

Segregation



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Introduction

- This chapter discusses segregation. In particular:
 - Racial segregation in America
 - Apartheid in South Africa
- Those systems of segregation have ended. However, it is useful to study them because:
 - Some tactics from those systems are used in other (lesser) forms of oppression
 - Sometimes it is easier to learn from extreme examples than from milder examples

1. Historical look at segregation

The “separate but equal” lie

- Segregationists often claimed that two races could live “separate but equal” lives
- Of course, the “equal” part of “separate but equal” was a lie:
 - Providing two sets of *equal* facilities was prohibitively expensive:
 - Public toilets, libraries, schools, drinking water fountains, restaurants, hotels, ...
 - Aside from the financial expense, there was also the waste of land
 - Neither the government nor businesses could afford it
 - In reality, inferior, and therefore *non-equal*, facilities were provided for black people
- Despite this, the “separate but equal” lie *sounded plausible* to naïve white people

Why segregation was important for oppression

■ Obvious reasons:

- Inferior facilities ensured oppressed people remained poorly educated and poor
- So they could continue to be exploited
- It reduced slack in the lives of oppressed people (See the *Slack* chapter earlier in this course)
- Without slack, it is difficult to bring about change

■ Less obvious reason:

- Recall from the *Bell Curve of Intolerance* part of this training course that most non-oppressed citizens form the “apathetic majority”
- Keeping this majority ignorant of the true horror of oppression ensured they remained apathetic
- This apathy arising from ignorance enabled the oppression to continue

Punishments for violating segregation

- There were severe punishments for white people who tried to end their own (or others') ignorance
- Examples:
 - From Chapter 28 of Nelson Mandela's autobiography
 - His wife, Winnie, spent 2 weeks in prison after taking part in a peaceful protest
 - While in prison, Winnie befriended 2 white prison wardens
 - After her release, these new friends visited her in the black township
 - They lost their jobs because of this
 - Donald Woods, was a journalist in South Africa
 - After befriending Steven Biko he started to write unbiased articles
 - The government "banned" him (from writing or being in a room with more than one other person)
 - (For details, see his autobiography or the *Cry Freedom* movie)

Punishments for violating segregation (cont')

- The *Black Like Me* book provides some more examples:
 - The author, John Howard Griffin, received death threats after publishing his accounts of living as a black man
 - The *November 14* and *November 15* chapters discussed P. D. East, a journalist who satirised segregation laws
 - His newspaper lost all its local subscribers
 - His family was shunned by almost everybody
- Punishments for violating segregation laws were more severe for black people:
 - Black people who started their own businesses (thus demonstrating their ability for more than menial work) risked having their homes or businesses burned down
 - 4700 people in America (most black) were lynched between 1882–1968 (an average of slightly more than one per week)

Segregation aided genocide

- In World War 2, the Nazis put Jews into ghettos:
 - (See Wikipedia article on *Ghettos in Nazi-occupied Europe*)
 - With security guards to prevent Jews leaving the ghettos (and to prevent non-Jewish people from entering)
 - The ghettos helped to enforce segregation
 - The ghettos were holding areas, until Jews could be transported to concentration camps

- Some Nazi concentration camps had a “Work sets you free” sign at their entrances
 - Local villagers thought they were work camps rather than death camps

2. Is segregation finished?

Examples of decreasing segregation

- The 1955–1956 Montgomery Bus Boycott ended segregation on public buses in the city of Montgomery
 - Segregation on public buses continued elsewhere in southern states
 - The 1960 Freedom Rides challenged segregation on inter-state buses
- Separate campaigns had to be launched to tackle:
 - Different forms of segregation within the same city or state
 - The same form of segregation in different states
- There was no single moment in time when segregation suddenly stopped:
 - Instead, segregation was reduced piece by piece
 - Even after segregation laws were repealed, de facto segregation continued in some aspects of society

Segregation is not all or nothing

- The examples show that segregation is *not* “all or nothing”:
 - A country does not have to be either completely segregated or completely integrated
- Instead, segregation is usually a matter of degree:
 - Many countries are *partially* segregated
 - There isn't one law that segregates all aspects of society
 - Instead, there can be:
 - Several laws that, between them, segregate employment
 - Another bunch of laws that segregate housing
 - Yet more laws that segregate restaurants, restrooms, education, ...
 - Typically, such laws are created (or repealed) one at a time
 - In this way, the amount of segregation increases or decreases over time

3. Modern segregation-like issues

Ghettos

- Origin of the term *ghetto*:

- The name of an island near Venice where Jews were *required* to live in the 16th century

- Modern dictionary definition:

- Section of a city, especially a slum area, inhabited predominantly by members of a minority group, often as a result of social or economic restrictions, pressures or hardships

- In modern cities, ghettos *informally* segregate people:

- Laws may not require “X” people to live in an ghetto, but...
- Badly paid jobs and high unemployment levels (due to discrimination) cause X people to live in cheap areas
- This keeps most X people segregated from most non-X people

Segregation of disabled people

- Widespread lack of disabled access to buildings keeps disabled people segregated from non-disabled people
- The lyrics of one song are relevant:
 - *I am What I am* by Mark Dignam, on his 1984 *Poetry and Songs from the Wheel* album
 - Note: “special” is sometimes used to refer to people with disabilities

Special child, offered alternative routes of travel
Special child, given special things to do
Special child, sent to special schools

Job discrimination and segregation

- Job discrimination financially affects a discriminated person
 - But it serves another purpose too
- Job discrimination helps to maintain segregation:
 - It keeps the apathetic majority ignorant about the reality of minorities
 - If you don't have work colleagues who are "different" then your only source of information about such people may be the (biased) media
- Keeping "different" people out of teaching positions maintains the ignorance of future generations
 - An example of this can be seen in the UK's "Section 28" law (discussed on the next slide)

Section 28 of the Local Government Act

- In 1998, England and Wales introduced a law that contained the following text:
 - “A local authority shall not:
 - intentionally promote homosexuality or publish material with the intention of promoting homosexuality;
 - promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship.”
 - In 2003, this law was repealed
- The concept of “promoting” homosexuality was ambiguous:
 - Did it mean “to encourage straight people to become gay”? (something that most gay people think is impossible)
 - Or did it mean “to promote the idea that homosexuality is acceptable”? (this was a widely accepted interpretation)

Section 28 of the Local Government Act (cont')

- Analysis: there is not much difference between:
 - *Forbidding* the promotion of “X is acceptable”, and
 - *Promoting* “X is unacceptable”
- Many people would say this encourages anti-X prejudice
 - Unsurprisingly, this was a major concern with Section 28
- A less widely understood concern was that Section 28 helped to maintain segregation
 - It helped to maintain the ignorance of (future generations of) the apathetic majority

4. Summary

Summary

- Segregation is not an “all or nothing” issue:
 - Instead, it is a matter of degree
 - The level of segregation in a society increases or decreases as individual laws are created or repealed
- An individual anti-X practice or law might not seem like a big cause for concern
 - However, the slow accumulation (or repealing) of such practices or laws over time changes the nature of society