

## Blockbusting: Sources

### Source 1: Document by Eunice Lyons Prescott, date unknown

I live in [West Chesterfield], a small area . . . an hour ride from the heart of the big windy city. This section happens to be the only residential district in this vast city where people of our group have been able to watch their dreams turn into a reality. Previous to the development of this locality it was impossible to acquire a loan for a home due to the fact that Bankers claim that negroes allow their property to depreciate to such an extent that they are a bad investment but [during?] the [period?] with the F.H.A. [Federal Housing Authority] in full swing and so many homes being built for other groups a small [group?] of negroes with ideals the chief one being a home worked entirely toward this end and were successful. Here just let me say that I represent no group but am only writing for myself with of course the good will of the [community?] . . . I am of the opinion that better homes make better people and better people are at this time more than ever a necessity to our race [illegible] due to the fact that our money was very limited as we are people in very moderate circumstances and three children to rear and educate. There were many times during this fight that we felt that our dream was to no avail. We have a community here that I can truthfully say without boasting that we are proud of and when people from other communities drive through to gaze and comment on our homes we want them to know that they didn't just grow but they represent many years of thought planning, [illegible], and hard work.

--Eunice Lyons Prescott, date unknown

## Source 2: Journal by Lillian Gartz, June 1936

Frankly, I think by next spring, if not sooner, all houses west of Parker's will be colored. . . . Miss McCarthy may stay to the end due to her advanced age. I also believe next May, Fred Jones will sell to colored and the Canersay's & Brown's will move. . . .

Friday, June 21, 1963

Well, the mystery of who bought the Young-Parker house has been solved as more or less expected, the blackies moved in today. It somehow gives me a squeamish feeling to be confronted with the actual fact of having them in our block. The question is what course to follow. How long before no whites will be renting here any more.

—Lillian Gartz, June 1963

### Source 3: Excerpt from the *Encyclopedia of Chicago*

“Blockbusting” refers to the efforts of real-estate agents and real-estate speculators to trigger the turnover of white-owned property and homes to African Americans. Often characterized as “panic peddling,” such practices frequently accompanied the expansion of black areas of residence and the entry of African Americans into neighborhoods previously denied to them. In evidence as early as 1900, blockbusting techniques included the repeated—often incessant—urging of white homeowners in areas adjacent to or near black communities to sell before it became “too late” and their property values diminished. Agents frequently hired African American subagents and other individuals to walk or drive through changing areas soliciting business and otherwise behaving in such a manner as to provoke and exaggerate white fears. Purchasing homes cheaply from nervous white occupants, the panic peddler sold dearly [at a high price] to African Americans who faced painfully limited choices and inflated prices in a discriminatory housing market. Often providing financing and stringent terms to a captive audience, the blockbuster could realize substantial profits.

—Arnold R. Hirsch, “Blockbusting,” *Encyclopedia of Chicago*