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| Dorothy Michaels  7-9-2013 |

I did most of my growing up in New York City on the cusp of the Lower East Side. I lived on Eleventh Street between First and Second Avenues and St. Marks Place between Second and Third Avenues. I am aware New York City (NYC) is segregated and assumes everyone in the world knows the same. How else could I find the best bagel, the most delicious pastry or the best buy for pocketbooks?

According to the 2010 census report, NYC is ranked the third most segregated city in the United States (2010.census.gov). In the 2004 census, NYC ranked third in the country for its level of segregation between Blacks and Whites, second for Whites and Hispanics and first in Whites and Asians. Some of this segregation is rooted in historical practice and economic constraints rather than discrimination and prejudice (<http://www.Umich.edu>).

The Center for Social Inclusion describes NYC as one of the most ethnically and racially

diverse city in the world, and a major focal point for immigration today. Despite this recognition,

NYC maintains its status of having the most segregated patterns of residential division

throughout its history (Graham, 1974) Caucasians, African Americans, Hispanics, Jews, Chinese,

Italians, the wealthy and the poor all have their *place* in the “Big Apple.”

In 1624 the Dutch settled in New Amsterdam; in 1664 New Amsterdam was conquered by

The English who renamed it New York. During the 1840s the Irish experienced a potato famine,

The European revolution occurred, and lack of sufficient farm land in Germany led to a large

population of Irish and German immigration to NYC (Saywack, 2012).

The Irish came over with few possessions and were poorer than other immigrants. Due

to lack of sufficient funds, The Irish lived in the worst conditions. In the famous slums of five

points. Signs were posted in factory windows, NINA, (No Irish Need Apply). Blacks and The

Irish found themselves competing for jobs thus creating disparity between the groups (Saywack,

2012).

Unlike the Irish, the Germans arrived to the Americas with a modest amount of capital,

enabling them to move west and purchase land (Saywack, 2012). The Germans were considered

to be more American than the Irish.

After the civil war (1861-1865), Italians, Polish and Russian Jews began to arrive to

New York City. The Russian - Jewish people made up the majority of Russian immigrants in

NYC during this time. The Russian - Jewish population were more skilled than their counter-

parts: 60% worked in the garment industry. Despite the Russian - Jewish living in an extremely

congested environment, they had the lowest death rate of all ethnic groups (Saywack, 2012).

Southern Italians immigrated in large numbers; they were rural farmers, unskilled

urban laborers and most were illiterate. Labor bosses met the Italians at Ellis Island, giving them

homes and jobs in construction, tunneling and bridges. Little Italy began to form in the area of

Five Points; the living conditions were crowded and dirty. The Italians were placed in the same

class as the Russian- Jewish people. They were classified as classless, clannish, and of low

intelligence. Natural Americans feared contamination of lineage with second class blood

(Saywack, 2012).

Harlem is known for its African-American culture. In the 1910 census, Harlem’s

population consisted of 500,000 people, of which only 50,000 were only African American. The remaining population consisted of native whites and immigrants who were attracted to its fertile soil. Harlem was a focal point in the civil rights movement in the 1960s. Malcolm X and Reverend Adam Clayton Powell helped to push the movement by motivating the residents ([www.welcomnetoharlem.com/page/harlem\_history](http://www.welcomnetoharlem.com/page/harlem_history) , 2012).

After World War 11 the period termed “white flight” occurred. Many affluent

Whites left the city for the suburbs changing the sociocultural state of the city. White flight may have been caused by Federal Housing Association and Veterans Administrations ability to direct their loans towards the suburban outlines of New York City and provide public housing to the poor in the City. The shift enabled or forced the returning veterans from World War 11 and the middle class to evacuate their city homes for the suburban construction boom (Graham, 1974).

White Flight in the 1950s encouraged segregation. Levitt Homes were built and

the “American Dream” became a reality for the middle class whites. The Jim Crow laws created by the government funded water supplies and sewage drainage to racially exclusive neighborhoods and supported realtors who practiced racial discrimination against blacks. The civil rights movement ended this practice by the government in 1965. Increases in housing costs, redlining, steering, affordable housing and previous policy has helped create a more lasting effect of segregation (Richardson, 2008).

During the Great Depression, President Roosevelt passed a new law entitled the

Wagner Act. The Wagner Act gave unions the right to organize strikes and engage in collective bargaining. The Wagner Act also allowed Unions the right to exclude blacks and other non-white minorities from membership. This decreased the access many had for gainful employment, suggestion the pattern of racial segregation seen throughout the city (Meltzer, 1974). Jim Crow laws and the Wagner Act kept blacks and non-whites in slums close to their jobs.

Segregation seen today is due to tradition, economics, Jim Crow Laws, the Wagner Act, economical constraints and racism. Laws have since changed to recognize the minority figure and encourage community diversity by adding low cost housing throughout all communities. Providing funding for school and encouraging employers to employ a percentage of minorities in the workforce has also been a factor for change.

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