



Tri-Village

Diversity, Assimilation, and Discrimination

Historical Context and Overview

Geographers categorize the reasons why people move as “push” and “pull” factors. Employment opportunities are one of the strongest “pull” factors that bring immigrants and internal migrants to new places. As the United States industrialized in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, immigrants began pouring into the country for work. Most of these jobs were located in urban centers in the North and Midwest. African Americans from the South also moved north for industrial labor opportunities.

In turn-of-the-century Columbus, industrial jobs could be found in a variety of growing industries including steel, glass, mining, and railroads. In the Tri-Village area, Italian immigrants made up the majority of laborers in the Marble Cliff Quarries. Italians also made important contributions to the culture and economy of the area. They opened restaurants and groceries as a means of integrating and assimilating into the broader community.

Other migrants found job opportunities with the nearby Sells Brother Circus. The circus established its winter headquarters east of Grandview near the present-day Lennox Town Center on Olentangy River Road. The surrounding area of Sellsville included an integrated group of immigrants, Native Americans, and African Americans.

Despite opportunities for employment, minority groups were often subject to discrimination in the Tri-Village area. The boundaries of Grandview were deliberately drawn to exclude Italian neighborhoods, and sometimes physical fences kept them out of white communities. Racially-restrictive deeds and covenants prevented Jews, Italians, and African Americans from purchasing homes in many neighborhoods. In 1948, in *Shelley v. Kraemer*, the Supreme Court ruled that while racially-based restrictive covenants are not themselves unconstitutional, government enforcement of the covenants violates the Equal Protection clause of the 14th Amendment.

Standards Alignment

Ohio's Learning Standards: Social Studies

Grade 3

Content Statement 8. Communities may include diverse cultural groups.

Grade 8

Content Statement 16. Cultural biases, stereotypes and prejudices had social, political and economic consequences for minority groups and the population as a whole.

High School American History

Content Statement 12. Immigration, internal migration and urbanization transformed American life.

Content Statement 17. Racial intolerance, anti-immigrant attitudes and the Red Scare contributed to social unrest after World War I.

Learning Objectives

- Explain how industrial job opportunities contributed to immigration and migration.
- Discuss the contributions of Italians and other minority groups to the culture and economy of the Tri-Village area.
- Describe the practices of racial discrimination against minority groups in Tri-Village and how these practices reflected broader patterns in American history.

Discussion Questions

1. What employment opportunities were available for minority groups in the Tri-Village area?
2. What impact did Italian immigrants have on the culture and economy of the Tri-Village area? How did they integrate and assimilate into the community? What influence remains today?
3. What biases, stereotypes or prejudice toward Italian immigrants were evident in Tri-Village? How did this change over time? What consequences did these feelings have on the larger community?
4. How was the treatment of minority groups in Sellsville different from other Tri-Village communities?
5. What practices of racial discrimination were used against minority groups in Tri-Village? How did these practices reflect broader patterns of treatment of immigrants and African Americans in the United States?
6. What factors contributed to the decline of discrimination and growing diversity of Tri-Village communities?

Extension Activities

- Have students look for evidence of the impact of various cultural groups on the city of Columbus. This can include the names of neighborhoods, churches, restaurants, etc. Students can create a multimedia presentation with examples.
- Have students research and write about practices of racial discrimination in northern cities, including red-lining and restrictive covenants. Students should include information about the *Shelley v. Kraemer* Supreme Court decision and to what extent it impacted integration of neighborhoods.

Additional Resources

- Columbus Memory (Keyword search: Marble Cliff): <http://digital-collections.columbuslibrary.org/cdm/>
- Sellsville: <http://www.dispatch.com/content/stories/local/2013/05/20/traveling-circus-formed-heart-of-sellsville-community.html>
- Italian Immigration: http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/voices/italian_immigration.cfm
- *Shelley vs. Kraemer* Supreme Court case: <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/334/1/case.html>