

DOCUMENT NOTE: *Born Malvina Milder, Malvina married in 1934, became active in various causes and received her PhD. in 1936. She later met Pete Seeger in the 40s and became a folk singer.* SOURCE: Words and music by Malvina Reynolds, 1962 Schroder Music, renewed 1990 Nancy Schimmel.

*Little Boxes on the hillside, little boxes made of ticky tacky,  
Little Boxes on the hillside, little boxes all the same,  
There's a green one and a pink one and a blue one and a yellow one  
And they're all made out of ticky tacky and they all look just the same.  
And the people in the houses all went to the university,  
Where they were put into boxes and they all came out the same;  
And there's doctors, and there's lawyers, and there's business executives  
And they're all made out of ticky tacky and they all look just the same  
And they all play on the golf course and drink their martini dry  
And they all have pretty children and the children go to school  
And the children go to summer camp and then to the university  
Where they are all put in boxes and they all come out the same*

1. What do you think “ticky tacky” is?
2. Is this a song that supports or critiques the consensus of the 1950? Explain
3. What elements of society or groups of people are missing from this song’s lyrics?

### Geographic Distribution of the U.S. Population

	1950	1960	1970
Central Cities	32.3	32.6	31.4
Suburbs	23.8	30.7	37.6
Rural Areas	43.9	36.7	31.0

4. Which geographic area’s population *increased* the greatest percentage?
5. Which geographic area’s population *decreased* the greatest percentage?



6. What do you notice about the homes of Levittown in the photographs?

7. What is similar and dissimilar about Levittown to your own?

**Levittown Racial Exclusion Clause:** “The tenant agrees not to permit the premises to be used or occupied by any person other than members of the caucasian race. But the employment and maintenance of other than Caucasian domestic servants shall be permitted.”

**At 45, Levittown’s Legacy Is Unclear, *New York Times*, June 28, 1992**



Eugene Burnett, a retired sergeant in the Suffolk County Police Department who is black, enlisted in the Army two days before his 17th birthday. After his discharge in 1949 he read advertisements in *The Daily News* and *The New York Mirror* for Levittown, and he and his fiancée borrowed a friend’s car and drove to Long Island. “We were taken to a model house, never thinking there was any kind of problem,” Mr. Burnett recounted. When he asked the agent at the rental office for an application, the agent seemed to go into shock, Mr. Burnett recalled, adding: “‘It’s not me,’ the agent said. ‘The builders have not at this time decided

to sell to Negroes.’ I was devastated. I’ll never forget the ride back to East Harlem.”

\* The impact of this segregated past continues to shape the present. The 2000 census identifies 94.1% of Levittown’s population as “Caucasian.” In a town of 53,000, only 3,601 people are Latino and only 266 are African-American.

8. Why do you think some people would think the Racial Exclusion Clause should be legal?

..., the 1950s sitcoms were aimed at young couples who had married in haste, women who had tasted new freedoms during World War II and given up their jobs with regret, veterans whose children resented their attempts to reassert paternal authority, and individuals disturbed by the changing racial and ethnic mix of postwar America. The message was clear: Buy these ranch houses, Hotpoint appliances, and child-raising ideals; relate to your spouse like this; get a new car to wash with your

kids on Sunday afternoons; organize your dinners like that—and you too can escape from the conflicts of race, class, and political witch-hunts into harmonious families where father knows best, mothers are never bored or irritated, and teenagers rush to the dinner table each night, eager to get their latest dose of parental wisdom.

Many families found it possible to put together of this way of living during the 1950s and 1960s. Couples were often able to construct marriages that were much more harmonious than those in which they had grown up, and to devote far more time to their children. Even when marriages were deeply unhappy, as many were, the new stability, economic security, and educational advantages parents were able to offer their kids counted for a lot in people's assessment of their life satisfaction. And in some matters, ignorance could be bliss: The lack of media coverage of problems such as abuse or incest was terribly hard on the casualties, but it protected more fortunate families from knowledge and fear of many social ills.

Page 39 of Stephanie Coontz book, *The Way We Really Are: Coming to Terms with America's Changing Families*.

9. Who were the sitcoms aimed at and what was the message?

10. What made it easy for the middle-class Americans to be ignorant of social ills of the day?

11. What happened to the earnings of manufacturing workers after WWII?

**Weekly Earnings of Manufacturing Workers, 1940-1960 (1967=100)**

Year	Index of Weekly Earnings	Index of Real Weekly Earnings (adjusted for inflation)
1940	21.9	53.1
1945	38.6	72.8
1950	51.6	72.8
1955	66.4	84.3
1960	78.1	89.5

“....What is more, Suburbia is the exemplification of the new and growing moneyed middle class, which *Fortune* described as a market that seems bound, sooner or later, to become the American market. The average family-unit income of Suburbia is \$6,500, which is 70 per cent higher than that of the rest of the nation. Since 1940, real, spendable income of U.S. customers, in 1953 dollars, has increased by nearly two-thirds, and most of this increase has gone to expand the numbers and incomes of family units with more than \$4,000 a year. Not only are about a third of these families concentrated in the suburbs, the \$4,000-and-over group makes up two-thirds of the suburbs. Suburbia is already the cream of the market.

The middle-class Suburbia, rapidly growing larger and more affluent, is developing a way of life that seems eventually bound to become dominant in America. It has been a major force in the phenomenal rise in the nation's birth rate. It has centered its customs and conventions on the needs of children and geared its buying habits to them. It has made the "ranch house" nationally popular. It has kept whole industries busy making equipment for outdoor living. It has helped double the sale of raiment woven of once lowly denim, and caused the sales of sports shirts to overtake the sales of "dress shirts...." From the editors of *Fortune*, "The Changing American Market" (Garden City, NY: Hanover House, 1955), pp. 13-18, 73-74, 249-250. (c) 1955 *Time*, Inc.

12. What is the average income of someone living in the suburbs compared to others living elsewhere?

13. According to the article, has the rise of the suburbs been good or bad for America? Explain