
Boston's History with Racism

Is Boston really a “racist city”? Or do a few isolated incidents just give it a bad wrap?



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Sports!

What do you know about Boston's history?

1. Which of the following ethnic groups have been prominent populations in Boston historically?

- a. Irish
- b. Italians
- c. Eastern Europeans
- d. Middle Easterners
- e. Asians

2. True or False: As a port city, Boston played a large role in the slave trade.

3. True or False: Boston's attempt to desegregate schools in the 1970s went more smoothly than it had in the South a decade earlier.

What do you know about Boston's history?

4. Which #s best represent the racial makeup of Boston in 1970?

A

80% white
16% Black
2.5% Hispanic
> 1% Asian

5. Which #s best represent the racial makeup of Boston in 2022?

B

63% white
20% Black
12% Hispanic
5% Asian

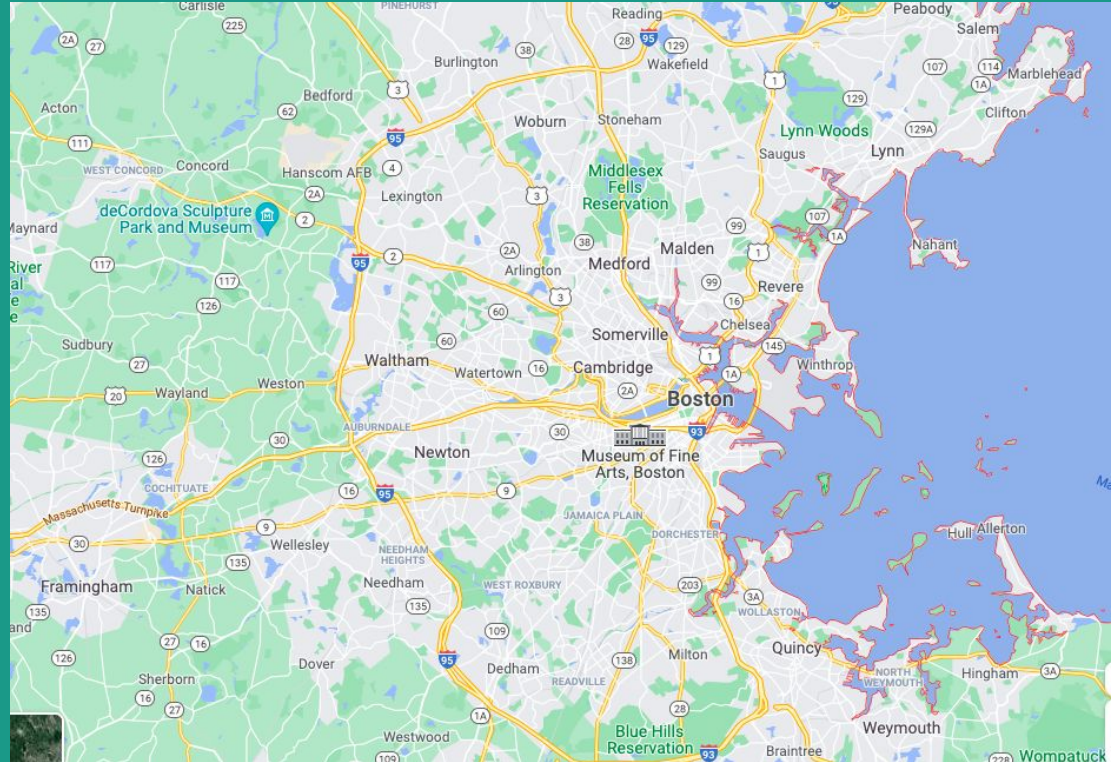
C

45% white
24% Black
20% Hispanic
10% Asian

What do you know about Boston's history?

6. When you think about Boston, what areas are included in that description?

- a. City limits
- b. Boston metro
- c. Suburbs
- d. All of Massachusetts



The Reputation

Even as the center of Northeast the “Liberal Intelligentsia” (Harvard, MIT, BU, Wellesley College, etc.), and the capital of one of the “bluest” states, Boston has long had a reputation as a “racist” city.

- Why does it have this reputation?
- Is it fair or accurate?
- How would one measure the level of racism in a given place?

SNL Weekend Update: February 5, 2017



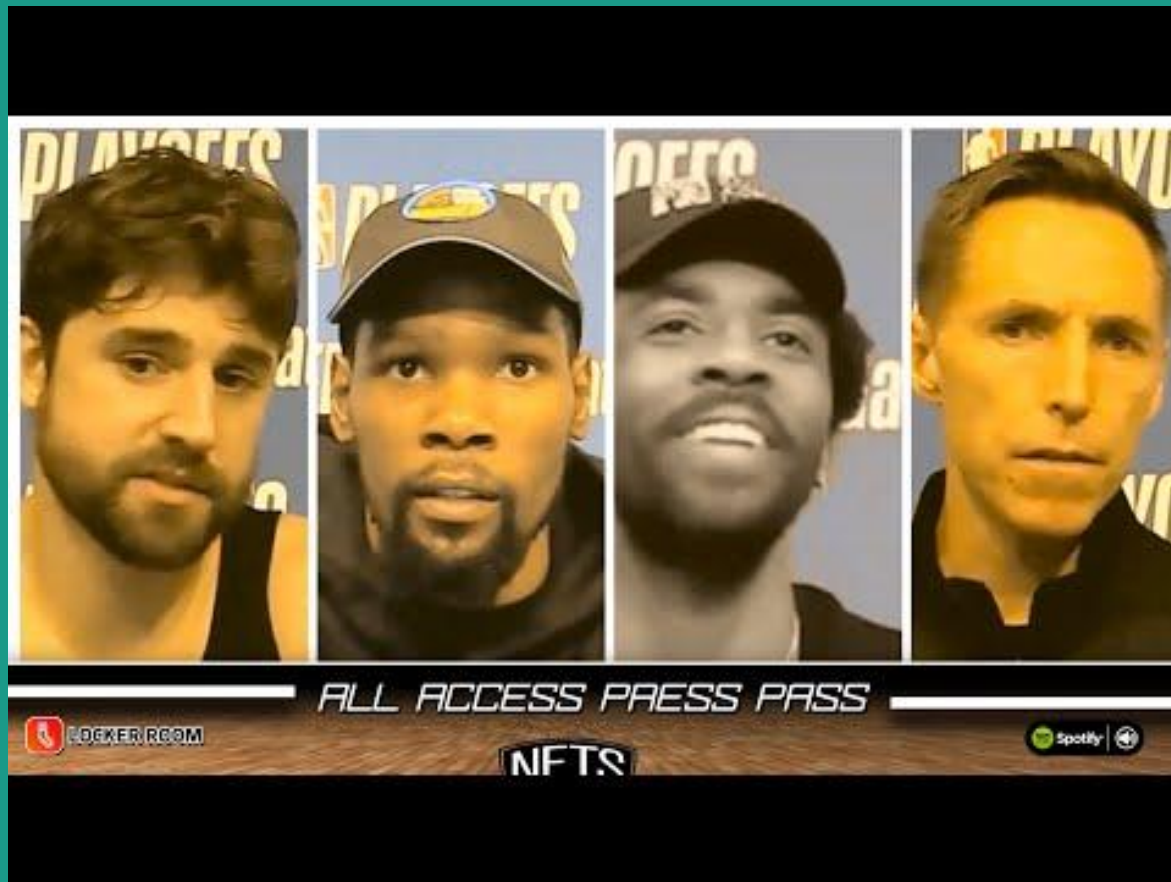
Kyrie Irving

“I mean it’s not my first time being an opponent in Boston, so I’m just looking forward to competing with my teammates and hopefully we can just keep it strictly basketball, there’s no belligerence or any racism going on, subtle racism and people yelling s— from the crowd...”

“But even if it is, it’s part of the nature of the game and we’re just going to focus on what we can control.”

Asked if he’s experienced harassment in Beantown before, he sounded incredulous that the question had to be asked.

“I’m not the only one that could attest to this, but it’s just,” he said with a long pause, “it is what it is.”



March 2019

The Celtics' Response



Celtics president Danny Ainge – who played eight seasons in Boston in the ‘80s and is now in his 18th season as an executive there – said on 98.5 The Sports Hub:

“I think that we take those kind of things seriously. I never heard any of that, from any player that I’ve ever played with in my 26 years in Boston. I never heard that before from Kyrie, and I talked to him quite a bit. So, I don’t know. As far as I’m concerned, it doesn’t matter. We’re just playing basketball. Players can say what they want.”

The Celtics' Response



Jan. 2019 - Boston fan muttered the n-word at DeMarcus Cousins when the Warriors were playing in Boston. Cousins informed the team security who talked to TD Garden security and they took care of the fan. Ultimately, that fan was banned for the rest of the season and the next year (in total a 2 year ban.)

Past history?



❖ Marcus Smart in *The Players' Tribune* (2021):

The incident that has stuck with me the most, and that's had the biggest impact on me, occurred a few years back after a victory at the Garden.

I was pulling out of the arena parking lot when I saw a white woman with her five- or six-year-old son crossing against the light right as the cars were starting to come at them. I had my windows down and realized something bad was about to happen, so I yelled to her, politely, that she needed to hurry and get out of the street so the two of them wouldn't get hurt.

The woman was wearing an Isaiah Thomas number 4 Celtics jersey. And there were all these other Celtics fans around who were at the game. I figured she'd be cool.

*Nope. She swung her head around and it was....“F*** you, you f***ing n-word!!!!”*

Lebron James on *UNINTERRUPTED: The Shop*



TV analyst & former Celtics player Kendrick Perkins discussed the behavior of Boston fans during his Monday appearance on *ESPN's First Take*.

Perkins said he's never personally dealt with racism during his playing days, though it didn't discount the fans' actions. "The fans in Boston do cross the line and hit below the belt when it comes down to being disrespectful," Perkins said.

Perkins detailed multiple recent events that put Celtics fans and TD Garden in the spotlight. There were the profanity-laced chants directed at Draymond Green during the NBA Finals, which irked both the Warriors and Green's family.

"I hear from so many other players about Boston being racist and things to that nature," Perkins said. "But there's racism everywhere. But I will say: The fans are too damn disrespectful when it comes to opposing teams coming to Boston."

The Daily Show



THE
DAILY SOCIAL
DISTANCING SHOW
WITH TREVOR NOAH

◀ THROWBACK

HOW RACIST IS BOSTON?

Questions to consider...

- Do the actions of individual or small groups of fans represent the entire fanbase or the city?
- What do you think might contribute to a whole city being labelled racist?
- How would you measure how racist a place is? What metrics would you consider?

Boston's History with Race



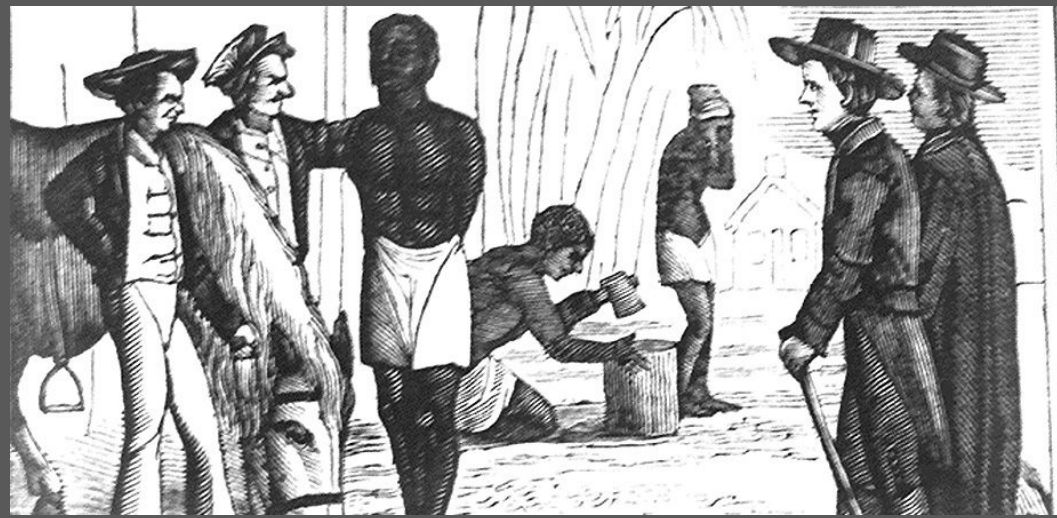
The Early History

We, here in Massachusetts, like to believe that we are free from the stain of slavery.

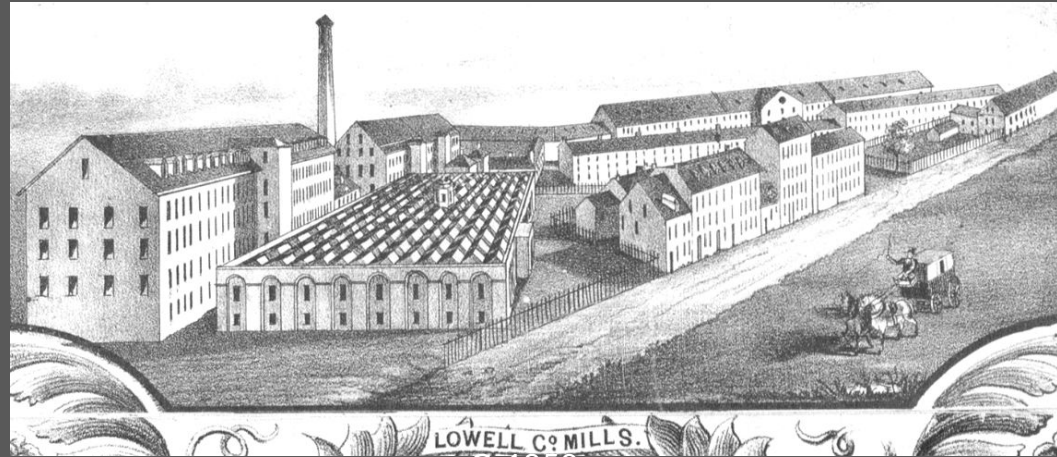
Unfortunately, that really isn't the case.

At one point in time, not only did Massachusetts allow for legalized slavery, Boston was a "hub" port for slave ships.

Even after slavery was made illegal in the Commonwealth, our state wasn't just an innocent bystander as the South continued exploiting enslaved people.

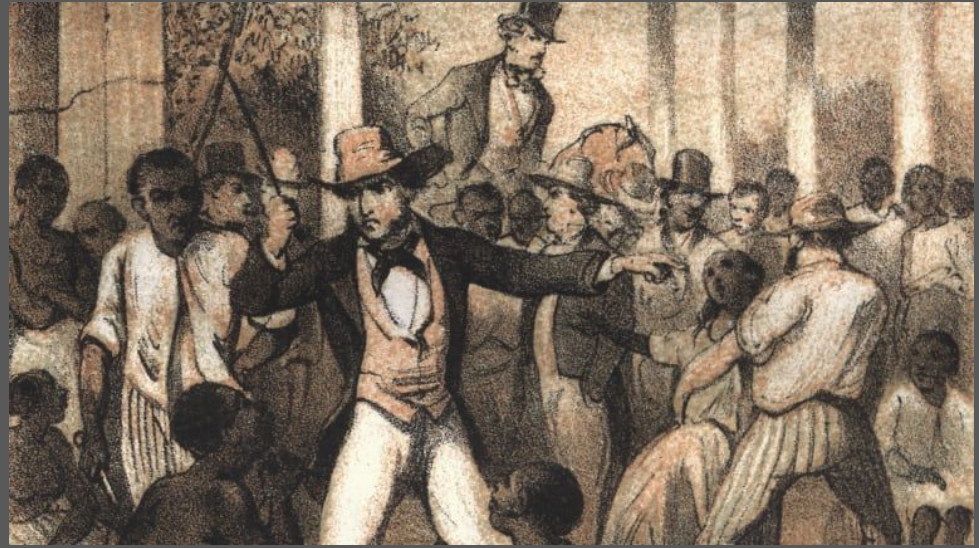


Depiction of the first slaves arriving in Massachusetts 12/12/1638



LOWELL C. MILLS.
C. 1850

Slavery in Massachusetts

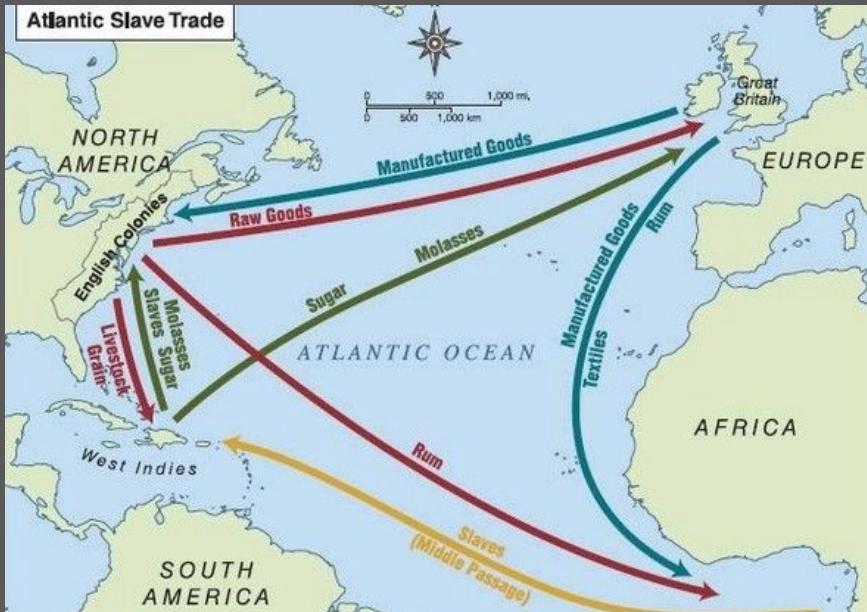


- The first enslaved people were brought to Massachusetts at the end of 1638.
- Because most farms were small and did not make much profit, few farming families could afford or benefit economically from the use of enslaved labor.
- Most of the enslaved people in Massachusetts were kept by wealthy families in Boston or used by craftsmen in Boston - who used the “free” labor to help their business grow.



Slavery in MA (cont.)

- While most MA residents did not own slaves, Boston DID become a major port for the slave trade.
- The height of the slave trade in Boston came between 1740-1769.
 - Ships would leave Boston, sail to Africa, pick up Africans to sell in the West Indies before returning to Boston with sugar.
 - This helped create the **“Triangular Trade”** (the triangle-shaped trade pattern in which people & goods were traded between Europe, Africa & the Americas)



Ending Slavery in Massachusetts

- Unlike in most other states, enslaved people in Massachusetts WERE granted a few legal rights in Massachusetts courts.
 - While they were taxed as “personal property”, courts allowed enslaved people to:
 - earn some wages
 - own some private property
 - bring a lawsuit against a citizen and
 - maintain some legal rights in MA courts
- In 1781 two enslaved individuals used the wording in the Massachusetts Constitution to successfully sue for their freedom.
 - *“All men are born free & equal, & have certain natural, essential, & unalienable rights; among which may be reckoned the right of enjoying & defending their lives & liberties; that of acquiring, possessing, & protecting property; ... that of seeking & obtaining their safety and happiness.”*



Ending Slavery in Massachusetts

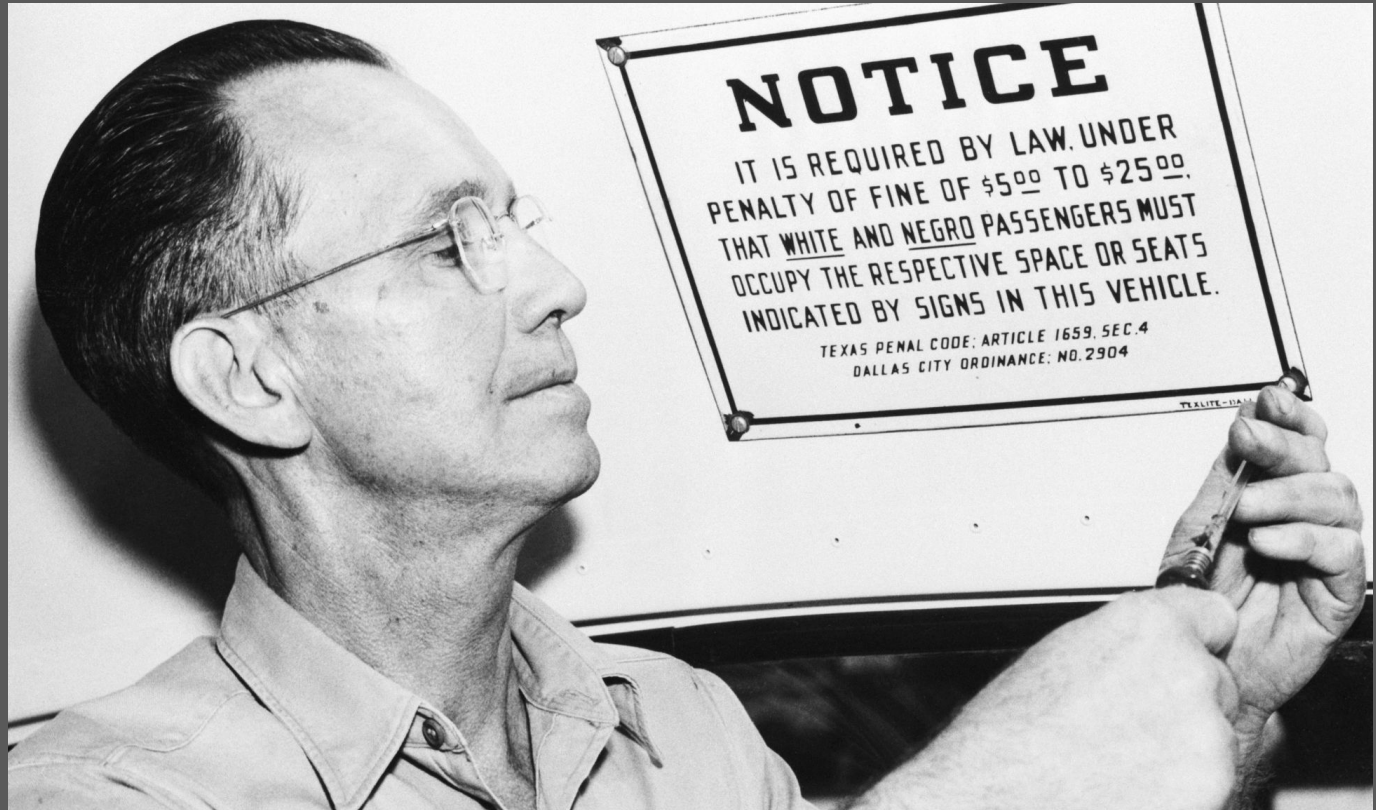
- In 1783, Chief Justice Cushing of the MA Supreme Judicial Court, ruled that slavery was a violation of Massachusetts Constitution.
 - He wrote: *"there can be no such thing as perpetual servitude of a rational creature."*
- This ended the practice of legalized slavery in MA but it did not end the use of de jure segregation and legalized discrimination.



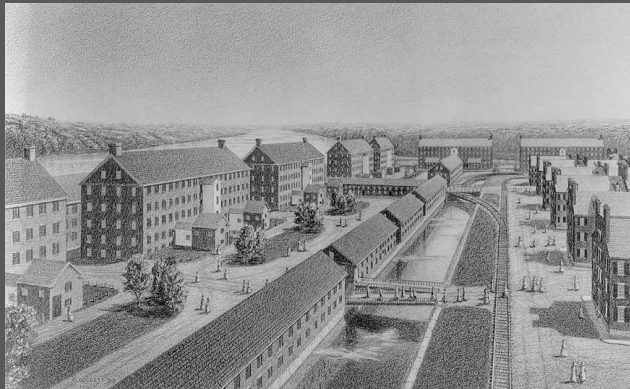
“De Jure Segregation” defined

Legal separation of people by law

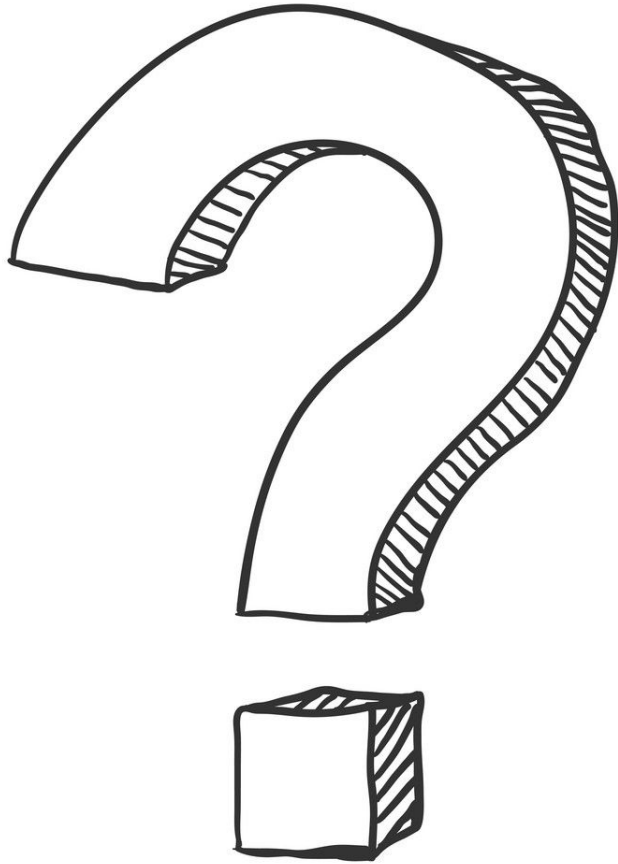
(i.e., Jim Crow laws which in the South in the late 1880s and first half of the 1900s)



After outlawing slavery, MA still benefited from & helped to expand slavery in the U.S.



- The Triangular Trade continued in MA well after its abolition of slavery.
 - The points of the triangle just shifted from the West Indies to the plantations of the southern states.
- The Lowell Mills:
 - Bought cheap cotton from southern plantations
 - Turned that cotton into textiles to be sold around the world and back to the southern states.
 - It was so economically successful that northern manufacturing locations (like Lowell) probably encouraged the expansion of slavery in the South.
- *“There is an unholy union between cotton planters and the flesh mongers of Louisiana & Mississippi and the cotton spinners & traffickers of New England – between the Lords of the Lash & the Lords of the Loom.”*
 - Massachusetts Senator Charles Sumner



**How does this all
relate to more
modern times?**

To better understand how we got the reputation, let's start with something simple:

SCHOOLS

The Boston Busing Crisis



BOSTON, MA - A bus carrying students returns to Dorchester with broken windows on the first day of school under a busing system put in place to desegregate Boston Public Schools. Busing was met with strong resistance from many residents of Boston's neighborhoods. (Sept. 12, 1974)

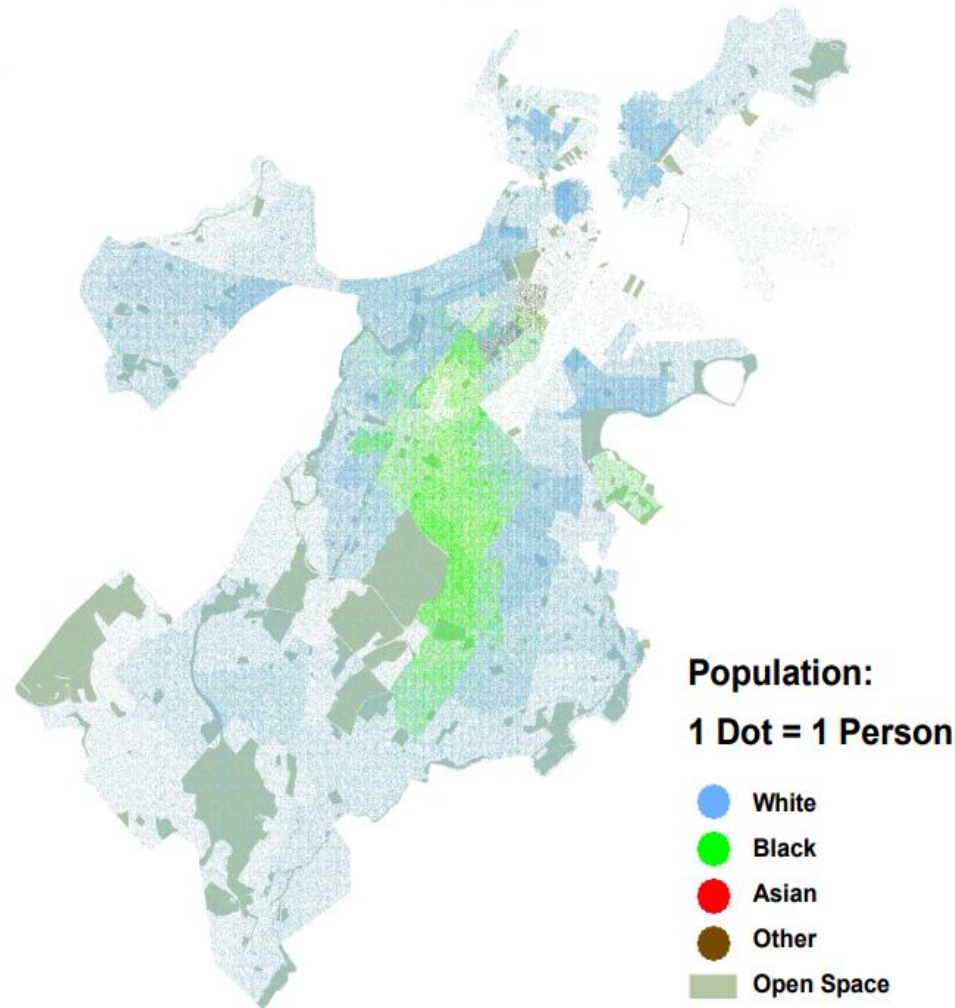
City Demographics 1970

Boston was unbelievably segregated & had little diversity (potentially even more so than today.*)

This is known as **de facto** segregation.

** Boston is still very much a segregated city, but it is more diverse in terms of race.*

1970





**20 years after the
Brown v. Board
decision, Boston's
schools were still not
desegregated**

- Even in the “liberal” city of Boston - where Civil Rights icons MLK and Malcolm X started their careers - the city schools were almost entirely segregated on racial lines.
- After years of fighting for access to better education, black families finally won a court battle to force integration.
- The court’s order was to force desegregation through busing students from different areas of the city.
 - It was controversial & faced resistance by (mostly) white residents in Boston
- The stain this reaction left on the city still persists today.





News coverage of
busing protests

This only happens in the South... right?



Protesters dressed as the KKK march in Boston in 1974 to show their anger over court ordered segregation



❖ Pro-desegregation & anti-desegregation protesters clash at Boston City Hall in 1976.

❖ What do you see happening in this picture?



Opposition to busing

White families organized a boycott of the public schools, sending their children to tutoring sessions at night, where public school teachers, college students, and prospective teachers volunteered to teach.



Charlestown mothers block street during busing protest.



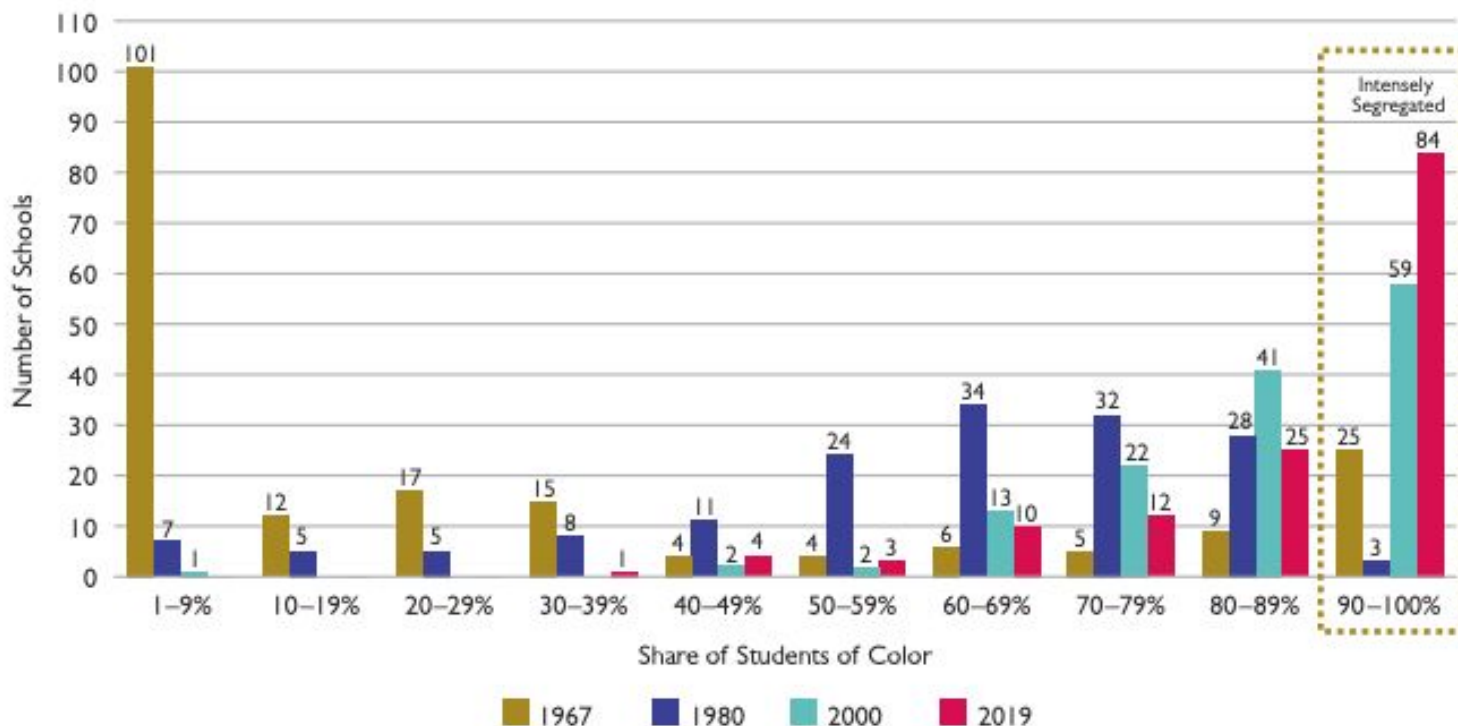
Of the 100,000 enrolled in Boston public schools, attendance fell to 40-60,000 due to busing.

But school segregation has gotten better over the last 50 years, hasn't it?

FIGURE 18

More than half of all public schools in Boston are now intensely segregated.

Number of schools by the percentage of students of color they enroll.



Source: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Enrollment by Race/Gender, and Boston Public Schools.

Let's take a break for some Boston sports trivia...



The City Today

How does it compare to other major cities, and what are some potential reasons for its bad reputation in terms of being racially welcoming?





Beyond the schools - How are race relations in Boston now?

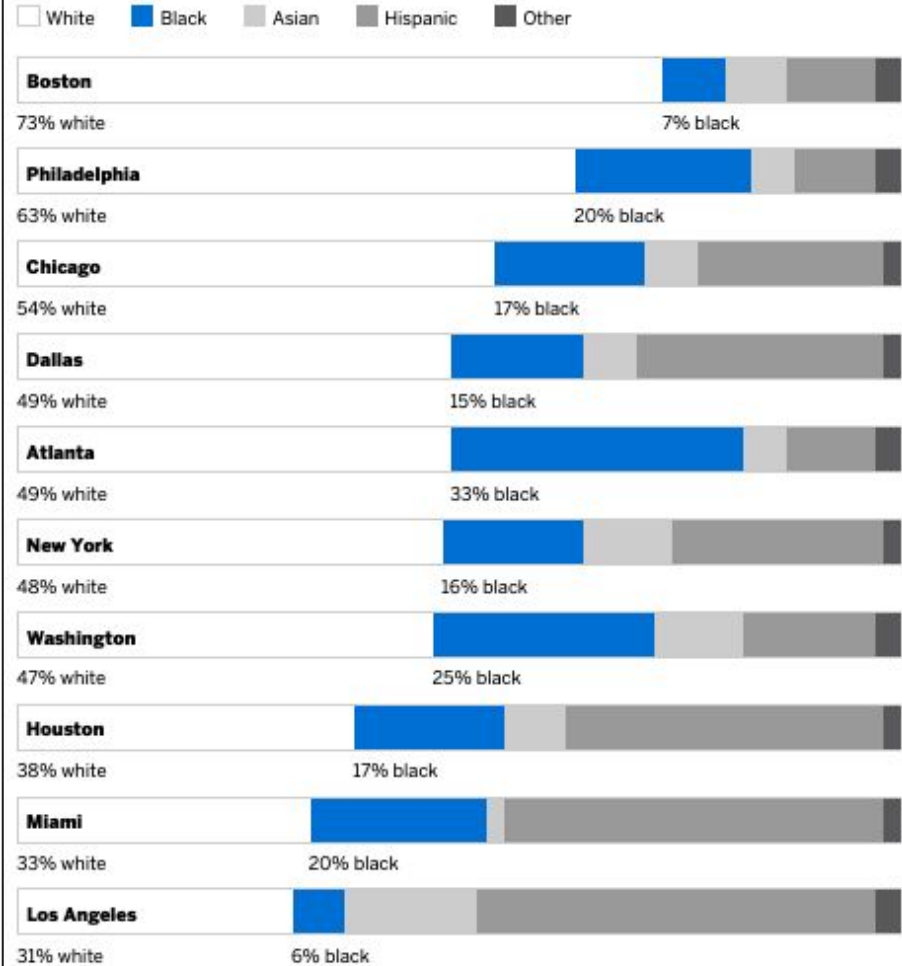
In 2017, *The Boston Globe* Spotlight team tried to find out if we really deserve the reputation...

Racial demographics of the Boston area:

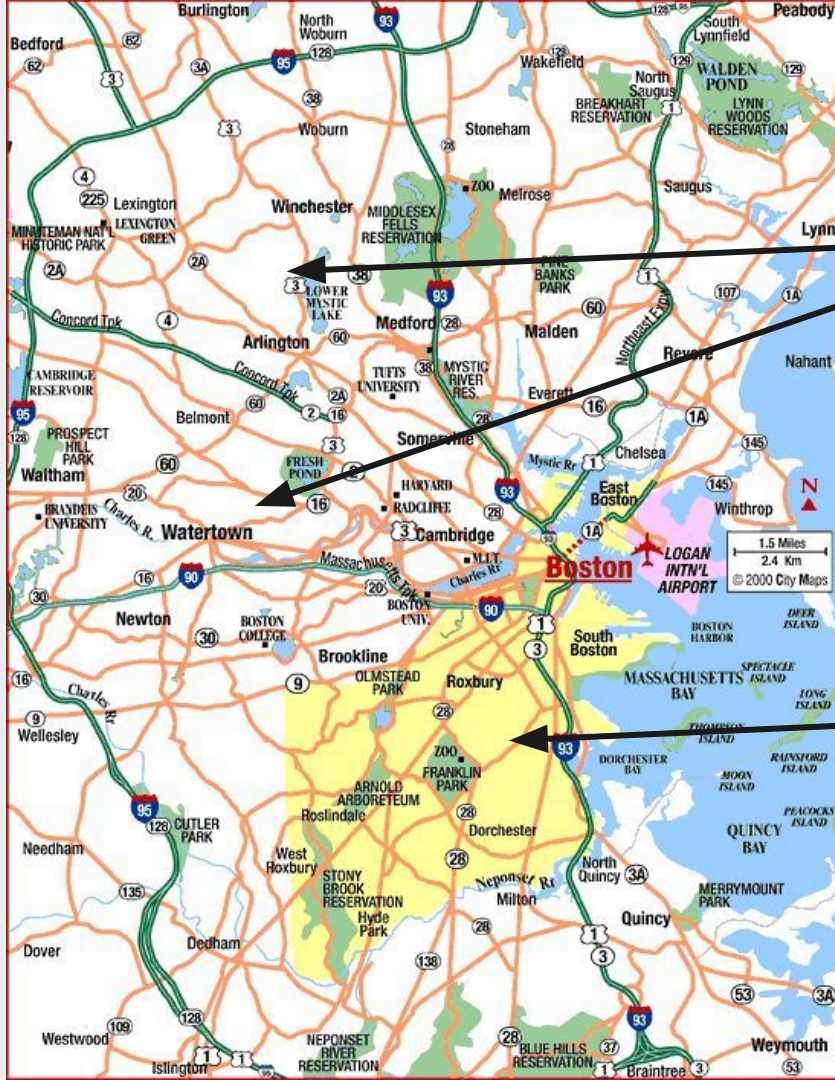


Compared to the 9 other largest metro areas in the US, Boston's is the **least** diverse in terms of population.

Racial makeup of 10 largest metro areas, by percent



Source: US Census



Boston metropolitan area, the suburbs of Boston (white shaded areas on the map)

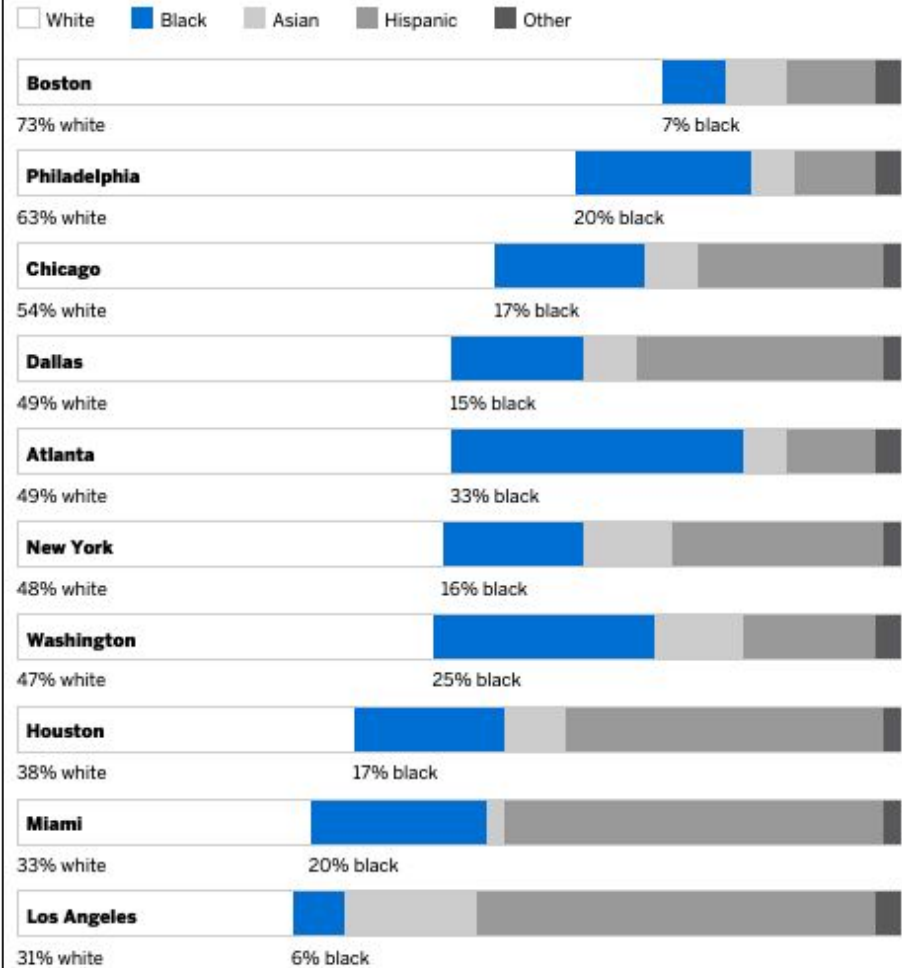
Boston, the city itself (yellow shaded areas on the map)

Racial demographics of the Boston area:



- Racial demographics of the Boston metro area:
 - 73% White
 - 9% Hispanic
 - 7% African American or Black
 - 7% Asian
- The city itself is slightly more diverse. Racial demographics of the city:
 - 44.9% White
 - 19.7% Hispanic
 - 22.2% African American or Black
 - 9.6% Asian

Racial makeup of 10 largest metro areas, by percent



Source: US Census

Let's talk numbers: See if you can guess the right answer.

How many black politicians have been elected to statewide office over the last 50 years?

2

What percentage of corporate board members of publicly traded companies are black?

1

The median net worth of white households in Boston is \$247,500. What is it for African American households?

\$8

In 1980, the % of black students at:
- BU: 4%
- Harvard: 5%
- Northeastern: 4%
What are the numbers by 2015?

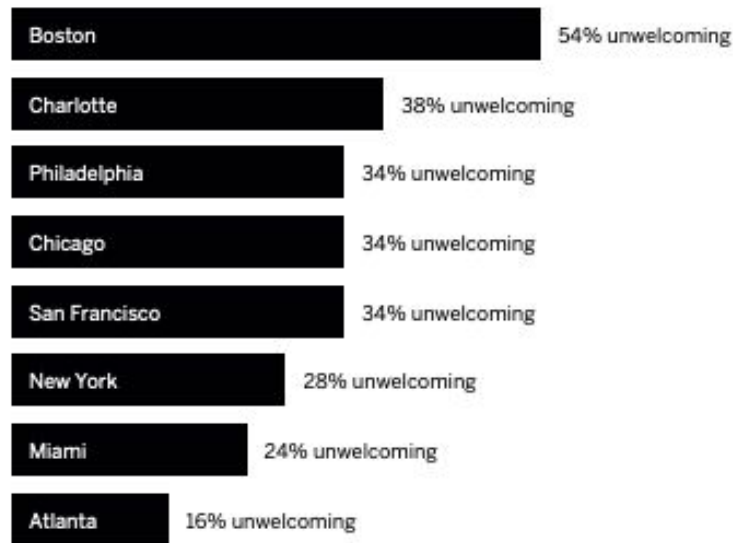
2015
BU: 4%
Harvard: 5%
NU: 3%



Questions to consider:

- Why do the demographics we just reviewed matter?
- How might those numbers potentially lead to the results of this survey?

Among African-Americans: How welcoming are these cities to people of color?



Source: 2017 survey by Chadwick Martin Bailey, a market research and strategy firm in Boston.

Some statistics comparing Boston “then” & “now”:



1983 - Only 4.5% of black workers held managerial level posts

2018- That number has basically remained the same - 4.6%

1983 - The “Vault” (group of 20 powerful Boston business leaders) had no black members

2018 - The “New Vault” (a 16 person Massachusetts Competitive Partnership) has no black members

1983 - The unemployment rate among Boston’s black citizens was twice that of white citizens

2018 - The gap in unemployment remains the same

Aspects of life that you won't see, but will FEEL - especially if you are a person of color in Boston.

- Studies have shown that landlords routinely ignore emails from prospective tenants who have “black-sounding names”
 - 45% vs. 36% of emails from “white-sounding names”
- In the Boston Metro area, only 4% of the households earning \$75K or more are black.



**So while Boston may not be segregated by law (de jure segregation),
it most certainly has elements of entrenched,
systemic segregation (de facto segregation).**

De Facto

Segregation:

segregation in fact or in practice. Not dictated by laws but instead by customs.

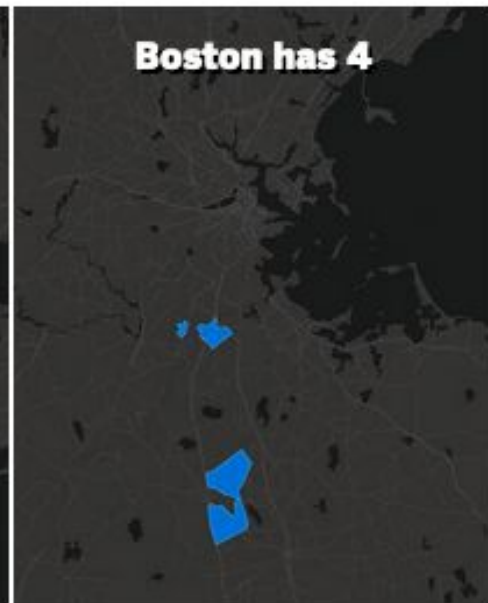


The difference between de jure and de facto segregation is the difference between open, forthright bigotry and the shamefaced kind that works through unwritten agreements between real estate dealers, school officials, and local politicians.

(Shirley Chisholm)

Middle-to-upper-class black enclaves: How Boston compares

The Boston metro area includes Suffolk, Norfolk, Plymouth, Middlesex, and Essex counties and New Hampshire's Rockingham and Strafford counties.

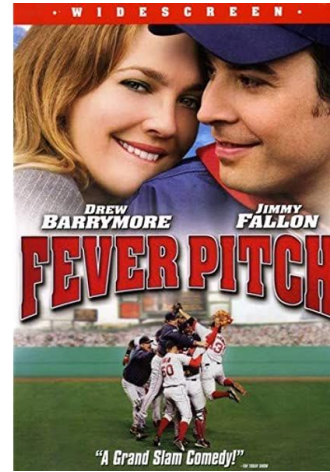
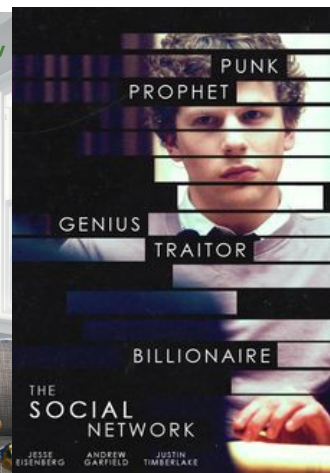
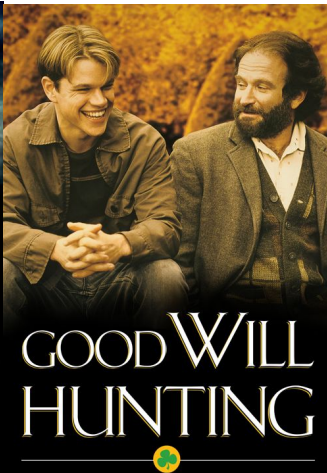
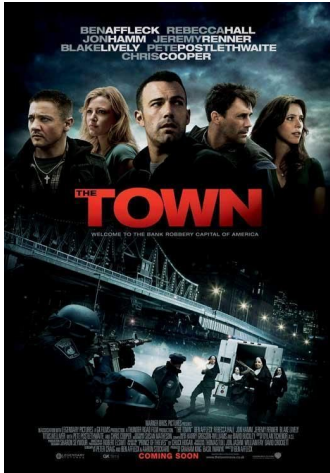


An “enclave” is defined as:

- A community where the population of black residents is at least 15%
- At least 30% of residents have a 4 year college degree
- The household income is above the median for the metro area

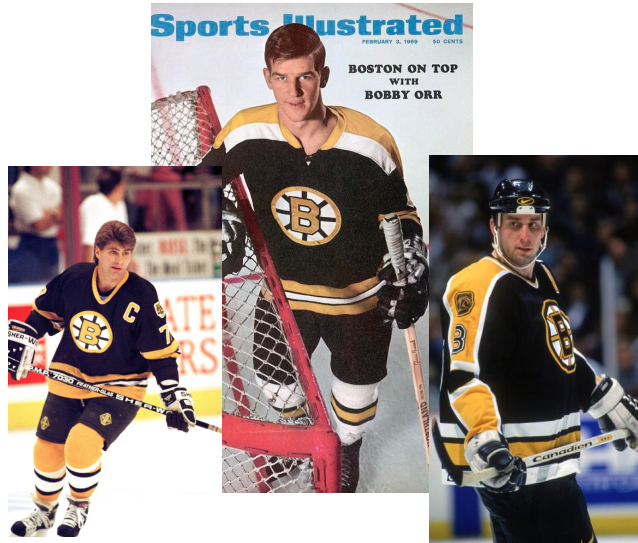
Boston in movies - our marketing

- Consider movies that have Boston as a central location or as a main aspect of the film:
 - What do these movies focus on?
 - Who do they primarily focus on as the “citizens” of Boston?



Boston in sports

- Who are Boston's most well-known athletes?
- What race are they primarily?
- How does that shape what and how non-Bostonians think about our city?



Fenway Crowd!



Bruins Fans!



Celtics Fans!



1233193435

The Patriots



What about crime & the interactions with BPD? Things seem “ok” to the outside world now, but Boston’s history of profiling has a lasting effect.

For the most part, Boston has done well in terms of violent crime - rates have continued to drop over the last 10-15 years.

The Boston Police Dept has, more or less, not been the subject of national scrutiny when it comes to excessive force against citizens of color.

But - it hasn’t always been this way....



Charles Stewart - 1989

Claimed his wife was murdered by “a 6 foot black man about 30 years old”



BOSTON HERALD WEATHER PAGE 26
Sports Page 10
TV PAGE 11
LOTTERIES PAGE 71
55 Cents 30 Cents (boxed) 98-100 size *** Tuesday, October 24, 1989

‘A terrible night!’

Gunman invades car, shoots couple



By DAVID WEBER

A pregnant woman and her husband were shot in Mission Hill when a man forced his way into their car and robbed them after they left Brigham and Women's Hospital last night, police said.

The woman, Carol Stewart, 31, of Reading, reportedly on her way home from a prenatal examination when she was shot in the back of her head, was in grave condition on life support early this morning in Brigham and Women's Hospital, said police.

Her husband, Charles Stewart, age unknown, was in stable condition in Boston City Hospital, with a gunshot wound to his side.

The couple's 1-month-old fetus was delivered by Cesarean section following the shooting, but its condition also was grave.

Mayor Ray Flynn visited the victims' families at the hospitals and later said, "This is a terrible, terrible night for us" in the city.

Flynn said he saw a

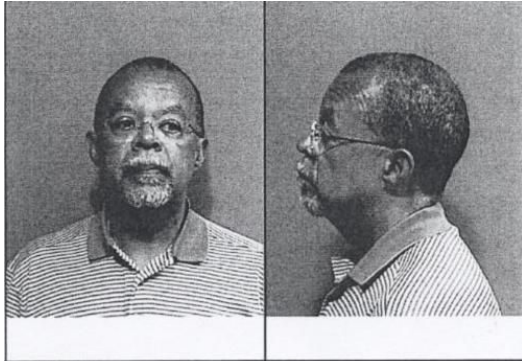
ORIM TASK: EMTs work to get into the car of Carol and Charles Stewart, who were shot by a robber in Mission Hill last night.

Turn to Page 4



Henry Louis Gates - 2009

Gates, a Harvard professor, was arrested in his home in Cambridge after being mistaken for a burglar.

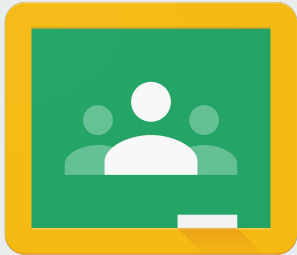


OFFENSES

1. DISORDERLY CONDUCT c272 S53



Head over to Google Classroom



Google Classroom

Using your notes, please answer the 2 questions posted there:

1. Identify at least three pieces of evidence that someone can point to when they claim Boston is “a racist city.”
2. If someone were to call Boston a racist city, does that description include anyone who lives in the Boston area? Why or why not?

How does this connect to our beloved sports teams?

That's what you need to find out.



As part of our look at Boston sports, we're going to be doing a reading on our sports history and then a group [project](#) where you will look more closely at either the Red Sox or the Celtics.

★ **Group questions to research**

- Basic biographical information of team (founding year, championships, “greatest” player in team history)
- When did the league become racially integrated? AND When did the team become racially integrated?
- In terms of the team’s dealings with race, what are some positives/highlights that are worth mentioning?
- In terms of the team’s dealings with race, what are some negatives/lowlights that are worth mentioning?
- Have players or coaches on your team or other teams ever reported being the victim, or target, of racially charged comments, threats or actions by team employees, fans or community members?
- Does the current franchise fuel Boston’s reputation as racist, or work to prove that reputation wrong?

★ **Individual Reflection:** Based on what we have discussed in class, and the information you have found during your group’s research, do you think that Boston deserves the reputation as being a “racist” city? Please make a clear argument that is supported by evidence from the unit.