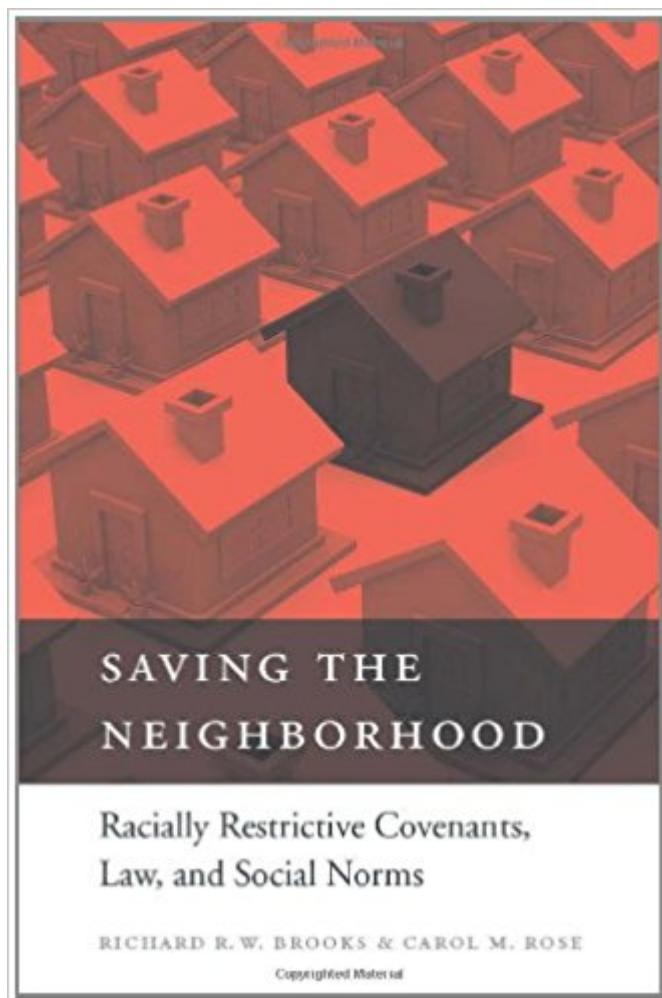


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# Saving The Neighborhood: Racially Restrictive Covenants, Law, And Social Norms



## Synopsis

Saving the Neighborhood tells the charged, still controversial story of the rise and fall of racially restrictive covenants in America, and offers rare insight into the ways legal and social norms reinforce one another, acting with pernicious efficacy to codify and perpetuate intolerance. The early 1900s saw an unprecedented migration of African Americans leaving the rural South in search of better work and equal citizenship. In reaction, many white communities instituted property agreements—covenants—designed to limit ownership and residency according to race. Restrictive covenants quickly became a powerful legal guarantor of segregation, their authority facing serious challenge only in 1948, when the Supreme Court declared them legally unenforceable in *Shelley v. Kraemer*. Although the ruling was a shock to courts that had upheld covenants for decades, it failed to end their influence. In this incisive study, Richard Brooks and Carol Rose unpack why. At root, covenants were social signals. Their greatest use lay in reassuring the white residents that they shared the same goal, while sending a warning to would-be minority entrants: keep out. The authors uncover how loosely knit urban and suburban communities, fearing ethnic mixing or even “tipping,” were fair game to a new class of entrepreneurs who catered to their fears while exacerbating the message encoded in covenants: that black residents threatened white property values. Legal racial covenants expressed and bestowed an aura of legitimacy upon the wish of many white neighborhoods to exclude minorities. Sadly for American race relations, their legacy still lingers.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Saving the Neighborhood vividly analyzes the rise, fall, and enduring legacy of the major legal tool that created segregated housing in the United States. At the same time, this book is a moving account of real communities--of fearful residents struggling to control fragile city blocks, visionaries willing to risk everything for justice, and hustlers driven to profit from the hopes and hatreds that have defined the American experience. (Daniel J. Sharfstein, author of *The Invisible Line: A Secret History of Race in America*) A brilliant and disturbing history of how racial restrictions designed to keep black homeowners out of white neighborhoods became legally respectable and socially pervasive, and a powerful and subtle meditation on the interplay between law, violence, and social norms. (Robert W. Gordon, Stanford Law School) Saving the Neighborhood makes a convincing case for the proposition that the effect of legal provisions can be fully understood only in the context of relevant social norms, economic incentives, and informal influences. (M. E. Ethridge Choice 2014-05-01)

Richard R. W. Brooks is Leighton Homer Surbeck Professor of Law at Yale Law School. Carol M. Rose is Gordon Bradford Tweedy Professor Emeritus of Law and Organization and Professorial Lecturer in Law at Yale Law School and Lohse Professor of Law at the University of Arizona.

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