

Racial Segregation in America's White Supremacist Society

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In Gary Pomerantz's recent book on Bob Cousy, "The Last Pass", he relates a story about the Boston Celtics All Star as to race relations. This was from 1950, when most of our nation was even more segregated than we (still) are now.

Cousy was a rookie that year and roomed with the team's only black player, Chuck Cooper. They became close friends, going to jazz clubs together and socializing with their wives on a regular basis. They had to go travel to play in areas of the country that had 'Jim Crow' laws to force segregation: 'White Only' and 'Colored Only' restaurant eating sections, bathrooms, water fountains and hotels. Cooper, a proud man, really got 'taken back' by such horrific and draconian laws. On one trip he just felt violated by such attacks on his manhood. Cousy, very troubled for his friend, told him that Germany, up until the war's end, had treated the Jews just as horrifically. Matter of fact, he said, being a Catholic he was angered by how some Southern right wing nuts trashed Catholic churches due to their hatred of what they referred to as 'Papists'. Cooper answered him that "When they look at those folks they cannot see if they are Jewish or Catholic or whatever. All they have to do is look at me and know!"

As a baby boomer this writer can assure you that I have always lived in a segregated, white supremacist society. It could be North, South, East or West, it is usually always the same thing: If one is of a darker complexion, then they are simply referred to as the *N Word* *Period!* All the crap about civil rights may be OK for some government jobs, but for the majority of Amerika, *N.s* will always be second class citizens. Whether it be for private sector employment, housing or getting into better schools, to name just a few examples, the *N.* gets the short end of the stick. One example resonates well with me. It was 1985 and I was employed at a local real estate office. The owner, a tall Irishman, once got arrested for running guns in Texas for shipment to the IRA in Belfast.

He *Knew*, from his experience with the British in Northern Ireland, that he himself was thought of as an *N.* One day he approached me to handle the rental of a home he owned in the area near the office. I answered the first call I got, from a doctor who had just been hired by the local hospital. When I showed the house to he and his wife, I noticed that he was originally from India. He and his wife loved the house and didn't even try to negotiate the rental charge. They wrote me a check for the deposit, and I told them to meet me tomorrow morning at 10 at the office to sign the contract etc. I was really happy the next morning when I arrived at the office. This was going to be a nice, hefty commission for me, the rental of a house. My boss saw me and called me over to him, right in front of the other sales people. "Phil, give the man back his check when he comes in. Tell him you are sorry but I

already rented the house.” I was shocked! Why, I asked? He rolled up his sleeve and said, as he slapped his hand across his wrist “Do you see the color of my wrist? Anything darker than that, you don’t rent. I don’t care myself, Phil, about things of that nature. It is just that I have to be careful as to not insult my neighbors by renting to someone colored.” I was aghast. But the guy is a doctor, I jibed back. I don’t get it! My boss got adamant and insisted I do what he asked. I exclaimed He’s a **** doctor! Do it yourself! I quit!!

Prejudice has always been a ‘Learned response’. Just look at a bunch of three year olds playing together. They care not for what background each of them come from. Not at all. I recall growing up in a 98% white neighborhood in Brooklyn. As with most of the neighborhoods in perhaps the whole country, this is how it was... and to some extent still is. The only black people I would see (though they were referred to in those days as ‘Colored’ or ‘Negro’) were either the cleaning ladies who a few of my neighbors hired, an apartment building janitor, or a delivery truck helper. As I have related in a previous column, my earliest experience of racial fear was when my mother took me with her around the corner to the grocery store. I must have been five years old, and she held my hand as we crossed the avenue. Coming in our direction was this black man, dressed in a suit. As we approached him I could feel her hand tightening on mine. After he passed by her hand loosened up.

In 1988 I was working as a marketing director for a Brooklyn based manufacturer. One evening I was on a flight to Phoenix, on this huge wide body plane. Many of us were able to stand around in a lounge area. I made conversation with this 40 something fellow from Israel. He was an engineer on his way to a conference. I asked him about his feelings on the Israeli- Palestinian conflict. His answer still reverberates in my memory bank as if it was yesterday. “Well”, he said, “Here is the way it is for many Israelis. The Palestinians are to us like your southern blacks are to you here. We see them breeding like rabbits, knee deep in poverty. If we do not do something about this problem, they will one day out populate us. As sorry I am to say this, but you asked for my truthful answer, is if we don’t push them into the sea, our culture will be doomed.... period!”

History has this terrible habit of always repeating itself... IF we never learn.

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