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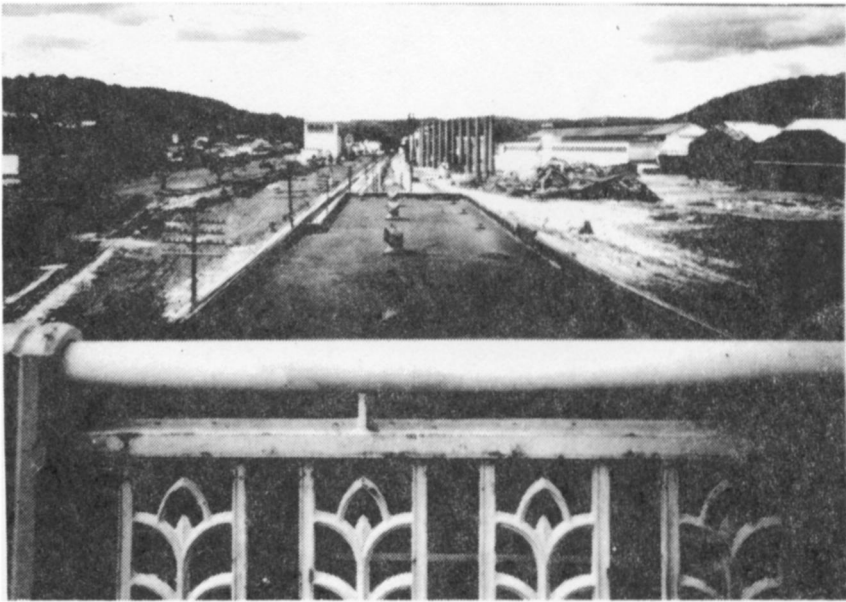


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# Perceiving Racism: Homestead from Depression to Deindustrialization

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*Surveying the wreckage of the Homestead Works from the High Level Bridge. The Homestead Series, c. 1980s.*

## Introduction

This is a paper about race relations in the steel town of Homestead, Pennsylvania, and specifically about the construction of “race” as a category of social interaction. Six miles from downtown Pittsburgh, Homestead is in the heart of the lower Monongahela (Mon) Valley, the once-prosperous industrial region of Western Pennsylvania. Like most steel towns, Homestead has an ethnically and racially diverse population comprised of second, third, and fourth generation descendants of migrants from Eastern Europe and the American South. From the 1890s through the 1980s, the Homestead Works dominated the town; it was the largest employer and a primary factor in people’s establishment of social networks and cultural categories.

In 1986 the mill closed and Homestead went from being a declining mill town whose population in the late 1930s had been almost 20,000 to a post-industrial ghost town with a population of just over 4,000. The event and its consequences exposed tensions that had long been part of the town's history but came strikingly to the forefront with economic crisis. Among these were tensions between blacks and whites, which took on new meanings and new expressions as the town fell victim to the total collapse of an industry. Customary understandings of diversity lost their persuasiveness for townspeople who lost their major source of livelihood.<sup>1</sup>

People we met in Homestead praised the town for its tolerance and agreement about the terms of social interaction, conveying this through vivid images of a community without strife outside the mill walls. "Everyone got along," we heard repeatedly about times "back then." The model of relationships between groups was epitomized by the phrase "live and let live," a rhetorical convention that, we were to learn, covered over profound differences in the experiences of residents. What we found was that in reality this romantic view had been challenged since the 1940s by the actions of black residents and workers, and the civil rights movement, and then even more severely tested by the closing of the mill. Accounts of Homestead by historians, social scientists, and journalists seem uncritically to accept residents' views of race relations. Starting with the 1908-1910 Pittsburgh Survey, observers have concentrated on ethnic rather than race relations, on struggles between worker and manager rather than between worker and worker, and on the "official text" about diversity rather than on the settings in which meaningful cultural categories are created. Studies of deindustrialization perpetuate the approach, minimizing racial factors and focusing on class; victimization of all workers is the dominant theme. Both John Hoerr's moving *And the Wolf Finally Came* and William Serrin's *Homestead: The Tragedy and Glory of an American Steel Town* gloss over the racial discrimination and conflict that always existed in Homestead and other Mon Valley steel towns and that came to the fore in the 1980s. Serrin explicitly borrows from Homestead's mythic past when he quotes one white worker who said that in the past, "Everybody knew each other. It was like a family. Not like today. People don't know you. There was no cutthroat then. Today it's all cutthroat, everybody for themselves."<sup>2</sup> Yet whites' antagonism to blacks has increased since the mills closed, and some whites have blamed affirmative action, blacks' "pathological" culture or abuse of welfare for the region's ills.

It is understandable that many observers would downplay or ignore racism in light of the devastation that corporations brought to steel towns. Tens of thousands of well-paying jobs permanently left the region, draining

the young people and economic lifeblood from the region. We sympathize with Irwin Marcus who showed in "The Deindustrialization of America: Homestead, A Case Study, 1959-1984", the heroic, and ultimately futile efforts of unionists and intellectuals to stop plant closings or reopen industrial facilities on a worker- and community-owned basis. Despite the substantial contribution that Marcus makes to our understanding of workers' reactions in Homestead, he never discusses the racial stratification within the Homestead local, which many black unionists felt was perhaps the most racist in the region. Other historians of deindustrialization also avoid questions of race. In the insightful roundtable discussion on deindustrialization by Marcus, Charles McColleston, Mark McColloch, and Carl Meyerhuber in *Pennsylvania History*, each analyzes deindustrialization with verve and passion. Yet none of these scholars ever examines the unique experiences of black workers nor racism as an aspect of white workers' or the community's reaction to deindustrialization. This blind spot is a national phenomenon. Although some scholars of deindustrialization have observed that black industrial workers have a harder time getting new jobs, and that deindustrialization devastates black communities to a much greater extent than white communities, they have not examined how narratives of race influenced how white workers and residents of mill towns understood and reacted to deindustrialization.<sup>3</sup>

The major exception to this neglect of racial issues is Dennis Dickerson, himself a son of a black steelworker. In *Out of the Crucible: Black Steelworkers in Western Pennsylvania, 1875-1980*, he examines the persistence of racism from the late nineteenth century to the 1980s. Dickerson details the pervasive, persistent, and virulent racism that black steelworkers confronted and tried to overcome by forming protest groups within their unions or supporting civil rights organizations. Yet Dickerson perceives racism as a fixed and permanent structure.<sup>4</sup>

By contrast, our observations, interviews, and analysis of historical documents reveal the flexibility and creativity in the "hidden texts" of race in steel towns such as Homestead. By analyzing hidden texts in white and black accounts of Homestead (over 80 interviews) we find that words like tolerance and phrases like "live and let live" meant maintaining separations and negotiating boundaries.<sup>5</sup> The notion of Homestead as "tolerant," then, can be seen for what it was: a hegemonic characterization embraced by white ethnics which their black neighbors, in turn, confronted, lived with, revised, or scorned as they, too, accommodated to life in a heterogeneous steel town.<sup>6</sup> Live-and-let-live was a convention that allowed whites to ignore the racism in work, residential, religious, and recreational places, and permitted some blacks occasionally to turn it to their own profitable purposes.<sup>7</sup> But as blacks

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*Working-class neighborhoods above the Homestead Works.*

increasingly challenged the conventions of live-and-let-live, whites' articulation of it increased in intensity and in ideological force.

### **Background**

We are not simply inserting racism into the story of American steel towns. We are seeking to examine the construction of race in the "domains of social action" typical of an urban setting.<sup>8</sup> We are guided by the argument made by Barbara Fields in her 1982 essay, "Ideology and Race in American History," in which she observes: "The idea one people has of another, even when the difference between them is embodied in the most striking physical characteristics, is always mediated by the social context within which the two come into contact."<sup>9</sup> According to this argument, race is not an essentialist or self-evident attribution but a cultural category that is continually re-interpreted. As Fields suggests, what "race" means depends upon the particular contexts of interaction. Borrowing the wording of another scholar, race relations in Homestead are, and always have been, "structured, fractured, or limited" by "daily life."<sup>10</sup>

Fields' point about race resembles the arguments made in the literature on ethnicity, beginning with the pioneering work by Fredrik Barth. In *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, Barth argues that "ethnicity" is situational, varying over time with the contexts of action and the "ecological niches" in which groups find themselves. Since Barth, scholars have embraced this view of ethnicity, seeing it as accidental rather than essential, a set of characteristics that can be assumed and rejected at will. Ethnicity can be "invented" and "performed" at particular moments and for particular purposes. Ethnicity, in this reading, is always cultural and never natural. Fields suggests the possibility of considering race from a similar theoretical perspective, placing "race" in the cultural and historical rather than the natural, or biological, world.<sup>11</sup>

To do this requires examining settings in which the categories of ethnicity and, by extension, of race may be invented or at least negotiated. William Kornblum's classic *Blue Collar Community* represents an early effort to examine the complexities of ethnic and racial relationships in a steel mill community. He notes the crucial importance of bars and taverns in this process—an emphasis repeated in the comments made by people we met in Homestead. In his discussion of behavior in bars, Kornblum suggests both the flexibility of racial and ethnic categories—as men discover their "common biographies"—and the fixity of racial and ethnic identifications as soon as a man stepped out of that domain. The suggestion that bars are a place in which the invention and performance of identity goes on can be bolstered with the analysis Perry Duis offers in his book, *The Saloon*.<sup>12</sup>

Building on the thesis that leisure is socially productive, Duis analyzes the ways in which saloons, taverns, and bars function in changing urban settings. He views these as "liminal" settings, between public institutions regulated by official laws and personnel, and private institutions regulated by the equally strong forces of kinship and religion. Saloons, then, are semi-public institutions, a designation we find useful for our analysis. Not outside the law or beyond the demands of personal relationships, bars offer individuals a space in which to reinvent the terms of ordinary social interaction.<sup>13</sup> In a bar, owner and patron together monitor membership, limit access, and set the parameters of behavioral style.

Accounts of drinking behavior and of "liminality" helped us understand the role of bars in people's stories about Homestead in the past and in the present. In the pages below, we do not analyze drinking behavior or interactions in a saloon; rather, we focus on the function that references to bars and leisure activity perform in the narratives we heard. Such references cropped up often in our interviews, evidently a device for comparing the past with the present, the "good old days" with the decline apparent to anyone who lived in the town. Closer analysis revealed the hidden texts in these

descriptions, particularly the conflicts covered over by an association of “live-and-let-live” with the “best” days in a flourishing steel town. Rhetoric about bars also evoked an elaborate analysis of the relationship between mill and town, often not otherwise stated.

The importance of the mill, and management policies and practices, was never far from anyone’s mind, regardless of work experience, age, or gender. Efforts to characterize interactions outside the mill, especially in recreational spaces, can be read as comments on the hierarchies and regulations that pervaded shopfloor life. These efforts can also be interpreted as a way of gaining control over a history that by the end of the twentieth century might well seem to be completely under the sway of national and international forces outside the town. The comparison of mill and town in the stories we heard became even more powerful by being mapped onto a contrast between then and now. In historicizing the relationship, people exposed the terms of a persistent process of negotiation over cultural identifications and social interactions. Comparisons of mill with community, past with present, broke down the articulated assumption that race was no different from ethnicity. How profoundly (and yet not consistently) different race is, for the very people who use ethnicity as their model, constitutes a central theme in the following pages.

We began our inquiry with the ethnographic interviews we collected over a period of five years.<sup>14</sup> Our contacts ranged from chance encounters in a bar or a restaurant to extensive conversations with individuals who had worked in the mill and lived in the town for a good part of their lives; in several instances, we interviewed more than one person in a family. Two qualities of these interviews stand out. One, people were eager to talk, claiming that their “own” perspectives had been ignored in the policy literature prompted by the recent crisis and, two, how close to the surface of any account of Homestead issues of race lay—the aspect of life in a steel town others avoided.

Newspaper reports, social work case studies, documents from the mill, as well as secondary literature suggest a persistent contradiction between the notion of “tolerance” and the actual terms of race relations in most domains of Homestead life. This is not to deny the importance of a voiced ideal of tolerance—or, accurately, of live-and-let-live—but to note what it obscures in the experience of individuals. Here, too, the accommodations blacks made to life in a steel town offer a striking piece of evidence about the hegemony of a town’s self-image and the compromises people make with this image over time.

We introduce our analysis with the voices of four men, one white and three black. Each had lived in the town most of his life and each reflected on the past from the perspective of a present decline that was visible in the

growingly empty lot where a mill had once stood and the boarded-up windows on a business street that had attracted shoppers from all over the region. Having agreed to be interviewed, each man played his own kind of game with the white, female, anthropologist who was doing the interview. In these games, as much as in the explicit content of an account, lay a revelation of how people negotiated the important dimensions of identity: race, gender, and ethnicity—the last an identification the interviewer was asked to provide, in order that all the parameters of interaction be explicit.

*Tony—“spilling out onto the sidewalk”*

The story begins with Tony, an Italian-American of about sixty who had lived in Homestead all his life. Owner of a small shop, Tony was, like many other residents of Homestead, proud of his ethnic and religious heritage and of his loyalty to the town. His narrative captures the point of view other white men and women expressed, though not always with the vivid sense of urgency Tony conveyed.

The encounter with Tony had not been pre-arranged. Rather, it followed up on a series of observations of the commercial establishments that lined the streets between Eighth Avenue and the mill. Tony was standing in his doorway, looking for customers, and thought nothing of someone coming in and starting a conversation. A businessman all his life, Tony was used to chatting with customers. He also, of course, recognized a stranger and was slightly hesitant when a visitor with a tape-recorder asked whether he had time to talk about changes in Homestead. But he began, probably in much the same spirit he talked with various customers who dropped in and out.

His story, then, was self-conscious, though somewhat less so when he talked about his family or when he turned from the anthropologist to a familiar person in the shop. As such, however, his account contains important points and provides a central theme for this paper. In an effort not to focus on controversial issues when asked about the impact of the U.S. Steel decision to close the mill, Tony described relationships between ethnic groups in Homestead: the theme of live-and-let-live that we were to hear again. As Tony talked, and later when we analyzed the interview, it became apparent that he was portraying a sharp decline in the town in terms of a breakdown of boundaries between groups: once people knew how to interact, but now those “understood” boundaries had collapsed. From Tony’s point of view, relationships between white ethnic groups suggested how people could live with differences. And he implied the contrast; relationships between whites and blacks had to be negotiated according to quite other rules. These rules, Tony concluded, had broken down in the 1980s.



He began with an assessment of economic life in a steel town. His own business, he said, had been modestly successful, thriving in a “boom” and just getting by during a “bust.” But he knew, as well as anyone, that present circumstances were not just a dip in the fortunes of Homestead; he had only to look at his street to see the severity of recent changes. Few of the neighboring buildings had signs, and most closed rather than opened their doors to the stray pedestrian. Tony’s customers were among the few white people on that block. His concerns were, initially, more evident in what he did than in what he said. At various points during the interview, he would nod towards the dominantly black group of pedestrians across the street. Even as he warmed up to his story, Tony kept a practiced eye on the men who wandered up and down the street.

Tony opened up and relaxed when he referred to his family. These references, moreover, carried an assessment of the town and its dependence on a mill. His son represented the loss; a promising athlete who never quite made it on a national scale, “the boy” was also unable to get a job in steel or in the town at all. This sign of breakdown was completed by Tony’s account of his marriage. As he described his “mixed” marriage to a Slovak woman, the relationship became a parable of “right” relationships and of borders that could be crossed—as well as, by implication, borders that could not be crossed. The possibility of blurring the differences between whites of diverse ethnic backgrounds, in Tony’s presentation, reinforced the impossibility of crossing racial boundaries.

The terms of this contrast became clearer when Tony addressed the problem of the clientele across the street, especially the young men hanging around a bar on a near-by corner. He remarked on their “youth,” their restlessness, their “lack of anything better to do.” He also commented on the fact that he did not know them; according to Tony, these black men were “new” to Homestead. Somewhere along the way, too, he was reminded of how often his shopped had been robbed in recent times, though he made no accusations. What he did point out, however, was the way in which these “men” moved out of the bar and onto the sidewalk. In Tony’s eyes, the bar had no boundaries; drinking, talking, and various exchanges went on “in plain sight.” That he defined this as inappropriate behavior for a recreational place only one block away from the main commercial street suggests what he was “really” seeing.

Unlike the patrons of the bar, Tony maintained boundaries. Tony’s store window was covered with posters, shutting him in and “them” out. His careful respect of inside and outside was in startling contrast to the use of the street made by the bar patrons. Yet not once in the interview did Tony mention drunkenness or alcohol; rather, his comments suggested that the loose performance of private activities in a shared arena constituted a threat to the

“peace.”<sup>15</sup> Nor did he mention race. That this was at the heart of his perceptions of disorder, however, was clear from his gestures. Blacks like those “hanging around” down the street forced the category of race to become public and pragmatic—even if not spoken.

Tony’s comparison was a double one: past and present, ethnicity and race. His reading of the right relationships between groups depended upon a romanticization of the past and of ethnic diversity, as well as on an interpretation of change in the present. His own marriage, Italian and Slovak, was a parable for correct relations between groups; what he saw represented its antithesis. In his view, the men who pulled their chairs out into the street in front of a bar seemed to flaunt the rules for sociability; they did not recognize the boundaries that black men, like white, would have in the past. Every time he looked across the street—a glance he made frequently—he saw (and intended the interviewer to see) how thorough the current disorder was.

Tony’s reading of ethnic and racial relationships also reflected his own position in the town. He had not been subject to the constraints that black residents of Homestead had experienced even in the “good old days.” But Jim, a black man about twenty years older than Tony, had. His story gives a different spin to the thens and nows of race relations in Homestead.

### *Jim—“Breaking the glass”*

Like Tony, Jim had spent virtually all his life in Homestead. And, too, like Tony he was prepared to provide the official image of Homestead as a town that was traditionally tolerant. Jim was introduced to us by the man who owned the tavern in which we sat; he was, Mike said, “a man who really knew Homestead.” Through the interview we learned what that “really” meant, as Jim combined a repetition of the conventional story of the town with a subtle between-the-lines revelation of the racism that existed when one had the eyes to see it. Jim’s whole interview, in a sense, played with appearances and what lay beneath the surface; he did not lose sight of the fact that he was talking to a white academic who was planning to write a book about Homestead or of the fact that he wanted his perspective—a black perspective—represented in that book.

Jim migrated to Homestead in the 1930s, after the peak period of black migration into the Pittsburgh area. Except for the years of the Second World War, he has been a resident ever since. Jim was eager to be interviewed, partly because he too considered himself to be an expert on the town and partly because he enjoyed playing the “black-white” game. The interview replicated the racial interactions he described and he teased and tested the boundaries, alternating between straight talk and street talk.<sup>16</sup> We sat in the back room of the tavern, the place reserved (ostensibly) for women and

families. There was a door to the front room and “real” bar, which even in the daytime was populated mainly by white males.

Jim’s narrative was retrospective. He implicitly compared the 1930s with the present, condemning the “loss of opportunity now.” His reminiscences were dexterously communicated, as he ranged from a serious look at race relations to provocative jokes about the “wild life” that flourished during Homestead’s Depression days. In the 1930s, he told us quite accurately, the mill neighborhood was not only an industrial zone but also a lively commercial, night-club, and red-light district. “Below the tracks,” he said, “no matter who you were you could get anything you wanted.”<sup>17</sup>

Jim did not get a job in the mill—he did not indicate how hard or if he tried—but instead survived on a variety of legal, semi-legal, and illegal activities which rose and declined along with the fortunes of the mill. From his account, virtually all his major economic activity took place in the bars that surrounded the Homestead Works. Drinking establishments were his “work place” and he did not, as he put it, “combine business and pleasure.” Jim’s narrative presented a man of skill and wiliness. He portrayed himself as a “dealer” in drugs, women, and gossip, recounting his achievements in a mixture of bravado, nostalgia, and reflection on being black in a 1930s steel town. Surviving as a black in the underground economy depended upon his acute understanding of bar culture. Owners, patrons, and the police did not tolerate him because the law said they should. They tolerated him because he discreetly provided needed services.

Between the lines and sometimes quite directly, Jim painted a picture of delicately maintained rules of racial interaction. The limits of tolerance were clear, and clearly depended on the perceptions shared by the owner and patrons who controlled interactions in a bar. As a way of reminding the interviewer, too, of how perceptions led to particular behaviors, he told the “breaking the glass” story. In the 1930s, he said, if a black were given a drink in a white bar, the glass would be “smashed to pieces” against the bar afterwards. Whatever his interpretation of the perception of a black man that carried, he continued to insist on his ability to exploit the racism that existed in “the old days.” Then, he explained, he knew the categories through which he was perceived and he took advantage of his marginal status to market “uncertain” goods. Unlike the regular white patrons, Jim could bring contraband and illegal substances into the bar.

Pursuing his own version of the remembered past, Jim went on to tell how blacks calculated the risks and benefits of entering a white bar, exploring the limits on their patronage and the “deals” they might make. Blacks knew, he announced in his confident, teasing way, that they would never make friends with whites; they also knew, he added, how much money they could make from whites. Like Tony, Jim remembered a community in

which boundaries were respected, if occasionally tested, and interactions were guided by differences “everyone” recognized. Unlike Tony, Jim could never get beyond the boundaries that were dramatically marked by the legendary breaking of a glass.

Jim’s narrative operates on several levels. On the one hand, he portrayed a time in the past when a live-and-let-live policy determined racial as well as ethnic relations. On the other hand, it was clear from his anecdotes and metaphors that the policy did not have the same consequences for racial as for ethnic interactions. Running through Jim’s reminiscences was a tale of discrimination which his loyalty to the town and, in all likelihood, his awareness of our project kept him from emphasizing. At the same time, he might not have dented the image of Homestead even so much as he did had the subject of our interview not been the collapse of the mill.

Jim did not condemn Homestead for the racism he experienced. A self-proclaimed loyalist, he obscured his criticism under accounts that resembled people like Tony’s. Jim was not alone; generally, blacks we met who had lived in Homestead all their lives were more likely to echo the live-and-let-live story than those who only worked in the town.

Yet Jim was aware of changes in Homestead, caused, he said with ambiguity about the implications, by “outsiders.” Jim pointed out “company mistakes” and government carelessness as the chief causes of Homestead’s decline. Outside the tavern we could see evidence of the intrusions he condemned: a mill closed down and about to be torn down, buildings that were either boarded up or squatted in, and a street population that was largely male in the middle of a week day. Had we walked a few blocks up from the tavern, we would have seen another sign of change, one that Jim did not detail and that bears a complex relationship to the meanings of “race” in Homestead. Up the block were several bars, in front of which a lively business in illegal “goods” went on. If still run by blacks, the business was now conducted outside of black, not inside white bars; exchanges between blacks and whites were more marginalized than in the past Jim remembered.<sup>18</sup>

An interview with the owner of a black bar echoed the tension Jim’s narrative displayed between reconstructing the past as a time when people got along and portraying the discrimination that was part of a black person’s experiences in Homestead. Ben’s interview, too, underlined the significance of the changing social contexts in which “race” could be negotiated in contemporary Homestead.

*Ben and Otis—“you have to know your parameters”*

Ben was Tony’s neighbor, and he had been observing the interview of his fellow merchant. After Tony showed himself to be done, Ben wandered over, curious and concerned about our activities. With some urging, he

agreed to talk about his life in Homestead, and turned his biography into a discussion of the bar he owned not far from Tony's shop. This bar, serving a black clientele, turned out to have been in the family for two generations. Located near the mill, too, Ben's Bar occupied a niche often opened to black establishments: the recreational space for men who had worked shifts together hour after hour. His bar also stood in an area in which blacks ran other businesses, like informal taxi services, gambling places, and short-order restaurants.

Like the interview with Tony, this was a casual encounter and Ben presented only what he would have told a new customer or, more accurately, a visitor with a special interest in the town. Whether or not he represented a "black" view of Homestead, he did convey the view a black resident would present to a white outsider.

His view was not the same as Jim's. Ben was a proprietor, an independent businessman, and his Ryder Tavern catered mainly to other blacks in the community. But like Jim, and like Tony up the street, Ben conveyed a strong sense that things had been better in the past. Without denying the character of his clientele, he also suggested that "once" they would have patronized Tony's store with relative comfort though Tony probably never felt entirely welcome in the bar that was neighbor to his shop. Still, there had been neighborly relations on the block—in the past. Ben used familiar phrases to describe these better times: people got along and "everyone helped each other." But his nostalgia for a once-tolerant town had a cynical ring to it, especially when he referred to the role of the mill.

Ben commented on the sharp decline in the town since the mill had closed: "ain't nobody working." In the old days, he suggested, race was not a "problem" but a category, like ethnicity, though with different rules for interaction. Now race was a problem, and the unemployment that gave Ben his customers also suggested how a category became the basis for excluding some groups from access to resources: blacks were more likely to be denied jobs in Homestead than were whites. The time black men spent in bars was, as Ben implied, not a break from something else, or a calculated activity as had been true for Jim, but the result of discrimination in the job market.

He was even less direct than Tony about the impact of economic decline on race relations and, as with Tony, his gestures revealed more than his words did. Ben carefully moved the interviewer away from the black patrons of his bar, walking us up the block towards Eighth Avenue, the main street. In that way, he indicated that the presence of a white woman around the edges of a black bar was not appropriate, even though (possibly because) my role as interviewer was clear. Though this is only speculation, Ben may also have recognized that a crowd of young black men sitting at a bar in the middle of the day represented a tinder box of frustration with the potential for outburst.

From one perspective, Ben's position in the community had improved: more blacks in Homestead, and more men out of work, meant more patrons at the Ryder.

At the same time, as his behavior implied, a crowded bar on a summer afternoon represented the lack of opportunity and of incorporation into the community that black residents of present-day Homestead experienced. Ben's reticence about the racism in a steel town, then and now, can be attributed to the fact that an interview which had come about by chance was being taped, but it also fits with the presentation made by other blacks in Homestead. Black residents, people whose livelihood and friendships depended upon an accommodation to the compromises made in the community, did not refer directly to the racism that pervaded informal and formal transactions in the town—even if once those transactions had been negotiable and now no longer were. The contrast between Ben and Otis points up this distinction.

A mill worker, Otis had never lived in Homestead but only came in for his "turns" or shifts in the mill. He said more than either Jim or Ben did about the lack of difference between past and present in terms of black-white relationships. There was discrimination in the period whites called harmonious, just as there was discrimination in the present when whites spoke of disharmony and disorder. Otis was franker in his critique because he knew the town as a worker and not a resident; he was not as constrained as were Jim and Ben to respond to the dominant narrative told by their white neighbors.

Otis claimed he never experienced a tolerant Homestead. In the mill for forty years, Otis commuted from the virtually all-black Hill district of downtown Pittsburgh. As he thought back over the years, he likened Homestead of the 1940s to the deep South, "behind the cotton curtain," where he had served in World War II. He recalled with some amazement that "to work in an area where the same thing prevailed, it really took me back. You couldn't go into bars, you couldn't go into shows, it was really something. They were in another time capsule in Homestead at that time." Throughout the interview, Otis simply did not take the Homestead tale of the good old days seriously.

He did mention going to after-work bars with his fellow millhands, perhaps his most nostalgic view of the town. The custom was well-defined—the shot-and-beer after a turn—and so were the rules of interaction. As Kornblum suggests, in working-class communities a black man's access to town bars was limited and the occupational bars which were "open" did not permit unfettered association between black and white workers. Otis expressed pride in his contacts with white workers but he claimed he had always recognized the limits that local rules of interaction placed on friendship.

Otis did not socialize in bars in the white neighborhoods up the hill from Homestead's commercial district, not then or now. As he said, I "don't

go up the hill no kinda way... When you get off the main drag, forget it." As far as ethnic clubs, "oh no, no, no, you didn't go in there." He observed without bitterness that "it's really something to know you are living in a society that you have to know your parameters where you can operate...." The change for him was less Homestead's fall from "grace" than a collapse of the parameters within which he, and everyone else, had once operated.<sup>19</sup>

These four accounts, by three black men and one white, begin to suggest how perceptions of race and race relations in Homestead diverged. Blacks who lived in Homestead drew a less sharp contrast between then and now than did whites. For blacks, aspects of the interviews showed, the live-and-let-live policy they might attach to the past resembled segregation more than it did integration. For Tony, as he too talked with a white interviewer he did not know very well, the memory of the past was not of "integration" either, but rather of a respect for rules, a time when "people knew their places" and knew which differences could be negotiated and which could not.

Yet the past was better in the eyes of blacks as well as of whites in Homestead. Why? An answer lies in the sense each group had that formerly individuals controlled the "social contexts" of contact; local decisions about sociability reflected and reiterated cultural categories of identity. The change, then, only culminated with the collapse of the Homestead Works. Change was certainly underway by the 1950s, when some people protested the customs that hid racism beneath (a presumed) mutual accommodation. To whites especially this kind of "activism" signaled a breakdown in agreed-upon rules of interaction.

Jim, Ben, and Otis each had a version of the "good old days" so vividly evoked by Tony's account of Homestead. None of three black men exactly shared the white man's memories, since each had experiences of exclusion from neighborhoods, of relegation to lower positions in the job market, and of the apocryphal glass-being-broken if they did enter a white bar. Yet for all three, the past was a better time, a time when Jim could parley his marginality into a source of income and Otis could have an after-work drink with his crew—a time when, as Jim suggested, blacks could "rise" by negotiating the rules.

Otis was an interesting voice in this array of speakers. The only non-resident, he was also the only steelworker in our introductory group of interviewees. Incorporated into the mill world, he was more aware of at least one of the sources of discrimination in the town. Otis established his understandings of "race" in the town through the filter of his interactions on the shop floor.

### *Race and Steel*

In the 1930s, Homestead housed one of the world's largest steel mills; by 1986 the mill was completely shut down. For most of its history, U.S. Steel had been the largest employer in Homestead. In 1944, at the height of World War II, 12,662 production workers drew a paycheck at the Homestead Works. During the 1950s, the number of employees varied from 13,500 in the Korean war to 7,500 at the end of the decade. By 1970, the Viet Nam War pushed the number of workers back up to 9,250. Then in the 1970s the number of workers dropped steadily and relentlessly.<sup>20</sup> Whether the mill was thriving or cutting back, the repercussions were felt throughout Homestead.

The steel industry historically established the framework for race relations in Homestead and throughout Western Pennsylvania. From the beginning, the Homestead Works had a heterogeneous and a stratified workforce. Blacks, who made up at best one-fifth of the enormous workforce, were always twice as likely to be unskilled laborers as whites, and just half as likely to be skilled workers.<sup>20</sup> There were limits on mobility for the heterogeneous white ethnic groups as well, but never as severe as those constraining black movement up the job ladder. The limited occupational mobility of Eastern European immigrants that John Bodnar observed in Steelton, Pennsylvania, was true for the Mon Valley in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; some whites could rise, while others—especially Catholics—remained stymied by persistent discrimination.<sup>21</sup> As one black steelworker from Homestead remembered, as late as the 1940s “the mill was structured so that certain people of central European extraction” operated machines and maintained equipment. “At a higher level, they [jobs] were given to the Irish. Then you had your top superintendents that were mostly Germans or English, and on top of that sits your Scotch, which was Andrew Carnegie’s gift to the Scotch.” Blacks were laborers.<sup>22</sup>

Many white workers recalled this hierarchy as a necessary or even “natural” aspect of working in the mill. In their accounts, distinctions among workers just “happened.” Typical of this view, one white steelworker recalled that “the black man’s job was more manual labor. Some of them got good jobs. They worked their way up. I felt that a black man was the same as me.” Most whites expected blacks to accept the same mode of response they had and regard selective hiring and promotion policies as part of the job. Blacks, they said, were treated like any other group starting at the bottom of the ladder.<sup>23</sup> Given this perspective, whites were sharply critical of black unionists’ demands that the union live up to its goals of racial and ethnic egalitarianism and stop helping to structure seniority agreements to the disadvantage of blacks.<sup>24</sup>



By the late 1950s, African Americans had been struggling for years against their de facto segregation into hot and dangerous jobs in the open hearth, blast furnaces, masonry departments, or the labor gangs. In 1957, for instance, one black steelworker complained that "although we have been in the mill a long time, we can't even get these [skilled] jobs."<sup>25</sup> This protest, and others, were part of increasingly organized black protest organizations, such as "Fair Share," which demanded a greater proportion of jobs and promotions in the steel industry. In the 1960s, frustrated with their progress in the conservative and discriminatory United Steel Workers (USW), two black Homestead unionists took advantage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and sued not only the Homestead Works but also their own local. In 1973, U.S. Steel and the USW reluctantly accepted a "Consent Decree" in which U.S. Steel's hiring and promotion procedures were monitored by the federal government.<sup>26</sup> One black worker acknowledged the importance of the Consent Decree when he said that before the 1970s, the mill was "hunky's paradise" and, by implication, a black worker's hell.<sup>27</sup>

To the extent that the Consent Decree rearranged seniority, it had an enormous impact on the placement of workers and thus on race relations in the mill. Union leaders, as well as plant managers, found the Decree a bitter pill to swallow. One union official remarked: "I've never heard such racist comments in all the years I've been attached to it [the USW] until we got involved in the Consent Decree, and then it became open."<sup>28</sup> Some white workers, including many local union presidents, formed a "Steel Workers Justice Committee" and vowed to fight the agreement. For white workers, the Consent Decree also represented yet another loss in their control over work conditions and shopfloor policies.<sup>29</sup> Obviously not the only instance of federal involvement in local practices, the Decree underlined the feeling whites had that taking the terms of interaction out of the hands of those most involved brought a breakdown in relationships. As one white worker observed in 1976, "they didn't have any black problems then. It only started within the last ten years....They were too busy working to go out parading and carrying on trying to destroy the system."<sup>30</sup>

The Consent Decree also had an impact on the perceptions of residents in the town. Influenced by changes in the mill, whites accentuated the story of the good old days, with an even more vigorous sense of how well things had worked then. One longtime resident, for example, remembered that in the 1930s: "We played with them [immigrants and native-born children]. We played with colored. No discrimination at all."<sup>31</sup>

Memories of such a "harmonious" past also affected the way black residents of Homestead interpreted their town's history. Although many blacks genuinely treasured their relationships with whites, they also recognized that live-and-let-live involved a large degree of social segregation and occupa-

tional stratification. A black worker, interviewed in the 1970s, tried to reconcile the various threads of what he knew about the Mon Valley. He began by recalling that during his childhood, “we got along real good.” But as he continued his story, he revealed the divergence in black and white experiences and perceptions. When you grow up, he said: “You see the differences then. They surface. Children you grew up with, white ones, they could find jobs. Blacks jobs were scarce for.” And his interview grew angrier: after high school, his friends “were steady working, while I was steady walking” from mill to mill in a vain search for a job.<sup>32</sup>

While white residents stressed the tolerance of Homestead in the 1930s, black residents tempered the meaning that harmony had in their lives. Whites we interviewed insisted that the kind of integration inherent in live-and-let-live offered a more “natural” form of social relationships than when social contexts were “regulated” by the federal government. In the 1930s, we heard, a person could chose his or her contexts of interaction, whereas by the 1960s, people “had” to share contexts. Whites were commenting on laws that desegregated not only the public places in which they worked or shopped, but also the semi-public places in which they relaxed and let down their guard; laws also altered the private domains of neighborhood and home. Perceiving changes, white residents of Homestead continued to argue for “side by side” arrangements, knowing that this pattern had served (them) well for years. As interviews with two tavern owners show, side by side was viewed not as discrimination but a reasonable compromise of difference. Both businessmen emphasized the importance of “shared” social and spatial boundaries. How they arranged their bars mirrored the segregated residential patterns of Homestead, where houses and blocks are still “black” or “white.”

### Race and Recreational Spaces

#### *Larry and Mike—“we all got along”*

As long-term residents in the town, both Larry and Mike based their policies toward patrons of the bars they owned on the “common sense” version of Homestead’s history. Their decisions were supported, and enacted, by their customers who knew what to expect and what to demand when they entered these establishments. Larry’s Corner House and Mike’s Millhand Bar shared a proximity to the mill and had served as occupational bars for several decades.

In the interview we did with him, Larry described his place as “integrated.” He chose that word deliberately, to underline the fact that he shared ownership with a black man—he had sold him part of the building a few years earlier. The nature of the partnership was clearly and architecturally drawn: the building was divided in half and actually had two bars, back to

back. One side catered to black customers, the other to white. In the middle was a dance floor which, according to Larry, all patrons shared. "They listen to the same bands." He did not describe the couples, assuming one would know how social interaction worked on the dance floor. With the drinking space unambiguously bounded, the rules were set for all other bar activities.

The black side of the bar shared a wall with a jitney service, a black-run and black-patronized illegal gypsy cab company. The jitney office and the black side of the bar, in fact, seemed to be one space, as if no wall existed. By contrast, white patrons stayed at the bar, not engaging in the spreading sociability that was characteristic of the "other side." To an outside observer, it seemed that white patrons used the bar as a place to drink and eat, not as a source of contacts as blacks did. The division of sides was thus reflected in function as much as in structure. Taken literally, however, Larry's choice of the word integration was right: the bar did welcome both black and white customers.

Somewhat more starkly than others, this encounter demonstrated the divergence in black and white views of racial accommodation. From Larry's point of view, the bar was integrated; his black co-owner, however, saw the separation between one side of the bar and the other. What he shared with Larry was a sense that "race" could still be negotiated in a semi-public place. Larry had grown up in the 1950s, when the model of live-and-let-live was already under fire from civil rights laws and activists. Yet his assumptions, metaphors, and organization of space in his bar brought him closer to whites of an older generation than to his black partner. People drank in Larry's bar as they lived in Homestead's neighborhoods, side by side but not together.

Mike's Millhand Bar was an archetypal occupational tavern. A few blocks from the mill, his establishment was a key Homestead institution not only for the workers who poured out the gates and into his front-barroom but also for families who came on Sundays to enjoy dinner in his back—for ladies—room (and where, not coincidentally, we interviewed Jim). Mike, more prominently than Larry, recognized and took advantage of his position as a longtime observer of sociability in Homestead. He set himself up as a "voice" for the white ethnic community and enjoyed the interview. His account brought together, vividly, the themes we had been hearing in other white histories of the town.

Mike had grown up in the mill neighborhood in the 1930s, and he described his childhood as a period in which "everyone got along." Then, he said, "life was really a pleasure," meaning more than the simple joys of being a child. He went on: "If there was a tragedy struck your house, on your street, the whole street came and helped. We had a colored family, matter of fact he owns the funeral home here, Mr. Frederick. He had a broth-

er who was in the hospital, who needed blood. And at that time blood transfusions were, things were shaky, they didn't process the blood, I think they gave it to you directly. I'm not sure, I don't know, I was just a youngster. This was about 1934 or 35. But all the kids on the street went to give blood for him. And he was a colored fella, we were all white." For Mike, evidently, cooperative exchanges between black and white individuals indicated the best possibilities for living with, while not blurring, the differences between groups. The dramatic incident he relayed can be read as an exaggerated version of the "normal," daily exchanges between ethnic groups: food, child care, even love.

According to Mike, race relations in Homestead continued to be placid through the Second World War and into the post-War era of "boom" in the steel industry. "Black families, I'll tell you, up until the sixties they were treated just like us. We went to school together, we fought together, we played together. They used to come to our house and eat, [we'd go to] their house and eat." Mike had not worked in the mill but he heard enough about shopfloor relations confidently to include them in his narrative, another example of "how well things worked out" before the federal government intervened in relations between groups. "They would just tell you, 'all you hunkies get over here. All you niggers get over there. John, you're gonna be the pusher today. You take them five niggers and you get down the checkers. Andy, you take your five or ten men and you go down the cinder pits.' .... That's the way they approached it. Nobody thought anything of it." A later listener, however, might think twice about the fact that hunkies became "men" and blacks became "niggers."

For Mike, as long as everyone shared conceptual understandings, practices worked out; this was true, he said, until the 1960s when John Kennedy imposed "desegregation" on the community.<sup>33</sup> Mike enacted the form of live-and-let-live he considered ideal, maintaining spatial divisions and control over his clientele. He did not close the door on blacks any more than he did on women. As for women, Mike maintained the original "ladies entrance," which led into the back room rather than the front bar; Mike encouraged his potential black patrons to go to "their own" bar across the street. How firmly his lines could be drawn was evident to us one evening when a black woman came into the front bar. She asked for a drink of water and the bartender quickly turned to Mike for guidance about what to do. Mike permitted the water to be served. But as soon as the woman left, he began regaling a group of older ex-steelworkers with a tirade against blacks on welfare. Mike was able to preserve in microcosm the remembered quality of life in the old days largely because throughout the town in the years we cover the distinction between bars and other places was respected. Not as exclusive as an ethnic club, a bar was presumed to have criteria for entry,

a self-selected clientele, and shared norms of behavior. The ability of Mike to balance such exclusivity with a stated "openness" in his Millhand Bar depended on its accepted role as a workers' tavern. To the extent that his bar, like Larry's, retained the traditional functions associated with an occupational tavern, Mike could open the doors to "anyone" while knowing that the patrons themselves would enforce the "real" rules of sociability. Near the mill, neither the Corner House nor the Millhand Bar could restrict access in the way that the bars in residential neighborhoods of Homestead did; customs imposed inside these semi-public spaces followed the terrain of their locations in the town, from "mill" though "main street" and on up into "semi-private" neighborhoods.

Like residents, outside observers in all decades made much of the plethora of bars in Homestead. Like residents, too, outsiders viewed bars as a display of the "real" relations between groups, where categories of identity were negotiated and exploited. Some outsiders saw the same "harmonious" town residents saw, regardless of the decade in which observations were made. Others, however, were sharper in their vision and bolder in their criticism. The accounts they left confirm the disjunction between a notion of tolerance and the experience blacks had in their daily life.

The tolerance that Mike (and many white Homestead residents) remembered as characteristic of the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s was not inevitably evident to a visiting social worker or, later, representative of the NAACP. These interested outsiders presented harmony for what it was—a conviction on the part of whites, and consequently a fact of life for black residents, that people wanted to be where they felt comfortable. What observers did share with insiders was the conviction that these boundaries were communally enforced. As one NAACP official wrote in the 1950s, "in mixed neighborhoods, there are distinct patterns of segregation—recognized by all inhabitants of the community."<sup>34</sup> But at least some observers questioned the desirability of the boundaries, arguing that even if segregation was a product of self-policing, that did not mean it ought be accepted.

During the very decades whites described to us as tolerant, white bar owners in fact found it impossible to serve a racially mixed clientele. In the late 1930s, William Bell, a black sociology student at the University of Pittsburgh, observed that in virtually all taverns Jews and Italians discriminated against blacks but found themselves the victims of discrimination in other recreational places.<sup>35</sup> Two social workers reported in the mid-1940s: "of the thirty-two restaurants and bars in Homewood-Brushton [neighborhood of Pittsburgh] only four of them will serve Negroes and whites: Vaughan's Beer Garden which is owned by a Negro, Crystal Lunch whose proprietor is Greek, Kramer's Bar and Grill which is operated by a Jew and the Rose Bar Cafe, the proprietor of which is also Jewish."<sup>36</sup> According to

their report, in taverns patronized by blacks and whites in the 1940s, less than ten per cent of the customers were white. The owner of Vaughan's Beer Garden claimed tavern owners did not serve blacks partly out of personal prejudice, but also because "they feel it's bad business as they fear whites won't patronize them."<sup>37</sup> By his own report, he had lost most of his white clientele when he started serving blacks.

Blacks could not be legally excluded from a drinking place, but the extent to which they were tolerated would be made clear. In the late 1940s, a black reporter tried to buy coffee in a Mon Valley mill tavern, only to be told by the owner: "Sure, I know the law, but you must not live around here."<sup>38</sup> Jim's experiences in Homestead bars were not unique and not limited to the period before the Second World War. One Homewood-Brushton tavern owner who himself served blacks reported in 1945 that other taverns would put "the tariff on" blacks. "Others would say to prospective Negro customers, 'you're drunk. We don't serve drunks!'" The Negro would deny being intoxicated while the prejudiced proprietor called the police saying the Negro was disorderly. Instead of getting a drink, the Negro usually got ten days in jail for disorderly conduct.<sup>39</sup> Where whites and blacks did drink together, the phenomenon drew comment. In 1947, for instance, the *Pittsburgh Courier* praised "Zarinski's Saloon" as a place "where democracy is always at work" because black and white workers mingled there.<sup>40</sup> In 1953, the white CIO director for Homestead, too, found it important to stress that during World War Two blacks and whites got along so well that "we even went to their bars."<sup>41</sup>

Given the clarity of norms in bars and taverns, blacks could—and did—spare themselves the particular manifestation of white racism in a smashed glass or a reluctantly served drink of water. Evidence suggests that during the Depression, into the War years, and in the years of prosperity, most blacks tended not to transgress the informal laws or call on the protection of formal laws. Rather they established and patronized their own businesses as much as possible. True or apocryphal stories about the dangers of "mixing" made this an inevitable strategy. In the late 1930s, for example, a black steelworker provided a vivid account of the dangers that resulted from transgressing boundaries. "You get along all right if you tend to your own business.... Some guys stick their neck out—look at Willie Martin [a neighbor recently found guilty of murder]. If he'd of looked after his wife and kids instead of gallivanting with another man's wife down in that white saloon, he'd be home now."<sup>42</sup>

As the anecdote indicates, if there were gains for some blacks in daring to challenge the boundaries, there could be severe losses that discouraged others. A black who mixed with whites did not usually fare well in mill towns like Aliquippa and Homestead. This was the reality that allowed

white social workers to state: "Negroes...go only to those places where they have no fear of embarrassment and where they know they are accepted. This practice leads to a natural process of self-segregation...."<sup>43</sup> At such moments in their reports, the social workers sound like residents. Underlying both versions was the idea that "people want to be with their own kind, that's just human nature."

The white story of race came increasingly under fire after the Second World War when African Americans began to protest against community norms that excluded them from public as well as semi-public places, norms that were, after a while, plainly illegal. In 1948, a riot broke out at a de facto segregated public swimming pool when young white males tried to drive blacks back to "their own" nearby swimming pool.<sup>44</sup> The city reluctantly intervened, and blacks gained access to the pool. In the early 1950s, black USW members joined with the NAACP in protesting discrimination in area swimming pools, dance halls, and amusement parks.<sup>45</sup> In 1953, a few white unionists from Rankin (directly across the river from Homestead) joined their black vice president in successfully desegregating a McKeesport bar.<sup>46</sup> Faced with a similar threat, Kennywood, the region's largest amusement park, closed its pool rather than allow interracial swimming. Forty years later, a black worker would look back on this as a time of early triumph: through these efforts, he said, discrimination "kinda broke down...slow but sure. And by the 1960s, it was really something to go to the movie, pay the same price, and not to have to go upstairs."<sup>47</sup>

Small gains apart, racial segregation remained a fact of life in the Mon Valley.<sup>48</sup> In 1956, for example, a white bar owner admitted to a NAACP representative his exclusion of four black men from his establishment. It made no sense to come to his bar, he said, as blacks had "their own" bar nearby. Anyway there were not enough blacks in the neighborhood to support his business if he had welcomed them.<sup>49</sup> In the 1950s, blacks were kept out of the Homestead Carnegie Library's swimming pool, a central feature of that public institution. At a dance at the Homestead Catholic Youth Association in the mid-1950s, two black couples were admitted and asked to dance in the coat room.<sup>50</sup> In 1971, blacks in a milltown down the river from Homestead had access to only three of its thirty taverns. Six of those taverns still broke the glass if a black drank from it.<sup>51</sup> Three years later, two young blacks entered a Homestead ethnic club during a dance; they were there ten minutes before being chased out into the street. The police backed up the whites and beat the black youths. The evening ended with a crowd of blacks throwing bottles at the white party.<sup>52</sup>

From the point of view that Tony and Mike articulated, "civil rights" did "mess things up." Before, there had not been "race riots." Afterwards there were outbreaks which, though milder in Homestead than elsewhere,

still made a dent in the community's self-image and in the ideology that organized people's accounts of the town. By the 1960s, where people "mixed," fights were likely to break out.<sup>53</sup> One white woman told us her father had taken her out of high school for a while because "things had gotten so bad" between black and white students. People who lived in "Hunky Hollow," another woman remembered, put up barricades so blacks would not use the street. For many whites, the solution to such direct, and dangerous, conflict was a return to the arrangement of the "old days"—when people only went where they knew they were accepted.

But a return to the culture in which a live-and-let-live ideology could flourish was impossible. In part, this was because whites and blacks literally lived further apart than they had in the past. During the Second World War, half of Homestead had been moved to make room for the expansion of the mill. Many whites had been moved to all-white housing projects in nearby Munhall; most blacks were moved further away to projects that were segregated building by building.<sup>54</sup> After the War, more whites moved out into nearby all-white suburbs like Munhall, Greenfield, and West Mifflin. Blacks were barred from moving into these neighborhoods by realtors, bankers, and the residents themselves. So, for instance, a black doctor who moved to West Mifflin in 1955 had his house vandalized by teenagers. Four years later, in 1959, a black reporter looking for an apartment was told "your people live on the other side of the project."<sup>55</sup> Two decades later, despite growing official pressure to integrate residential areas, the story was the same.<sup>56</sup> A black man who moved to the suburbs in the early 1970s recalled his feeling that "the house was vacant and it didn't look swank enough to cause any trouble from the whites." But neighborhood kids beat up his son, telling him "only whites live on this side of the street."<sup>57</sup>

The suburbanization of Homestead's white population made Homestead seem "darker"—a term used advisedly by those who observed the change. In 1960, blacks were eighteen per cent of the population, in 1970, twenty-eight per cent, and by 1980, thirty-seven per cent. In 1990, the proportion was close to fifty per cent. With the decline of the steel industry in the 1970s and the lowering of property values, more blacks have moved into Homestead, blacks who, according to white residents, are "different from" the people they "used to know." Perceptions of race as a category of social interaction changed with population shifts. This was as much a matter of numbers as of "types" of black.<sup>58</sup>

Thus even before the mill closed, the past of live-and-let-live was receding further and further away. As the present became more problematic, the past became more attractive. Mike said it for his fellow white residents, when he remembered his own childhood: "And we'd sing, and they'd give you cookies, everybody'd have either a bottle of pop or a glass of wine.



Nobody abused liquor, you know, —well, I imagine there was some abuse but I didn't see it." For Mike, before Kennedy imposed desegregation, order had been maintained in all respects. "I don't know how many of us ended up alcoholics over the fact that we had a glass of wine at Christmas time." He also depicted, in his characteristically metaphorical way, the disorder whites perceived to be true now. He described several black-owned bars that had to be shut down because "they were all matchboxes for the fire trucks." They were not "safe." The possibility of conflagration remained. "You can see one of them still exists here. Bad place. As far as safety is concerned."

But there were still places in Homestead where the principles and practices of the "good old days" justified current customs. Bars that existed up the hill from the main business street and deep in a residential neighborhood preserved patterns of sociability and control that resembled what we heard and read about bars during the Depression. Here, under the watchful eye of the owner and in the conversational style of the patrons, categories of interaction were shaped and applied without strife; what might be called racism by an outsider was considered an accommodation to differences by those who owned, and patronized, such bars.

*Patty—"I didn't wanna mix colors"*

If it is true that bars across the urban landscape provide a window on race relations in Homestead, then bars in areas considered residential provide a particularly clear view. In such "semi-private" recreational spaces, the customs Mike, Larry, and others noticed endured—because there the contexts of interaction remained under the control of owner and patrons. These "residential bars" in the late 1980s constituted a domain in which the residents of a steeltown could still feel life was their own to manage.

We came upon Patty, and her bar, as part of our general exploration of a neighborhood where the recent demographic changes in Homestead had had a visible impact. Blacks were beginning to outnumber whites on streets where both groups had always lived. Patty was alert to the demographic reshaping of "her" blocks and not reluctant to bring it up. Unlike Tony, who perceived a similar change in his neighborhood, Patty trusted both her neighbors and herself; secure in her position—evident in the number of people who greeted her as we talked—she was forthright in her discussion of race. She was also critical of the town she had moved to thirty years earlier.

Patty had owned and run the neighborhood bar since that time, nearly all of her adult life. She was proud of this, considering it both a legitimate business and a legacy of her upbringing in a family of "bootleggers." This pride, it seems likely, carried her over into frankness about the rules and regulations she imposed, and without which the bar would not have survived.<sup>59</sup> "Well, it was kind of a controlled bar when I run it. Control in them days,

and I didn't wanna mix colors in them days but I'm friends with so many across the street." Like Mike, Patty distinguished what went on in her bar from the possibilities of "tolerance" outside the bar. Thus, she too confirmed the special quality of a bar, which meant that exclusion from its inner rooms did not amount to discrimination or racism: "I'm friends with so many," she said.

In addition, two and a half decades after the Civil Rights Act barred racial segregation of public facilities, she was not reluctant to describe her regulations in detail. Blacks never drank inside her bar. Patty reported this, and that she sold "take-out" food and beer to blacks to bring back home. "And they really supported me with take-outs. They would come in, Thursdays and Fridays, fish and shrimp. Always gave 'em a fair price. And they'd buy their beers. You make money on take-out. You make money, you have no problem cause they're gone."

She had also sponsored a black basketball team in the 1960s and 1970s. "And we had beautiful uniforms, I had everything for them—not only just tops, they had their shorts and shoes and socks and towels and everything." They had everything but access to her bar. "But no, those boys who play basketball are interested in sports not drinks. But I took them on parties and had steak dinners for them on Sundays when the bar was closed. I took 'em, we went over to Schenley Park a lot of times, had a big steak cookout, so they were good boys. Believe me, to this day they protect me. All good boys."

The way Patty described "getting along", in the 1960s and 70s was not unlike Jim's account of bars in the 1930s. Blacks and whites got along by providing services for one another and recognizing the limits to their interactions. The formulation of race relationships was similar for a fifty-year-old woman and an eighty-year-old man.

There were differences, too, stemming partly from the fact that she was white, owner of a bar, and he was black, an enterprising patron of various establishments, and partly from her critical approach and his nostalgic one. That Patty's bar was in a residential neighborhood, connected with a domestic rather than a "market" economy, gave her control over the rules of entry and of sociability. Her bar might be considered an extended household rather than a "drinking establishment"; that was the privilege of its incorporation into a block of houses rather than among stores or close to the mill.

Patty herself distinguished this bar from a "night bar" she once owned, closer to the mill. "When I had it I called it the Jack of Diamonds. And it was a night bar"—with a different clientele than she had at her neighborhood bar. "They had more of a mill crowd. I had the neighborhood crowd over here." Not only was the clientele different but so was the part that drinking played in negotiations between individuals: the night bar was open to diverse populations and the rules were created as much by the clientele as by Patty in her role of owner.

Patty demonstrated the kind of contact she thought proper between racial groups each time she waved to a black man driving by in his car. These were former members of her team, not permitted in her bar, but appreciated for their skills and services. "See, there's one of the boys. Billy, now that's the fireman. That's—the big guy driving the car is the one that used to be my star player." A second or two later a horn honked. "Hey, how you doin' babe?" she called out, and then explained: "There's another one, see what I mean?"

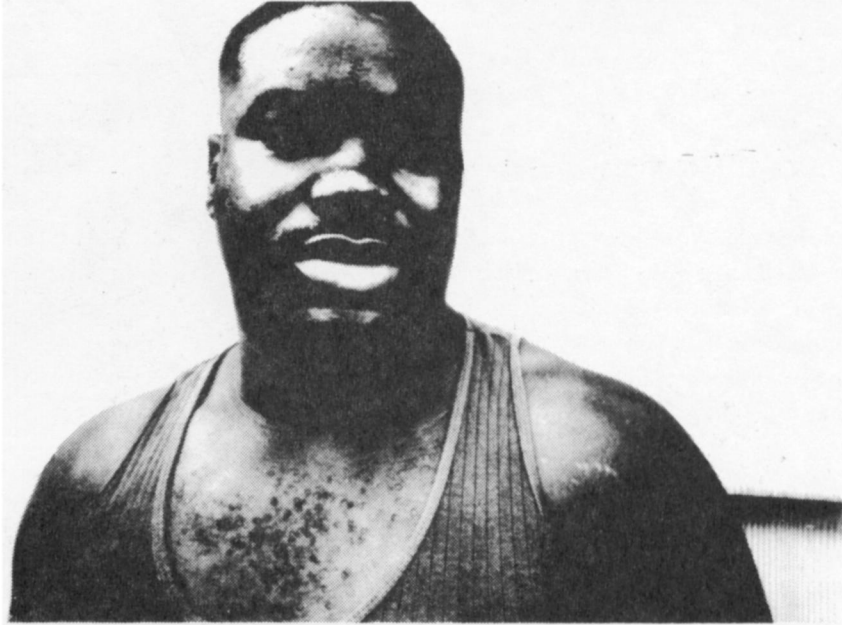
But like the private space of her bar, Patty forthrightly asserted, the private realm of home ought not be mixed. "See this neighborhood down there on the avenue? It makes me puke. Kids. Can't understand it. White mother, black kids. You know, I mean it might be all right for—you may think it's all right but what's those kids gonna do? .... What's gonna happen to those kids? I look at those kids, I get sick. Which way are they going?" In the new, deindustrializing Homestead, lines had collapsed and the control that really mattered had disappeared.

*"Blacks, whites, whatever—didn't matter"*

The people we interviewed looked back over the town's history at a time of severe economic crisis, which made demographic changes in the town appear problematic and the future bleak. We are not suggesting that Homestead in the 1980s had fallen from a golden age of consensual race relations. We are suggesting, however, that deindustrialization radically alters the "idea one people has of another" as competition increases for scarce resources.<sup>60</sup> A sense that the designations of difference are now weighted rather than neutral underlies the tendency of whites and some blacks in the town to summon up a time when differences existed without consequences. Mike typically pushed the point about the past to an extreme: "They were no different from us." And he described being reprimanded by the "colored" man next door, just as his father reprimanded the colored children on the block.

This view of the past, we have argued, was shared by some blacks. Rhetorical gestures and anecdotes brought black accounts close to those of whites, especially when the subject was the pre-World War II years. One black worker, for instance, recalled race relations in terms that echoed those of the white tavern owner, Mike. Mistreated by a white supervisor, he drew on the notion of cooperation Mike espoused; he recalled saying to the young supervisor: "I raised you. Me and your father raised you." His remembered response came, however, after he had been insulted by the young white supervisor. Such a thing had never happened to Mike. Yet it would not be fair to assume the black worker was simply downplaying the importance of his experiences in a racist setting; like Mike, he looked upon the past as a

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*Portrait of a Homestead resident, The Homestead Series, c. 1980s.*

time when individuals, not institutions, controlled “race” in Homestead. Both men put their faith in the ordinary contexts of interaction for reconciling differences, claiming through their anecdotes that this had “once” worked perfectly well.

One white ex-steelworker picks up the story where Mike leaves off, filtering his perceptions of the good in Homestead through the lens of his joblessness and a growing alienation from the “new people” in Homestead. Interviewed in 1988, Dave conveyed the history of his town by stressing the importance of an economic base if there was to be harmony and cooperation between black and white in Homestead. He was in his thirties, and had learned a more critical view of relations between the races than an older generation had.

Dave began by claiming that deindustrialization would not disrupt a way of life Homestead had sustained for decades. “This is one town where you don’t see—[overt evidence of racial tension]. Like blacks and whites get along so well,” now, he meant. And he explained why: “Whereas—I guess they got so much in common because they’re all poor and they’re all proba-

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*Four boys from Munhall hanging out. The Homestead Series, c. 1980s.*

bly laid off. But you, like my kids go to school with blacks. I went to a, my high school was fifty-fifty. And people seem to get along just as well. Whereas, because later on—your father worked with their father, you know. And then you'd go to work, you'd be working with them. Blacks, whites, whatever, didn't matter." But like the woman whose basketball team could not celebrate in her bar, this man added his limits. "I don't know if I'd want my daughters to marry any, into any other race other than my own."

Dave's implication was that as long as social interactions happened "naturally," people would get along, choosing a path through the tangled diversity of a steel town. But as the interview continued, his discomfort became more apparent. Things in Homestead were not working naturally. The "wrong" people were getting jobs. There were no mill jobs for the men who were well-qualified. In 1988 the structure was still standing; Dave looked out the window and wondered if, with all the machinery in place, the plant would start up again.

He also suspected that would never happen and that the danger of welfare, "sleeping in doorways," and turning to drink and drugs for relief would grow. "Shooting drugs, drinking, —that's suicide to me. Brought on by depression over losing your job. You lose your job first, then you lose your

house, then your wife divorces you, and then where're you at?" This was not the Homestead he had grown up in. Nor was it the town most people remembered where drinking was a relief from work, not a refuge from unemployment, and activities in bars seemed to uphold rather than threaten a way of life.

Dave's remarks did not reveal a newly virulent racist attitude caused by economic crisis so much as a sense of boundaries disappearing and familiar lines dissolving. For other white residents of Homestead as well, the disorder of the present was due to the influx of black migrants who caused drug and alcohol abuse and the increase in crime. Eighth Avenue, an ex-steelworker's wife said, had grown dark; she would not shop "down there." These sentiments were not brand-new but rather an intensification of the point of view expressed in response to the earlier "intrusion" of civil rights into Homestead life. White residents had offered similar explanations for the decline of Homestead in the 1970s: new blacks had moved in who had no respect for the mores of live-and-let-live; federal legislation gave them leeway to demand other social arrangements than those that phrase implied. One former steelworker, for instance, said in the mid-70s: "With the influx of laborers, colored people, it's changed. This used to be a nice spot. We had no problems."<sup>61</sup> With a particular poignancy in her choice of words, a woman whose husband owned a tavern said she did not remember blacks, only "workers." "Men would come from work and come in. The town was beautiful when I came."<sup>62</sup>

For its white residents, the town was once "beautiful." The memory of beauty, like the recollection of live-and-let-live, referred to social as well as physical aspects of the town. The empty lot where a mill once stood, boarded-up store fronts, bars that were "tinder boxes," grated against the memories of Homestead in "better times." And though they did not always state this directly, the white residents we interviewed evidently blamed a good part of the change on the effects of black activism and civil rights laws. From the point of view of whites who stayed in the town, the 1980s and 1990s represented an even more strenuous break with customs than had the 1960s and 1970s. As they talked, they drew on a collective memory of "perfect times" during the 1930s; the harmony of below the tracks was an emblem of what Homestead should be.

The story is different when we listen to the voices of blacks who grew up and remained in Homestead. They recalled the patterns of discrimination that were part of the black experience in a steel town, covered over as they might be in Homestead by the town's powerful self-image. Like whites, the blacks we interviewed knew the civil rights movement brought far more than parades and a revision of law. The national movement provided resources for revising an interpretation of Homestead that had never suited

their experiences of the town. Then in 1986, the devastation brought especially to the lives of African Americans released the strong critical comments that had hitherto been part of the (albeit only partially) hidden text.

Ultimately, the closing of the mill exacerbated the contradictions in the discourse of live-and-let-live for both whites and blacks. By the 1970s, whites had begun to complain that local control was slipping as a result of consent decrees in the workplace, school integration, and direct black protest against the status quo. All these factors undermined the premise of live-and-let-live that differences could be acknowledged without resulting in discrimination. The closing of the mill was a reminder of the external factors that had all along shaped the way in which blacks and whites perceived each other. When outside crews moved in to tear down the Works, the symbolic destruction of Homestead was complete.

### *Conclusion: The Invisibility of Race*

Throughout this essay, we have argued that “race” is not a biological or demographic fact but a perceptual category. We have shown that whites in Homestead collectively embraced a memory of a town that was harmonious and tolerant, in contrast to the imposed ethnic and racial stratification of the mill. Reading between the lines of such comments, we saw that first civil rights and then, more powerfully, the shutdown of the mill severely challenged white control over the town’s dominant model of race relations—a model in which strident inequality was glossed over by a presumption of common rules for sociability. In the face of these challenges, whites brought forward an image of the past in which live-and-let-live guided all interactions, as if recalling a once-perfect community would guarantee its reinvigoration. On the surface, black as well as white residents of Homestead might assure outsiders that the town’s past was harmonious, but the details of blacks’ narratives indicate how divergent the actual experiences of this harmony were. The stories African Americans tell expose the practice of racism that the rhetoric of live-and-let-live covered over. Blacks who lived in Homestead, loyal to its assumptions, negotiated the rhetoric of live-and-let-live, at once compromising with and displaying the evil subtext of the myth. And so four black men laughed about the town’s flaws, until a “newcomer” came by and condemned it as a “bad” place. “Then get on the bus and go back to where you came from,” they said in unison. Blacks who worked in Homestead but lived elsewhere were less likely to accept live-and-let-live as a proper history for the area.

From the narratives of whites and blacks it is clear that challenges to racism in the mill and in Homestead itself after World War II helped to shape the memory of Homestead in the 1930s as a “harmonious” place. In the face of the civil rights movement, whites strengthened their articulation

of a past community of live-and-let-live, when blacks and ethnics were equally discriminated against and shared rules were presumed to govern all interactions. It was as if "remembering" the once-perfect community would be enough to guarantee Homestead's future. This idealization of the past was accelerated by the harsh reality of a deindustrialized Homestead, which reminded whites how little fundamental control they had over their any element of their community's fate.

Given the contradictions in these accounts of Homestead, why have so many observers chosen to avoid the issue of racism in Homestead? Part of the answer must lie with Homestead's reputation as a heroic working-class town. To many, this town of strikes and manly workers creating steel in a dangerous environment represents the essence of "workers" in the annals of American history; racism would tarnish the heroic image. Furthermore, the rhetorical overlap between white and black narratives of Homestead's history, if examined uncritically, could lead one to conclude that Homestead had no race relations "problem."

In implicitly accepting this view of the past, observers have succumbed to whites' use of ethnicity as a model for Homestead-style sociability in which "everyone got along" and "we ate in their houses, they ate in ours." The generous quality of ethnic diversity is manifested in the persistence of ethnically-homogenous church congregations, the survival of ethnic clubs, and the publicity surrounding ethnic festivals. However, throughout the years we cover, ethnicity did not constitute grounds for permanently denying individuals access to housing or jobs on the basis of their group identity.

In fact, white Homestead's continued emphasis on ethnicity is in many ways a text about race—a means to explain the contradiction between the racism on the ground and the town's reputation for harmony. Live-and-let-live, in its behavioral and rhetorical forms, allowed for symbolic distinctions between members of different ethnic groups to persist while economic or social distinctions faded. Live-and-let-live facilitated the creation of a collective "white" identity amidst an ethnically heterogeneous, racially stratified mill town. Although ethnicity still persists and ethnic differences do shape many individuals' lives in Homestead, inter-ethnic differences blur to insignificance when compared to race.

In the end, any observer of American steeltowns must take on the responsibility of probing the myths these towns both inspire and proclaim. Homestead has had a special history, its complex animosities hidden beneath its symbolic role in American labor history. That is why a penetration of its public images may be especially important; to preserve Homestead's image as the "good" working class community does a disservice to residents, both white and black, who constructed a community out of the tensions and deprivations of lived experience.



Acknowledgments: we would like to thank the people of Homestead, who gave us their time and thoughts. We also thank the members of the Pittsburgh Center for Social History, Working-Class History Seminar, Joe Trotter, John Modell, Lisa Frank, Eugene Ogan, Ray Henderson, Tony Buba and the anonymous reviewers at *Pennsylvania History*. The errors, of course, are ours.

### Notes

1. Although the literature on deindustrialization provides an insightful analysis of the macro-economic causes and consequences of plant closings it fails to illuminate the response of workers and communities to deindustrialization. Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison's seminal work, *The Deindustrialization of America* (New York: Basic Books, 1982) understood much better the economic effects of plant closings upon communities than how those communities responded. They implied that workers would respond *en masse* as a class to plant closings; this assumption is also shared by Staughton Lynd's *The Fight Against Shutdowns* (San Pedro: Steeple Jack Books, California, 1982). Lynd argued that after U.S. Steel began to shut down its mill in Youngstown, Ohio in the late 1970s, a steelworker-based movement arose to reopen U.S. Steel's mills on a worker and community-owned basis. Thomas Fuechtmann's *Steeple and Stacks* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989) also analyzed the movement to reopen the steel mills in Youngstown. Fuechtmann noted that the initial impetus to reopen the mills came from Catholic priests and lay activists who never understood why steelworkers failed to take to the streets to support them. Although Fuechtmann recognized that workers could be quite disorganized in the face of plant closings, he did not analyze the role of race in that disorganization. Glimmers of the role of race relations in responses to deindustrialization can be seen in shadowy form in some of the literature; for instance,

in *Rusted Dreams* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1987) David Bensman and Robert Lynch acknowledged that ethnic and racial tensions were pervasive in East Chicago, but do not fully explore how this history shaped workers' response to deindustrialization. In short, the literature on deindustrialization is deficient in understanding the role race plays in the deindustrializing city.

2. William Serrin, *Homestead: The Glory and Tragedy of an American Steeltown* (New York: Times Books, 1992), 7; John Hoerr, *And the Wolf Finally Came: The Decline of the American Steel Industry* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1988). Many contemporary observers realized the 1892 strike symbolized the end of a way of life for American workers; see Arthur G. Burgoyne, *Homestead: A Complete History of the Struggle of July, 1892* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1979). The Homestead strike has been featured prominently in a number of monographs on the working class, such as Francis G. Couvares, *The Remaking of Pittsburgh: Class and Culture in an Industrializing City, 1877-1919* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984) and David Montgomery, *The Fall of the House of Labor: The Workplace, the State, American Labor Activism, 1865-1925* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). The latest and most thorough work on the strike is Paul Krause, *The Battle for Homestead: Politics, Culture and Steel* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1992). Homestead was the site of the one

- of the classics of sociology, Margaret F. Byington's, *Homestead: The Households of a Mill Town* (New York, 1910). See also David P. Demarest, ed., "*The River Ran Red*": *Homestead, 1892* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1992); S. J. Kleinberg, *The Shadow of the Mills: Working-Class Families in Pittsburgh, 1870-1907* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1989).
3. Irwin M. Marcus, "The Deindustrialization of America: Homestead, A Case Study, 1959-1984," *Pennsylvania History* (June 1985): 162-82; "Deindustrialization: A Panel Discussion," with Paul Clark, moderator, Irwin Marcus, Carl Meyerhuber, Charles McCollester, and Mark McColloch; comments by James Toth, Joe Gowaskie and David Bensman, *Pennsylvania History* 58 (July 1991): 181-211.
  4. Dennis Dickerson, *Out of the Crucible: Black Steelworkers in Western Pennsylvania, 1875-1980* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986). See also Peter Gottlieb, *Making Their Own Way: Southern Blacks' Migration to Pittsburgh, 1916-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 117-27; Matthew S. Magda, *Monessen: Industrial Boomtown and Steel Community, 1898-1980* (Harrisburg, 1985), 14-15.
  5. The phrase is borrowed from James Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990). We discuss our research method below.
  6. Based on our field notes and interviews, racial tension in Homestead and the Mon Valley worsened in the wake of the shut-down of steel mills. See also Jim Cunningham and Pamela Martz, eds., *Steel People: Survival and Resilience in Pittsburgh's Mon Valley* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work, 1986), 72-3 and 93-4.
  7. Discrimination by gender is another thread in the story, but one we have chosen not to deal with in this paper.
  8. Ulf Hannerz, "The Global Ecumene as a Network of Networks" (Unpublished manuscript, 1990).
  9. Barbara Fields, "Ideology and Race in American History," in J. Morgan Kousser and James M. McPherson, eds., *Region, Race and Reconstruction: Essays in Honor of C. Vann Woodward* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 149.
  10. Rick Fantasia, *Cultures of Solidarity: Consciousness, Action and Contemporary American Workers* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 16.
  11. Fredrik Barth, ed. *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* (Boston: Little Brown, 1969). Kathleen Neils Conzen, David A. Gerber, Ewa Morawska, George E. Pozzetta, and Rudolph J. Vecoli, "The Invention of Ethnicity: A Perspective from the U.S.A.," *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 12 (Fall 1992), 3-41. David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (New York: Verso, 1991).
  12. William Kornblum, *Blue Collar Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 75-87. Kornblum does not just focus on bars, but integrates them into the community fabric of the South Side of Chicago. See also Perry Duis, *The Saloon: Public Drinking in Chicago and Boston, 1880-1920* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983); Roy Rosenzweig, in *Eight Hours For What We Will: Workers and Leisure in an Industrial City, 1870-1920*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).
  13. In *Weekend Warriors: Alcohol in a Micronesian Culture*, Mac Marshall makes this point in a way that is both cogent and applicable across cultures (Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing Co, 1979).
  14. Judith Modell, an anthropologist, has been doing fieldwork in Homestead since 1988, concentrating on families who have been in the area for over three generations. She has interviewed approximately fifty individuals, of whom seven are black. John Hinshaw has just finished a dissertation on black and white steel workers in the post-World War II period. He interviewed about thirty individuals, of whom five were black and also consulted one hundred interviews in archives or personal collections, of which forty were black.
  15. Dan Rose makes the point about the street as a shared space and a "stage" upon which to perform a variety of "acts" in his book on a black neighborhood, *Black American Street Life: South Philadelphia*,

1969-1971 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987).

16. His skill at and self-consciousness about social boundaries was evident, too, when a male friend of Modell's stopped by. Jim's demeanor and the content of his conversation changed for the benefit of the other man (and, of course, for Modell's benefit as well); sex was the subject and winks were the dominant gestures.

17. "Below the tracks" is a key phrase in Homestead's history. Used by almost everyone we interviewed, the phrase refers to the neighborhood surrounding the mill, a vast area that was torn down in 1940 when the mill expanded. Its metaphorical resonances should be clear in the rest of our article. The synonymous "ward" was a heterogeneous neighborhood, where Eastern Europeans, Mexicans, and blacks from the South lived. See Curtis Miner, *Homestead: The Story of a Steel Town* (Pittsburgh: Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania, 1989), 59-61. See also Miner's "Mill Towns, the 'Underworld Fraternity,' and the Working Man: Reconsidering Local Politics and Corruption within the Industrial Suburb, Homestead, Pennsylvania, 1921-1937" (Conference Paper, 1988, in Hinshaw's possession) on how Burgess Jack Cavanaugh's regime in the 1920s tolerated vice. This tolerance wasn't unique to Homestead, John Hoerr discusses a similar phenomenon in McKeesport in the 1940s. See Hoerr, *And the Wolf Finally Came*, 178-84. Pittsburgh's politicians were also soft on vice: Michael Weber, *Don't Call Me Boss: Pittsburgh's Renaissance Mayor* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1988), 294-309.

18. Hinshaw's participant observation in the Ryder Bar corroborates this. Joe Trotter's *Black Milwaukee: The Making of an Industrial Proletariat, 1915-1945* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 180 indicates that blacks in Milwaukee ran the "policy racket" and were involved in prostitution. Rob Ruck's *Sandlot Seasons: Sport in Black Pittsburgh* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987) emphasizes the connections between at least a portion of the black middle class and the vice rackets. The "sporting life" based on illegal activities helped finance black Pittsburgh's black baseball teams.

19. As in the South Chicago neighborhood of Kornblum's 1970 study, in Homestead the civil rights movement did not alter the lay of the land Otis described. The real recreational spaces for black steelworkers were the black neighborhood bars.

20. 1930s and WWII figures from Dickerson, *Out of the Crucible*, 154-5; for the 1950s, see Unemployment Surveys, USW Research Department, box 25, file 28; box 63, file 2, United Steel Workers of America, Historical and Labor Archives, Pattee Library, Penn State University (hereafter USW); *1960s and County Industry Report* (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Department of Internal Affairs, 1961-1973).

21. U.S. Steel's own personnel data showed this for a period as late as the late 1960s. Rodgers and Turner vs. U.S. Steel, U.S. Court of Appeals, 3rd Circuit, Joint Appendix v-3, 789a, cited in Robert Ruck, "Origins of the Seniority System in Steel," (Seminar Paper, University of Pittsburgh, 1977), 94. See also John Hinshaw, "Dialectic of Division: Race and Power Among Western Pennsylvania Steelworkers, 1937-1975" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Carnegie Mellon University, 1995), 350-1.

22. The conservative survival strategies of Eastern and Southern European immigrants in the steel industry have been ably documented by John Bodnar in *Steelton: Immigration and Industrialization, 1870-1940* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1977) and Eva Morawska's *For Bread With Butter. Life Worlds of East Central Europeans in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, 1890-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985). That ethnic stratification broke down in the post-WWII period is based on preliminary review of National Tube Works pension files in the United Electrical Workers/Labor Archives, Archives of Industrial History, University of Pittsburgh (AIS). See also John Bodnar, Roger Simon and Michael P. Weber's *Lives of Their Own: Blacks, Italians, and Poles in Pittsburgh, 1900-1960* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982).

23. Mr. Scanlon, interview by Tony Buba and Ray Henderson, Summer 1992, tape recording. These interviews are in the possession of Tony Buba and Ray Henderson and will be used for their documentary film:

"*Struggles in Steel.*" The interviews will eventually be deposited in the Carnegie Public Library in Braddock, Pennsylvania.

24. Martin Duffy and Frank Leach interview, June 3, 1976, Homestead Album Oral History Project, AIS.

25. Martin Duffy and Frank Leach, interview, June 3, 1976, Homestead Album Oral History Project, AIS.

26. Ruck, "Origins," 88; see also 87-111.

27. Ruck, "Origins," 88. Other black unionists protested conditions at the Homestead Works in the 1960s and 1970s; see Eugene Arrington, notes, October 3, 1963, in the Arthur Miller Papers, box 2, file folder "Civil Rights—Frank Shane, 1961-1965," USW; see also Sydney Lee Smith to Earnest Clifford, letter, August 8, 1973, box 44, file "S. Smith;" and file folder "Charges Filed Against Union Local Equal Opportunities," both in Papers of Homestead Steel Local 1397, Special Collections, Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

28. Charles Lee, Jr., interview by Henderson and Buba, Summer 1992, tape recording.

29. Ben Fisher, interview, June 23, 1977, transcript, Pattee Library, Pennsylvania State University.

30. Frank O'Brian, former President of a nearby USW Local Union, number 1843, railed against the agreement, particularly because the USW gave its members no chance for input. O'Brian argued this was because the Consent Decree was "a sell-out." See Ray Steffens, "USW Aide Blasts 'Equal Job Decree,'" *Pittsburgh Press*, May 19, 1975, 3. O'Brian founded the "Steel Workers Justice Committee" who vowed to fight the agreement. See Edward Verlich, "Steelworkers Here Map Fight Over Minority Decree," *Pittsburgh Press*, October 4, 1974, 2. Even some black unionists noted that they wished they had never become involved with the union during this period; see John P. Moody, "Civil Rights Panel Costs USW Officers Here," *Pittsburgh Post Gazette*, October 28, 1974, 21.

31. Steve Vrael, interview, May 28, 1976, transcript, Homestead Oral History Project, AIS.

32. Martin Duffy and Frank Leach, interview by Jim Barrett, June 3, 1976, tran-

script, Homestead Oral History Project, AIS.

33. Willie C. Norman, April 9, 1976, transcript, Oral History of Ethnic Fraternal Organizations, AIS.

34. Mike may be referring to John F. Kennedy's Committee on Equal Opportunity, Order #11246, in 1961, which ordered companies with government contracts to comply with non-discrimination policies. See Dickerson, *Out of the Crucible*, 28, 180-81 and 190-91. The union's complicity with U.S. Steel's racism in Birmingham, Alabama, is ably documented in Robert J. Norell's "Caste in Steel: Jim Crow Careers in Birmingham, Alabama" *Journal of American History* 73 (December 1986): 669-94.

35. Robert Mast to Marion Jordon, letter, February 13, 1956, NAACP records, box 17, file folder #1, "Public Accommodations, 1957-1958," AIS.

36. William Yancy Bell, "Commercial Recreational Facilities Among Negroes in the Hill District of Pittsburgh" (Master's Thesis, University of Pittsburgh, 1938), 9-20.

37. Geraldin Hermalin and Ruth Levin, "Recreational Resources for the Negro in the Homewood Brushton Area" (Masters Thesis, University of Pittsburgh, 1945), 35-48.

38. Hermalin and Levin, "Recreational Resources," 49-50.

39. *Pittsburgh Courier*, November 22, 1947.

40. Hermalin and Levin, "Recreational Resources," 49-50.

41. *Pittsburgh Courier*, April 5, 1947.

42. "Homestead Community Studies," File 1, Drawer 1, Folder 12, Records of the American Service Institute, AIS. Emphasis added.

43. Celia Rosenblatt Moss, "Social and Economic Factors Affecting the Health and Welfare of a Group of Migrant Families, A Study of 29 Negro Families Migrating to Aliquippa, Pennsylvania, from Americus, Georgia, in 1936, for the Purpose of Employment at the Jones and Laughlin Steel Corporation" (Masters Thesis, University of Pittsburgh, 1943), 40-2.

44. Hilda Kaplan and Selma Levy, "Recreational Facilities for the Negro in the East Liberty District with Special Emphasis on Tracts 7G, 12D, and 12E" (Masters

- Thesis, University of Pittsburgh, 1945), 49.
45. Civic Unity Council, Second Report on Highland Park Swimming Pool, April 12, 1950, NAACP Records, box 3, 22-3, AIS. Blacks noted that "their pool" was inferior, and termed it the "inkwell."
46. David McDonald to Rev. Leroy Patrick, Kennywood Park Corporation, West View Park Corporation, May 18, 1953, letter, NAACP Papers, box 6, file "Swimming Pools, 1952-1954," AIS; Anthony Strinich to NAACP, letter, April 28, 1953, NAACP Papers, box 6, file "Swimming Pools, 1952-1954," AIS.
47. "Union Leaders Charge Civil Rights Violation," *Pittsburgh Courier*, January 15, 1949, 3.
48. Otis King, interview by John Hinshaw, February 25, 1992, tape recording. Black steelworkers still had to fight to uphold the union's policy of boycotting facilities that tolerated discrimination. In 1957, two steelworkers from Donora local 1758, Gray and Carter, contacted David McDonald to ensure that a local picnic would not be held at Rainbow Park. See David McDonald to Frank Shane, letter, June 12, 1957, box 10, file 7, Civil Rights Department, USW. In Braddock, James Greathouse said "things started changing after the war. Segregation started to get broke down." James Greathouse, interview by Henderson and Buba, Summer 1992, tape recording.
49. In mill towns with few blacks, most African Americans operated within tight constraints. Ruby Ovid, "Recreational Facilities For The Negro in Manchester" (Masters Thesis, University of Pittsburgh, 1952), 45, 57. *Pittsburgh Courier*, November 22, 1947, notes that blacks in Clairton had access to only three of the thirty beer gardens in town.
50. No author, memo, November 9, 1956, "Public Accommodations, 1957-1958," NAACP Records, AIS.
51. "Homestead Community Studies," File 1, Drawer 1, Folder 12, Records of the American Service Institute, AIS. See also interviews with Dr. George Little and Mr. J. W. McGowan in that same file.
52. *Pittsburgh Courier*, April 24, 1971, 19.
53. *Pittsburgh Courier*, June 15, 1974, 1.
54. The late 1960s and 1970s saw an escalation of racial violence throughout Pittsburgh and the Mon Valley in previously integrated schools, and an explosion of violence when all-white schools were integrated. *Pittsburgh Courier*, May 15, 1971; May 15, 1971, 31; June 5, 1971, 1; February 23, 1974, 9; August 24, 1974, 9; November 30, 1974, 9. Street violence: *Pittsburgh Courier*, August 17, 1974, 1.
55. Lori E. Cole, "Voices and Choices: Race, Class and Identity in Homestead, Pennsylvania, 1941-1945," (Ph.D. Dissertation, Carnegie Mellon University, 1994).
56. *Pittsburgh Courier*, February 12, 1955, 1; December 6, 1959, 3.
57. Pennsylvania passed a rather ineffective Fair Housing Law in 1961. "Keystone State Gets Fair Housing Bill," *Steel Labor*, February 1, 1961, 6. The "Fair Housing Law" was signed into law on February 28, 1961. It gave the old Fair Employment Commission Practices a new name: the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission. The Fair Housing Law also expanded the scope of the 1939 public accommodations law; see Pennsylvania Equal Rights Council, March 17, 1961, box 38, file folder "PA Equal Rights Council," NAACP Records, AIS.
58. *Pittsburgh Courier*, December 30, 1972, 1.
59. Population of Homestead
- | Year | Total  | Black |
|------|--------|-------|
| 1930 | 20,141 | 3,606 |
| 1940 | 19,401 | 3,388 |
| 1950 | 10,046 | 1,380 |
| 1960 | 7,445  | 1,359 |
| 1970 | 7,502  | 1,735 |
| 1980 | 6,309  | 1,877 |
| 1990 | 4,179  | 1,828 |
60. She was easy about being tape-recorded and did not mind photographs being taken of her establishment.
61. Fields, "Ideology and Race," xx and *passim*.
62. Mel Rutter, interview, May 11, 1976, transcript, Homestead Oral History Project, AIS.
63. Jane Stophel, interview, May 11, 1965, transcript, Homestead Oral History Project, AIS.