**6HNPBAWWealthPart2 Transcript**

[blues music]

- Milwaukee Resident: People here are suffering now. What do you wanna do about it now? What are you gonna do about it now? How many homes do you have available now for us?

- Nathan Denzin: Bulldozers rolled into Milwaukee in the 1960s, leveling Black neighborhoods in the name of urban renewal. [bulldozers roaring] The projects often razed successful Black neighborhoods like Bronzeville in downtown Milwaukee.

- Well, you had homes with families and with kids, and we were all just playing around.

- Nathan: Theresa Garrison has lived in the Bronzeville community for 70 years.

- Theresa: So I'd say it was family-oriented and everybody knew everybody.

- Nathan: Bronzeville enjoyed a flourishing business district in the early 1960s, from banks to movie theaters to grocery stores.

- Theresa: It was just a booming shopping center.

- Nathan: But in the mid 1960s, the federal government started giving grants for cities to update infrastructure. The goal of urban renewal was to construct new housing and modern interstates. Those projects often destroyed Black neighborhoods in the process.

- Narrator: Fred Durra and his family have lived in this house for eight years, but they live in the K3 urban renewal area and they have to move now. There are 13 of them, and they are Black and poor, so they won't be able to find a decent home on their own.

- As far as urban renewal, I'll just say it was urban tragedies.

- Nathan: In just eight years between 1960 and 1968, more than 7,500 homes and businesses were demolished in Milwaukee. Interstate 43 was the largest and most visible urban renewal project in Milwaukee and was built directly through Bronzeville.

- The addition of I-43 decimated the neighborhood.

- Friendships that were very close to having a family connection were disrupted and destroyed, and a lot of families never recovered.

- Nathan: Elmer Moore, Jr. and Ranell Washington play critical roles in the Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority.

- What does that do to everyone else's sense of security? I wouldn't be able to sleep that night, thinking, "What are they gonna do to my home next?"

- Ranell: Everybody deserves to have a house.

- Theresa: When they start tearing a community apart, there was nothing to do. You didn't have anything.

- Nathan: The Black community was now facing three forms of discrimination at once. Restrictive covenants prohibited them from living in certain areas, redlining prevented them from getting mortgages, and urban renewal destroyed their neighborhoods.

- Black households that were displaced by highways and urban renewal had limited housing options in the city because of discrimination and exclusionary zoning in the suburbs.

- Nathan: Kurt Paulsen is a historian of urban planning at UW-Madison, who says decades of discrimination built to massive protest.

- No surprise that you get significant political pushback and rebellion amongst African Americans in disinvested neighborhoods.

- We tend to think about the civil rights movement, like the institution of slavery, as something that is uniquely southern, and it was not.

- Nathan: Dr. Christy Clark-Pujara, a UW-Madison history professor, also works with the Madison organization Nehemiah. She's an instructor in its "Justified Anger: Black History for a New Day" course. The nine-week course teaches the community about race, history, and justice.

- You can just look at the civil rights struggle for open housing, for instance, in Milwaukee.

- Nathan: The pushback in Milwaukee started in the 1960s when Vel Phillips was elected to the city council. Phillips was both the first woman and the first Black person elected to a city office. She led the charge to desegregate Milwaukee's housing.

- These cats are just too dumb, just too dumb to know when they have something going for 'em. It's bad enough...

- Kurt: And they argued in favor of reinvestment in Black neighborhoods, but also what we today would call fair housing or open housing.

- Nathan: Fair housing is the idea that discrimination of any kind in the sale or rental of housing should be prohibited. When Phillips first introduced her fair housing ordinance in 1962, the rest of the council overwhelmingly rejected it.

- It was one of the first proposed in the country and it went down to defeat 18 to 1. Only Vel Phillips voted for it.

- Y'all have done this #### for over 200 years, telling us what felt good for us.

- Nathan: Over the next four years, the ordinance was shot down four more times, each time by the 18 to 1 margin. By the summer of 1967, Milwaukee reached its boiling point. A group of young Black activists decided to rally their community around a common goal. Their mindset:

- We are going to march and demand that the local government, the city of Milwaukee, passes a fair housing ordinance that has some teeth to it.

- Nathan: Reggie Jackson is a community leader in Milwaukee.

- Reggie: So they marched for 200 consecutive days. The first two days they marched, they were met crossing this bridge in Milwaukee called the 16th Street Viaduct, which separates the north side from the south side. They were met by an angry crowd of thousands of white people, throwing bricks and bottles and bags of feces.

- Nathan: Despite the angry white crowds, protestors kept up the pressure.

- Anybody that knows anything about the weather in Milwaukee, marching in December, January, February when it's bitterly cold, snow, blizzards, all that stuff, ice storms, they continued to march.

- Nathan: Protests continued until March 1968. Less than a month later, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated in Memphis. As unrest grew after the murder of Dr. King, the federal government felt pressure to pass an open housing law.

- The federal government finally passed the Federal Fair Housing Act a week after Dr. King's assassination.

- But that's after 40 years of segregation. And a law prohibiting discrimination does not address the deep structure of segregation that was already built into the urban landscape.

- Nathan: As an expert on the deep and lasting scars of discrimination and forced segregation, Clark-Pujara says understanding that past is critical to working towards a better future.

- So now we're in a situation where things are very lopsided, but we can address them as a society if we choose to.

- Nathan: For Here & Now, I'm Nathan Denzin.