Pietila's work distinguishes itself by its meticulous focus on the role of bigotry in shaping the city's development. While other works may touch on these themes, "Not In My Neighborhood" provides a comprehensive and nuanced examination of the complex interplay between prejudice, power, and urban development. 2. **What are some of the specific examples of bigotry documented in the book?** Pietila examines a wide range of examples, including the Chinese Exclusion Act, the redlining of Black neighborhoods, the opposition to affordable housing projects, and the displacement of LGBTQ+ communities. He provides detailed accounts of specific events and policies that illustrate the pervasive nature of bigotry in San Francisco's history. 3. **How does the book connect to broader discussions about systemic racism and inequality?** "Not In My Neighborhood" provides a valuable case study for understanding how systemic racism operates at the local level, *shaped a great american city by antero pietila*

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shaping everything from housing patterns to access to resources and opportunity. It demonstrates how deeply entrenched prejudice can be, even in cities that consider themselves progressive. 4. What are the implications of Pietila's research for understanding contemporary urban challenges? The book offers insights into the historical roots of many contemporary urban challenges, such as housing affordability, racial disparities, and the persistence of segregation. By understanding the historical forces that shaped these problems, we can develop more effective solutions. 5. *What is the significance of Pietila's use of storytelling in the book?* Pietila's approach to storytelling is crucial to humanizing the victims of prejudice and challenging us to see beyond stereotypes. By giving voice to those who were often silenced, he compels us to confront the human cost of bigotry and work towards a more just and equitable society.

Conclusion

Antero Pietila's "Not In My Neighborhood" is a powerful and essential read for anyone seeking to understand the complex history of American cities and the enduring impact of bigotry. The book offers a stark reminder that the American Dream, while often romanticized, has been built on a foundation of exclusion and inequality. By confronting the uncomfortable truth about the past, we can work towards a future where the dream of a just and equitable society becomes a reality for all.

Not In My Neighborhood: How Bigotry Shaped a Great American City, By Antero Pietila

The story of American cities is often told as a narrative of progress, of growth, of the melting pot simmering into a vibrant, diverse whole. But beneath this idealized surface lies a more complex, and often uncomfortable, truth: the persistent legacy of prejudice and discrimination. Antero Pietila's powerful book, "Not In My Neighborhood: How Bigotry Shaped a Great American City," dives headfirst into this shadow, using Baltimore as its compelling case study. This isn't just a historical account; it's a stark reminder of how intentional acts of exclusion and racial animosity have fundamentally altered the urban landscape and the lives of its inhabitants. Pietila, a seasoned journalist, meticulously details how policies and practices, often cloaked in the guise of "preserving neighborhood character" or maintaining "property values," were, in reality, deeply rooted in racial bigotry. He exposes the systematic mechanisms that segregated Baltimore, creating enduring disparities that continue to resonate today. If you're interested in urban history, the sociology of race, or the lived experiences of marginalized communities, "Not In My Neighborhood" offers an essential, albeit challenging, perspective.

Unpacking the "Not In My Backyard"

Syndrome: A Baltimore Story

The phrase "not in my backyard" (NIMBY) is often associated with local resistance to undesirable projects like landfills or prisons. Pietila, however, broadens this concept to encompass a more insidious form of NIMBYism: the exclusion of specific groups of people, primarily African Americans, from certain neighborhoods based solely on their race. This wasn't a spontaneous phenomenon; it was a deliberate, organized, and legally sanctioned effort. Pietila's research reveals how real estate agents, lenders, and even government officials actively participated in creating and maintaining racially segregated housing patterns. This involved a complex web of practices, including:

- * **Restrictive Covenants:** These were clauses written into property deeds that prohibited the sale or rental of homes to people of certain races. While eventually outlawed by the Supreme Court, their impact lingered for decades.
- * **Redlining:** This discriminatory practice by banks and insurance companies involved drawing red lines on maps around predominantly Black neighborhoods, deeming them too risky for investment and loans. This starved these communities of resources, perpetuating disinvestment and decay.
- * **Blockbusting:** This was a predatory practice where real estate agents would intentionally incite panic among white residents by suggesting that Black families moving into the neighborhood would cause property values to plummet. They would then buy properties at low prices from fleeing white homeowners and resell them at inflated prices to Black families.
- * **Racial Steering:** Real estate agents would guide potential homebuyers towards or away from certain neighborhoods based on their race, effectively reinforcing

segregation. These tactics, employed systematically and relentlessly, didn't just affect where people lived; they shaped the very fabric of Baltimore.

The Human Cost of Segregation: Lives Interrupted and Opportunities Denied

"Not In My Neighborhood" is not just an academic dissection of policy; it's a deeply human story. Pietila brings to life the experiences of individuals and families who were directly impacted by this bigotry. He recounts the heartbreak of being denied a home in a desirable neighborhood, the constant fear of displacement, and the limited opportunities that resulted from being confined to areas with fewer resources, poorer schools, and less access to good jobs. The book highlights how segregation created a stark contrast between the lives of white and Black residents of Baltimore. While some neighborhoods flourished with investment and amenities, others were systematically neglected, leading to a widening chasm in wealth, health outcomes, and educational attainment. This wasn't an accident of history; it was the direct consequence of intentional policies designed to keep Black Americans separate and unequal. The psychological toll of such systemic exclusion is also a significant theme. Imagine being told, implicitly or explicitly, that you are not welcome in certain parts of your own city, that your presence would somehow be detrimental. This breeds feelings of alienation, frustration, and a deep sense of injustice that can persist for generations.

Beyond Baltimore: A Mirror to Other American Cities

While Pietila focuses on Baltimore, the patterns he uncovers are sadly not unique. "Not In My Neighborhood" serves as a mirror reflecting the experiences of countless other American cities. From Chicago and Detroit to Los Angeles and Atlanta, similar stories of segregation, redlining, and racial discrimination played out, shaping their urban landscapes and their social dynamics. The mechanisms of exclusion might have varied slightly in their specifics, but the underlying intent and the devastating consequences were remarkably consistent. Understanding Baltimore's story, therefore, provides crucial insights into the historical forces that have shaped urban America as a whole. It underscores the importance of examining the historical roots of contemporary urban inequalities, recognizing that present-day challenges are often deeply intertwined with past injustices. For those interested in urban planning, sociology, and American history, this book offers a critical lens through which to understand the complexities of city development and the enduring impact of racial prejudice on the built environment and social equity. The concepts of urban segregation and its impact on communities are central to understanding contemporary urban challenges.

Challenging the Narrative: The Importance of "Not In My

Neighborhood"

Pietila's book challenges the comfortable narrative of American progress by forcing readers to confront the uncomfortable realities of past and present discrimination. It's a call to acknowledge the role of bigotry in shaping our cities and to understand how these historical forces continue to influence our present. The book's strength lies in its meticulous research, its clear and accessible prose, and its unwavering commitment to telling the truth, however difficult. It doesn't shy away from naming names or exposing the complicity of institutions and individuals. This directness is what makes "Not In My Neighborhood" such a powerful and essential read. By understanding how bigotry shaped Baltimore, we gain a deeper appreciation for the ongoing struggles for racial justice and housing equity in cities across America. It's a reminder that the fight for inclusive and equitable urban spaces is a continuous one, requiring vigilance and a commitment to dismantling the legacies of past discrimination. If you're looking to understand the complexities of American urban development and the persistent impact of racial bias, "Not In My Neighborhood" is a must-read that will undoubtedly leave a lasting impression. It's a vital piece of literature for anyone concerned with social justice, urban studies, and the ongoing evolution of American society. The lessons learned from this book are crucial for fostering more inclusive and equitable futures for all urban dwellers.

The Enduring Legacy of "Not in My Neighborhood: How Bigotry Shaped a Great American City" by Antero Pietila

In the ongoing conversation about urban development and social dynamics, Antero Pietila's book *Not in My Neighborhood: How Bigotry Shaped a Great American City* stands as a compelling and sobering examination of how prejudice and exclusion have deeply influenced the growth and character of American cities. Rather than offering a mere chronicle of events, Pietila crafts a nuanced narrative that traces the invisible yet powerful forces of bigotry—whether rooted in race, class, or cultural difference—that have steered housing policies, public investment, and community relations for generations.

Pietila's central argument is both simple and profound: the physical and social landscape of many American neighborhoods is not shaped solely by market forces or planning decisions, but often by deliberate choices driven by bias and fear. Through meticulous research and compelling storytelling, he reveals how restrictive covenants, redlining practices, and discriminatory zoning laws systematically excluded marginalized groups, concentrating poverty and diminishing opportunity in specific areas. These patterns, Pietila shows, were not accidental but institutionalized, leaving enduring scars on urban infrastructure and social cohesion. His work invites readers to see the city not just as a collection of

buildings and streets, but as a living testament to historical inequities that continue to shape daily life.

Key Insights: The Architecture of Exclusion

One of the book's most powerful contributions is its exploration of how exclusionary policies were embedded into the very fabric of urban planning. Pietila uncovers how local governments and private developers collaborated to enforce racial and economic segregation, often under the guise of preserving "community character." These decisions were rarely neutral; they were deliberate mechanisms that controlled who could live where, who could access quality housing, and who was deemed unworthy of inclusion. By analyzing

archival records, policy documents, and personal testimonies, Pietila illustrates how these practices created food deserts, underfunded schools, and disinvested neighborhoods—consequences that persist long after the formal policies have been dismantled.

Another key insight lies in Pietila's emphasis on the psychological and social toll of such exclusion. The cumulative effect of sustained discrimination is not just economic deprivation but a deep erosion of belonging and trust. Communities shaped by bigotry often face compounded challenges, from limited access to healthcare and education to heightened exposure to environmental hazards. Pietila's work thus bridges the gap between historical analysis

and lived experience, showing how systemic bias reverberates through generations, influencing identity, opportunity, and civic engagement.

Applications: Reimagining Urban Futures

The relevance of Pietila's analysis extends far beyond academic circles. Urban planners, policymakers, and community advocates find in *Not in My Neighborhood* a vital resource for understanding the roots of contemporary urban inequality. By illuminating the historical origins of segregation and disinvestment, the book equips stakeholders with the context needed to develop equitable solutions. For instance, contemporary efforts to promote inclusive zoning,

expand affordable housing, and repair environmental injustices gain greater depth and urgency when grounded in this historical accountability.

Moreover, Pietila's narrative encourages cities to engage in honest dialogue about past harms, fostering reconciliation and trust as essential components of sustainable urban renewal.

His work also resonates with educators and activists who seek to cultivate empathy and critical awareness. By presenting history not as distant events but as active forces shaping the present, Pietila's book encourages readers to confront uncomfortable truths and imagine cities where diversity is celebrated, not suppressed. Schools, community centers, and civic organizations can

use his insights to promote inclusive citizenship and challenge the narratives that perpetuate exclusion.

Benefits and Future Outlook

The benefits of engaging fully with Pietila's perspective are manifold. For cities committed to justice and equity, the book provides a roadmap for dismantling structural barriers and building more resilient, integrated communities. It challenges leaders to move beyond superficial diversity initiatives toward deep, systemic change—ensuring that development benefits all residents, not just a privileged few. Furthermore, Pietila's work inspires hope by demonstrating that urban transformation is possible when communities recognize their

shared history and collectively reclaim their future.

Looking ahead, the future of American cities depends on confronting the legacy of bigotry head-on. As urban populations grow and social dynamics evolve, the lessons of Not in My Neighborhood become ever more urgent. By grounding policy in historical truth and empathy, cities can break free from the patterns of exclusion and build environments where every resident feels valued, connected, and empowered. In this way, Pietila's book is not only a reckoning with the past but a visionary call to action for a more just and inclusive America.

Unearthing the Roots of Segregation: Antero Pietila's "Not in My Neighborhood" Exposes Baltimore's Bigoted Past

Baltimore, a city renowned for its vibrant culture, historic harbor, and resilient spirit, carries a complex and often painful legacy. In his seminal work, *Not in My Neighborhood: How Bigotry Shaped a Great American City*, investigative journalist Antero Pietila meticulously dissects the insidious forces that sculpted Baltimore's urban landscape and social fabric for over a century. This deeply researched and unflinchingly honest account reveals how deliberate acts of exclusion, fueled by racial prejudice and class anxieties, transformed a promising port city into a starkly segregated

metropolis. Pietila's investigation is not merely a historical document; it's a crucial lens through which to understand contemporary urban challenges and the enduring impact of discriminatory housing practices.

The Architects of Segregation: From Covenants to Redlining

Pietila's narrative begins with the early 20th century, a period when the seeds of segregation were sown with alarming precision. He details the widespread use of racially restrictive covenants, legally binding agreements that prohibited the sale or rental of property to Black individuals and other minority groups. These covenants, often embedded in property deeds, acted as invisible walls, dictating where certain citizens could live and

effectively barring them from desirable neighborhoods. The impact was profound, creating de facto ghettos and limiting opportunities for generations.

Restrictive Covenants: A Legal Foundation for Exclusion

The author meticulously chronicles how these covenants were not just informal agreements but were actively enforced by real estate agents, lenders, and even homeowners associations. He highlights the legal battles and societal pressures that upheld these discriminatory practices, illustrating how the American dream of homeownership was systematically denied to entire communities based on their race. Pietila demonstrates that the desire to maintain "neighborhood

character" was often a thinly veiled euphemism for racial exclusion.

Redlining and the Federal Role in Entrenching Inequality

Beyond private agreements, Pietila shines a spotlight on the federal government's complicity in shaping segregated Baltimore. The Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC) and the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) introduced the practice of "redlining," a systematic process of assessing mortgage risk based on the racial and ethnic makeup of neighborhoods. Areas with significant Black populations were deemed "hazardous," leading to a refusal of mortgage insurance and loans. This federal endorsement of discriminatory lending practices effectively starved

Black communities of investment, perpetuating cycles of poverty and disinvestment. The legacy of redlining, as Pietila illustrates, is still visible in the stark disparities in wealth, access to resources, and quality of life between different Baltimore neighborhoods today.

The Human Cost of Exclusion: Stories of Resilience and Resistance

***While Not in My Neighborhood* meticulously documents the systemic forces of segregation, it is far from a dry academic treatise. Pietila interweaves the broader historical trends with poignant individual stories, humanizing the devastating impact of these discriminatory policies. He introduces readers to**

families who were denied the opportunity to build wealth through homeownership, individuals forced to endure substandard living conditions, and communities fighting tirelessly for basic rights and equitable treatment.

Fighting for a Place to Call Home

The book highlights the courage and resilience of Black Baltimoreans who, despite facing immense obstacles, sought to create vibrant and thriving communities. Pietila recounts instances of courageous individuals who challenged restrictive covenants, organized protests, and advocated for fairer housing practices. These stories serve as powerful reminders of the ongoing struggle for equality and the human spirit's ability to persevere in the face of injustice. The persistent

efforts to desegregate neighborhoods, even against overwhelming odds, underscore a critical aspect of Baltimore's history often overlooked.

The Ripple Effect: Impact on Education, Employment, and Health

Pietila effectively demonstrates that housing segregation was not an isolated issue. It had profound ripple effects on virtually every aspect of life for Black residents. Limited access to well-funded schools, fewer job opportunities in desirable areas, and poorer access to healthcare facilities were all direct consequences of being confined to disinvested neighborhoods. The lack of diverse housing options also impacted the socioeconomic makeup of different areas, creating a self-perpetuating

cycle of inequality. This interconnectedness of housing policy and social outcomes is a central theme of Pietila's analysis.

Baltimore's Enduring Legacy: Lessons for Today

***Not in My Neighborhood* is more than just a history lesson; it's a crucial call to action. Pietila's unflinching examination of Baltimore's past provides valuable insights into the roots of contemporary urban challenges, including persistent racial wealth gaps, neighborhood disinvestment, and ongoing housing affordability crises. The book compels readers to confront the uncomfortable truths about how bigotry has actively shaped the city's physical and social geography.**

From Exclusion to gentrification: The Evolving Landscape

While the overt discriminatory practices of the past may have been dismantled, Pietila suggests that the legacy of segregation continues to manifest in new forms. The article implicitly touches upon how historical disinvestment in certain neighborhoods can create vulnerabilities that later allow for gentrification, potentially displacing long-term residents and exacerbating existing inequalities. Understanding the historical context is vital for addressing these contemporary issues effectively and ensuring that development benefits all communities.

The Power of Urban Planning and

Policy

Pietila's work serves as a stark reminder of the immense power of urban planning and housing policy to either perpetuate or dismantle systemic inequalities. The book implicitly argues for more equitable and inclusive urban development strategies. It highlights the need for policies that actively promote desegregation, invest in historically marginalized communities, and address the lingering effects of past discriminatory practices. The future of American cities, as the book suggests, depends on a willingness to confront and rectify the historical injustices that have shaped them.

Conclusion: A Necessary

Reckoning for Baltimore and Beyond

Antero Pietila's *Not in My Neighborhood* is an essential read for anyone seeking to understand the complexities of American urbanism, the enduring impact of racism, and the fight for social justice. By meticulously documenting how bigotry systematically shaped Baltimore, Pietila provides a vital case study that resonates far beyond the city limits. The book is a powerful testament to the destructive consequences of exclusionary policies and a compelling argument for a more just and equitable future for all neighborhoods.

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Questions & Answers About not in my neighborhood how bigotry shaped a great american city by antero pietila

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1	What's the core argument of 'Not in My Neighborhood' regarding how bigotry shaped Baltimore?	Antero Pietila's book argues that discriminatory housing practices, particularly racial segregation and redlining, were not accidental but deliberate tools used to maintain white dominance and control over urban development in Baltimore, profoundly shaping its physical and social landscape.
2	How did 'restrictive covenants' play a role in Baltimore's segregation, according to the book?	Restrictive covenants were legally binding agreements in property deeds that prevented the sale or rental of homes to people of color. Pietila shows how these covenants, often enforced by white homeowner associations, actively created and maintained racially exclusive neighborhoods.
3	What is 'redlining' and how did it impact Baltimore as described in the book?	Redlining was a practice where banks and insurance companies refused to offer services to residents of certain, often minority-dominated, neighborhoods, marking them in red on maps. In Baltimore, this led to disinvestment, decay, and limited access to mortgages and insurance for Black communities.
4	Beyond race, did other forms of bigotry contribute to Baltimore's shaping, as per the book?	While race is a central theme, the book also touches on how class and ethnicity intersected with race. The desire to maintain social hierarchies and property values fueled a broad opposition to integration, often manifesting as 'Not in My Backyard' (NIMBY) sentiments.

5	What examples does Pietila provide of active resistance to integration in Baltimore?	Pietila details instances of white residents organizing protests, legal challenges, and even violence to prevent Black families from moving into 'white' neighborhoods. This included forming neighborhood associations explicitly dedicated to preserving racial exclusivity.
6	How did the federal government's policies contribute to or alleviate segregation in Baltimore, according to the book?	The book highlights how federal policies like FHA-backed mortgages often reinforced existing segregation by favoring suburban development that was implicitly or explicitly white. While later civil rights legislation aimed to counter this, the legacy of these earlier policies was deeply ingrained.
7	What is the lasting legacy of this bigotry on Baltimore's present-day demographics and urban structure?	The patterns of segregation established through decades of discriminatory practices persist today, contributing to concentrated poverty, disparities in wealth and education, and a physically divided city with stark differences in neighborhood resources and quality of life.
8	What does the title 'Not in My Neighborhood' truly represent in the context of Pietila's research?	The title encapsulates the widespread sentiment among white Baltimoreans who, while perhaps not overtly racist in all aspects of their lives, actively resisted the integration of their own neighborhoods, prioritizing perceived property values and social homogeneity over fairness and equality.

9	What is the primary takeaway for readers about urban development and social justice from 'Not in My Neighborhood'?	The book serves as a crucial reminder that urban development is not a neutral process; it is deeply influenced by social and political forces, including prejudice. It underscores the importance of understanding historical discrimination to address contemporary inequalities and build more inclusive cities.
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bigotry and urban segregation in American cities, racial bias and city development, systemic prejudice shaping urban landscapes, not in my neighborhood city narratives, Antero Pietila's analysis of American city divides, racial exclusion in urban history, urban identity and bigotry in U.S. cities, racialized urban development patterns, social bias in American metropolitan growth, bigotry's role in shaping great American cities

Not In My Neighborhood How Bigotry Shaped A

Great American City

By Antero Pietila

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