

No Flight to Suburbs

By Earl Raab

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(Jewish Bulletin Special Writer)

Is San Francisco different? There may be one index which suggests that it is different, after all. The middle class, including the predominantly middle class Jew has fled from most central cities. There are places like Cleveland where there is virtually no Jew left in residence. But it hasn't happened everywhere. And San Francisco may well be one of the cities in which there will be some exodus in the 1970's, but **not** a headlong flight — for some simple reasons.

There is a unique ethnic mix in San Francisco. At the present time, out of every 100 San Franciscans, 10 are Spanish speaking whites, 62 are other whites, (6 or 7 are Jewish), 13 are black, and 15 are Chinese, Japanese or other non-white. For generations to come, San Francisco will be a city in which there is no single ethnic or racial group in heavy dominance; nor even the usual bi-racial pattern. There is probably no other city in the country in which this is so dramatically true.



Raab

San Francisco is an unusual piece of real estate. Most cities, including San Francisco, developed because of their location — usually related to water transportation. And the people had to live right there. When the logic of economy and transportation changed, there was nothing intrinsic in most cities to hold people, if they had a choice. People may come from all over the country to Detroit or Cleveland to see their relatives; but not for much else. People do come from all over the country to see San Francisco because, by and large, it is an exceptionally delightful place to look at and an exciting place to be in. That's no small matter for those for whom "quality of life" means more than the absence of noise and nuisance.

There are massive problems in the city — and elsewhere. But there also tends to be a kind of automatic hysteria about any problem in the city. As far back as Job we find the note that "from out of the populous city men groan and the soul of the wounded cries out." For the middle class, in San Francisco, some of the wounds are not as great as the crying out. For instance, you'd think that all middle class parents are ready to give up on the public schools. But a random sample of Jews living in San Francisco were just asked what they thought of the public schools. Over half think the schools are "good" or "very good". About a third think they are fair. Only the small remaining percentage think they are poor. That's pretty good, considering that middle class parents tend to think the schools never quite match their children. Most of them finally know that their children are getting a better education than they did. It's not the middle class children whom the educators are failing to give a better education.

In short, those magic characteristics of the "big city" — which drew so many people — and which have provided so many young people an irreplaceably rich, diverse and exciting environment in which to grow — are still here, if San Francisco does not become ugly — high-risers to the contrary notwithstanding — and it is still manageable in a way that most central cities are not. The 1980 census may find a lot of us gone — but not to the suburbs.

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