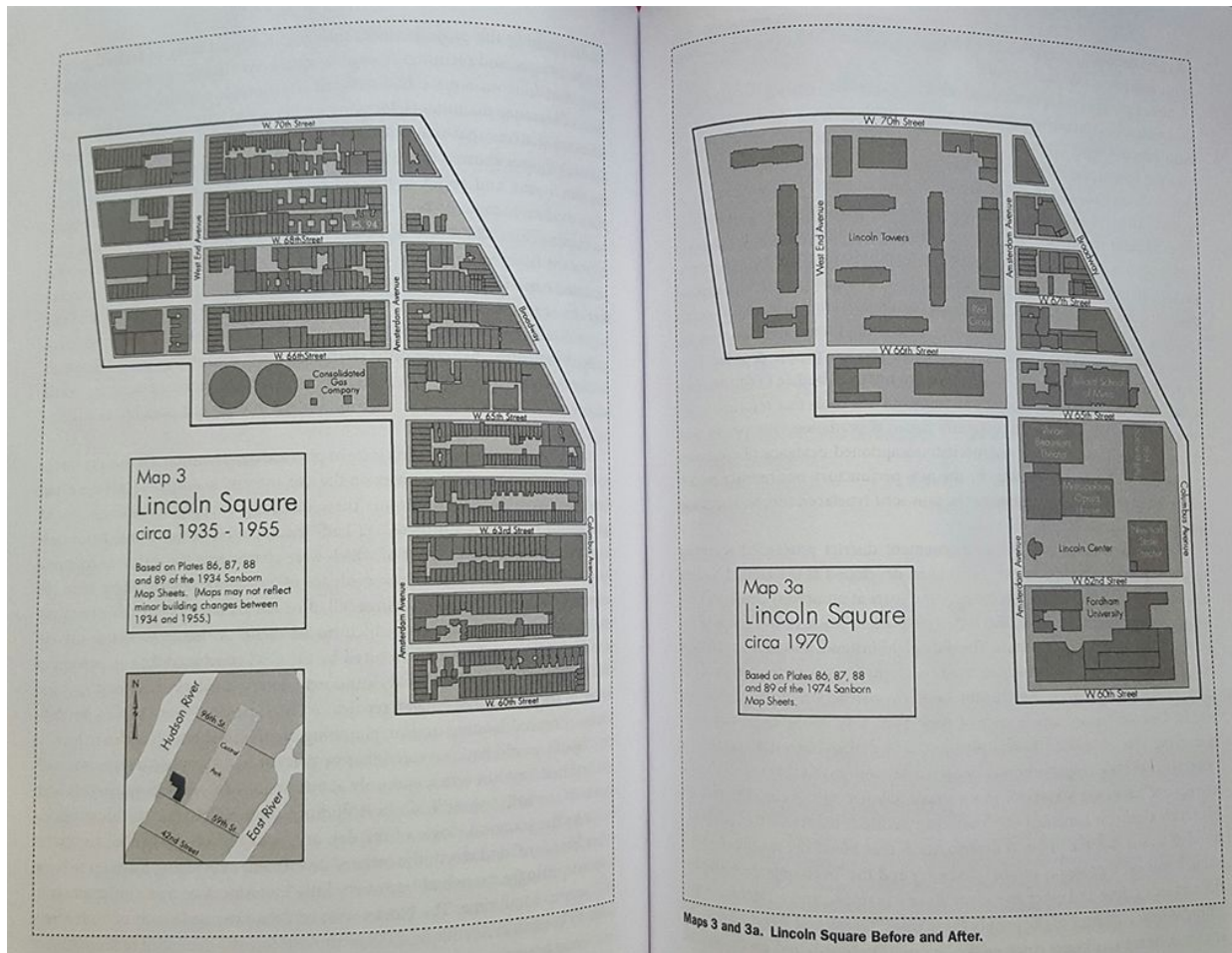


Learning Places Fall 2016

Chin/Swift

FINAL GROUP REPORT: *Jingyu, Stedroy, Maggie, Matthew.*

“What Was the Lincoln Center Neighbourhood like Before and After Lincoln Center was Constructed?”



INTRODUCTION

Lincoln Square is a residential area in Upper Manhattan that changed over time through architecture and morals. It features the illustrious Lincoln Center, the mecca of theatre, dance and musicals across the world. It is one of the major visual representation of the change within

Lincoln Square formerly known as San Juan Hill. Midway during this semester we got an opportunity to research more Lincoln Square or Times Square, and we discussed as a team and agreed that Lincoln Center would be our focus of study. Thereby, we will explore San Juan Hill in the 19th century to present to show how the area changed. To do this we will use historical events, maps, special events of interest, demographics, statistics, archival material, library material, and web sources to convey our ideas and findings on our topic. Which is, "What was the Lincoln Center neighbourhood like before and after Lincoln Center was constructed?"

PROCESS

We narrowed down our research by splitting our research into two parts with Jingyu and Stedroy focus on the past (1980's to 1950's.) Then Maggie and Matthew would focus on Lincoln Center to present (1960's - to present). However, some of our dates overlap, so we might be helping out each other. With that said, each person was tasked with some specific questions and had the responsibility to use credible sources to answer and illustrate their findings; such as CUNY online and physical library, to the archive at the New York Historical Society etc.

DISCOVERIES

Stedroy: The area we know today as Lincoln Center was a very different place in the 19th Century. Firstly, that very area was in the heat of war between the Spanish and Americans in 1898. The outcome was Theodore Roosevelt won an important battle against Spain there, and that's how the area got its name San Juan Hill. San Juan Hill was known to be the largest

African-American community before Harlem. The neighbourhood spans between 57th Street to 64th Street and Amsterdam Ave to the Hudson River however the central core was at Amsterdam Ave and 62nd Street. *See Spanish-American War Image*. After that the Spanish-American War San Juan Hill was said to be the largest poor working-class black community living in tenement buildings. The homes were mostly made from brick and wood. However, the culture was rich with a vibrant jazz atmosphere. *See Tenement Buildings Image. (Manhattan's Long-gone San Juan Hill) (Charles, A. Mario)*

Fast forward into the 20th Century the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) was created in 1934. This Authority claims that their goal is to “provides decent and affordable housing in a safe and secure living environment for low- and moderate-income residents throughout the five boroughs.” (NYCHA) However, this same authority worked very closely with Robert Moses to designate San Juan Hill as the worst slum neighbourhood in New York City in 1940. *See NYC Public Housing Image*. World War II seemed to delay Mr. Moses plans from 1939 to 1945 due to lack of resources and money, but he was still able to excite him plan. Robert Moses was a New York City Urban Planner by profession and is the creator of the Urban Renewal program. He used this program to completely demolish the San Juan Hill neighbourhood! By the 1950's most of the African-Americans moved to Harlem opening San Juan to Puerto-Ricans. Then in 1955 that area was designated for Urban Renewal thanks to the prior announcement from the NYCHA who labeled the area as the “worst slum” in the city. *(Manhattan's Long-gone San Juan Hill)*

The reasoning behind building Lincoln Center on 3 of 5 city lots was to cover up the existing residential slums and the history that it held and replace it with Lincoln Center for

Performing Arts. Unfortunately, evidence shows over fifteen hundred families had to leave the area. Lincoln Center groundbreaking ceremony was in 1959 and done by President Dwight D Eisenhower. From my observation the Fordham University Law School was built on the remaining 2 of 5 lots. *(Charles A. Mario) (About Lincoln Center)*

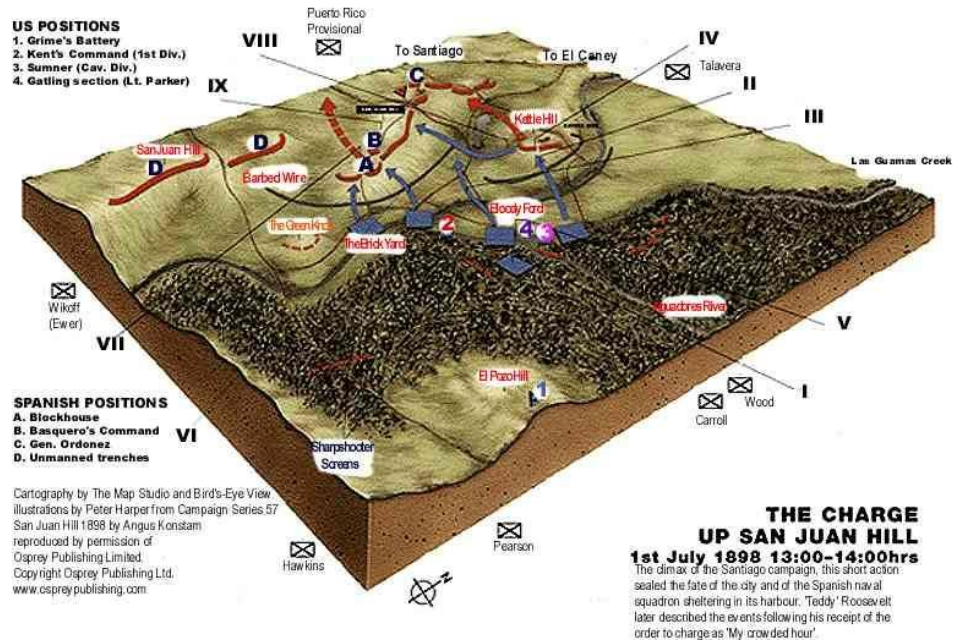


Image of Spanish-American War at San Juan Hill in 1898.

Source: Osprey Publishing.



Image of Tenement Buildings. Source: Ephemeral New York.

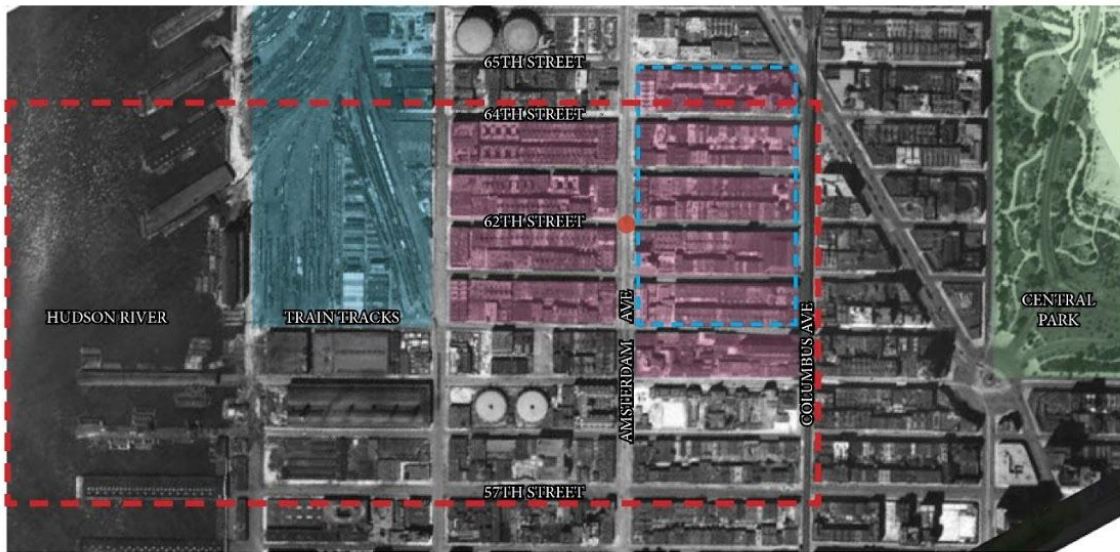


Figure 9. East River Houses (1941) represented the irresistible destination of NYCHA designs once administrators realized the cost savings possible in high-rise buildings. Photograph by Nicholas Dagen Blom.

- Slum clearance- a run-down area of a city characterized by sub standard housing and squalor and lacking in tenure security
- Public housing in NYC looked very different than the rest of the country because:
 - Ambitious goals
 - Mixture of Funding Sources
 - It sought to launch a European scale authority with the funds and legal powers both to rescue the poor and to redevelop the city along modern lines
 - Modernism perpetuated by cost concerns (Vladeck and East River Houses)
 - Well constructed high rise brick
 - Increased height
 - Minimum amenities
- Still vested in greenery
 - New lawns, trees and playgrounds
- Led by Robert Moses
- Refused to believe that as the cities housing service it was responsible for social services

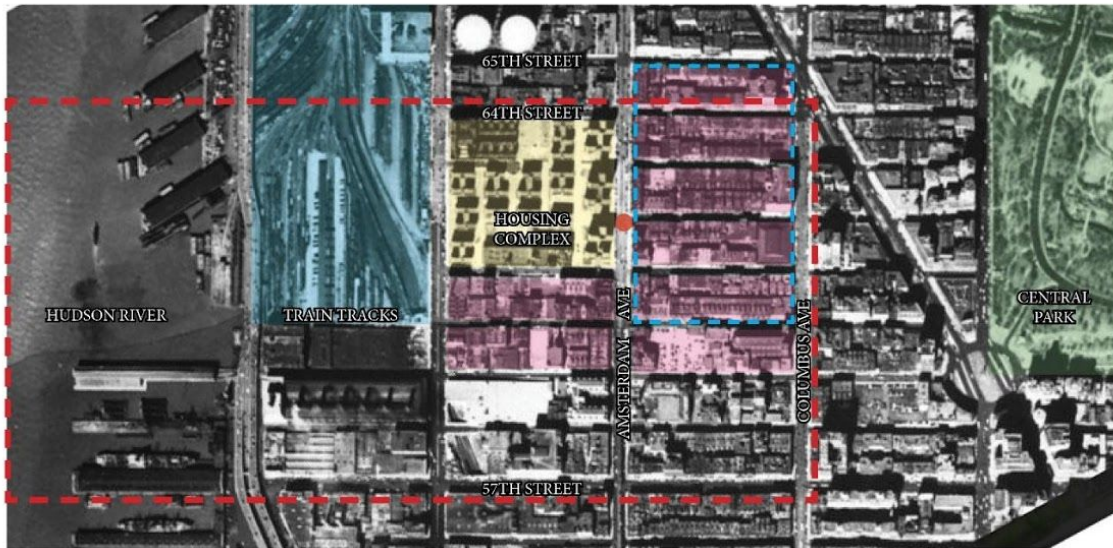
Images showing the connection between NYCHA and Robert Moses.

Source: NYC Public Housing 1934-Present, page 9.



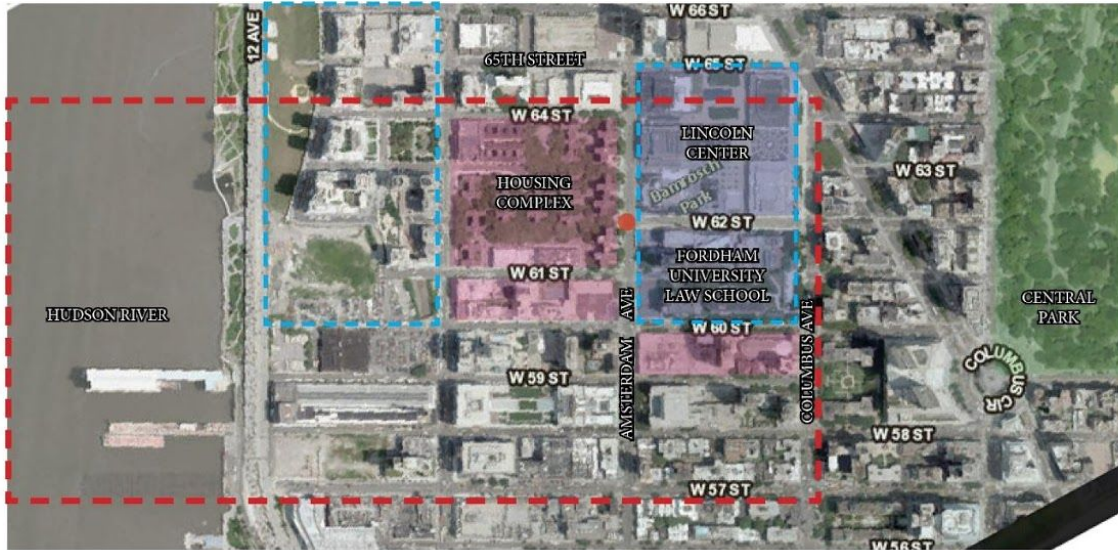
Map of Lincoln Center by NYCityMap DoITT GIS in 1924 and edited by Stedroy Brand

- Red dotted line is San Juan Hill boundary.
- Red dot is the center of San Juan Hill.
- Blue dotted line Lincoln Center & Fordham University Law School site.
- Pink rectangles are residential buildings.
- Blue rectangle is old Train Tracks.
- Green rectangle is part of Central Park



Map of Lincoln Center by NYCityMap DoITT GIS in 1951 and edited by Stedroy Brand

- Red dotted Line is San Juan Hill Boundary.
- Red dot is the center of San Juan Hill.
- Blue dotted line Lincoln Center & Fordham University Law School Site.
- Pink rectangles are residential buildings.
- Yellow square is Housing complex.
- Blue rectangle is old Train Tracks.
- Green rectangle is part of Central Park



Map of Lincoln Center by NYCityMap DoITT GIS in 2012 and edited by Stedroy Brand

- Red dotted line is San Juan Hill Boundary.
- Red dot is the center of San Juan Hill.
- Purple rectangle is Lincoln Center & Fordham University Law School Site.
- Pink rectangles are residential buildings.

Jingyu: The Neighborhood

The Lincoln Square area had a diverse social character. The southern part of the neighborhood, San Juan Hill had a large, mixed-income black population and Hispanic communities. By the Depression, most wealthy blacks had moved to Harlem, which hurt Lincoln Square's fortunes heavily. In addition, the neighborhood was hard hit by the post-war decline. Middle and working-class families moved to other areas, and left a lot of single-family rowhouses to speculative landlords, who divided them into smaller apartments or rooming

houses. These housing were rented to poorer white immigrants from Hell's Kitchen, Chelsea, Lower East Side, and newly arrived Puerto Rican families. According to Moses' Committee on Slum Clearance (CSC) figures, 62% of the families in the neighborhood earned less than \$4,000 a year, and about 53% earned less than the city median income of \$3,526 a year (Zipp, 2008).

The area was in a condition of physical deterioration. A majority of the residential structures were "Old Law Tenements" built before 1901. Some of them had "incompatible conversions" from residential uses. Most of them were apartments converted to rooming houses. Besides, there were 386 stores in these residential buildings. All of them were in a deteriorating state as the buildings which house them. A survey by the CSC indicated 98% of the buildings were "either badly rundown, deteriorated or deteriorating, and most of them required major repairs". A majority of the buildings were described as "deficient in central heating or plumbing facilities". Only 4 of the 482 residential buildings were "standard" and worth being invested in bringing them up to code. As a matter of fact, the neighborhood had been awarded a "D" rating by the federal Home Owner's Loan Corporation, to make sure that the banks would not loan money for new mortgages or improvements there (Zipp, 2008).

The Times magazine used to view Lincoln square as a "barren urban waste" where "tenements stand, blowsy and run-down, in silent shoulder-to-shoulder misery, full of filth and vermin". The signs of poverty, which were "overcongestion, disease delinquency, crime, and other attendant ills of a cramped and scrambled population" had deteriorated and damaged the built environment and its economic well-being (Zipp, 2008).

Relocation

As Moses' project proceeded, the eminent domain allowed Moses to demolish the neighborhood. The city officials implemented a forced relocation plan among residents of Lincoln Square, relocating about 3000 families. The residents were offered priority housing cooperative in conjunction with the Lincoln Center project, but none of them accepted. 52% of the residents found their own housing in other areas. 28.4% of them were assigned apartment by the sponsors of Lincoln Center, 11.6% moved into public housing, and 7.3% abandoned their apartments without any notice. Most families were relocated to other densely packed slums which were mostly inhabited by laborers of color such as Harlem or certain areas of the Bronx (*From the Slum to the Center*,2011).

After The Construction of Lincoln Center

Matthew: For Lincoln Center to become, San Juan hill had to 'cease' to exist. Robert Moses, the demonic playwright, was able to convince a right-in-the mind judge to allow the demolition of the slum, San J.Hill, which even though not murder had to heinously cause the relocation of all of the tenants mainly African American. San Juan hill was heavily saturated with African American with about 1000 tenants per acre whereas Lincoln Square has 166 tenants per acre. With the numerous housing developments, the Hill was deemed a slum due to its characteristic poor living conditions and stuffed housing whereas now, with 6 times less tenants and the introduction of more of White America, Lincoln Square is a haven for those with necessary funds or a love for theatre as stated in the real estate section of the NY Times online paper. That difference in tenants per acre had been made up in revenue as the average income

for a family in San Juan Hill was about \$3500+ whereas the cheapest rent in the unified Square is approximately that amount. One can guess that if the rent is higher, income should be as well and correct that assumption is. The current average income in Lincoln Square today is about \$67000 as seen on www.point2homes.com. Due to the increase monetary traffic and white privilege brought on by Lincoln Center, consumer spending is essentially average and thereby, there is no sense of destitution as compared to slum villa, San Juan Hill. No household lacks food, healthcare or any other necessary human amenities especially space which those in San Juan hill were not fortunate to benefit from. So basically, Lincoln Center is taking care of its new tenants by providing music, entertainment and most of all, opportunity which racism denied those African Americans coupled with unfortunate circumstances. Another interesting point is the upgrade in working class. San Juan Hill was home to a manufacturing district thereby manual labour by which they could be referred to as blue collar workers. Without any clear information, it can be said that at least 80% of San Juan Hill's population were blue collar workers whereas Lincoln Square has 68.1% white collar workers and 31.9% of blue collar workers. This reiterates the fact that Lincoln Square earns more than its predecessor as white collar workers are office workers and earn substantially more than blue collar workers.

Maggie: Urban renewal plays an important part in many parts of history. From Columbus' 'discovery and refurbishing' of then native cultures to better them and to modernise it and therefore to bring out an essential change as seen by the changers. Lincoln Square renewal is important because it's replacing the West Side Story (Figure 4.1). According to Manhattan Projects, it says, "West Side Story tells the tale of Tony and Maria, the two star-crossed lovers who try to escape the world in which the warring factions have trapped them. But their love story

is also the story of urban renewal (Zipp 248).” It means that West Side Story is a tragedy, so it needs a redevelopment. By 1961, those people that are involving in the renewal projects are ready to clear of tenements, warehouses, and stores in order to to replace by the Lincoln Square renewal project and its centerpiece, Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts. The importance of Lincoln Square redevelopment is because Lincoln Square is known as a slum (Figure 5.3). Therefore, they need to rebuild the area in order to represent New York’s status. (Figure 4.2 and 4.3) Represent New York’s status means it will be high social class area. Lincoln Center has the purpose to attract white-collar residents and the public. According to Manhattan Projects, president Dwight D. Eisenhower at Lincoln Center groundbreaking in May 1959 says, “Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts symbolizes an increasing interest in America in cultural matters as well as a stimulating approach to one of the nations, pressing problems- urban blight. Here in the heat of our greatest metropolitan center men of vision are executing a redevelopment of purpose, utility, and taste (Zipp 169) (Figure 4.4).” What he means is that Lincoln Square is already disrupted. Consequently, it needs to rebuild and to have Lincoln Center as a centerpiece that represents New York and a better future for Americans. Robert Moses is the architect that begins the urban renewal at Lincoln Square. In 1969, the renewal is finished and the overall cost for Lincoln Square is under \$185 million.

Its after construction and design after renewal has a mandatory purpose, which is try to have the area in a modern feel. The Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts has Philharmonic Hall, the Metropolitan Opera, the New York State Theater, the Vivian Beaumont Theater, the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, and the Juilliard School. According to the Manhattan Projects, Rockefeller says, “go just as far as possible economically in making opera,

drama, and ballet broadly available (Zipp 177).” Rockefeller is telling that Lincoln Center is intended for performing arts and attract the public. The architects want Lincoln Center to be the symbol that represents New York and even further “a symbol to the world,” which the Manhattan Projects states (Zipp 179). Because of Lincoln Center is representing New York, the design of Lincoln Center will be different from other architectures. The design of the buildings in Lincoln Center will intended to display, to perform, and the most important is to attract the public. Each building has their own individuals designs and main entrance to attract people with different perspective of arts. Lincoln Center has the Metropolitan Opera, the Philharmonic, the dance theater, Juilliard, the performing arts library, the repertory theater, and Moses’s park. Lincoln Center is trying to be special, so people can have a different perspectives and feeling to New York. Different also includes different people design different buildings. Harrison designs the opera-house; Max Abramovitz design the Philharmonic Hall; Philip Johnson designs the dance theater; Pietro Belluschi designs the Juilliard; Eero Saarinen and Gordon Bunshaft design the repertory theater and the library building. (Figure 4.5, 4.6) That’s why Lincoln Center is special. (Map3 and Map3a)

During the renewal, around 800 families, include 55 percent of them are black, Puerto Rican, or otherwise non-white, are displace. According to Manhattan Projects, it says, “the report claimed, would cause the rate of displacement to more than double, from an average of about 23,500 to 50,000 people a year (Zipp 211),” Some has moved to potential redevelopment clearance; some has moved to neighborhoods that are not slum; some were forced back into other slums; some escaped; and some disappeared. Another important issue is the income. Robert Moses mentions that 62.6 percent of the families earned less than \$4000 a year, and 53

percent earned less than \$3,526 a year. According to the Manhattan Project, twenty-four percent or 1,250 families were minorities, 18 percent of them were Puerto Rican, 4 percent black, and 2 percent listed as “others.” Robert Moses concluded that 6,018 families have to relocated.

QUESTIONS TO RESEARCH FURTHER

1. Was there any job allocation sorted for those San Juan hill tenants who were displaced?
2. Other than the law, did anybody fight for the justice of the tenants?
3. Is the history of San Juan Hill still vocalized or does it need to be searched in the depths of 1950’s racism?
4. Even if right in the eyes of the law, was there any look back at the tenant removal to bring those removed any justice?

CONCLUSIONS

From this study we clearly observe discrimination against the African-American and Hispanic residents living in San Juan Hill by Robert Moses thus his answer was Urban Renewal and Lincoln Center. Which clearly dispersed a crowded community which they call slum demonizing the people there. This new complex was to provide Theatrical arts made to attract money and a mainly Caucasian crowd to bring prosperity into the area from foreign regions in the 1950’s. We were able to discover the details about Lincoln Square construction and its subsequent Center. Additionally, we explain the benefits that Lincoln Center has brought to the area. We hope that our research brings awareness to new generations about a piece of dark forgotten history.

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