

Roles for Redlining Improvisation

African American Homeowner

You are an African American homeowner. You live in a segregated neighborhood in Portland called Boise. Most of the people who live in your neighborhood are also African American. Most of the businesses are owned by African Americans. You like your neighbors a lot. You like going to Smitty's Ice Cream Shop with your family and getting your hair cut at the Bogle Barbershop. You like your house, but you want to move so you can be closer to your job. You want to sell your house and buy a new one.

White Homeowner

You are a white homeowner. You live in a segregated neighborhood. All of your neighbors are white. All of the businesses in your neighborhood are owned by white people. An African American family wants to move into the house on your block that is for sale. Some of your neighbors want to stop them. Your neighbors tell you they are worried their houses will be worth less money if African American people live in the neighborhood.

White Real Estate Agent

You are a real estate agent—someone whose job it is to sell houses. You are selling a house in a segregated neighborhood where only white people live. An African American family asks you to show them the house because they might want to buy it. You know that the white community will be angry if you sell a house to an African American family. You know you might get in trouble at your job. You could even lose your job if you sell to African Americans outside the red line. The other real estate agents and you all promised not to sell houses to African Americans in white neighborhoods.

White Banker

You are a white banker. Your bank makes loans to help people buy houses. Your boss has told you that you are not allowed to loan money to African Americans who want to buy a house. He said you absolutely cannot loan money to black people who want to buy in a white neighborhood. Your boss gave you a map with a red line drawn around the neighborhoods where African Americans can live.

The bankers all agreed to pretend that the loans African American people tried to get were not for enough money. You are supposed to say that the loan is too small when African Americans ask for a loan. That way you won't get in trouble for being racist, but you won't have to give a loan to African Americans. Even if they want to buy a house in a segregated black neighborhood, you are not supposed to loan any money to African Americans.

White Mayor

You were elected by the people of Portland to be their mayor. Some African Americans are trying to buy houses in neighborhoods that are all white. The white people are asking you to stop them. The African Americans are asking you to help them get houses. Some of the town's bankers and real estate agents have asked you to keep things just the way they are.

African American Renter

You are a young African American. You have been saving up your money to buy a house for you and your family. You are ready to buy a house, but you need a loan from a bank. The house you want to buy is near where you live now. The house is in a segregated black neighborhood called Woodlawn. You like living in that neighborhood because all your friends are there and you like to feel safe and comfortable. You try to get a loan for your house, but no bank will give you one. You have heard about a company called Lincoln Loan that might make a loan to you. You are worried that Lincoln Loan is not fair and honest because you have heard about other people who got cheated by them.