

## The Land of the Free

A Comparative Analysis of Income Inequality in Washington, D.C.

### Author Note

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### Abstract

This essay explains the income and social inequality present in the city of Washington, DC by comparing various aspects of two DC neighborhoods: Anacostia and Woodley Park. I have compared the history and storytelling styles of authors writing on both neighborhoods to determine how the external views of the city have changed over time. In particular, I extend Williams and McFadden-Resper's ideas of a lack of individualization in the Anacostia neighborhood to the Woodley Park neighborhood. I determine whether the literature on Woodley Park is differentiated from the other neighborhoods of Northwest, unlike Anacostia. I have compared the way that DC's tourist industry has affected the neighborhoods to ameliorate or exacerbate the wealth inequality. I have analysed the effects of prolonged exposure to income inequality in social and physiological settings, and I have discussed how DC's segregation plays into both the historical and economic aspects of the history of the two neighborhoods. Using these analytics, I hope to create an initial framework for a comprehensive movement to revitalize Anacostia while preserving the unique black culture found there.

When I first reveal to people that I go to school in Washington, DC, the first remarks I get usually include, “What’s it like living next to the Washington Monument?” “How often do you go to the Museums?” or “How many times have you seen Obama?” These questions refer only to the tiny square mile area around the White House and the National Mall. This is most people’s perception of the city of Washington, and it was certainly mine before coming here. Even after living in the city for a few months, I’ve realized that a large portion of George Washington University students, if not the majority, have absolutely no idea what lies beyond campus: K Street, E Street, 23<sup>rd</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>. Maybe once in a while they will travel up to Foxhall, but it’s unlikely that they know anything about this other area besides the Snapchat Geofilter. Even if students decide to venture out into the city, they go to Eastern Market, or Rock Creek Park, or maybe even Columbia Heights if they are feeling like shopping. And of course, there’s the advice that everyone’s parents leave with them before driving away for the semester:

“Make sure you don’t go to the South Side.”

In this essay, I will compare the history and present, merits and drawbacks, people and parks, of two of DC’s most different neighborhoods. The first is Woodley Park, in Ward 3, home to the National Zoo and a median property value of 1.3 million dollars (Neighborhood Info DC. [Neighborhood], 2012, cluster 15 section). Woodley Park has been associated with the National Zoo since the neighborhood’s inception. As a result, the community’s affluence has gradually increased throughout the evolution of DC. Today, Woodley Park is 80% white, with some of the highest incomes in the city. The other neighborhood is Anacostia, sometimes referred to as Historic Anacostia, in Ward 8. One of the oldest and most history-filled areas in the city, Anacostia is often overlooked and generalized into the entire Southeastern quarter. With a population that is 97% African American, Anacostia has a home

foreclosure rate three times that of the city average. Nearly half of all Anacostians live below the poverty line (Neighborhood, 2012, cluster 28 section).

Before beginning my argument, there are a few issues that I feel I must clarify in order to truly articulate my points. First, I will discuss the views of the greater United States community towards the neighborhoods of Anacostia and Woodley Park. I will often use the pronoun “we” to denote the predominant attitudes of non-Washingtonians towards the city and its people. This does not necessarily reflect the views of Washingtonians who are more intimately exposed to the situation in the city. There are other attitudes assumed by Washingtonians about DC’s income inequality, and I will discuss these as well. It is also important to note that while there are many struggling areas east of the Anacostia River, this essay will exclusively look at the Anacostia neighborhood. The information about this particular area cannot and should not be generalized to represent the entire area east of the Anacostia River. Anacostia is a different place than Deanwood. It is separate from Barry Farms, it is unique from River Terrace, it is entirely removed from Bellevue, Benning Road, Hillcrest, and every other neighborhood beyond the toxic barrier of the river. If we are to attempt to combat the perception of the east-of-the-river community, we must be sure to acknowledge each place there as its own unique entity, just as we do for neighborhoods in the north.

My goal in writing this paper is to highlight some of the things that make Anacostia a neighborhood worth visiting. Although I am making a direct comparison to Woodley Park, it is not my goal to discourage travel to the Zoo and the other attractions in Washington. I believe that these areas are just as culturally rich as Anacostia. The National Mall sees over 25 million visitors a year (Line & Braxton, n.d., p. 1). One can argue that Anacostia’s historical significance compares to that of the National Mall and yet there are reputations: the Mall’s reputation as a place of national pride and culture, and Anacostia’s reputation as a dangerous

and run-down section. I argue that this discrepancy has come about first through the independent history of each location, then the economic inputs and outputs consumed and produced by the area, and lastly the neocolonialism and racism in reporting and industry. A combination of these conditions have led to the social degradation of the Anacostia neighborhood, especially in terms of health and crime rates. At the end of the essay, I will provide suggestions on how I would begin work to ameliorate the situation in Anacostia.

To completely understand why Washington, DC has such economic and social inequality, it is imperative that one looks at the history of the area and its neighborhoods. Being familiar with the way places have evolved can provide understanding of the attitudes and prevailing trends in a society, as well as a prediction of what the future might hold. In the case of Woodley Park, the history dates back to 1890. Even before suburban development, Woodley Park had a reputation of large and high class houses, with estates and manors dotting the wooded countryside (Holmes, 1993, ch. 1). Also present, of course, was the all-important National Zoological Park. Economist Wallace E. Oates (1986) discusses the effect of a large public good on the economy and services available in a certain area (ironically called the “zoo effect”). Oates claims that a population near a public good will end up spending more money on a greater range of goods that will benefit both the population and the institution in question (p. 87). Thus, it can be assumed that the progress of the community will mirror that of the National Zoo, and vice versa. Both the neighborhood and the zoo remained fairly inconspicuous for the early 20th century, the area being overshadowed by the more tourist-friendly downtown Washington. However, areas like Rock Creek Park did attract visitors looking for an elegant lifestyle away from the high-activity of the city. Woodley Park’s residents were wealthy and “owned their own homes and could afford a way of life which included live-in servants” (Holmes, 1993, ch. 1). The Zoo also remained an exclusive attraction, charging admission fees and only displaying one or two

specimens of exotic species, without focusing on conservation or animal care (Friends of the National Zoo [Friends], 2014, para. 4).

In the 1950s, Woodley Park went through a significant change. The Zoo was turned over to the Smithsonian Institution, and admission was made free of charge as a result. The Zoo became more concerned with the preservation of endangered and rare species, and it became a national center for animal care and research (Friends, 2014, para. 5-6). As for the community, it too began to become more open and available to the general public. Even so, the area remained over 90% white. The neighborhood committed itself to maintaining a serene and removed sense of calm as the storm of the Civil Rights Movement raged around the rest of the city and country (Smithsonian Institution, 1992, p. 225). Since then, the Woodley Park neighborhood has been content to sit on its development laurels. The neighborhood today remains extremely wealthy.

In the 1990's the Woodley Park Community Association contracted Madelyn Holmes, a historical-anthropological writer to construct a brief history of the neighborhood. She was assisted in her work by Dr. Cynthia R. Field, a Smithsonian historian and Woodley Park resident. The way that Holmes writes about Woodley Park reveals the neighborhood's concern with a higher standard of living. Using specific anecdotes about the two competing Woodley Park hotels, the local churches, as well as small family-owned stores along Connecticut Avenue, Holmes (1993) humanizes the characters of Woodley Park (ch. 3). She brings them to life against a background of statistics and national attractions. In this fashion, Holmes uses personal stories to tell the history of Woodley Park in an entertaining, encouraging, and attractive fashion. One can imagine how saying "the people of Woodley Park began their industry in 1918, with the opening of two hotels" would not exactly inspire tourism. "The Sheraton, built by real estate mogul Harry Wardman, opened in 1918 and was enlarged in 1928. The Shoreham, built by Harry Bralove, opened in October 1930," however,

personalizes the story to provide an element of intrigue and humanity to the neighborhood (Holmes, 1993, ch. 2). The latter is the way that Woodley Park's history is expressed, and it underlies the key to the success of the area throughout their history.

Leaving behind the trees, houses and animals of Woodley Park and the National Zoo, one can get on the red line metro heading south. Thirty minutes and one transfer later, the green line pulls into the Anacostia metro station. Six miles and one river separate the two neighborhoods, but they might as well be different cities. Anacostia has had a fascinating history, from being a key strategic point for General Joseph Hooker during the Civil War and the location of over 30 Union army hospitals, to being completely ignored in every single map published in the Smithsonian Institution's overview of the Capital City (Anacostia Community Museum [Anacostia], 2015, n.p.; Smithsonian Institution, 1992, p. 15, 66, 68).

Several anecdotes provide further evidence towards Anacostia's removal from the life of upper-class DC and from the country's perception of the entire city. When Dr. Phyllis Ryder, a professor of writing for social change at The George Washington University, asked a class of her students the name of DC's river, they all answered immediately "the Potomac!" The Potomac River has not been within Washington's borders since the city of Alexandria was returned to Virginia in 1846 (personal communication, August 2015). It became immediately obvious to all those in the room that DC, and the country, truly had forgotten the historical waters of the Anacostia.

The isolation of the Anacostia is more than just a change in mental focus away from the Southeastern quarter. There is actual physical evidence of the abandonment of the neighborhood as well. In 1865, a man by the name of John Wilkes Booth escaped down a road called Harrison Street in the Anacostia neighborhood after shooting someone in Downtown's Ford's Theatre (Muller 2011, p. 2). Had Booth committed this crime today, the road would be

referred to as Good Hope Road, SE. The street named after President William Henry Harrison has been moved to Northwest, granted to a tiny avenue near Forest Hills. Similarly, roads named after Presidents Monroe, Jefferson, Jackson, and many others were all moved from Anacostia to areas in Northern Washington (Muller, 2011, Old street names section). Important people are generally associated with important streets, and where it previously had dozens, Anacostia now has no presidentially-named streets at all. It represents a conscious and physical betrayal of the neighborhood by the Federal Government, who felt that the names that graced its historic streets would better serve the upper class neighborhoods of Northwest (Tiller, 1908, p. 7).

Williams and McFadden-Resper (2005) performed a study on the history and anthropology of the Anacostia neighborhood, attempting to determine what about the area has caused its irrelevance in today's DC story. Brett Williams is an established anthropologist studying the DC-Anacostia area. He is assisted by Susie McFadden-Resper, an Anacostia resident and a community activist. They characterize the historical treatment of Anacostia with the term "The City Turned its Back on the Water" (p. 3). In this case, the "water" referred to is not just the Anacostia River, but the entire community structure that lives along its banks.

Williams and McFadden-Resper (2005) develop this theme, illustrating the disastrous urban renewal projects of the 1940s, in which residents of Southwest DC were forcibly removed to Maryland in order to carry out the city's vision of "slum clearance." This pushed even more poor citizens, largely African American, east of the river into Anacostia (p. 7). Gentrification followed in the 1960s, with white residents of eastern DC fleeing the inner city area out into the formerly black outskirts of the city, areas like Georgetown, Foxhall, and Friendship Heights (p. 8). Not coincidentally, one may note that this is about the same time

period that Holmes (1993) reported a spike in Woodley Park's population (ch. 3). Not only did this racially segregate Washington, it had the effect of economic segregation as well.

Finally, Williams and McFadden-Resper (2005) end their tale of underservice and invisibility with the final nail in Anacostia's coffin: the loss of individuality. Anacostia slowly began to blur into the history books with Deanwood and Barry Farm and Buena Vista. Soon, Southeast simply became one entity, and no one across the river talked about the individuals or communities there (p. 9-10). The way that the history of Anacostia is told illustrates a lack of the individual focus that can be seen in Woodley Park's story. The story of Anacostia is told using broad terms of "urban renewal," "gentrification," and "white flight." There are no street corner businesses mentioned in historical documents. The businesses are there, and there is no shortage of unique and interesting stories in Anacostia. However, they are simply grouped together to tell the story of a general area, not a person. This, above all else, is the crime committed against the people of Anacostia by the American people. By talking about "Anacostia" as a massive entity east of the river, not different groups of individual people, we lose the kind of intimacy with the people that we feel when learning about Woodley Park. This mindset further perpetuates the racism and segregation already inherent in the DC system. Black Anacostians are viewed not as people, but as a neighborhood, whereas white residents of Woodley Park are individuals with goals, successes, and stories. The result is, as Williams and McFadden-Resper (2005) claim, that the Anacostia residents are "Washington's 'People without History.'"

Although Holmes (1993) and Williams and McFadden-Resper (2005) are writing for two different audiences and in two different styles, their end works are comparable in theme. Both are trying to improve the perception of their respective communities, and to promote education and investment in their neighborhood. Both are describing the historical context and its effect on the progression and development of each neighborhood. Where they

dramatically differ is the way that the writers attempt to promote their area. While Holmes highlights the serenity and escapism of Woodley Park, Williams and McFadden-Resper attempt to justify and counter Anacostia's reputation of violence and poverty by telling a tale of injustice. This fundamental difference in language and perspective can be used to analyse how each neighborhood responds to the predominant outside view.

As aforementioned, there is no shortage of stores and shops in either Anacostia or in Woodley Park. The physical condition of storefronts may vary between the neighborhoods, but that does not necessarily speak to the value of the goods inside. Why then, has Anacostia suffered such economic tragedy whereas Woodley Park has grown dramatically? In many metropolitan cities in the US, the wealth gap can often be traced back to "old money" citizens who continue to reinvest their wealth. DC, however, does not have the industrial capital to be able to sustain this kind of investment and speculation. Instead, DC takes in millions of tourists per year, who generate billions of dollars of income for the city and its companies. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) is qualified as investment from one nation directly into the economy of another (Financial Times, n.d., para. 1-4.). Although many DC tourists come from within the States, their spending in the city can still be considered FDI, as DC does not follow the same industrial regulations as full US states, and the money spent in DC does not go back into circulation in the tourists' home area. Furthermore, the thousands of international tourists who visit DC can be considered FDI without such additional considerations.

In a study on 47 US states and the District of Columbia done by Thai and German economists Chintrakarn, Herzer, and Nunnenkamp (2010), it was found that increasing levels of FDI reduces income inequality on average (p. 18). This would make it seem that such a large tourism industry would actually work to improve Anacostia's income. However, when looking deeper into Chintrakarn et al.'s study, an argument is made that in the specific case

of DC, this FDI can actually cause income inequality to increase (p. 11, 17, 18). In the study, the states received a rating comparing income inequality to FDI level, with a correlation of 1 meaning an extremely positive relationship between increasing FDI and increasing income inequality, and -1 signifying an extremely negative relationship. DC registered at a correlation slightly above 0, meaning that an increase in FDI will result in a small increase in income inequality levels (p. 17). In addition, looking at the states which received high correlations between income inequality and FDI, they seem to be states which already have high levels of income inequality, such as Connecticut, Arkansas, and Massachusetts (p. 11, 17). Like these states, DC's FDI is concentrated to specific spaces, such as the National Mall or Woodley Park, that remain significantly lower in income than wealthy residential neighborhoods such as Georgetown and Palisades. Thus, it can appear that income inequality is decreasing, because upper middle class neighborhoods are being raised to an even higher level of upper class, one that certain areas of the city have already obtained. However, Anacostia sees little of this benefit, which accounts for the 12% drop in average family income over the past 10 years (Neighborhood, 2012, cluster 28 section).

As stated in my introduction, I do not seek to deter tourists from visiting the Monuments or museums. These are clearly rich in culture and history, and they are well worth a visit for any DC newcomer. While promoting a visit to our nation's capital to see these worthy attractions, publications could introduce some of the lesser known, yet equally historically rich, areas of DC, such as Anacostia. This would increase the spread of FDI across the District and, according to Chintrakarn et al., decrease income inequality. Yet, DiPaola's USA Today article (2013), "Hidden' attractions in Washington, D.C." does not mention a single area east of the Anacostia River. Georgetown is mentioned throughout, as well are boat cruises on the Potomac (a river that is, as aforementioned, not in DC) (n.p.). Yelp, one of the most popular tourist reference sites, also published a list of "DCs lesser known places to visit

(S., n.d.).” On this list, the only site mentioned in the southeast quarter is Eastern Market, one of the most gentrified areas in the city. Nearly all the other locations are in Northwest or in Virginia and Maryland (n.p.). Even the Internet’s most “unusual” or “lesser known” tourist lists completely pass over half of the city of Washington.

DC’s income inequality is a systemic and real issue, and the repercussions extend far beyond the surface economic conditions. Substantial evidence has shown that high levels of income inequality leads to greater rates of maternal mental and physical health problems (Kahn, Wise, Kennedy, & Kawachi 2000). This study compared levels of income and income inequality in various areas to levels of depression and physical illness in new mothers. The research found that in low income areas, women were more than three times as likely to develop depressive symptoms and over seven times more likely to report poor general health (results section). This effect is exacerbated in high income inequality areas, where women were three times more likely to report depressive symptoms or poor health than women of a similar income level in an area of low income inequality (Kahn et al., results section). In DC, this is even more relevant due to the geographical proximity of the extremely wealthy to the extremely poor. In areas such as Anacostia, where families headed by single mothers account for 77% of all families, this can be absolutely devastating to a family who is struggling to live on the income of a single person (Neighborhood, 2012, cluster 28 section). In Woodley Park, on the other hand, not only is maternal illness lower, families have the money to be able to take time off from work or seek psychological and physiological assistance. In areas where these funds are not available, some people may resort to crime to fill the needs that they cannot through legal means.

A report by sociologists Aki Roberts and Dale Willits’s (2015) examined links between different measurements of inequality and homicide rates, and discovered a constant positive correlation for all measures of income inequality to high homicide rates (p. 30). Because the

multitude of different measurements control for external variables such as race, location and, ethnicity, one can make a reasonable assumption that this increased homicide rate is at the very least associated with people's frustration with income inequality. As one of the country's leaders in both homicide and income inequality, it can be postulated that DC's criminal reputation is a direct result of the systemic inequality among the neighborhoods. Income inequality is more than just financial. It can impact a person's entire life, and the lives of those around them. Given the research and evidence on income disparities and social phenomena like illness and crime, one can easily come to the conclusion that DC's rampant income inequality is a key source to Anacostia's negative reputation.

Finally, one cannot discuss income inequality in Washington, DC without discussing race. Simply by taking a train from Woodley Park to Gallery Place to Anacostia, one can easily see the segregation that plagues the city. The racial composition of the train does a complete 180 at Metro Center, where the entire white population gets off and is replaced by African Americans. As expressed by University of Missouri justice anthropologist Tanya Y. Price (1998), Washington, DC has always been a black city (p. 303). From the pre-Civil War era as a refuge for escaped and freed slaves to the Civil Rights Movement protests of the 1950s, Washington represents a haven for black culture and activism (Anacostia, 2015, n.p.). However, within this traditionally black city, there exist public white spaces. The National Mall, the Capitol, and the National Zoo are all possible examples of such a phenomenon (p. 305). Many black residents of DC view the Mall as an actual symbol of their continued oppression and bondage and the constant appropriation of their culture (Price, 1998, p. 309). It is no longer physical chains that bind them, however, but the crushing weight of wealth inequality.

A relevant anecdote is provided by Dennis Chestnut, the Deanwood-born Executive Director of the non-profit Groundwork Anacostia. He tells of his upbringing in a segregated

DC, where black residents were forbidden from the Zoo except on “Black Day:” Easter Monday (personal communication, November 2015). This is a clear example of a white space within the then-called “Chocolate City.” Post-segregation, the lines have become significantly more blurred. Though black Washingtonians can now legally visit the Zoo at any time of year, one trip there makes it obvious that they do not often attend. Like the Mall, the National Zoo has become a symbol of the long-lasting effects that racial discrimination has had on the city of Washington. Although the Zoo has become legally integrated, its culture and the culture of the surrounding Woodley Park have ensured that the Zoo will remain a white space into the 21st century.

Of course, it is not difficult to extrapolate where in the city these black residents live. As Dominique Skinner, another Groundwork Anacostia director and native Washingtonian put it, “the people in the Southeast are the real Washingtonians. People come through this city all the time; there’s a lot of in and out flow of population. But only one group of people stay here for five, six generations, and those are the people in Anacostia, in Deanwood, in Hillcrest” (personal communication, November 2015). Instead of celebrating the self-sufficiency and resilience of this loyal Washingtonian population, we the residents of the 50 states continue to contribute to the downfall of the Anacostia neighborhood by staying away and afraid.

It is impossible to discuss race before discussing history and economics. By ignoring the history of the individual Anacostian while glorying white individuals in Woodley Park, we purposefully dehumanize the travails of the black residents of DC, just as we did during slavery and Jim Crow. By only patronizing the white spaces of DC, we spread investment thick over the already wealthy areas of the city. Even if we know about Anacostia’s history, even if we can “appreciate black culture,” we still have a perfect excuse for not visiting. It’s too dangerous. While this claim may be supported by statistical evidence in homicide rates,

it is the symptom of an unfixable catch-22. We won't visit Anacostia until crime drops, but the high crime is a direct result of our ignoring the neighborhood and staying in our precious white spaces. There is one way to address Washington's income inequality. We need to believe in the strength and resilience of the people of Anacostia, and we need to direct our money and attention towards their stores, their parks, their museums, their stories, and their communities.

With all the talk of FDI, of large-scale change and systematic racism, it can be difficult and overwhelming to look at Anacostia and wonder what a person, especially white college student like myself, can do. But of course, as with all social justice initiatives, change truly does begin with a single step. It is of key importance that Anacostia and other Southeast neighborhoods are put back onto the map - literally. Tourists unfamiliar with the city of Washington cannot be expected to visit a place that they do not know exists. Thus, Anacostia must be reintroduced to tourist publications. This includes not only paper materials presented at the monuments and museums, but also online publications, like the aforementioned Yelp and its peer sites. We must reinvest the millions of dollars in tourist FDI pouring into DC into marketing the Anacostia neighborhood as a culturally rich and valuable place to visit. To achieve this end, residents of DC and tourists alike must show those in charge of budget allocation that Anacostia has something valuable and unique to offer. This can be done by bringing to light Anacostia's unique and fascinating history.

Thus, the second step towards sustainable revitalization would involve the return of history to Anacostia. Though such actions like erecting historic area signs and returning presidential street names may seem superficial, they will help Anacostians see the value of their own neighborhood as well as learn more about the history of their roads and public spaces. For example, the nearby Deanwood neighborhood has set up a history trail throughout the area, with markers at areas of political and cultural significance. Among

these are singer Marvin Gaye's home nightclub, the Riverside, and the park in which Martin Luther King Jr. first organized supporters for his famous March on Washington (Chestnut, D., personal communication, November 2015). Anacostia could easily create a similar historic trail. Monuments could be created memorializing the Civil War hospitals and forts in Anacostia, and informational signposts could allow tourists to walk in assassin John Wilkes Booth's footsteps as they learn about him and his conspirator's attempt to assassinate not just President Lincoln, but his entire cabinet. Physically adding Anacostia back to tourist maps and creating spaces in which the dramatic history of the neighborhood can be brought to life would be a significant step towards stimulating investment in Anacostia while celebrating the unique culture there.

However, raising awareness of Anacostia in DC's white spaces runs the risk of gentrification and whitewashing. This symptom can be seen throughout the country, especially in areas such as Greenwich, New York; Douglas Park, Chicago; and Adams Morgan and Shaw, Washington, DC (Johnson, 1997, p. 10; Brown, 2004, p. 35). A proven method of preventing this loss of black culture in black places is to empower the community leaders to advocate for themselves. This prevents the formation of a white savior complex, as the people who are creating change in the community actually are the ones living there. This is not a novel idea, and has already seen applications across the country going back decades. In the 1920s, Harlem, New York reformists successfully changed the neighborhood from a forgotten back alleyway to a haven of black art, music, and culture. These reformists came from within the neighborhood, and they fostered interest in the neighborhood by outsiders while still maintaining the unique culture, which remains to this day (Johnson, 1997, p. 9-19). There are already dozens of Anacostia residents who are striving for this change, as exemplified by Mr. Chestnut and Ms. Skinner. In order to ensure the preservation of the native black culture, these activists must take the lead in these awareness campaigns. They

can and should be supported by leaders in DC's white places, but the face and substance of the movement must be native Anacostians. This will assure that the neighborhood of Anacostia remains culturally vibrant and unique throughout its revitalization.

It only takes a few minutes of walking through Anacostia to tell that the neighborhood contains something special. The metro station is covered with a colorful mural depicting some of the residents engaging in sports, arts, and festivals. There are dozens of parks around the area, and small tributaries flow into the Anacostia from all directions. Although some upper-class neighborhoods like Woodley Park may advertise their serenity and natural escapism, it is impossible to deny that Anacostia possesses just as much natural and cultural beauty. However, this beauty is left unappreciated and unattended by visitors and DC residents alike. The east of the river is viewed as a stain upon DC's historic and monumental reputation, when truly the southeast is *the real* DC. The people of Anacostia are generational Washingtonians. They were born here, their parents were born here, and their grandparents died here. No one else can give a more comprehensive and unique history of the city, but no one cares to ask. Instead, we look at these self-reliant people, abandoned by the world, as a statistic, a neighborhood, something that can be pushed out by condominiums and cupcakes. Anacostia is a neighborhood brimming with culture, history, and stories. Take a walk there sometime. You might just be surprised.

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## Reflection

I have a volunteer placement in Southeast Washington, D.C. right along the Maryland border, in neighborhood called Douglass, after famed abolitionist Frederick Douglass. One afternoon after work, I decided to take the train to Dupont Circle, and then from there the bus to Georgetown University to meet an old friend. The journey took me around 30 minutes, and by my best estimate, had the linear distance of around seven miles. The speed at which I traveled could be expressed as a little bit under 2 million dollars per hour in median property values (Neighborhood 2012, cluster 38 section, cluster 4 section). I entered the Metro at Southern Avenue being the only white person at the station. I sat next to a man who was one of the few black people on the train by the time we got to Dupont. Once I got to my final destination, I didn't see a single person of color on the Circulator.

Throughout my short time residing in DC, it has become clear to me that this alignment of racial and wealth barriers is no coincidence. Looking at statistics among different neighborhoods across the city, it seems like as percent population white has a perfectly positive correlation with median income and median property values. Similarly, it has a perfectly negative correlation with percent of the population below the poverty line. As I explored these statistics, I noticed one more correlation. The black and white neighborhoods were divided nearly perfectly by the Anacostia River.

I decided that this division would be an excellent topic for my research paper for UW 1020. My primary source of research was actually experiential; I visited the Woodley Park and Anacostia neighborhoods and took notes based on the differences I saw between the two. Besides this, the library was my most important asset, and I found nearly all my important

print and online sources through library. I took advantage of all sorts of library resources, from databases to books to the special collections.

I had a difficult time finding my key sources. I started my search on the library databases. I figured that my topic was most relevant to anthropological studies, so I focused my efforts on the Anthropology Plus database. By searching the database, I found one of my key articles, “Washington’s ‘People without History.’” Not only did this source aid me in my research, but it also helped me to set the frame for my entire essay. I took Williams and McFadden-Resper’s idea of a forgotten culture beyond the river and extended it into the other facets of DC life. I used the historical and economic contexts of contemporary DC to analyse how Anacostia has become a place without history.

Secondly, I found a masters thesis in GW’s special collection. It is a comparison on the movement of people within DC, immigration versus gentrification. Although I did not use this source in my final draft, it was key to my idea development. At first, I was focused on determining the history of gentrification within my case study neighborhoods. However, after reading Brown’s thesis, I decided to focus less on gentrification. At first I reduced it to a single paragraph, but that did not fit well within my argument, so I removed it completely. Despite my limited use of Brown’s source, my reading and research on DC gentrification was absolutely key to my thesis development.

Although I used over a dozen sources from library databases and physical copies, the final one I will mention is Tanya Price’s “White Spaces in Black Places.” Not only was this piece (also found on Anthropology Plus) essential to my thesis development, it upheld the greater portion of my section on race and income inequality. This section is one of my favorite in my essay. I feel that it is one of my most convincing arguments, and I think that it makes the hypothetical and theoretical points in history and economics very real and

relevant. If a person was to actually take the metro trips that I discuss in the paper, the segregation discussed by Price and myself becomes extremely obvious. Without this journal article, my essay would not come to the powerful conclusion that it does.

Looking at my essay as a whole, the library system and databases were absolutely essential to every part of my writing process. I used library sources for every purpose, from idea searching, to key articles, to even minor citations of certain facts or historical anecdotes. After completing this paper, I feel that my navigation skill of library resources has been greatly improved. I can easily use the digital catalogue, as well as search for articles online in databases by subject, source, or publisher. I feel absolutely prepared to take on the challenge of university writing with these skills in my research toolkit.