NYC 9/11 Public Portal Document

THE NEW YORK TIMES, TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2001

A Newly Cleaved View of the City

Uptown vs. Downtown Takes On a Stark New Meaning

By ADAM NAGOURNEY

Uptown on Sunday, Lincoln Center bustled with a performance of "The Magic Flute," and the cafes were packed and the shops crowded. Downtown, outside Da Silvano restaurant in Greenwich Village, diners stopped and nervously stared as motorcade after motorcade of police cars, ambulances, construction trucks and Humvees, many with lights flashing and sirens wailing, passed repeatedly through the night.

Uptown, New Yorkers jogged in Central Park, played soccer at Riverside Park and took their children for piano lessons. Downtown, the sound of passing helicopters still rattled windows and residents, while people in TriBeCa, who need to show ID to pass police barricades to get home, stocked up on face masks to use when they want to walk near the dusty, smoky cloud to the south.

New York has always been divided into uptown and downtown, memorialized in song, Broadway, literature and politics. It is a generalization that connotes differences in the way people dress and talk; in the height of the buildings and the width of the streets; in the style of restaurants and in how people enjoy themselves after dark.

But never has the difference been as stark as it has since terrorists flew two jets into the World Trade Center last Tuesday. If downtown has become New York's Jerusalem, every turn of a corner providing another vivid reminder of what happened just blocks away, uptown is now its Tel Aviv, acutely aware and upset about the distress to its south, but following it all at a distance.

"If you didn't know from the news what had happened, it feels very far away," said Susan Greenfield, a professor of English literature at Fordham University who lives on West 103rd Street and took her daughter to piano lessons on Sunday. "We had to watch it on TV to understand it, to comprehend it. You had the luxury to imagine it was very far away."

Downtown, Jane Avrich, who lives on West 11th Street, did not need to turn on her television set to know what was going on. "There's just a pervasive sense of death everywhere," said Ms. Avrich, an English teacher at St. Ann's School in Brooklyn Heights. She lives up the street from St. Vincent's Manhattan Hospital, which is ringed by police barricades, television transmission trucks and reporters waiting to speak to survivors and emergency room doctors.

"The buildings on my block, mailboxes, scaffolding, everywhere — it seems like all the outdoor facades are papered with pictures of people, of the missing," she said. "There's this sense of sadness and searching and death."

On the Upper West Side, Lily Klebanoff Blake, who went to the opera at Lincoln Center on Sunday, said that she could smell smoke the day after the attack and that from her high-rise terrace, she could still make out the smoke rising to the south. "Because of the terrace, I could see the military helicopters," she added.

> It's not just style or architecture. It's Tel Aviv and Jerusalem.

Downtown, it is nearly impossible to walk out a door, or glance up a street, without being reminded of the attack by the sheer emptiness in the sky. Many downtown New Yorkers saw the towers collapse from their windows and stoops and fire escapes and low-lying roofs. The World Trade Center, like it or not — and many people who live downtown did not care much for the two stark towers — was an inescapable icon on the landscape. Its loss is not an abstraction.

There are shrines to the dead and missing everywhere in the city these days. But the one that turned up over the weekend under the arch at Washington Square Park — photographs, flowers and a canvas where people scrawled messages of remembrance and hope and hate — is different from, for example, the one at the firehouse up on East 85th Street.

From the south side, there is a clear view of what once was, and early yesterday, people circled under the arch and paused to gaze down Thompson Street at the vast, empty expanse of smoky sky, brightly illuminated in the night.

Uptown, business returned to near-normal by Thursday. People are out and about the way they normally would be, Ms. Greenfield said of her Upper West Side neighborhood. The restaurants are filled. "I wouldn't be surprised if people were not buying a lot of luxury items," Ms. Greenfield said.

But a few blocks from Washington Square Park, a sign at a cash machine at a Chase Manhattan bank announced that the place was closed due to "The Emergency." The restaurant Nobu, once within sight of the trade center, posted a handwritten sign on its door announcing that it would be closed indefinitely. There is no sign in front of Bouley Bakery, one of the city's luxury restaurants, up the street, but its window is cracked and covered with tape. It, too, is closed.

James E. Higgins, a partner in a buyout firm who lives in TriBeCa, hands out masks before he takes people for a stroll through his neighborhood, which has become a maze of police barricades filled with stacks of donated food and the occasional incinerated car.

In this bifurcated environment, conversations with New Yorkers suggest a newly cleaved view of the city, quite different from the familiar, friendly uptown-downtown competition that has so long been part of the New York experience.

"I was walking down Columbus Avenue and people were congregated in bars," Gene Block, 36, an assignment manager for the CNN business network, said the other day. "I had a piece of pizza. People are certainly very occupied with this, but if you just looked at it and turned the sound down, it seemed like the old New York."

People downtown wish that that were the case. An invitation for a dinner party Saturday night, at an apartment south of 14th Street, was darkly advertised as dinner in the demilitarized zone. A bit of apparently new graffiti on a wall on West 10th Street reads simply: Yu R Alive.

A block away, at the front of a firehouse, flowers and candles were scattered on the bay, and there was another list of missing firefighters on the wall: "To our neighbors on W. 10th Street: Please say a prayer for our missing brothers."

CITY_21MC100_011829509

NYC-WTC_000412229