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UNITING A CITY: FACILITATING INTERRACIAL INTERACTIONS AND CULTURAL EXCHANGE IN URBAN PUBLIC SPACES

*WITH APPLICATIONS TO
WASHINGTON, D.C.*

Ginger M. Moored

Racial segregation in American cities exacerbates racial tensions and spatially concentrates poverty. While government entities and other organizations use a number of techniques to mollify these problems such as mixed-income housing and school busing programs, these techniques often do not overcome everyday geographic separation, and, in turn, fail to promote physical interracial interactions or cultural exchange. One way to foster interracial interactions that lead to cultural exchange is to hold organized events in public spaces that are natural meeting-areas for cities' residents. Studies about interracial interactions, though, suggest that to be successful these events should: (1) produce high levels of interaction, (2) provide opportunities for cultural exchange, (3) use engaging programming with broad appeal, (4) maximize accessibility of events, (5) minimize cultural intimidation, and (6) equally value all cultures. This paper devises strategies for creating events that have these six characteristics and illustrates these strategies using examples

Ginger Moored is a Master in Public Affairs and Master in Urban and Regional Planning candidate at the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, Princeton University (ginger@alumni.virginia.edu).

from U.S. cities. The latter part of this paper describes how these strategies can be specifically applied to Washington, D.C., a city sharply divided by race.

INTRODUCTION

From the outside—and from the tourist's point of view—Washington, D.C. appears to be the quintessential capital of Western democracies. Leadership and sacrifice are enshrined in the Lincoln and FDR memorials, while the foundations of freedom are celebrated in the National Archives. The Smithsonian museums display humans' greatest feats in the sciences and humanities and the gold-topped Capitol dome encompasses America's representation-based government. But most tourists do not see beyond the National Mall. They do not walk up North Capitol Street and see that the majority of the city is black (Census 2000)¹. They do not see that the majority of black people in the city—many of whom are poor—live in the eastern quadrants, while the northwestern quadrant of the city is overwhelmingly white and economically well-off (Census 2000). They do not see that Washington, D.C. is a divided city.

In *American Apartheid*, Massey and Denton (1993) show that racial segregation² in the United States is not limited to Washington, D.C. They find that in 1990, more than 50 percent of all blacks³ in thirty U.S. metropolitan areas would have had to move to make each city racially integrated (222). More specifically, about 77 percent of the black population in Philadelphia, 67 percent in San Francisco, 82 percent in New York, and 66 percent in Washington, D.C. would have had to move to create equal racial distributions throughout each city (Massey and Denton 1993, 222). Today, more than a decade later, segregation has decreased little. Even in cities where integration has occurred, segregation has often risen in their inner-ring suburbs (Orfield 2002).

One obvious consequence of racial segregation is that it inhibits interracial interactions, producing and reinforcing race-based prejudices, stereotypes, and fears (Massey and Denton 1993). This, in part, has led to racial tensions that receive much media attention—such as the 1992 riots in L.A. and national protests after the 1999 shooting of Amadou Diallo in New York—and others that receive practically no attention, such as the discomfort some people feel when they interact with someone of a different race. Because class is often correlated with race in American inner-cities, racial segregation also results in concentrated poverty. In St. Louis the median income for white families is about one-and-a-half times that of black and Latino families, in San Francisco and Houston it is almost twice as

high, and in Atlanta and Washington, D.C. the median income for white families is practically three times that of black and Latino families (Census 2000). Concentrated poverty in American cities has contributed to the decline of inner-city public school systems, persistence of high crime and unemployment rates, and the emergence of public health problems, such as HIV/AIDS and Type II diabetes (Massey and Denton 1993).

To combat segregation-related problems, city residents must first be aware that these problems exist, understand their root causes, and determine how their city's strengths and weaknesses can affect the magnitude of these problems. But when racially-separated residents of a city rarely interact with each other—let alone understand each other's worldviews, experiences, and ways of life—how can residents ever understand the problems that burden their city? How can they pose solutions to problems that they have never even seen?

Certainly, interracial interactions and cultural exchange cannot alone remedy the problems endemic in America's urban centers. Yet it is unlikely that segregation-related problems will be solved without them. They offer something that more traditional methods of reducing residual problems of segregation—such as zoning techniques and school busing programs⁴—often do not.

One way to facilitate the exchange of worldviews, experiences, and ways of life among different racial communities is through organized events. And arguably, some of the best places to hold events such as these are public spaces,⁵ since as Jane Jacobs argues in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961), public spaces are the places where interactions among a city's citizens most frequently occur. Jacobs was instrumental in preserving New York's Washington Square Park as a public space, and venerable urban planning firms such as the Project for Public Spaces consistently refer to the park as a space that attracts one of the world's most diverse populations (Project for Public Spaces 2006). However, although several studies (Wilner et al. 1955; Jackman and Crane 1986; Rowley 2000; Barnard and Benn 2001; Ihlanfeldt and Scafidi 2002; Shinew et al. 2004) confirm that events involving interracial interactions can promote positive cultural exchange, they also find that the magnitude of cultural exchange depends on the environment in which the interactions take place. Therefore, the ultimate goal of this paper is to determine how to plan events and create event-environments that increase the likelihood of positive cultural exchange between residents of cities that are highly segregated.

Grounded in literature about interracial interactions, the first half of this paper outlines six concepts that characterize successful intercultural

events. The second half of this paper devises strategies for creating events with these characteristics and recommends how these strategies can be applied in Washington, D.C., a city sharply divided by race. While the implementation of the recommendations in this paper will vary among cities because of differing physical, political, social, and economic structures, the recommendations are generic enough to be applicable to the numerous American cities that endure persistent racial segregation.

Part I: Event and Environment Characteristics Needed to Create Interracial Interactions and Cultural Exchange

A review of interracial interaction literature suggests that events and event-environments that induce interracial interactions and cultural exchange typically:

1. Produce high levels of interaction.
2. Provide opportunities for cultural exchange.
3. Create engaging programming with broad appeal.
4. Maximize accessibility of events.
5. Minimize cultural intimidation.
6. Equally value all cultures.

Producing High Levels of Interaction

The intimacy of interactions an event facilitates can heavily impact the level of cultural exchange. Sitting as a passive audience-member, for example, is a much different experience than physically or verbally interacting with other event attendees. Several studies confirm this (Wilner et al. 1955; Jackman and Crane 1986; Barnard and Benn 2001; Shinew et al. 2004, with Wilner et al. 1955), finding that without exception (Shinew et al. 2004, 99) positive attitudes increase with the level of intimacy of contact.

Providing Opportunities for Cultural Exchange

Many theorists (Jackman and Crane 1986; Sigelman and Welch 1993; Shinew et al. 2004) argue that bringing people of different races together in the same space will not necessarily promote cultural exchange. Shinew et al. (2004), for instance, find that black and white residents of St. Louis who shared a community garden would interact with each other, but the

interactions caused no change in the gardeners' opinions of different racial groups. Meanwhile, Paul Gobster's study (2001) of interracial interactions in a Chicago park bordered by different racial communities finds that interracial interactions in the park were almost non-existent. Since gathering people of different races in the same space does not guarantee cultural exchange or even interracial interactions, events will have to provide specific opportunities for cultural exchange.

Creating Engaging Programming with Broad Appeal

It is also important to consider how people exchange their worldviews, experiences, and lifestyles. Psychological studies show that emotion-evoking information is more memorable than information contained in a list of facts (Darley 2005). In other words, people are often more receptive to programming that uses emotion-evoking sights, sounds, and movements rather than speeches or academic lectures. Similarly, psychologists have found that events are more memorable when they are salient to a person (Darley 2005). Therefore, while events focused on diversity are important, events promoting cultural exchange should also emphasize the common experiences all humans share, regardless of their race, religion, class, gender, or other defining characteristics. Barnard and Benn's findings (2001) support this. In their study of interactions between black and white college students, they find that positive changes in students' attitudes towards students of a different race were more likely when the black and white students shared similar values or beliefs. It is also important to remember that programming should have broad appeal. Events will draw more people of different backgrounds if they resonate with multiple generations, races, genders, and classes, among other things.

Maximizing Accessibility of Events

Lund's 2003 study about neighbors' interactions demonstrates that the amount of contact between neighbors depends on the layout of neighborhoods and the amount and type of public and semi-public spaces. Lund's conclusion should be equally valid when thinking of citizens of a city as neighbors. In other words, the ability for a public space to draw people together depends on the physical context in which the public space exists.

Spaces that will be most conducive to interracial interactions and cultural exchange are those that are easily accessible by all of a city's residents, and not just a sub-group of residents. Public spaces can be inaccessible for a variety of reasons. Inner-city highways often divide the rich from the poor and communities of color from white communities. In Los Angeles there have even been instances of police blockading low-income minority

neighborhoods, ostensibly for safety reasons (Davis 1992). Furthermore, many low-income city residents who cannot afford cars rely on public transportation, whose routes can therefore limit these residents' mobility (Lee, Campbell, and Miller 1991).

Economic factors also affect event accessibility. Events that have entrance fees or dress code requirements might deter low-income people—who are disproportionately likely to be racial minorities in most inner-cities—from attending.

Minimizing Cultural Intimidation

For interaction to occur in public spaces, cultural barriers associated with race and class need to be overcome. In his 2000 study about interactions between urban universities and minority urban communities, John Rowley finds that physical closeness between the two parties does not ensure positive interactions because of cultural differences. Rowley (2000) argues that the use and meaning of urban public spaces are often defined by dominating cultural norms (which are usually those of the white middle- and upper-classes), which can exclude people with differing cultural norms from public spaces.

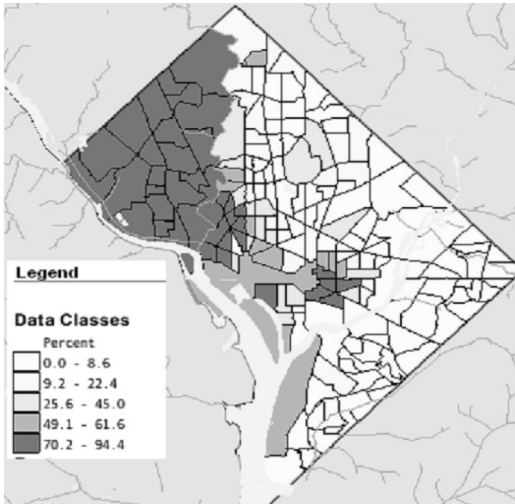
Equally Valuing All Cultures

To foster conditions favorable to positive cross-cultural exchange, Jackman and Crane (1986) argue that events bringing together different groups of people must give each group equal status (461). While this may sound simple, there is evidence that minority cultures are devalued because they are not accepted as legitimate by the majority culture. For instance, Rowley (2000) says that hip-hop and jazz used to be excluded from white communities because whites did not value these music genres as legitimate art forms. He further explains that only after the spaces used to perform hip hop and jazz became less isolated from white communities did whites recognize these types of music as parts of the American music culture.

Part II: Strategies for Achieving These Characteristics and Application of Strategies in Washington, D.C.⁶

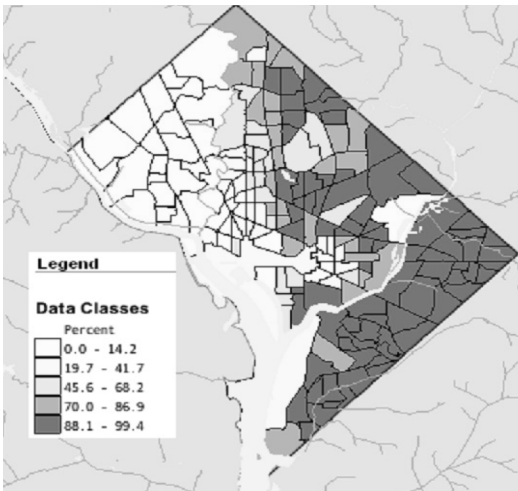
Sawyer and Tatian's 2003 study describes the many demographic changes Washington, D.C. has undergone during the past 50 years. Their study says that between 1950 and 1980 about 346,000 white residents left the city, decreasing the white population by 67% and making the majority of D.C. residents nonwhite. Today whites make up about 33 percent of the city's 518,000 residents (American Community Survey 2004). Figure 1 shows that the vast majority of white D.C. residents reside in the Northwest quadrant of the city (Census 2000). The white residents of

Figure 1: Distribution of white residents in Washington, D.C. (by percent of population that is white)



Source: U.S. 2000 Census. Graphic available at: www.census.gov

Figure 2: Distribution of black residents in Washington, D.C. (by percent of population that is black and/or African-American)



Source: U.S. 2000 Census. Graphic available at: www.census.gov

Northwest are typically highly educated and economically well-off; in 2000 the median income of white D.C. families was \$113,647 (in 1999 dollars) (Census 2000).

Washington, D.C.'s white exodus was followed by a middle-class black flight to the Maryland suburbs that began in the 1980s. From 1980 to 2000 about one-hundred thousand black residents left the city (Sawyer and Tatian 2003). While blacks are still the majority racial group in Washington, D.C., the middle-class exodus left a mostly low-income black population within the District limits (Census 2000). In 2000, the median income for black D.C. families was \$30,478 (in 1999 dollars), which is only about one-quarter of the median income for white D.C. families (Census 2000). According to 2004 American Community Survey data, 58 percent of D.C. residents identify themselves as black or African-American, and as seen in Figure 2, the majority of the black population lives in the city's southeast and northeast quadrants. Land east of the Anacostia River is especially associated with Washington, D.C.'s low-income, black population, and the Southeast Washington neighborhood of Anacostia is typically considered the cultural center of this community.

African populations are also spread throughout the city. According to the Brookings Institution (Singer, Friedman, Cheung, and Price 2001) the Adams Morgan, Mt. Pleasant, Petworth, and Brightwood Park neighborhoods have sizeable Ethiopian populations.

Meanwhile, the city's Latino and Asian populations have more than doubled in size over the past twenty years (Sawyer and Tatian 2003). The 2004 American Community Survey reports that about 9 percent of the city's residents are Latino or Hispanic (of any race) and 3 percent are Asian.

The center of the Latino community is located near the neighborhoods of Adams-Morgan, Columbia Heights, and Mt. Pleasant, which are in the eastern part of Washington, D.C.'s northwest quadrant (Census 2000). This population is predominantly low-income and foreign born, with most Latino residents hailing from Central America (Census 2000).

Members of Washington, D.C.'s smaller Asian population mainly reside in the downtown area, near the Northeast-Northwest border, and more generally, the southern half of the Northwest quadrant (Census 2000). The Asian communities located downtown and north of downtown—particularly in the Chinatown, Shaw, Adams-Morgan, Columbia Heights, Mt. Pleasant and Petworth neighborhoods—tend to be comprised of relatively new, low-income immigrants, many of whom are from Vietnam (Singer et al. 2001).

Because the Latino and Asian populations in Washington, D.C. are

so small, the strategies in the latter sections of Part II focus more on the city's white and black populations. However, the Latino and Asian populations are not totally excluded from the analysis, especially since the Latino population in Washington, D.C. has expanded from 5.4 percent in 1990 to 8 percent in 2000 to 9 percent in 2004 (Census 1990; Census 2000; American Community Survey 2004).

Lastly, it is important to note the income disparities between racial groups in Washington, D.C. As the introduction states, this is a pattern common in many U.S. cities (Massey and Denton 1993). Therefore, the strategies in the following sections consider factors of both race and class when explaining how to create events that produce interracial cultural exchange.

Producing High Levels of Interaction

Facilitating increased levels of interracial interaction is difficult because it often requires a highly structured event. It also requires a non-competitive environment (Jackman and Crane 1986, 461). However, interracial teams that share a common goal might produce positive interracial interactions. This section describes how teams like this can be formed. Although Clotfelter's 1998 study on D.C. public schools shows that the city's schools are highly segregated, inter-school projects that are displayed to the wider community can draw many people together. Projects can include arts-based collaborations, such as art displays and musical or drama productions, or science or humanities projects that tackle issues or challenges relevant to local communities. For example, students from different schools can collaborate to create better recycling programs for their neighborhoods. Projects like this can promote cultural exchange because they allow students to work with people different than themselves on projects important to the students' communities. Joint projects like this are also valuable because presentations of these projects can attract families and not just individuals. Because 94 percent of the D.C. public school population is non-white (District of Columbia Public Schools 2006) events might be most effective if they involved students from both public and private schools.

George Washington University sponsors a program for high school students, the DC Student Voices Civics Fair, which allows students to create and display projects relevant to civics issues in the students' communities. Programs like this can be expanded to include inter-school civics projects.

Interracial recreational sports teams are another way to promote interracial contact since they can lead to one-on-one interactions and teammates share a common goal. In Gobster's 2001 study of interracial interactions

in a Chicago park, he finds the basketball courts and playgrounds to be the only places where interracial interactions occur. Similar patterns occur in Washington, D.C.; during warm months, Malcolm X Park—located at the intersection of traditionally white, black, and Latino neighborhoods near the center of Washington, D.C.—hosts several informal soccer games between teams with players of a variety of racial backgrounds. Interracial recreational sports teams can lead to one-on-one interactions as teammates work towards a common goal. Recreational interracial sports teams could also be created by having multi-neighborhood teams. Specifically, a traditionally white neighborhood could team up with traditionally black or Latino neighborhood to form a common team. While sports might not guarantee that cultural exchange occurs, sports teammates often create strong friendship bonds.

Providing Opportunities for Cultural Exchange

One way to increase the likelihood that interracial interactions will lead to cross-cultural exchange is to create culture-based events. Though Washington, D.C. already has many culture-based events, such as the Black Family Reunion and the Hispanic Festival, few events in Washington, D.C. are explicitly multi-cultural. There are neighborhood festivals with multi-cultural themes, such as Adams Morgan Day and Mt. Pleasant Day, but there are few, if any, events that celebrate multiple city cultures and communities at once. Celebrating cultures across neighborhood boundaries is important because as the Sawyer and Tatian (2003) study finds, more than half of segregation in Washington, D.C. is between D.C. wards (which are political entities made up of several neighborhoods) rather than within wards. Therefore, it might be useful to have multi-cultural festivals that attract citizens from all of the city's neighborhoods. Such a festival could be modeled after the outdoor Smithsonian Folklife Festival held every summer; the life and culture of various D.C. communities can be reproduced through food, song, dance, plays, visual arts, speakers, and other methods of conveying experiences, world views, and ways of life.

Performing arts involving events such as concerts, plays, and films can gather diverse crowds while displaying culture through art. Social issues affecting different racial groups in Washington, D.C. can also be integrated into performances. This is a common practice throughout community theater groups in the United States. For example, the La Peña cultural center in Berkeley, California, and Appalshop, a cultural arts group in Appalachia, produce plays that focus on social, economic, and political issues salient to Latino and Appalachian populations (La Peña 2004; Cocke 2005). Film festivals can serve a similar function. Washington, D.C. currently hosts

the Jewish Film Festival, Asian-American Film Festival, and International Film Festival, among others, but a multi-cultural film festival could show films from a number of these more ethnocentric festivals.

While exhibit-viewing does not provide direct contact between people of two cultures, it can expose people to different cultures, which can be valuable when there are significant barriers to direct interaction. Museums that have exhibits specific to D.C. culture, such as the Smithsonian's Anacostia Museum and Center for African-American History and Culture, should be promoted by the D.C. government and local tourist organizations. Meanwhile, museums that normally reflect dominant cultures or national themes might be able to incorporate exhibits specific to life in Washington, D.C. The Building Museum, for example, held an exhibit on the history of the Anacostia Waterfront and the plans for its renovation (National Building Museum 2006). Following this logic, when the Corcoran, a nationally-renowned art museum located near the Mall, creates the "National Student Art Exhibit" from work of winners of the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards (Corcoran 2006), perhaps it could incorporate into the exhibit work from D.C. teens.

Creating Engaging Programming with Broad Appeal

To help draw a diverse crowd and increase pride in the multiple cultures found in the city, performances could focus on local artists' talents and themes relative to local communities. The New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC) has done this by having local musicians perform in the evenings, which has been successful in attracting people of multiple races to the Center's concerts (Corwin 2004).

One problem, though, is that NJPAC concerts attract mostly-black crowds in the early evening and then mostly-white crowds later at night because of the different genres of music played at various times throughout the night (Corwin 2004). It might be beneficial then, for NJPAC and cities like Washington, D.C. to create programming that includes multiple genres or culture-centric themes within one event. Alternately, hybrid genres can be created. For instance, bluegrass musicians who work with Appalshop—a cultural arts organization that is based on the culture of Appalachia—have teamed up with rappers to create a hybrid music genre called "hill-hop" or "hick-hop" (Cocke 2005). D.C. musicians could do this by fusing Go-Go and jazz, both popular music genres in Washington, D.C.'s black community, with music that is traditionally listened to by white, Latino, and Asian audiences.

Another example of an event that appeals to people of many different racial backgrounds is Open House New York, an annual event that offers

a tour of New York City facilities not typically open to the public, such as private homes and monuments (Open House New York 2006). For the event, people follow a map through the city, traversing racially and culturally distinct neighborhoods. An event like this held in Washington, D.C. has the potential to be popular with people in all D.C. racial communities. An “open house” event in Washington, D.C. that stretched from the west to east end of the city, could celebrate landmarks important to the city as a whole as well as to particular communities.

An example of an event that is popular, but might not have broad appeal, is “Screen on the Green,” a weekly, free summer-time D.C. event where movies are shown outdoors on the Mall. While “Screen on the Green” draws such a large audience that people claim their seats hours before the movies, it does not necessarily have broad appeal. The event shows movies from the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, many of which have all white casts, which likely reduces the appeal of the movies to younger people and non-white communities. To broaden the appeal of “Screen on the Green” organizers should screen more recent movies with more diverse casts.

Maximizing Accessibility of Events

Many lower-income D.C. residents—the majority of whom are non-white—cannot afford cars and instead use public transportation to travel throughout the city. While Washington, D.C.’s public transportation system, which consists of buses and underground Metrorail trains, is extensive, it is not always reliable. It is not uncommon to have an hour-long-wait for a bus or to have to take multiple busses to reach a final destination, especially in the eastern part of the city where a majority of the city’s black community lives (Layton 2005). Additionally, many cabs refuse to go to Southeast D.C. (even though this is illegal), which is commonly perceived as the center of the D.C. lower-income black community (*Washington Post* 2000).

This makes locations in the center of Washington, D.C. that are near Metro stops or well-used bus lines, as well as locations closer to populations without cars, ideal for events. Neighborhoods such as Columbia Heights, U St., Shaw, Chinatown, and Eastern Market would be good venues, since they are all serviced by Metro stops and lie near the center of the city at the nexus of white, black, Asian, and Latino communities.

To give further incentive for people to attend events, organizations could offer discounted public transportation fares. In 2004, ING Direct provided free rush hour travel on the Metro during a weekday morning as part of an advertising campaign (Ginsberg 2004) and each year the Metropolitan Transit Authority of New York City gives 50 percent dis-

counts on all bus and subway fares between Thanksgiving and January 2 (Metropolitan Transit Authority of New York 2006). Events can be more affordable to those without cars if similar corporate or government-sponsored transportation subsidies are offered.

To maximize event accessibility, admissions fees should be minimal or non-existent. If events prove to be too costly for non-profit or government entities to sponsor, then private companies could be recruited to help sponsor events to reduce admission costs. Sponsoring events like these would appeal to companies interested in advertising to diverse communities. Also, discounted tickets can be distributed through institutions like the public school system (in which many low-income students are educated) while other patrons can pay full-priced admission fees.

Minimizing Cultural Intimidation

Perhaps one of the biggest barriers to interracial interactions is cultural intimidation—the sense of discomfort people have when they feel they are unwanted or do not belong in a certain space or at a particular event. In Washington, D.C., as in many other cities, this means some residents do not venture into certain neighborhoods because they are intimidated by its environment. This discomfort reinforces physical segregation, and often results in scenarios where, for example, a lower-income black person raised in Southeast D.C. has never visited Georgetown and an upper-middle class white person from Georgetown has never visited Southeast D.C., although the two communities are less than ten miles apart.

The author's own experiences as a teacher at a historically black public high school in Washington, D.C. verifies the presence of cultural intimidation; the author overheard one student asking another student what the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum was like. The responding student said: "It's just a bunch of white people walking around in flip flops." Henry Louis Gates, Jr., chair of Harvard's African-American studies department, provided his own example of cultural intimidation, when he said he remembered "a poll where black kids were asked to list the things they considered 'acting white.' One of the top three things [was] ... 'going to the Smithsonian'" (Milloy 2004). To black D.C. youth, and probably to other black residents of the city, the National Mall and its museums are unwelcoming places. They are places where white culture—embodied in tourist destinations like the Washington Monument, the White House, and the Senate floor—dominates and African-American culture does not. Similarly, many upper and middle-class and white residents of the city fear going to poor neighborhoods where minority residents reside because they have little knowledge of these communities (and it is natural to fear

the unknown). In fact, because interracial contact is limited in segregated cities, many white D.C. residents only get information about the city's poor, minority communities through mass media, which can distort the image of these communities in a negative manner and heighten the fears of non-community members.

To make people of all races feel welcome at events, it is best to use venues where no single culture dominates.⁷ In Washington, D.C., venues like this are likely to be found near the center of the city where the most diverse neighborhoods are located. Therefore, neighborhoods like Columbia Heights and Adams Morgan, which have significant black, Latino, Asian, and white populations; U St., which has large numbers of black and white residents; Shaw and Chinatown, which have predominantly black and Asian residents; and Capitol Hill, which also has large numbers of white and black residents, would be ideal locations for multi-racial or multi-cultural events. Conversely, a venue such as the Kennedy Center can deter mixed-race audiences since it is located in a mostly white part of the city, is associated with shows that cater to middle- and upper-class patrons, and is not easily accessible by the Metro.

It is also important that event invitations are inclusive of all races. This can be achieved through advertisements in widely-read newspapers like the *Washington Post* and also in papers catering to specific communities like the *Afro American* or *D.C. North*, on Metrorail trains and Metrobuses, and on various public, hip-hop, pop, classical, and Latino radio stations; by distributing flyers at multiple D.C. institutions such as schools, churches, places of employment, medical centers, post offices, and banks, among others; and by using inclusive wording when naming and advertising events. Using inclusive wording means using titles and phrases that do not blatantly or subtly exclude any group or type of people from an event and purposefully make a variety of people feel welcome at an event. If well-known private or public organizations sponsor events, cultural intimidation might be further reduced since respected organizations can lend credibility to events and make them feel more "known" to event-goers. Jackman and Crane support this theory in their 1986 study when they say events should be sponsored by "relevant authorities" (461), which can make events more welcoming to people of different races.

Equally Valuing All Cultures

Various social, political, and economic forces have devalued the culture of non-white D.C. communities. The space often perceived as Washington, D.C.'s cultural center—the National Mall—has few memorials, monuments, or museums specifically dedicated to cultural relics of black, Asian,

Latino, or other non-white communities⁸. Mall memorials enshrine white leaders of the United States such as Washington, Lincoln, and FDR; meanwhile, it wasn't until 2003 that the National Park Service finalized the design for an inscription at the Lincoln Memorial that memorializes Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech (National Capital Planning Commission 2003). Just before the publication of this paper—in March 2006—the Smithsonian Institution announced its National Museum of American History would host an exhibit on hip-hop (Sisaro 2006). While this announcement comes decades after hip-hop started influencing American culture, it will hopefully make racial minorities feel more welcome at the Mall and its Smithsonian museums.

Meanwhile, in a city that is 60 percent black, the African-American Civil War Memorial is more than a mile north of the Mall and the Smithsonian's Center for African-American History and Culture lies across the Anacostia River in Southeast DC. In fact, to get from the Mall to the Center, visitors must take a Metrorail train to Anacostia and then transfer to a Metrobus, an ordeal that can take up to an hour. If museums like these were closer to the National Mall (or closer to major Metrorail train stops) and better advertised they could help transform the Mall into a place where all D.C. residents feel welcome.

Another way cultures can be devalued is through negative media. In a 1996 *Washington Post* column, D.C. resident and journalist Courtney Milloy laments Washington, D.C.'s bad reputation, which he says had been perpetuated in national newspapers that used headlines such as "Monument to Decay" and "How the Capital Has Crumbled" to describe the city. In the same column, Milloy (1996) says he particularly regrets the comment of D.C.'s then-CFO, Anthony Williams, that "everything is broken" in Washington, DC. Milloy (1996) rebuts this comment by saying, "The people of Washington are our greatest asset. They just aren't so well known." Milloy (1996) then quotes a community activist who said, "You don't read a lot about what's good in D.C., but that doesn't mean it's not there."

Other popular press volumes substantiate Milloy's accusations. For example, the Washington, D.C. edition of the popular travel guide *Let's Go* (Dickey 2004) has a highlighted section that describes Anacostia youths' propensity to steal cars (92). It is not difficult to imagine this could be interpreted as describing black youths' propensity to steal cars since more than 88 percent of residents in Anacostia are black (Census 2000). The *Rough Guide to Washington, D.C.* (2002) puts it a bit more bluntly. The guide says that in most of Northeast and Southeast D.C.—both of which

are overwhelmingly non-white (Census 2000)—“there’s nothing there to see and certainly no ‘real’ Washington that you’d want to experience” (Brown 2002, 35).

For people who will never visit Washington, D.C.’s black, Latino, and Asian communities, descriptions like this one can feed people’s misperceptions and biases which, in turn, lead them to create misinformed and incorrect assumptions about these communities. This assertion is not meant to suggest that weaknesses of communities should never be discussed; rather, weaknesses should be discussed within a larger context that concentrates on the roots of problems and the environments that incubate them.

One way to value cultures that are often degraded, besides having event focus programming focus on positive outputs of communities, is to select event venues that are culturally and historically significant to various racial communities. For example, the Lincoln Theatre—the former epicenter of Washington, D.C.’s “Black Broadway”—provides a good location for performing arts events because of its historical importance to the black community and its current location in a neighborhood with large black and white populations.

Summary of Recommendations

While various entities use a variety of methods to mollify racial segregation, it seems unlikely that segregation-related problems will be greatly reduced if people of different racial communities do not understand each others’ experiences, world views, and ways of life. One way to help different racial communities understand each other is to hold events in public spaces that create interracial interactions and cultural exchange. Studies about interracial interactions suggest that to be successful these events should have the following characteristics:

1. Produce high levels of interaction.
2. Provide opportunities for cultural exchange.
3. Create engaging programming with broad appeal.
4. Maximize accessibility of events.
5. Minimize cultural intimidation.
6. Equally value all cultures.

This paper devises strategies for obtaining these characteristics. Below is a summary of this paper's findings.

Recommendation 1: Produce high levels of interaction.

Organize events that require one-on-one interactions between people of different races. Examples include multi-racial sports teams and joint projects involving schools with differing racial compositions.

Recommendation 2: Provide opportunities for cultural exchange.

Since it is often difficult to create one-on-one interactions between people of different races, especially on a large scale, another way to produce cultural exchange is to hold events that have culture-centric themes. One way to achieve this is through the performing arts, including plays, dance and music performances, spoken word events, documentaries, and other forms of art that convey people's world views, experiences, and ways of life.

Recommendation 3: Create engaging programming with broad appeal.

Arts-based events might produce more cultural exchange than other types of events because emotion-evoking images, sights, and sounds are more memorable than lists of facts or academic lectures. To draw diverse crowds, though, these events must appeal to people of all ages, races, genders, etc.

Recommendation 4: Maximize accessibility of events.

Lower-income people can be excluded from events because of transportation or monetary barriers. To ensure lower-income people have the same access to events as others, hold events close to the center of cities along major routes of public transportation and make admission fees minimal.

Recommendation 5: Minimize cultural intimidation.

Many people feel intimidated in environments where the dominant culture is one different from their own. To minimize this intimidation, hold events in culturally neutral spaces where no single culture dominates, use inclusive wording when naming and advertising the event, and publicize the event through media that is used by people of all races.

Recommendation 6: Equally value all cultures.

City institutions, such as museums, libraries, and organizations that create public art, should give equal attention to the positive aspects of all cultures in a city. Since this often does not occur, events should devote resources to celebrating cultures that are too often degraded.

NOTES

- ¹ According to U.S. Census data from 2000, 30.8 percent of D.C. residents are white, 60.0 percent are black or African American, 2.7 percent are Asian, and 7.9 percent are Latino or Hispanic (of any race).
- ² In this paper “racial segregation” refers to segregation by race or ethnicity (as do derivatives of this phrase, such as “segregation by race”). Likewise, phrases such as “different racial communities” refer to communities separated race or ethnicity.
- ³ Massey and Denton (1993) mostly discuss the segregation of black populations, and do limited analysis concerning the segregation of other racial and ethnic groups such as Asians and Asian-Americans and Latinos and Hispanics. Most likely this is the case because their data originate from the years between 1970 and 1990, when blacks still constituted the largest racial or ethnic minority group in the United States.
- ⁴ To read more about techniques urban planners and community developers use to reduce segregation-related problems, read pages 115 – 217 in *American Apartheid* (10th printing, 2003), pages 49 – 129 in *American Metropolitanics*, and Chapters 10, 11, and 12 in *Understanding Poverty*.
- ⁵ This paper uses a liberal and flexible definition of a “public space.” Here, a public space is considered a venue open to all residents and visitors with only minimal monetary admission requirements.
- ⁶ From 2002 – 2004 the author lived in the Columbia Heights neighborhood in Washington, D.C. and taught at a public high school in the center of the city that has a student population that is 99 percent black. Many D.C.-specific examples used in this paper are drawn from the author’s experiences while living and teaching in the city.
- ⁷ Ideally, spaces in racially homogeneous settings should welcome people of all races. But, until this ideal is achieved, the most welcome settings are likely to be racially-diverse settings.
- ⁸ To the Smithsonian Institution’s credit, the National Museum of the American Indian—which is located on the National Mall—opened in 2004. Also, the Freer and Sackler art galleries specifically showcase African and Asian art.

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