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<div align="center">Ideological Evolution of Suburbia</div>

After a tiring day working in the urban bustle, many Americans are relieved to ignite their engine, fly onto multi-lane highways, and (hopefully) within minutes have dinner on their pristine, secluded patio. Such a mutual balance between action and peace has driven human society ever since the dawns of mankind. Although this harmony is clearly evident in everyday interactions of children and adults alike, the capsizing of society's geospatial layouts to the outskirts, in "suburbia," is perhaps the most *visual* transformation. The effects of suburbia resonate with all branches of society, from a child's school bus ride to one's daily planner on when he or she can do the morning jog. Quantitative facts only bolster these growing commonplaces further. According to the US Census Bureau, the proportion of Americans living in suburban areas, defined with a population density between 2,500 and 6,000 residents per square mile, has leapfrogged from 27% in 1950 to 52% in 2015. However, a closer examination of this data reveals that 72% of this growth occurred before 1965, and 23% occurred after 1990. It is therefore palpable that challenges against suburbia are fencing cul-de-sacs and tract houses, but some newborn force is eating away such roadblocks. The acceleration, fall and eventual rebirth of suburbia's expansion germinate from variations in the strengths of purity and solitude sentiments, inherent repercussions of racial, aesthetic and environmental challenges, and evolving American migratory demographics and ideologies.

There is no denying that suburbia never truly took off until the mid-20th century, but its origins can be traced back to the summer vacation house in the revolutionary period. Between 1740 and 1760, approximately 600,000 settlers from Europe migrated to America's thirteen colonies, many in search for religious secularity from the relatively scrupulous standards set by the Anglican church. Such development of spiritual freedom soon became geographical as well during the enactments of the Coercive Acts in 1763, driving increased hatred and violence in major American cities. While none of the acts were purely religious in nature, the notion of a free state across the Atlantic had already kicked off tenets of evangelicalism and freedom from governmental involvement. Since many great cities like Philadelphia and Boston were political centers back in the day, many wealthy merchants considered constructing a second, "vacation" house outside the cities. An example of such a phenomenon is William Allen's exodus from the political battleground of Philadelphia to the village of Northampton, approximately eighty miles to the north. His "Trout Hall," built in 1768, would serve as a sphere of seclusion from an increasingly chaotic urban world. While Allen's moves were replicated by many others, it is important to note that most summer cottage owners were wealthy merchants; this thus generated a status symbol that these rural mansions were reserved for the rich and famous, and infused a drive of many others to also own their own single-family house in the countryside. Unfortunately, given the price factor of such custom residences and the relative difficulty of transportation, the vacation house movement did not initially gain immense popularity among the masses. Nevertheless, this movement without a doubt infused the public with commonplaces about the wealth and purity associated outside the city.

After the revolutionary period, there was not much of an increased push outside cities until the mass migration of Irish and Scottish immigrants took place in New York and Boston

during the late nineteenth century. While major cities had handled steady growth in population until this point, a sudden increase in urban population began to put a strain on the aging infrastructure throughout the streets. As slums abutted ostentatious Victorian high-rises, and sewage spilled onto formerly pristine green-lands, initial settlers yearned for a way to avoid the newfound chaos in urban environments, and thus a renewed drive outside was dawning. Graeme Davison of Monash University, in his *Journal of Urban History*, argued that the "sheer pressure of population" (Davison 291) nonexistent in European cities became the true driving force of outward sprawl. He argued that for thousands of years, the home was regarded as the heaven of purity. If this purity was threatened by an increasingly corrupt city, then the countryside would more and more be seen as a place of moral refuge. In addition to the evident notions of evangelicalism and sanitarianism (cleanliness), one can also argue that many members of the middle to upper class possessed inherent discrimination. During the time period of Jim Crow laws, many evangelicals were coming under scrutiny for their explicit discrimination against recently freed African Americans. However, there was no denying that an inherent racism was being generated between the resident American generation and the immigrant Scotts-Irish generation. Innate psychology dictated that simply moving out was among the most effective method to satisfy their inherent desires and communal reputation among the entire community. "Geographic segregation," as it turned out, merely shifted the tiles of a city without fully replacing them. For example, in Manhattan, the movement of the middle class from Downtown to Midtown left what is now Wall Street the enclave for immigrants. Though simultaneously, many immigrants were coming from regions that were in severe drought or famine, events much harsher than a moderate rate of unsanitary enclaves in American cities. In this regard, such a collection of phenomena introduced the idea of geographical stratification to all recent

immigrants of major metropolises; towering Gothic (ornamented stone) structures abutted the many shanty towns of tenement buildings, and inherently infused a desire for all shanty residents to, at one point, live in the Gothic towers. Not all could afford to live outside the tenements, but definitely more could than the select few who set up summer cottages.

To connect with the increasingly emotional and visual view of the city with respect to its surroundings, the movement towards conservation at the turn of the twentieth century only bolstered the relative stance of purity and serenity outside crowded cities. Much credit can be given to President Theodore Roosevelt, whose conservation campaign jump-started the preservation of Rainer, Yellowstone, and Yosemite National Parks. In his journal, *Outdoor Pastimes of an American Hunter*, Roosevelt remarked that "our people should see to [nature] that it is preserved for their children and their children's children forever, with their majestic beauty all unarmed" (Roosevelt 23). Such a movement was also emotional, dating back to Henry David Thoreau's vacation journal *In the Maine Woods*, and effected in the booming of alpine vacation resorts from New Hampshire to California. Though most importantly, at a time when knowledge of America's natural wonders was lackluster, such publicity of landscapes through literature and politics ignited many Americans to not only vacation at Mouth Washington or Yosemite Canyon, but perhaps live there as well. While most nearby suburbs would in no fashion mirror such natural beauties, they would nonetheless possess many similar traits of nature and greenery outside one's patio. In fact, it turned out that in 1970, landscaping as a career would employ 18 times more people than in 1940. Landscaping infused a sense of serenity and purity evident in vacation resort towns; even though Yosemite could not run 3000 miles to Levittown, NY, owning shrubs and trees only became possible to the masses when Suburbia truly took off in the 1950s.

Most historians credit the first example of an affordable Suburbia to be Levittown, but John C. Nichols of Kansas City, Missouri was the first to truly develop the "assembly line" process of construction. His development of a large, planned community of 3,000 homes in a suburb five miles to the east, under the existent status quo of fully tailoring houses to people's desires, would require a mass increase in both human and physical resources, so Nichols designed a couple house models that appeared to the masses. Similar to an assembly line, each piece of one house would be reproduced thousands of times for each individual house. Through economies of scale, lower costs with increasing production, Nichols was able to lower the average house price per square foot by 34 percent! Unfortunately, his development was to be constructed during the Panic of 1917, among the worst economic downfalls in American history. Many who were willing to pay for a Nichols house were unable, especially since a Nichols house was still more expensive than an apartment.

In 1952, William Levitt of New York embarked on constructing a mega-community of ten thousand homes near Hampstead on Long Island. He dubbed this locale "Levittown" and adopted Nichols's assembly-line adaptation to residential construction. However, Levitt placed tough regulations to keep his community as pristine as possible, including lack of fencing, pools, or other overly flamboyant decorations. There is no denying that the kairotic moment of the 1950s' economic resurgence, coupled with the relative pristinity of the newly-constructed Cape Cod-style homes, caused the massive influx into the community. Very interestingly, the suburb was becoming an emblem of conformity; all had to abide by strict regulations on upkeep, but most agreed that this order signified wealth, starkly contrasting with the poorly maintained, famine-infested inner cities. In essence, the residents of Levittown and similar suburbs craved

elements of white Greek mansions they have so often dreamed of living in, thus drawing common elements into what would become a uniform, Utopian-esque society.

However, the excessive uniformity of these new suburbs, resulting from both the lack of custom designs and the pooling of similar elements from commonplaces on the "ideal mansion," effected in backfire from city-dwellers and wealthy estate owners alike. In his 1956 publication, *The Crack in the Picture Window,* John Keats remarked the conformity of suburbs as a "homogeneous, postwar hell" (Keats 107) of rigid societal duties that constructed an environment of mediocracy. The very essence of a pure, natural setting was being destroyed by the construction of rectangular, cookie-cutter houses blocking off essentially any trace of organic landscapes. What was intended to be "park-land" as was viewed in the Rooseveltian conservation era, gave way to a collage of man-made prisms with little sense of truly living in the countryside. Small lots sizes, pioneered by Nichols and popularized by Levitt, not only made the suburb more urban aesthetically, but in some matters also made it less art-worthy than the cities themselves, with their diverse pallet of brick, mortar, and glass. To extend John Keats's analysis on Suburbia, one can also examine the lifestyles of its residents, which were almost as identical as the social boxes they were living in. The workday was stratified by the substantially increased commute times associated with suburban life. In addition, common-pooling of schools and big box stores resulted in a template of a suburban day relatable to all of Suburbia's residents. In effect, a mental stigma of the suburb was sprouting on outsiders: the suburb was the emblem of oversimplification and bane of the creativity and diversity of the organic land that made them even consider moving outside the city in the first place!

A decrease in the suburb's appeal in the 1960s was the result of not only the environment's aesthetic impairment, but also the very planning techniques of such suburbs. Most

would blame Eisenhower's Interstate Highway System as the culprit of a 30 percent increase in Long Island ozone levels within 20 years, but the very spatial layout of the communities themselves had a near equal effect. Alluding to commonplaces on seclusion from the world's action, many developments were designed with *culdesacs*, dead-end streets lined by numerous properties in a circle. A flaw with such a design was that it significantly increased the driving distance between two points as, geometrically speaking, the shortest path was no longer close to a straight line. In addition, the trend towards big box stores and strip malls, intended to satisfy an increasing desire to minimize shopping trips, meant that the nearest grocery outlet would be considerably more distant. All this resulted in the smog associated with the suburban communities encompassing major American cities. Not only that, but the noise pollution of gasoline engines and tires rolling on nearby highways had an equally baneful effect on the suburb's appeal to urban residents. Earlier on, many escaped the city for peace and *quiet* in the countryside, but road noise is *not* the definition of such serenity. It turned out that, in most cases, the people themselves were the culprit of spoiling the landscape paintings they perennially dreamed about being painted in, causing a drop of outwards migration from the traditionally grim cities.

Yet another effect on the road-heavy design of such communities was the decline of public transportation options for the less wealthy. There was no denying that Nichols and Levitt had enormous impacts on the number of Americans who could comfortably afford a single-family house, but it turned out that those in the old cities who were unable to afford a car, even if they *could* purchase a house, had a much lower propensity to relocate. Coincidentally, such a gap of purchasing power nearly corresponded with the income gap between White and Minority Americans, the former of which migrated in much greater numbers outside cities. In effect, the

geographic segregation dreamed of in the cities during the 1800s immigration of Scotts-Irish only became a true reality in the 1950s, when the majority of one ethnicity was able to relocate while the minorities, now African Americans and Hispanics, were not. It is also important to note that such a trend occurred in the midst of the civil rights movement, but unlike the landmark trial of Brown v. Board or the Montgomery bus boycotts, the suburb did not *explicitly* discriminate against minority races. Nevertheless, it turned out that even though the community of Levittown, among others, welcomed all races, especially to avoid racial charges during such a kairotic timeframe, the minority population only stood at 5 percent in 1960. A combination of an inability to relocate and the fear of relocating to such communities were likely contributions to such a statistic. Interestingly, the notion of a uniform Black or Hispanic community inflated drastically during the 1950s and 1960s, as many psychologically saw the *inner cities* as the safe-haven from a tyranny of the majority. In fact, one can say that the very germination of ethnic schools, stores, and churches was from the spatial segregation resulting from suburbia. It increasingly became clear that a racial stigma was being generated on a region by its outsiders, thus only inflating such an ideology that differing races could not get along when placed together. This caused a major decline in suburbia's growth after the 1960s, since many immigrants, who were still flooding into America's borders, felt more comfortable economically and psychologically residing in urban ethnic enclaves.

However, such a notion of geographic segregation began to collapse onto itself in the 1980s, when a new racial division – Asian Americans – began pouring into the US's IT and consulting companies. Hinduism, the majority religion of India, specifically values wealth as a measure of space, in that simply owning a physically larger home signified prestige. However, until very recently most Indians were unable or unwilling to relocate to the USA, specifically

stemming from a lack of technical education. Ironically, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's

development of the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), initially planned to develop the

republic's crumbling infrastructure, transformed such spiritual desires of space into mass

migrations to the USA, where both technical positions and spacious homes were more readily

and cheaply available. That the IIT-educated Indians were seeking white collar positions came as

a stark contrast to other immigration demographics who were primarily members of the working

class. In effect, it was the suburbs that most Indians settled in, as they could therefore

comfortably afford single family homes and private cars. In addition, increased interaction with

their suburban-residing coworkers rendered Suburbia as the choice of residence since they were

newcomers to any American environment, be it rural or urban. However, Indians possessed

another ideology, that one's workplace should be within a stone's throw. Many Indians were

accustomed to walking down their tenement and working in their local street shop, so

commuting daily to downtown, where a majority of jobs were still located, was a massive

departure. From this dogma germinated a growing belief that one's hometown need not be

separate from his or her workplace, especially considering the growing traffic pains on the

Interstates. The "edge city," or office and retail district outside a metropolitan region's core city,

took off from such a cause; while commute times had always been the bane of all Americans, the

relative desire of Indians to work near home was the true soil from which suburban office towers

grew from. Such edge cities like Metuchen, New Jersey are 65% populated by a Gujarati Indian

population, many residing in nearby Edison. Having a prominently non-White community

outside a city center in the USA was unfathomable only ten years prior, but such a phenomenon

no doubt has challenged Suburbia's view as the majority's haven. In effect, many newly

constructed houses can be spotted in suburbs all across the country, several of which house not

Whites, but a mosaic of Asians, African Americans, Hispanics, and people of all races and

religions, serving as a testament that the era of geographic segregation is approaching its

retirement.

Like any fundamental shift in society, there is no doubting that repercussions will

continually germinate from the very motives of suburban planning, which in turn fluctuate its

expansion. However, the notion of the suburb has undenyingly evolved in recent years as an

effect of inherent shifts in American demographics and the respective ideologies injected in by

immigrants. The suburb will perennially maintain its position as a safe-haven from the city,

especially considering that density is only becoming a greater issue in the coming years. America

is the land of freedom and opportunity, and the everlasting tenets of purity and solitude, at least

for a number of people, will trump the many negative connotations associated with the ever-

expanding suburbs.

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