MOSES, ROBERT

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Robert Moses is one of the major shaping forces behind the America’s modern cities, particularly those in the Northern east. Moses was one of three children. Moses was born in December 18, 1888 in New Haven, Connecticut, United States. His Father named Emanuel Moses and mother named Bella Cohen Moses, both of German-Jewish descent. Moses has studied in private academies and Yale College, from which he graduated in 1909. He studied English public administration for a thesis in Oxford University than in Columbia University he completed Civil Services of Great Britain. Once he received his Ph.D. in 1914, he did his interned ship at the Bureau of Municipal Research in New York City. He began his public career in 1913. He married a bureau secretary, Mary Louis Sims, on August 15th, 1915 and they had two daughters (as cited in Jackson & Markoe p.1).

For decades Robert Moses was languished as a mid-level bureaucrat until the New York governor Al Smith, who appointed him as a head of the Long Island State Parks Authority in 1924, as a chairman of the State Council of the parks and as president of the Long Island State park commission (1924-1963). For thirty years he served as a chairman of the Jones Beach State Parkway Authority and of the Bethpage Park authority. During 1934 and 1963, he was New York City park commissioner. Some of his constructions includes Triborough Bridge, the Henry Hudson Bridge, the Bronx-White Marine Bridge, the stone Bridge, the Alexander Hamilton Bridge, the Throgs Neck Bridge, the Northern State parkway, the Southern State Parkway, the Long Island Expressway, the Cross Island Parkway, Orchard Beach, Jacob Riis Beach, New Rockaway Beach, Bethpage State Park, Sunken Meadows State Park, Marine park, Pelham Bay Park, five hundred playgrounds, seventeen swimming pools, and the 1964 World’s Fair (as cited in Epperson 2007, p.816-817).

He also did some major housing projects, and played a major role in the construction of Lincoln Center, the United Nations complex and Shea stadium. Robert Moses is well known as an individual that transformed dream to reality. In 1930s the waterfront of the upper West side of Manhattan was six mile long wasteland, the area was covered by untreated garbage but ten years later he transformed the area. The railroad tracks were covered with tennis courts, lawns, promenades, playgrounds. Moses was the greatest builder in the American history; he was a hard working individual that worked until his death in 1981 at the age of 92. Robert Moses has done so much for the New York City; his achievements can best be put into perspective when we consider how poorly we are currently preparing for the reminder of the twenty-first century. As of right now there is not a single individual who can compete with Moses genius mind (as cited in Epperson 2007, p.816-817).

Robert Caro’s in his book called The Power of Broker states that Robert Moses was unquestionably America’s most prolific physical creator. He was America’s greatest builder…. He was, for the greatest city in the Western world, the city shaper, the only city shaper. In sheer physical impact on New York and the entire New York metropolitan region, he is comparable not to the works of any man or group of men or even generations of men. In the shaping of New York, Robert Moses was comparable only to some elemental force of nature (as cited in Caro, pp 10; 830).

As I was reading The power of Broker about Moses kept on inspiring me until I read that he was well known as an arrogance person that” had no respect for anyone’s opinion but his own” (as cited in Caro, p.484). It was in news that during the 30s and 40s among New York political insiders of Moses’ physical attacks on those who disagreed with him. He was anti-democratic that had an attitude toward the lower classes, especially the non-white lower classes that can be described in one word: hate. In the book called Robert Moses single minded genius written by Stevens & Jackson 1989, has given an example of Moses policies in public places was to deny blacks in the swimming pools and Jones Beach that they can’t have full enjoyment of them. Robert Moses destroyed thousands of houses; he cleaved his way through the populated neighborhoods and displaced thousands of people to build his highways, basically gentrification was taking place.

Moses threw out of their homes 250,000 persons- more people than lived in Albany or Chattanooga, or in Spokane, Tacoma, Duluth, Akron, Baton Rouge, Mobile, Nashville or Sacramento. He tore out the hearts of a score of neighborhoods, communities the size of small cities, communities that had been lively, friendly places to live, the vital parts of the city that made New York a home to its people (as cited in Caro, p.19).

According to the census in 1950, the people who were non-white in New York City were about 12% and 36% 0f those were evacuated by Moses. Those were the families that had income less than $2,000 per year, so those were the people who were least able to find new homes. As I was researching about Moses, I also came across that during his years of power, education, libraries, fire houses and hospitals were neglected (as cited in Stevens & Jackson 1989, p. 38). I recall the first day of the class, when we were standing next to the Grand Central Terminal Prof. Russo mentioned that during 1950s the usage of railroad declined due to the car usage because of the high ways were built. There is no doubt that Robert Moses was a great builder and his hard work will be always appreciated. We love our city and without him New York City and Long Island would not be the same.

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