

Angell & Bloom

Social Justice Pathway

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Palo Alto: A Comparison with Apartheid

Since the Civil Rights movement in the mid 20th century, to the end of apartheid South Africa in 1994 (Apartheid), apartheid has been a major part of our world's history. Thankfully, most apartheid laws no longer exist today, although its characteristics still remain present. Palo Alto today is not an apartheid state; however, it does share similarities with apartheid states such as extreme income and wealth differences, educational differences, and residential conformity, all based on race.

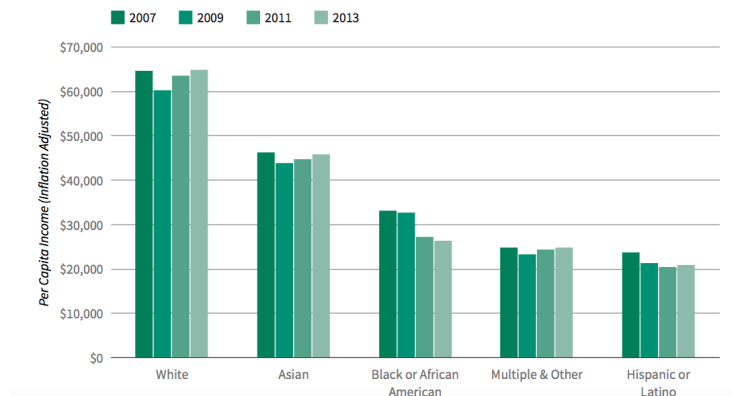



Figure 1

Similar to apartheid states, there are differences in wealth and income across different races in Silicon Valley, however Palo Alto is not an apartheid state, because of the underlying causes for this income gap. Race-based differences in income gives Palo Alto its apartheid



characteristics. According to Gennady Sheyner, “White residents had the highest per capita income in 2013, while Hispanic and Latino residents earned the lowest, despite modest gains.” Demonstrated in Figure 1, the average white person in Silicon Valley earns a per capita income of \$64,998 while African Americans earned \$26,466 and Hispanics and Latinos earned \$20,961. (Per Capita Income by Race & Ethnicity) Following this pattern, 9.84% of African Americans and 7.24% of Hispanics and Latinos of 16 years and older experience unemployment, while white residents only experience 3.76% unemployment. (Unemployed Residents’ Share of the Working Age Population) In apartheid U.S. in 1955, the median family income for white households was \$3,445, while black families earned \$1,869. (Money Income of Families and Persons in the United States) This information proves that today, in Silicon valley, there is a consistent pattern in which minorities such as African Americans and Hispanics and Latinos, receive less income and have more unemployment than white citizens. Data from apartheid U.S. in the 1950’s shows that African American families also experienced a similar income gap. Both divisions of data show economic segregation on the grounds of race. Such data shows that Palo Alto and the Silicon Valley are similar to the apartheid U.S. Therefore, because of the resemblance in segregation, Palo Alto can be said to have apartheid characteristics. However, despite apartheid characteristics, there are not raced-based laws in Palo Alto causing this economic segregation. One factor that accounts for 27% of the wealth gap between races in Silicon Valley today is the years of homeownership. (The Roots of the Widening Racial Wealth Gap: Explaining the Black-White Economic Divide) According to the IASP, “...Residential segregation artificially lowers demand, placing a forced ceiling on home equity for African-Americans who own homes in non-white neighborhoods.” Additionally, during the

pre-civil rights movement in America, the wealth gap between races existed because of the exclusion from higher paying jobs. (The Black Work Experience) This information shows that in Silicon Valley, the wealth gap is influenced by homeownership since home values make up a big percentage of a family's wealth. Minorities such as African Americans who live in predominantly black neighborhoods, own houses that are not worth as much as in white neighborhoods. The lower home values are a result of people not wanting to buy houses in that neighborhood, which lowers the demand and hence the value. The fact that houses are unwanted solely because the neighborhood is predominantly African American demonstrates racism. Therefore, the wealth gap between races is caused by racial discrimination. Information about America in 1950's shows that the wealth gap then was influenced by the exclusion of higher paying jobs since both businesses and government only hired blacks for low-level manual jobs. The fact that government and businesses were lawfully authorized to exclude a group of people because of their race shows that America in the 1950's was apartheid. However, the wealth gap in Silicon Valley today is not a result of racist laws, but influenced by racial discrimination, therefore Palo Alto is not an apartheid state.

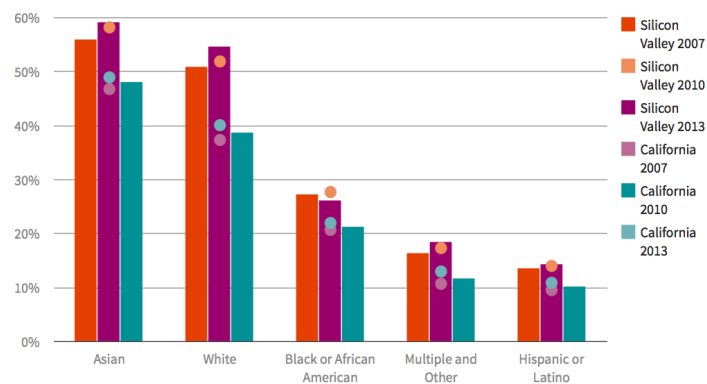



Figure 2



Differences in education based on race are present in Palo Alto, similar to apartheid South Africa, but because of their different causes, Palo Alto is not an apartheid state. There are differences in education that follow racial lines that give Palo Alto its apartheid characteristics. According to a 2013 census, the high school graduation rate for Asian and white students is 92% while African Americans have a rate of 75% and Hispanics and Latinos have a 72% rate. (High School Graduation Rates) Following this pattern, the percentage of adults with bachelor's degrees are 48.1% for Asians, 38.7% for white, 21.4% for African Americans and 10.31% for Hispanics and Latinos, as seen in Figure 2. (Educational Attainment) In apartheid South Africa, the Bantu Education Act of 1952 ensured that black students would receive limited education, affecting the content of learning. The Act required that white students go to school from age seven to sixteen, while black students were only allowed to attend until thirteen years of age. Additionally, the act also gave less money to black schools while giving more to white schools. (Ocampo) This information shows that today in Silicon Valley, there is a consistent pattern in which white and Asian students have higher educational achievements than African American or Hispanic or Latino students. Data from apartheid South Africa in the 1950's demonstrates that black students received less educational goods than white students. The curriculum potential of black students was purposely limited so that they would remain in the working class, and so that they were prevented access to further education. However, white students kept their educational goods. Because of this limited education, black students had lower educational achievements than white students. As a result, both divisions of information demonstrate examples of educational segregation based on race, since both races are separated on the ends of high and low



educational achievement. Such resemblance shows that Palo Alto and the Silicon Valley is similar to an apartheid state. Therefore, Palo Alto can be observed as having apartheid characteristics because it shows similar separation as in an apartheid state, and apartheid is a system of racial segregation. However, despite its apartheid characteristics, Palo Alto is not a legally sanctioned apartheid state. In Palo Alto, the education gap between races may be a result of being ignored by teachers and by tracking. (Identifying Factors That Contribute to Achievement Gaps) The educational success gap in apartheid South Africa was a result of not only the Bantu Education Act, but also the country's Jim Crow laws. These laws mandated the racial segregation of public schools. Black and white students were required to attend different schools, and resulted in white schools receiving most of the public money. (Brooker) This information shows that in Silicon Valley, the differences in educational gap is influenced by racial tracking, since, according to Adam Gamoran, "...measures of school performance that are commonly used to assign students to tracks typically coincide with the broader bases of social disadvantage such as race/ethnicity..." and schools tended to measure minorities with lower performance levels. The gap is also influenced by low expectations of achievement since minority students of high level classes tended to be ignored by teachers because of low expectations on student achievement. (Identifying Factors That Contribute to Achievement Gaps) Because of this, "they gave up and decided to go to [low level] classes where at least there were other black children," states Lovie Lilly. (Solomon) The fact that these minorities were given low expectations and were measured with lower performance levels solely because of their race demonstrates that the educational gap is a result of racial discrimination. Information about apartheid South Africa shows that the educational gap then was influenced by black schools

receiving less educational benefits than white schools, therefore black students gained less educational achievement, demonstrating racial preference. This was a result from racial segregation of schools. Because this racial preference and segregation was authorized by law, South Africa during mid 20th century was apartheid. However because the education gap in Silicon Valley is created by racial discrimination by people, and not by segregation and discrimination by law, Palo Alto is not an apartheid state.

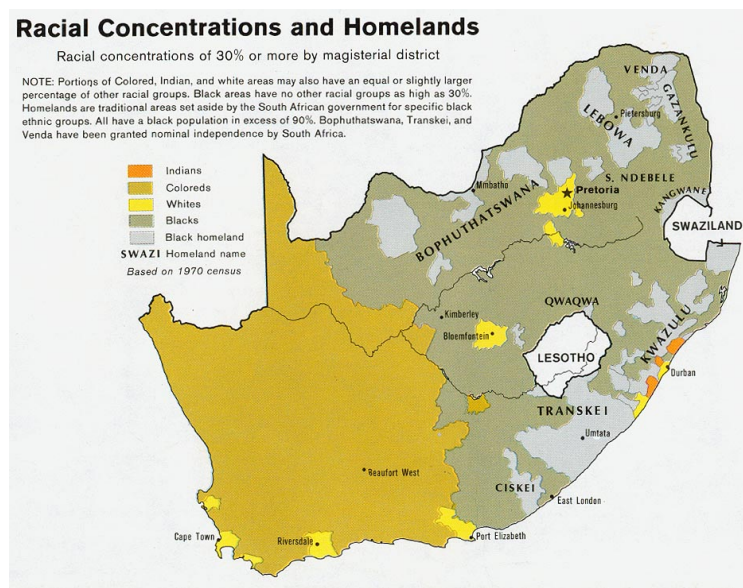




Figure 3

Racial conformity present in Palo Alto today is similar to those of apartheid South Africa, however, Palo Alto is not an apartheid state. Residential conformity gives Palo Alto its apartheid characteristics. According to a 2010 census, 87.6% of the Palo Altan population is either white or Asian, while only 10% is Hispanic or African American. In contrast, 78% of the East Palo Altan population is either Hispanic or African American. (Palo Alto, California) Shown in figure 3, most blacks in apartheid South Africa in 1979 were concentrated in the north, while whites



resided in their own clusters. (Coloured) This information proves that today, Palo Alto and East Palo Alto are segregated, as Kai Mai-Cutler says has, “a primarily white and Asian western half of the bay, while Latino and black communities live in the south and the East.” Data from Apartheid South Africa claims that there was residential segregation throughout, as members from one race were separated from others and grouped together. Both divisions of information demonstrate similar residential segregation. Such resemblance proves that Palo Alto and East Palo Alto is similar to an apartheid state. Therefore, these cities can be observed as having apartheid characteristics because of the segregation resemblance, and because apartheid is defined as being a system of racial segregation. However, despite its apartheid characteristics, Palo Alto does not have laws enforcing apartheid. During the 1960’s, African American resident, Bob Hoover, explained, “You’d call them, ask them if the apartment was available. They’d say yes. But when I would show up and they’d see my face, they would suddenly say it had ‘just been rented’...” (Cutler) Additionally, according to Kim-Mai Cutler, “Real estate agents would buy the fire-sale prices [of houses], then turn them around and sell them to African-Americans for profit.” In apartheid South Africa, the government implemented the Group Areas act of 1950, which assigned racial groups different residential areas. More than 850,000 people were forced to resettle. (Forced Removals) An effect of this law was to exclude non-whites in areas that were restricted to white residents. (Group Areas Act) This information proves that in Palo Alto and East Palo Alto, residential conformity was influenced by a history of minorities having a hard time settling in Palo Alto, pushing them into East Palo Alto. This was a result of people refusing to rent to minorities, or real estate agents selling houses at high prices, all because of their race. Therefore, minorities and white residents grew up segregated. Because these actions were



entirely based on race, Palo Alto's residential conformity is a result of racial discrimination.

Additionally, since these actions of racial discrimination were legal in the 1960's, Palo Alto was an apartheid state. The reason why South Africa was residentially segregated was because of law. Because this policy of racial segregation was legally authorized, South Africa was an apartheid state. However, Palo Alto's residential segregation was a result of past apartheid history, and these laws are not longer in place. Therefore, Palo Alto is not an apartheid state because there are no existing laws of racial segregation, unlike in apartheid South Africa.

In conclusion, Palo Alto today is not an apartheid state; however, it does share similarities. Palo Alto has extreme income and wealth differences between races, influenced by racial discrimination. Educational differences between races also exists because of racial discrimination by people. Finally, residential conformity is present in Palo Alto because of its history of apartheid. However, because there are no existing laws that force racial segregation or discrimination, Palo Alto today is not an apartheid state. Although the city does not practice apartheid laws, it is important to recognize that racism and discrimination are still prevalent in society, not only in Palo Alto but throughout the rest of America, in order for us to take action and make changes towards a more just future.



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