Perpetual Educational Inequality:
An historical analysis of the Germantown community
in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
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“men have a right to object to a race so poor and ignorant and inefficient as the mass of the Negros; but if their policy in the past is parent of much of this condition, and if today by shutting black boys and girls out of most avenues of decent employment they are increasing pauperism and vice, then they must hold themselves largely responsible for the deplorable results.”

— W.E.B DuBois, 1899

“racial ghettoes have not formed around abundant employment opportunities; they emerged instead in economically depressed residential areas which were abandoned by affluent whites who moved to more distant suburbs seeking greater socioeconomic homogeneity, better schools, and more spacious housing.”


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“whereas the older generation of local men were able to work in the regular job market and earn wages that allowed them to live much like the American middle class, the changed economy has made this extremely difficult for the younger generation. Largely unskilled with serious educational deficiencies, the youth of today are left to participate only at the lowest levels of the emerging service-oriented economy. In response, many have become attracted to the underground of crime and drugs, while others have become so demoralized that they are ready candidates for alcohol and drug addiction.”

Elijah Anderson, 1990

In the eyes of the state of Pennsylvania, the schools that comprise the Philadelphia school district are failing. The schools are not preparing their students for college, for jobs, for life. And, while not doing this, the schools are allegedly ill-managing their local funds as well as the funds given by the state to Philadelphia so that it can operate. One of the possibilities that may arise is the privatization of the worst performing schools. Now, this does not mean that these schools will suddenly become tuition schools and have their students admitted into the best colleges and universities in

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1 Elijah Anderson Streetwise: race, class, and change in an urban community (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), p. 80-81
the country, as do many private schools in Philadelphia. Rather, a for-profit company, most likely Edison Inc., paid through public funds would run these schools. What kind of state are the Philadelphia public schools in that the Governor deems the local municipality unfit to administer its own education program? Sadly, the answer is that Philadelphia public schools are not preparing a majority of their students for furthering their education, nor educating them to enter a career oriented workforce. In fact, many Philadelphia students do not even graduate from high school; and many of those who do graduate do not have the skills to obtain well paying, or even family-supporting, jobs.

I hope to explain, through analysis of the Germantown community (as defined by the former Germantown school cluster)\(^\text{∗}\), that while Philadelphia schools are not preparing their students as well as their suburban neighbors, or even rural Pennsylvania districts, the school district of Philadelphia itself is not to blame. In fact, as I will demonstrate, the present problems of Philadelphia’s public schools, and specifically Germantown, are rooted not only in today’s management of the school systems, but more importantly in the historical conditions surrounding the African-American experience in America and especially Philadelphia. By tracing the experience of the African-American through slavery in the South [and North], racially discriminatory laws affecting blacks on

\(^\text{∗}\) The Philadelphia School District used to separate and create “districts” within the Philadelphia School District by utilizing clusters. These clusters were similar to a suburban system in which a large number of elementary schools fed into a smaller number of middle schools which then filled the halls of a high school representing the whole community. Germantown High served as the top tier of the Germantown cluster.
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political, social and personal levels throughout America’s history, and especially the effects of 20th century migration and immigration, we can determine that the lot of the African-American in Germantown in 2002 can be directly correlated to the past. Indeed, the roots of the present day Germantown populace is inextricably linked to the black experience described in W.E.B DuBois’ 1899 *The Philadelphia Negro*, the free blacks living in antebellum Philadelphia and, in particular, the southern sharecropper and slave. However, it is a mistake to think that today’s problems are solely a vestige of the past. While many unhelpful educational policies [such as funding schools through a property tax] are old, they are *maintained* and *reinforced* by the people of today. The history of Philadelphia schools, and especially those in Germantown, is not a parade of facts and events; it is a process.4

**Germantown Today**

In order to understand what the past has constructed for the present, we must know what Germantown looks like today. Germantown is not a “hyper-ghetto;” it is not an enclave of destitute people living in a dead-end cycle. There are many middle to upper

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4 For this approach to historical research I am indebted to Professor Emma J. Lapsansky of Haverford College and her class on the American West.
class families living in the Germantown community. However, these people are often in
small pockets or too few in number to affect the overall character of the Germantown
community. They do add though, some sense of hope—there are people with well paying
jobs, well-kept homes, and a lifestyle that transcends that of the dead-end ghetto.

Germantown Avenue, which travels from suburban Chestnut Hill to Temple University,
travels through the heart of Germantown. Elijah Anderson describes the area best:

   On the avenue Germantown gives the appearance of a segregated, black,
working-class neighborhood. But this is deceptive. Many whites, including middle-class
whites along with middle-class blacks, do live here, but they tend to avoid the business
district…On Germantown Avenue, discount stores of all sorts appear—supermarkets,
furniture stores, and clothing stores…and of the people you pass now, many more are
part of the ‘street element’…Further down, more and more boarded-up buildings appear,
along with even more empty lots. In fact, certain areas give the impression of no-man’s
lands, with empty dirt or overgrown lots, a few isolated buildings here and there, few cars
on the street, and almost no people on the sidewalks. You pass billboards advertising
‘forties’, cigarettes, and other kinds of liquor.5

What makes Germantown interesting is that to the south, down Germantown Avenue, is a
concentration of extreme poverty, while to the north, on the outskirts of the city limits
lies Chestnut Hill, an affluent middle-to-upper class community that resembles
Germantown before the second World War [suburban and predominantly white]. I will
demonstrate that the present Germantown community is increasingly becoming like the
more destitute portion of Germantown Avenue to the south, as described by Anderson. It
can be seen as a process of urban decline, slowly creeping up Germantown Avenue that
began in the infamous Seventh ward described by DuBois at the beginning of the twentieth century. While this change is attributable to various factors, the education system can be viewed as a means through which positive change did not occur, thus facilitating the downward spiral of the African-American population in Philadelphia and Germantown. The state of a community’s education often tells of the relative health of the very community itself [this is quite evident in the lily-white suburbs in which many public schools are top-notch institutions, rivaling the education offered by tuition private schools]. The Germantown community, then, is in serious trouble.

In the 1999-2000 school year, Germantown High [which is a local, public high school under the Philadelphia School District] had 1829 students in grades 9-12. Sixty-six percent of these students were eligible for subsidized lunches, which is usually used as the determining figure by the state in labeling those who come from “low-income” families. So, two-thirds of the student population is poor. Ninety-seven percent of the student body is black, while whites constitute only two percent. Eight Hispanic students comprise the rest of the population; there are no Asians. Student performance on standardized testing is quite low: the mean SAT verbal score is 385; the math section

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6 W.E.B. DuBois’ The Philadelphia Negro, a landmark social science study, of the black residents of primarily the seventh Ward in Philadelphia at the end of the twentieth century, is a treasure trove of information on black life in Philadelphia at the turn of the century and will be utilized in much depth later in this study.
7 See the National Center for Educational Studies web-site: http:nces.ed.gov/ccdweb/school/index.asp
slightly higher, at 390 (even with only seventy percent of students taking the exam). On the state administered PSSA (Pennsylvania System of School Assessment) in grade 11, eighty-two percent of the scores fell into the “below basic math” category; meanwhile, the reading scores weren’t much better: sixty-one percent of scores in the “below basic” reading level.8

The SAT has come under attack in recent years as an unfair and unjust means of testing students. There has been much criticism that the tests are racially biased and therefore do not truly judge the knowledge of a student.9 Meanwhile, SAT’s, whatever their worth, are still a crucial factor in gaining admission to American’s colleges and universities. This is something that, unfortunately, cannot be ignored. So, for Germantown students to attend college, they must achieve a higher standard on the SAT. For instance, according to the College Board [a for-profit company], which administers the exams, the mean score nationwide for black students is 434 on the Verbal section and 426 on the Math for a combined score of 860. Meanwhile, the combined mean score at

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8 See the Pennsylvania Department of Education web-site: http://www.pde.psu.edu/pssa/perflevels.html. The state defines four levels of achievement: advanced, proficient, basic, and below basic. Advanced is described as “superior academic performance indicating an in-depth understanding and exemplary display of the skills included in Pennsylvania’s Academic Standards.” Below Basic is portrayed as “inadequate academic performance that indicates little understanding and minimal display of the skills included in the Pennsylvania Academic Content Standards. There is a major need for additional instructional opportunities and/or increased student academic commitment to achieve the Proficient Level.”

9 Nicholas Lemann’s The Big Test: The Secret History of the American Meritocracy [New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999] has a wealth of information detailing the SAT as an outdated, biased test geared towards those of the upper class. Andrew Hacker’s Two Nations: Black and White, Separate, Hostile, and Unequal [New York: Maxwell Macmillan, 1992] is also a good source that details the SAT’s disastrous effect upon the black population in applying to colleges.
Germantown is 775. The mean public school score in the nation is a combined 1011. Not surprisingly for a test originally designed for the upper crust of society, the mean score on the SAT rises with family income on both sections at every incremental increase of ten thousand dollars. So, if we take the lowest level, “less than $10,000,” the mean combined score is 872—still nearly one hundred points higher than many of the test-takers at Germantown who fall into this economic category [sixty-six percent qualify for free/reduced lunches and are thus deemed “poor” by the state]. When admissions into state colleges are almost solely based on test scores, those from Germantown face a distinct disadvantage. They score below the average public school student, black student, and socioeconomically poor test taker.

The elementary and middle schools that feed into Germantown High are not much better in terms of test results. Of the thirteen schools in the former Germantown cluster, not one school has more than five percent of its students score at the “advanced level” on the 2001 PSSA math section. On the reading section, every school but one had the largest number of their students’ score at the “below basic” level while the fewest amount scored at the “advanced level.” In other words, there are a much larger percentage of Germantown elementary students who are considered to be below basic in their math skills than advanced, or even proficient.

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10 http://www.collegeboard.org
One could argue that because of the magnet school system, in which the highest scoring students attend Masterman, Central, or Girls High, Germantown High does not receive the best local students; however, there are very few high scoring students among the middle and elementary school students in Germantown. The low scoring elementary and middle schools are begetting the lower scoring Germantown High.\textsuperscript{11} One might argue that the state tests are difficult and very few students score well. However, this is not the case. If we look at the scores of schools around suburban Haverford College, we see a drastic difference: at Radnor middle school in Montgomery County, fifty percent of eighth graders scored at the “advanced level” on the math section of the PSSA in 2001. At Lower Merion high school, just a few miles down the road from Radnor, fifty nine percent of 11\textsuperscript{th} graders scored at the “advanced level” on the math section while only three percent scored at the “below basic level” on the reading test. In my hometown, and the school I attended in fifth grade, only three percent of New Hope-Solebury fifth graders scored at the “below basic” reading level.\textsuperscript{12} [See Appendix A]

With such drastic differences in PSSA scores between suburban and urban districts, it is no wonder that the state is aghast at the lack of performance in many Philadelphia schools. But is it fair to compare suburban schools like Lower Merion and urban schools like those in Germantown? Fair or not, these students live in the same

\textsuperscript{11} http://www.pde.psu.edu
\textsuperscript{12} http://www.pde.psu.edu
greater metropolitan area of Philadelphia and will compete against one another for admissions into state universities based on their test scores. Their paths will cross whether they know it or not.13

Of sixty-three suburban districts in Bucks, Delaware, Chester, and Montgomery counties, only two have a majority of black students.14 Not one school in the Germantown area has a majority of white students. In fact, CW Henry, located in the West Mount Airy neighborhood, has the largest percentage of white students at twenty-one percent.

Meanwhile, including Germantown High, ten of the thirteen schools located in the Germantown cluster are over ninety-six percent black. If we drop that number to ninety percent, we can include eleven of thirteen schools. All but Henry are more than eighty percent black. Many suburban schools are much the same way—in inverse proportion: New Hope-Solebury school district is ninety-five percent white, with virtually no black students; Lower Merion School District is comprised of eighty-six percent white students and eight percent black.15 [See Appendix B]

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13 For instance, during the summer of 2001 I was a seventh grade English teacher in the Summerbridge of Greater Philadelphia program, located at Germantown Friends School in the heart of the Germantown community. My students were all from the Germantown community and I was raised in the Bucks County suburbs of New Hope; despite these differences in location, we came together for one summer and were able to interact, teach, and learn from one another. While comparisons between suburban and urban districts may at times appear arbitrary, there are indeed clear connections between the areas and the differences represented in growing up in one or the other. College students who were raised in Germantown are not coming to suburban New Hope to teach middle school aged students Math, Science, and English.


15 2000 Report Card on the Schools/ Philadelphia Inquirer; found online at http://www.philly.com
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I believe that the SAT’s and most standardized testing are racially and socioeconomically biased. The highest scoring elementary and middle schools on the PSSA in Germantown are those with either a higher percentage of white students or are situated in a middle-upper class neighborhood. It then comes as no surprise to find drastic differences in SAT scores between Lower Merion [1158], New Hope [1076], and Germantown High [775]. As SAT scores are often the springboard to college admission, it then also comes as no surprise that the percentage of low-income students is also quite different: New Hope (1 percent low income), Lower Merion (4 percent low income), and Germantown (66 percent low income).16 As has already been noted, SAT scores increase proportionally to parents’ income. However, scores also increase proportionally to level of parents’ educational attainment: no high school diploma (combined 837); high school diploma (942); bachelor’s degree (1044); graduate degree (1111).17 It is also well documented that higher level of educational attainment is associated with higher income. Higher income becomes crucial in determining how much money per-student a school district can spend, because school funding comes from local property taxes. The more

16 If we investigate the scores of 5th grade students in the Germantown area, it becomes quite apparent that not only does race play a role in test scores, but so does socioeconomic status: every school is at least three-quarters black, but the highest scoring school, CW Henry [1230 Math, 1260 Reading] only has a poor rate of twenty-three percent. Meanwhile, Fulton at ninety-one percent poor had scores of 1100 and 1090. Mind you, these scores are still drastically lower than those in the suburbs where York Avenue School located in the North Penn district of Montgomery County also has a twenty-three percent poor rate like Henry, yet their scores are 1400 on Math and 1420 on Reading—nearly two hundred points higher in each section. North Penn is over eighty percent white.
income one has, the more likely one is to purchase one’s own home and one of greater value.

In a specific area representative of the greater Germantown area in 1990, the median household income was only $9,447. In comparison, the median household income in Radnor Township was $51,762 [over five times greater than that of Germantown]; in Lower Merion it was $63,197 [nearly seven times greater than in Germantown]. As one must have income to purchase a home, it makes sense that in this Germantown neighborhood there were only 108 owner occupied housing units out of a total of 627 total occupied housing units. Of these owner-occupied housing units, fifty-one were white-owned and fifty-five were black-owned—however, blacks constituted over seventy-seven percent of the total population [though only eleven percent of blacks lived in owner-occupied housing]. Furthermore, the median value of black-owned homes was $32,500; there is no data for white-owned homes, though the overall median value of owner-occupied housing was $67,500—more than twice what the median black-owned home was worth.

In Germantown the enormous differences between the amount and worth of black-owned and white-owned homes is already quite evident. Yet, when we look at suburban data the picture becomes even bleaker: in Radnor Township there are 6,420

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17 2001 College-Bound Seniors A Profile of SAT Program Test Takers (Pennsylvania Report), can be found on the website, www.collegeboard.org
families, of which eighty-three percent [5,321] own their own homes. In nearby Lower Merion the story is much the same: eighty-nine percent of families live in owner-occupied housing. Even in working class Bristol Township, eighty-four percent of families live in their own homes.18

Per-student expenditure in districts like New Hope ($10,981) and Lower Merion ($13,367) where many parents are college graduates, live in nice houses, and make healthy sums of money is much higher than Germantown ($7,669) where people come from traditionally poorer neighborhoods, families, and do not own their own homes. The per-student expenditure differences seem like a large sum and it can mean nicer, larger facilities, more extra-curricular programs, and most importantly, more teachers—which equals smaller classes. The average class size at Germantown (26), is much larger than at Lower Merion (18) and New Hope (22), which becomes especially pertinent when one thinks of the differences in test scores between these schools. By the time the students at Germantown reach the high school, they have already been facing score performance deficits, but they have also been in larger classes and will continue to be in larger classes, thus making individual improvement difficult. Meanwhile, the few who score low in these suburban districts are in smaller classes throughout their schooling and thus have a better chance at improving their scores because of more intimate contact with teachers.

18 1990 Census data; the Germantown neighborhood is Philadelphia Tract 241, which encompasses the area surrounded by Rittenhouse, Germantown, Wayne, and Coulter streets.
For instance, in Bucks, Montgomery, Delaware, and Chester counties, the average second grade classroom ranges from 21-23. In Philadelphia the average is 26; this difference increases in high school because suburban districts average 22-25 while Philadelphia averages between 30-31. The few students at Germantown, however, who do succeed and look to compete with students from Lower Merion and New Hope for college admissions have another obstacle to overcome: a lack of counselors. At New Hope there is one counselor for every 180 students; at Lower Merion the number is 1:76; at Germantown it is a whopping 1:461. With only 180 days in a school year, at Germantown it becomes very difficult to access a counselor for advice and help in applying to college. The cycle of economics of inequality rears its ugly head in supposedly fair competition in public education and subsequent college admission tests. However, as I have noted, the larger a parent’s income and the higher their educational attainment, then the smaller their children’s classes, more counselors for college and general counseling, a higher SAT score and, in a nutshell, their chance for socioeconomic advancement.

With serious educational deficiencies caused by an inadequate education system, the ability to legitimately enter the workforce becomes an impossibility for many youths. Traveling down Germantown Avenue on a given weekday, one can see numerous groups

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19 Philadelphia Inquirer Report Card on Schools, 2002
20 2000 Report Card on the Schools/ Philadelphia Inquirer; found online at http://www.philly.com
of predominantly young, black males hanging out on the corner. These are men who should either be in school, college, or at work; however, Germantown High has over 1800 students in four grades—yet just over 300 hundred graduate per year and of those who do, few qualify for admission to college. With few skills, career-oriented jobs are not an option. Instead, living amidst a dirty, trash-strewn area of the city which seems to be forgotten about by the big wigs downtown, these youths—often demoralized and apathetic—find alternative methods for survival, for obtaining the luxuries of middle class life that they would not normally be able to obtain. In short, the lure of the drug underground plays an important role in the community. With drug dealers and those affiliated with the drug culture posing as the most “successful” members of the community, the younger generation looks up to them; the realization that their futile studies will only place them at the bottom of the burgeoning service economy also leads them into the dead-end life of the drug culture and schools suffer the consequence. While much can be blamed on the misplaced funding in public schools, some of the blame must lie in students’ apathy towards success [even though in many ways it is understandable considering the numerous difficulties and barriers that must be overcome].

21 I have found that the two best sources for describing the affiliation of disappearing jobs and the creation of a drug culture in a community are Elijah Anderson’s *Streetwise: race, class, and change in an urban community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990) and William Julius Wilson’s *When Work Disappears: the world of the new urban poor* (New York: Knopf, 1996).
Like in most metropolitan communities, there exists an alternative to the public schools in Germantown. One of the most prestigious and well-respected independent schools in the region, Germantown Friends School [a K-12 school with 896 students—358 in the high school], is situated in the heart of Germantown. GFS’ web-site proclaims that it was “established by the [Quaker] Meeting in 1845 to benefit the community [and] seeks to develop students with the intellectual and spiritual power to make a difference in the world.”

However, the students do not all come from the immediate community: seventy-eight percent of the student population is white, fifteen percent black. Lest we forget Germantown High’s figures I repeat them here: ninety-seven percent black, two percent white. Considering that only two percent of Germantown High’s students are white, I don’t necessarily believe that GFS is benefiting the community in the same fashion that it did in the early half of the 20th century when the population of the community was predominantly white (for instance, merely sixty years ago in 1940 the population of the 22nd Ward, which encompasses all of Northwestern Philadelphia including the Germantown community, was nearly eighty percent white. In 1920 it was over ninety-two percent white). In fact, before 1945 when the school began admitting black students, it served only the white population.

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22 http://www.gfsnet.org/menu.html
23 1940 Census data
24 Personal interview conducted with Germantown Friends Upper School American History teacher, William Koons on March 1st, 2002. In fact, GFS prided itself upon being one of the first private schools to
However, today, GFS is clearly benefiting a community of very intelligent, mostly white [seventy-six percent white; fifteen percent black] students: average combined SAT—1300. This is nearly twice that of Germantown High’s! If GFS is drawing any students from the local community they are drawing only the best and brightest who don’t already go to the magnet schools downtown and can come up with some funds to pay for the $14,585 tuition bill.\(^{25}\) What kind of students does GFS produce? The best and the brightest: of the past five graduating classes, thirty percent chose to attend Ivy league universities; another forty-seven percent chose to attend colleges and universities that I have categorized as some of the elite institutions in the country such as NYU, Oberlin, Wesleyan, Haverford, Swarthmore, University of Chicago, Smith, Amherst, Middlebury…the list goes on and on. Universities such as Temple or Delaware didn’t even make the list I compiled.\(^{26}\) On Germantown High’s web-site there is a list of thirty-five students and their college acceptances. On a side note, let

\(^{25}\) Even with financial aid, a few thousand dollars can still be too costly for many residents of the Germantown community. Recall that the median household income in the area is less than $10,000 per year. Still, Germantown Friends is intent on increasing the numbers of blacks in its school—it just received a one million dollar gift towards black enrollment—though the money stays in the bank and the school only uses the interest. Personal Interview with William Koons.

\(^{26}\) See Germantown Friends School web-site: http://www.gfsnet.org/Admissions/colleges.html
us remember that Germantown High has a senior class of 320. Meanwhile, only one student was accepted to an Ivy League university; in fact, he was accepted to Brown, Columbia, Georgetown, Morehouse, Penn, and Yale—an impressive list I imagine for even a GFS student! However, not one of the other thirty-four students’ college acceptances would have made the impressive list I compiled from Germantown Friends School. Most of the colleges were local state universities and the locally known, but not nationally renowned, black colleges and universities.27

What does Germantown Friends School, right down the road from Germantown High, do differently? For starters, they have students that already have many of the prerequisites for achievement in our schooling system—money, the right ethnicity, and a higher parent’s education level.28 These, as in Lower Merion and New Hope, translate into the little things like smaller classes (average of 17) that can make all the difference for a struggling student. Safety is also an issue: there are police in not only Germantown High, but also some of the junior highs; at Germantown Friends the safety and security are there for the protection of the students from outsiders, not for protecting the students from one another like in the public schools. The startling differences between Germantown High and Germantown Friends is striking; yet, at the same time it is exemplary of the unequal education received by many whites and blacks in this nation.

27 See Germantown High School web-site: http://www.phila.k12.pa.us/schools/germantown/colleges.html
Naturally, these differences have historical roots. So, in order to understand the present situation in Germantown we must also know what Germantown used to be like. In the next section I seek to describe the origins of the Germantown community and trace its history in order to understand why Germantown is quickly becoming a dead-end ghetto.

_A German Settlement—Germantown in the Beginning_

Germantown can pride itself upon being one of the oldest, continuous communities in the region. In 1683 Francis Daniel Pastorius [along with two children and six servants] came to the Philadelphia region as an agent in order to set up a community for the Saalhof-Pietists from Germany. The Pietists never came; instead Pastorius and his fellow settlers formed their own settlement and a place for German immigrants to come and live.  

In 1690, when Reverend Rudolphus Varick visited from Long Island, the Germantown village consisted of 44 families [28 of whom were Quaker].  

By 1691 Germantown had incorporated into a borough. By 1707, borough government was

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28 Bill Koons says that a large percentage of the parents at GFS are professionals such as doctors, lawyers, teachers and college professors.
30 Edward W. Hocker _Germantown 1683-1933_ (Philadelphia, 1933) p. 27.
deemed too time consuming and the village of Germantown became a part of Germantownship for roughly the next century and a half until 1847. Germantown of the late 17th century was a pleasant enclave of families that had a “sixty-foot wide street…bordered with peach trees.” Not only that but each home had a “vegetable and a flower garden of three acres size.” With a decent sized population and growing industry [the first paper mill in the country was built in Germantown in 1690], the recognition for a need of formal schooling was immediate.

Pastorius, as the patriarch and founding member of the Germantown settlement, began a school in 1701, serving the Germantown community until his death in 1715. Over the next century or so, there were various attempts [some more successful than others] to begin schools in the Germantown community. Anthony Benezet taught school in Germantown from 1739-1742 until he transferred to the Friends Public School in Philadelphia. The Moravians opened a school in April of 1742, but relocated to Bethlehem by June. Another Moravian school was opened in 1747 and attended by fifty boys and girls [including two Mohegan Indian girls]. Another school was maintained at St. Michael’s Lutheran Church in 1748. Johann Wolfgang Leitzell advertised in a local paper in 1754 that he was teaching reading and writing in lower Germantown. In 1757, Hilarius Becker had a school in lower Germantown, too. In 1760 the Reformed

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31 Keyser, p. 50
32 Keyser, p. 44 [the description of Germantown comes from Daniel Pastorius circa late 17th century].
Congregation at Market Square also had a school. These were all small enterprises and short in duration.

However, in 1761 a two-story, sixty-by-forty foot building with two small houses on the side was built on School Lane—this school opened on August 11, 1761 as the Union School.\textsuperscript{35} By 1784 the school was incorporated and had been renamed the “Public School of Germantown.”\textsuperscript{36} Indeed, the original charter of the school stated that the “schoolhouse shall be free to all persons of what Denomination soever and wheresoever residing, to send their children thereto, without any regard to Name or Sect of People.”\textsuperscript{37}

It is important to remember, however, that Germantown was still largely a German settlement because Germantown had become a point for German immigrants to stop in for a few years before venturing out to the country to start their own farms. It was also a quickly growing community: increasing from 100 houses in 1745 to 350 houses in 1758.\textsuperscript{38} In 1762 the Germantown Union School had 130 students—seventy in the English school and sixty in the German School, headed by Hilarius Becker.\textsuperscript{39}

\textsuperscript{33} Hocker, p. 43  
\textsuperscript{34} Keyser, p. 77. Pastorius was quite a learned man and subsequently must have been a good schoolmaster. His library collection, affectionately known as the “beehive”, was one of the largest in the region. A good source of information about Pastorius is: Marion Dexter Learned The Life of Francis Daniel Pastorius (Philadelphia, 1908). 
\textsuperscript{35} Keyser, p.79-81; Hocker, p. 80-81  
\textsuperscript{36} A History of the Germantown Academy (Philadelphia, 1910) p. 115  
\textsuperscript{37} as quoted in A History of the Germantown Academy, p. 34  
\textsuperscript{38} Hocker, p. 78  
\textsuperscript{39} Keyser, p. 82
After fifteen years of operation, the German school was becoming increasingly less useful in a community in which English was beginning to dominate. It was during this pre-revolution period that many people in the colonies began to see themselves as one unit and notions of a united, English speaking country danced through many a heads.

In October 1775, the Concord schoolhouse was built with the funds of 122 families residing in the northern section of Germantown to educate their children in English because the Germantown Academy campus was deemed too distant.\textsuperscript{40} Even in the late 18\textsuperscript{th} century there was a population of free blacks in the community—an entry in the old account book for Germantown Academy includes tuition for a black boy.\textsuperscript{41} In the entire Philadelphia County in 1800, there were merely eighty-five slaves while there were nearly seven thousand “free” blacks.\textsuperscript{42}

By the turn of the century, Germantown Union had been renamed Germantown Academy and had developed a reputation as an excellent school, so much so that George Washington sent his adopted son there in the 1790s.\textsuperscript{43} Germantown Academy was not just a school of elite families before the 18\textsuperscript{th} century, however. A Mrs. Hill bequeathed 150

\textsuperscript{40} Hocker, p. 94
\textsuperscript{41} Keyser, p. 84. However, it was not until the 1967-68 school year that Germantown Academy would see another black student walk its halls.
\textsuperscript{42} Vincent P. Franklin \textit{The Education of Black Philadelphia} (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1979) p. 5
\textsuperscript{43} Germantown Academy website: http://www.ga.k12.pa/aboutga/history_traditions/1759.shtml. One of the reasons that Washington decided to send his adopted son to Germantown Academy was that during the Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1793, Washington and the national government [located in Philadelphia at the
pounds for the education of poor children of the neighborhood; so in 1792 six poor
children from the community were educated at the Germantown Academy.\textsuperscript{44} The Census
of 1790 also showed twelve residents of the Germantown community receiving
almshouse funds.\textsuperscript{45} However, this was still a community dominated by those who had
versus those who had not. And when it came to those who had not, blacks were almost
always going to fall into that category.

While most blacks, as already noted, were not held in bondage at the turn of the
19\textsuperscript{th} century, they were never really afforded the opportunity to live as equal members of
society. Slavery was still a widespread practice in Southeastern Pennsylvania at the end
of the 17\textsuperscript{th} century when Pastorius and his German compatriots founded Germantown.
However, it was his group of people, along with the Germantown Quakers, that in 1688
became the first group in the New World to denounce the practice of slavery and call for
its abolition.\textsuperscript{46} By setting the standard against slavery in the late 17\textsuperscript{th} century, there were

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{44} A History of the Germantown Academy, p. 118
\textsuperscript{45} Hocker, p. 95
\textsuperscript{46} This can be seen in more detail in Hildegard Binder-Johnson, “The Germantown Protest of 1688 Against
Negro Slavery” The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography 65 (1941) 147-149; a copy of the
paper presented by the Germantown contingent was reprinted by Nathan Kite, “The German Friends” The
Friend (XVII) 125. Also, my junior seminar paper, “Antislavery” Rhetoric of the 17\textsuperscript{th} century, deals with
this topic extensively.
\end{flushleft}
no longer slaves in Germantownship by 1820 and virtually no slaves in the entirety of Philadelphia by the end of the 18th century.47

**Early Education Efforts in Philadelphia**

Freedom from bondage, however, did not give blacks a level playing field in the least. Even though in 1802, 1809, 1812, and 1818 Pennsylvania school laws reaffirmed the right of blacks to receive free, tax-supported education, it was never practiced.48 Numerous attempts at educating blacks students in Philadelphia had occurred during the 18th century, though to no substantial avail. As early as 1740 a Mr. Bolton had arranged for blacks to be privately taught in his home. In 1758, the Bray Associates attempted the first school for blacks at Christ Church. In 1770 the Philadelphia Quaker Monthly Meeting began classes preparing slaves for manumission as well as already “free” blacks. By 1790 the Pennsylvania Abolition Society had formed a committee for the “Improvement of the Condition of the Free Negroes”; one of their areas to be addressed was education. By 1813 there had been established a free school for blacks, the Clarkson School—named for British abolitionist Thomas Clarkson.49 While Philadelphia public

47 Keyser, p. 60
49 Franklin, p. 29-31
school education [for whites] began in 1818, the first large-scale school for blacks was established in 1822 on Mary Street, enrolling 199 students. By 1823 the school had a total of 237 boys and girls; clearly demand for the education of black children was high.\(^50\) By 1826, the Gaskill Street School for Girls had opened while Mary Street was maintained as a Boys school.\(^51\)

These schools were taught in the Lancasterian method, a recent “scientific” approach to education that utilized one adult teacher for as many as two hundred students in one large classroom. However, older students were to be used as “assistants” in helping out the younger students. So, once a child was in grade 5, for instance, that child could then help children below grade 5. This pedagogy was deemed to be most cost-efficient while still providing a quality education.\(^52\) However, as it is today, black student performance was still far behind that of white students in the city.\(^53\) By 1828, city

\(^{50}\) While these schools for blacks are located downtown, as opposed to the Germantown community, the story is still very important in regards to what occurs in Germantown in the 20\(^{th}\) century. As will be discussed later in this essay, a large proportion of blacks from 1900-1950 move from their center city residences to outer lying districts, such as Germantown, and thus their history is also the history of blacks in Germantown during the catalyzing residential changes in the Germantown community of the mid-to-late 20\(^{th}\) century.

\(^{51}\) Silcox, p. 444-451

\(^{52}\) A good discussion of the Lancasterian system of education, named after its “founder” Joseph Lancaster, can be found in: Charles Calvert Ellis Lancasterian Schools in Philadelphia (Ph.D. Thesis for the University of Pennsylvania, 1907). In fact, Ellis argues that this strategy is actually taken from an English system used in London which itself is a derivative of an Indian approach. The Lancasterian method is also often referred to as a “monitorial” system. In Philadelphia the model was developed by John L. Rhees and was required reading for all Philadelphia teachers in the pamphlet, A Pocket Manual of the Lancasterian System (Philadelphia, 1827).

\(^{53}\) For instance, according to the Ninth Annual Report of the Controllers of the Public Schools (Philadelphia, 1827) p. 4, only twelve percent of black students had progressed to actually writing.
officials recognized the many deficiencies associated with the black schools in the city. Thus, once the new Locust Street school was built for the white student population, the Mary and Gaskill street schools for blacks were allowed to move into the old Lombard Street school that used to house white students. This move set an unfortunate precedent in Philadelphia public schools in which blacks were moved into abandoned white schools. This practice can be seen throughout the Germantown community in the middle of the 20th century when whites either move out of the area or stop sending their children to the public schools, abruptly changing the racial make-up of schools from white to black.∗

The pedagogical methods of black schools also were not up to date compared with white schools. At the Lombard school, the Lancasterian system continued to be employed despite a 1836 law making it “optional” and regarded as a pauper method of teaching with its cheapness seen as the most redeeming value. Further detrimental to the educational aspirations of black children was the creation of a public high school in 1837 that did not admit black students. Black students’ schooling was finished after grammar school.

Another problem of early black education was instability. For instance, at the Lombard street school from 1834-1839, there were no less than six different principal-teachers. Yet, at white schools there was little to no turnover.54 Unfortunately, this is the

∗ This will be discussed in much greater detail later in this paper.
54 Silcox, p. 455-456
same type of problem that plagues many inner city schools in America today that are populated, in some instances, by almost all black students [indeed, Germantown High, which is currently ninety-eight percent black, is a school that falls into this category].

As schools became worse for blacks, the white community made strides: the first public infant school was created in 1832; and while black students often relied on one teacher for as many as 200 students, whites were often broken down into classes with the help of teaching assistants [which, naturally, is a result of the disproportionate funds being directed towards the benefit of whites].\textsuperscript{55} The focus away from blacks’ education can be seen in their numbers in the public school system: in 1829 blacks composed fourteen percent of the total public school population; yet, by 1839 it had substantially dropped to only three percent.\textsuperscript{56} Since blacks increased their population twenty-seven percent and whites thirty-seven percent during this time period, this cannot be attributed to the changing population of the city.\textsuperscript{57} Apparently, black disillusionment with the education system was present from the very beginning. On the other hand, one of the causes of blacks’ reduced educational opportunity can be attributed to foreign immigration.

Indeed, during the 1830’s when black school attendance dropped dramatically, there were at least three major race riots. These riots were almost solely directed at the

\textsuperscript{55} Silcox, p. 456-459
\textsuperscript{56} Silcox, p. 460
black population, often led by the Irish, and intent on scaring them out of town.

Immigrants could most easily fill low-paying, unskilled jobs for which blacks were the main competitor.58 The housing picture in the city was not as ghettoized as it is today;∗ the large influx of German and Irish immigrants could not find cheap, affordable housing in one area—so they were dispersed throughout the city, though almost everyone was within walking distance of their workplace. Blacks and recent European immigrants often lived side by side and had many opportunities to interact [albeit often in negative ways] with one another.59

To add fuel to the fire, blacks had their right to vote taken away by the state legislature in 1838 on the premise that they were “inferior and degraded beings.”60 In 1850 there were roughly eight thousand black adults in Philadelphia; however, 3,498 of them could neither read nor write. This was reflected in the small number of black youth enrolled in school in 1856: of 3,491 blacks between the ages of eight and eighteen, only

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57 DuBois, p. 46
58 DuBois, p. 46-53 and Franklin, p. 9
∗ Antonio McDaniel, in his article ““The Philadelphia Negro’ Then and Now” in W.E.B. DuBois, Race, and the City (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998) p. 164, constructed a table of dissimilarity measuring the residential segregation of ethnic groups in Philadelphia from 1850 to 1990. The dissimilarity index indicates the percentage of one group that would have to change residences from areas where they are over represented in order to produce an even distribution. In 1850, those of African descent had a dissimilarity index of 53; the Irish were 35, and Germans 37. Over the next thirty years, Blacks increased to 61, while the Irish dropped to 28 and the Germans 32. This data is telling of today’s ghettoization of the black population. In both 1980 and 1990 the dissimilarity index of blacks was 83—much higher than in antebellum Philadelphia when blacks were afforded few, if any, rights as citizens at all.
2,321 were enrolled in school. Accordingly, in the same year, there were 4,123 totally illiterate blacks in a population of 9,001 adults over 21. There were merely 1,710 of those who could “read, write and cipher.” Meanwhile, out in Germantown, where there were few blacks, they were no more literate than their brothers downtown: of thirty-six blacks over twenty years of age, eighteen were “wholly illiterate” and only seven could “read, write, and cipher.”

In 1847, only ten percent of Philadelphia blacks had been born slaves. One of the many arguments today about why so many black households are headed by females is that their culture is rooted in southern plantation life, not lending itself to a suitable, mainstream monogamous marriage. However, this argument is based on false notions as evidenced by the fact that in 1850 [before the end of slavery] the same proportion of blacks were living in nuclear households as in 1880 [after slavery]. While the percentage of female headed families did not change substantially in that thirty year period, black women were still twice as likely to head a family than an Irish, German, or Native-White-American (NWA) woman. Even more alarmingly, black males over the age of eighteen were four times as likely as Germans and NWAs to be unskilled workers. With their skin color already a strike against them in society, preventing them from

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60 Franklin, p. 11
61 DuBois, 85-88
* Technically, here I refer to the 22nd ward, which includes the Germantown community.
getting an education equal to their white neighbors, being primarily unskilled meant they mainly competed against the immigrant Irish—the next largest group of unskilled workers [the Irish being fifty percent unskilled workers, as opposed to nearly four-fifths of blacks]. Unfortunately, the jobs almost always went to the Irish, as blacks constituted not even one-half percent of the new iron and steel manufacturing jobs. This inability to find sufficient work to support a family was one of the contributors to the matrilocal black family. Here it is summed up quite nicely:

Economic status had a powerful effect on the structure of the black family because blacks suffered extremely high mortality and females with children faced difficulties in remarrying. To the extent that the female-headed family appeared during this period, it emerged, not as a legacy of slavery, but as a result of the destructive conditions of Northern life...The matrilocal black family is a product of economic discrimination, poverty, and disease.63

While the place of blacks in the social and educational sphere was already low, in 1854 it only got worse with the Pennsylvania state school law of 1854, which stipulated that 1) segregation of blacks in schools was legal if there were twenty or more black students that could attend the school; 2) communities were not required to admit blacks into white schools; and 3) segregated black schools only need be open for four months.64

64 Silcox, p. 463
Along with the new 1854 state law, Germantown was consolidated within the city of Philadelphia, meaning that Germantown was no longer a separate borough or township, rather it was just one of many neighborhoods in Philadelphia. Germantown became part of the Sixth ward and had five public schools with an average attendance of 841 students. These schools were: a) Rittenhouse school on Rittenhouse St., Germantown; b) Bringhurst Primary School on Bringhurst St., Germantown; c) Harmony School, Chestnut Hill; d) West Unclassified School, Allen’s Lane, upper end of Germantown; and e) Cresheim Primary, Franklinville.

Of course, these schools, including the private Germantown Academy, did not admit black students. There was a recognizable need for the education of black children, though. With minimal or next to no education, blacks could barely even compete against the recent immigrants, such as the Irish, for the manufacturing and other unskilled labor opportunities. In fact, in 1847 less than one-half of one percent of adult black males could obtain jobs in the new sectors of the economy such as iron, steel, and machine tools.

The professional path, most specifically teaching, was seen as one of the most beneficial ways to improve the social and educational standing of Philadelphia’s blacks.

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* The size of Philadelphia City increased from two square miles to 130.
65 Keyser, p. 85
The Institute for Colored Youth was established in 1852 as a result of a bequest in 1832 of $10,000 by a Philadelphia Quaker, Richard Humphreys, for an institution to prepare blacks for skilled trade and the teaching profession. While the main purpose of the Institute for Colored Youth was to educate, it often also served as a cultural center for the black population of Philadelphia. Located in the heart of the city on Lombard Street in the seventh ward and then on Bainbridge Street above Ninth, the Institute for Colored Youth became the leading center for educating and socially uplifting the black population of Philadelphia in the latter half of the 19th century. In fact, Philadelphia in the middle of the century had the largest black population of any city in the north. The Institute prided itself upon its wholly black faculty and students; this was quite an accomplishment because every public school in the city for blacks had only white teachers until 1862.

And, indeed, it was a school of the highest order as evidenced by a catalog of classes available in 1853: Orthography, Writing, Algebra, Mensuration, Surveying, Navigation, English Grammar, Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, Reading, Arithmetic, Geometry, Plane Trigonometry, Spherical Trigonometry, Geography, Dictation, Composition, Mechanical Drawing and Drafting.

While classes in the beginning were small, the Institute served as an authoritative answer to those in the nation who saw blacks as genetically inferior to whites, especially

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after the 1857 Supreme Court Dred Scott case which made this claim. For this reason, the Institute was something of a tourist attraction, especially for white southerners amazed to see such bright black students. During the Civil Wars years the product of the Institute for Colored Youth was displayed when the first black public school teachers were hired and all were graduates of the Institute.  

The zenith of accomplishment for the Institute for Colored Youth was under the direction of Fanny Jackson, who arrived from Oberlin in 1865 with her assistant Mary Jane Patterson [who was the first black woman college graduate in the country]. Ms. Jackson was born a slave in Washington, D.C. and proved to be an excellent teacher—by the end of her first year the number of female students had doubled, from forty-two to eighty students. After four years, the overall population of the Institute had nearly doubled, from 114 to 218. However, the next decade saw numerous problems arise in Jackson’s and the Institute’s path: black migration from the south coupled with depression caused various social ills among the general black population, many teachers resigned to take jobs at other schools in the country, and one, Octavius V. Catto, was assassinated in 1871 as he attempted to vote. 

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68 Perkins, p. 20  
* While the Institute did offer some night classes to appease those who worked during the day, the Institute clearly could not serve the entire black community. So, while it was a great benefit to those who did attend, one of the best products of the school was to increase awareness that blacks were not inferior as they were often portrayed. For instance, in 1863 there were merely 109 students.  
69 Perkins, p. 21  
70 Perkins, p. 22
Over the next two decades the enrollment was maintained just below 300
students. However, by the turn of the century the Board had lost its interest in the cause
of the black person and had instructed Jackson to cut some of the more advanced
mathematics and classical classes. This was the beginning of the end for the Institute,
which finally closed its doors in 1903, relocating to a rural farm in Cheyney,
Pennsylvania. It is at roughly this time in Philadelphia that W.E.B. DuBois was asked to
do a study of the Philadelphia black population for the University of Pennsylvania. What
followed was the classic social science study, *The Philadelphia Negro*, which provides a
wealth of information about blacks in Philadelphia at the turn of the century.

**DuBois’ Philadelphia—entering the twentieth century**

The black population that DuBois encountered was a transient one. In his
investigation of the seventh ward, only thirty-two percent of 9,138 black residents were
born in Philadelphia. The largest amount, fifty-four percent, were born in the South.\(^72\)

Even more striking is that of the 2,939 born in Philadelphia, 1,741 were under the age of
twenty. Furthermore, of the 21-30 year olds, only 107 out of 1,814 had been living in
Philadelphia for twenty-one years or more. Therefore, only six percent of the age group

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\(^71\) Perkins, p. 23

\(^72\) DuBois, p. 74-75
most viable for the workforce and creating families were born and raised in Philadelphia. This paints a portrait of a population and city in transition.

Many blacks traveled north during the latter half of the nineteenth century in search of industrial, unskilled jobs. Unfortunately, this was at the very same time that immigration into the US also increased. Because of this, at the turn of the century forty-eight percent of men and forty-six percent of women of all races were employed in the manufacturing and mechanical industries in Philadelphia; meanwhile, only eight percent of black men and nine percent of black women were engaged in the same industries. Rather, blacks dominated the domestic/personal service realm in Philadelphia: seventy-four percent of the employed residents of the seventh ward were engaged in domestic/personal services. Meanwhile, only twenty-three percent of all Philadelphians worked in this sphere.73

While blacks were often unable to obtain similar work to the recent immigrants, they were, as a whole, a much more literate group. For instance, of six ethnic immigrant groups in Philadelphia in 1894, only the Germans had a higher literacy rate.74 Despite this advantage, blacks were still unable to procure legitimate work in order to pull themselves up by the proverbial bootstraps that are so imbedded in the American imagination. Apparently even some of the skilled black workers had difficulty finding employment;

73 DuBois, p. 108-109
for instance, DuBois reported that nearly all carpenters, masoners, painters, and iron
workers had succeeded in keeping out the black workforce by refusing to work with non-
union men and, accordingly, did not allow black men into their unions.\textsuperscript{74} Even after
obtaining a job, maintaining it proved difficult: DuBois describes the plight of a young
girl who went to work in Germantown and was told by the Mistress that she would have
liked to keep her but because all the other servants were white, she had to discharge her
because she was black.\textsuperscript{75} In other instances, blacks were able to obtain the same job as
whites—yet they were often paid less: a coachman received $50-75 if he were white and
only $30-60 if he were black.\textsuperscript{76} The disgruntled state of a black employee is described
well by DuBois:

\begin{quote}
Much discouragement results from the persistent refusal to promote
colored employees. The humblest white employee knows that the better he
does his work the more chance there is for him to rise in the business. The
black employee knows that the better he does his work the longer he may
do it; he cannot hope for promotion.\textsuperscript{77}
\end{quote}

Without steady or substantial employment opportunities available, there are
limited opportunities to acquire the necessary tools, such as home ownership, to climb the
proverbial social ladder. For example, one of the best indicators of financial stability is

\begin{footnotes}
\textit{Illiterate[Philadelphia, 1894]}—Italians: 63.63 %; Russians: 41.92%; Poles: 40.27%; Hungarians: 30.84%;
Irish: 25.79%; Blacks of the 7th ward [1896]: 18.56%; Germans: 14.74%, as reported by DuBois, p. 92
\textsuperscript{74} DuBois, p. 128
\textsuperscript{75} DuBois, p. 339. DuBois describes twenty different circumstances in which blacks were not hired or were
fired simply because they were black from p. 329-331.
\textsuperscript{76} DuBois, p. 345
\end{footnotes}
home ownership. At the turn of the century, just over five percent of seventh ward black families owned property in the seventh ward and eight percent owned property in the city [dishearteningly, in 1849 5.5% of blacks owned property in the city-proper, more than seventh ward blacks fifty years later]. Nearly one-sixth of these families were headed by caterers, one of the few professions other than domestic service that blacks dominated at the time.\textsuperscript{78}

At the turn of the century Germantown was still largely a suburban community, although it was linked to the downtown sector by iron tracks that had been laid down in 1857, by electrified trolleys, and by elevated trains and subways in the 1890s.\textsuperscript{79} It was, however, a “better” place to live than in center-city Philadelphia in terms of health. The death rate per 1,000 blacks in the twenty-second ward between 1884-1890 was only 15.9, while the seventh district was twice as high at 30.54. One explanation can be attributed to the smaller black population in the twenty-second ward: they constituted just four percent of the roughly 45,000 people residing there. DuBois also accounts for this by the fact that blacks in the twenty-second ward were mainly servants, a profession that did not lead to many physical ailments.\textsuperscript{80} In 1925, the density per acre of blacks in the seventh ward was

\textsuperscript{77} DuBois, p. 343
\textsuperscript{78} DuBois, p. 179-184. He describes that ninety-four percent of black families were renters because many blacks were distrustful of banks after the Freedmen’s Bank failed; their difficulty in buying homes in decent neighborhoods due to racism; and finally the rising price of real estate coinciding with the limited workforce opportunities afforded blacks.
\textsuperscript{79} “Tale of Three Cities”, p. 472-473
\textsuperscript{80} DuBois, p. 154-155
164; in the twenty-second ward, it was only 98.8. If we look at the population of the wards closer to the time DuBois made his study we can see that while the seventh ward remained the same in number [1896: 11,553 to 1925: 11,661], the twenty-second ward increased greatly [1896: 4,799 to 1925: 7,885]—meaning that difference between density per acre was even greater at the turn of the century.

Education in Germantown around 1900 was highly segregated. There were two schools for blacks in the twenty-second ward in 1895—the Coulter Street School, which had forty-five boys and thirty-nine girls; and J.E. Hill School in Germantown, which had eighty-four boys and eighty-nine girls. The teachers at these two schools were also all black. Perhaps the most surprising element about these schools was the average age: 24 at Hill and 20 at Coulter street. By 1908, Vincent P. Franklin reports there being 466 black children attending school in the twenty-second ward in a total school population of 9,351. These schools were clearly not just educating the children of the neighborhood but also the black neighborhood itself, much like the Institute for Colored Youth did downtown. In fact, there was a small black community in Germantown before the turn of the century in which a number of blacks owned businesses of their own, independent of whites: there were two grocery stores, three barbers, one restaurant and lodging house, one upholsterer, one expressman, and one steam laundry. Over the next fifty years the

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81 Franklin, p. 38
82 DuBois, p. 125
twenty-second ward would grow in leaps and bounds, especially from blacks moving from the south and the downtown districts of Philadelphia as described by DuBois in *The Philadelphia Negro*, and this would begin changing the face of Philadelphia to represent the majority black community it represents today.

**Black migration to Philadelphia and white uneasiness**

European immigrants were utilized to provide much of the labor force for the industrial revolution that forever altered the landscape of the American nation and can even be described as the beginning of the modern era. On the other hand, blacks from the south during the late 19th and early 20th century were actively recruited to work in northern factories, but only as lowly strike-breakers. For instance, blacks from the south were used as scab workers at least seven times between 1895-1916 in New York City. Throughout the north blacks were not welcomed with open arms. In Chicago between 1917-1921, there were fifty-eight black homes bombed—and average of one every twenty-one days. By the First World War, the southern plantation economy was faltering and the war effort required a larger, unskilled workforce. For this reason, southern blacks flocked to the north in unprecedented numbers. Between 1910-1920,

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525,000 blacks left the South for the North. The twenties had an even larger migration to the north: 877,000.

The scene in Philadelphia was no different: the black population increased fifty-nine percent between 1910-1920 and another twenty-two percent over the next five years. Accordingly, in 1910 blacks constituted only five and a half percent of Philadelphia’s population, but by 1925 they constituted nearly eight and a half percent. This may not seem like a large increase, but blacks were living in much more densely populated areas: 111.2 per acre compared with merely 28.2 for whites. There was little room left in the traditional black neighborhoods of the seventh ward and blacks increasingly became dispersed throughout the city. Germantown of 1910 only had 4,799 black residents. By 1925 that number had increased to 7,885. Germantown was still largely an outer lying district where conditions were “good” according to a report from 1927.84

After the world war, many blacks that had managed to gain employment in professional and skilled occupations chose to reside in “good home areas.”85 Meanwhile, the seventh district had maintained its already sizable black population despite the large volume of black immigrants: in 1910 the seventh ward had 11,553 blacks and in 1935 there were merely 108 more. However, many of the former residents who had secured a firm footing were moving out to places like Germantown while the new black immigrants

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84 T.J. Woofter and Madge Headley Priest Negro Housing in Philadelphia (Philadelphia, 1927) p. 3-5
85 Woofter and Priest, p. 9
moved into their old housing, as a 1927 report proclaimed: “The rapid increase in Negro population has taxed the low-rent housing facilities of the city to the limit, filling up old areas of Negro residences and causing the spread to new areas.”

The large black migration was also coupled with drastically reduced numbers of unskilled European immigrants. Italians, for instance, came in droves [222,000] to the United States in 1921; yet, in 1922 there were only 40,000 Italians entering the country. This was true of all European immigrants: there were 652,000 in 1921 and only 216,000 in 1922. Because of the decreased presence of foreign immigrants and the continually increasing numbers of southern blacks, communities were threatened with the possibility of interracially mixed and economically stratified neighborhoods because of the lack of affordable housing available. For instance, in Germantown most of the original houses built with five to ten rooms for one family had been converted and divided amongst two to five families. The families moving into these formerly white residences were often blacks. One of the methods blacks used for survival was to sub-let their apartments because of the high rents offered to blacks. For instance, in 1922-23 rents in Philadelphia increased nearly twenty-eight percent for blacks but not even eighteen percent for whites. However, this is not surprising, as whites were the ones most often setting rents: forty-

86 Woofter and Priest, p. 29
five percent of whites owned homes compared to only twelve percent of blacks. As has always been in American history, whites controlled the economic destiny of blacks.

Philadelphia was still not a hospitable place for a black person. Blacks were not seen as equal members of society. They mostly attended segregated schools. To keep their schools, neighborhoods, and way of life separate—whites relied on the law and real estate brokers in order to keep their lives residentially segregated. One of the first approaches to eliminating the possibility of blacks living amongst whites was through organizations invariably known as “neighborhood improvement associations.” While the benevolent name suggests a group of concerned citizens planting gardens and beautifying the neighborhood—these organizations were almost solely based on the premises of excluding blacks from their neighborhood. They adopted restrictive covenants, often lasting twenty years, which barred any member from leasing, renting, or selling to any blacks. As if these private organizations weren’t enough of a deterrent, in 1924 the National Association of Real Estate Brokers adopted an article in its code of ethics stating that “a Realtor should never be instrumental in introducing into a neighborhood…members of any race or nationality…whose presence will clearly be detrimental to property values in that neighborhood.” And, as whites were the ones who

88 Miller, p. 310
89 Massey & Denton, p. 35-36
90 As quoted in Massey and Denton, p. 37. This policy continued until 1950.
owned the majority of property and controlled society’s institutions, it was they who decided what race [obviously blacks] would be detrimental to property values.\textsuperscript{91}

As a last step to not only segregate blacks but also keep them on the lowest rungs of the socioeconomic ladder, white banks consistently did not make loans, necessary for purchasing homes, to black applicants. Realtors, the benevolent folk that they were, picked up the slack and often acted as bankers as well as sales agents, putting themselves into a position to charge higher interest rates to blacks than whites.\textsuperscript{92} If we look back upon the Philadelphia residential dissimilarity index table created by Antonio McDaniel, we will see that black residential dissimilarity increased from 46 in 1910 to 61 in 1930.\textsuperscript{93} While every other ethnic group in the table either leveled out or decreased over the rest of the century, those of African descent’s index increased nearly every decade to the point where in 1990 it was 83. The deleterious discriminatory housing practices originating in the beginning of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, and continued throughout in various ways, as I will demonstrate later, are still clearly evident as we enter the 21\textsuperscript{st} century.

Philadelphia schools in the early half of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century were not totally segregated. In 1908 there were nine separate black public schools which had a population

\textsuperscript{91} Dalton Conley, a young sociologist, describes the phenomena of real estate value quite well in \textit{Being Black, Living in the Red} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999) p. 38: “A rare stamp or a precious metal has no inherent productive value; rather, its value is socially conferred by the market. Likewise, black housing may be worth less because the majority group (whites) controls the market, and thus segregation is in this group’s interest. White housing is worth more precisely because it is not black housing.”

\textsuperscript{92} Massey and Denton, p. 38

\textsuperscript{93} McDaniel, p. 164
of 2,335. Meanwhile, the other 5,224 black children in the Philadelphia district attended integrated schools.94 During the period of mass black migration to Philadelphia between 1922-1924, black enrollment increased from 19,859 to 24,702.95 One major hindrance to the complete desegregation of schools in America and Philadelphia during 1910-1930, was the introduction of the so-called “intelligence tests.” These tests were, according to social Darwinist scientists of the period, proof that blacks were innately less intelligent than whites. Because many people wanted to believe such an idea, rather than blame their own political and social practices, IQ testing caught on as a legitimate means to delineate the differences between and physically separate the races. There was, however, strong opposition among a number of social scientists, who reported that if a child were taught how to take the tests, his or her scores would increase by fifteen to twenty points.96 IQ tests, though, are still around today and their predecessor, SATs, still wreak havoc on a large proportion of today’s black high school students. Some schools still use IQ tests as the entrance exam into gifted programs.97

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94 Franklin, p. 39
95 Miller, p. 310
96 Franklin, p. 43-48, 132. The story is also amply told by Nicholas Lemann’s *The Big Test: the secret history of the American meritocracy* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1999)
97 This comes from my own experience at New Hope-Solebury Elementary school in 1989-1990 when I was administered an IQ test for entry into the “special interest” program. First time around my score was not high enough; hence I was stuck with the ‘normal’ intelligence students. Apparently later in the year when I retook the test my mental capacity must have increased because I was admitted to the program for my remaining three years there.
In late 1931 and early 1932 a scandal erupted in the Philadelphia public schools: a textbook entitled “Problems in American Democracy”, used in Junior High classrooms throughout the city, used offensive and racist remarks about blacks’ supposed ignorance, proneness to superstition, uncleanness, and that widespread illiteracy among southern blacks was their reason for not voting [not intimidation at the polls]. After front-page coverage in the Philadelphia Tribune and much fanfare, the book was recommended for removal later that year. While a minor victory, it was important to many blacks in the city who were continually discriminated against in all aspects of their lives.98 Spurred by this event, over the next five years blacks were able to dismantle the “dual list” pool of teachers that separated blacks from whites so that blacks would only be assigned to black schools in the lower grades; they also had the first black ever appointed to the school board; and black teachers were assigned to public secondary schools throughout the city.99

There were many communities that did not want to integrate their schools. In suburban Berwyn, there was a two-year fight between the blacks of the community and the white school board to desegregate the unequal schools. In Easttown and Tredyffin school district in 1932 there were two schools: a new school for white students and a one-room schoolhouse for blacks, with one teacher, for grades one through six. No blacks

98 Franklin, p. 136-7
99 Franklin, p. 146
were allowed at the new school. Black parents were enraged at the inequality between the two schools and decided to do something—they filed suit; however, it was promptly shut down. In response, they boycotted the schools for two full years, teaching their own children and were even arrested for breaking truancy laws. By 1934, however, the district acceded to the demands of the parents, who had gained the support of the governor, and the schools were open to members of any race. While a great gain for the black community members of Berwyn, the story also has a link to Germantown and its desegregation efforts.

The lawyer who represented the Berwyn parents in the initial lawsuit was Raymond Pace Alexander. In 1938, his family got the necessary nomination from a Quaker to have his daughter admitted to Germantown Friends School, located in the heart of the Germantown community—across from Germantown Academy. However, after much agonizing, the Quaker school decided to refuse Alexander’s daughter admission. Germantown Friends had never had a black student in its entire history. Even though the school had been one of the first independent schools in the region to admit Jewish students, the school was apparently not ready to admit a black student. However, in 1945, after an ‘integrationist’ Headmaster had replaced the former Headmaster of forty years,

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100 Franklin, p. 139-141
the first black student was finally admitted to Germantown Friends School—the son of two doctors.¹⁰¹

Every decade since the turn of the century saw an increased percentage of blacks in the twenty-second ward, which includes Germantown. Because of its suburban location and its limited access to industrial jobs near the downtown, Germantown was a place for more middle class blacks to move. For instance, in 1910 blacks constituted 6.8% of the twenty-second ward population; 7.8% in 1920; 9.1% in 1930; and 11.7% in 1940. In actual numbers, blacks increased from 4,799 in 1910 to 10,044 in 1940.¹⁰² This is a testament to the large number of black migrants coming to Philadelphia as discussed earlier.

Manufacturing jobs were becoming increasingly rare as the century progressed—in a three mile ring from the city’s center there were nine of ten manufacturing jobs in the city in 1880; by 1930 there were only six for every ten within that ring, and finally in 1970 there were only four of ten within a three-mile radius of the center of the city.¹⁰³ Not only did jobs decrease for the city as a whole, but the Great Depression of the 1930’s had a disastrous effect upon Philadelphia’s black community

¹⁰¹ The story was related to me through a personal interview with William Koons, an Upper School History teacher at Germantown Friends School, on March 1, 2002. I discovered that Alexander worked on the Berwyn case through Franklin’s The Education of Black Philadelphia.
¹⁰² United States Census Data 1910-1940
¹⁰³ “Tale of Three Cities”, p. 477
not only because of the joblessness, but also because blacks were last in line to receive any type of help during this decade due to racism.

The 1920’s were not “roaring” for Philadelphia as it had been for many other cities. It was, in fact, a period of economic recession. The recession hit blacks first and hardest: in 1927 one in five employable blacks was unemployed. As many blacks had recently migrated from the South and were “unskilled” workers, they were the first to be laid off from a job because their jobs were expendable. Blacks already earned lower wages than whites—the largest group earned between $20-24 a week while the largest amount of whites earned $25-29 a week with a large proportion also earning $30-34 a week—and this meant that blacks had fewer reserves from which to live when unemployed.

Unemployment throughout the city in the early thirties skyrocketed, but was always worst within the black populace: in 1934 near the peak of unemployment in the city, forty-eight percent of employable blacks were unemployed, compared with only twenty-eight percent of foreign-born residents and thirty-one percent of native born whites. In April of 1933, it was estimated that over thirty-five percent of families requesting aid were black, despite constituting less than twelve percent of Philadelphia’s population.\textsuperscript{104} It is quite apparent that the racist policies and actions of white Philadelphians denying blacks employment, entry into unions, and affordable housing in
not only the past few decades but since the formation of the city began to bite those very same people back as they were forced to help support a large proportion of the destitute black community during the Great Depression. [See Appendix C]

The lesson fell on deaf ears. That a larger proportion of blacks were unemployed than any other race was not seen as a result of past inequalities; rather, blacks’ social and economic woes were viewed as the fault of blacks themselves—not that of a racist society. Because of this, blacks in Philadelphia were virtually left out on the numerous New Deal initiatives put in place by Franklin D. Roosevelt to jumpstart the nation’s economy. Blacks were also shafted out of new, affordable housing. The two New Deal Housing complexes constructed during the thirties, the Carl Mackley homes [1936] and the Hill Creek homes [1938], were built not for impoverished blacks, but rather for the white, middle-class.

America’s entry into the war in Europe and Asia in the forties finally saw some much-needed relief for black Philadelphians. National defense projects for the war effort provided substantial amounts of jobs throughout the country, helping pull America through the last throngs of the Depression. Blacks were also able to capitalize on the numerous opportunities available to them and were finally hired in “representative numbers” by private industries in Philadelphia. However, as the war neared to an end, it became clear that blacks’ acceptance into the workforce was implicit upon their working

104 Franklin, p. 105-111
for national security; in other words, when the work of blacks meant preserving the way of life for white Americans, it was acceptable to work by their side. In 1944 white Philadelphians showed their true colors when the white workers for the Philadelphia Transportation Company went on strike over the hiring of black employees. The strike nearly closed down all public transit in the city for the month of August.105

Over the first half of the 20th century, the black population of Philadelphia increased greatly, yet made little progress in becoming equal members of society. Post World War II Philadelphia would not be a catalyst for positive socioeconomic change either. Instead, I argue that while on the surface it may appear that blacks’ opportunities were greater after the war, in fact the overtly and discreetly racist policies and actions of white Philadelphians only magnified the differences between the two races, leading to the present situation of today’s isolated black ghettos in Philadelphia, exemplified by communities like Germantown.

White flight and racism creating black poverty and ghettos—1950s to the present

In a survey conducted in 1942 of white Americans, eighty-four percent agreed that there should be separate sections in towns and cities for blacks to live in. By 1962 the sentiment hadn’t changed much because sixty-one percent agreed that “white people have

105 Franklin, p. 113-117
a right to keep blacks out of their neighborhoods if they want to, and blacks should respect that right.” During post World War II America, this is exactly what happened. Federal programs and private business such as realtors aided and abetted the white flight to the suburbs that characterized the latter half of the 20th century. Perhaps the program most responsible for uplifting white America into the middle-class suburbs and leaving black America behind in the urban ghettos, was the Federal Housing Administration [FHA] and its use of redlining techniques to exclude blacks from loans in order to purchase homes.

In 1933, as part of New Deal legislation, the federal government passed the Home Owners Loan Corporation [HOLC] program that provided funds for refinancing urban mortgages in danger of default and also granted low-interest loans to those who had lost their homes. While the money given out by this program was minimal, the method in which money was distributed was overtly racist, guiding loaning practices for the FHA and banks for the rest of the century. Four categories of neighborhoods were established, with the lowest being outlined in red—these were always predominantly black neighborhoods and virtually never received loans as it was deemed too risky. So, in 1937, when the FHA was created, almost no loans went to blacks because of the FHA redlining tactics. By guaranteeing over ninety percent of the value of collateral so down payments of only ten percent on new homes became the standard, many whites were able to

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106 Massey and Denton, p. 49
purchase homes in the suburbs who before would have never been able to come up with the money. With this security, the risk of customer default to the banks was virtually eliminated. Thus, the FHA was crucial to the lily-white suburbanization of America.

The FHA also rated homes for approval for loans by establishing minimum standards for lot size, setbacks, and separation from existing structures. These regulations excluded black, urban housing from receiving loans—meaning that almost all the money went into suburban development. Even if inner-city dwellers received FHA funds, they only did so if they lived in racially homogenous neighborhoods. A 1939 FHA underwriting manual stated that “if a neighborhood is to retain stability, it is necessary that properties should continue to be occupied by the same social and racial classes.” For this reason, the FHA compiled maps of red-lined black neighborhoods for their own purpose but would later be used as models by banks to help determine their general lending practices. As a result, places like Nassau County [suburban Long Island, New York] received eleven times more per capita lending from the FHA between 1934 and 1960 than Kings County in Brooklyn, New York and sixty times that of the Bronx.¹⁰⁷ It is under these circumstances for the black community that we see such drastic population changes in Philadelphia from 1950-1970, seriously altering the public school system structure, which then served as the catalyst for, and maintainer of, social inequality.

¹⁰⁷ Massey and Denton, p. 51-54; Conley, p. 36-37
There were 139,060 Philadelphia public elementary students in the 1950-51 school year. Just a shade over two-thirds of these students were white; one-third were black. Ten years later, whites had dropped to only forty-eight percent while blacks climbed to fifty-two percent. Five years later, in the 1965-66 school year, almost sixty percent of Philadelphia’s public elementary students were black, while just over forty percent were white. Clearly, something drastic in the population demographics was happening. An analysis of a Census tract in the heart of Germantown will aid us in understanding the changes in the school population. For our purposes we will investigate Tract 22-D. This tract is bordered by Rittenhouse, Germantown, Wayne, and Coulter St and lies in the heart of the Germantown community, as well as encompassing the campuses of independent schools Germantown Academy and Germantown Friends.

In 1950, the population was 2,012: seventy percent white and thirty percent black. Of the black population twenty-five years and over, thirty percent had never attended high school and only twelve percent completed high school. Just one percent had completed four years of college. In comparison, nearly thirteen percent of whites over twenty-five had completed four years of college and nearly forty-three percent were high school graduates. Almost all black males were employed as “laborers,” “operatives and kindred workers,” and “service workers”—in a nutshell, unskilled. Two-thirds of employed black females were “private household workers.” Also, only thirty-eight percent of black families lived in homes that they owned. This data suggests that the
employment and well being of the black population was heavily reliant upon the white population. While Germantown was still considered a suburban-type residence of middle-class homes, the black population remained largely uneducated in comparison to whites and the occupational structure depended on whites—especially for the females who worked in their homes.\textsuperscript{108}

By 1980, the tract was fifty percent black and fifty percent white. The drastic difference in the two populations, however, is reflected in the median family income: whites at almost $38,000 and black families at $5,096. Ten years later, in 1990, almost all the whites had fled the neighborhood: blacks constituted just over seventy-seven percent of the population.

In another neighborhood in Germantown, bordering Germantown Avenue to the east and north of High Street [which is where Germantown High School is located], the change in the racial make-up of the community occurred much more quickly, yet surprisingly with a community that had a stronger socioeconomic background. In 1950 tract 22-Z had a total population of 9,502; it was ninety-five percent white and had been ninety-eight percent white in 1940. The blacks in this neighborhood could be described as at least middle class. Over ten percent had a college degree and nearly fifty percent had graduated from high school. They owned 113 of the 144 housing units in which they

lived. This was not a group of lower class, uneducated, unskilled working blacks; these are not the people who bring shame to a neighborhood.

However, by 1960 blacks made up fifty-six percent of the neighborhood. Where did all the blacks come from and where did the whites go? In just 1955, nearly forty percent of blacks lived in the center city of Philadelphia; barely three percent came from the south—meaning that blacks were no longer streaming to Philadelphia from the south like in the early part of the century, but rather once established in the central wards were moving out to the better wards of Germantown and the like. Seventy-seven percent of blacks had moved into their current housing unit since 1955. The remaining whites in the neighborhood were mostly older: their median age was fifty for women and thirty-nine for men; blacks were a much younger lot at twenty-seven for both. By 1970, the transformation of the neighborhood from white to black was nearly complete: blacks made up eighty-four percent of the population. The community, as a predominantly black enclave, continued to thrive—black males over the age of sixteen sported a very low 3.8 percent unemployment rate. By 1990 the community resembled its 1950 self inversely: ninety-three percent black, seven percent white.

This neighborhood is quite typical of the residential patterns of Philadelphia from 1950 to the present. Elijah Anderson likens the phenomena of whites moving out of neighborhoods to when blacks show up at the local playground basketball court. Whites will be playing basketball on the court but when too many blacks show up to play, the
whites pack up and head out to their own, white courts. He calls this invasion-succeSSION.\textsuperscript{109} It is the same ideology that the HOLC and FHA used to determine that heterogeneous neighborhoods were undesirable in the 1930s and 40s—leading to the fact that of all mortgages issued in the US between 1930-1960, fewer than one percent went to blacks.\textsuperscript{110}

Because of the massive change in housing patterns after World War II, schools also felt the effect. In Philadelphia, schools that were predominantly white became practically segregated black schools in just over ten years in some cases—even after \textit{Brown v. Board of Education [1954]} deemed separate but equal to be unconstitutional. Rather than excluding blacks from their schools, whites just packed up and moved out of the neighborhood, leaving their old schools for the blacks. Because of the funding of schools through property taxes [which hinge on property value], the new black neighborhoods of Philadelphia suffered for lack of funding, while also inheriting the old stock of housing and school facilities with no way to improve or maintain them.

\textit{Schooling in Germantown from the 60s forward}

\textsuperscript{110} Conley, p. 37
In 1962 The United States Commission on Civil Rights reported findings in five cities that underlined the direction of civil rights in education. These reports, each written by a lawyer, were composed under the auspices of an indictment of the inequality built into the education systems of these specific cities. Philadelphia was one of the cities involved in the study. Accordingly, much emphasis in the article by Albert P. Blaustein was placed on Northwest Philadelphia and the measures undertaken by specific schools in order to keep certain ones nominally segregated. At this time, many schools would encourage white students living in predominantly black districts to transfer to schools with majority white populations; conversely, blacks were encouraged to transfer to schools with a nearly all black student populace.

Northwest Philadelphia was not a black ghetto in the 1960’s. Instead, large portions of East Mt. Airy were completely white. For instance, there was a large dispute over the boundary lines that separated the Anna Day school from the Eleanor Emlen school. Emlen was 98 percent black; Day was 100 percent white, yet they shared a common boarder. Further north, the F.S. Edmonds school was 99 percent white, while Pennypacker, McCloskey, and Rowen were all 100 percent white. Meanwhile, to the south, Pennell was 94 percent black, Pastorius 80 percent black, Wister 80 percent black, Fulton 85 percent black, Linglebach 70 percent black, etc.\footnote{Albert P. Blaustein, “Philadelphia,” in Civil rights USA Public Schools North and West 1962 [1962], p.109-173} To the north lived mostly
whites, to the south mostly blacks. Germantown High at 48 percent black, which served both populations, was what Elijah Anderson calls, “a model of racially integrated, quality education.”

In the mid 1960s, a court case, Chisholm v. The Board of Public Education, was supposed to bring racial and educational equality to Philadelphia through the situation of Northwest Philadelphia. However, this never materialized. I can find no evidence of the case ever coming to a close and, thus, the Board of Education in Philadelphia was never found guilty of favoring white students over blacks and providing an inadequate education to the black students of Philadelphia. The ramifications of the decision can be seen in the present racial composition of Germantown’s schools—nearly all black. While whites originally attempted to keep certain schools as their own in the 1960s, it is clear that many whites did not stay in the city—they moved to the suburbs, to places like Chestnut Hill that today, still, are almost ninety percent white and too expensive for many blacks to move to, thus keeping the schools predominantly white.

Not only did white people move out of the Germantown community, but so did American’s oldest non-sectarian independent school—Germantown Academy [GA]. Founded in 1761 by a group of citizens concerned about their children’s education, GA was so well respected that George Washington’s adopted son was enrolled there in the

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112 Anderson, p. 22
late 18th century. In 1958, Frank Deacon, the treasurer of Germantown Academy, said to its Board of Trustees, “The handwriting is on the wall and if we do not risk this opportunity to move we soon will be out of existence.” What Deacon was speaking about was their $84,000 debt and a piece of land in suburban Fort Washington that had been offered to the school. GA was no longer one of the premiere independent schools in the region. The changing demographics of Germantown over the past decade, from almost all white to all black, created a situation in which there was not a market for both Germantown Friends and Germantown Academy; frankly, there were not enough white students able to pay tuition. Staying in the neighborhood would mean having to admit black students in order to fill their rolls. However, GA did not admit black students until the 1968-69 school year, after they had already made the move to Fort Washington. Despite accumulating a huge debt to physically assemble a new school in Fort Washington, the move was deemed necessary for survival. By 1965 the move was complete and began enrolling women (it had been all-male before) in order “to serve the whole community,” as their web-site proclaims. In truth, the man who donated the land

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113 For instance, in 1990 the median value of a white home in Chestnut Hill was almost $240,000—five to seven times greater than many homes in the heart of Germantown.
115 O’Neill, p. 12
116 Personal Interview conducted on April 3, 2002 with Brian Burke, a Latin and English teacher at Germantown Academy since 1966.
117 http://www.ga.k12.pa/aboutga/history_traditions/1759.shtml
required that they be co-ed, which at first had made the trustees balk [I wonder if they 
would have still made the move had they been required to admit black students].

Germantown Academy was a school in financial trouble because its market 
(middle, upper-class white students) had moved out to the suburbs. In effect, GA simply 
followed its students. GFS, on the other hand, did not move—the property to which GA 
was moved was first offered to Germantown Friends, but out of allegiance to the Quaker 
Meeting in Germantown as well as their socially conscience view on the world, they 
turned down the offer. Both schools have prospered; Germantown Friends’ decision to 
remain in Germantown has not weakened the quality of the school—it might even be the 
best independent school in the region and has an endowment around thirty million.

Today, Germantown Friends is the largest employer in the Germantown community. 
Germantown Academy has also brought itself back from the brink of extinction, sporting 
a thirty million-dollar endowment and a quality education harking back to its 19th century 
glory days.118

Meanwhile, all the other white residents and business fled. Germantown resident 
and Germantown Friends teacher Bill Koons remembers during the early seventies when 
the corner of Germantown and Chelten was a bustling shopping area. However, when 
Sears left the neighborhood for the suburbs, so too did Woolworth’s, Montgomery Ward,
and other locally owned businesses. Today, that same corner is still bustling—with discount liquor and grocery stores, pager and pawnshops, and the ubiquitous check cashing places. True, today the GFS campus is insular; one hardly recognizes the dilapidated buildings surrounding it once on campus. GFS has become a beacon of progressive education in the region, noted as one of the most academically well-respected schools in the area. And while their fifteen percent black student population is quite low in relation to the surrounding community, Germantown Academy’s four percent seems embarrassing. It appears as if GA has kept to its traditional all-white roots by removing itself from the black Germantown community and retaining their white Germantown name as a vestige of a time gone by.

Because of the move to Fort Washington, those residing in Germantown no longer have much of a local choice for an independent school. And it is a shame, considering that GA has continued to produce excellent students. The average SAT score of the 2000 class was 1227. Not only that, but on their web-site is a calendar that lists the colleges and universities that come to their Fort Washington campus to encourage them to apply. Here’s a sampling: Brown, Penn, U. of Chicago, Yale, Duke, Rice, Cornell, Williams, St. Andrews (in Scotland! —a college fit for a Prince, William that is),

118 I obtained the endowment figures through the kind research of Linda Brown, my mother, who has access to the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) web-site database because she works for another independent school.

119 Personal interview with Bill Koons, March 1, 2002
Dartmouth, Johns Hopkins, Bryn Mawr and the list just goes on and on. I wonder if many of these institutions travel to Germantown High. For instance, Haverford College does not. Instead Haverford travels to the magnet schools in search of “students of color”: 

Every admission officer now seeks to identify strong prospective students of color, during the fall semester visiting a variety of high schools and agencies throughout the country, including inner-city areas. Examples of high schools targeted for such visits are Central, Girls, Overbrook and Masterman high schools in Philadelphia, Stuyvesant HS and Bronx High School of Science in New York City, Woodrow Wilson HS in Washington and Ridge and Latin High School in Cambridge, MA.120

So, while getting more funding and better students, magnet schools are getting all the attention of elite institutions like Haverford. Places like Germantown High are left behind. In fact, the only school on Haverford’s list of targeted schools in order to find “students of color” that isn’t a magnet school is Overbrook HS in West Philadelphia. Overbrook is less than four miles down Lancaster Avenue from Haverford. They’re not breaking their backs by visiting there.

In 1987 Germantown High had been transformed in under thirty years from what was once a “model of integration” to a ninety-nine percent black high school. The change from integrated to all-black happened just as quickly in many of the elementary and middle schools. For instance, in 1961 John S. Jenks’ black population was only thirteen percent. By 1987 that figure had risen to forty-eight percent. Presently, according to 2000 figures, the percentage of blacks has risen to eighty percent. Henry Houston was only
eighteen percent black in 1961. In 1987 it was seventy-four percent black. Today, it is ninety percent black. Fitler Academics Plus was twenty-four percent black in 1961. 1987: sixty-eight percent. Today: 85 percent. On a more drastic level, Anna Day, Samuel Pennypacker, McCloskey, and Rowen were all entirely white in 1961. A mere forty years later, these schools are all ninety-eight percent or more black! Every school in the Germantown cluster and surrounding area has increased in percentage of black students from 1987 to 2000. Every school, except for the three in the West Mt. Airy and Chestnut Hill neighborhoods, as well as Fitler because it is a magnet school drawing from all over the city as well as the local area, has a student population of over seventy-nine percent from low-income families.121 [See Appendix D]

Gradually, Germantown has become an area of predominantly black people with low-incomes. Wealth inequalities have perpetuated through generations. Those blacks from the 1960’s who brought about the *Chisholm* court case because of unequal schooling for black and white children were clearly not given an equal chance because today poverty and even more unequal education continues.

It is important to notice the subtle differences in communities that contribute to the quality of education in specific schools. Of course, the quality of teachers is essential, but the social organization of the neighborhood also plays an instrumental role in the

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120 “Building and Sustaining Diversity: a preliminary report in the Board of Managers on Work-in-progress on Diversity” Haverford College, fall, 1999
quality of education. For instance, if we investigate the Penn-Knox neighborhood (through the 1990 census) in which Clarence Pickett Middle School is situated, we discover that the neighborhood is seventy-one percent black, a much lower rate than the ninety-eight percent enrolled at Pickett. Of family households, only twenty-one percent are married couples living with their children. Meanwhile, twenty-nine percent of children live with just their mother. (Having two parents is clearly a distinct advantage in raising and educating a child because of the dual role model as well as the extra economic funding. I doubt any researcher could prove that a one-parent household increases a child’s future socioeconomic status.) Only twenty-two percent of residents owned and lived in their own homes. Owning a house is also a clear indication of wealth accumulation and allows surer financial ground from which to live. However, only sixteen percent of black families owned their own house compared to the white rate of fifty-four percent. Even more striking is that the median value of black owned homes was nearly $43,000 dollars, almost exactly half of the median value of white owned homes [a little over $87,000]. This trend continues in the Wister neighborhood, where the Kelly School and the Wister School are located. For instance, in Wister there were twice as many families of a single mother with children than a two-parent family with children. While fifty-four percent of blacks owned their own home, sixty-five percent of whites owned their own. The median value of a black-owned home was only $28,000 while a
white-owned home’s median value was $41,000. So, it is clear that the whites that do reside in the Germantown area are better off because more live in their own homes and those homes are worth more. As we have already discussed, wealth and income plays a pivotal role in the quality of education children receive as well as children’s ability to score well on standardized testing, which in turn increases chance of acceptance at better colleges and universities.

But what of the black middle class? Some of them too have moved to outlying, predominantly white neighborhoods like Chestnut Hill, leaving behind the poorest black families. However, when we examine the data of the Chestnut Hill neighborhood, we see middle-class inequalities linked to race. Chestnut Hill is eighty-seven percent white and eleven percent black. More families are comprised of two-parents [thirty-one percent] than single mother families [seven percent]. Forty-three percent of households own their own homes. While fifty-two percent of whites own their own homes, only four percent of blacks own their own homes. The median value of these homes is also quite different: whites at a whopping $240,000 and blacks at $207,000. While such large numbers are not that much different and both signify wealth, very few blacks are able to acquire enough money to own their own homes in such an affluent area. Most of these middle-class blacks have seemingly left the certainty of owning their own home in predominantly black, lower-income neighborhoods to live in a more suburban, middle-class locale despite the inability to rely on property accumulation as a means of securing a stable
economic base. The only instances in the Germantown community where the median value of black homes is greater than that of whites is when the figure is in the thirty thousands—meaning that these poor blacks are better off than the poorest whites who cannot afford to move from the ghetto to the suburbs.122

Conclusion—hope lies in the schools

As noted earlier, blacks were continually denied mortgages on housing, refused loans, and encouraged to buy homes in all-black neighborhoods during and even after the Civil Rights movement. Whites did not want blacks to move into a predominantly white neighborhood because property values would drop. The remnants of these deliberate and unconscious forms of racism can be seen in the housing patterns in Germantown in which the communities with higher percentages of blacks have lower median values on homes. With lower values on housing and fear of living in an all-black neighborhood, whites are moving out of the Germantown area, leaving it increasingly black and poor. This does not aid in the funding of schools, either. A smaller tax-base means fewer funds that Philadelphia provides and more from the state. And, let’s be honest, the last thing the white legislators in Harrisburg want to do is give more money to a school system full of black and minority students that continually under-performs.

122 http://www.pde.psu.edu
To prove this, we can investigate the per-student expenditure of Philadelphia: $7,669. Thirty-eight percent of this funding is local. Fifty-one percent is from the state. Considering that Philadelphia can only manage to raise $2,914.22 per student, this is clearly not enough to provide an adequate education. Therefore the state’s contribution of $3,911.19 per student is greatly needed to bring the sum to the already low level of $7,669. Because of the large number of pupils in Philadelphia, this gross number becomes quite hefty; however, when we look at the same data for suburban districts a curious pattern emerges.

For instance, in Lower Merion per-student expenditure amounts to $13,367, nearly twice that of Philadelphia. Because of the wealth of the neighborhood, Lower Merion is able to raise most of its money on its own, eighty-eight percent, amounting to $11,762.96 per student. Yet, this sum, already four thousand dollars more per-student than in Philadelphia, is apparently not enough. The state contributes eleven percent, or $1,444.96 per student. I can guarantee that the state’s contribution of $3,911 to Philadelphia, which is only 2 2/3 times more than Lower Merion’s $1,444, does not correspond to the relative wealth of the respective districts. As already demonstrated, in many areas of Germantown, the median value of homes hovers around thirty thousand dollars, while in the all-white suburban-like community of Chestnut Hill the median value of homes is $239,000, for a value of nearly eight times greater. Indeed, this trend of extra funding for ninety percent white districts can be seen throughout the suburbs:
Radnor per student expenditure: $13,136; percent local: eighty-seven; percent state: eleven. New Hope-Solebury per student expenditure: $10,981; percent local: ninety; percent state: ten. One can imagine how over every district in the state this money amasses, creating a situation in which already wealthy districts, taxing themselves at a lower rate than Philadelphia, get a nice boost from the state to help keep inequality in funding even more unequal.123

As we can see, while the Germantown community’s various schools are all underperforming in relation to their suburban neighbors as well as compared to others in a similar economic situation, there are numerous obstacles working against the success of Germantown students, such as difficulties in wealth acquisition, historically linked racism in housing patterns, unequal school funding from the state, unfair school funding through property taxes, and racist testing measures, among others. Despite all of these forces working against Germantown, it is still a vibrant, thriving community that has yet to succumb to the destitute, vicious cycle of perpetual failure associated with the “hyper-ghetto” throughout urban areas in the nation. Certain programs exist, such as Summerbridge of Germantown, in order to help Germantown youth avoid the pitfalls of living in a precarious community and better their chances for educational and, in theory,

123 2000 Philadelphia Report Card on the Schools; found online at www.philly.com
life success.124 Hopefully, through social policy, Germantown can halt its meshing with
the hyper-ghetto to the south down Germantown Avenue and instead can become more
like its neighbors up Germantown Avenue in areas like Chestnut Hill. However, I fear
that without substantial alterations in the way that public schools are funded, as well as a
stop to the troubling trend towards testing standardization and subsequent reliance on
these scores for fund allocation, the Germantown community will become yet another
victim of our nation’s past wrongs never righted, still haunting us today in the third-
world-like societies that now constitute many of our urban areas.

124 Summerbridge of Germantown is an extension of a larger, nation-wide program located in many urban
areas throughout the country that strives to better the educational chances of, often minority, middle school
aged youth. The program accepts students entering seventh grade, provides them tutoring and
extracurricular programs during the school year and an enrichment-based, rigorous academic summer
school experience in the summer for two years. The idea is that the extra effort will place them into the
magnet schools in the city or, even better, they can earn a scholarship at a local independent school.
APPENDIX A

PSSA test score differences: Germantown and suburban schools

APPENDIX B

Racial composition of Germantown and select suburban schools
APPENDIX C

Unemployment during the Depression in Philadelphia

Unemployed in 1934
employed in 1934

APPENDIX D

Germantown neighborhood schools transition from white to black [1961-2000]
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