

Arc of Justice

Arc of Justice, written by Kevin Boyle, won the National Book Award for nonfiction and was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize.

The book is, to quote one review, “a poignant biography, a tour-de-force of historical detective work, a gripping courtroom drama, and a powerful reflection on race relations in America. Better than any historian to date, Boyle captures the tensions of... a period that witnessed the rebirth of the Ku Klux Klan and the flowering of the Harlem Renaissance... the crystallization of racial segregation, both north and south, and the rise of the modern civil rights movement.”¹

For all its successes, the case, the story, the NAACP, and legendary defense lawyer Clarence Darrow were unable to turn back the housing segregation that was, at that very moment in history, being cemented into American society. “To this day, the nation’s cities remain deeply divided, black and white neighborhoods separated by enduring discriminatory practices, racial fears, and hatreds,” Boyle says, “and the casual acceptance by too many people that there is no problem to address.” By the time fair housing legislation was passed, it was too late.

Boyle adds that, “segregation had become so deeply entrenched in urban America it couldn’t be uprooted, no matter what the law said.”

How far have we come in the ensuing decades? Join us on April 23rd as we review this case with Kevin Boyle, review our own local history, and discuss related present and future trends.

¹ Thomas J. Sugrue, Bicentennial Class of 1940 Professor of History, University of Pennsylvania, author of the Bancroft Prize-winning, [Origins of the Urban Crisis](#)