



It's More Complicated Than You Think

Baltimore is not your average city. Not much happens here, yet everything happens here. I understand I have created an oxymoron, but in a way, that's the best way to describe Baltimore. There are three sides to Baltimore. The one you see, the one that only people who live here see, and the one the uninterested see. The visitor looks at the big buildings, the Harbor, Hard-Rock café, and the Domino sugar sign. The dweller sees the tragedies of everyday life. While those uninterested in

Baltimore only see it as a crime ridden city. Baltimore is hard to understand but must be understood through the eyes of someone who lives here. Luckily for you, I have lived here as long as I can remember.

The first memory that I can remember was in Baltimore. I wasn't born here yet have lived here my whole life. My early views of Baltimore were exactly that of a tourist; I thought it was either sunshine and rainbows, or darkness and rain. That's the reality of Baltimore. You could be

By Syed Kazmi

walking through Baltimore City and see a developed area, but right next to it see an undeveloped housing project. You can see a rich man wearing a suit walking right past a homeless man.

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The Duality

I have lived in both worlds; when I first moved into Baltimore I lived in the poorer areas. I walked and lived with the very people whom many Loyola students try to avoid. Loyola students are put in this bubble that makes it seem like Loyola is the only thing that exists

around them. But right next to Loyola is York Road, one of the poorest neighborhoods in Baltimore. I asked a fellow student about how he felt about York Road and his response shocked me. Apparently, he had walked through the neighborhood, and the only way

he could describe it was “It’s Shady.” This is the common response of the Loyola student. They are unaware; they are told that York Road is bad and never to go there. So, many choose to ignore it. But to fix York Road we must acknowledge its existence.

A Historical Problem

York Road is a remnant of Baltimore’s racist past. Segregated housing was a common practice in Baltimore in the early 20th century. The African-American neighborhoods were kept far away from the white neighborhoods, “Baltimore invented the tools and tactics of housing segregation a century ago, through restrictive zoning and later,

when that was ruled unconstitutional, restrictive covenants” (“Baltimore’s”). The rich whites became richer from years of wealth accumulation. Whereas the African Americans, who had been slaves, could not accumulate the same wealth. This created an economic divide that would last till today. The best example is the York

Road and Homeland split. The tactics that were originally used to separate the whites from the blacks have now become ones that separate the rich from the poor. So, the “shadiness” that arises from York Road is discomfort in seeing the disenfranchised.

"I then urge you to work with Loyola programs that help to serve our neighbors on York Road."

The Divide

The problem is that the people in the poorer neighborhoods have been ignored for a long time. As a Loyola Professor says, "The people on York Road are materially poor but spiritually quite rich. We only need to speak to them, and most Loyola students don't want to." We as Loyola students cannot continue to do this. We have the means to help them. Therefore, it should be our responsibility. We must work to end this divide that is a remnant of an era we have been trying to get rid of. As Kanye West says in one of his songs, "The system broken, the

schools closed, the prison's open." The poor have been disadvantaged by a system that has been created to work against them. Where some schools such as Tunbridge Public Charter School work to build a great environment for kids: some schools are not so lucky. Guilford Elementary/Middle school lies directly on York Road; the school ranks 828 out of the 848 schools in all of Maryland ("Guilford"). Meanwhile the prison system flourishes throughout Baltimore City. "While one out of 10 Maryland residents is from Baltimore, one out of three Maryland residents in state prison is from the city" (Justice). More

people are sent to prison every day simply because they do not have the chances we have. So, next time you walk to the McDonald's or the CVS on York Road, remember that Loyola students are part of the York Road neighborhood; we should try and give our neighbors the chance that we have. Some organizations have been created within Loyola to help York Road, because we are their neighbors. Loyola is less than a 2-minute walk from York Road. The York Road Initiative acknowledges this, and works to fix York Road to better our community.

A Conversation

We fail to see the problems that society has created, and we oftentimes avoid these topics. As Kanye West says, "Well that's a pretty bad way to start a conversation." I think the fact is that we as Americans need to have a conversation about the reality of our past actions affecting our present. Otherwise we become separated,

stuck in our own little bubbles of ignorance. Loyola students need to become the change that will correct the duality created by years of racial tension. The modern segregation of Baltimore can only be stopped if we wish for it to do so. So, as you move towards your first year in college, I urge you to have the conversation that eve-

ryone avoids, and work to correct the past for a brighter future. I then urge you to work with Loyola programs that help to serve our neighbors on York Road.

"More people are sent to prison every day because they don't have the opportunities we have."

Resources on Campus

York Road Initiative

<http://www.loyola.edu/departments/ccsj/york-road-initiative>

Center for Community Service and Justice

<http://www.loyola.edu/departments/ccsj>

"Baltimore's Segregated Housing."



Baltimoresun.com. Baltimore Sun, 10 July 2015. Web. 02 Mar. 2017.
"Guilford Elementary/Middle." SchoolDigger. Web. 02 Mar. 2017.
Justice Policy Institute. "The Right Investment? Corrections Spending in Baltimore City." Prison Policy. Prison Policy Initiative, Feb. 2015. Web. 2 Mar. 2017.