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Interview Transcript

1.) Do you think the issues that Riis brought up are still relevant today?

Yes, the issues that Riis brought up are still relevant today. Many people, including immigrants, live in substandard housing, often illegal housing today. The conditions in Chinatown and elsewhere would be shocking to the middle-class New Yorkers if they knew about them. Riis' audience was largely the middle class and things would be the same today. Some people today live in rooms subdivided to house multiple people and in spaces with no windows or other ventilation.

2.) How was the invention of flash photography crucial to Riis?

Flash photography allowed Riis to take shots that were a bit more candid than what would have been possible otherwise, although the pictures are not always as candid as they seem. It was mostly candid.

3.) What were some of the worst neighborhoods/tenement buildings during the 19th century and describe the conditions.

The worst neighborhoods were on the lower east side and the lower west side. But there were bad conditions in many other areas, including the Hell's Kitchen and east Harlem.

Overcrowding, lack of light and air, poor sanitation, deteriorated buildings, poor/no toilets, lack of running water were all problems.