

Little Boxes:

Levittown and the Rise of American Suburbia

Kameron McNair

Geographies of Inequality: Social Movements and Urban Policy

Cindy Gorn

December 2015

Modern American history is filled with men who capitalized on a crisis. John D. Rockefeller saw a frail oil industry, so he built an enterprise. JP Morgan saw a failing nation so he built an empire. William Levitt saw a need for affordable houses, so he built a utopia. At the end of World War II, the American economy was booming. Thanks to the National Housing Act of 1934, veterans returning from the war were welcomed back by the true American Dream: suburbia. The goal of the Housing Act was to increase the production of low-cost housing¹, which for entrepreneurs like Levitt, meant creating a “Model-T” of houses that the everyday family could afford and enjoy. However, like the Model-T, Levitt created a system to mass-produce homes in literal minutes and friendly neighborhood utopias within hours. It sounds like the perfect little town in which to raise 2.5 children and make friends with all the other white families, but the dream does not last forever. Levitt’s dream of American suburbia should have remained just that: a dream.

“Levittown itself arguably embodied the best and worst of the postwar American story; it was a result of the entrepreneurship and ingenuity that has come to define the American spirit, but it also participated in the violent prejudice that has also been part of American history.”²

While the plan did create hundreds of thousands of homes for many families, the impact may have been detrimental. Planning the perfect suburb may be easy, but only when you forget to consider the future.

¹ Kelly, Barbara M. *Expanding the American Dream: Building and Rebuilding Levittown*. Albany: State U of New York, 1993. Print.

² Galyean, Crystal. "Levittown: The Imperfect Rise of the American Suburbs." *US History Scene*. Web. 1 Dec. 2015.

There is something to be said about the correlation between the rise of capitalism and the fall of culture. Culture, being used here to describe the style with which a population comes together and gets along. A driving force of Capitalism, mass production, encourages the population to all get the same thing. After all, everybody is chasing the same “American Dream,” so they should all drive the same car and live in the same house and look the same as their neighbors. William Levitt capitalized on this desire for a cookie-cutter world. Mass production makes sense for the entrepreneur- lower quality means higher revenue. But does mass production make sense for a lifestyle? Levitt surely thought so when he and his men built Levittown, New York.

“The preconditions for the housing programs were therefore deeply rooted in pre-New Deal American ideologies and meshed with long-established American beliefs that emphasized the importance of private property, personal initiative, and free enterprise, as well as the traditional nineteenth-century themes of republican virtue and Christian domesticity.”³

Levitt was not just building homes, he was building lifestyles. The whole outlook of his neighborhoods was idealistic. If everyone in the neighborhood had the same house and the same type of family, everyone would get along and live happily ever after. Levitt built these cookie cutter homes for a few reasons. They were fast, cheap, and easy. He thought of everything. He invested in a forest in California in case of a lumber shortage. He built a nail factory when nails were hard to get. He truly set out to build an empire. And like Alexander the Great, Levitt decided to expand his empire to Pennsylvania.

³ Kelly, Barbara

After the success of Levittown, New York, William Levitt set out to do it all over again right in the middle of two major urban hubs. Construction began on Levittown, Pennsylvania in 1952. Levit designed a 26-step building process that worked like an assembly line to most efficiently build homes. The system allowed the company to produce a new home every 16 minutes. Soon Levitt's utopia took shape in the perfect tiny grid. By 1958, 17,311 homes had gone up in a neighborhood perfect for the starter family.

“They designed community streets along curvilinear patterns to create a graceful, un-urban grid like feel, and directed cars going through the development to the outside of the community so Levittown would not be disturbed by noisy traffic. Even the maintenance of houses and yards were meticulously governed; buyers agreed to a laundry list of rules that, for example, prohibited residents from hanging laundry to dry outside their homes.”⁴

However, once that perfect family moved in, it was unlikely they would ever move out. While the Levittown homes were low-cost, the people that bought them were typically more blue-collared workers, or lower middle-class.

“The Levittowner, on the other hand, is fairly immobile. Buying his home has strained his slender resources and his level of income keeps him on a desperate merry-go-round attempting to meet the payments on his home, his car, his television set and the many other appliances he has purchased on time. A survey of Levittown residents made two years ago showed that the average savings bank balance per family was less than two hundred dollars. Most Levittowners are

⁴ Galyean, Crystal.

former city dwellers. A substantial number have had no formal education beyond the high school level.”⁵

On the outside, however this seemed like a perfectly fine situation. The Levittowners couldn't leave their dwellings, but at least everyone in the neighborhood was in the same situation. It could have been worse. There could have been negroes.

While William Levitt and his company refused to sell their homes to black families, there were no limits placed on owners selling to them. By 1953, Levittown had become the largest community in the United States with no black residents. Yet in 1957, one Levittown family was able to move away, and sold their luxury suburban home to William and Daisy Myers, a black couple. Suddenly, the quiet and calm neighborhood was in uproar. People could not believe a colored family dare set foot in their perfect utopia. They feared for their children, their market values, and their general well-beings.

“Given these factors then of emotional and economic attachment to a home making for immobility and an educational level that militates against a correct evaluation of complex racial situations and it is small wonder that many Levittowners reacted with fear, near panic and violence to a Negro purchasing a home and moving into their all-white community. Rumors, the inevitable handmaidens of emotional disturbance, began to fly. The Negroes had moved in as part of a plot variously ascribed to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Communists, Quakers and Jews. Their move presaged a deluge of Negro families into the community. Real estate prices would plummet. Social caste would be lost. Their daughters, if not debauched, would

⁵ Miller, Alexander F. “Levittown U.S.A.”. *The Phylon Quarterly* 19.1 (1958): 108–112. Web.

certainly marry Negroes. All the lies and rumors and half-truths that have soiled race relations in a hundred and more communities raced through Levittown.”⁶

The controversy sparked interest nationwide. The small suburb began appearing on national front pages.

“Their move was marked with racist harassment and mob violence, which ultimately required intervention by state authorities. This led to an injunction and criminal charges against the harassers while the Myers refused to surrender and move out. The family would ultimately become one of the symbols of resistance in the civil rights movement. Daisy Myers was even hailed as ‘the Rosa Parks of the North.’”⁷

To this day, Levittown remains only 3% black, slightly above the national average of 1% black population in suburbia. It seems as though William Levitt built a white bubble over his community when he placed it between Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and Trenton, New Jersey- two majority black cities. While Levittown seemed to avoid becoming a slum as many predicted, it succeeded in continuing a legacy of a non-diverse neighborhood.

The original goal of Levittown to be low-cost housing for veterans, young families, and middle class citizens seemed to work well enough for the era. The thousands of houses did their job of providing homes to millions of people who couldn’t afford to live in the city or in bigger houses. With the changing times, however, Levittown homes began to rise in price and became unattainable for the new middle class, especially minorities. Forty years after its construction, Levittown, NY was examined for this very issue.

⁶ Miller, Alexander F.

⁷ "Crisis in Levittown, Pennsylvania." *Portland Center Stage*. 24 Mar. 2013. Web. 11 Nov. 2015.

“‘This was a place where everybody was welcome if they worked hard and took care of their family,’ she recalled. ‘The young people are really out of luck that there isn’t a Mr. Levitt around today.’ A Dream Come True - But Not for Blacks”⁸

Many people feared that Levittown would become a slum because of its affordability. That was clearly not true, because even at its lower costs, actual low-income families still could not afford the homes. Though the founding idea behind Levittown was affordable housing, as the market changed for those who needed this housing, Levittown homes floated above an affordable range for low-income families. At the time of their construction, much of the nation lived in fear of Communism. Levittown served as a comforting tool for those fears while also being the affordable alternative to “socialism.”

“Though the government attempted to address the severe housing shortage by launching some public housing programs, those programs were viciously vilified by right-wing politicians as a form of socialism. Senator Joseph McCarthy himself called public housing projects ‘breeding ground[s] for communists.’

The Levitts and McCarthy joined forces in promoting Levittown as a more American, capitalist alternative to public housing solutions. McCarthy posed with washing machines to be placed in Levittown homes, and praised Levittown as a model of the American way.”⁹

Though the fear of Communism fizzled out after the Cold War, the idea that Levittown is a better alternative to public housing may remain in tact for planners.

⁸ Gutis, Philip. "LEVITTOWN, L.I., AT 40: ONCE A SOLUTION, NOW A PROBLEM." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, 20 Sept. 1987. Web. 17 Nov. 2015.

⁹Kushner, David. *Levittown: Two Families, One Tycoon, and the Fight for Civil Rights in America's Legendary Suburb*. New York: Walker, 2009. Print.

Today, Levittown remains almost identical to its original plan. While many people then and now have renovated the homes, they still look very much like Levitt's dream, speaking both physically about the houses and taking into account the demographics. The population in Levittown, Pa remains around 87.5% white and Levittown, Ny is estimated to be closer to 94% white. To get a better sense of modern day Levittown, I interviewed Jon Chichilitti, a teacher I had years ago, who grew up and currently resides in Levittown, Pennsylvania. The full interview is attached in the appendix. Mr. Chichilitti gave me an overview of his childhood in Levittown as well as what it is like raising his own children with his wife now. It became very clear to me that Levittown has not changed much over years.

Mr. Chichilitti talks about growing up in Levittown, meeting his wife at a young age there, and continuing to raise his own family there.

"I grew up in Levittown, and it was a very positive experience for me. The neighbors I had were very helpful and caring. I met some life long friends in Levittown through the Neshaminy Schools. I also met my wife on the first day of school in 7th grade. Both of us grew up in Levittown as well as 3 of our parents, with our grandparents being original home owners in the early-mid 50's."¹⁰

While his experience is not an anomaly, it is strange. How many people live in the same neighborhood their whole life? The Levittown experience seems to be unlike most others. Something about the lifestyle pulls people in, and makes them want to stay forever. Money also comes into question with Mr. Chichilitti's story. He is able to climb the Levittown financial pyramid over his lifetime. He mentions having always wanted to live in a Country Clubber, and finally achieving that goal as a young professional. It is funny that the idea for Levittown homes

¹⁰Chichilitti, Jonathan. "Growing up Levittown." E-mail interview. 30 Nov. 2015.

originally played into the “American Dream” concept. For Mr. Chichilitti, living in a Levittown home was a given from birth, and his American Dream came true with his Country Clubber. He mentions his wife and his grandparents being original owners which calls into question the racial diversity in Levittown. Obviously it was not his grandparents’ duty to sell their homes to minorities. It is clear they were not selling their homes at all. So perhaps this tradition of keeping homes in the family is more the issue that creates the homogenous neighborhoods in Levittown, rather than just the original racism in play.

Despite seeming like a pretty unique experience, Mr. Chichilitti describes his life in Levittown as normal. The reference points he uses are all positive, and sound like a great place to raise children.

“All has been positive. [My son,] Michael, at 8, can now ride his bike to a friend’s house in our neighborhood and he is more independent. The school he attended for 2 years was the same as Melissa's elementary school (Everitt). But that closed in June of '15, so [my daughter,] Katelyn and Michael go to Miller, which is where I went. On the Negative, I wish there were more girls on our street for Katelyn to play with.”¹¹

However, the question of diversity looms behind the picture-perfect life. Granted, Mr. Chichilitti did not grow up in the heated moment of racism in Levittown, the effects remain in place.

Levittown remains vastly white, and Mr. Chichilitti mentions the lack of even Jewish neighbors. While it is not essential that children grow up in a multicultural neighborhood, it could not be a bad thing to have some diversity. It is not the fault of Mr. Chichilitti, or most of the current homeowners, even. Levitt did not sell to black families, and when a black family was able to buy a Levittown home, there was national outrage. So it was unlikely that the first generation of

¹¹ Chichilitti, Jonathan.

Levittowners was going to be the one to fully integrate the neighborhood, and so many of them sold their homes to their children. It seems to be more of a cycle of whiteness rather than outright exclusion.

Not only are most of Levittown's inhabitants are white, Mr. Chichilitti speaks about the neighbors with whom he is friendly. Two of the women Mr. Chichilitti mentions went to junior high school with him, and now live in his neighborhood and their children play together. Again, it looks like a perfect little neighborhood. There is nothing wrong with being friends with his neighbors. However, again the homogeneity is omnipresent. All the families Mr. Chichilitti describes are upper-middle class, young, white couples and their children. The reason Levittown and similar planned cities are parodied so much is because from the outside, it looks creepy, for lack of a better word. When one drives down the street and sees cookie-cutter houses with all white families with a set of early-30's couple and 2.5 children, it looks like something out of a science fiction novel. It does not feel like a place where people live, it feels like a place where people came off of the assembly line with their house. Perhaps that is only how it looks to outsiders. As Mr. Chichilitti explains, all his experiences have been positive, and he adores his hometown.

Some of Mr. Chichilitti's most interesting insight comes when he speaks about the different sections of Levittown, particularly Bristol Township. It is funny that the majority of Levittown falls into Bristol Township, yet it still has this ominous reputation, according to Mr. Chichilitti. While an exact cause as to why Bristol is such a shabby part of town, safety does seem to be Mr. Chichilitti's main concern.

“I grew up in (a jubilee) which are available in Falls and Bristol Twp. are about \$20,000 cheaper in Bristol Twp. than Falls or Middletown. Same house, same mailing address, different school district and township. In 1974, my parents made a decision to NOT buy in Bristol Twp. because of the schools. That has only continued. One year, Tyrone Lewis, the class president who went on to play basketball at Niagara, delivered his commencement speech from inside the school gym because there had been a death threat against him because he had been in a car and had witnessed a shooting! Stuff like that just doesn't happen at Pennsbury and Neshaminy.”¹²

Perhaps because Bristol Township is the closest to Philadelphia, the area falls right in the crossfire for two different worlds. Philadelphia is the complete opposite of Levittown. It is an urban city vibrant with history and diversity. It is conceivable Philadelphia is exactly what Levittowners want to block out when they put gates in front of their neighborhoods.

As someone from a suburb, I can say my childhood was much different than Mr. Chichilitti's. While a lot of the differences stem purely from generational and cultural background, on the platform of hometowns, my life looks a lot different than the Levittowners. I grew up on a street of elderly people. I only knew the neighbors that employed my brother to help take down their garbage cans. When I was very young, my neighbors across the street were a young couple with a pool, but they eventually moved away and divorced. Once I went to school, I found more kids my age in my “greater” neighborhood. They were a block or two away, but I could easily ride my scooter to their houses to play. I always thought my house was one of the biggest on the street, but I think that is mostly because I live on a hill. In reality, it's about the same size if not smaller than the other houses. Either way, every house looks different. There are a few houses in

¹² Chichilitti, Jonathan.

my neighborhood that have the same architecture as mine, but in general the outlook is random. The family aspect was also never present in my hometown. People moved in and out somewhat frequently, and were not selling their homes to their children. My next-door neighbors for the first 10 or more years of my life was an old Polish couple who died of old age in their home. Once everything was cleared out, a young couple bought the house and recently had a baby there. While my experience with the suburbs is not an indication of the rest of America's suburban life, neither does Mr. Chichilitti's.

Levittown is not a normal little town. As Mr. Chichilitti says, and many people know, it was an experiment. Levitt needed to make a lot of homes in a little bit of time, and that is what he did. Millions of homes suddenly appeared on previously open land; they were affordable, charming, and close to an incoming shopping mall. 50 years later, there's this strange utopian village of people still living there. They look a bit different from the original crop, in that they're not GIs returning from war or men looking for work at the factory nearby. They are, however still upper middle class white families living out the American Dream. The original goal for Levittown was met, and from there it should have transformed to fit the needs of future generations. Why can't today's Levittown function as actual low-cost housing or even public housing?

“To some, suburbia was a symbol of American can-do; to others, it was a symbol of conformity and exclusion. The story of Levittown captures both the hopeful and darker sides of the rise of the American suburbs.”¹³

¹³ Galyean, Crystal.

Bibliography

Chichilitti, Jonathan. "Growing up Levittown." E-mail interview. 30 Nov. 2015.

"Crisis in Levittown, Pennsylvania." *Portland Center Stage*. 24 Mar. 2013. Web. 11 Nov. 2015.

Galyean, Crystal. "Levittown: The Imperfect Rise of the American Suburbs." *US History Scene*. Web. 1 Dec. 2015.

Gutis, Philip. "LEVITTOWN, L.I., AT 40: ONCE A SOLUTION, NOW A PROBLEM." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, 20 Sept. 1987. Web. 17 Nov. 2015.

Kelly, Barbara M. *Expanding the American Dream: Building and Rebuilding Levittown*. Albany: State U of New York, 1993. Print.

Kushner, David. *Levittown: Two Families, One Tycoon, and the Fight for Civil Rights in America's Legendary Suburb*. New York: Walker, 2009. Print.

Miller, Alexander F. "Levittown U.S.A.". *The Phylon Quarterly* 19.1 (1958): 108–112. Web.

Appendix

“Growing Up Levittown” an Interview with Jonathan Chichilitti

Kamaron: What made you want to live in Levittown?

Jonathan: I grew up in Levittown, and it was a very positive experience for me. The neighbors I had were very helpful and caring. I met some life long friends in Levittown through the Neshaminy Schools. I also met my wife on the first day of school in 7th grade. Both of us grew up in Levittown as well as 3 of our parents, with our grandparents being original home owners in the early-mid 50's. Family has always been our number 1 concern. The first single home we purchased was in Levittown, as well as our current home which we bought in September 2011. We purchased that house because it is the largest of the 6 types of Levittown homes (Country Clubber) and I always wanted one. But the main reason we moved to that house is because it is across the street from my in-laws. My wife's father had Alzheimer's and we lived across the street to help out my mother-in-law and so she could help out with getting our kids to school in the morning. My wife's father passed away December 22, 2015.

K: How would you describe your experience raising a family here? Mostly positive or negative? Normal?

J: It has been an awesome experience so far. The generations change as homeowners age and new people move in. So from my wife's perspective, she has lived on this road from 1978 until we got our first place together in 2004. Then we lived elsewhere until we came back in '11. So now she is watching her two children grow up on the same road and interact with the new generation of children on our street. All has been positive. [My son,] Michael, at 8, can now ride his bike to a friend's house in our neighborhood and he is more independent. The school he attended for 2 years was the same as Melissa's elementary school (Everitt). But that closed in June of '15, so [my daughter,] Katelyn and Michael go to Miller, which is where I went. On the Negative, I wish there were more girls on our street for Katelyn to play with. As a matter of fact, there is just one who is only 3 I believe. Quite normal is a good way to describe it.

K: What is the community like in your neighborhood? Do you know your neighbors well?

J: There is another girl, Jennifer who lives down the street from us who bought her home from her parents. Jennifer graduated from Neshaminy with Melissa and I in 1996. She is raising her boys, one who is a year older than Michael and sometimes they play. Next to her is another girl, Melissa who went to elementary through high school with Kathleen (I met both Jennifer and Kathleen at our jr. high school, Sandburg). Kathleen is raising her 3 children that my kids sometimes play with and are on sports teams together. Jennifer, Kathleen, and our next door neighbor (who moved in a month after us in October of 2015) plan yearly block parties on our street. We have now had two, which I love, since I'm such a social butterfly. But Melissa isn't so fond of, because she is much more to herself and private than me. So yes, we know all of the young couple neighbors very well, and their kids come to our house to play and vice versa. Most are from the area, but our next door neighbor is from Long Island. I asked Jessica if she has ever been to Levittown, NY and she said no, but her best friend just bought a home there!

K: Do you think the homes in your community are as accessible to young and low-income families as they were upon their construction?

J: Young? yes. Low-income? not so much. A lot depends on which part of Levittown. Levittown, PA spills into 4 municipalities and 3 school districts. There is a certain stereotype associated with all 3 districts. Most of Levittown falls into Bristol twp. (24 of the 41 neighborhoods) which go to Bristol Twp. School District. 12 fall into Middletown twp (where I grew up and where I live now) which go to Neshaminy school district. And the rest (5) are in Falls twp. which attend Pennsbury School District (Tullytown borough does not have entirely 1 neighborhood, but parts of 4 that it shares with Falls and Bristol Twp). Neshaminy and Pennsbury are considered very good school districts. They are well performing schools with very good reputations. When a job opens up in either school district, hundreds of applicants apply. Their teachers top out at well over \$100K. Their extracurriculars are top notch, whether it is the Pennsbury High marching band, or their world famous in-gym Prom which features a float parade (Michael Bamberger wrote a book on it called *Wonderland*. The title comes from a John Mayer song. A student at Pennsbury, Bob Costa, got John Mayer to come and perform at the Pennsbury prom in the mid 2000's). Neshaminy is no slouch either. Great football, track,

and soccer programs. The football stadium was featured in a Nike commercial. Recently, the school board, high school principal and newspaper, The Playwicka, have been involved in a battle over the political correctness of Neshaminy's mascot, the Redskins. The Playwicka finds it offensive, while the school board and principal have resisted change for sake of tradition. Bristol Township, however, does not have a good reputation. It never has. Whether it was race riots in the late 1960's and early 1970s, or low income housing, Bristol Twp. is not, never has been, and may never be a desirable place to buy a home and send your children to school. Most of it is perception, but with good reason. However, I taught there my first year in 2001-02 and found it to be a great experience. The teachers were outstanding and the kids were great. I didn't want to leave, I left because I was a long term sub for just one year. I would have stayed my whole career. I feel as though they have a bad reputation. Sidebar: The high school, Harry S Truman, is by far the #1 high school theatre program in the country. The recently retired director, Lou Volpe, a highly regarded director, who was the first to perform multiple musicals for the first time ever in a high school setting, like Les Mis. He uses big time connections in New York to pull that off.

Back to the question, the same exact home I grew up in (a jubilee) which are available in Falls and Bristol Twp. are about \$20,000 cheaper in Bristol Twp. than Falls or Middletown. Same house, same mailing address, different school district and township. In 1974, my parents made a decision to NOT buy in Bristol Twp. because of the schools. That has only continued. One year, Tyrone Lewis, the class president who went on to play basketball at Niagara, delivered his commencement speech from inside the school gym because there had been a death threat against him because he had been in a car and had witnessed a shooting! Stuff like that just doesn't happen at Pennsbury and Neshaminy. And clearly, my wife and I were not going to live in Bristol Twp. The neighborhoods are a bit more run down than Middletown, Falls, and Tullytown borough.

Where we live in Red Rose Gate, the homes are Country Clubbers. These home are very exclusive. There are 2 other neighborhoods with "clubbers", Forsythia Gate and Snowball Gate.

These homes are the largest of the 6 different homes Levitt built. There are no sidewalks. The yards are bigger. The homes are bigger and they cost more. My parents could not afford a country clubber in the 70's and had to settle on a jubilee. My wife's parents, were able too. I hardly knew any Jewish kids growing up. A large population of Jewish families did live in Levittown, but only in the gates. My wife's grandparents (Jewish) bought the house across the street from us (also her childhood home, her parents bought it off of them in 1978) originally new in 1957. We bought our house from Jewish people. Behind me is a Holocaust survivor who is in his 90's and is a cantor. And there are many other Jewish families in the neighborhood, that are not in other Levittown neighborhoods. So in a way, low income families can get a home in Levittown, just not in the most desirable neighborhood. Upon construction, because this was post-World War II suburbia, many vets were able to get a home. My grandparents moved here with their young daughter (my mother) to buy a cheap home and get a job at the new steel mill that Benjamin Fairless built. Melissa's maternal grandparents (Jewish; her father's grandparents were Catholic) whose grandfather was a Ford engineer, and grandmother earned her Masters in Art History had no problem buying their home for about \$17,000, more than double my grandparents, and Melissa's dad's parents homes of \$8,000 and \$11,000. My parents without college degrees bought their house for \$30,000 in 1974. To buy a country clubber now, you pretty much need to be a working professional. All the new buyers are nurses, teachers, etc. Melissa and I have 3 bachelors, and a Master's between us. I can't say whether it is because of where we live or the times. Most of my friends' moms stayed at home when I was a kid. My mom was the only one who worked. Now, everyone has both parents in the workforce. Many real estate agents when listing their houses, won't use Levittown if it is in Middletown Twp. Middletown Twp. sounds more attractive than Levittown. They don't want people to be confused with Bristol Twp. Levittown. All this sounds so snobby!

K: How do you think living in Levittown is different than living in other suburbs?

J: I'm not sure. My wife and I have no other reference point. We have a history of industry (that steel mill made me. It moved my mom's parents away from Western PA and my parents met at

Bucks County Community College) There is such a steep history with Levittown and post-World War suburbia. Levitt's was an experiment. We have been mentioned in every high school history book written, mocked in movies (Edward Scissorhands), represented in others (Mona Lisa Smile), I even read a book when I studied abroad in Glasgow, Scotland about the McDonaldization of society and it mentioned Levittown in it! I just read an article about the New York Islanders hockey team moving from the suburbs to Brooklyn and the writer couldn't help but mention Levittown, NY twice in it. Billy Joel said he was from Levittown in his first sentence when being inducted into the Rock and Roll hall of fame (I have actually heard him sing Allentown with Levittown lyrics). I know I'm totally biased but it seems as though it was better! But in reality, it probably is no different than any other suburb. We just happen to be the most famous. But most of these suburbs seem to have the same mind set.

I know there is a bit of a chip on Levittowners' shoulders. A lot of us are not from college educated parents. However, many of our children will be from college educated parents! Neshaminy had 9 elementary schools feeding the high school when I was in K-12. We encompass Langhorne borough, Langhorne Manor, Penndel, Hulmeville, and Middletown twp. But there is a big difference between lower Middletown twp. (Levittown) and upper Middletown twp. (Langhorne). There is a lot more money and higher taxes up there than down here. More farmland and bigger parks in upper Middletown. It's more desirable. Heck, if I could, I'd probably live there. But I will say this. In 1996, with a graduating class of about 692, all five speakers at the Neshaminy High School Commencement ceremony were from Walter Miller Elementary School in Levittown! The valedictorian, salutatorian, class president, class vice president, and class secretary all went to my elementary school (I was none of those people for the record, but I was friends with all of them).