

# SPATIAL SEPARATION AS A WAY OF MAINTAINING HOUSING VALUE

## PART 1

### DOWNTOWN MARKETING & DEVELOPMENT

By Barry Cassidy



In recent weeks I have devoted a little more time to addressing issues relating to gentrification in Coatesville. It appeared to me to be where somehow many of the black people in Chester County ended up in one place.

There is a spatial separation of minorities in Chester County. Minorities are not evenly distributed throughout the county.

As plans for the new train station move forward, a potential wave of gentrification will result. I am going door to door in Coatesville, attempting to help people, because I wouldn't say I like the strategy of the current revitalization. Although I put my head down and tried to ignore some of the things that have been done to thwart my effort, I felt that I needed to gain a better understanding before I responded.

One thing I have found is that, in many cases, there are not traditional mortgages but instead notes that had been given to people to transfer the property. There are many tangled titles, and wild financing mechanisms used to finance homes in Coatesville. It isn't straightforward to make heads or tails of any situation. Because I am a government finance specialist, I tried to ferret my way through on existing knowledge. Still, some of the stuff was so out of the ordinary I had to secure a reference base as to racial/spatial segregation, in general, to understand what made these finance mechanisms necessary.

I went back to review some of the books I purchased for my London School of Economics MSc in Cities as recommended readings. It was a big list, and although I bought all the books, I did not read many of them because I cannot read that fast. One book that I did not read was titled *American Apartheid* by Massey and Denton from 1993 (I have the 10th printing, 2003). It is information I gleaned from that book that this column is based on.

The historical record of spatial separation has been practiced over the last century throughout American cities as a way of maintaining value in housing, and maybe because Chester County started with gentlemen farmers, all of the minorities were in the more urban areas like Coatesville and Phoenixville. When farms were preserved for open space, there was an area that concentrated development so the gentleman farmer could get his money when he wanted to sell, and in order to make Chester County remain to look the same as it always had by maintaining the views.

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## DOWNTOWN MARKETING & DEVELOPMENT

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The spatial separations of the races in the 19th century showed that blacks and whites lived side by side as they were scattered about cities like Philadelphia, Detroit, and Chicago. In the south another pattern developed with white people on the main streets and black people living in the allies behind those homes, but for purposes of the is column we will deal with racial spatial separation in the north. Although 80 percent of the black Americans living in the south in 1870 were exploited as sharecroppers, by 1970 80 percent of black Americans lived in urban areas.

In the 19th century, most of the discrimination was centered around job opportunities and not about housing. During this time, land use was not highly specialized, and socially distinctive neighborhoods were yet to emerge. Densities were low because the building technology had not yet developed to make them structurally sound. Because there was discrimination in job opportunities, there was less ability to garner enough dollars to afford proper housing. Block rations for black residences rarely exceeded 30 percent, and there were many harmonious mixed neighborhoods. Many of the professional blacks, includ-

ing physicians, lawyers, and clergy, relied on white support for their economic enterprises and political support.

The period between 1900 and 1940 saw rapid industrialization and the creation of many jobs which happened concurrently with a movement of blacks from the farms to the cities to enable them to take advantage of the newly created jobs. Up to those times, most goods produced were what would be considered today artisan type goods, produced in the home or in a small shop. Artisans produced garments, foodstuffs, and the like to serve the needs of the local community. After 1900 industrial labor needs were met by an influx of people from the south and from eastern Europe. Housing density was increased and clustered near the industrial facilities to provide a workforce.

While southern blacks migrated to fill some of the industrial positions, there were far more immigrants whose origin was from eastern Europe, and during boom times in Europe, when the immigration slowed, the slack was filled by blacks from the south. So black migration had a symbiotic relationship with the European economy.

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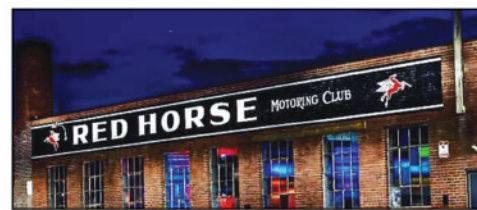
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There was another use for black migrants in the early industrial times, as they served as strikebreakers. They were transported by special trains directly to the factories by the capitalist factory owners with little understanding of their role in the labor dispute. As insect infestation and weather conditions changed, and the southern plantation owners moved from cotton to foodstuffs, resulting in a vast amount of workers who became jobless.

The size of the black population burgeoned in the urban centers during this time. Northern newspapers increasingly ran stories concerning black crime, vice and general uncouthness of the black community. Whites became alarmed, and public school integration was a victim as white parents increasing did not want their child associating with black youth. Prosperous professional blacks lost their white clientele.

The increasing black migration sparked race riots New York, Evansville Indiana, Springfield, Illinois, and Chicago, where individual blacks were taken from public transit and beaten,

outlying homes of blacks were ransacked or burned. Although the aggressors were white, most of the victims and those arrested for rioting were black.

The steady rise of black-white segregation continued from 1900 for approximately 60 years.

Part two of this column will deal with the increased efforts of white America to segregate themselves from the black population at large as they moved to the urban centers for work. I will describe methods and tactics which created situations all over America that are similar to those in Coatesville. I will explain how the financing mechanism or lack thereof has led to the disbandment and loss of generational wealth through finance mechanisms employed to promote segregation.

I look at this project in Coatesville as one of the most important things I will ever do in my life, and I am amused by the Micky Mouse tactics being used to attempt to thwart my effort.

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