



The South Side: A Portrait of Chicago and American Segregation

Natalie Y. Moore

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Mayors Richard M. Daley and Rahm Emanuel have touted and promoted Chicago as a "world class city." The skyscrapers kissing the clouds, the billion-dollar Millennium Park, Michelin-rated restaurants, pristine lake views, fabulous shopping, vibrant theater scene, downtown flower beds and stellar architecture tell one story. Yet, swept under the rug is the stench of segregation that compromises Chicago. The Manhattan Institute dubs Chicago as one of the most segregated big cities in the country. Though other cities - including Cleveland, Los Angeles, and Baltimore - can fight over that mantle, it's clear that segregation defines Chicago. And unlike many other major U.S. cities, no one race dominates. Chicago is divided equally into black, white, and Latino, each group clustered in their various turfs.

In this intelligent and highly important narrative, Chicago-native Natalie Moore shines a light on contemporary segregation on the South Side of Chicago through reported essays, showing the life of these communities through the stories of people who live in them. *The South Side* shows the important impact of Chicago's historic segregation - and the ongoing policies that keep it that way.

The South Side: A Portrait of Chicago and American Segregation Details

Date : Published March 22nd 2016 by St. Martin's Press (first published March 1st 2016)

ISBN : 9781137280152

Author : Natalie Y. Moore

Format : Hardcover 272 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, History, Politics, Sociology, Race, Cultural, African American



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Ang says

100% required reading if you a) live in Chicago, b) have ever lived in Chicago, c) are interested in Chicago, d) care at all about Chicago, e) care at all about the way Chicago was segregated by its corrupt government...etc etc etc.

Natalie Moore has written this really, really readable book, and I can't recommend it highly enough. This isn't an academic tome that'll make you fall asleep while reading. Far from it. It's relatable and personal, but also filled with insight and information.

Look, just read it.

Sunshine says

I think the author got lost in the details. Some of the writing and her personal stories were very good. However, there were parts that read like a text book. There really was no chronological order. The book was all over the place. If this is what she was looking for, she succeeded. But, it was a bit too much for me.

Katie Brennan says

Few subjects interest me more than the intersections of race and real estate. This book draws on some great sources (Massey, D. Bradford Hunt, Vale, Sugrue) and a compelling personal narrative, but is a muddled mess. This book needed a stronger editor - at times, the sentences did not even appear to be in order.

I suspect it's full of great information, but I will never know, since I very uncharacteristically had to set this one aside.

Iris says

I received a copy of The South Side from netgalley for review. As a life-long Chicagoan who grew up in Hyde Park, I thought I knew my city. I did not. This is an important book showing the past and giving some suggestions on how to change. Natalie Moore does not scream so hopefully she will be heard.

Nora says

This book joins a few others in my category of must-read for all Chicagoans and those who would say my city's name in a public forum, but I'll get more specific than that: Chicagoans, near-Chicagoans who think

they know my city, North Siders who think they know the South Side, transplants who think they know any of the above, educators, realtors, politicians, voters, police officers, journalists, owners of large and small businesses, activists, organizers, and/or anybody who has ever had the kind of love for Chicago required in order to look at it closely. The author is my age, and we grew up in adjacent communities. Her experience as part of a middle class black family and neighborhood (Chatham) and mine witnessing the racial panic in 1980s Beverly dovetail so intricately that I was audibly responding to her mentions of things like the student protest at Morgan Park High School in 1990 or the carefully-not-racist-but-also-kind-of maneuvers of the Beverly Area Planning Association. Extra copies of this book would make a suitable response to just about every tropey reaction to the complexities of our city. Only a lifelong resident with that Carl Sandburg/Nelson Algren kind of love for Chicago could have written it, but everyone who is more invested than the comments section should read it.

Karin says

So nice to end my year in reading on such a high note. Natalie blends the personal and the political in this in-depth look at segregation in Chicago. One of the best books on the city I've ever read, and would be a great One Book, One Chicago choice going forward. I'll be searching out more from her in the future and will be pushing this on all the Chicagoans I know.

Jenny says

An excellent examination of the history and effects of segregation in Chicago. Well researched and written in an engaging way where she intersperses some personal reflections within her broader topics - education, crime, politics, etc... I found myself talking about it after various chapters, which is probably indicative of my interest.

Liza Ann Acosta says

All Chicagoans should read this book. And they should read it before making any pronouncements about the South Side, even if you are from the South Side, but especially if you are from the North Side. And even more so if you are a gentrifier (hipster or otherwise). The history of segregation here is terrifying. We are still suffering the consequences of the racism of the housing policies enacted here for so long. LEARN THE HISTORY OF THE PLACE YOU LIVE.

Janet Stevens says

I think Moore's analysis was accurate yet thought provoking. I am from the South Side and very proud of it. What Moore described as her childhood is very similar to mine. Yet as I read, I continued to question what New Ways can we discover to improve the conditions of all people. A good read.

Emily says

I've lived in Chicago since the age of 18, and spent 30 years in the Beverly neighborhood on Chicago's south side where author Natalie Moore went to school. It is a rare integrated neighborhood on the south side, since whites there were smart enough to realize that it made no sense to keep running away from African-Americans, that neighborhoods would go from all white to all black only if people chose to abandon them, and that we can and must learn to live together. With that background in mind, I was excited to read this book. Although there were some interesting insights, I was ultimately disappointed. I didn't think the book was well edited. It just didn't flow smoothly from one chapter to another or even within each chapter. I couldn't help but compare it to *The Warmth of Other Suns*, by Isabel Wilkerson that tells the story of the Great Migration of African-Americans to the north in a beautifully structured and compelling fashion. *Moore's book seemed to meander from making big statements about issues to anecdotes about her personal experiences in a random way. It's a worthwhile effort that, in my view, just needed a firmer hand in organizing it in a more coherent fashion.*

Cynthia says

I left this book wishing it were more memoir/oral history, less historical/sociological study. Natalie Moore's stories about growing up on the South Side, told with a journalist's attention to detail and facts, were compelling, but much of the rest was information I already knew from other sources. This would be a good introduction to the subject matter for anyone who is not familiar with "de facto" discriminatory policies and practices in northern cities of the United States, and how government deliberately and systematically creates and under-resources segregated black communities.

Michael says

I remember Roger Ebert commenting on criticism of the movie Hotel Rwanda. There were people who said the movie didn't do enough to convey the broader story of the totality of the horror of the genocide in Rwanda. Ebert noted that sometimes it is more effective to focus on the a specific story to give you an idea of the total horror, which he felt the film did very well.

And, to an extent, that's what Moore does here, weaving in her and her family's personal stories of living on the South Side of Chicago to convey what the impact of the city's severe segregation and discrimination against African-Americans actually is. I say to an extent, because Moore, throughout the book, masterfully weaves the anecdotal to actual research and statistics, shining a spotlight on an overlooked problem in Chicago -- how even the black middle class is negatively impacted by policies and attitudes that, even if somewhat mitigated over time, still exist today.

Moore's writing is concise and she manages to never overplay the research within her narrative. For me, this book is a great companion to Ta-Nehisi Coates' Between the World and Me, as the one thing that frustrated me about Coates' lyrical polemic was that in being so personal, it didn't add any outside research and statistics to help ground its premise (this is really my problem -- as an appellate attorney, I always want authoritative support for my arguments).

The South Side of Chicago is generally mis-perceived by the bulk of white Chicagoans and suburbanites. This book provides a needed perspective and even offers a chapter of possible solutions to alleviate the problem. It really filled in some gaps for me on the topic.

Rachel León says

A fantastic examination of the issue of segregation by focusing on Chicago and its south side. Moore does a nice job weaving her personal experience in when it's relevant. I'm a slow nonfiction reader, so it took me a bit to get through, but it certainly never dragged. And the examination of race and segregation is especially relevant right now with all the--ahem--things happening in America.

Kathy says

It was hard for me to get into this book as I am not a huge fan of non fiction. But as I went on I found it more and more compelling. I think my interest grew as the events which were being described were ones I remembered.

I've lived in the southern suburbs all of my life and I found many similarities between what has occurred in the south side and Park Forest. We aspired to integration and hoped to be like Oak Park. My father was school board President when they voted to bus for integration in the schools and I saw the reactions people had to him.

I found it fascinating as the narrative was more the last 50 years to compare a 30 something black woman from the south side and a 60 something white woman from the south suburbs.

I didn't feel optimistic about white segregation, a term I learned reading the book, by the end. I felt a little squirmy about having left Park Forest, which mirrored some of her feelings about having left Bronzeville. I was saddened by some of what I read but not surprised. The only truly surprising thing I read was that Karen Lewis is black. I was shocked and my daughter thinks I'm crazy.

A really good read if you live in Chicagoland. It started out a 3 and ended up a 5 so I gave it a 4.

Cathleen says

3.5 stars. This book takes on a great deal: both location specific (*The South Side: A Portrait of Chicago...*) and wider application (...and *American Segregation*), a mesh of journalism/memoir/research, compelling arguments for integration...or maybe not, and examinations of housing, education, crime, and politics -- all with eye to past, present, and potential future. No wonder the urge to exhale at the close is palpable.

The author's framing of complex issues through the lens of her own family and personal experiences not only introduces a relatable element but also establishes her credibility. Moore is a journalist who is willing to put in the work but who still allows her personal feelings to seep through, showing loyalty, nostalgia, frustration, impatience, and even uncertainty as to what would be best for her beloved hometown.

As a whole, this book isn't as accessible as I'd first believed. There are passages that might have been finessed for ratio of heavy fact with narrative flow, but if the reader is willing to hold for an extra beat, the balance is eventually restored. The end chapter undermines some of the accomplishment in throwing a

succession of expert commentary in page-sized paragraphs. It is a bit disorienting, though the insight offered is high quality; if a weary reader opts to skip to that oh-so-close conclusion, it's understandable.

The book discussion you plan is rarely the one you have, and I had two that were nothing alike except in that they both offered surprise. This book offers a wealth of topics for groups of different personalities and affinities, even if those participants are taking part in the same conversation.

One of the other attendees demanded to know if I loved the book without reservation and would be giving to 10-12 of my most dear friends and family. Well, no, but truth be told there are few books of my acquaintance that would meet that criteria. Will I suggest, even recommend, this book? Yes, I will -- to the right reader and under the right circumstance. This is a thoughtful, thought-challenging book with personal stakes, and it also has lessons (both individual and societal) to teach. Which lessons we take away are up to us.
