

Norhan Ahmed
08/16/2012

Difficulties in Acceptance

No one really understands how hard it is to be different,
It doesn't matter what time period one lived in,
Or if it's a group of people that lived in the 19th century,
Or one person from the 21st century,

Being different meant being an easy target,
It meant making it easy for others to prey on your weaknesses,
All the way from the way you walked,
To language spoken,

Through the eyes of a man named Gabriel Furman,
His unsympathetic view toward new immigrants coming into Brooklyn
at the time,
Showed his readers how difficult it was In the 19th century,
To be of a different race, ethnicity, and color,

The groups of people targeted were the Jews and Irish,
These people came into America looking for opportunity,
But what they found was disrespect,
How were they supposed to know they were settling into an unwelcome
racist society?

Every mistake they made was held against them,
The Irish were disliked for their drunken, obnoxious behavior,
And the Jews were disliked for being themselves,
Being treated unfairly was something they had to all face on a daily
basis,

It seems like the only thing society couldn't do at the time,
Was to accept.
To accept these different groups of people,
And include them in the history of Brooklyn without difficulty,

But little did they know unwillingly,

**That the presence of these immigrants,
Was already influencing history,
It was these immigrants that contributed to the development of
Brooklyn.**

Jews:

**Judged, persecuted, and discriminated,
These were some of things Jews had to face,
They came to America to escape poverty,
They began by opening shops along Chatham and Baxter Streets,**

**Building their way up from the ground,
They started out with nothing, but their historical pasts that they
threw behind them,
Walking through Brooklyn's streets,
They were often regarded as alien more than human,**

**Gabriel Furman observed the Jews in his journals,
And made comments such as,
The Jews had "some defect in the body,"
And they spoke in "cracked squeaking tones,"
He also made an effort to mention their "badly formed legs,"¹**

**One cannot imagine how it was,
To live in a place,
Where people like Gabriel Furman,
Commented on every single weakness,
And exposed it to anyone who read his journals.**

Historical Weaknesses:

**Ever since the beginning of time,
Jews have been looked down upon by many societies,
Gabriel Furman chooses to write about Jew's historical weaknesses,
By dedicating a section in journal in which he talks about,
What generations before them have gone through,**

**He writes, "They (the Jews) have lain wetting under the curse of God
for more than six hundred years,"**

**Being a natural born nativist,
By including this in his journal,
Gabriel Furman shows his readers that the Jews don't belong in
Brooklyn,**

**Their "long lasting misery,"
And "the wickedness of their Forefathers,"
Contributed to the overall opinion that people had of the
Jewish race,
It was harder for them to be accepted
Because of their history,²**

**Anything they were trying to escape,
And put in the dark,
Gabriel brought attention to in his journals.
It simply was not good enough for the Jews to be Jewish.**

Irish:

**The Irish were treated the same as the Jews,
They were also not accepted,
The only difference between the two is that,
The Irish were hated by many for something different,**

**They came from Ireland to escape religious persecution, the potato
famine, and poverty,
During the 19th century, it was unacceptable to be anything but
Christian or Protestant.
The Irish were Catholic,**

**Anti-Catholic movements organized by Protestant leaders began to
happen,
It seems in any way different one could be,
There is always opposition against those differences,**

**Gabriel Furman used the word "depravity" to describe the Irish in his
journals,
Which means to be morally corrupt,
He viewed the Irish like pollution in the air,**

He stated in his writing “...they and their leaders are so much accustomed to attribute their depressed moral state and all their other evils,”

**His use of adjectives in this section of his journal suggests,
Not only his disapproval in the Irish’s past actions and their leaders,
But also his overall dislike of the Irish race,
He also writes “it will require generations to effect any marked improvement in them,”
Through Gabriel Furman’s view,
It was simply intolerable to not be the way society in the 19th century wanted you to be.**

Historical Weaknesses:

**Feeling oppressed was something familiar to the Irish,
According to Furman, years ago they “experienced the oppressions of the Saxon race,”
Even before they arrived to Brooklyn,
The Irish were not strangers to being treated in an unjustly manner,**

**Not only does Furman mention their depressed moral states,
The Irish’s historical pasts were criticized as well,
He wrote “...that great engine of their oppression and debasement... can affect the great and desired change in the advancement and civilization of that race,”³
He believed that in order for them to be accepted entirely,
They needed to change.**

**Biased views such as Gabriel Furman’s are what caused settlement into Brooklyn to be difficult,
When society judges different groups of people in every way,
It makes it difficult for these people to live.
However different one may be,**

Conclusion:

**Society in the 19th century,
And even in the 21st century,
Seems to work against these differences,**

**It seems that no matter what,
Others always have an idea in their mind of how other people should
be,
To be accepted.**

¹ Physical deficiencies of Jews, circa 1854, Miscellaneous, 215, Gabriel Furman papers, ARC.190, box 6, folder 1; Brooklyn Historical Society.

² Increase Mather's disparagement of Jews, circa January 31, 1835, Volume 5, 458, Gabriel Furman papers, ARC.190, box 2, folder 1; Brooklyn Historical Society

³ Depravity of Irish, circa August 3, 1854, Miscellaneous, 192, Gabriel Furman papers, ARC.190, box 6, folder 1; Brooklyn Historical Society.