

BLACK LIVES NEXT DOOR: GEORGE MASON IN AN AGE OF DISPARITY AND OPPORTUNITY

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Black Lives Next Door:

George Mason & Northern Virginia
In an Age of Disparity & Opportunity



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Preliminary Findings

During the summer of 2020, a time of protest against police killings of unarmed Black people, the legal scholar Richard Rothstein wrote a *New York Times* op-ed titled, "Black Lives Next Door."^[1] Having recently authored *The Color of Law*, he called for more studies of "comprehensive racial inequity...that allows abusive...practices to flourish" at the local level.^[2] Rothstein's groundbreaking work inspired our investigation at George Mason University (GMU).

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Key Questions

- How did segregation affect George Mason College and its surrounding communities and public schools?
- Were all citizens welcome to learn and teach at the new college in Fairfax?
- To what extent did civil rights movements mobilize students and faculty, and their neighbors?
- Did legacies of slavery directly influence the establishment of George Mason College?
- As Northern Virginia burgeoned into a mega-suburb, what happened to the Black residents?
- Was it true that 25% of the "inhabitants" of Fairfax County were designated "colored" in the 1900 US census? Seventy years later they comprised 3% of the population.
- Did Black people willingly move away?
- Whose voices will be heard? Had widespread dispossession occurred? If so, was it a systemic process?

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Research Areas

- Education
- Oral Histories
- Mapping School Street
- Black-Jewish Relations

Education: Fairfax Rosenwald School and Eleven Oaks School



Fairfax Rosenwald School



Eleven Oaks Elementary School, 1958.

Eleven Oaks School

Fairfax Rosenwald School and Eleven Oaks School

Student Researchers: Rachel Amon and Alexis Massenbourg

Major Questions:

- How did segregation and desegregation impact K-12 education in Fairfax?
- What was the student experience for Black people in Fairfax?
- How did the Fairfax Rosenwald and Eleven Oaks Schools serve the Black community in Fairfax?

Fairfax Rosenwald School and Eleven Oaks School

Findings

“Black citizens of Fairfax have valued learning and teaching for generations - even when the county itself prevented Black students from accessing equal education.” (Amon)

- Clear discrepancies in funding from the beginning
- Black community raised money to build and support FR and EO schools
- Black schools were central to the community, teachers and administrators played multiple roles
- Desegregation broke up the student population and impacted the local community

Search

Education > Fairfax Rosenwald > Rosenwald and Eleven Oaks



Across the street from George Mason University is a former site of valued education for Black students. Some aptly named street signs and a historical marker are the remaining physical manifestations of the legacies of the Rosenwald School and Eleven Oaks Elementary.