

THE HUMANS

By Stephen Karam

Directed by Todd Salovey

Jan. 9—Feb. 2, 2020

On the Lyceum Stage
Theatre

*"Absolutely, relentlessly
gripping...Rackingly
funny even as it pummels
the heart and scares the
bejesus out of you."*

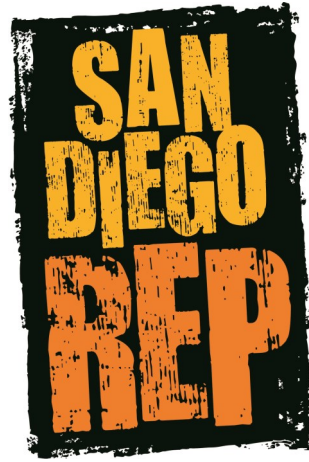
-New York Magazine

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The Curious Report

An inside look at



TABLE OF CONTENTS

What we're excited about...

Page 3

Interesting Tidbits

Page 4

10 Thought-Provoking Items

Related to *The Humans*

Around the Kitchen Table: The Evolution of Family Drama Page 5

Collective Trauma and Hope After 9/11 Page 7

Forget it Jake, It's Chinatown Page 9

The Triangle Fire of 1911 Page 11

The Evolution of the American Dream Page 13

The Debt We Carry Page 15

What was on the Menu at the First Thanksgiving? Page 16

The Parting Glass Page 18

About the Author: Stephen Karam Page 20

Interview with Stephen Karam by Kristin Leahey Page 21

Timeline

Pages 23-25

Food for Thought Questions

Page 26

This In-Depth Guide was prepared by Joel Castellaw, Kian Kline-Chilton, Verónica Isabel Márquez, and Shelley Orr and edited by Literary Manager Danielle Ward.

The Humans Cover Art by Studio Conover.

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We are excited about...

bringing this 2016 Tony Award-winning play by Stephen Karam (which was also a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize) to our stage. *The New York Times*' Charles Isherwood called it a "haunting, beautifully realized play, quite possibly the finest we will see all season... Blisteringly funny and altogether wonderful."

Over the last few seasons, *The Humans* has had productions all across the nation. For our production, we are happy to have our Associate Artistic Director Todd Salovey directing a top-caliber collection of actors—some that are new to our stage like Elizabeth Dennehy and Kate Rose Reynolds, and some of our returning REP family like Brian Mackey, Jeffrey Meek, Rosina Reynolds, and Amanda Sitton. This powerhouse cast is sure to make the stage sizzle.

We are also thrilled to transform the Lyceum Stage into the two story apartment that Karam evokes in the play. It is almost a character in and of itself, what with the creaks and idiosyncrasies that come with an old building. Long-time Rep Scenic Designer Giulio Perone (think *Outside Mullingar*) has designed this home away from home for our characters we get to watch as a fly on the wall. We are also happy to welcome back Costume Designer Elisa Benzoni from our production of *Sweat*, Lighting Designer Chris Rynne from *Bad Hombres/Good Wives*, and Melanie Chen Cole from *Aubergine*.

Karam has written a play that takes place around a holiday dinner table. It is a familiar place for many of us. But it is made even more familiar because the playwright has infused the story with his own experiences. "But it's not straight autobiography," says Karam. What really interests him, he said, is emotional autobiography:

We hope that you too enjoy this fresh look at the hilarity, heart and struggles of the modern American family.

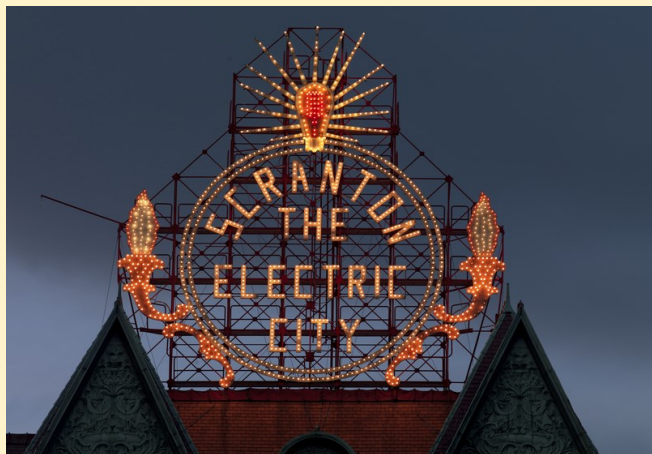


San Diego Repertory Theatre produces intimate, provocative, inclusive theatre.

We promote an interconnected community through vivid works that nourish progressive political and social values and celebrate the multiple voices of our region.

San Diego Repertory Theatre feeds the curious soul.

Interesting Tidbits



Scranton, Pennsylvania, is playwright Stephen Karam's hometown. It is also where our play's characters, Erik and Deirdre, are from. Scranton has 77, 182 residents, making it the 6th largest city in Pennsylvania by population. You may also know "the electric city" as the setting for the American version of the television show *The Office*.

Photo by Carol M. Highsmith via <https://www.goodfreephotos.com/>>Good Free Photos

DID YOU KNOW?

5.8 million Americans suffer from Dementia in the United States.

According to the Alzheimer's Association, to test a patient for signs of Dementia, a medical professional will ask a series of questions to test the patient's mental status. Mental status testing evaluates memory, ability to solve simple problems and other thinking skills. Such tests give an overall sense of whether a person:

- Is aware of symptoms.
- Knows the date, time and where he or she is.
- Can remember a short list of words, follow instructions and do simple calculations.

Chinatown, New York City

The Humans takes place in an apartment in New York's Chinatown. While the overall population of Chinatown has lessened over the past three decades, the proportion of Non-Hispanic White residents of Chinatown has increased.

Manhattan Chinatown: Racial Composition			
	1990	Year 2000	2010
Population			
Asian or Pacific Islander	51,439	59,320	52,613
Hispanic or Latino	41,609	34,050	30,227
Non-Hispanic Black	9867	8588	8457
Non-Hispanic White	22,229	19,529	23,314
Other	430	2,678	2,111
General Population Size	125,574	124,165	116,722

Do you believe in ghosts or that the spirits of dead people can come back in certain places and situations? In a 2012 survey of 1000 adults, YouGov/HuffPost found that **45% of people believe in ghosts**. And 67% of people responded that they either believe or are not sure whether there are ghosts or spirits of the dead.

Thought-Provoking Item 1:

Around the Kitchen Table: The Evolution of Family Drama

By Shelley Orr

You have likely heard the terms Kitchen Sink Realism or Kitchen Sink Drama. These terms usually apply to a play or film from the middle of the 20th Century that features working class characters in a realistic and sometimes gritty depiction of their lives. The style has roots in the previous century, in a form called Naturalism, and arguably, it continues to this day in plays like *The Humans*.

The name of the style comes from the fact that the setting for such plays is almost always domestic, depicting in great detail the humble home of the main characters. Often the pinnacle of realistic scenic design is the inclusion of working plumbing on a set, which makes it seem as though the characters live there—in fact, someone could actually live on some of the realistic sets that have been built over the decades.

I would like to add that the kitchen table often plays an even more significant role in these plays than the sink. Characters are often frequently depicted at meals together as they struggle to overcome their circumstances. While we might regard these kinds of plays as familiar or even standard now, they were innovative in the late 1800s when someone like Henrik Ibsen was writing his *A Doll House*. It was a path-breaking play, filled with unconventional choices such as centering the play on a family of middle class characters who speak in everyday language and face real challenges not unlike those the audience members might face in their own lives. In depicting these people's lives in accurate ways, the playwrights of Naturalism called for sets that created a realistic environment on stage. This included the use of real furniture, rugs, drapes, etc. to show in detail the kinds of lives the characters led.

My description of these production choices may

not seem at all radical to you, but at the time on the 19th Century stage it was much more common to see dashing heroes and helpless heroines speaking in soaring, poetic rhetoric designed to create a strong emotional response in



the Emil Poulsen as Helmer at the table in the first production of *A Doll's House* at The Royal Theatre in Copenhagen, 1879 or 1880. <http://ibsen.nb.no/id/367>

audience. The scene would frequently change and special effects would be employed to heighten dramatic and emotional mood swings as the characters were put into and rescued from life-threatening peril. This was the most familiar style of that age: melodrama. Naturalism was a response to the overly histrionic, manipulative style of melodrama, and it became the antecedent to Realism.

Thought-Provoking Item 1:

Continued...

In plays like Ibsen's *A Doll House* (1879), Tennessee Williams's *The Glass Menagerie* (1945), and Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959), the characters gather around their table to share more than just their meals. The characters in *The Humans* also gather to give thanks for all they have shared as a family; it is Thanksgiving, after all. But it is up to the audience to recognize the places where the members of the family register their regrets and their losses, even as they express gratitude for all that they have.

Playwright Stephen Karam noted, "With *The Humans*, I originally thought the way to address the play's big ideas was a lot noisier, with a lot more bells and whistles, but through the writing process of stripping things away, by the end, I was staring at six damaged and lovely souls, who audiences would watch be hurt and laugh and cry and love." We invite you to sit down to Thanksgiving dinner with the Blakes.



1959 Image of *A Raisin in the Sun* at the Billy Rose Theatre. Curtesy of NYPL Digital Collections.



1945 Stage Production of *The Glass Menagerie*. Curtesy of NYPL Digital Collection.



The San Diego REP cast of *The Humans*

Thought-Provoking Item 2:

Collective Trauma and Hope After 9/11

By Verónica Isabel Márquez

On September 11th, 2001, Americans witnessed four passenger airlines crash into targets on our own soil. Two directly hit the World Trade Center in the heart of New York City; an attack led by the Islamic Terrorist group al-Qaeda, which left nearly 3,000 victims dead, more than 6,000 injured and has left its impact

on the American psyche. An attack of such large proportions will undoubtedly leave traumatic effects on those affected by the event and have lasting effects on the collective mindset of a nation. As individuals are forced to deal with the aftermath of the events that day, we must also address the collective trauma that was experienced. The United States continues to grapple with 9/11 and the culturally hereditary trauma that we are passing onto future generations.

The whole world watched as terrorists found the chink in America's armor. The media spread horrific visuals of the event, depicting passenger airplanes crashing into a large iconic building, flames going up, buildings crumbling down, and explosions like those typically only seen in action movies. Only this wasn't a movie, this was real life. The images were broadcast directly into the homes of Americans everywhere; wide-eyed children viewed these videos and pictures as their parents grieved the loss of something they couldn't fully understand. Research scientist Dana Rose Garfin studies the "responses to natural and human-caused adversities that impact large segments of the population", or "collective trauma" caused by such events. Garfin studied the effects of the media coverage on the mental state of those exposed to these images over the months and years following the 9/11 attacks. Her team found that the continued exposure to these visuals and constant coverage by the media led to psychological distress in audiences as well as a growing fear of future attacks of terrorism. This increase of psychological distress within individuals also led to more mental and physical health problems such as an increased risk of heart failure in the population.



New York City fire fighters walk past the American flag as they work their way toward the heart of the devastation that was once the World Trade Center. US Navy Photo/Journalist 1st Class Preston Keres.

Looking at how America continues to be

Thought-Provoking Item 2:

Continued...

affected by the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Garfin's study interviewed individuals directly affected by 9/11 and other terrorist attacks, such as the Boston Marathon bombing and Sandy Hook shootings, and compared the mental states of these individuals to those of individuals exposed to media images and video of these traumatic events. People who had direct exposure to these instances of collective trauma as well as individuals exposed to high rates of media coverage of these events experienced higher levels of acute stress symptoms. Over the years the constant coverage of such large scale acts of terrorism and violence has led to an increased level of national anxiety as well as a rise in the political activity of those most affected by these events.

In response to the 9/11 attacks, the Bush Administration raised funding for national security organizations, such as Homeland security, the TSA, and the border patrol. Military expenses have also skyrocketed since 9/11, and we have watched the use of Guantanamo Bay as a prison for those accused of being involved in the attacks. We have also seen the use of questionable methods of information extraction and torture employed there, all in America's effort to win the "war on terror" instigated by this growing collective national fear. The war on terror also led to an increase in xenophobic attitudes, seen in the racial profiling of terrorists and, more recently, an increased deportation of foreign-born people. California in particular is susceptible to the long-lasting effects of increased activity by these institutions as we supply the second most military recruits of any state as well as being the "primary destination for foreign nationals entering the country, and home to a quarter of America's immigrant population" according to journalist Matthew Green.

How do we defend ourselves against acts of terrorism while not letting ourselves become consumed by fear and trauma? Garfin suggests that we stay informed but limit our media exposure. She has found that "each tragic incident that individuals witness, even if only through the media, likely has a cumulative effect." While this can be disheartening, her findings also propose that those exposed to the trauma of 9/11 directly and indirectly were able to be more resilient to adversity in the years following the attacks. Despite this resilience it is important to limit exposure to disturbing images, which have been proven to raise post-traumatic stress and acute stress symptoms which can negatively impact one's mental and physical wellbeing.

For more information on the impacts of 9/11 on the American people go to:

<http://theconversation.com/how-the-pain-of-9-11-still-stays-with-a-generation-64725>

<https://www.kqed.org/lowdown/14066/13-years-later-four-major-lasting-impacts-of-911>

Thought-Provoking Item 3:

Forget it Jake, It's Chinatown

By Kian Kline-Chilton

Photo by Bryan Ledgard—www.flickr.com/photos/ledgard/18076448908



New York's Chinatown was established in the 1870s as Chinese workers who were instrumental in building the railroads across the United States finished their work. Many of these workers found that they were not welcome in the Western communities that they helped to connect to the rail lines. The population of Chinatown was approximately 150 in 1859 but swelled to more than 2,000 in the 1870s, according to Peter Kwong who wrote *The New Chinatown* (1996). The area of the lower east side of Manhattan where they settled was already a bustling immigrant community of newly arrived Irish transplants (such as the ancestors of our characters Erik and his mother Momo in *The Humans*). Little Italy is also nearby and there were many newly freed African Americans in the neighborhood in the second half of the

nineteenth century. Today, the Tenement Museum is just a few blocks north of Chinatown, and it documents the history of the waves of immigrant communities to New York that made this area their home.

The Chinatown community has changed in several ways over the intervening century and a half since the founding of Chinatown, most recently with the addition of upwardly mobile younger people moving to the area, like our characters Brigid and her boyfriend Richard. The relative affordability of the area attracts young professionals to the neighborhood. In a converted duplex that likely once housed two immigrant families, the young couple Brigid and Richard are excited to have their pied-à-terre on Manhattan.

Thought-Provoking Item 3:

Continued...

Gentrification is a complex phenomenon that has dominated debates about development projects in major cities in the United States for more than three decades. To some, gentrification is necessary to create safer and more appealing neighborhoods for all. To others, gentrification a deliberate way to remove lower-income members of the community and create generic commercial spaces, all to make profits for a small segment of the population. To be clear, development is much more than building new buildings or opening a fancy restaurant. It is both a physical and emotional change that happens. For those who are displaced by gentrification, it is the sense that is created when you walk into a place that is no longer “yours.”

I grew up in the North Park neighborhood of San Diego. For years, North Park has been voted the best neighborhood in San Diego by its loyal residents. In 2012, it was profiled by Forbes as one of the best hipster neighborhoods in the nation. Yet, even now when I visit it, I can't recognize anything familiar about the place that I once called home. Mom and Pop shops have been replaced with new and updated businesses; the homes have become much more expensive; you can walk down a street at 9 pm and not feel threatened at all. Some may think this is an improvement, but I believe it to be the fastest way to kill a city.

Gentrification is the process of renovating and improving a house or district so that it conforms to middle-class taste. While not a prominent part of every city, many U.S. cities feature a Chinatown that is a pinnacle of Chinese culture and community. As the years go by, many Chinatowns are succumbing to the demand for upwardly mobile neighborhoods and the new residents who can afford to live in them. Especially in the case of the limited square footage on Manhattan, New York City has long

been a target of developers. NYC is taking a stand against indiscriminate gentrification. In a report done in 2013, reporter Andrew Leong noted that, Chinatowns are turning into “a sanitized ethnic playground for the rich to satisfy their exotic appetite for a dim sum and fortune cookie fix.”

However, New York has a rich history of retaining its thriving immigrant communities. More than ever, there is proof that despite the deteriorating appearance of some areas of Chinatown, it is this community that has preserved its special character in the face of development. The shop signs, the language, the groceries, the aromas of the restaurants are unlike those of any other Manhattan neighborhood. Visitors to Chinatown can sample a subculture that has grown over decades. There is no telling as to when or how long Chinatown will withstand the push for development, but this is for certain: increasingly people want unique rather than generic. They want distinct characteristics to the place they can call home. They also want affordability. While gentrification may offer newer, nicer homes or shiny coffee shops, they are also decried as carbon copies of other neighborhoods. At least as of this writing, New York's Chinatown remains a cultural bastion in the face of changing times.

Thought-Provoking Item 4:

The Triangle Fire of 1911

By Joel Castellaw

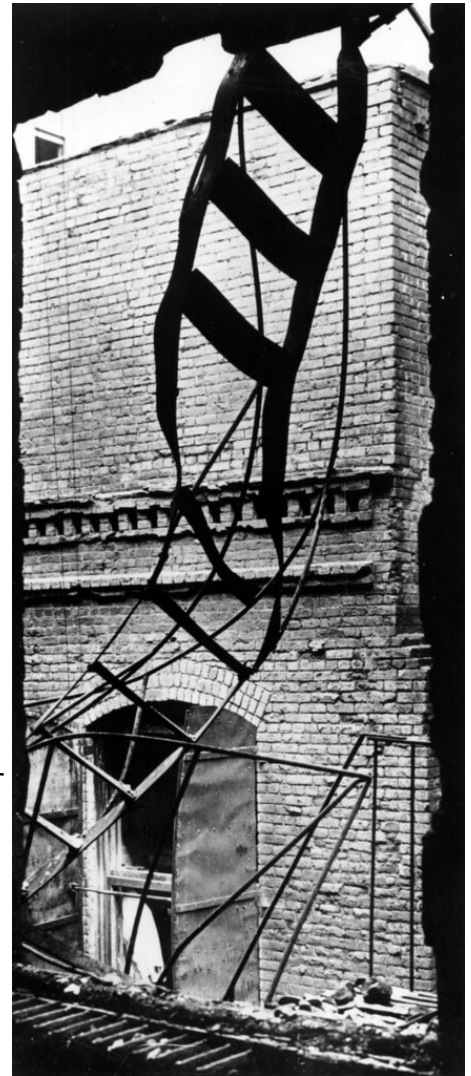
Late in our play *The Humans*, in a discussion that touches on money, power, and class, Erik shares that his grandmother was almost killed in a fire because, “Her bosses locked the doors to her factory to keep ‘em from taking breaks,” and that this incident occurred just a few blocks away from what is now Brigid’s apartment. Unsafe working conditions, draconian management, and death on the job were commonplace in the Industrial America that Erik’s grandmother would have inhabited. The most notorious Industrial workplace tragedy in New York history is the Triangle Shirtwaist Company factory fire of 1911. Erik’s story about his grandmother evokes the Triangle Fire.

Just before closing time on payday, March 25, 1911, a fire broke out at the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory, which occupied the eighth, ninth, and tenth floors of a building at Washington Place and Greene Street in New York City, just north of Chinatown. The fire spread rapidly, and in a matter of eighteen minutes 146 garment workers—mostly immigrants, mostly young women—lost their lives. Some were burned, some asphyxiated, but many leaped to their deaths rather than face being consumed by fire. The single biggest contributing factor to the loss of life was the fact that the owners of the factory kept the exit doors locked, both to prevent breaks and, ostensibly, to guard against theft of merchandise by the workers. With the exits locked, the workers were trapped in the inferno. The event is considered to be one of the most significant tragedies of the Industrial era, and it was the largest loss-of-life incident in any workplace in New York City for the next ninety years—until the attacks on the World Trade Center in 2001.

The Triangle Fire riveted the attention of New York City. In the immediate aftermath of the fire the International Ladies’ Garment Workers Union proposed an official day of mourning. Leaflets

were distributed that read, “Fellow Workers! Join in rendering a last sad tribute of sympathy and affection for the victims of the Triangle Fire.” Hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers lined the streets along the route of the funeral procession. The labor movement in general, and garment workers in particular, had been organizing for several years to demand better working conditions, but they had had little success in forcing any meaningful change. The Triangle Fire served as a catalyst that advanced the movement significantly.

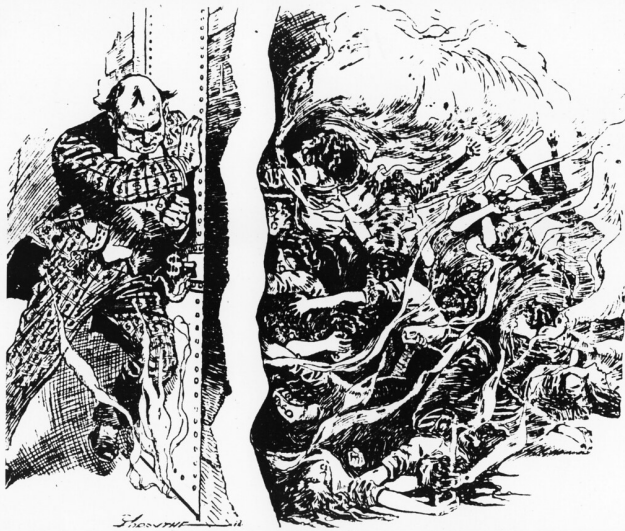
Frances Perkins, a young sociologist and workers’ rights advocate who headed the New York Consumers League, was in the vicinity of the Triangle building when the fire broke out and arrived on scene as bodies fell from the building above. With others, she formed the Citizens’ Committee on Public Safety, a



A fire escape that was never used by the workers trapped inside the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire in 1911. Photo from the Kheel Center for Labor-Management Documentation and Archives in the ILR School at Cornell University. www.ilr.cornell.edu/library/kheel

Thought-Provoking Item 4:

Continued...



A cartoon referring to the Triangle fire depicts a factory owner, his coat bedecked with dollar signs, holding a door closed while workers shut inside struggle to escape amid flames and smoke. Photo from The Khell Center for Labor Management Documentation and Archives.

group of prominent citizens who wanted to work on responses to the fire. The Committee brought thousands together from across all walks of life in New York City—socialites and reformers, clergy and politicians, labor organizers and garment workers—for a meeting at the Metropolitan Opera House on April 2, 1911. Rose Schneiderman, who represented the Women's Trade Union League, delivered a famously impassioned speech: "This is not the first time girls have been burned alive in this city. . . . There are so many of us for one job, it matters little if one hundred and forty-odd are burned to death. We have tried you good people of the public—and we have found you wanting!" That night, the Citizen's Committee passed a resolution pressuring the state to conduct investigations and pass new protective labor legislation, including labor law reforms regarding working conditions and employers' responsibility for workplace safety. The investigations that the Committee called for took place over the next several years, and reforms were passed that not only addressed issues of workplace safety but that also went beyond those

concerns to address issues such as the number of hours in the workweek and the use of child labor. These reforms first took hold as part of New York State law, but they would eventually work their way into federal law as part of Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal reforms. And Frances Perkins, who was instrumental throughout the legislative work in New York in the aftermath of the Triangle Fire, would become the first female U.S. cabinet secretary, heading the Labor department in the Roosevelt administration.

The activism that took place in the aftermath of the fire is also credited by author David von Drehle with solidifying the bonds between the labor movement and the Democratic party, accelerating positive changes within the corrupt power structure of Tammany Hall, and providing a boost to Alfred E. Smith, who lent his support to Perkins and her reforms, as he made his ascent to become Governor of New York State. Von Drehle went so far in his analysis of the importance of the fire and its aftermath that he subtitled his book on the fire, *The Fire that Changed America*.



Demonstration of protest and mourning for Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire. Photo from Department of Labor Historian's Office. [Research.archives.gov/description/5730933](https://research.archives.gov/description/5730933)

SOURCES for this article include Cornell

University's website on the fire, *Remembering the 1911 Triangle Fire* (Cornell University. *Remembering the 1911 Triangle Fire*. 2018, trianglefire.ilr.cornell.edu/), and David von Drehle's book, *Triangle: The Fire that Changed America* (Von Drehle, David. *Triangle: The Fire*

Thought-Provoking Item 5:

The Evolution of the American Dream

By Verónica Isabel Márquez

The phrase “the American dream” was originally coined by historian James Truslow Adams during the Great Depression to describe:

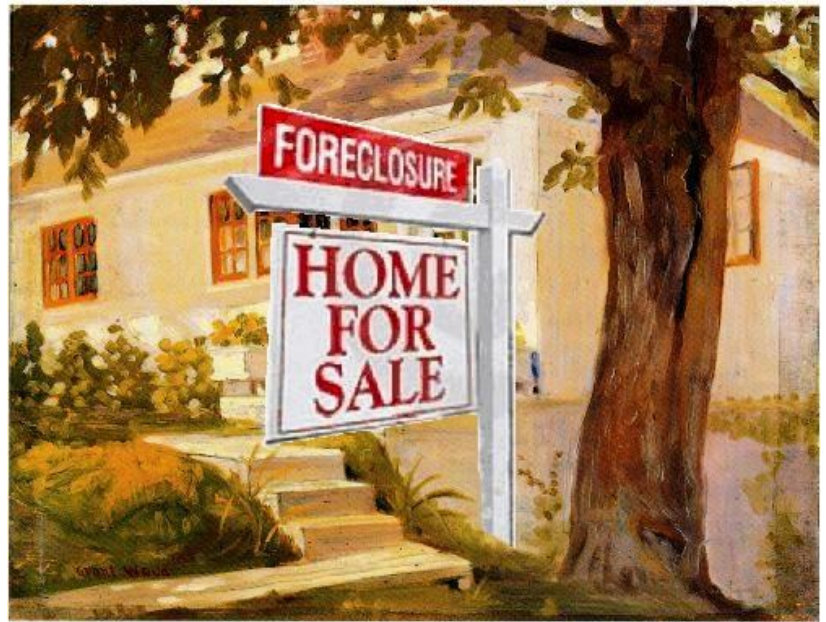
“a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement ... It is not a dream of motor cars and high wages merely, but a dream of social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position.”

Over nearly the last century, however, the American Dream has evolved to include the idea of desire for affluence and materialism, backed by an increasingly Capitalist society. The definition of the American dream has changed and morphed with each generation. After WWII, President Roosevelt implemented the GI Bill of Rights to help ensure economic security, housing, education, and healthcare for those who served in the war and their families. Roosevelt believed that “true individual freedom cannot exist without economic security and independence. ‘Necessitous men are not free men.’ People who are hungry, people who are out of a job are the stuff of which dictatorships are made.” As much as Roosevelt believed in the hard working individual as deserving of these basic rights, he was unable to implement his universal Bill of Rights. However, his work

helped lead to the rise of the American middle class of the 1950s and 60s.

During the emergence of American suburban living in the middle of the century, there was a clear distinction between those afforded these basic rights and those denied government and financial aid. While white Americans thrived, African Americans and other people of color struggled and were often forced into unsafe and indecent living conditions. These disparities of wealth and opportunities afforded through red-lining policies and the denial of loans, gave rise to the Civil Rights movement and major displays of civil disobedience such as the bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama. Those who had been continuously marginalized and denied basic rights began to fight for their place within society.

In the 1970s, runaway inflation and the Vietnam War posed a threat to the American Dream as people began to struggle to maintain their standards of living. The increases in prosperity



Can the American Dream become a reality for today's adults? Image by Mike Licht. Creative Commons license; NotionsCapital.com

Thought-Provoking Item 5:

Continued...

they had known during the 1950s and 60s began to subside. President Jimmy Carter, facing an economic crisis, turned to the American people and asked them to evaluate what the American Dream meant to them. He believed that “too many of us now tend to worship self-indulgence and consumption. Human identity is no longer defined by what one does, but by what one owns. But we've discovered that owning things and consuming things does not satisfy our longing for meaning” challenging the material comforts to which the American people had grown accustomed.

As distrust in the government's ability to ensure its citizens economic security, people began to view money in a new light as they turned to their home and retirement savings as well as Wall Street as ways to increase their buying power in the face of an ever-increasing cost of living. The result was that the American economy grew, however, so did the wage gap as most of the wealth went to only a small percentage of citizens. With the emergence of real estate speculation and a push by banks to encourage borrowing, America saw a housing boom. Owning a home became the one investment that held the promise of security as the value in homes seemed only to increase over time. The Wall Street housing crash of 2008 hit the American citizens hard and took them by surprise. The Great Recession caused a severe economic downturn similar in scope to that of the Great Depression of the 1930s. For the first time in nearly a century, in 2019, it is not a foregone conclusion that the children of a generation will have greater prosperity and opportunity than their parents. And the investment portfolios of those aging parents have not all held their value through the housing crisis, adding significant pressure to families across the country.

President Barack Obama attempted to address this severe economic crisis and the effect it has had on American morale. He emphasized that although the nation faced a new challenge, the values of the American Dream, “honesty and hard work, courage and fair play, tolerance and curiosity, loyalty and patriotism—these things are old. These things are true. They have been the quiet force of progress throughout our history.” In the past decade since the Great Recession began, we have since seen another shift in how people choose to spend their money. Economic Editor Chris Farrell, notes that “There's been a rise in people spending their money on an experience, on something that enhances their life. You can see it in the rise of religion, spirituality, yoga” and Farrell believes that like every generation before, the major economic events will impact how citizens view finances and how they choose to spend and save their money. Yet, despite these constant changes within the economy, the American psyche is determined to hold true to the values of hard work in order to achieve and maintain security and the freedom of the individual to pursue happiness, even if neither of these are guaranteed.

For more information on the evolution of the American Dream go to:

<http://americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/americandream/a1.html>

Thought-Provoking Item 6:

The Debt We Carry

By Kian Kline-Chilton



Photo by Marco Verch; Creative Commons License.

www.flickr.com/photos/30478819@N08/32033206848

In the upcoming years, the possibility of owning a house for anyone under the age of forty-five is becoming more and more unlikely. Employer-provided health care is no longer an option for many. Three jobs and a Masters Degree may not be sufficient to actually secure a decent living. Despite being one of the most prosperous countries in the world, for many younger Americans, the pursuit of money has evolved from the motivation to achieve greater status to an issue of survival for more American families. Not only do many individuals not have enough, they also are suffering from crippling debt. In a *Huffington Post* essay by Michael Hobbes, he states that millennials are facing the scariest financial future of any generation since the Great Depression. Just let that sit for a little.

Stephen Karam's play attempts to explore this situation through the Blake family. Brigid and Richard, the youngest daughter and her boyfriend, have just moved in to a Chinatown home where loud noises constantly interrupt any hope of peace. They are serving Thanksgiving dinner on paper plates and plastic cups, so eager are they to host their family in their new apartment. We expect this of

young people who are just freshly living together and cannot yet afford the luxuries their parents have. But even the parents, Erik and Deidree, despite working all their lives and attaining the age of retirement, they are still facing the issue of having to hold down steady jobs to afford their home. That's our new normal.

Gone are the days where you could retire before sixty and spend the rest of your life in comfort. The new normal is knowing that as the current trends of the economy rise and fall, this much stays true: people under the age of thirty-five won't likely be able to retire completely until at least seventy-five. That's the rate at which one could start investing and hopefully retire comfortably by eighty, if they are lucky.

There is no clear answer as to what can be done but Karam's portrayal of two struggling generations gathering around to count their blessings at Thanksgiving evokes debate as to what the newest generation of adults can expect now that the promises of the past seem hollow. By knowing we cannot likely reach a higher tier in terms of income, is it easier for us to accept defeat? Or are we truly happy and ready to spend our whole lives with the burden and responsibility of the debt we carry? The future is uncertain, however it is certain that the white picket fence and big house that we all once dreamed of seems to be a dream of the past.

SOURCE: Hobbes, Michael. "Poor Millennials." <https://highline.huffingtonpost.com/articles/en/poor-millennials/>

Thought-Provoking Item 7:

What Was on the Menu at the First Thanksgiving?

The Humans takes place at Thanksgiving dinner. The Blake family gathers, not at Grandmother's house, but instead at the youngest granddaughter's apartment in New York City. In our play, set in the present in Lower Manhattan's Chinatown, elements of the tradition are turned on their head.

The matriarch Momo suffers from dementia and uses a wheelchair. Momo's son Erik and daughter-in-law Deirdre bring her to her granddaughter's apartment. Instead of the best china and silver being set on an heirloom table, three generations of the Blake family eat from a folding table and drink from plastic cups.

Many cultures have harvest feasts, and Thanksgiving is certainly a holiday based on that long tradition. As one of the few major U.S. holidays that is not religious, Thanksgiving is celebrated in most homes in the nation. In this article from the Smithsonian, historians discuss what would have likely been part of the first Thanksgiving feast that was celebrated in 1621.

The following article, titled "What was on the menu at the first Thanksgiving" is written by Megan Gambino from the Smithsonian's Teen Tribune. It was originally published on November 20, 2015.

Today, the traditional Thanksgiving dinner includes any number of dishes: turkey, stuffing, mashed potatoes, candied yams, cranberry sauce and pumpkin pie. If we were to create a historically accurate feast consisting of foods that were served at the so-called "first Thanksgiving," there would be slimmer pickings.

"Wildfowl was there. Corn, in grain form for bread or for porridge, was there. Venison was there," says Kathleen Wall.

Two primary sources confirm that these staples were part of the harvest celebration shared by the Pilgrims and Wampanoag at Plymouth Colony in 1621. Edward Winslow, an English leader who attended, wrote home to a friend:

"Our harvest being gotten in, our governor sent four men on fowling, that so we might after a special manner rejoice together after we had gathered the



Thanksgiving Turkey by Ruocaled. Creative Commons <https://www.flickr.com/photos/ruocaled/8069135368>

fruit of our labors . . . At which time, amongst other recreations, we exercised our arms, many of the Indians coming amongst us, and among the rest their greatest king Massasoit, with some ninety men, whom for three days we entertained and feasted, and they went out and killed five deer, which they brought to the plantation and bestowed on our governor, and upon the captain and others."

William Bradford, the governor Winslow mentions, also described the autumn of 1621, adding, "And besides waterfowl there was great store of wild turkeys, of which they took many, besides venison, etc."

Determining what else they might have eaten at the 17th-century feast takes some digging. To form educated guesses, Wall, a culinarian at Plimoth Plantation, a living history museum in Plymouth, Massachusetts, studies cookbooks and descriptions of gardens from the period, archaeological remains such as pollen samples that might clue her in to what the colonists were growing.

Turkey was not the centerpiece of the meal. It's possible the colonists and American Indians cooked wild turkey, but Wall suspects that goose or duck was more likely.

Small birds were often spit-roasted, while larger birds were boiled.

"I also think some birds . . . were boiled first, then roasted to finish them off. Or things are roasted first

Thought-Provoking Item 7:

Continued...

and then boiled," says Wall. "The early roasting gives them nicer flavor, sort of caramelizes them on the outside and makes the broth darker."

It is possible that the birds were stuffed, though probably not with bread. (Bread, made from maize not wheat, was likely a part of the meal, but exactly how it was made is unknown.) The Pilgrims instead stuffed birds with chunks of onion and herbs. "There is a wonderful stuffing for goose in the 17th-century that is just shelled chestnuts," says Wall.

In addition to wildfowl and deer, the colonists and Wampanoag probably ate eels and shellfish, such as lobster, clams and mussels. "They were drying shellfish and smoking other sorts of fish," says Wall.

According to Wall, the Wampanoag, like most eastern woodlands people, had a "varied and extremely good diet." The forest provided chestnuts, walnuts and beechnuts. "They grew flint corn, and that was their staple. They grew beans, which they used from when they were small and green until when they were mature," says Wall. "They also had different sorts of pumpkins or squashes."

As we are taught in school, the Indians showed the colonists how to plant native crops. "The English colonists plant gardens in March of 1620 and 1621," says Wall. "We don't know exactly what's in those gardens. But in later sources, they talk about turnips, carrots, onions, garlic and pumpkins as the sorts of things that they were growing."

To some extent, the exercise of reimagining the spread of food at the 1621 celebration becomes a process of elimination. "You look at what an English celebration in England is at this time. What are the things on the table? You see lots of pies in the first course and in the second course, meat and fish pies. To cook a turkey in a pie was not terribly uncommon," says Wall. "But it is like, no, the pastry isn't there." The colonists did not have butter and wheat flour to make crusts for pies and tarts. (That's right: No pumpkin pie!) "That is a blank in the table, for an English eye. So what are they putting on instead? I think meat, meat and more meat," says Wall.

Meat without potatoes, that is. White potatoes,

originating in South America, and sweet potatoes, from the Caribbean, had yet to infiltrate North America. Also, there would have been no cranberry sauce. It would be another 50 years before an Englishman wrote about boiling cranberries and sugar into a "Sauce to eat with . . . Meat."

How did the Thanksgiving menu evolve into what it is today?

Wall explains that the Thanksgiving holiday, as we know it, took root in the mid-19th century. At this time, Edward Winslow's letter, printed in a pamphlet called *Mourt's Relation*, and Gov. Bradford's manuscript, titled *Of Plimoth Plantation*, were rediscovered and published. Boston clergyman Alexander Young printed Winslow's letter in his *Chronicles of the Pilgrim Fathers*, and in the footnotes to the resurrected letter, he somewhat arbitrarily declared the feast the first Thanksgiving. There was nostalgia for colonial times, and by the 1850s, most states and territories were celebrating Thanksgiving.

Sarah Josepha Hale, editor of the women's magazine *Godey's Lady's Book*, was a leading voice in establishing Thanksgiving as an annual event. She pitched her idea to President Lincoln as a way to unite the country in the midst of the Civil War. In 1863, he made Thanksgiving a national holiday.

Hale printed Thanksgiving recipes and menus in *Godey's Lady's Book*. She also published close to a dozen cookbooks.

"A lot of the food that we think of - roast turkey with sage dressing, creamed onions, mashed turnips, even some of the mashed potato dishes, which were kind of exotic then - are there," said Wall.

Thought-Provoking Item 8:

The Parting Glass

By Joel Castellaw

Early on in our play *The Humans*, the members of the Blake family sing a traditional folksong, “The Parting Glass.” The song traces all the way back to the 17th Century, and various versions were published in music collections throughout the 18th and 19th Centuries, including *Collection of Scots Tunes* (1755) and *The Complete Repository of Original Scots Tunes* (1802). There is even a version written by Robert Burns, at a time when he was considering leaving his home country. As the title suggests, the song is most often used as a farewell; William Stenhouse noted in 1839 that it “has, time out of mind, been played at the breaking up of convivial parties.”

More recently the song was popularized as part of the 20th Century Folk music movement. The Clancy Brothers, a group that helped to revitalize Folk music in Ireland and to bring traditional Irish music to the attention of

American audiences, recorded the song in 1959, and it became a popular standard as a result of this recording. Bob Dylan penned a version of the song, which he titled “Restless Farewell,” and Frank Sinatra is said to have loved the song so much that he asked Dylan to play it at a concert celebrating Sinatra’s 80th birthday in 1998.

Here are the lyrics to the song as set down in the Clancy Brothers’ version, which hews closely to the various traditional versions that are available:

Of all the money that e'er I spent
I've spent it in good company.
And all the harm that ever I did
Alas it was to none but me.
And all I've done for want of wit



The Clancy Brothers brought traditional Irish music to a wider audience during the Folk Music revival of the mid-Twentieth Century. This photo is from a site dedicated to Dublin street art where this tribute mural was captured in 2011. Photo by William Murphy and used under Creative Commons license. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/infomatique/5619943606>

Thought-Provoking Item 8:

Continued...

To memory now I can't recall.
So fill to me the parting glass –
Good night and joy be with you all.

If I had money enough to spend
And leisure to sit awhile,
There is a fair maid in the town
That sorely has my heart beguiled.
Her rosy cheeks and ruby lips
I own she has my heart enthralled,
So fill to me the parting glass –
Good night and joy be with you all.

Oh, all the comrades that e'er I had
They're sorry for my going away.
And all the sweethearts that e'er I had
They'd wish me one more day to stay.
But since it falls unto my lot
That I should rise and you should not,
I'll gently rise and softly call—
Good night and joy be with you all.

The version in the play has some interesting departures from these traditional lyrics. One difference is found in the second line of the first verse, where the play's version refers to money "lost," rather than "spent"—a small difference, but a significant one. The differences pile up in the second verse. Not all versions of the song include this verse and its reference to a maiden, but those that do describe the maiden's "rosy cheeks and ruby lips" which "ensure she has my heart in thrall." The play's version, in contrast, refers to the maiden's "pale white cheeks [and] her skin of snow," with the singer claiming, "I will not rest till she comes to call." These two

maidens couldn't be more different from each other! Another difference between traditional versions of the song and the play's version is found in the lines at the end of the second verse, where the Blakes sing, "Lay down your fears and raise your glass" instead of, "So fill to me the parting glass." What fears are being thought of here? A final difference is that the Blake's version ends with the second verse and completely omits the third verse in which the farewell is finalized.

Why did Stephen Karam make these changes to this song? And why did he use a traditional *farewell* song *at the beginning* of the Blake family's Thanksgiving celebration? *The Humans* is a play that takes the common family gathering and turns it on its head, rendering it as a mystery. As you enjoy the play, you might reflect on how the lyrics Karam provides for "The Parting Glass" reflect parts of the larger mystery of the Blake family's story.

SOURCE: Parts of this article are adapted from "Some Notes on the History of 'The Parting Glass,'" by Jürgen Kloss. (Kloss, Jürgen. "Some Notes on the History of 'The Parting Glass.'" *Just Another Tune: Songs & Their History*, 30 March, 2012, justanotherhertune.com/html/partingglass.html).

Thought-Provoking Item 9:

About the Playwright: Stephen Karam



Photo by Jessica Antola

Stephen Karam is the Tony Award-winning author of *The Humans*, *Sons of the Prophet* and *Speech & Debate*. For his work he's received two Drama Critics Circle Awards, an OBIE Award and is a two-time Pulitzer Prize finalist.

He wrote a film adaptation of Chekhov's *The Seagull* starring Annette Bening, which was released by Sony Picture Classics. His adaptation of Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard* premiered on Broadway as part of Roundabout's 2016 season. Recent honors include the inaugural Horton Foote Playwriting Award, the inaugural Sam Norkin Drama Desk Award, two Outer Critics Circle Awards, a Lucille Lortel Award, Drama League Award, and Hull-Warriner Award.

Stephen teaches graduate playwriting at The New School. He is a graduate of Brown University and grew up in Scranton, PA.

A New York Times profile on Stephen can be found at <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/27/theater/stephen-karams-plays-treat-anguish-as-a-laughing-matter.html>

Thought-Provoking Item 10:

Interview with Playwright Stephen Karam

Interview by Kristin Leahey

This article is from the website “The Magazine: An Inside Look at Broadway SF.” The interview was originally published May 20, 2018 at <http://magazine.shnsf.com/index.php/shows/the-humans/the-humans-playwright-stephen-karam-opens-up-about-his-tony-award-winning-play/>.

Kristin Leahey (KL): What was your impulse behind writing *The Humans*?

Stephen Karam (SK): I was thinking a lot about the things that were keeping me up at night and that got me thinking about existential human fears: fear of poverty, sickness, losing the love of someone... Was there a way to actually tell a story that might elicit some of those fears—or provide some thrills—while also talking about how human beings cope with them? And by the time I was done, I had written a family play or, as I think of it now, a family thriller.

KL: Could you share some of the highlights of working on the play in 2014 with Chicago’s American Theater Company (ATC), then in 2015 with New York’s Roundabout Theatre Company, and eventually on Broadway in 2016

SK: The gift of new work when it goes well is you get to grow the piece with other artists and countless people behind the scenes. The Roundabout production was set, but the theatre allowed for the world premiere at ATC in Chicago, because I thought it would help me to develop the play in preparation for New York. Also, I thought it was a great play for Chicago, where audiences are accustomed to taking risks, especially with new work. I did a lot of intense rewriting while we were in rehearsals for the production. And then we went to Roundabout, and it was almost like doing it over again, because there was a new director, Joe Mantello, as well as a new cast. I learned a lot from the first production, so the company I think had a stronger script as a result.

The Roundabout’s off-Broadway space is about 400 seats, so it’s actually quite big. Therefore, it wasn’t a huge shift in terms of rethinking the play when we moved to Broadway. The set nestled well into the Helen Hayes Theatre and then we transferred to the Gerald Schoenfeld Theatre, which is larger. It was interesting to see how the actors adjusted their performances to each of the different spaces... but, you know, the same dilapidated two-story duplex set followed us everywhere.

KL: After having the experience of working on the premiere in Chicago and now, in many ways, coming full circle with the national tour, what are you looking forward to with this new journey for *The Humans*?

SK: You can probably tell from the play that I’m from Pennsylvania. Any time I do a new play, I’m actually thinking, “Will it ever find its way across the country?” “Will it ever find its way to Pennsylvania or Arizona or Washington State?” My first attendance at a professional theatre was seeing touring shows that made their way to the Scranton Cultural Center at the Masonic Temple. I ushered at the Masonic in high school to get free tickets. They were large musicals but never “straight plays.” There’s a special magic in taking a play, a piece like this, across the country. I just feel [that it] really connects to what it meant for me to see theatre growing up, so I’m excited to see something that I wrote have a chance to travel.

KL: I really admire that your work, such as *Speech & Debate*, *Sons of the Prophet*, and *The Humans*, grapples with immense sociopolitical ideas, but at its core are these tangible, intimate relationships between characters. How do you strike this balance?



Thought-Provoking Item 10:

Continued...

SK: Instead of running away from the larger questions we're struggling with, I realized that my plays can come from them. With *The Humans*, I originally thought the way to address the play's big ideas was a lot noisier, with a lot more bells and whistles, but through the writing process of stripping things away, by the end, I was staring at six damaged and lovely souls, who audiences would watch be hurt and laugh and cry and love. Things become universal, and thus reverberate more precisely. It's sort of the epic via the intimate.

KL: It's interesting considering that sometimes the most intimate of subjects can also be the most political.

SK: I didn't start *The Humans* by saying, "I'm going to write about the dying middle class." I think that's a losing game, only because you can't make people watch a play like that— at least I don't think so—unless there are complex, multidimensional people at the center of the conflict. That's where audiences invest, when they actually care about the struggle of the people onstage. If I get too bogged down in ideas, I don't tend to write so well.

I feel like my plays become more political by focusing on human behavior. As a playwright, you can't write about what it means to be alive and not be political. And if you're writing about what it means to be alive today, you're going to end up writing a political play...I *never* would have predicted or imagined that Donald Trump would have become president. Nor would I have ever suspected that somebody with his particular background, trust fund, and golden toilets would be the person who ends up connecting to the Erik Blakes of the world.

KL: I really appreciated the March 2017 article you wrote for *American Theatre*—"Guides for Survival in the Trump Simulacrum." You wrote, "Artists and philosophers are better at processing complex realities during unreal times."

SK: Our job as writers is to tell the truth and be as honest as possible—avoid propaganda or a tidy resolution. And politicians are interested in the sincere question that *The Humans* was born out of, too—"What are the things that keep human beings up at night?" And sometimes, for the good of the people, they think about these things because they want to know what we care and are worried about. And then, of course, when politicians are campaigning, they can also play into these fears in really dark and scary ways. The play got caught for a while in a political discussion that I certainly welcomed, but I think part of the reason it did is that there's an overlap of interest in watching politicians also try to take the temperature of what's keeping people up at night.

KL: What was it like working with Joe Mantello on the project? We're so thrilled that he's helming the tour.

SK: It was incredible! A good collaborator like Joe just makes your work stronger. I think what I love about working with him is that he is uncompromising, has an incredible eye, and understood the play from the second he read it. I can't really overstate what a gift that is. I feel somewhat giddy that we're going to get to go to Seattle together and do it again.

KL: Well, we're thrilled that you are sharing it with our audience!

SK: I should also note that the play is a comedy. I'm somebody who loves laughing when I'm seeing any play myself. But you can't just tell people a play is funny; you have to let them decide that for themselves. But of course, watching any family interact for 90 minutes is going to be partially, if not largely, hilarious.

Original Transcription by Annika Bennett.

A Timeline of Immigration, Lower East Side of Manhattan

1600s

The Lower East Side was once a fertile landscape of marshes and woods. It had a wide variety of wildlife and fauna. The first immigrants to the area arrived from Europe around 1600. Prior to that time, Manates Indians lived on the island. The Manates are a branch of the Mumsee/Lenape/Algonquin tribes. Europeans arrived from The Netherlands and then from England. Ives Goddard, in his article entitled “The Origin and Meaning of the Name ‘Manhattan’” in the Fall 2010 issue of *New York History*, notes that “‘Manhattan’ was the first Native American place-name to be recorded by Europeans between Chesapeake Bay and the coast of Maine, and not surprisingly its early attestation is marked by some uncertainty. It appears in two sources that document Henry Hudson’s expedition of 1609: an English map and the log of the voyage kept by Robert Juet” (278). Prior to the American Revolution, the Dutch owned farmland on the area. One well known farmer was James Delancey (*History of the Lower East Side*.)



A map of the Lower East Side from 1776.

Delancey Street is dedicated to James Delancey, and the orchards he grew inspired the name for Orchard Street. Anthony and Harmanus Rutgers were another pair of early immigrants. Their farm stretched from Division Street to Catherine Street and from Montgomery Street to the East River. The Rutgers farm would later be used as an area for tenements (Krucoff 2002).

1770s

In 1776, New York is briefly the capital of the new country. Delancey is forced to relinquish his property after the war because of his Royalist sympathies. After the Revolutionary War, the Lower East Side is divided into parcels and sold.

1840s

During most of the 1840s, Europe underwent many difficulties. Bad harvests over several successive years culminated in the potato blight of 1845-46, which brought widespread privation, causing many to starve, particularly in Ireland. Economic troubles fueled discontent among the poor, spreading to the middle classes, causing many to emigrate to America, seeking safety and the opportunity for a better life.

From 1846-48 Irish immigrants flood into the Lower East Side fleeing the Great Hunger. Irish Catholic immigrants purchase land from Julia Winthrop to build St. Brigid’s Roman Catholic Church, designed by Irish American Architect Charles Patrick Keely. The church was built in 1848 and is sometimes called Famine Church recalling the crisis its early parishioners left behind in Ireland. In 2001, it was closed due to a catastrophic crack in the building. St. Brigid’s was then under threat of being sold and demolished in 2006, but received a gift of \$20 million dollars for renovation. St. Brigid’s is a landmark that stands today on the corner of Avenue B and 8th Street.

Timeline Continued...

1847

The next large immigrant group to come to the Lower East Side was from Germany. They arrived in the mid 19th century as political refugees escaping a revolution in Germany. They lived in large wooden apartments and rookies (single family homes that were divided into smaller spaces). German life became so integral to the neighborhood during this time, that the Lower East side was known as Kleindeutschland, or little Germany.

However, during the late 18th century, other immigrant groups began to settle in the Lower East Side. The German population began to shrink because most achieved business and financial success, and as a result moved into other parts of the city. The sinking of the General Slocum steamship in 1904, a disaster that left over 1021 passengers dead, began the decline of the German community in the Lower East Side. Most drowned or succumbed to a fire. This event was so devastating that most Germans left the community for good (Krucoff 2002).

Photos: Kleindeutschland (Little Germany) circa 1900 (top) and Sinking of the General Slocum steamship (1904) (middle)



1859

In the face of anti-Semitic riots (pogroms), Jewish people from Russia and Ukraine made up the next large wave of immigrants to settle on the Lower East Side. In order to escape political and financial oppression in Europe, many emigrated to the United States. It is important to note that Jews who settled here in the late 19th Century often faced discrimination. They also suffered harsh living conditions; most Jewish immigrants lived in cramped tenement apartments that overlooked crowded, dirty streets. However, this community began to reform the Lower East Side. Soon there were marketplaces for kosher food and synagogues. Walking around the Lower East Side today, one can still see store signs in Yiddish and Hebrew and can still find traditional Jewish food (Krucoff 2002). Katz's famous deli was established in 1888 and remains a fixture of the Lower East Side.

In 1859 *The New York Times* reported that 150 Chinese men lived on the Lower East Side. These early arrivals were joined by more Chinese laborers who came to New York throughout the 1870s, many after finishing work in the Western United States on the railroads.

During the early 20th Century, poverty was deeply embedded in the Lower East Side. Take the concept of pushcarts, for example. They were a means of cheaply providing for a family's basic necessities. While the produce and goods sold from the pushcarts were not always safe, nonetheless, they became an extension of entrepreneur's kitchens (Ziegelman 125-181).

Fortunately, concerned citizens established social reform groups such as the Educational Alliance and the Henry Street Settlement. These charitable organizations taught English to incoming immigrants, provided artistic events for children, and even taught recent immigrants basic hygiene.



Photo: Store signs in Hebrew on Orchard Street (bottom)

Timeline Continued...

1930s

The city began to rapidly change over the 20th Century. Small, wooden tenements were torn down and replaced by brick apartments. Subways, parks, and highways were constructed. The Urban Reform Movement begins. Mayor Fiorello La Guardia appoints Robert Moses as NYC Parks Commissioner. Many lower income houses were cleared for public works. A technique known as “slum clearance” was used to force these changes. Occupant families were kicked out of their own homes in order to make way for new luxury apartments. This technique is one of the early examples of gentrification in the Lower East Side (Krucoff 2002).

Chinatown becomes a tourist destination for its lively stores and famous cuisine. The success of the neighborhood helps inspire other such neighborhoods in large American cities.

Laundry hanging outside Irish Tenement buildings. (right)
Chinatown postcard from 1910 (left)



1960s

The later techniques of gentrification began in the 1960s. The demographics began to change during this time. Artists, musicians, and “hippies” moved in, drawn by the affordable rents. Their arrival changed the character of the neighborhood.

The population of Chinatown increased to over 20,000. In addition to Chinese families, the area plays host to people from several Asian countries.

1990s and 2000s

In the 1990s, the population of Chinatown reaches 95,000, and includes families from a diverse group of backgrounds. In addition to those of Asian background, the second most populous group in the area is those from a Hispanic/Latinx background, followed by non-Hispanic White residents.

Young, upwardly mobile professionals and “hipsters” begin to move in in greater numbers. This gave the area the reputation of being chic, and the reputation spread through the Lower East Side during the 2000s (Mele 2000). Trendy, expensive restaurants such as the Clinton St. Baking Company began to appear. In 2006, a 16-floor luxury condominium unit was built north of Delancey Street. This was followed by reconstruction of the Hotel on Rivington street and soon several more luxury condominiums appeared.

Today the Lower East Side is known for being a trendy and hipster hotspot. It has also become quite expensive, so much so, that many can't afford to live there. Notably, while the population of Chinatown overall has decreased in the twenty years from 1990 and 2010 from a peak of 125,000 down to 116,000, the number of non-Hispanic White residents has increased slightly, while all other groups' numbers have declined.

Sources: <https://eportfolios.macaulay.cuny.edu/libman2014lowereastside/history/> and <http://www.lespi-nyc.org/history/timeline-of-the-lower-east-side.html>

Food for Thought Questions

1. Have you experienced an event in your life that you feel profoundly changed your course? How do you reflect back on that event?
2. What role do you play in your family? Does that role match how you view yourself? How would your mother describe you, for example?
3. What traditions do you and your family follow at Thanksgiving? If you have started your own family, do you follow the traditions that you had growing up? Some but not others? Or have you started entirely new traditions?
4. When you were younger, envisioning your future, are you at the stage that you expected to be at the age you are now? What has turned out differently than you expected?
5. Have you experienced something that seemed to involve the spirit world? Or something is hard to fully explain?