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Spacious, well-kept West Adams Heights still had the complacent look of the days when most of Los Angeles' aristocracy lived there. But the look was deceiving. In the Los Angeles courtroom of Superior Judge Thurmond Clarke last week some 250 of West Adams' residents stood at swords' points.

Their story was as old as it was ugly. In 1938, Negroes, willing and able to pay \$15,000 and up for Heights property, had begun moving into the old colonial mansions. Many were movie folk—Actresses Louise Beavers, Hattie McDaniel, Ethel Waters, etc. They improved their holdings, kept their well-defined ways, quickly won more than tolerance from most of their white neighbors.

But some whites, refusing to be comforted, had drawn up a racial restriction covenant among themselves. For seven years they had tried to sell it to the other whites, but failed. Then they went to court.

For two hours, opposing counsel argued the constitutionality of eviction injunctions based on private agreements. When he had heard both sides out and considered the overtones, tall, well-groomed Judge Clarke decided to visit the disputed ground—popularly known as "Sugar Hill." As he rose to leave, spectators noticed a portrait of Lincoln hanging behind the bench. Breathed one burly Negro: "I hope that judge has eyes in the back of his head."

Apparently he had. Next morning, Janus-eyed Judge Clarke threw the case out of court. His reason: "It is time that members of the Negro race are accorded, without reservations or evasions, the full rights guaranteed them under the 14th Amendment to the Federal Constitution. Judges have been avoiding the real issue too long."

Said Hattie McDaniel, of West Adams Heights: "Words cannot express my appreciation."

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