

A Right to Establish a Home examines the history behind a series of menacing protests that enveloped 4600 Columbus Avenue South, Minneapolis following its purchase in August 1931 by Arthur and Edith Lee. The young couple was African-American, and they chose to buy a house in what many then considered a “white neighborhood” of South Minneapolis. On one night, as many as 4,000 protestors gathered in the street outside the Lee house, hurling insults, garbage, and even human waste at the property in an effort to intimidate the family into leaving the neighborhood. Confident in their right to establish a home, the Lees ultimately stayed in the house for more than two years, though the neighborhood never fully accepted the family's presence.

The exhibition was curated by Assistant Professor Greg Donofrio (link to: <http://arch.design.umn.edu/directory/donofriog/>) and Laurel Fritz, MS Architecture, Heritage Conservation & Preservation Program (link to: <http://arch.design.umn.edu/programs/mshcp/>) Candidate, working with community collaborators Stearline Rucker and the Field-Regina-Northrop Neighborhood Group, and incorporating research by graduate and undergraduate architecture students.

Read More about Student Involvement and responses to the project:
<http://blog.lib.umn.edu/design/designatmn/2014/08/community-engaged-preservation.html>

The exhibition interprets the protests and responses in the broader context of race and housing in Minneapolis, racism in Minnesota, and the individuals and organizations that defended the Lees, including the NAACP and the distinguished attorney Lena Olive Smith. Additionally, through a series of oral history interview with current Field-Regina-Northrop neighborhood residents, the exhibition connects the events of 1931 with the longer, broader, continuum of events, people, and actions that reflect the history of a neighborhood striving for public safety, inclusiveness, cooperation, mutual respect, and social justice.

Viewers are encouraged to consider questions such as what it means to have the right to establish a home, what it means to be part of a neighborhood, and the ways that racism in Minnesota has changed since 1931.

A Right to Establish a Home is a project of the Goldstein Museum of Design (link to: <http://goldstein.design.umn.edu/>) and was supported by: The IAS Heritage Collaborative (link to: <http://ias.umn.edu/programs/collaboratives/heritage/>); Minnesota Historical Society/University of Minnesota Heritage Partnership; Imagine Fund, the McKnight Arts and Humanities Endowment; and Rapson Hall Exhibitions Fund with support from Judy Dayton.