
Native Americans in the 21st Century and the Housing Issues They Faced

Housing stands as an arena in which rooted socio-economic, ethnic and political discriminations play a part. Sadly, prevalent most in America where housing for high-quality, suburban homes is competitive and real estate agencies earn a mint. One's housing is critical to several factors such as character development, educational opportunities, job prospects and lifestyle convenience. It determines exposure to crime, accessibility to certain jobs, schools and clean air. "When discrimination is institutionalized in one sphere, say housing, it becomes easier to commit acts of discrimination in other areas" (Aguirre 10). Therefore, it is crucial to tackle housing discrimination as this brand of discrimination can only engender more discrimination and racist housing policies. Prime minority groups that face housing discrimination in America because of race or ethnicity are Native Americans, African Americans and Hispanic/Latino Americans owing to systems already in place which promote bias in housing distributions.

Housing falls among man's key physiological and security needs according to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Housing fulfills the basic biological need for shelter as a protection from the elements and also satisfies the secondary need for security and stability. With the growing homeless statistics, one can understand how important it is to have a fixed, normal and adequate abode. "The usual scarcity of housing, jobs and other resources engenders competition and conflict" (Foner 302). In the ethnic housing bias, history and migration play a large part in current generational trends in particular residencies. Housing denotes social class, either adversely labeling and suppressing one group or privileging another.

Migration is a dynamic which influences ethnic distribution in American communities. Internal migration is provoked by job hunting, racial violence, social mobility and history. Urbanization and suburbanization are controlled by residential shifts such as workforce demands, flight from stereotyped populations, environmental factors and the rush to be better positioned to acquire resources. Movements such as white flight, the Californian gold rush, the Great Migration are some of the reasons why certain ethnic groups have such dense concentrations in one specific area and little presence in another. One cannot fail to examine the predisposition and gravitation of immigrants toward certain areas.

In America, in view of the arrival of immigrants and the prejudice against them are other dynamics that put more strain to procure housing; as a result, they must bear with substandard, segregated housing. Immigrant groups usually are alienated from the American public by homogenous housing systems or colonies. In many districts, one particular immigrant or ethnic

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group stands out as the dominant one. Apart from the natural inclination to reside among one's own race – there are circumstances such as socio economic status that work as deciding factors in neighborhood placement. Uniformity in housing, although it may foster more bonding among group members, facilitates the targeting of ethnic groups by policy makers. Native Americans have been the earliest people to face housing discrimination on the basis of their ethnic identity.

Vices such as greed and materialism are some principal motivators of the White man's conquest of Native American lands, as evidenced in his capture of Amerindian lands and passed reservation laws. "In housing...Native Americans (are) confined to reservations" (Aguirre 102). The reservation system is another way by which fertile, arable Indians' lands are allotted to the Anglo-Saxons immigrants. In the early colonial period, the Native American Indians fought for these lands against the new European immigrants. In the end, immigrants overpower the Indians, coming to lodge in their lands. Native American chiefs were coerced into signing away ancestral lands for inferior ones. Indians soon adapt an attitude of resignation and retreatism in which they seclude themselves from the public. The next step was the institution of land-based statutes that would control the residential patterns of Indians.

Restrictive laws such as the Indian Removal Act (1830), Indian Appropriation Act (1851) and the Dawes Severalty Act (1887) are a few regulations which purposed to exclude Indians from mainstream American society and keep them confined at reservation bases. Millions of acres of arid, unproductive and unwanted lands are given to the Native Americans while the lands on which they lived were seized by Anglo-Americans. The Indian Appropriation Act (1851) is another piece of legislation which constituted the Indian removal project which demands that Indians move from rich lands to much poorer ones to favor Anglo-Americans. The Dawes Severalty Act of 1887 was an act aimed at providing "for the allotment of lands in severalty to Indians on the various reservations, and to extend the protection of the laws of the United States and the territories over the Indians" (Dawes Law). Hence the reservation becomes the primary housing unit for Native Americans and strips the Native American from sovereignty – in other words, it makes him bound to the U.S. Government instead of his tribe. The desert areas are not near developed or urbanized zones since the lands are "advantageous for agricultural and grazing purposes" (Dawes Law), as a result, educational institutions, health care facilities and food supplies are not readily available to Native Americans. Under the Dawes Severalty Act, Native American Indians are consigned to family-headed and tribally-owned terrains. On Indian Reservations, Native Americans are disenfranchised; they are not entitled to vote and were subject to much abuse. Even today, reservations remained sectioned off, apart from society. Indian reservations stand as poor, desolate areas given to alcoholism and violence. Indeed, the consequence of the reservation system put Native American in an irretrievably disadvantaged place since "the loss of their lands and resources undercut ...economic infrastructure; they were unable to derive a livelihood from stock raising, herding and

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agriculture” (Aguirre 132). While the reservation system keep Indians untainted from external influences, they could not persist in their nomadic life. The nomadic life allowed more movement since resources would be depleted after a certain period of residency.

In the 21st century, Native Americans continue to face discrimination with regard to housing. According to U.S. Census Bureau Statistics, “14 percent of Native Americans lived in crowded housing, 67 percent lived in houses without running water, 48 percent lived in houses without toilets and 32 percent had no means of transportation” (Aguirre 118). The deficiencies of these facilities attest to discriminatory practices in disallowing Native Americans equal opportunities for safe and standard homes. Even if Native Americans choose to migrate outside the reservation units, they still have to dwell in poor and undeveloped housing systems. The compound of these factors perpetuates the cycle of low-income jobs, inadequate education and criminal tendencies

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