

# JERSEY DUTY

## Why hoopsters and hipsters shouldn't abandon NJ for Brooklyn

WHEN THE NEW Jersey Nets announced the team's sale and eventual relocation to Brooklyn, community uproar ensued. Not in New Jersey, mind you. There are only five or six actual Nets fans in the Garden State. Yes, the team reached the NBA Finals in two consecutive seasons, and nearly reached the Finals this year. But they didn't win, and in New Jersey, we demand only the best. This isn't Buffalo, after all.

Meanwhile, two rivers away, in Brooklyn, civic leaders are griping about the construction of a new arena and the subsequent havoc it would wreak on the local environs. A larger issue looms, however—a compelling reason for the Nets to remain in the Land of Sinatra, Springsteen, and Sopranos. Simply stated, no one should ever move from New Jersey to Brooklyn.

I readily admit to a Jersey-centric bias. I am a Hoboken resident and have lived in New Jersey for two-thirds of my 35 years. For more than a decade, I've socialized with my Generation X peers and their modern-day counterparts. I don't know what this Generation is called, but they all own iPods. Some of us live in Brooklyn, others in Jersey City, or Hoboken, or Astoria, and there are hushed rumors of people actually dwelling in Washington Heights. But the shared dream, whether admitted or not, is to live in Manhattan proper. Walking to work! Stumbling home drunk, never waiting interminably on a freezing or sweltering train platform in the middle of the night! Manhattan, the shining city, our own Valhalla.

The problem is, to be under 40 and to live alone in Manhattan requires two words. One of them is *trust* and the other is *fund*.

So, we take halfhearted pride in our far-flung communities. Grimaldi's has the best pizza! Maxwell's has the best concerts! You want spanakopita? You came to the right place, buddy. Plus, the rent is low and it only takes us 15 minutes to get to work. Okay, it's 45 minutes, but we're fine with that.

But Brooklyn had to go and sour the deal. They somehow won the Hipness Wars. Park Slope! Williamsburg! Greenpoint! Neighborhood doesn't have a name? We'll make one up! Come to the trendy new gallery/coffee shop/club/boutique! It's next to the old-world bakery with an Eastern European name that we can't pronounce. Later, come to the house party. It's on that block you didn't think was very safe eight months ago. Relax! It's safe now.

And why is this more hip than New Jersey? Three rea-

sons come to mind. Brooklyn is in New York State, so there's hipness by association. Also, it's on the MTA subway system, so there's one less train card to worry about. Lastly, a cab ride home from Manhattan to Brooklyn is relatively inexpensive. To take a taxi an equal distance across the Hudson River, you need to apply for a small-business loan.

Never mind that Brooklyn's own Robert Lanham, author of *The Hipster Handbook* (Anchor Books), was contacted by the venerable *New York Times* for an article on Jersey City's newfound hipness (March 30, 2003). The article said that Lanham "thinks Jersey City has potential now that Williamsburg has nearly reached hipness senescence." (That's a very hip *New York Times* word, by the way. I looked it up, and it means "being old.") But you probably never read that article, and why? It appeared only in the paper's New Jersey section. Foiled again! Though I suppose you can easily question Lanham's credibility. I saw his book in an airport bookstore's humor section, and how painfully unhip is that?

Brooklyn has plenty more going for it, don't get me wrong. I have two fond memories of the borough from my own childhood. I vividly recall that it was the "fourth largest city in America" according to a sign shown in the opening credits of *Welcome Back, Kotter*. (That title seems to have passed to Houston, a city that already has an NBA team.) And at a bar mitzvah, my dad's side of the family was described by the DJ as hailing from "Brooklyn, where the girls are good-lookin'." So if you're moving to the greater New York metropolitan area, and you pick Brooklyn, more power to you. No argument here.

And if you live in New Jersey, and really want to leave, move to Manhattan. That makes sense. I see your logic and I applaud it. But please, if you must turn your back on New Jersey, do not move to Brooklyn. Three of my good friends have done exactly that, and a fourth is planning to do so.

Why am I so adamant? New Jersey and Brooklyn are, simply put, identical. They might as well be merged. You want charming neighborhoods? Both places have them. Seaside attractions? Gentrified, pseudo-cool enclaves? Nearby urban blight? Loud, large men with absurd, outdated accents? Lengthy commutes on unreliable trains? Either region will suit you.

So, Nets, stay put. Learn a lesson from the Dodgers. Brooklyn seemed hip to them too. And then they heard about Los Angeles. ■