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# The Cost of Segregation || Part 2: Paying for Preferences

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Donna Terek / The Detroit News

**BLACK COST: INFANT MORTALITY:** Sherita Cammon, 19, holds her 2-month-old, Tamia Bryant, during a checkup with Judy Supanich, a certified nurse midwife at Detroit Community Health Connection. Studies show that blacks in highly segregated metro areas face higher infant mortality rates, as well as higher rates of heart disease and high blood pressure. Tamia's father, Shuantae Bryant, plays with daughter Davontae on table.

## Blacks pay harsh price while whites suffer less

Segregation's toll: Blacks, lower quality of life; Whites, a matter of lifestyle

By Ron French and Oralandar Brand-Williams / The Detroit News

Everyone in Metro Detroit pays for segregation. Blacks and whites, however, pay unequal prices.

For David Robillard, that means working overtime at Ford and moonlighting at a second job to pay for a home



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in Plymouth, where his mortgage is four times what he'd paid in northwest Detroit.

"You pay for location," admits Robillard, who is white. "It was quite a burden."

Higher mortgage payments, poor water pressure and stultifying commutes are among the prices paid by those living in Metro Detroit's overwhelmingly white suburbs.

The cost is even greater for black Detroiters. Shannton Gaston, a day care operator spending her retirement money to send her children to private schools.

"It's different in the suburbs," laments Gaston. "They have the best of both worlds (and) their children have good schools."

Bad schools are among the steep costs of segregation to Metro Detroit blacks, three-quarters of whom live in Detroit. They run a greater risk for heart attacks, low birth-weight babies, homicides, stunted home values and dead-end jobs.

Segregation influences what we know and how we think, such as Nora Bonner having never read a book by a white author after her freshman year at Detroit High School for the Fine and Performing Arts.

It affects where Detroiters like Ethel Lee Johnson work and how much she is paid. It influences the restaurants in which Detroiters like Joyce Marshall eat and what cable



Max Ortiz / The Detroit News

**WHITE COST: COMMUTING** | A generally unrecognized symptom of segregation is suburban sprawl and the traffic and long commutes that come with it. In a Detroit News/WDIV poll conducted in August, whites named traffic and overdevelopment as prime concerns.



## The Cost of Segregation

[Jan. 14: Racial Attitudes](#)

The Detroit News looks at Metro Detroit's sometimes startling attitudes toward segregation today, the extent and reasons for racial separation and how they play out in the lives of families white and black.

**Today:** *Paying For Preferences*

Segregation is the norm for Metro Detroiters, but it carries heavy costs. From segregated schools to stagnant property values to a lack of exposure to the nation's increasing diversity, we pay for our preferences.

**Jan. 28:** *Where We're Headed*

Are we fated to continue living apart? If so, what will the future toll be? The Detroit News looks at the factors that could break down racial barriers, the factors that keep them standing and how living patterns in other metropolitan areas have changed.

**Would you be willing to participate in a town-hall forum on the issue of segregation?** Please [CLICK HERE](#) and fill out the form to be considered for participation.

## CyberSurvey

Add your comments to these CyberSurvey discussions:

- ▶ [Is the improvement in black/white relations permanent?](#)
- ▶ [Will segregation end on its own?](#)
- ▶ [Does segregation hurt blacks?](#)
- ▶ [Does segregation hurt whites?](#)
- ▶ [Does segregation hurt Detroit's reputation?](#)

## More on WDIV/TV 4

Watch for special reports by Emery King and Roger Weber during today's 5 p.m. and 11 p.m. newscasts.

channels Macomb Township's Tanya Shavers watches.

And it hurts our surroundings in ways that on the surface seem unrelated to race, from trash strewn across Belle Isle to the loss of farmland in Lyon Township.

"People generally don't think about" the consequences of segregation, said University of Michigan sociologist David Harris. "There are certain costs for everyone, and more costs for some."

Those costs are illustrated in a Detroit News/WDIV poll. The majority of blacks and whites saw little harm in living separately. Yet when that same poll asked residents to name the biggest problems facing their neighborhoods, whites listed traffic and overdevelopment, while blacks listed crime and neighborhood deterioration -- different problems for different races, but all rooted firmly in the area's racial polarization.

Forty years after the civil rights movement, segregated housing continues to carry heavy consequences in Metro Detroit, where the racial divide is the widest -- and arguably the most costly -- in the nation. Segregation has shaped communities that are separate and unequal, where those who can least afford it pay the heaviest price.

The price is hard to quantify and easy to argue over. It is difficult to separate segregation as a cause of problems from other factors, and many of today's social ills -- from inefficient land use in the suburbs to crumbling schools in Detroit -- do not have clear price tags.

Yet for those who study it, and for those whose lives are touched by it daily, segregation's tentacles can be felt throughout Metro Detroit.



Max Ortiz / The Detroit News

**BLACK COST: CRIME |** Mary Ballard of Royal Oak Township tells Oakland County Sheriff's Deputy Gerald Hall about problems in her neighborhood. Crime rates are higher in highly segregated black communities.



Donna Terek / The Detroit News

**WHITE COST: HIGH MORTGAGES |** This home in Grosse Pointe Shores is for sale for \$575,000. In Metro Detroit, the homes of whites cost 43 percent more than the homes of blacks who have the same income.

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**Life-and-death risks**

Blacks in Metro Detroit's depressed urban areas pay the highest price. Inner-city residents of highly segregated metro areas, such as Detroit and Chicago, suffer higher infant mortality, crime and unemployment than inner-city residents of less-segregated cities.

Wayne State Professor George Galster analyzed the segregation level and various quality of life indicators in U.S. cities. Based on the 1990 census, he concluded that if Metro Detroit's segregation level were cut in half, the median income of black families would rise 24 percent; the black homicide rate would fall 30 percent; the black high school dropout rate would fall 75 percent; and the black poverty rate would fall 17 percent.

"I'm not trying to suggest that all black neighborhoods are bad," Galster said. "But for the entire society, the statistics are not debatable: Segregation harms the groups that are segregated."

Nowhere is the difference more apparent than in health care. Numerous studies have found that in highly segregated metro areas, blacks suffer higher rates of homicide, suicide, high blood pressure and heart disease. Whites in highly segregated areas do not face similar increased health risks.

That trend can be seen in Detroit, where, because of Medicaid-Medicare cuts, three Detroit hospitals -- Mercy, Sinai and Saratoga -- have closed in the last five years. More than 8,000 hospital workers were laid off. Each of the hospitals had a mission to treat poor and uninsured patients, so when the government cut back on reimbursements, they suffered the most.

More significantly, Detroit has lost 50 percent of its primary-care centers in recent years, as doctors seek out patients with better insurance in the suburbs. As general practitioners flee to the suburbs, more poor Detroit residents wait longer to seek medical care, and seek it at hospital emergency rooms, said Lucille Smith, executive director of the Voices of Detroit Initiative, a partnership between the city of Detroit and four health systems designed to help the uninsured.

"Segregated housing, segregated employment, they all have a domino impact," Smith said.

The racial divide between blacks and whites fosters an atmosphere of mistrust in Metro Detroit doctors' offices, said Dr. William Anderson of Detroit. That mistrust leads blacks to go to doctors -- especially the overwhelmingly white specialists -- less often, and to follow the medical advice less strictly. "Blacks as a general rule are less trustful of white physicians," said Anderson, who is black. "The perception is, the reason you're practicing in downtown Detroit is because you couldn't make it in Bloomfield Hills."

The result: "We have more disease, we treat it later and therefore we die earlier," Anderson said.

Detroit has an infant mortality rate eight times that of Livonia (1 percent black); an unemployment rate three times that of Sterling Heights (1 percent black); a violent crime rate more than twice as high as adjacent Warren (2 percent black).

Even in the area's segregated suburbs, infant mortality is higher

among blacks than whites. In Oakland County, African-American babies are five times more likely to die before their first birthday than their white neighbors.

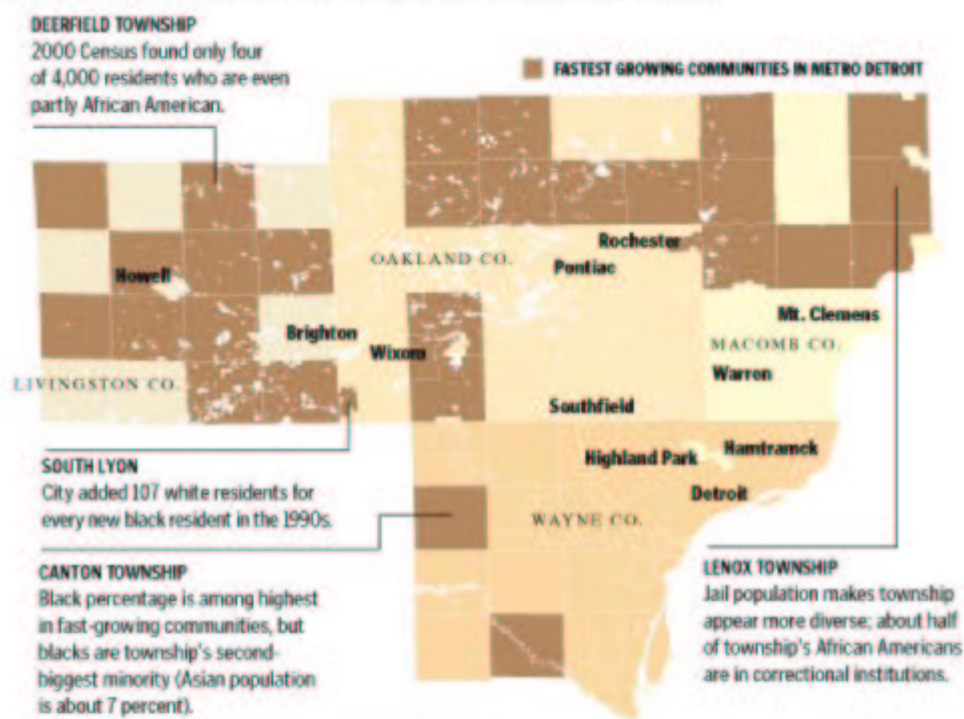
Between 1997 and 1999 in Oakland County, 23 black infants died in their first year for every 1,000 live births, a rate substantially higher than Oakland County whites or even Wayne County blacks.

Harvard University psychiatrist Dr. Alvin Poussaint said racial segregation and racial isolation affects blacks more than whites, including social costs that are hard to quantify.

Poussaint said racial isolation leads to a breakdown in black communities; that breakdown often leads to higher crime. "Segregation promotes the devaluation of black life even among blacks, and can lead to self-hatred," he said.

### Fastest growing — and white

Most of the 30 fastest growing communities in Metro Detroit during the 1990s are overwhelmingly white, which shows that whites are mostly responsible for suburban sprawl and the costs associated with it.



NAME	COUNTY	PERCENT			NAME	COUNTY	PERCENT		
		GROWTH	WHITE	BLACK			GROWTH	WHITE	BLACK
Macomb Twp.	Macomb	122.2%	96.1%	0.8%	Orion Twp.	Oakland	39.0%	95.4%	1.3%
Iosco Twp.	Livingston	93.9	94.8	0.1	Marion Twp.	Livingston	37.4	97.8	0.0
Oceola Twp.	Livingston	73.3	97.1	0.1	Deerfield Twp.	Livingston	36.2	98.3	0.0
South Lyon	Oakland	71.4	96.7	0.4	Bruce Twp.	Macomb	35.7	95.9	1.8
Hartland Twp.	Livingston	60.3	97.9	0.3	Richmond Twp.	Macomb	35.1	96.9	1.0
Oakland Twp.	Oakland	58.9	94.1	2.0	Green Oak Twp.	Livingston	34.6	95.9	1.6
Hamburg Twp.	Livingston	57.7	97.2	1.0	Springfield Twp.	Oakland	34.4	96.7	1.1
Lenox Twp.	Macomb	56.2	79.0	16.5	Oxford Twp.	Oakland	34.3	96.8	0.4
Wixom	Oakland	55.1	90.4	2.5	Shelby Twp.	Macomb	33.9	95.0	0.8
Conway Twp.	Livingston	50.3	96.0	0.3	Canton Twp.	Wayne	33.9	83.9	4.5
Genoa Twp.	Livingston	47.0	97.3	0.2	Howell Twp.	Livingston	32.1	97.7	0.2
Rochester	Oakland	46.8	92.4	2.2	Independence Twp.	Oakland	31.8	95.8	0.8
Washington Twp.	Macomb	45.8	97.2	0.5	Huron Twp.	Wayne	31.5	96.0	1.1
Chesterfield Twp.	Macomb	44.4	93.4	3.0	Groveland Twp.	Oakland	30.7	96.7	0.8

NOVI	OAKLAND	45.6	51.5	1.7	Commerce Twp.	OAKLAND	250	296.1	4.7
Source: 2000 census									
The Detroit News									

## A cause of sprawl

A serious and generally unrecognized symptom of segregation is suburban sprawl, says John Powell, a Detroit native who is the executive director of the Institute on Race and Poverty at the University of Minnesota. The desire of middle-class whites to avoid the perceived problems of integrated neighborhoods has pushed them farther from central cities across America, Powell said.

That claim is backed up by statistics in Metro Detroit, where whites are almost solely responsible for sprawl. Metro Detroit is 24 percent black. Yet of the area's 30 fastest-growing communities in the 1990s, 28 have black populations of 3 percent or less.

Between 1972 and 1997, Metro Detroit's population grew by 5 percent, while developed land grew 29 percent, according to a national study conducted by the Brookings Institution. For every person added to the region, more than an acre of land was developed.

"You started out as a big, dense area, but now you're sprawling like crazy," said William Fulton, one of the authors of the study.

Sprawl spawns a plethora of problems. It gobbles up farmland in a costly and inefficient way, while central cities -- whose most wealthy and best educated residents flee -- crumble because of a falling tax base, Powell says. Taxpayers fork out millions of dollars for road projects to expand roads in fringe suburbs that a few years earlier carried farm equipment. Meanwhile, in Detroit, money is short when the population is in even greater need of services and schools.

Adam Davis couldn't get a decent shower in his Clinton Township home this summer because Metro Detroit's aging water system was not built to serve so many homes spread over such a large area.

Tony Kay leaves his Bloomfield Township home at 6 a.m. to make the 30-mile trek to his downtown Detroit office ahead of the bumper-to-bumper traffic of other suburban commuters.

And Plymouth's Robillard spent less time with his children while they were growing up, working two jobs so he could afford to move from Detroit to the suburbs.

"It hurts people in the suburbs," Robillard said. "The impact of segregation on the city (of Detroit) is going to damage the overall community and society at large. The healthier Detroit is, the healthier the whole area is going to be."

## Home values

Even when blacks and whites have the same income, blacks suffer in the housing market.

In Metro Detroit, the homes of whites are worth 43 percent more than the homes of blacks, when both earn the same. For example, if the home of a white Metro Detroiter is worth \$250,000, the home of a black Metro Detroiter bringing home the same paycheck would be worth \$143,000 on average.

That's the worst housing value gap in the nation, says David Bush, a

It has the worst housing value gap in the nation, says David Rusk, a nationally known city planner and former mayor of Albuquerque, N.M. As segregation decreases, the home value gap disappears.

The difference, which Rusk calls a "segregation tax," reflects the gap in home values in the the region's majority-white suburbs vs. those in Detroit and its majority-black suburbs. Though homes in majority-black communities have appreciated faster than average in Metro Detroit in the past decade, such homes continue to be worth less than comparable homes in most majority-white communities.

"Racial isolation impacts housing values," said Margaret Simms, vice-president of research for the Joint Center for Economic and Political Studies, a black think tank based in Washington, D.C. "It may contribute to wealth disparity."

### High costs

Infant mortality, average elementary class sizes, crime and unemployment are among the issues that are often more severe in highly segregated cities compared to less segregated cities.

	CITIES HIGHLY SEGREGATED		CITIES LESS SEGREGATED	
	Detroit	Chicago	Houston	Portland
Infant mortality	14.7	11.3	6.5	4.7
Average elementary class size	27.3	24.5	20.1	24.4
Violent crimes per 1,000 residents	23	19	11	12
Unemployment rate	7.2%	5.7 %	5.0%	5.1

Source: Kid Friendly Cities Report Card

### Taxpayers pay price

Even residents in the Upper Peninsula pay a price for Metro Detroit's segregation.

The flight of middle- to high-income families and business investment to the suburbs and elsewhere has left behind a city that needs considerable help from state coffers to stay afloat. Each year, Michigan taxpayers shell out millions of dollars to help Detroit pay for city services and schools.

"Detroit has more social problems, more poverty than other cities in Michigan and that certainly imposes costs on the rest of the state," said Edward Glaeser, an economics professor at Harvard University who has extensively studied segregation's effects on cities.

At the same time, more and more resources go into building roads and extending water lines where they wouldn't be needed if not for white flight.

### Misconceptions reign

Other costs are harder to quantify. There's the frustration Detroit resident Joyce Marshall feels when she must leave a city of nearly 1 million

people to shop at a large grocery store after 9 p.m. or eat at a national chain restaurant.

There's the isolation felt by Tanya Shavers, who moved from Detroit to Macomb Township only to find that Comcast doesn't include the black cable network BET. "I have a race-car driving channel and a golf channel," Shavers fumed. "I have 400-some channels here, and I can't get one here for me, a black American."

And there are the stereotypes that white Detroiters Nora Bonner hears repeated by her black friends in her home town, and her white friends from the suburbs.

"There's a lot of ignorance on both sides," said Bonner, 20, now a student at the University of Michigan. "There's a lot of fear there.

"People my age who live in Detroit are afraid to go to the suburbs because they think they'll be pulled over by cops. Friends of mine in the suburbs were kind of fearful for me because I went to an all-black school. They thought I had to face gangs every day."

The more separate blacks and whites live, the less they understand each other, and the harder it becomes to break down racial stereotypes. Even for Bonner, it's difficult.

"As I grew older, I started noticing that all the white kids would hang out with all the white kids, and the black kids with the black kids," she said. "Most of the white families I know have moved out of Detroit.

"There are so many misconceptions people have of each other, because of segregation," Bonner said. "I don't know what the answer is."

## HOW TO REACH US

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