

On Thursday, October 24, 2013, I attended a community event hosted by several doctoral and post-doctoral students from the University of Michigan. The event took place at a local café near downtown Detroit. It was developed to create a dialogue amongst Detroit Public School (DPS) students regarding their personal experiences as students and citizens of the city of Detroit. The goal was to allow the students the opportunity to begin to build a social network beyond social media and to give them the chance to discuss matters pertaining to their education and socio-emotional health that are often overlooked. The conversation covered content from school environment, educational resources to inappropriate behavioral conduct within school settings (i.e. sex). However, the topic that resounded the most was inequality. It seemed to fit perfectly with our course and with my personal academic goals.

There were several students, from both the more affluent, higher ranking DPS schools (i.e. Cass Tech and Renaissance) and the more academically, resource challenged DPS schools (i.e. Cody and Osborn). These schools cover different areas from the city which helped bring the environmental factors into the community dialogue. The event started off with a youtube clip about two schools in New York City. The schools are literally across the street from one another but one school is predominately white with minimal disabilities and the other school is predominantly Black with students who are differently-abled (i.e. students with autism, learning or emotional differences). This video opened the dialogue regarding the two obvious factors within the video: race and being differently-abled.

First, the students covered the content of the video and empathized with the students who had a lack of resources but shortly after that they were able to see themselves within the narrative and began to compare their schooling with the students in the video. Students were able to identify that the students who attended the more well-to-do schools (i.e. Cass) received better resources, more up-to-date books, the more involved teachers and a better school environment (i.e. tissue in their bathrooms). Students who were unable to attend these sorts of schools either because they could not pass the achievement test in order to apply to the school, they could not afford the necessary transportation to get to the school location or they were unable to enroll because the school had reached its maximum for admittance. Whatever the reason, students were frustrated with the inequality that they saw within their own schooling system.

This conversation ties in well to all of the readings for this course because the theme within each book seems to have been inequality. Sugrue (2005), Tyack (1974) and Mirel (1993) all discussed how race, social economic status and city politics played a role in how students and residents of color within the city of Detroit were treated. Unfortunately, the dialogue that the students had during this event seemed to resonate with each of the readings as the students discussed their

housing issues, comparison of the different DPS schools which many believed are affected by social class and the political climate of the school/city (i.e. many students wanted to know where is the money going that is supposed to be for the schools).

This dialogue helped put everything that we had been reading into perspective. It made me think that this may have been what the dialogue looked like for those families who were building their own homes in Conant Gardens and 8-mile during the earlier part of the 20th century and how they were fighting for their ability to live out their dreams (Sugrue, 2005). The students in Detroit are doing the same thing, fighting for the ability to have resources, good teachers and a better school environment so they can push their potential and excel not only academically but as a person. During the end of the event, I think one student summed it up best “inequality will always be here and for us [Blacks] as always been here... we just have to figure out how we can work through it just like they did in the past.”