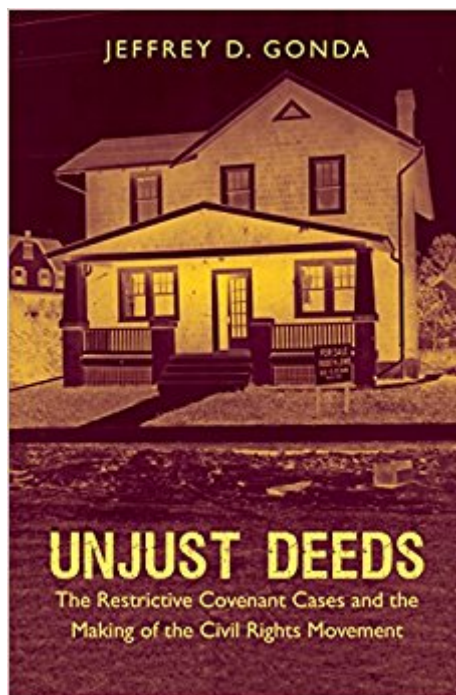




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# Unjust Deeds: The Restrictive Covenant Cases And The Making Of The Civil Rights Movement (Justice, Power, And Politics)



## Synopsis

In 1945, six African American families from St. Louis, Detroit, and Washington, D.C., began a desperate fight to keep their homes. Each of them had purchased a property that prohibited the occupancy of African Americans and other minority groups through the use of legal instruments called racial restrictive covenants--one of the most pervasive tools of residential segregation in the aftermath of World War II. Over the next three years, local activists and lawyers at the NAACP fought through the nation's courts to end the enforcement of these discriminatory contracts. *Unjust Deeds* explores the origins and complex legacies of their dramatic campaign, culminating in a landmark Supreme Court victory in *Shelley v. Kraemer* (1948). Restoring this story to its proper place in the history of the black freedom struggle, Jeffrey D. Gonda's groundbreaking study provides a critical vantage point to the simultaneously personal, local, and national dimensions of legal activism in the twentieth century and offers a new understanding of the evolving legal fight against Jim Crow in neighborhoods and courtrooms across America.

## Book Information

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An examination of the simultaneously personal, local, and national dimensions of legal activism in the twentieth century.--*Law & Social Inquiry* Raises fundamental philosophical questions that are sure to inspire conversation and debate.---*Missouri Historical Review* A highly readable, well argued, and ultimately convincing reappraisal of the significance of restrictive covenant cases in modern American history.--*Journal of Social History* Gonda's valuable contribution underscores the

formidable movement to counter housing discrimination, an area of research long neglected.--Journal of Southern HistoryWell written and argued, Unjust Deeds add important details to the story of the black freedom struggle.--Journal of American History

The time is more than ripe for a new look at restrictive covenant litigation, and Unjust Deeds is invaluable in this regard. With top-rate scholarship and original treatment, this is an important new work. It's definitely among the top books on legal civil rights history from the past decade.--Susan Carle, American University Washington College of LawA pathbreaking and definitive account of the struggle against racially restrictive covenants in the 1940s, Unjust Deeds reveals the complex processes of housing discrimination alongside the dynamic efforts to redraw the American map and redefine the American dream.Â Jeffrey Gonda compellingly shows how this block-by-block battle was crucial in establishing the litigation tactics, constitutional arguments, and collaborative activism that would come to define the legal assault on Jim Crow. Rooted in the Great Migration and the World War II-era urban housing shortage, Gonda's brilliant storytelling details how people who just wanted a safe place to live found the courage and commitment to take a heroic stand for equal rights. Unjust Deeds is legal, social, and political history at its best.--Daniel J. Sharfstein, Vanderbilt University Law School, author of The Invisible Line: A Secret History of Race in America.Unjust Deeds analyzes the legal history of Shelley v. Kraemer to show just how instrumental legal campaigns have been to the Black Freedom Struggle. With clear and precise writing, Jeffrey Gonda is making an essential contribution to civil rights scholarship.--Robert S. Smith, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

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