

How racism affects urbanization in america



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The urbanization of America and the history that ties to it has been examined and theorized by many. The influences of what created such a history is up for debate. When cities began to develop in America, it appeared to be a result of the limited resources that were available in rural areas.

People believed that if they moved from a rural area to an urban one, the potential for a better life and opportunity would be possible for their families. Migration from all areas of the world generated a wide range of characteristics in people and one of those differences, although there were many, was race. Cities were known as "Melting Pots." These people were representing a collection of cultures, beliefs, religions, and new ways of life. Race, although disguised in many ways, was the driving force in the reshaping and overall development of Urban America.

African Americans first migrated North and West right after Emancipation. Millions of them decided to move into cities in these regions, this "... played a highly influential role in redefining American culture and transforming the political landscape of the century." (357)¹ Due to the fact that African Americans and Immigrants migrated to the Americas with little to no money, there was high demand for low-income housing. With so many people flooding the cities for hopes of a better life, there was restricted space for people to live. The new urban American society developed to accommodate the large numbers of people moving in from the rural areas. This diverse population, bringing together different ethnic backgrounds and new ideas that were trying to exist as one, provided a deep necessity to make some big changes. The combinations of many cultures, languages, and religions forced

the development of an urban society to accommodate the needs of all.

Initially, the population in cities increased so quickly that people were losing jobs. One example would be the increase in agricultural efficiency, which caused many farmers to be unemployed. Farmers were forced to look to the city for employment. Another example would be how the immigrants came to the cities looking for employment in order to escape the poverty in their previous country, but were unaware of the challenges faced ahead when they arrived in America. These challenges consisted of malnutrition, poverty, unpleasant living conditions, and language barriers. When people migrated to America, they searched for jobs in factories because they required limited to no communication. These jobs were few and far between because of the overpopulation of immigrants during that time. When immigrants didn't have a source of income to rely on, they turned to what they knew best.

Immigrants began selling goods and cultural commodities just to make a living. Not having the opportunity to obtain a factory job was another example of racial discrimination. The city limited the immigrants to a small number of possible jobs. This is where people had to get creative. For example, places like Chinatown evolved because their goods only appealed to other Chinese immigrants, forcing them to reside in the same communities. Include more examples This trend seemed to carry on with others as well.

The combination of millions of immigrants migrating to the city with little to no money as well as searching for work led city officials to formulate a plan for low-income housing. City planning became a top priority, which helped the development of low-income housing. Tenements were built, which were

the beginnings of urbanization. Building the tenements also opened up a whole other set of challenges. Tenements were “divided into small apartments, as numerous as decency will admit.” (60)¹ These divided apartments tended to be split, and closet size rooms were not far off. These small apartments were rented to the poor. Tenants were required to pay their dues in advance in order to guarantee the lease. Families that had first priority were able to find the apartment in good condition. Due to no management and supervision of the tenements, they quickly became out of control. With numerous people living in one small area, poor sanitation, bad hygiene, grime and filth quickly became a problem. This led to disease and many times even death. This called for the cities to implement sanitation laws and getting reformers to fight for the rights of the people. This sanitary movement inspired urban novelists such as Upton Sinclair and social commentators such as Jacob Riis to acknowledge the reputation of filthy cities, New York being at the top. These sanitation laws attempted to create better health conditions, a clean environment, and an escape from poverty for immigrants. These reformers recognized the racial discrimination of putting immigrants in this living state.

Over the course of U. S. history, the role of race was continuously a part of the decision making process in almost every aspect of the creation of urbanization in America. People in communities were not willing to admit the significant role that our government played in the verdict of development; however, it clearly stood center stage. For several decades, city planners tramped through neighborhoods in the name of urban renewal. This was underwritten by federal funding from the 1949 Housing Act, as well as the

Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956. These Acts increased housing standards that, in turn, eliminated the slum areas and drastically improved living conditions. According to David Naguib Pellow and Lisa Sun-Hee Park, urban renewal was “devastating to many communities earning urban renewal the nicknames “Negro removal” and “Mexican removal.” (300)¹ African Americans had limited housing options at this time, even though they may have been willing to pay more than a white person for the same house. The real estate industry made a large effort to create all black suburbs, which ended up being highly overcrowded. The newly created suburban communities quickly turned into slum areas, which caused property values to decrease significantly. This trend continued for many years after. Realtors additionally contributed to this racial segregation by using scare tactics to guide prospective home buyers to stay clear of certain neighborhoods, all with their racial prejudices leading the fight. These are just a few examples of the many federal programs that displaced residents in the black communities.

There was a huge misconception linked to segregation based on race. This misconception was that African Americans simply couldn't afford to live in middle class neighborhoods and chose to live in areas where waste and filth was welcomed. According to Clifton Hood, communities with the highest racial and ethnic residents were located near commercial hazardous waste facilities. To be exact, “Three out of the five of the largest commercial hazardous waste landfills in the U. S. were located in predominantly Black or Hispanic communities.” (331)¹ Reader) Blacks and other minorities were placed in these undesirable living areas because of race and poverty issues.

The government soon began to create large subdivisions; however, strict conditions were enforced and only Whites were allowed to purchase the homes, giving African Americans limited options. African Americans were eventually forced to live in apartments due to the fact that the values of the homes purchased by the Whites nearly doubled, resulting in many African Americans being forced out because they couldn't afford the houses.

Realtors used this idea to their advantage, and obviously knew that African Americans wouldn't ever have enough money to afford them. The government once again, masked behind their racism, passed zoning ordinances that would exclude minorities. The ordinances prevented apartments from being built in suburbs that had existing single-family (white) homes, making it obvious to most that they wanted to make the suburb racially exclusive. This racial trend seemed to continue on for many years.

Behind racial discrimination lies the members of the federal government. While some of the members were behind the newly implemented laws, other members were not able to openly admit their desire to keep African Americans separate from whites. If one were to look back as early as the inception of the U. S. Census in 1790, the way Blacks were categorized was based on the percentage of their blood. This was a very cruel way to view a human being, no matter their race, or ethnic background. The American government started their misconstrued conception of race based on those African American categorizations. As time passed, and leadership evolved, America somehow was able to desegregate the buses, the restaurants, the schools, as well as other things, but their biggest challenge has always been

desegregating neighborhoods. Desegregating neighborhoods is essential in order for people to come together as a community. If people are segregated in the areas in which they live, the potential for unity is simply not there. To this day, neighborhoods are still failing to desegregate, but the main issue behind it is that people tend to stay in the areas in which they were born. People don't have the ambition to overcome adversity. According to Sharkey, "Urban neighborhoods became battlegrounds where African Americans, who sought to live wherever they chose and have equal status under the law and equal representation in government, faced fears and violent resistance." (14)⁴ All policies that were formulated were racially explicit and were prevalent at every level of government, federal, state and local.

In cities such as Chicago, African Americans were restricted to the "black belt" by law. The black belt was the area they were segregated to live in by the city officials. Being contained to one area of the city, African Americans still continued to live in places that suffered from poverty, crime, and political corruption. These neighborhoods were not created by coincidence, but were created by institutions that pressured realtors to ensure that neighborhoods would not be integrated. Having cities discriminate against people for the color of their skin, even after the Emancipation, caused outrage. No matter where minorities migrated to, they could never escape racial discrimination, whether it be from the Government, city members, or white supremacists. For example, the author who wrote *Uncivil War* talks about the Five New Orleans Street Battles. These battles addressed how the South ultimately was not at peace after the Civil War. Riots and fighting

occurred in the streets of New Orleans because many African Americans could not afford to leave and had to stay in the vicinity of where they had been freed. African Americans were contained to certain areas due to Jim Crow Laws and Black Codes. The riots that broke out were between white supremacists who still believed in the confederacy and ex union troops. This would determine the future of the southern society.

Even after the Civil War, racial discrimination seemed to still be apparent because everyone was still divided with his or her own thoughts and ideas. The southern states wanted no part of the way the government and union was being run, and were trying to find every way around assimilating to these new ideas of racial equality and created laws known as " Black Codes." Black codes clearly violated African Americans civil rights and were used to model how people, such as government officials and citizens, were against the ideas and were not willing to except equality. These codes had the potential to arrest African Americans who were homeless, had no job, were wondering the streets, and required them to work. This was again a prime example of how the South was racially discriminating against African Americans. They were finding ways around the Unions laws to still keep slavery alive.

A culmination of Black Codes, the segregating of houses, race riots, and poverty, it was apparent that no matter what African Americans did, they clearly couldn't escape racial discrimination. Therefore, African Americans tried everything they possibly could to beat the system of inequality. Life for African Americans remained extremely difficult (mentally and physically). Due to the competitive nature of America, and the need of money to succeed

<https://assignbuster.com/how-racism-affects-urbanization-in-america/>

in society, African Americans were willing to do whatever necessary to achieve social status and a bank account. For African Americans turned to a life of crime, doing, and selling anything they may need to support their family and achieve the “ American Dream”.

A social activist, Martin Luther King Jr., was responsible for a majority of the American Civil rights movement in the 1950's. Martin Luther King Jr. fought for the rights of African Americans and even lead the Montgomery bus boycott, as well as the March on Washington. The Montgomery Bus Boycott evolved after the arrest of Rosa Parks. Parks, after a very long day of work, refused to give up her seat to a white passenger. During this time in history, African Americans were forced to sit in the back of the bus and were supposed to give up their seat for a white passenger if the seats in the front ran out. Arresting Rosa Parks is a sign of racial discrimination in the south and the people had to fight for what is right. Choosing Martin Luther King Jr. as the protest leader, the people fought for Rosa Parks and created the Montgomery Bus Boycott. The boycott lasted 381 days, which put an economic stress on the mass transit system and local businesses. Martin Luther King Jr. was a target of white supremacists during the American Civil rights movement, which later lead to his assassination. The assassination of King confirms that the fight against racial discrimination was a struggle. Whites were willing to go that extra step just so they didn't have to adapt to a new way of life. In the south, people had the hardest time acknowledging African Americans as “ free” and equal according to the law. Another example of how African Americans fought back against racial discrimination was “ sit- ins”. In Greensboro, North Carolina on February 1st, 1960, four

black college students sat in the “ Whites Only” section at a restaurant.

When asked to leave, the students refused and decided to stay as a way to protest against racial discrimination in public places. They were denied service immediately and white supremacists would surround them....(need to finish with other ways people tried to fight back racial discrimination).

Paragraph about Los Angelos

Paragraph about Present Day.

What is this American Dream that individuals are searching for? For most it is typically represented buying a home, and having a job to provide for living needs. Most Americans have their home and job as their greatest asset. It provides the means for a family and everyday life.

There are really no characteristics that have not been discriminated against in our society. However, with many challenges still in place, race and opportunity, although slightly improved continues to remain unequal and sadly the gap grows.

Urban history has really been simply put, moving people to solve problems but perhaps instead of looking at it so simplistically individuals should evaluate the roots to it all in racism. Why do people only try to make move when there are people of color and poor? Why do individuals restrict those with language barriers and cultural differences? How has it become normal to take privilege over time for middle class whites when it is clear as day that it still continues in our lives? Who are these city planners? Has anyone ever looked at their racial bias in their decision-making? Is it even possible after

all of this progression and growth that we still in 2018 remain stuck in the racist theme of city planning. Our misconception of race masked behind our government and others has fueled the fire to many aspects of our world. City planners, the government, realtors and many others, have played a key role in creating structural barriers and ethnic issues that make racial inequalities in housing, jobs, and our everyday life still persistent today. In due time one can only hope our perceptions of people change all based on views of race.

[1]Steven H. Corey and Lisa Krissoff Boehm, *The American Urban Reader History and Theory* (Nueva York: Routledge, 2011). 71 [1]James K. Hogue, *Uncivil War: Five New Orleans Street Battles and the Rise and Fall of Radical Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2011).
3Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985). 4PATRICK SHARKEY, *UNEASY PEACE: The Great Crime Decline, the Renewal of City Life, and the next War on Violence* (S. l.: W W NORTON, 2019).