

**T**wo important issues of immediate and statewide importance in Illinois—the closing of three Chicago public schools and the state's budget shortfall—have recently and rightfully been the focus of educators, legislators, parents and a wide variety of organizations, including the Chicago Urban League.

First, the Chicago Public Schools announced in April that three under-performing elementary schools—Mary C. Terrell, Mary Mapes Dodge, and Daniel

Hale Williams—would be closed. Over the next year CPS plans to work with educators and community residents to redesign two of the schools—Dodge and Williams.



The Chicago Urban League supports that action. We must demand the best schools and educational opportunities for our children. The decision to reorganize Dodge and Williams is an important step in the right direction. We look forward to working with CPS to improve public education.

In a related matter, the Chicago Urban League joined a chorus of community-based organizations and civic leaders in support of Senate Democratic Leader Emil Jones' proposal to solve the state's ongoing budget crisis. Sen. Jones' plan called for borrowing tobacco settlement funds, decoupling Illinois depreciation taxes from the federal tax, along with transferring funds from dedicated funds into the general revenue fund. The plan did not feature any cuts in Illinois Gov. George Ryan's proposed fiscal year 2003 budget.

Unlike other plans that were discussed, this plan did not cut programs that serve the most vulnerable members of our society—the poor, seniors and children. We had hoped that the Illinois General Assembly and the Governor would seriously consider this proposal.

*James W. Compton*  
James W. Compton  
President & CEO

# ▶ The Color of Community: Race and Residence in and Around Chicago at the Turn of the Millennium

By Dr. Paul Street

Vice President, Research & Planning, Chicago Urban League

## The Promise

**I**n the eyes of many white Americans, there was more than a hint of dangerous radicalism in Martin Luther King's 1960s claim that "integration is the ultimate goal of our community." Many white eyebrows raised and some white fists clenched when black civil rights activists were heard expressing faith in what civil rights activist and now U.S. Congressman John Lewis called "the possibilities of one America, one community, one house, one family." Much of the nation felt uneasy about the civil rights movement's prospect of a color-blind "Promised Land" in which "all God's children," would live together in "a beloved community."

More than 35 years later, these words no longer carry the weight of perceived extremism and naïve utopian idealism. The core sentiment they express has gone mainstream, becoming the official and publicly declared commitment of the nation's business, educational, media and political establishments.

For a considerable portion of whites, moreover, black-white integration is more than an accept-

ed ideal. It is also, many believe, an accomplished reality, reflected in the elimination of discriminatory laws and barriers to full black participation in American life and the high visibility of African American personalities like Michael Jordan and Colin Powell.



## A Racial Tour

The lived reality of race is rather different than the official ideal, however, something suggested by elementary sociological travel in and around Chicago, the first northern metropolis to which Dr. King brought his anti-segregation Freedom Movement in 1966. Such travel might begin in the Loop at the beginning of the workday, when nearly

all-black buses from the South Side disgorge thousands of mostly low-rung employees from very predominantly black and poor neighborhoods like Grand Boulevard.

The tour could proceed westward through the city's downtown, past droves of well-dressed and very predominantly white commuters hurrying to their professional jobs from commuter rail stations, where they will board to return to lush homes in predominantly white bedroom communities on the western and northwestern edges of the metropolis. It might

(Continued on next page)

# The Color of Community: Race and

(Continued from previous page)

proceed further west on Madison Avenue, into the heart of significantly impoverished neighborhoods like North Lawndale and West and East Garfield. There shocking numbers and percentages of the residents are unemployed, attend and drop out from substandard schools, struggle to find housing in dilapidated tenements and Chicago Housing Authority units, and possess criminal records. The endemic stress, disappointment and danger of inner-city life is etched on the faces of many of the community's residents, nearly all of whom are black.

The tour could escape the ghetto by taking the Eisenhower Expressway out to the western suburbs of Naperville or Wheaton, where median homes sell for \$254,200 and \$222,100, respectively, and where children are expected to graduate to good universities rather than to prisons. In both communities, only 3 out of every 100 faces are black and more than 85 of the faces are white.

## Measuring Black-White Segregation

The disturbing impressions certain to be made by such a trip on even a minimally sensitive sociological tourist are based on social realities that are more than skin deep, so to speak. Recent work by academic researchers at the State University of New York-Albany, Northern Illinois University (NIU) and Roosevelt University shows that African Americans continue to live in extreme concentrated isolation from other racial and ethnic groups in and around Chicago. The central analytical tool in their analysis is what sociologists call the Index of Dissimilarity, a sophisticated measure of the extent to which groups live near or far apart from one another. As researchers from Roosevelt and NIU describe it, "the Index...is used to measure the extent to which any two groups live either together or apart in a particular place. The Index ranges from a score of 0 if two groups are evenly spread across a region or municipality, to 100 if they are completely separated. [It] measures the extent to which two groups inhabit different areas of a city, and can be interpreted as the fraction of members of any race group that would have to switch areas to achieve an even racial distribution citywide."

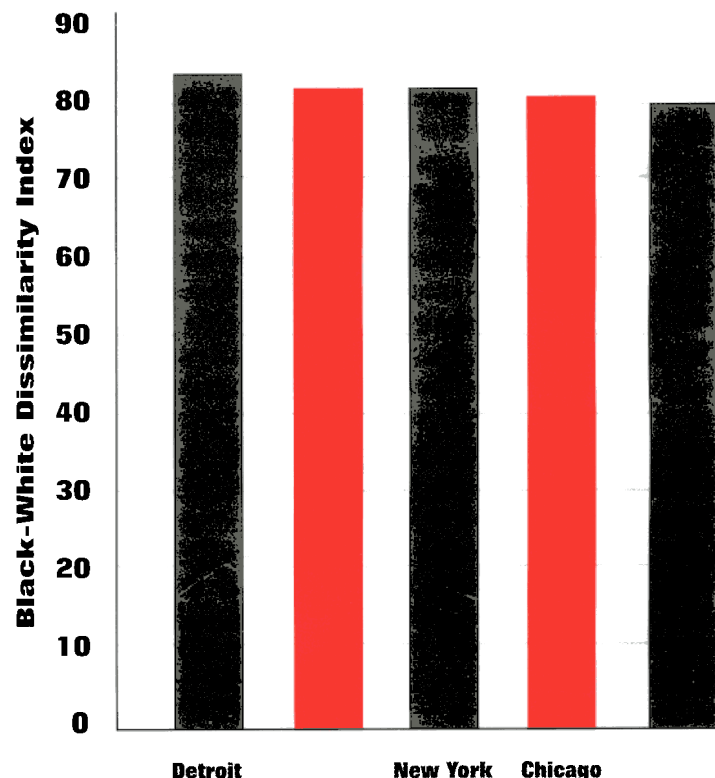
Based on recent census data, some of the researchers' findings are encouraging from the pro-integration perspective that animated the civil rights movement:

- From 1980 - 2000, the number of Chicago area suburbs with at least some black residents rose significantly. In 1980, 71 percent of those communities were less than 1 percent African American. Twenty years later, more than three-fourths are at least 1 percent black and the number of suburbs that were more than half black rose from 3 percent to 8 percent.
- There has been a substantial decline in the number and percentage of suburbs where blacks and whites live in extreme isolation from one another.
- Nearly 1 in 5 of Chicago's neighborhoods can be accurately characterized as integrated or as moving towards integration during the 1990s.

Beneath these positive findings, however, researchers also made a number of more disturbing discoveries on the relationship between race and residence:

- With a black-white Dissimilarity measure of 81, the Chicago metropolitan area ranks fourth in black-white segregation among the nation's top 50 metropolitan areas (see Table 1), exceeded only by Detroit (85), Milwaukee (82) and New York (81).
- Seventy percent of African Americans in the Chicago area live in communities (meaning separate municipalities outside Chicago and neighborhoods within Chicago) with very few whites and a high degree (a black white Dissimilarity Index of 80 or higher) of black-white separation.
- \* Six out of 10 African Americans in the Chicago area live in communities where they are at least 80 percent of the population.
- Within Chicago, home to 90 percent of the metropolitan area's African American population, blacks continue to experience extreme residential isolation from other racial and

Top Ten Metropolitan



ethnic groups. Blacks in Chicago have Dissimilarity scores of 88.3 with whites, 87.6 with Hispanics, and 90 percent with Asians.

- Seventy-five percent of African Americans in Chicago live in neighborhoods that are at least 90 percent black.

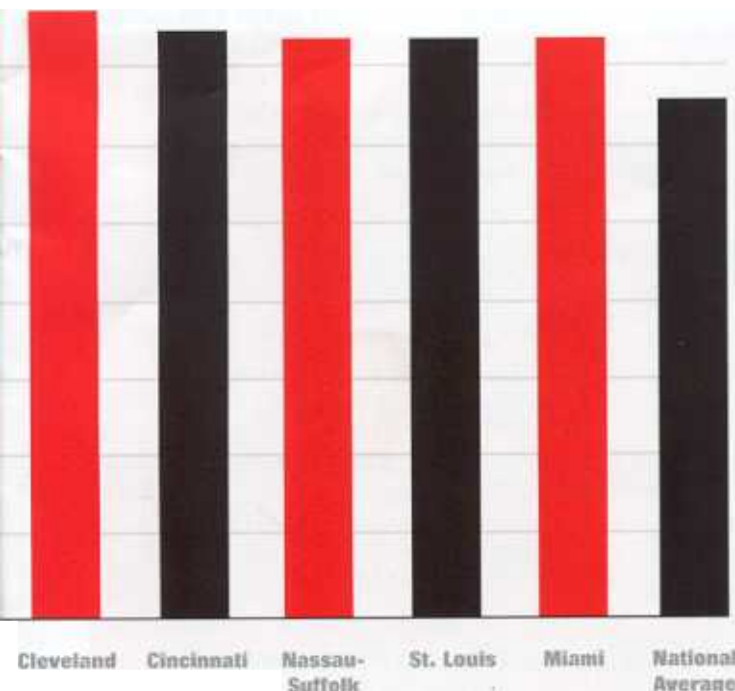
• Consistent with historical patterns during the 1960s and 1970s, black residential segregation in Chicago continued to be heavily fueled by "white flight" between 1980 and 2000, with a number of neighborhoods experiencing the classic syndrome of black influx and white departure. The leading white-to black turnover communities are Chicago Lawn, New City and Ashburn (Southwest Side), Beverly and South Chicago (South Side), Austin (West Side) and Rogers Park (North Side).

- In certain neighborhoods that appear to be undergoing greater integration, the truer underlying reality is gentrification, with poorer blacks being squeezed out by public housing "transformation" and escalating property taxes and rents, and more affluent whites moving in. This process is most graphically seen on the edges of the Loop, in the Near South Side, the Near West Side and the Near North Side.

- Blacks are dramatically more segregated than the region's second largest non-"majority" (non-Hispanic white) racial-ethnic group, Hispanics, who now comprise 26 percent of Chicago's total population. Only 2 percent of the area's communities exhibit a Latino-white dissimilarity measure of 80 or higher. The Latino-white Dissimilarity measure for the Chicago

area is 62. Fully 85 percent of the city's African Americans live in neighborhoods that are at least 90 percent black.

## White Segregation, 2000



### *Separate and Unequal: Why It Matters*

An outside observer sympathetic to black equality but unfamiliar with the spatial distribution of social and economic opportunity in modern America might well ask, "so what?" Contrary to the Supreme Court's reasoning in its famous *Brown v Board of Education* (1954) decision, racial separation is not inherently racial inequality. There is

no absolute or inviolable law of social and historical development mandating that African Americans could not thrive while living in essentially separate communities. In actually existing society, in the Chicago area as elsewhere, however, crucial social and economic opportunities simply are not distributed evenly across and between space and community. They are spread in profoundly unequal ways that correlate strongly with the color of residents. Nobody has stated the core problem posed by residential segregation of African Americans more effectively and concisely than University of Pennsylvania sociologist Douglas S. Massey, who notes:

*"Housing markets are especially important because they distribute much more than a place to live; they also distribute any good or resource that is correlated with where one lives. Housing markets don't just distribute dwellings, they also distribute education, employment, safety, insurance rates, services, and wealth in the form of home equity; they also determine the level of exposure to crime and drugs, and the peer groups that one's children experience. ...If one group of people is denied full access to urban housing markets because of the color of their skin, then they are systematically denied full access to the full range of benefits in urban society."*

Massey's thesis is especially relevant in the highly segregated Chicago area, which exhibits some of the nation's most dramatic spatial and racial disparities along the lines of tax base, school funding and job growth. Thanks to the state's distinctively heavy reliance on local property taxes to fund public schools (Illinois ranks 49th among the 50 states in state contribution to public education), residential segregation is a particularly strong barrier to African American educational opportunity in the Chicago area.

Massey's argument has recently found support from the Chicago metropolitan area in Leonard Rubinowitz and James Rosenbaum's provocative book *Crossing the Class and Color Lines: From Public Housing to White Suburbia* (Chicago, 2000). Rosenbaum and Rubinowitz found a unique research sample among the roughly 6,000 low-income African American families relocated out of Chicago

# The Color of Community *continued*

public housing as part of the Gautreaux program, one of the largest court-ordered desegregation experiments in the nation's history, during the 1980s and 1990s. They discovered major differences in employment and educational outcomes between families assigned to the suburbs and those assigned to other neighborhoods within the city. Those who went to the relatively job- and property-rich suburbs, home to the region's best-financed schools, did significantly better in both areas.

## **Black Preferences**

It should come as no surprise that African Americans overwhelmingly prefer to live in racially mixed communities. Contrary to much popular and some scholarly opinion, black segregation is not the result of free black choice and preference. It is more significantly the consequence of persistent discrimination in the real estate and home-lending industries. Exclusionary zoning, practiced by many Chicago suburbs, prohibits the development of affordable housing in communities that tend to offer the most in terms of basic social and economic opportunity.

Insofar as black preferences for living with other blacks do contribute to segregation by race, moreover, recent survey research finds that such preference is driven less by racial solidarity or black ethnocentrism than by rational fears of white hostility. While almost all blacks are willing to move into largely white communities if those areas contain a visible black presence, whites are reluctant to live in communities with more than a few African Americans. White hostility and flight continues to fuel persistent high levels of black-white residential segregation in more ways than one.

Especially relevant in light of the finding that more African Americans than ever are moving into the suburbs, albeit in small numbers, white flight also fuels the endemic problem of

urban and suburban sprawl. It thereby increases the Chicago region's already extreme mismatch between home and work, exacerbates automobile dependence, and furthers the despoiling of natural habitats on the outskirts of an ever-expanding metropolitan area.

## **Solutions**

In light of this research, the Chicago Urban League supports the more vigorous enforcement of existing laws against housing and lending discrimination. It also supports a more recently developed policy innovation known as inclusionary zoning. Already successfully implemented in a number of municipalities and counties across the nation, inclusionary zoning requires that developers of large apartment subdivisions set aside a certain percentage—generally around 20 percent—of units for low-income tenants. In return the developer becomes eligible for a density bonus beyond what previous zoning rules allowed.

In some cases, developers who refuse to build affordable housing are required to pay into a local or county fund meant to fund low-cost units. The goal is to de-segregate poverty and race by increasing the number of affordable housing units outside central cities while avoiding the re-concentration of low-income housing in any one area.

## **Sources:**

Institute for Metropolitan Affairs, Roosevelt University, and Office for Social Policy, Northern Illinois University, *Race and Residence in the Chicago Metropolitan Area, 1980 to 2000 (2002)*, based on U.S. Census, 2000, 1990, 1980.

Diagonal Mason, "American Apartheid: Housing Segregation and Racialized Urban Poverty," *Disfranchisement Lectures at the Social Science Research Institute, Northern Illinois University*, March 1994.

"Ethnic Diversity Grows, Neighborhood Integration Lags," *Lowell Milken Center, SUNY Albany*, April 7, 2001, based on U.S. Census 2000, 1990.

Leonard Rubenowitz and James Rosenbaum, *Crossing the Class and Color Lines: From Public Housing to White Suburbs* (Chicago, 2000).

Maria Krysan and Revintha Farley, "The Residential Preferences of Blacks: Do They Explain Persistent Segregation?" *Social Forces*, March 2002, 80 (3): 917-940.

*Chicago Metropolis 2000: The 2002 Metropolitan Index* (Chicago, 2002).