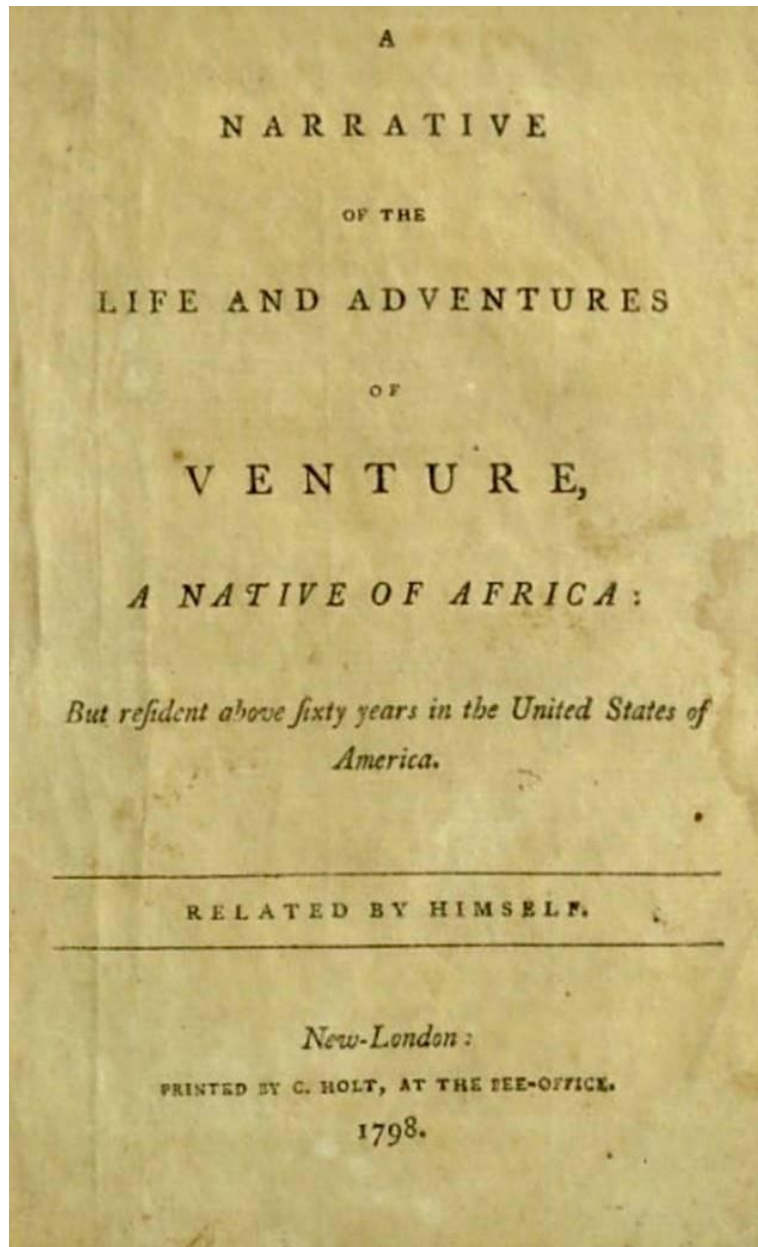


**Black New Yorkers and a History
of Dispossession,
Disinheritance, and
Decapitalization**

Calvin Schermerhorn

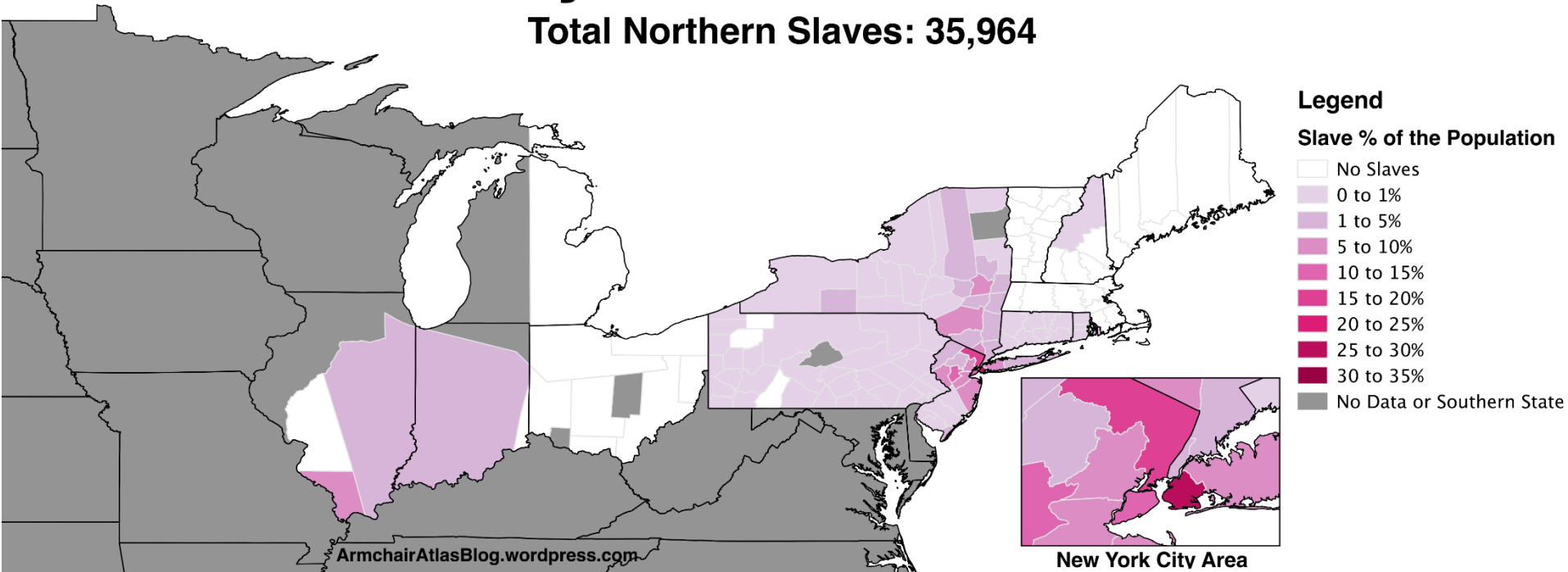


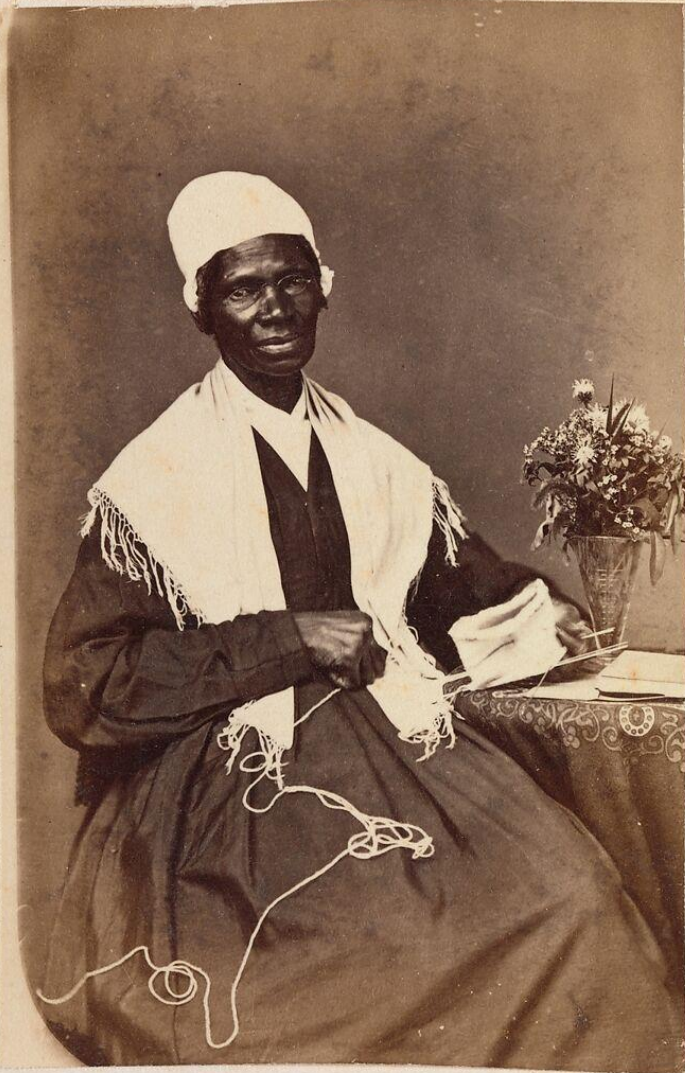
By 1703, more than 42 percent of New York City households included enslaved people of African descent.



Slavery in the North, 1800

Total Northern Slaves: 35,964





I Sell the Shadow to Support the Substance.
SOJOURNER TRUTH.

Be it enacted by the people of the state of New York represented in Senate and Assembly, That any child born of a slave within this State after the fourth day of July next, shall be deemed and adjudged to be born free: Provided nevertheless that such child shall be the servant of the legal proprietor of his or her mother, until such servant if a male shall arrive at the age of twenty eight years, and if a female at the age of twenty five years.

And be it further enacted, That such proprietor his, her, or their heirs or assigns shall be entitled to the service of such child until he or she shall arrive at the age of twenty eight years, and if a female at the age of twenty five years.

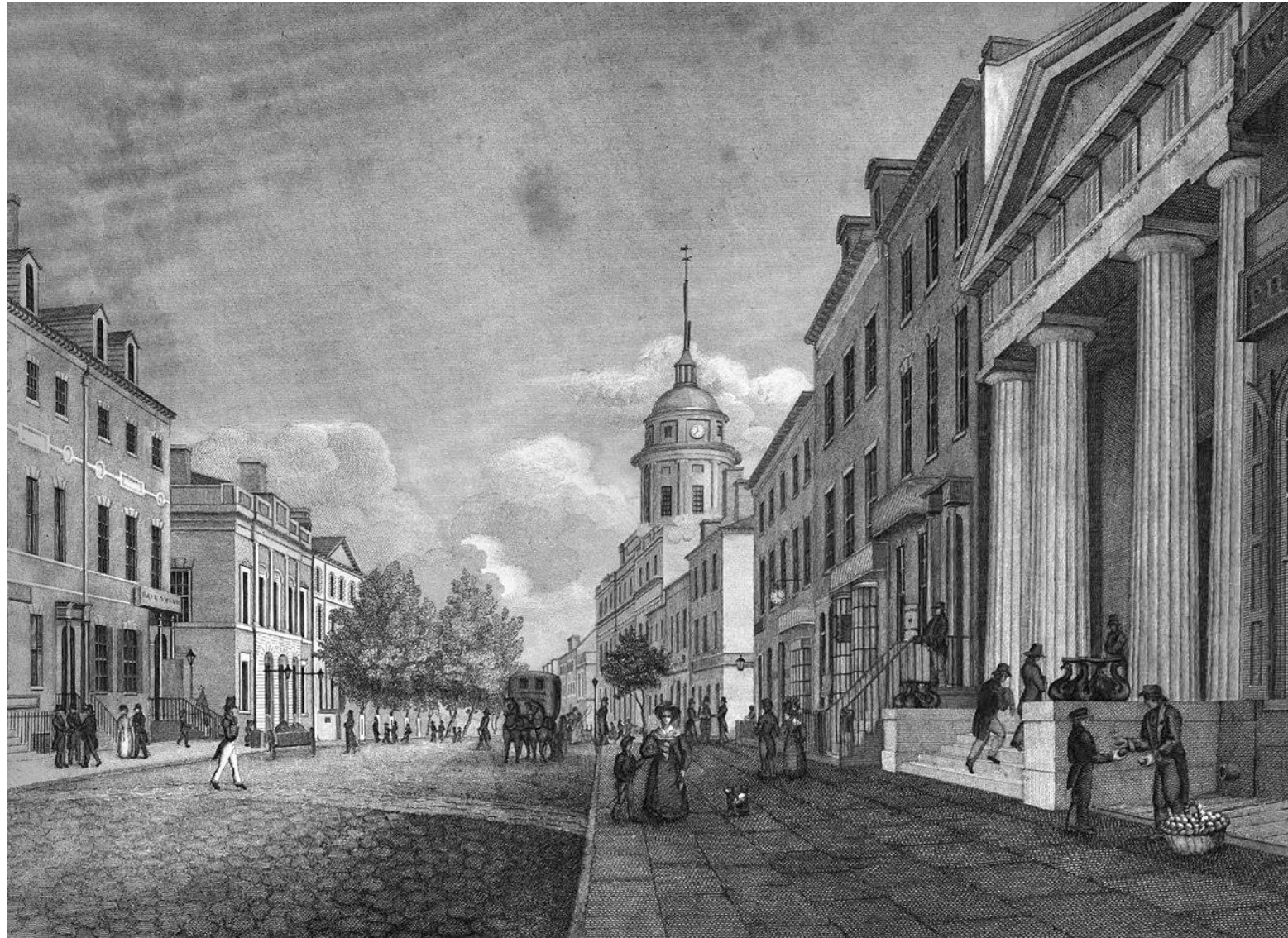
New York passed a gradual abolition statute in 1799, but it did not immediately free enslaved New Yorkers like Sojourner Truth



”The legislature drew an indelible line between blacks and whites of all classes. The law devalued blacks in comparison to whites, for white men gained the vote despite their occupations and wealth or lack of it.”
–Leslie M. Harris, *In the Shadow of Slavery* (119).

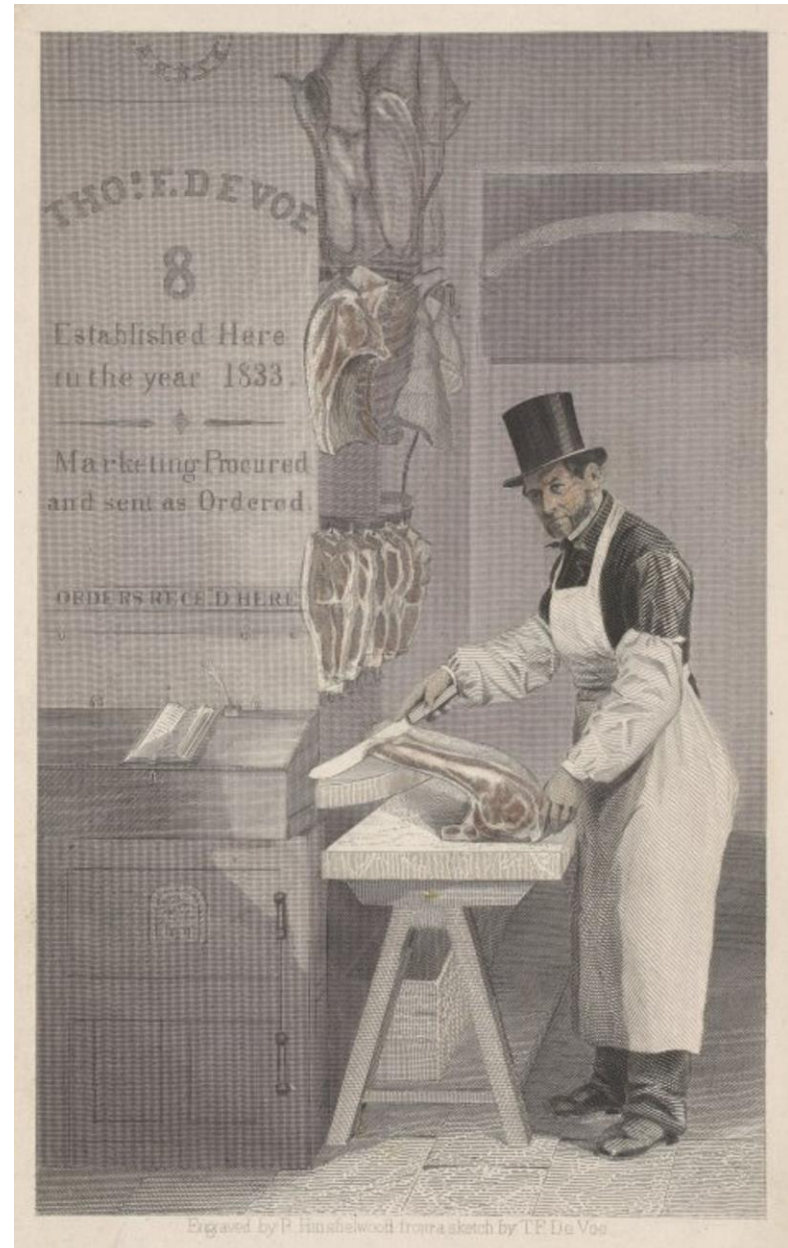
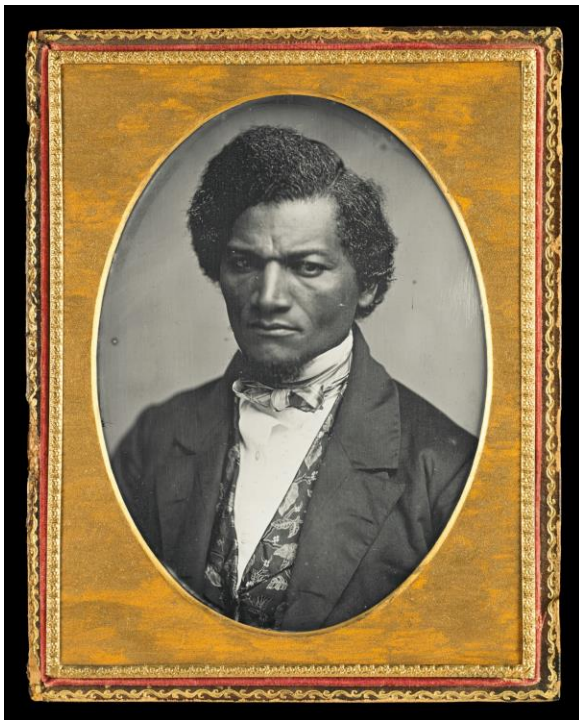
Wall Street, New York City

1830s



"All of this wealth and power made Black lives cheap in the minds of white leaders." - Jonathan Daniel Wells, *The Kidnapping Club*

“The slave is robbed, by his master, of all his earnings, above what is required for his bare physical necessities” – Frederick Douglass, 1855



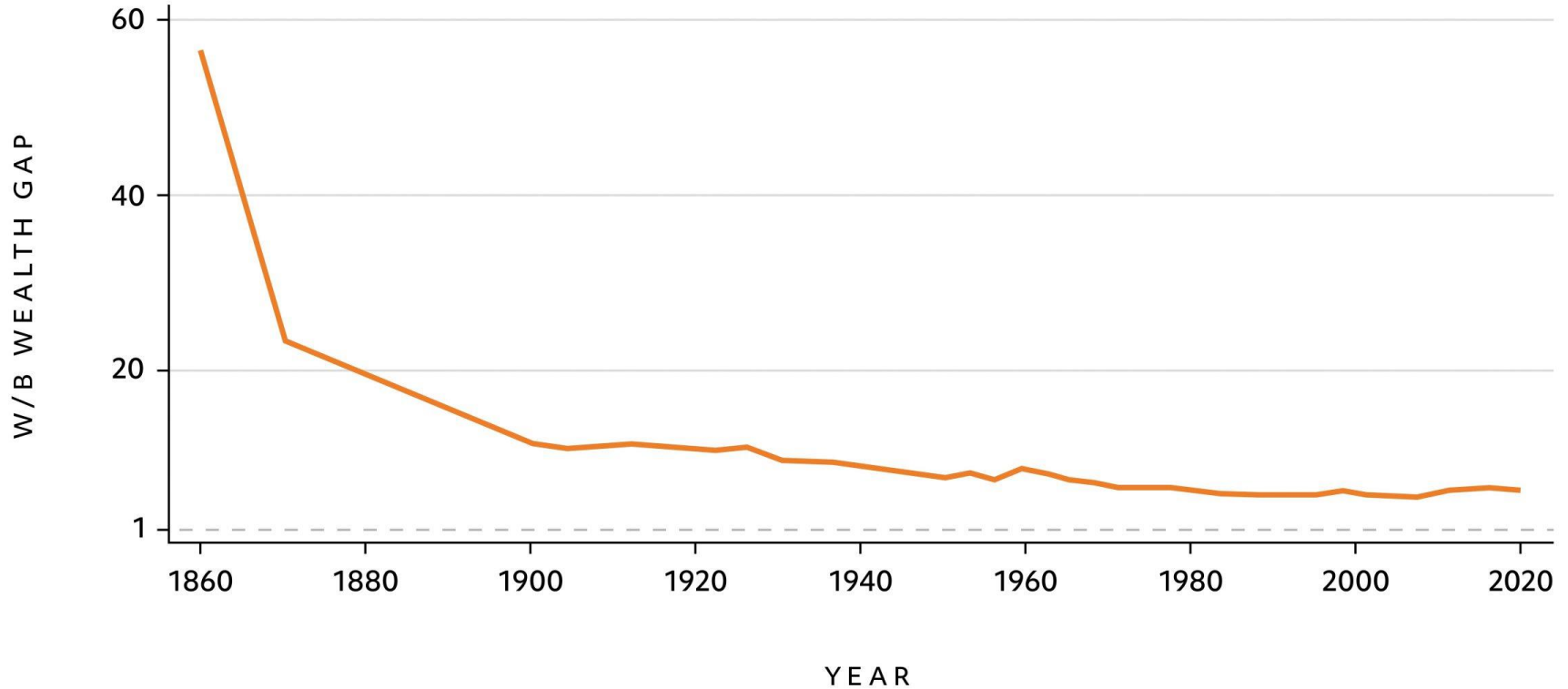
Engraved by R. Hinshelwood from a sketch by T.F. De Voe

Racial Wealth Gap in 1860: 56:1

P
E

FIGURE 1

White-Black Per Capita Wealth Ratio: 1860-2020



Ellora Derenoncourt, Chi Hyun Kim, Moritz Kuhn, Moritz Schularick, "Wealth of Two Nations: The U.S. Racial Wealth Gap, 1860–2020," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Vol. 139, 2, (May 2024): 693–750, <https://doi.org/10.1093/qje/qjad044>



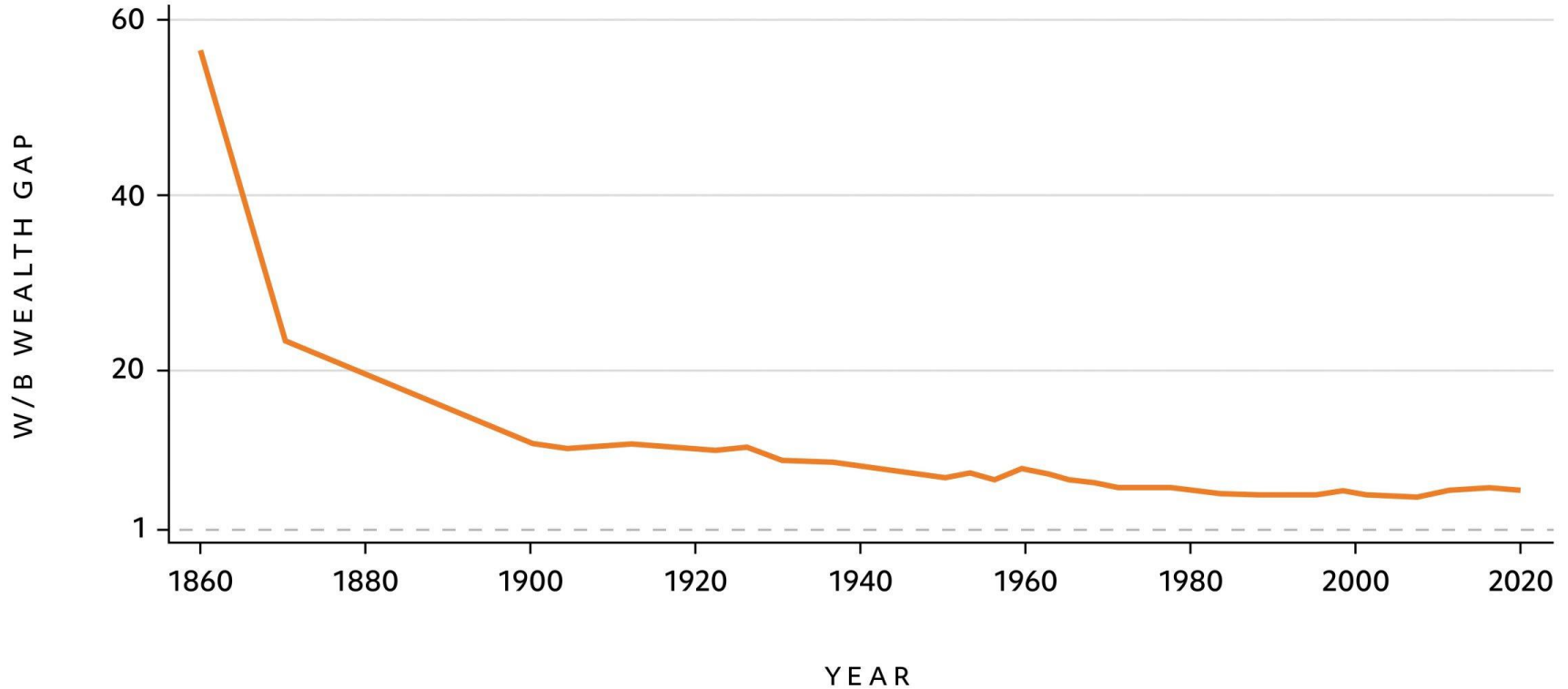
Places that welcomed fugitives from enslavement did not necessarily support Black economic advancement.

Racial Wealth Gap in 1870: 23:1

P
E

FIGURE 1

White-Black Per Capita Wealth Ratio: 1860-2020



Ellora Derenoncourt, Chi Hyun Kim, Moritz Kuhn, Moritz Schularick, "Wealth of Two Nations: The U.S. Racial Wealth Gap, 1860–2020," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Vol. 139, 2, (May 2024): 693–750, <https://doi.org/10.1093/qje/qjad044>



Photograph of Harriet Tubman (seated, center, in white shawl), with caretakers at the Harriet Tubman Home for the Aged, circa 1911; source:

<https://msmagazine.com/2022/03/02/karen-v-hill-harriet-tubman-home-house/>

Harlem, New York City

Moving to Opportunity

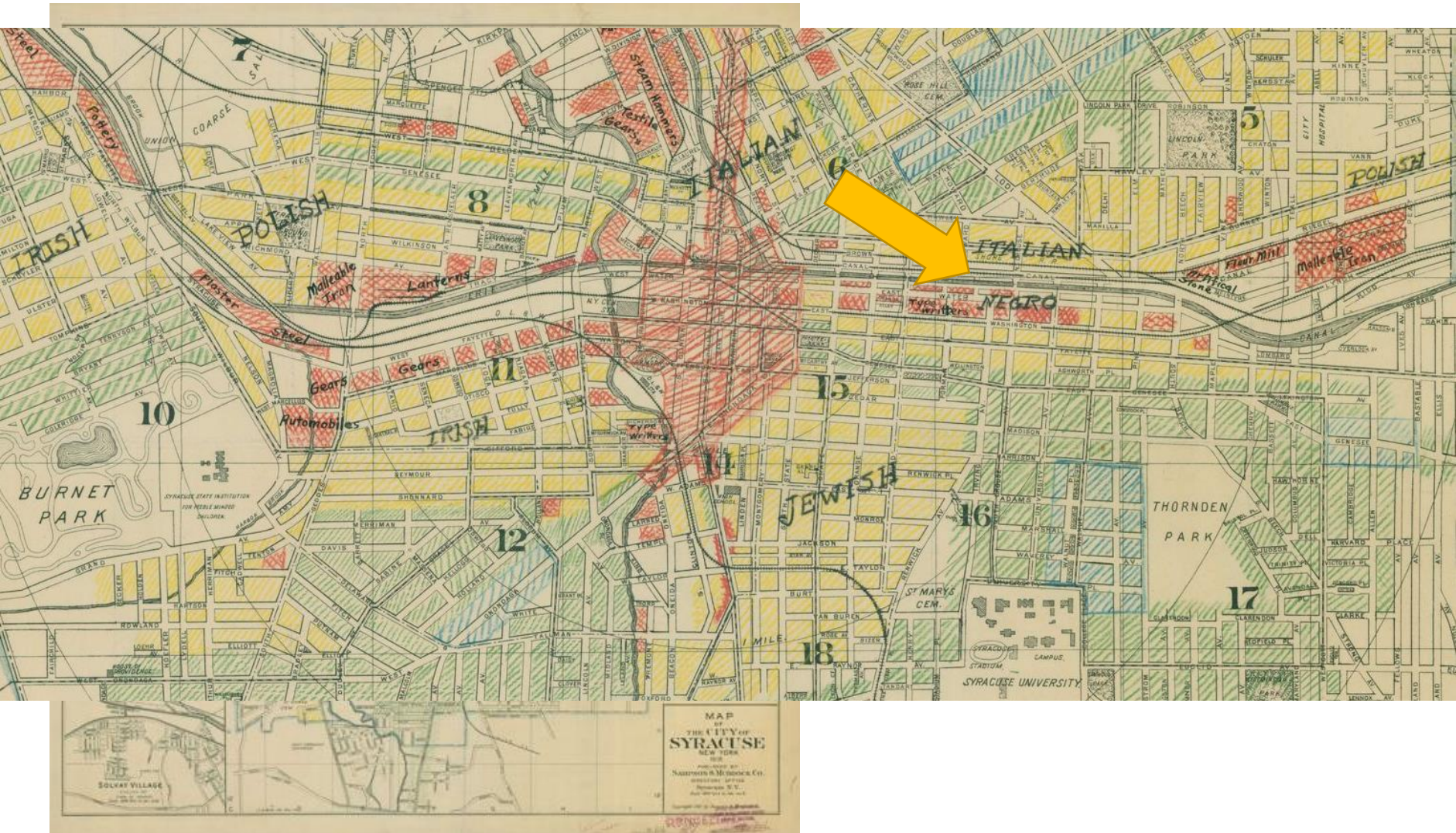
1920s



Syracuse, New York

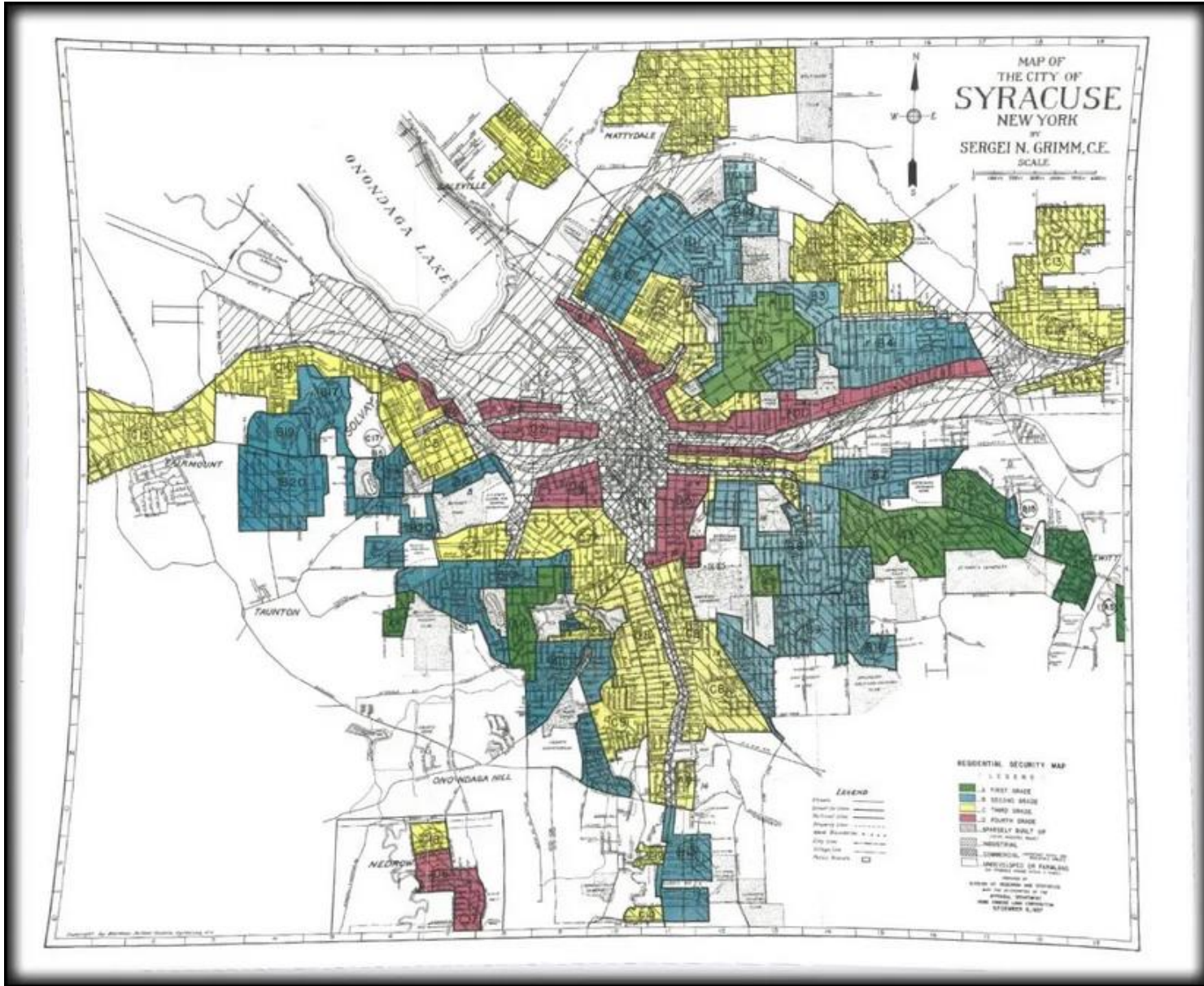
Decapitalization

1918



Source: National Archives and Records Administration, NAID: 137929742

<https://catalog.archives.gov/id/137929742>



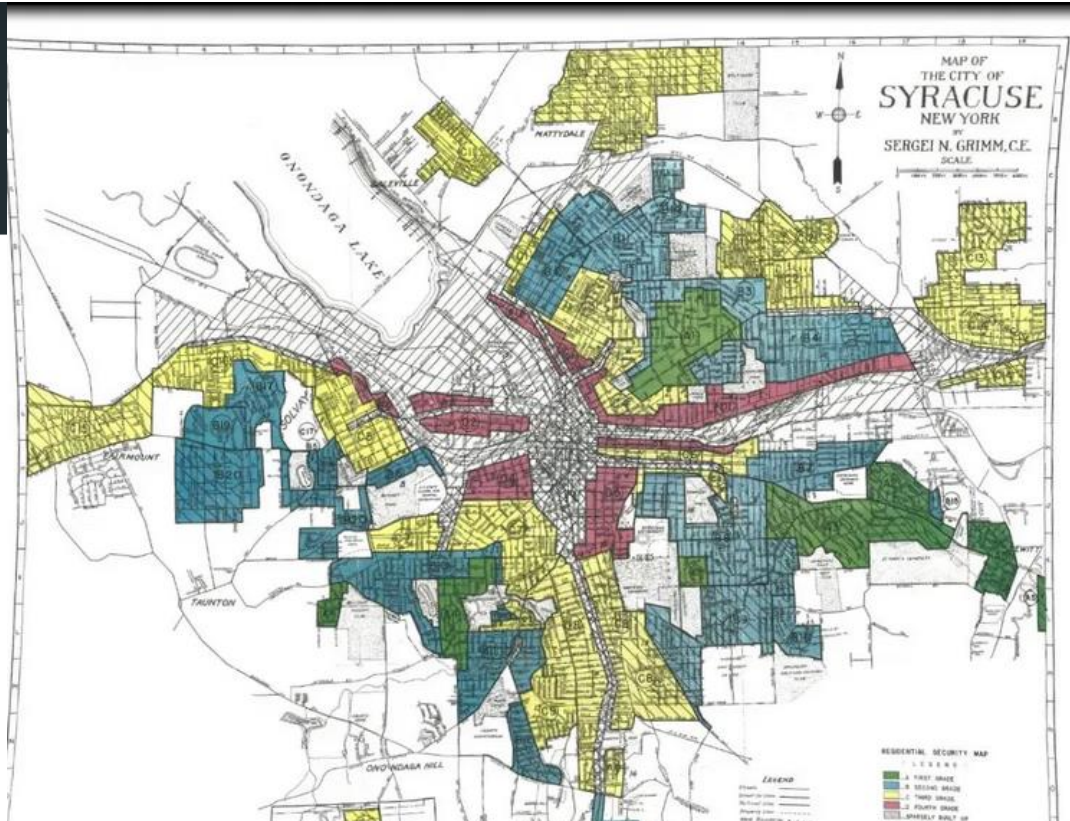
Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC)

D2
Area D3
D4

Negro Section

MAP
SCAN

SELECTIONS
FULL



8. DESCRIPTION AND CHARACTERISTICS OF AREA

A colored slum section - occupied by the the lowest type of colored race. Low flat land - no favorable influences - no sales for years probably the oldest area in city - dwellings in deplorable state. Here are located the L.C.Smith Typewriter Corp, Continental Can and others.

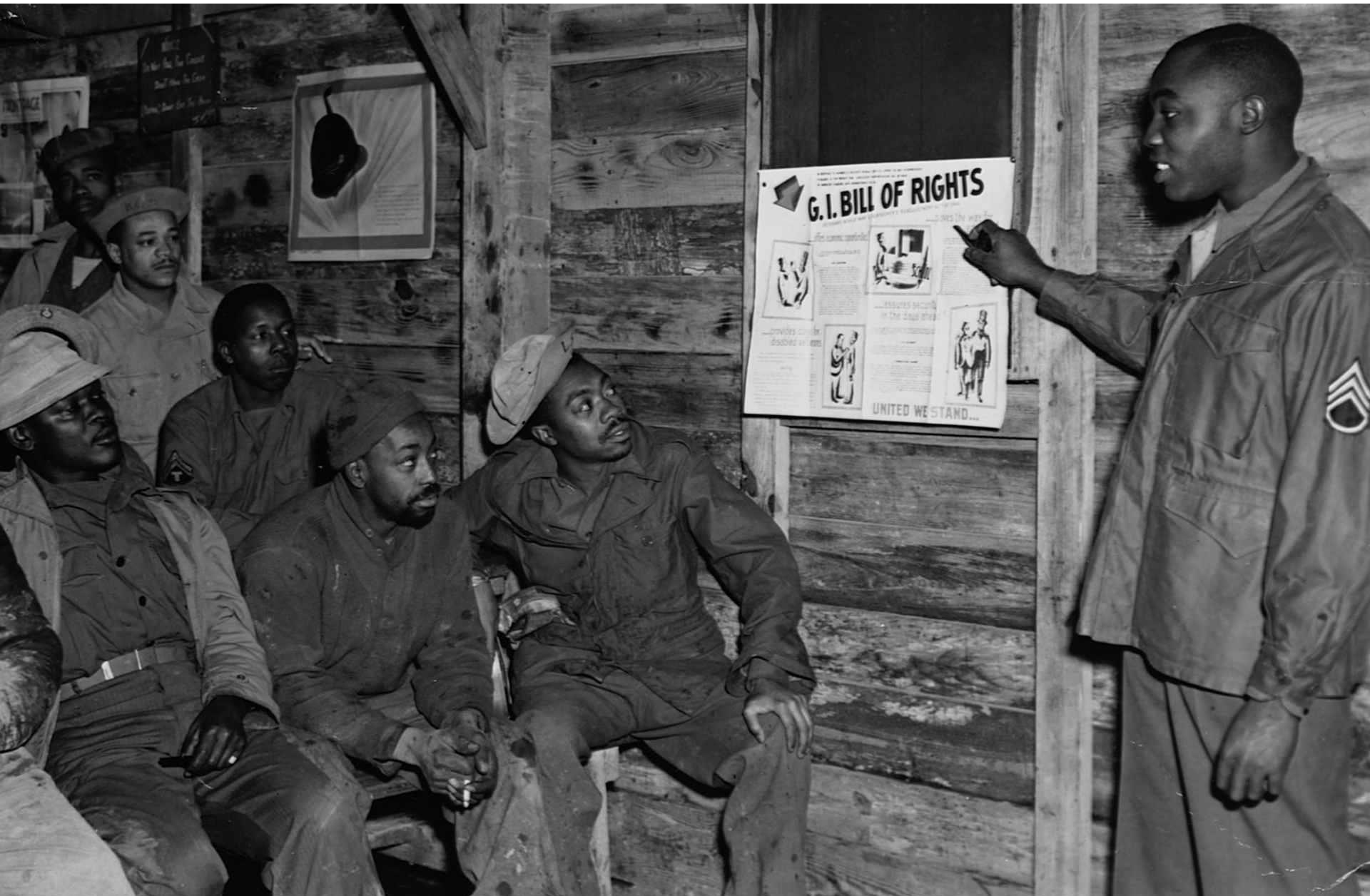
1. POPULATION

- e. Shifting or Infiltration: Same
- c. Foreign Families: 5 % Nationalities: Mixed Spanish
- d. Negro: 95 %
- b. Class and Occupation: Domestic and laborers





“Equality is the heart and essence of democracy, freedom, and justice, equality of opportunity in industry, in labor unions, schools and colleges, government, politics, and before the law. There must be no dual standards of justice, no dual rights, privileges, duties, or responsibilities of citizenship.” –A. Phillip Randolph





lot No. 4. X

This Property is sold with the following covenants running with the land.

I. That the same shall never be occupied by a saloon or colored person.

2. That no building shall be placed within less than 20 feet from the front line of said lot.

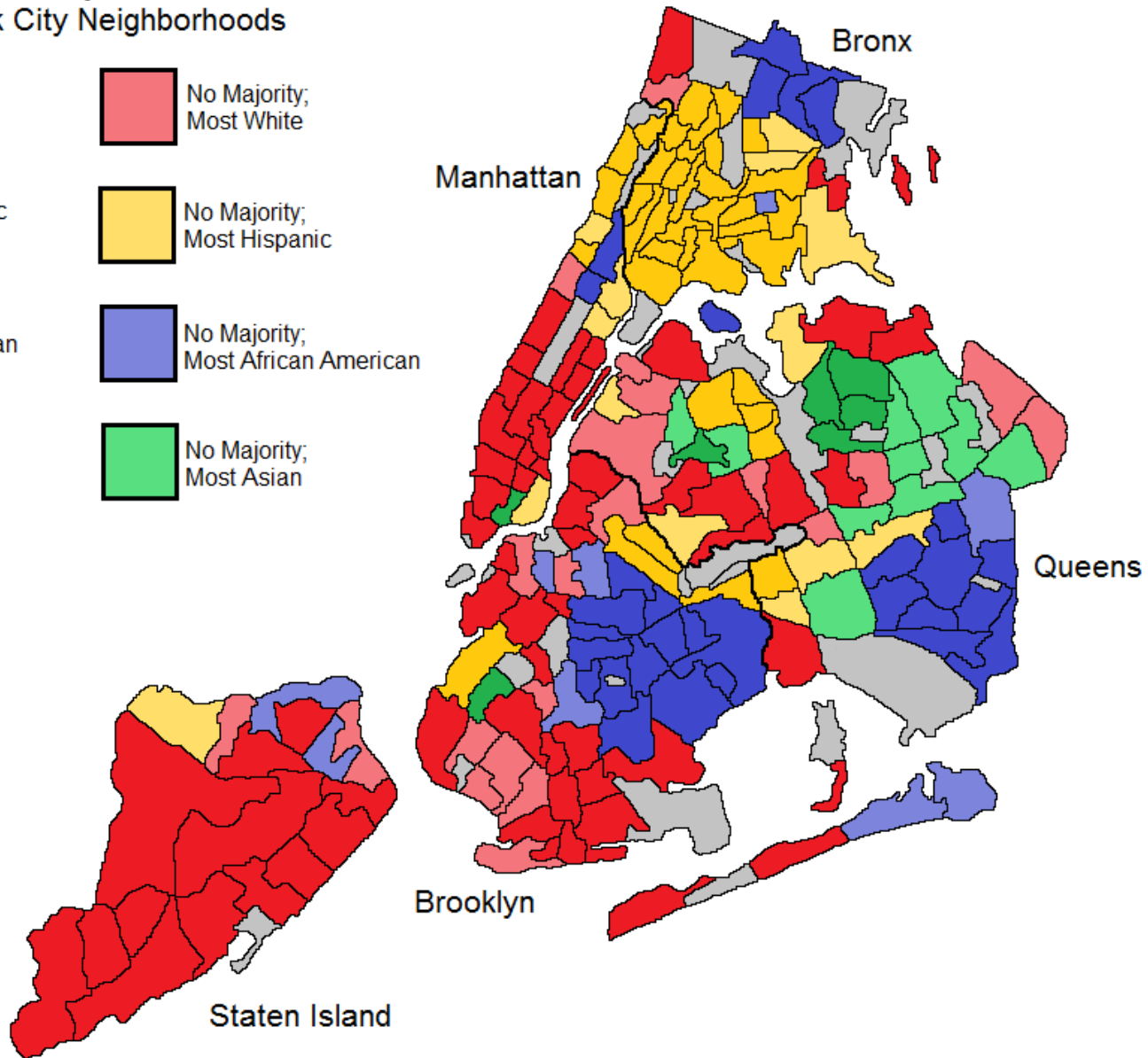
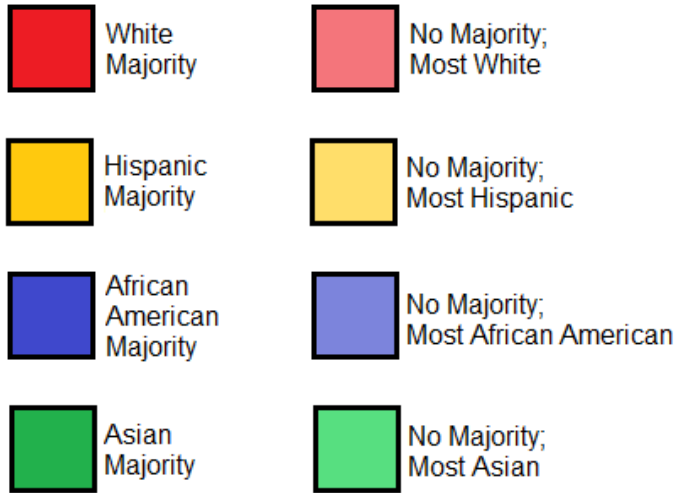
3. That no building shall be erected on said land of less than 3 rooms, with standard weather boarding and painted.

“Equality in the enjoyment of property rights was regarded by the framers of that [Fourteenth] Amendment as an essential pre-condition to the realization of other basic civil rights and liberties which the Amendment was intended to guarantee” –*Shelley v. Kraemer* (1948)

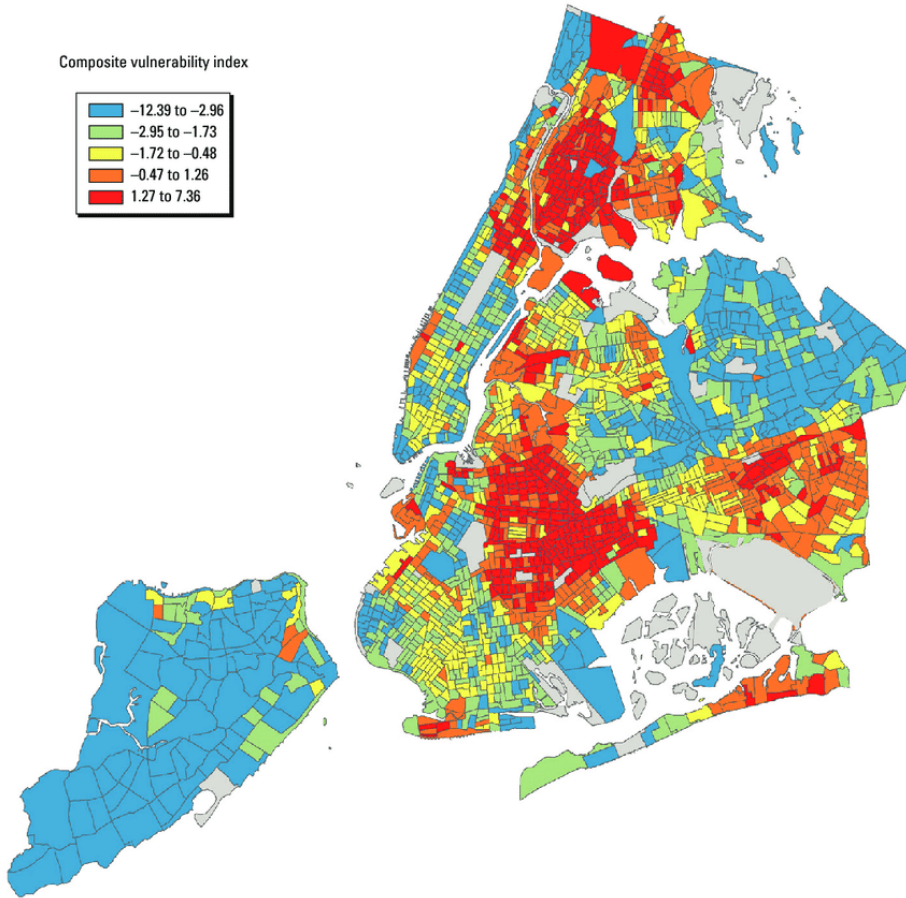




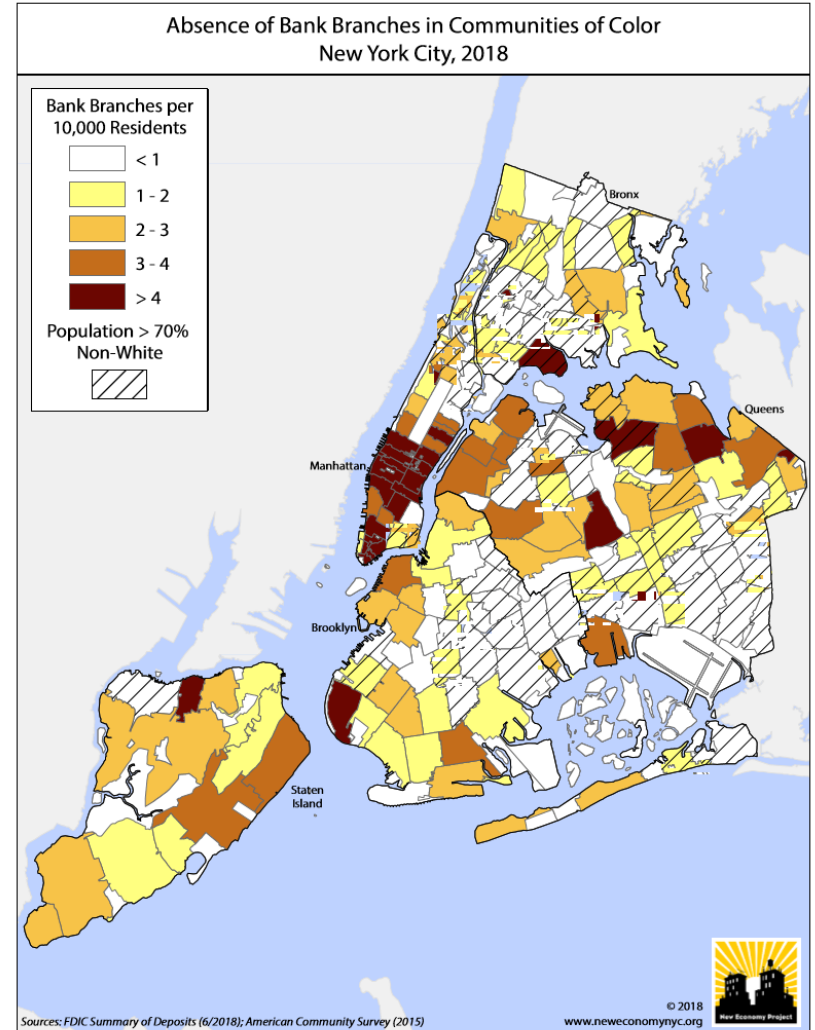
Race and Ethnicity in New York City Neighborhoods

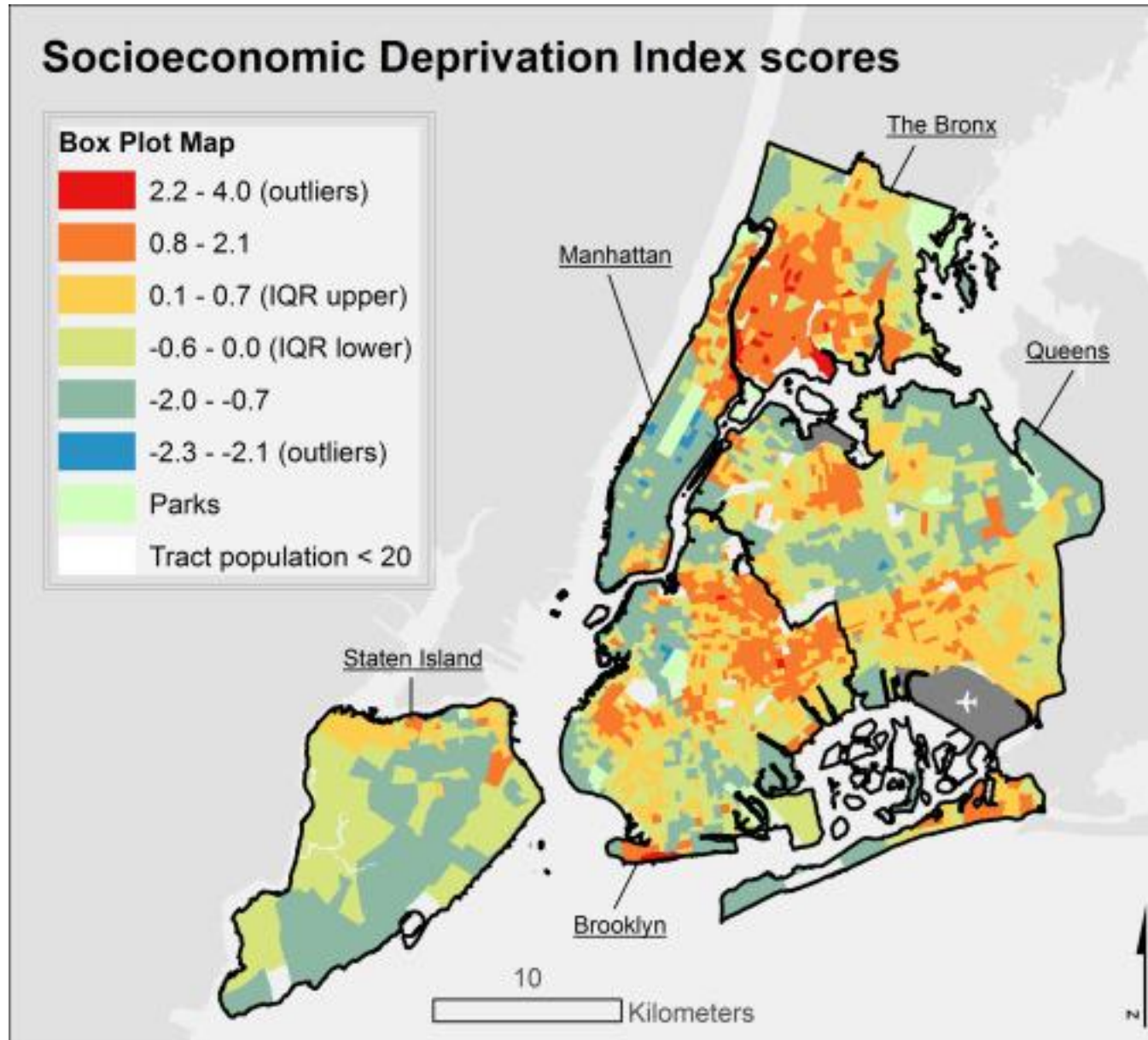


Interlocking Disadvantage



Present Day





Interlocking Disadvantage

Present Day

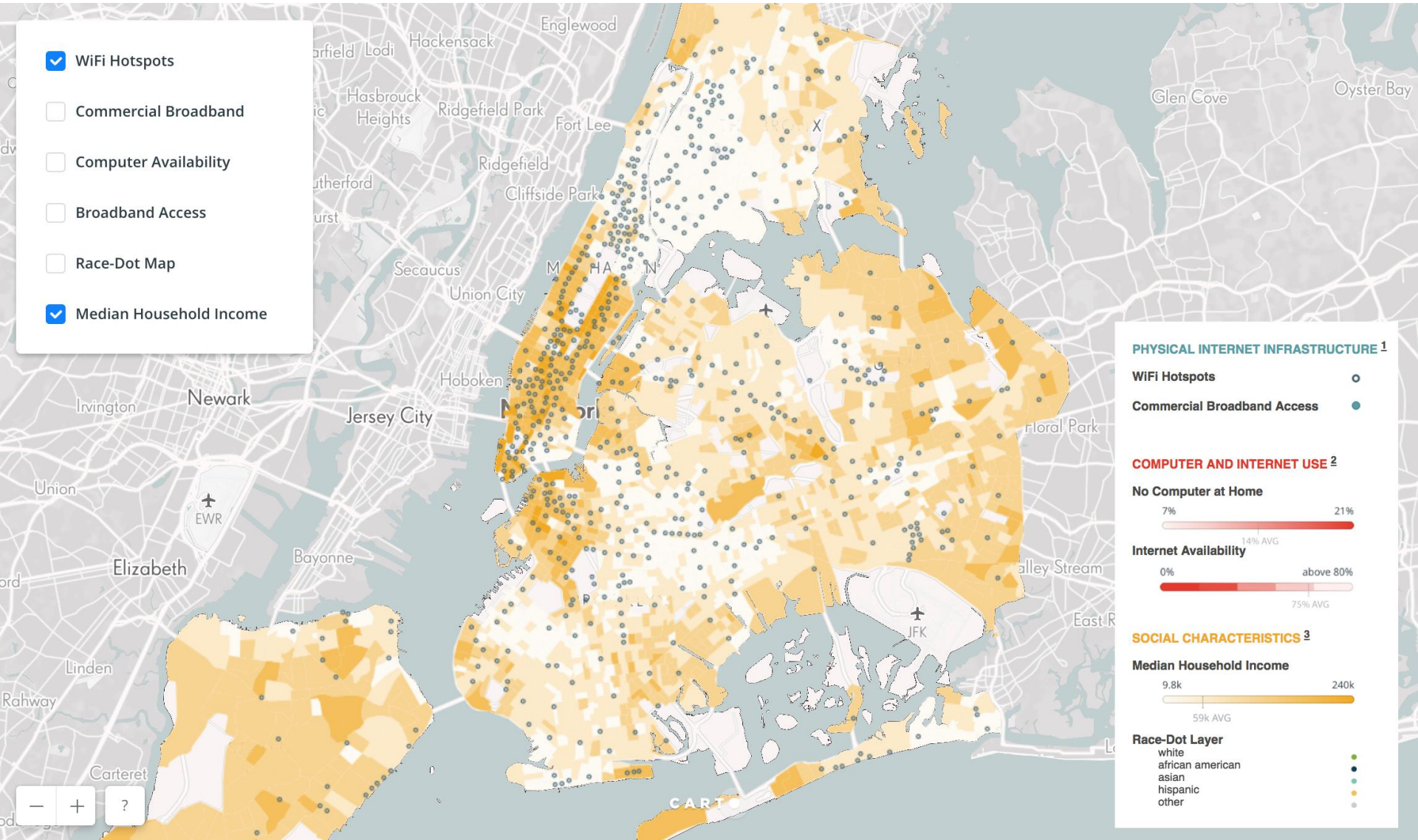
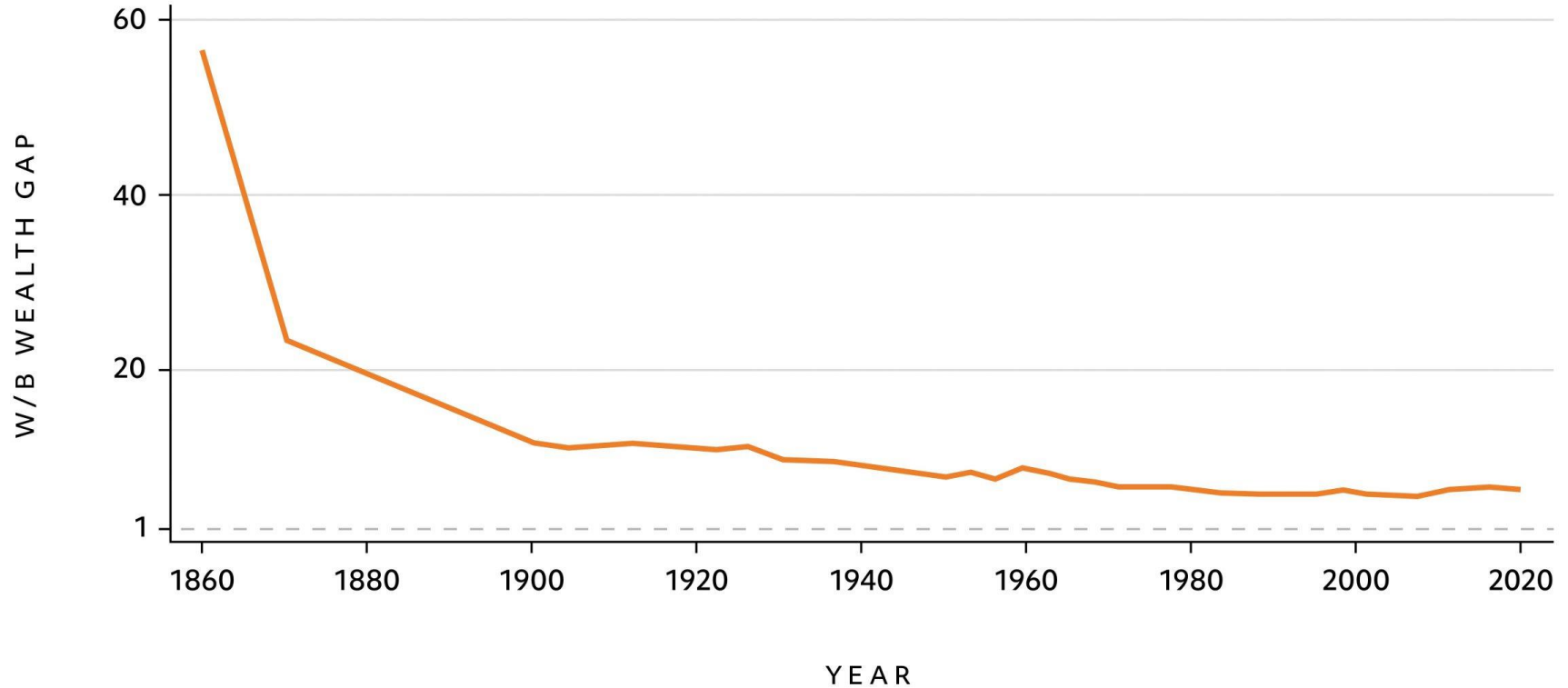


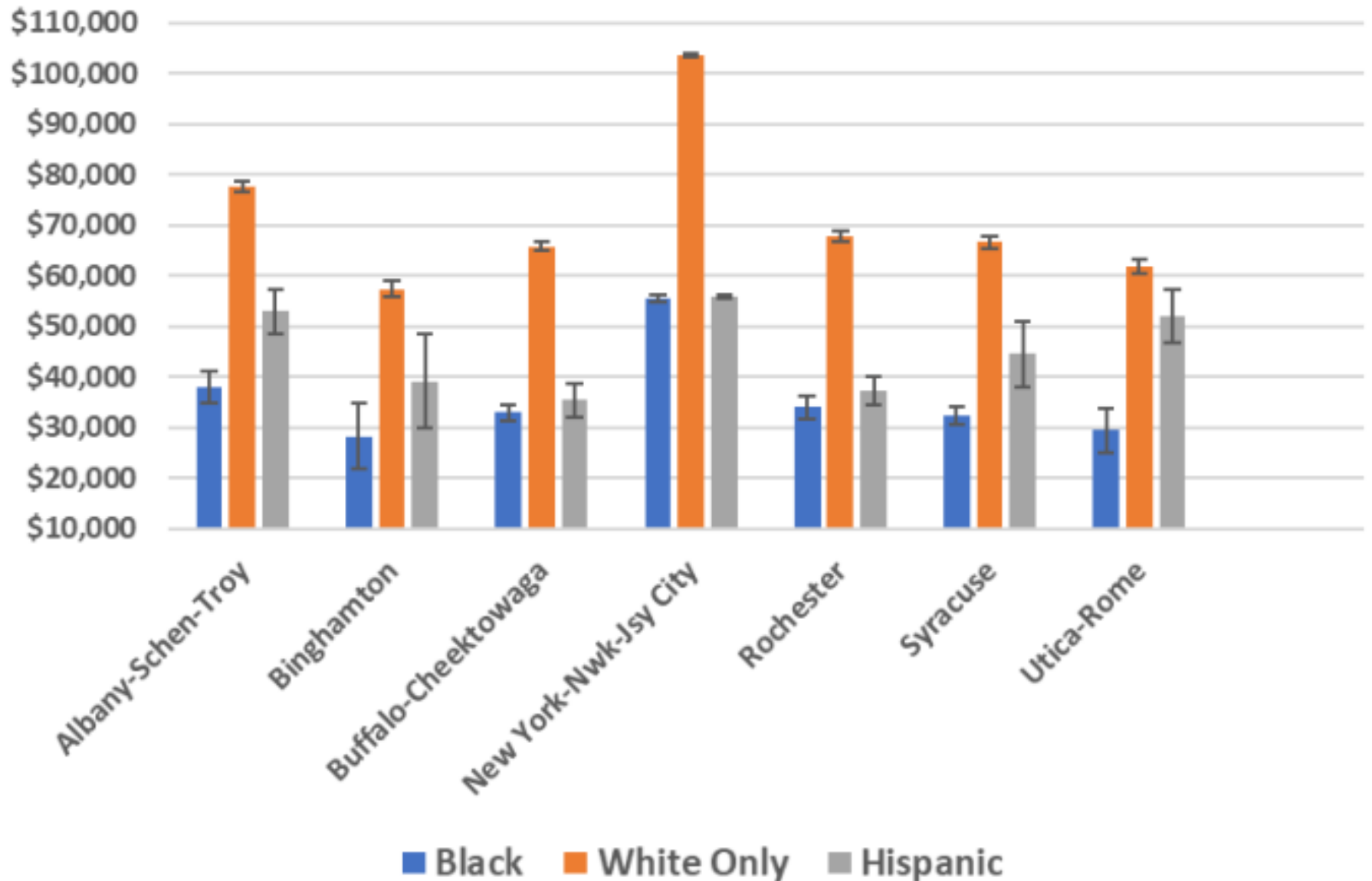
FIGURE 1

White-Black Per Capita Wealth Ratio: 1860-2020



Median Household Income - 2020

New York Metro Areas



Looking into the Future



“when it comes to wealth, the racial gap has largely remained unchanged since such data began to be systematically collected.” --Grieve Chelwa, Darrick Hamilton, & Avi Green, “ Identity Group Stratification, Political Economy & Inclusive Economic Rights,” *Daedalus* 152.1 (2023): 156.