

Nolan Gray:

Howdy, I'm Nolan Gray, your friendly neighborhood City Planner, the Research Director at California YIMBY, also pledge director now, but we'll talk about that in another episode and one of the co-leads of the New Metropolitan Abundance project.

Welcome back to the Abundance Podcast. In this episode, Ned Resnikoff and I chat with Richard Kahlenberg. He's an Education Scholar, Director of the American Identity Project, and the Director of Housing policy at the Progressive Policy Institute. He's also the author of the new book, "Excluded: How Snob Zoning, NIMBYism, and Class Bias Build the Walls We Don't See." It's a fantastic new book, and I highly recommend it. In this episode, we'll be chatting about the persistence of economic segregation, the connection between housing and education, and what, if anything, the federal government can be doing about all of this.

As always, please like, subscribe, and leave a review. We are especially keen to hear who you'd like to have on the podcast in the future. And I think we've done enough episodes now to where we can maybe even start bringing back previous guests. So if there's anybody that you particularly liked, let us know. We do read the comments and we appreciate the feedback. Of course, also follow us on social media. We have the Metropolitan Abundance project on Twitter, Blue Sky, Instagram -- ditto for California YIMBY. Reach out to us and stay connected. With that, onto the show.

Richard Kahlenberg, thanks so much for joining the Abundance podcast. It's a pleasure to be here and we're chatting about your new book, which is fantastic. "Excluded: How Snob Zoning, NIMBYism, and Class Bias Build the Walls We Don't See." I want to start at a really, really high level here. So I think most people get a general education of... Here in the US, we had a lot of explicitly segregationist policies. We said that whites and blacks had to consume different private and public services, they had to live in different parts of the city. But then in the 1960s we passed the Civil Rights Act, the Fair Housing Act, and all of that was supposed to have gone away. And I think your book complicates that narrative and shows how in many cases some of these segregationist outcomes persist, but potentially even without mentioning race. So at a very high level, I'm wondering if you could just share the general thesis of "Excluded."

Richard Kahlenberg:

Thanks, and thanks so much for having me on the show. There has been a lot of great work looking historically at the role of race in segregating American society, and I'm thinking, in particular, Richard Rothstein's terrific book, "The Color of Law," talked about how redlining racial zoning, racially restrictive covenants, all were designed to keep black and white people separate and unequal. And it's kind of treated as a relic of the past. It's part of our disgraceful history, but now we've passed laws that try to address those questions. But what I try to do in "Excluded" is talk about the ways in which we have intense class bias built into our laws that has a racially disparate impact. I have a whole chapter in the book on the ways in which black people are particularly hurt by exclusionary zoning. But at the same time, I think the racial lens by itself is too narrow because exclusionary zoning is fundamentally designed to separate people by income and to artificially boost housing prices by limiting the supply of housing.

So historically, we had racial zoning in this country. In Baltimore and elsewhere, there were explicit laws that said if you were black, you could not move to majority-white neighborhoods. Thankfully the Supreme Court struck that down in 1917 and the Buchanan decision, but municipalities quickly found a workaround and that's what we have today. Economic zoning that makes it illegal to build multifamily housing in large swaths of the country, imposes minimum lot-sizes requirements and all the things that your audience is well familiar with.

Nolan Gray:

Well, so let me ask you this. I think somebody encountering this issue for the first time, might say, okay, yeah, absolutely racial segregation: bad, good that we got rid of it. But there are a lot of aspects of our lives where we're segregated based on class, right? I can't afford to join a certain country club. I can't afford certain restaurants. It's not very nice, but it's not something where we feel like we have this shared obligation to intervene or maybe some people do, right?

But I think most people would say, yeah, sure, you can't afford the restaurant, you don't get a go. What would you say to somebody who would say, yeah, hey, I worked hard to be able to afford a home in this very, very nice neighborhood and now you're telling me that anybody should have a right to come live here no matter how much they earn. I think most people on this call would disagree, but I think it's a very widely held view and you hear it articulated a lot at city council meetings and public hearings. What

would you say to that person? Why is housing different or the way that we manage housing different?

Richard Kahlenberg:

Well, I'd say a couple of things. One is that to the extent that certain houses are more expensive because they're bigger, they're more desirable and located in certain areas, yes, the free market and housing by definition discriminate based on income. And that's the way markets work. I don't have an objection to that. My major objection is to government laws that forbid the construction of any kind of housing that could be more affordable to those of lesser means. And so it's putting the government's imprimatur on the idea that certain neighborhoods ought to be off limits to people who make less money.

So that's the bigger messaging problem with exclusionary zoning: it says that certain people are so beneath others. Those who are modest means are so beneath those who are wealthier that it's okay for the government to effectively exclude them, to build walls, to keep them out.

The second piece of this is that as you well know, housing is directly connected to opportunity in America and we're saying not only people who make less money are going to be excluded from entire neighborhoods, but also their kids are going to be excluded from the opportunities that come from living in a safe neighborhood with strong public schools. And so I think that's the other piece of this that's deeply concerning from a moral perspective.

Ned Resnikoff:

Yeah. One of the things that you point out in the book is that this type of snob zoning, you call it, is more prevalent in blue parts of the country than in red parts of the country in many cases. And one of the places you call out as a particularly bad actor is my home state of Connecticut. I was raised in central Connecticut and as always was dismayed but unsurprised to see it make the list for having things in some jurisdictions like a three-spot parking minimum for a studio apartment.

However, I think Connecticut is maybe an interesting case because it's a solid blue state now, but up until the late 20th century, there was very much a strain of I think

moderate business conservatism, especially the parts of Connecticut that are a bit closer to the border with New York. So the more affluent suburban parts of the State, which makes me wonder, are we getting the causal relationship backwards sometimes when it comes to snob zoning? That it's not, oh, these blue states have restrictive zoning because of something to do with liberalism itself, but for some reason, some of these places that were more inclined to have restrictive zoning decades ago are now becoming more blue. I'm just curious how you think about that.

Richard Kahlenberg:

I take your point. I think that in some cases that can be true, that the zoning laws were often put into place a long time ago. And so you'd want to look back at what the political makeup of communities are. Having said that, this is one of the issues that I found energizes people. This finding is not my finding, but Jenny Schuetz and others have established very clearly that politically blue areas have the worst forms of exclusionary zoning. It touched a nerve, and so people are looking for a lot of explanations. And I think yours, Ned, is plausible that in some cases, not all, but in some cases the bad guys might've been more conservative. But that still doesn't explain why the laws persist to this day. The other thing I'd say is that there can be mixed motives here, even when predominantly liberal areas have bad zoning laws and we can tie it directly to the liberalism of the community.

There's some positive explanations one can point to. Liberals care more about the environment - that is a good thing. Liberals often care more about small-D democracy and therefore want to have a process by which decisions about the community ensure input from lots of different people. So I think all of those are legitimate reasons why you might find exclusionary zoning worse in predominantly liberal areas. But there's also a lot of emerging social science research, which I think is more troubling. And so there is evidence from experimental research that with higher levels of education, which today is associated with political liberalism, you see reductions in racial prejudice as one would hope and expect, but also increases in negative attitudes towards those who are less educated. And in the book I quote Fareed Zakaria who points out, "If the cardinal sin of the right is racism, the cardinal sin of the left is elitism." And I think there is something going on certainly in the persistence of exclusionary laws in politically liberal areas.

Ned Resnikoff:

Yeah. And I mean, maybe to put a finer point on that, one difference I've noticed now living in California between the Bay Area and Connecticut is that in the Bay Area, NIMBYs are typically a little bit more sophisticated and they know not to say certain things when they're opposing housing. But when I go back and read an article in the Hartford Courant or the Connecticut Mirror or something where people are talking about the opposition to affordable housing down the block. People who I think would describe themselves as fairly liberal are often fuel licensed to speak in pretty shocking ways about people with less education or lower incomes and often there is a very distinct racist undertone to what they're saying. I always wonder what the disconnect is there because these are folks who in a lot of cases I'm sure are very enthusiastic Kamala Harris supporters. What's your theory on why there's such an intense disconnect for them between the values they might espouse on Facebook or whatever about racial equality and class divisions and how they actually behave in the context of local land use?

Richard Kahlenberg:

I think that's a great question. I might interpret it a little bit differently. My experience with people who live in exclusive communities - highly educated liberal communities - is that the motivation isn't racist per se. So that is to say they affirmatively celebrate when there's a black doctor down the street. That's a point of pride for a lot of these folks. And that's progress in this country - didn't used to be that way - but I think by focusing on race exclusively, we end up missing the fact that there is deep concern about working-class people of all races coming into a neighborhood. And I quote Omar Wasow who's at Berkeley in the book, and he says, "In exclusive liberal communities, we love our Muslim neighbors so long as they're millionaires." And I think there is something like that going on in the exclusionary zoning. Just to complete that thought, you really see the difference in terms of immigration where people who would be completely opposed to building a wall of Mexico are perfectly happy to defend these invisible walls that they erect around their cities.

Nolan Gray:

Early on in the book you quote Michael Sandel, "classism is the last acceptable prejudice." I'll continue my role as this sort of hypothetical NIMBY at the public hearing here. To what extent are these attitudes motivated by the real or perceived variations in the way people behave? Right. So I think a lot of people would say, well, yeah, racism's intolerable, suggesting that there are racial differences on certain behavioral margins. But yeah, lower-income people are going to not maintain the property quite so well, they might be more disposed to commit crimes, the pupils are not going to be as engaged in school, that's going to lower the quality of the school. I mean, again, not particularly nice things, but things you hear quite commonly in public hearings. To what extent is that real? To what extent do you think that motivates that? And to what extent are these perceptions valid to any extent?

Richard Kahlenberg:

I think that is part of what's going on. It's not just that wealthier people look down on those who are less wealthy, it's that they are concerned about particular questions of crime and academic achievement and the types of things that you mentioned. To me, it's fascinating to see how we handle that issue with respect to race versus class. So one can cite empirical studies that find that there's a racial achievement gap in this country - that on average black students perform less well. One, if so inclined, can point to differences in crime rates by race. But as a society, a long time ago, we said, yes, there might be these statistical relationships, but because black people as a group might have lower academic achievement, it's simply immoral and wrong to assume that every black person or black people who want to move into the neighborhood are going to share those characteristics.

And so we were able to make clear that it was really improper to paint people with a broad brush, even if there was some statistical empirical analysis one could cite. And with respect to class, we haven't made that cultural shift, which I find fascinating. I had a piece in the New York Times, exclusionary zoning and all the types of arguments that you're articulating, Nolan came up quite clearly with respect to income. And people would write in and say, you don't understand. You've never lived among poor people.

And there was one guy who said their dogs bark louder, which I thought was a little odd. But in any event, the New York Times comment section would not, I hope, have allowed people to write in and say that black people or Hispanic people have certain characteristics. But there was no problem allowing people to write in with a very broad

brush about those who are less economically fortunate. And one of the things I try to do in the book is to write about a lot of single mothers who have, by all measures what people would call, middle-class values. They wanted better education for their kids. They were not criminals. They wanted to get out of the neighborhood where there were high crime rates. So I think of those individual mothers and their kids when I hear people say, oh, but poor people as a group, just act and behave differently than the middle class.

Nolan Gray:

Yeah, that's a really interesting point. What do we know about trends here? Generally speaking, especially post-Fair Housing Act, are we making progress on or moving backward on racial and class-based segregation?

Richard Kahlenberg:

Well, so there are conflicting trends here. So on the one hand, the good news is that racial segregation has declined by about 30% since the passage of the 1968 Fair Housing Act, and I should be more precise there. What I'm talking about is data that looks at the Black-White Dissimilarity Index. At 100, that's pure apartheid, at zero is pure integration, and it's gone from 79 in 1970 to 55 in 2020. So 55 is still a high number, it's bad, it should go lower, we have too much racial segregation in society, but it's headed in the right direction, at least, a 30% decline.

Meanwhile, Sean Reardon and others, he's a Stanford researcher, have found that there's an increase in income segregation. Basically a doubling of income segregation. And by that, Reardon means that there used to be more mixed income communities, people of different economic backgrounds living side by side, and now the poor have pulled off in one direction and the wealthy in particular have isolated themselves from those who are middle class and low income, decreasing racial segregation, increasing income segregation. And I can just follow up, one other point here is I think our public policies are partly there to explain this trend. Because we do have a Fair Housing Act to address racial segregation. We really don't have legislation to address class segregation.

Ned Resnikoff:

You brought up schools a little bit earlier and you say in the book that education disparities are in large part a housing story. Could you talk a little bit about what you mean by that?

Richard Kahlenberg:

Yes. So by way of background, I've spent about 30 years writing about education. That's my bread and butter. One of the key findings in the educational research is that what matters even more than how much a school spends per pupil is whether low income students have a chance to be in economically mixed schools or in high poverty schools. So it's enormously important who your classmates are. And low-income students who have a chance to go to middle-class schools are between a year and two years ahead of low-income students stuck in high-poverty schools. And I spent most of my career writing about using public school choice. So these are not private school vouchers, but public school choice - things like magnet schools and charter schools, schools where you can choose to go outside of your neighborhood. And I still support those efforts. They're good. But at the end of the day, 3/4ths of American school children attend neighborhood public schools.

So as long as our houses, our residential areas are segregated by race and by class, our schools will tend to be segregated by race and class. And given the enormous body of research suggesting that's hugely problematic to equal opportunity. I just finally had to belatedly get to the field you guys have been researching and writing about for a long time because housing policy is school policy.

I'll just cite one other example of this that really drove it home for me. There's a study of Montgomery County public schools, right outside of Washington, D.C., and the community is progressive community that cares about low-income students. And they have two interventions to improve academic achievement. One was to spend \$2,000 extra per person for good things like reduced class size in the early grades and better professional development for teachers. And the other intervention was a housing intervention. Inclusionary zoning, which your audience knows well is an opportunity for low-income families to live in middle-class communities when there are inclusionary units built in a middle-income area.

And a researcher at the Rand Corporation tracked these two groups of low-income students, students who were in public housing through the inclusionary zoning program who were in middle-class areas versus those in higher poverty areas. And even though they were spending \$2,000 more per person in the higher poverty area, the kids who got to go to economically mixed schools did far better over time. They cut the achievement gap in half in math with the middle-class kids, by a third in reading. I said, okay, I've got to dig into this more. And I think it's enormously important that we address our housing issues if we want to address our schooling inequalities.

Ned Resnikoff:

I don't have 30 years of background in education, but I did, before I worked on housing full-time, work briefly at the Legislative Analyst's office here in California on K-12 issues. And the California context is pretty interesting. I'm curious you have thoughts about it because here we have the local control funding formula, so by and large school districts that do have more low income students actually do receive more money in some cases significantly more money than school districts with uniformly middle or high-income households, but at the same time, the achievement gap in California has remained pretty stubborn.

And I was tasked with looking at this in my previous role, and it was interesting to note, well, we have about twice as many school districts in California as we have municipalities. So even as school districts with more low-income students are better funded, and even as segregation within districts is going down, segregation between districts is growing. And at the same time, in a lot of these higher-income districts, you have these intense housing crunches that are keeping out all of the kids from low-income households. And it does seem a little bit strange to me that we've spent so much time and energy trying to solve this solely through the channel of education policy and expecting schools to essentially compensate for pretty entrenched housing segregation.

Richard Kahlenberg:

Absolutely, and I should be clear, there is evidence that money works in education. It's just that integration matters more. So I would favor what California's doing, spending more money on the higher poverty districts, but the way to make real progress is to

address the housing segregation and the exclusionary practices that result in educational segregation. In the book, I talk about an example in Dallas where it's so stark because they have a - they call it the "donut hole" within the city of Dallas - this affluent enclave, Highland Park, that has its own school system. It's very, very affluent. The students who are quite nearby come from real concentrated poverty, and yet the reason is that low-income families can't access Highland Park is the basic outline of almost all multifamily housing. And I don't want to overstate this - clearly, property values are connected to school quality, so it's a complicated relationship, but fundamentally, even if the way to get into this high-performing school district is to be able to afford an extremely expensive single-family home.

Nolan Gray:

I had a student, and Rick, you have real expertise here, I had a student who did a paper on this in a California planning policy class I taught last semester. The term paper was essentially looking at, okay, we've tried to take a lot of these steps to improve equity in education outcomes, but then we know that persistently, one of the main determinants of where a person sends their kids to school is the length of time it takes to get them to school and the available transportation options. And the student was making this very effective case of, we say we support even public school choice, but then in many cases, the best public schools even within a given district are certainly here in Los Angeles, for example, are completely surrounded by R-one zoning where the starting price for a home would be \$2.53 million. And then we all are supposed to pretend why we have these crazy equity issues and larger school districts like Los Angeles's.

Richard Kahlenberg:

Absolutely right. I mean, they're supposed to be public schools and they're public so long as you can afford the 2.5 million price tag, which doesn't sound very equitable. It's a pervasive problem throughout the country. And I've been interested to see how the housing community and housing activists think about the education issue. I did a series of reports for the Gates Foundation on the relationship between exclusionary zoning and educational opportunities in New York state. The polling is complicated on this to the extent that when we talk about the relationship between housing and education, it

in a perverse way can activate exclusionary sentiments on the parts of those who have a good deal.

That is to say, their kids are in high-achieving schools and they're nervous about risking that. And one answer, I think an important answer to that is that the research evidence says that low-income students do not negatively affect the achievement and outcomes of middle-class students at least so long as there's a critical mass of middle-class students in the schools. And moreover, when, particularly if it's a predominantly white wealthy school district, the students are missing out on something that's vital to a high quality, which is learning from students who have a different set of life experiences. There's a whole body of research on the benefits of diversity and racial and economic diversity to learning. And so it doesn't have to be zero-sum where every benefit for a low income student somehow comes out of the hides of middle-class students and wealthy students.

Nolan Gray:

That's an important point. I mean, there's almost this sort of... Sometimes it's framed as like, well, yeah, you're going to have to accept a little bit of inconvenience to have these low-income students have more opportunity here. But to your point, there can be benefits for even middle and upper-class pupils in these schools. Some of the most interesting parts of the book are sort of this intersection with education because that's an area where you have a lot of expertise and it's relatively new. It's interesting to me when I think about the history of post-Brown education, right? There was some awareness of, okay, yeah, we have to actually diversify our schools, right? And I guess the first attempt at this is busing, right? If we're just going to... Yes, our cities are totally segregated as a result of a hundred years or so of policy, we're going to solve this problem by just moving everybody around.

And then we stopped doing that, I guess for the most part. But then we don't ever solve the underlying land-use issue that made that a challenge. And I'm wondering, have we just fallen into a suboptimal equilibrium of like, yeah, okay, the schools are going to be segregated. Busing was controversial and difficult, so we're not going to do that so much anymore, but we're not going to address our underlying land-use patterns. I mean, when you talk to education folks, what's their perspective on what, if any change needs to happen in housing and land use?

Richard Kahlenberg:

Most education reform is about enforcing Plessy v. Ferguson, so let's accept the fact that these are separate schools and just try our best to make them equal. I think there is increasing conversation among educators about tackling housing policy. Here we have the driving force behind educational segregation. We just had the 50th anniversary of the Milliken v. Bradley decision, which involved the Detroit public schools in the surrounding suburbs. That was a decision in 1974 when the Supreme Court said, no, we're not going to require school desegregation to go across school district lines and include the suburbs. I was just reading an article about the case and the judge in that decision who was in the lower court decision who wanted to desegregate did point to a number of housing policies that were at the root of the educational segregation, but the Supreme Court drew this artificial line between school boards on the one hand and local government housing policies on the other, which was deeply unfortunate.

I do think compulsory busing certainly has a bad name, and for some good reason because families weren't given any choice in the matter. Their kids were sent across town, and a lot of times it was working-class families who felt like they didn't have a lot of power in life to begin with. So it's not as if the desegregation era was perfect, but the ideal of integrated schools is enormously important. Not only for reasons of academic achievement, but also because of fundamental issues related to our democracy.

I think back to 2016 when Donald Trump was running, he wanted a Muslim ban and he was calling Mexican immigrants rapists and murderers. Not that he stopped doing that, but that was central to his campaign in 2016. And you had to wonder if more white, Christian students had gone to school with Mexican American students, with Muslim students and become, if not best friends, at least acquaintances, whether there would've been less appeal on the part of a demagogue who tried to demonize certain populations. It's a whole lot. I mean, I think that the big lesson of the gay rights movement was that when people started coming out of the closet and people became much more aware that uncles and cousins and friends were in fact gay, that the effort to demonize entire populations became much more difficult.

Ned Resnikoff:

Yeah, I think that's a really important point and certainly something that I've been doing a lot of thinking about in both the education context and the housing context, because something about our existing land use patterns is not only our schools still pretty segregated and especially our school districts, but the pattern of how housing is built in the United States makes it so that other than schools, there are fewer and fewer spaces where you're actually going to have any sort of meaningful interaction with someone from a different class background. Or depending on the area, someone from a different religious or ethnic background than you. And that does seem like it goes some of the way toward explaining maybe why multiracial democracy in the United States has, after a decent run of a few decades, come under intense threat. So I'm curious how you think about that democracy piece in the context of housing in addition to education.

Richard Kahlenberg:

Yeah. I think that the polarization, economic polarization, but also political polarization is connected to our inability to bring different types of housing into communities. There's been this research going back a number of years now, finding the ways in which people cluster by ideology and increasingly so. And that has real problems for our democracy because... And I'll be honest, I don't know that many Trump supporters in my neighborhood, and I think that's a problem. I think any of us would be less likely to judge individuals harshly if they spent time talking about their kids' sports teams over the backyard fence. I just think that the ways in which housing policies help drive separation by education level have big implications for how we begin to view one another in terms of differing politics. And that translates into democracy or the strength of the democracy, because if you think your political opponents or adversaries are evil, not just they think a different way, they're evil, then it's much easier to take shortcuts.

And this is mostly, I think, a problem on the right where we had a President who didn't want to go along with the peaceful transfer of power and those on the right, who demonized liberals felt like it was okay to take that shortcut. It also happens on the left and on campuses, you can have students who are liberal, who are willing to cut corners on free speech protections, and shout down speakers just because those speakers have more conservative views. I don't want to pin this all on housing, but the

increasing ways in which residential areas are divided politically has implications for the health of our democracy.

Ned Resnikoff:

And maybe this is a good segue to talking about persuasion because one of the things I love about your book is that it's written for normal people. It's not written for people like me and Nolan who marinate in these issues all day. And I do think that sometimes if you are plugged into housing Twitter, then the conversation can get pretty insular. So I'm curious how you think about approaching this challenge of talking to your neighbors who live in single-family homes about this sort of thing, because it is true, as we've discussed before, people with certain abstract political beliefs, something else can very easily get triggered by any perceived threats to their neighborhood or their property values. So can you talk a little bit about how you tried to approach that challenge in the writing of the book?

Richard Kahlenberg:

To my mind, a lot of the people living in exclusionary communities are not bad people who are actively involved in exclusion. I think there are definitely some of those folks, but I think most don't spend a lot of time thinking about zoning issues. They kind of just think that, well, I've made a certain amount of money and therefore I can live in a certain type of neighborhood. And of course, all the houses are similar and we all have big lots, and that's just the market at play. And it doesn't really matter.

What I try to do in the book and when I'm talking to people is to tell stories about those who are hurt by exclusionary zoning, because mostly invisible, I think, to a lot of even well-meaning people living in exclusionary neighborhoods. And so the ways in which, for example, the fact that certain types of housing are banned that lot sizes are so large mean that some individuals have to live way out on the periphery of metropolitan areas, and that they have these terrible commutes that end up increasing the rate of heart attacks, divorce, to say nothing of the impact on climate change. Telling the stories about the low-income, single mothers, all of whom have jobs, all of whom work hard, all of whom care about education and want their kids to do better, but they're stymied by exclusionary policies.

And so I think it's important - I've been talking about the importance of not demonizing - I don't think it's good to demonize people living in exclusionary communities. I think most or many, I should say, can be persuaded that the policies are harmful. And we're seeing evidence of that in a lot of blue states and some red states now where we are seeing some change.

Nolan Gray:

Let's dive into that. So by now, the audience is thoroughly depressed about the state of American housing policy and education. But you've actually covered an exciting counter trend, which is what happened in Minneapolis in the late 2010s. You want to share what was so transformative about Minneapolis, and especially why did it happen?

Richard Kahlenberg:

Yeah. Well, Minneapolis was a typical urban area. 70% of the land was set aside for single-family homes, and nothing else could be built. There was a groundswell of change that came about from a number of different forces. And I think what excited me about Minneapolis was the coalition they put together for change under the rubric of Neighbors for More Neighbors. And your audience is probably familiar, Minneapolis was the first major city to legalize duplexes and triplexes. And also it turns out more importantly, to allow some more dense development near transit and make some other reforms. But it was a beautiful coalition of young people who understand better than anyone, the ways in which exclusionary zoning artificially increased housing prices. And so you had a young mayor, young council members who understood the problem. Minneapolis, it's an overwhelmingly democratic city - I think there was one green member in rest for Democrats. So it was generational. There was originally some opposition from older Democrats who thought that the way the zoning had been done for years was the way it should always be done. And then you had labor unions get involved. So SEIU, the Healthcare Union, had a lot of workers who worked in the hospitals in Minneapolis and the people who were their members, the employees who were providing medical services were from working-class backgrounds, and had to take two buses to get to work, and they'd often miss work if they missed the bus exchange. So housing was a huge issue for labor. This was before the murder of

George Floyd, but Minneapolis has a long-standing concern about racial justice. And civil rights groups and others who were concerned about civil rights did a great job of overlaying the old redlining maps that quarantined black people in certain areas and robbed them of the chance for wealth, which connected that to the fact that the green-zoned areas were almost all single-family exclusionary today.

There were educators who got into the act too, pointing out that 14 of the 15 high-performing schools in Minneapolis were off limits to those who couldn't afford a single family home. And all these different groups came together and made some changes. Importantly, there was some incremental change that had happened earlier. The accessory dwelling units, the ADUs, were legalized first. And there was a lot of fear around that initially as one council member said, well, these are going to become houses of prostitution. That was the big argument made against ADUs, and that did not happen.

And so as a result, that made it easier for people to go along with some additional reforms. So Minneapolis is a success story in that regard. And then it's not in the book because it's more recent data, but Bloomberg just said Minneapolis is the first city to tame inflation. And they pinned that primarily on housing policy. The fact that there was further growth in housing than nationally meant that rents had increased much less than they had nationally. So in many ways, Minneapolis is a success story. The footnote is actually, there's some legal complications, and it's not a perfect story, but it kind of opened the floodgates for reform in lots of different places.

Nolan Gray:

Well, we surveyed how people use ADUs, and it's only about 7% they used for prostitution so that's... No, yeah, haha.

There's a kernel of a broader point there, which is when these reforms were first proposed, people were so... You get the most hysterical reactions to them, but right now you look at most of what's getting built in Minneapolis, and it's like, oh, okay, more apartments are being built on corridors. Probably not enough Missing Middle has been built. That's actually the concern now, not that, "oh yes, every single family home in the city has been flipped."

Something that I was really interested in... I totally didn't know about this, but the metro Minneapolis region had actually already had some history of trying to institute a fair

share mechanism for housing - almost not unlike Reno and California or Mount Laurel in New Jersey. And I was really surprised by that, that there was actually somewhat a long history. When I think of Minneapolis, certainly before 2020, I wouldn't have thought of Minneapolis as this metro area, Minneapolis-St. Paul to all of our beautiful St. Paul listeners, as this metro area that's been reckoning with racial equity for a long time. But there actually has been, and much more explicitly on the angle of class, which I think is the frame that you bring to the conversation.

Richard Kahlenberg:

That's right, that's right. Well, actually, I grew up in a suburb of St. Paul and Minnesota is a fascinating state. I mean that area, it's got some of the best and the worst. So there are a lot of people concerned about racial justice. Hubert Humphrey was from Minnesota. Walter Mondale, there's a long tradition of that, but there's also lots of forces for reaction too, so it's a mix. I don't want to suggest that - of course, it could happen in Minneapolis, but can't happen elsewhere - because I think now we've seen evidence that it can happen; reform can happen in lots of states, including of course Montana, where we have a conservative, very conservative state adopting change as well.

Nolan Gray:

And you talk about Charlotte too, which is another great counter. I don't think most people would see Minneapolis and Charlotte as in any sense, peer cities, but you talk about some of the sort of radical pro-housing equity reforms that have happened there.

Richard Kahlenberg:

Yes, and Charlotte did put racial justice right at the center. It was a more divided vote in Charlotte than in a lot of places, but they did manage to pass it. I worked some with the Charlotte public schools over the years, and what really drove reform in part was that Raj Chetty at Harvard did this study of "what are the levels of social mobility in different parts of the regions of the country?" And Charlotte came out dead last, I think it was 30th out of 30. And people said, given that Chetty also tied social mobility to segregation levels, we've got to do something about that. And so I worked with the

public schools on a modest effort to integrate the schools through the magnet programs, but the much bigger lift is to deal with housing segregation.

Ned Resnikoff:

Since you mentioned working with racial justice groups, let's talk a little bit in more detail about that, both in Charlotte and in Minneapolis. Because I think this is an area where there's maybe a lot to learn for YIMBY groups nationwide. Often, there can be some tensions between YIMBY organizations and tenant unions or other older community organizations. And I'm wondering if from your research, you found any useful tips for how to build bridges there and piece together larger coalitions?

Richard Kahlenberg:

Well, you're absolutely right to point to the tensions. And in the book I do talk a little bit about some mistakes in California. The legendary "read the bill" chanting that I think most YIMBYs now recognize was a mistake. But in Minneapolis and elsewhere, there was a conscious effort to reach out to community groups. There was a whole package of reforms. So part of it was missing middle and zoning reforms, but part of it was tenant protections. There were some provisions to increase the amount of money spent on subsidized housing. There were efforts to make sure that zoning reform didn't unintentionally exacerbate displacement in gentrifying areas. So there are a number of things that I think sensitive YIMBYs can and should do to build alliances. And probably the most important thing about Minneapolis, which I neglected to mention earlier, is that they brought in a whole new group of people, many of them people of color and working class people to attend meetings.

And one organizer described that that is the secret sauce of why Minneapolis succeeded. There's all this research suggesting that the people who show up at meetings, zoning meetings, honestly, they look like the three of us. And although they're more like me because they're older too, and that's a problem. And so Minneapolis made conscious efforts to really make sure that people who might not have been involved in the process of government decision-making were made to feel comfortable. So little things like wearing T-shirts of a certain color so that once you got to the meeting, you didn't feel isolated, you could go be with your people. And reaching out to the street fairs and going to churches and other community gatherings

to get input and avoiding a lot of the jargon that so many of us fall into. They never use the word "density," for example, in going out and talking to regular people about housing issues. So all those things were important in Minneapolis.

Nolan Gray:

Normally we stress this, don't say density, don't talk about FAR. But I will say former President Obama used the word units in his DNC speech, which was tickling my housing policy, spidey senses. I was like, oh, okay, he's actually reading Jerusalem Demsas somewhat, right? So yes, not the best messaging tool, but for those of us who follow this issue, we were like, oh, okay. This is good.

Ned Resnikoff:

Continuing to talk about coalitions and maybe getting a little bit into what's going on in the Democratic Party. I'm interested to hear your perspective on this. As someone who has spent some time in DC and national party circles, we're a little bit removed from that out here. And so from your perspective, what's happening in Washington right now when it comes to the spread of YIMBY thought among some very prominent elected officials?

Richard Kahlenberg:

I think one has to distinguish between the congressional level and then the executive level. So at the congressional level, you all know some modest pieces of legislation, things like the YIMBY Act, which are bipartisan. You have a Republican senator from Indiana and Democratic officials from Hawaii and elsewhere coming together for reform. And so, one of the wonderful things I think about zoning reform is you can -- The American Enterprise Institute said this, "You can come into zoning reform from completely opposite ends of the political spectrum and arrive at the same policy conclusion." I thought it was a profound point. So I might talk about racial justice and economic justice, and my colleague at the American Enterprise Institute, Ed Pinto, whom I work with, will talk about deregulation and property rights, and one can agree on the ultimate idea.

So at the congressional level, I think we see some progress. At the presidential level, I think as Vice President Harris has made this issue more salient, we're seeing a classic YIMBY versus NIMBY. I mean, it's so wonderful in my view, that Vice President Harris has said that she wants to facilitate the building of 3 million new housing units and that... She probably said homes, she probably didn't say housing units. And that there's a recognition of the importance of increasing supply. I don't agree with everything she's proposed, but I think that she's clearly planted her foot firmly and President Obama reinforced it at the convention in the YIMBY camp. It is a huge victory for YIMBYs. It's hard to think of a more raw NIMBY type than Donald Trump who has not gone along with his congressional consensus and continues to talk about the importance of making sure that we don't "abolish the suburbs."

I don't think he's talked about Suburban Housewives of America this round, but that was his raw appeal to fear about race and class and the suburbs. I think we'll see more of that. Back in 2016, there were those two folks from St. Louis who had brandished guns against Black Lives Matter protesters, and I remember watching the convention, and then all of a sudden one of them pivoted inexplicably to "and we need to defend single-family zoning." And so there's that. Trump is the ultimate NIMBY. So they're both betting that their appeal is the more politically powerful one. And we'll just have to see how it all works out.

Ned Resnikoff:

And I do have to point out just as a sidebar, that Trump is also a developer. So for people who tend to think that there's a simple binary between developers are YIMBYs and then tenants are not YIMBYs, Donald Trump sort of puts the lie to that.

Richard Kahlenberg:

Well, that's right. I remember in talking with activists in Minneapolis about the coalition that was put together, I said, well, of course developers were part of your coalition. And they said, yes, but the camp was divided. They wanted to be clear that there were some developers who loved the current business scene system as it is because they benefit from it. I mean, I think in Trump's case, it's just the raw racism classism is winning out here, but there is a profound irony that someone who builds for a living has not embraced the Build, Baby, Build that the Democratic Party now has.

Nolan Gray:

Yeah, there was a weird sort of moment, and he did a Bloomberg interview recently where they were like point-blank wire housing costs so high, and you could tell he was sort of returning to old developer mode, like, oh yeah, the permitting is really difficult, and all the reviews. And he used the word bookkeeping, which I thought was interesting. Bookkeeping, increasing the cost of bookkeeping. But yeah, I think then it's right back to the, okay, we're losing the suburbs. What does the polling say? How do we stoke unhealthy divisions here?

Richard Kahlenberg:

It's immigrants too. He talks about immigrants, that's the other big thing. Immigrants are taking all the housing. And I thought there was an interesting op-ed in the New York Times, you may have seen, which pointed to research actually showing that immigrants disproportionately build our housing. If you round up all the immigrants, there are lots of reasons why that's immoral. But in addition, in terms of housing prices, it's not necessarily going to work the way Trump wants it to. I'm sorry.

Nolan Gray:

Well, and there's a certain part of the MAGA wing, right? It's almost this know-nothing housing policy of like, well, it's immigrants buying or living in homes. It's Chinese foreign buyers. It's Wall Street coming into your neighborhood and buying up all the homes. I mean, it really is kind of the classic kind of know-nothing playbook. And I do want to stress, and I think you're aware of this as well, certainly there are a lot of pro-housing Republicans who, exactly to your point, understand the issues here. But I do think it's incredibly dangerous, the trajectory we were on where one party's come around, great, they get it.

The Democrats, I think at a high level, have started to understand this potentially much of the chagrin of local exclusionary Democrats in some states and cities. But on the other side, we have the opposite happening with the Republican Party where a lot of local Republicans at the city and state level get it, and they can vote for good stuff. And I mean exactly, you raised the Montana piece, but then at the top of the ticket you

have this classic just hard NIMBYism. And to me, it's scary because as with some progress that's been made on other issues, certainly like education as well, you're going to have to have a certain degree of bipartisanship to actually get this through, even in a state like California, but certainly in the vast majority of the country.

Richard Kahlenberg:

Yes, absolutely. And to me, that's one of the things that attracted me to writing about housing was not only the education angle, but also the possibility of interesting political coalitions. I don't know if you can see it behind me, but I've got my Robert Kennedy, 1968... Robert Kennedy Sr. Poster. And in college I wrote my thesis about his ability, right? Running for president to bring together working-class, black, Latino, and white voters. And that was the coalition... I'm oversimplifying here, but that was part of the coalition in Oregon. And it's my understanding it was part of the coalition in California as well. That is to say the efforts for reform were primarily motivated by Democrats. But it's my understanding in both California and Oregon that you would not have had a reform pass, but for a modest number of Republican votes. And that those Republican votes came disproportionately from representatives of working-class white people who may have wanted to stick it to rich, hypocritical, liberal exclusionary areas. But I also care about housing prices and also don't want to be looked down upon.

Nolan Gray:

Ned, what do you say? Is it time for a lightning round?

Ned Resnikoff:

Yeah, perhaps it is. Maybe I'll kick it off by asking most underrated city.

Richard Kahlenberg:

I'm not familiar with your lightning round. This had nothing to do with housing or is it?

Ned Resnikoff:

The questions are generally housing or city adjacent and it's just sort of rapid-fire questions.

Richard Kahlenberg:

Housing. I'm sorry. I'll give the predictable answer. Minneapolis.

Nolan Gray:

Where should we get lunch in Rockville?

Richard Kahlenberg:

Rockville, well, there's a wonderful Thai chef place right in downtown Rockville.

Ned Resnikoff:

So living in the greater DC area, what's your favorite thing about DC? What's a non-touristy thing that people should do when they visit DC?

Richard Kahlenberg:

Oh, gosh, I love Great Falls, which is along the Potomac. You feel like you're 10 minutes from bustling areas, but you're in a completely different world.

Nolan Gray:

If you could put one book on education policy, let's, for the sake of conversation, say not one of your own books, which are all fantastic, on the desk of every policymaker in the country, what would it be?

Richard Kahlenberg:

Jonathan Kozol's "Savage Inequalities," which begins to talk about not only inequalities in spending, but also with respect to segregation.

Ned Resnikoff:

Maybe less of a lightning rapid-fire question. But I am very curious. Now that you've written a great book about housing policy, are you planning to do more work in this area? Can we expect more books about housing from you?

Richard Kahlenberg:

I actually have a book coming out on affirmative action and higher education next year. That now the Supreme Court has struck down the use of race, what can universities do to create economic and racial diversity? But I'd love to do more work on housing and talking with folks about creating a bipartisan task force that would look at some of the success stories, also some of the failures locally, and see are there broader lessons, both for communities that want to try to engage in reform, but also at the federal level.

Nolan Gray:

This might be purely to the benefit of Ned and I, as I know Ned is working on a book, and once you've written one, you start working on the next. You're an incredibly prolific author. What's your process? We'll go back and add a timestamp for people who don't want to hear about the process of book writing. We'll return to federal housing policy in a moment here. But yeah, start to finish. I'm curious, what do you think about this? You've clearly got it down to a flow, topic identification, the day-to-day process, how does that work for you?

Richard Kahlenberg:

Well, I'm very predictable. Well, I'll just say in terms of coming up with an idea, in 1984, before you guys were born, I was writing about Bobby Kennedy, and he had this insight that with passage of civil rights laws, class was going to really become the major issue. And so I've looked at education, labor, housing, affirmative action, and higher education. And that's been a theme for me. In terms of coming up with an inspiration for an idea, I'm just playing off, spinning off one idea over and over again. But in terms of the process, I mean, the fun part obviously is just reading everything you can on a new topic. And I benefited from reading stuff that both of you have written in the housing arena. And then I think it's really important because the research is so much fun to start writing pretty quickly. Just jotting down stuff, because otherwise you can go on for years doing the research, you're eating your dessert, and then you have to eat your spinach. And that to me is unpleasant. So I try to do writing along the way, outlining, and it shifts a lot, but that's something important. The last thing I'll say is that I'm someone who's motivated by statistics and by data, but I recognize I'm an oddball in that respect. With "Excluded" and with this most recent book on affirmative Action, I've really tried to be conscious about telling a lot of stories because that is what convinces people, not the data. So that's been a new element to what I try to do. And that's the hardest part. That's the hardest part, finding families who've been affected. I had a research assistant who helped me with that, introduced me to a number of families, and that ended up being the most rewarding part of writing the book, was to talk with people who were living with a lot of pain because of our current policies. And it serves as a point of motivation when you can talk to peoples whose lives could be changed if what you're advocating or actually adopted.

Ned Resnikoff:

Well, I could talk about writing craft for hours, but there are other podcasts for that and people are listening to this one because they want to hear us go into the weeds on housing and urban policy. So maybe pivoting back to that, I wanted to talk about one of your proposals at the end of the book for the Economic Fair Housing Act. What is that?

Richard Kahlenberg:

So the Economic Fair Housing Act would give people who are hurt by government exclusionary zoning laws, the right to sue in federal court, to seek to upend those exclusionary practices. So it's modeled after the 1968 Fair Housing Act, which makes it illegal for both private landlords and private homeowners and government to discriminate based on race. And it takes a piece of that and says, the government should not be able to exclude people because of their income without sufficient justification. So this is a little bit technical, but under the Fair Housing Act, there's something called the Disparate Impact Law where you don't have to prove that the government intentionally was trying to exclude black people or Hispanics, but rather that that's the effect. And then if there is an effect of exclusion, the burden shifts to the municipality to justify, come up with a good reason for why they need that law or that practice in place.

So to make this concrete, if a town banned all multifamily housing, that's clearly going to discriminate based on income. And so a plaintiff could bring that case and the town would then have the chance to say, well, the reason we've banned all multifamily housing is, and they'd probably come up with some excuse, we need to reduce traffic, or they would come up with a rationale. But under the law, they'd have to show that their exclusionary practice was necessary to achieve a legitimate objective. And I think in many cases the exclusionary practices would fall. And this has worked with respect to racial discrimination. There are cases where municipalities have had to change their zoning laws because of the racially disparate impact.

Ned Resnikoff:

This may be one area where our thinking on this issue diverges a little bit. And so I'd like to maybe give you an opportunity to sell me on this. One of the concerns I have about this approach and similar approaches is whether we are relying too much on private right of action to solve problems that should instead be more sort of automatic regulatory actions. I don't know. What do you think about that?

Richard Kahlenberg:

I'd say a couple of things. One is that the Economic Fair Housing Act is meant to be one tool, and it's not meant to replace the various reform efforts that go directly at public policy. I think the Economic Fair Housing Act adds a couple of dimensions. One

is that, in part, using the Fair Housing language is meant to help shift the culture so that after the passage of the Fair Housing Act in 1968, the acceptability of racial discrimination, the legitimacy was reduced dramatically. So at the time the bill was passed, there were lots of people who responded to pollsters and said, no, black people shouldn't be able to live wherever they want. I don't agree with that. And over time, that shifted, and this I think was a case where the law helped shift the culture in addition to the culture allowing for passage of the law. So I think it's important in that respect.

On a more pragmatic level, I was talking a while back with the California State Senator Scott Wiener, and I said, what can the feds do to make your job easier of passing reforms at the state local level? And he said, the threat of legal action works wonders and that you could have a municipality where even the people in power would like to do the right thing, but they feel like politically they can't. To have the ability to say, well, if we don't make this change, we're going to get sued and it's going to cost a lot of money. That's a powerful lever for change. So it's not so much that I would expect lawsuits to proliferate across the country and then go to trial and everything. What I would hope for is the threat of lawsuits to bring about changes in behavior. I don't know if I made any sense in convincing you, but you're being polite by not coming back with 12 arguments.

Ned Resnikoff:

No, I think that's reasonable. I think it certainly, private right of action needs to be a tool in the toolbox. And as you said, the threat of consequences can often be really, really powerful. I just like to push back on these sorts of things every once in a while because I think that one of the real problems with housing policy right now is that a lot of it is planning by lawsuit instead of planning by thoughtful planning processes.

Richard Kahlenberg:

I'm definitely in agreement with you on that point and just see this as another tool.

Nolan Gray:

A point that you made there that I think is really interesting, which is exactly this of the law changes and then attitudes shift, right? I suspect on almost all the issues that the three of us spend all day thinking about, most people basically never think about this stuff. And they're going to default to the sort of common sense of, well, of course there should be white and black neighborhoods, and then the law changes. And that's the signal of like, Hey, there's this broader shift in thinking that's happening here unless you have strong feelings to the contrary, get on board with the program, right? And I think that's partly actually what's happening with zoning stuff as well, is people were like, if you had asked most folks 10 years ago, oh, yeah, should vast portions of our cities be restricted to single family homes? They would say, well, duh, of course.

And then a city changes the law and they're like, oh, yeah, actually, I'm reconsidering my preconceived notions about this policy for the first time. I think we're actively living through that, and certainly younger generations have totally different attitudes.

Returning to you as our DC capitol knower, I'm curious, other things that the federal government can do. I think you're expanding the right of standing for some of this stuff is really, really valuable. There are a lot of conversations about federal carrots and sticks on housing reforms. I'm wondering your perspective on that and what you see potentially being viable going forward, certainly now that a Harris administration might be fully bought into the program.

Richard Kahlenberg:

Yes. Well, I mean, the most immediate step is not an Economic Fair Housing Act, but rather incentives for communities who are on the verge of potentially doing something constructive and bringing more housing, bringing more equity to their process. I think that's positive. I'm glad that Biden and now Harris have been making these proposals. I do think you need some powerful sticks in addition to the carrots because the carrots are unlikely to persuade Scarsdale, New York, which is incredibly exclusionary, to take action. But a powerful stick as a complement to that could make a difference as well.

But I think the first step is what's reasonable to do in the short term and incentive programs, they're a positive step. And then just political science 101 is you create a constituency. Once some communities are getting some money, others want it too. And so you've got a built-in lobby for continuing the program and every member of Congress and state senator who has beneficiaries from a particular program is going to

be more inclined to continue to support funding. So I think it's a reasonable place to start. I just hope we don't stop with incentives.

Nolan Gray:

Yeah. I mean, you're getting at, I think some of the concerns some folks have, and Jenny Schuetz who you mentioned earlier, has sort of raised this of the most popular proposals was tie community development block grants or CBDG grants funds to zoning reform. And it's like, well, the richest jurisdictions are not dependent on CBDG funding if they collect it at all. I'm never going to miss an opportunity to push it now that this issue has federal salience. I've suggested, okay, bring back SALT and mortgage interest deduction. That's a big issue for certain Moderate Dems, but tie it to housing affordability outcome that we care about. Either you have affordability levels at some threshold or you're building... Or you have some share of units that are deed restricted, affordable, sort of like the Massachusetts model. It feels like to me, like a very open field, actually.

And it's an exciting area of policy where it seems like it could go in a lot of different directions. But exactly to your point, we've kind of been doing the carrot stuff for decades, right? There's periodically been grants to encourage more pro-housing funds, right? I mean, going back to the Douglas Commission, right? And it's like, Hey, you might actually have to have a carrot in here once in a while, and maybe that's a private actor suing you for violation of class discrimination. Maybe that's okay. Homeowners in this jurisdiction are no longer eligible for certain federal benefits.

Richard Kahlenberg:

Right. Yeah. No, I love your idea. I think that makes a lot of sense. I think it was Jack Boger at the University of North Carolina who was talking a number of years ago about making the interest deduction dependent upon taking steps to reduce exclusionary zoning. And I had assumed, well, that's not going to work anymore. But you're absolutely right. If it became an important part of the tax code again, then that would be a powerful lever to get change. And it would go almost most precisely at those communities that need the change the most.

Ned Resnikoff:

Here's a crazy idea I'll just throw out there that I think gets at some of the questions around education and housing that we've been discussing. High income school districts that receive any sort of federal grant money, automatic upzoning within half a mile of the schools themselves.

Richard Kahlenberg:

Wow. Oh, I think that's really intriguing. So there is this research in particular around the gap between affordable housing and strong schools, but if you're bringing upzoning to the areas right near schools, that could have a really positive impact on economic and racial integration as well. I like that.

Ned Resnikoff:

Yeah. And also I think in California, obviously we attempted to do upzoning within half a mile of transit stops, and I think there's opportunities to do things like that at the federal level as long as you're talking about agencies that are receiving federal funding to get around the commerce clause. But one of the advantages of doing it for schools in addition to doing it for your transit stops is make it so that kids can walk to school again.

Richard Kahlenberg:

Absolutely. Yeah. Yeah. I mean, the biggest opposition to integration is the transportation involved, and you're tackling several problems at once there. Ingenious.

Nolan Gray:

Wow. We're just cooking. I hope federal policymakers are taking notes. Pull over if you're driving or riding a bike.

Rick, I'm curious, what did you change your mind on over the course of writing this book? Was there anything where your perspective shifted as you did more research into the topic?

Richard Kahlenberg:

Well, this will be a very telling admission, but because I came at this issue from an education perspective and come from someone who's deeply concerned about segregation, that was really what drove me nuts about exclusionary zoning. And it was only after reading... I mean, it wasn't after very long, but I discovered that's not motivating very many people. And this is all about affordability. If you talk to the average person, of course, this issue is one of affordability. But to me, that was something I came to after my original interest in segregation.

Nolan Gray:

Yeah, I think certainly the thing that I feel like I most learned from your book was of course, broadly speaking, the intersection of housing and education. But just the extent to which, if we're going to say there's some school choice, access to schools is just so... Physical proximity to schools. It seems almost too obvious to even need to say, but it's like, well, if you're saying, oh, yeah, hypothetically low-income household in impoverished minority, majority part of the city, you can go to affluent white majority school across town, but there may or may not be any public support for you to get there. Even if there is, it's going to be 30 to 45 minutes of your child sitting in traffic. And then by the way, we're not going to let any housing that you could possibly afford get built anywhere near there. And you really sort of drill this home of, certainly among cities in a metro area, but even within a large city like LA or a large city like DC, these issues are just as salient. And I worry that we have to keep both contexts in mind, and I think you do a very good job of that.

Richard Kahlenberg:

If I can add one other thing that occurred to me that surprised me, it's that people who are pro-housing would be hyper-focused on the ways in which exclusionary zoning is prized by what is now the Democratic Party's base, upper-middle-class white liberals.

To me, it's so obvious that the Democratic Party should be the party of working people and that's central. But when I proposed the Economic Fair Housing Act, I got pushback from pro-housing forces, generally pro-housing forces who said, this is not the right tactic because exclusionary liberals are the central core of the Democratic Party today, and we can't go after our own base.

And it was a very clarifying moment because it underlined for me why we have to go back to the Bobby Kennedy Coalition of Working Class, black, Hispanic, and white people. That exclusionary policies does such harm in terms of making people's lives miserable in terms of affordability, cutting people off from opportunity, and increasing racial segregation, that all those considerations should be set aside because the reality is we'd be going after our own people. Scarsdale gave 70% of its votes to Biden, and so we can't mess with that. And I guess I was kind of astounded that people would say that out loud rather than just maybe thinking it, but they did. So that was a surprise as well.

Nolan Gray:

Well, I think thanks in no small part to your work that this attitude is shifting a lot. I mean, if we had had this conversation three or four weeks ago, I might've been a little bit more cynical about pathways here within the Democratic Party. But housing has just become so preeminent, and I think it's almost obvious in retrospect, right? This is any given family's number one line item. It's the one area where we have lingering inflation. As you mentioned, the cities that are building are overcoming this. So it does seem like this issue is really, really improving. Again, thanks in part to folks like you making this case of, Hey, if we're serious about our claims, about believing in equity, we can't leave housing and where we build it off the table. Rick, the book is "Excluded: How Snob Zoning, NIMBYism, and Class Bias Build the Walls We Don't See." Fantastic book. Rick, thanks so much for joining the podcast.

Richard Kahlenberg:

Oh, it was my pleasure. Enjoyed the conversation and thank you all for the great work you're doing.

Ned Resnikoff:

Thanks, Rick.