



HOMES  
FOR  
BLACKS

# SHAW, MISSISSIPPI

## UP-GRADING "THE WRONG SIDE OF THE TRACKS"

Andrew Hawkins is a black carpenter who built a house for his family in Shaw, Mississippi—a Delta town of 1,500 blacks and 1,000 whites. The house faces a road of gravel and mud, full of ruts, with deep puddles which persist after a rain until the sun dries them up. At night, deep darkness closes in: the nearest street light is a bare bulb hanging from a post hundreds of feet from the Hawkins home.

By contrast, just five blocks away, the big houses for white folks along Porter's Bayou are set off by broad lawns and leafy shade trees. Storm sewers carry off the rain quickly, and the well-paved street is brightly lit at night with mercury-vapor lamps.

The Southern charm of Shaw is the exclusive preserve of the whites, and even basic town services are often absent where black folks live. Twenty percent of the black houses have no sanitary sewers at all; 60% are on unpaved streets; 63% have inferior water lines. Most streets in the black community have little or no street drainage, and they are almost 100% dimly lit.

Race discrimination? Mr. Hawkins thought so and complained to the Legal Defense Fund. Yale Rabin, LDF's expert on planning, surveyed Shaw and

found that its tax dollars were indeed expended largely for its white citizens.

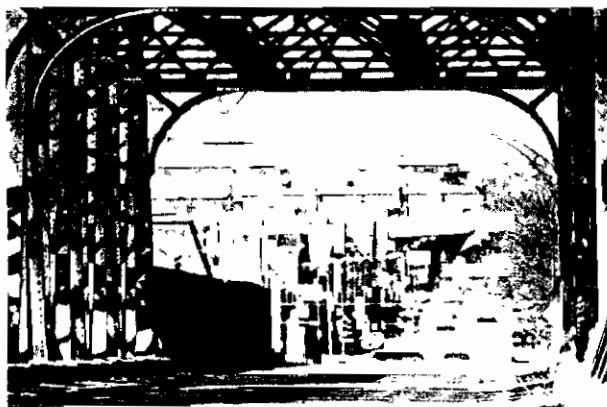
LDF attorneys sued and lost in the Federal District Court. On appeal, however, the Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit held that Shaw's "discriminatory provision of municipal services based on race" is unlawful. The town officials sought and were granted rehearing, and arguments were heard by sixteen judges of the Fifth Circuit, sitting *en banc*. As of November 11, 1971, no decision has been announced. But this case—which the *New York Times* says can herald another "revolution by court order" as significant as the school desegregation decision of 1954—may well go up the line to the Supreme Court.

If Shaw is finally ordered to deal out its public services without regard to race, the principle on which this case is based can become the law of the land everywhere. Thus, a new tool would be forged to force up-grading of services in cities and towns across the United States, relieving the stark contrast between the best residential neighborhoods and the slums, both black and white.

**Below)** THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BLACK AND WHITE. Black homes on the left; white on the right.



# SUCCESS IN LACKA



a



d



e



b

# LACKAWANNA, N.Y.

Lackawanna is a Bethlehem Steel town on the shores of Lake Erie, adjacent to Buffalo. Traditionally, the workers lived across from the huge mills in Company-owned houses—some sections of which were “white,” and some “black.”

As wages went up, white workers moved away from the immediate mill vicinity. Black workers, not welcome in Lackawanna’s residential areas, could not escape from the soot and smog of the Company houses. Ward 1 became a black ghetto, with the highest concentration of homes per acre and the highest number of residents per house in the City. Typically, a low-income project was built in Ward 1 and named “Bright Homes.”

But black men and their families want homes of their own the same as white workers. They formed Kennedy Park Home Association, a non-profit housing corporation, to purchase land and build moderately priced homes in Lackawanna, not restricted by race or color.

Well away from the smoke of the mills, in Ward 3

**a)** CROSSING THE BRIDGE. Ward 1 and the steel plants it adjoins are shut off from the rest of Lackawanna (see background). This bridge is the only way to cross what some of the black people call their version of the “Berlin Wall.”

**b)** SPIRE AGAINST SMOKE. In Lackawanna, the churches played their role for a better life in this world as well as hereafter. The Rev. Thomas, Protestant minister in Ward 1, helped organize Kennedy Park Home Association, and the Catholic Diocese insisted on selling them land for their homes.

**c)** COMPANY HOUSES. Fifth Street in Ward 1. Bethlehem Steel refuses to keep up houses it owns.

**d, e)** CHILDREN PLAYING. Black and white boys in Ward 1; white boys in Ward 3.

**On the cover)** DARRELL L. THOMAS, young son of the Rev. James M. Thomas, plaintiff for Kennedy Park Home Association, watches steel-mill smoke rise from basic oxygen furnace. Pollution is extremely dense in Ward 1,

the Catholic Diocese of Buffalo owned a large tract of vacant land opposite a residential area with many “white” homes. The Diocese agreed to sell the land to Kennedy Park Home Association early in 1968, and, on October 4, 1968, the Federal Housing Administration issued a letter calling the subdivision feasible.

The FHA’s approval called forth an almost immediate reaction from the City Council. Long accustomed to overlook what went on in Ward 1, they suddenly faced the fact that black men and women there had set up a non-profit housing corporation, secured the consent of Bishop McNulty to sell them the land, prepared a plan for a housing subdivision which displaced no one, and secured FHA’s letter of feasibility. Even more incredible, this housing would be located across the street from some of the newer houses for white people in Lackawanna.

Just three days after the FHA letter, outraged City Council members met and amended the zoning ordinances: the land the Diocese had agreed to sell to the blacks was re-zoned for park and recreational uses exclusively.

Attorneys for the Legal Defense Fund and for the Diocese of Buffalo went to Court on behalf of the Kennedy Park Home Association to stop the rezoning. Bishop McNulty declared: “One of the nation’s greatest problems is how to break down the wall which imprisons so many in our urban slums before this injustice destroys our society as we know it. A group of individuals in Lackawanna, through their own private enterprise, have made arrangements to build an integrated subdivision outside the ghetto and attempts are being made to frustrate this plan. The issue is whether American citizens are to have the right of

