



Racial Beachhead: Diversity and Democracy in a Military Town

Carol McKibben

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In 1917, Fort Ord was established in the tiny subdivision of Seaside, California. Over the course of the 20th century, it held great national and military importance—a major launching point for World War II operations, the first base in the military to undergo complete integration, the West Coast's most important training base for draftees in the Vietnam War, a site of important civil rights movements—until its closure in the 1990s. Alongside it, the city of Seaside took form. *Racial Beachhead* offers the story of this city, shaped over the decades by military policies of racial integration in the context of the ideals of the American civil rights movement.

Middle class blacks, together with other military families—black, white, Hispanic, and Asian—created a local politics of inclusion that continues to serve as a reminder that integration can work to change ideas about race. Though Seaside's relationship with the military makes it unique, at the same time the story of Seaside is part and parcel of the story of 20th century American town life. Its story contributes to the growing history of cities of color—those minority-majority places that are increasingly the face of urban America.

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