

Louisville Urban League



CAMPAIGN FOR AFRICAN-AMERICAN ACHIEVEMENT

**The State of
African-American
Youth in
Metropolitan
Louisville**

A PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION

LOUISVILLE URBAN LEAGUE

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The Louisville Urban League is a human service organization whose mission is to assist African-Americans and disadvantaged persons in the achievement of social and economic equality, comparable to the general community, through advocacy and direct services.

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THE STATE OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN YOUTH IN METROPOLITAN LOUISVILLE

A Foreword

Two and a half years ago, the Louisville Urban League was awarded \$500,000 over five years to embark upon a community-wide campaign, *a Campaign for African-American Achievement*. This campaign, backed by the Lilly Foundation and the National Urban League, has three important goals:

- Spread the gospel that “Achievement Matters” so that parents, students and community leaders fully understand the importance that our children achieve at high levels;
- Transform parents into sophisticated consumers of public education, so that they properly support the academic and social development of their youngsters at home, in the community and in school; and,
- Create a consumer demand for quality education so that educators and policymakers fulfill their obligations to our children.

Since the Campaign’s launch in 1999, much has been done to enlist and educate African-American residents, parents and youth about the critical need to improve the academic achievement of African-American youth and thus their opportunities for long-term success and the subsequent success of the entire community. Activities include campaign information sessions, education forums, parent-training sessions, community building efforts, church outreach, as well as new youth programs and recognition events.

While an intense focus remains on reaching African-American youth, their parents and their supporters, another important task remains — the task of communicating to the larger community the compelling need to address the educational gaps that exist between African-American students and their white counterparts. Until we acknowledge this challenge to our community, we will be forever hindered in our attempts to address the widening chasm that divides us.

In 1948, the Louisville Urban League, with the assistance of the National Urban League and researcher and writer J. Harvey Kerns, undertook a study to assess the economic and cultural conditions of the larger African-American community in Louisville. Now, more than 50 years later, the LUL is again attempting to initiate a community dialogue, this time with a focus on youth.

Toward this end, the Louisville Urban League commissioned a study to research the actual trends among African-American youth in Louisville, examining economic status and educational attainment as well as sexual attitudes and rates of crime and violence. Community surveys and focus groups were used to provide a fuller view of how the African-American community views its life here in Louisville, offering real voices and real lives.

This committee, which includes leading researchers and educators in Louisville, has produced a crucial and compelling report that could prove to be a turning

point for African-American youth in our community. As director of the Louisville Urban League and as a concerned citizen of Louisville, I would like to thank them for donating countless hours toward this important research and for performing an invaluable community service.

The recommendations for action advanced in this report are extensive, but by no means comprehensive. The recommendations also do not necessarily reflect the views of the Louisville Urban League, or its other community partners. For example, the recommendation to establish a Citizen Review Board is not a concept endorsed by the Urban League at this time and is an issue that members of this organization believe requires more study. However, the main purpose of this report is to raise community awareness, engage a public dialogue and encourage a call for action to address these challenging issues. For that reason, the Urban League, as the commissioner of this study, sought to provide a report that would not be restricted by its own organizational orientation. In this report, as in the Campaign, the Urban League is acting as a convenor and a catalyst to promote dialogue and constructive action to address these issues.

As a reader of this report, we call on you to take an active role — by providing commentary, offering challenges and suggestions and by sharing it with others who need to know. We are asking you to take action on this important issue in our community and, by doing so, to acknowledge that all of our children deserve equal opportunities for success.

Benjamin K. Richmond
President/CEO
Louisville Urban League

THE STATE OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN YOUTH IN METROPOLITAN LOUISVILLE

Executive Summary

Historical Background (Parts I and VI)

The contemporary conditions and patterns of African-American life in Louisville have their origins in—and cannot be understood fully without knowledge of — the realities of local and regional history. Through the ante-bellum period, race relations in the Louisville area were shaped by the institution of slavery and by the presence of Kentucky’s only significant concentration of free people of color. African-American “family” structure was particularly fragile. Children were often separated from their parents by sale, flight or death. Enslaved African Americans could not marry legally and, even when one or both natural parents were present, family relationships were inherently “unnatural” since enslaved African Americans had no legal rights to themselves or their children. Females were a majority among local African Americans and one consequence of this unbalanced sex ratio was the presence of numerous one-parent households among both enslaved and free African Americans.

With few African American adults living to middle age, African-American youth represented a significant segment of the African-American population and often assumed adult roles and responsibilities in adolescence. Slavery was first and foremost a labor system — and one that allowed no “unemployment.” Thus, work was the most important constant in the lives of young African Americans, free and enslaved, during this early period. Enslaved African-American children were “put to work” very early in their childhood and the vast majority of free African-American households were desperately poor and depended on multiple small incomes.

Louisville had the largest concentration of free people of color in Kentucky and free blacks were the moving forces behind the establishment of the first black churches, schools and fraternal organizations. In these centers, young African Americans could learn leadership and autonomy in the midst of slavery. Enslaved young African Americans could associate with free blacks and learn what freedom, however circumscribed, meant.

After emancipation, the opportunities offered by freedom were limited by the challenges of life in an increasingly segregated and still hostile community. Nevertheless, promoting the welfare of black children was a central community concern. The number of traditional family units increased dramatically. With strong leadership and some white allies, Louisville African Americans pressed for economic opportunities, political rights, and access to quality education. Public schools were established for blacks in October 1870 and (what later became) Central Colored High School opened in October 1873. However, despite these and many other achievements, African Americans remained generally poor and locked firmly in a separate and unequal “place.”

Years later, in *Negro Youth at the Crossways* (1940), Dr. E. Franklin Frazier studied the effects of two generations of segregation on the roughly 27 percent of Louisville's black population under twenty years of age (i.e., 13,195 of 47,158). Frazier concluded that "the social and cultural world of the Negro is isolated in important respects from the larger white world despite its economic dependence upon the latter." Frazier found no young people who were "happy to be segregated", but, within the limits of segregation, how young African Americans viewed their lives and their prospects was determined to a significant degree by their socio-economic status. As socio-economic status improved, attitudes toward self grew more positive — and the fear of whites decreased. Frazier was impressed with the work of local schools, but disappointed in the lack of social mission among local churches. Furthermore, unemployment was highest among African American youth and, as a consequence, Frazier noted that many young people "turn to criminal and anti-social behavior in order to survive the struggle, while others become accommodated to low types of legitimate employment." Given these difficult conditions, he concluded that, "Negro youth are critical of Negroes and skeptical of their possibilities."

For many young people, the lure of the "streets" led to crime and delinquency. What awaited young African Americans in those streets was a troubling and long-standing relationship between blacks, crime, the police and the courts. As Kerns noted in a 1948 study conducted for the Louisville Urban League, "All evidence, statistical and otherwise, indicates that the problem of delinquency among Negro juveniles is far from being satisfactorily solved. This is without question due largely to environmental factors, employment limitations, in the absence of adequate recreational opportunities." Discriminatory treatment by the local police and justice system compounded existing problems, e.g., a 1947 survey conducted by the Louisville Crime Prevention Bureau reported that African-American youth were arrested in disproportionate numbers and were subject to more severe penalties than were white youth.

During the Great Depression, the goal of African-American struggle, in Louisville and elsewhere, shifted from "making separate as equal as possible" to overthrowing both the principle and the fact of racial segregation. Young African Americans were in the forefront of this struggle, e.g., the demonstrations for public accommodations in the early 1960s, the Open Housing campaign in 1967, the formation of the Black Unity League of Kentucky (BULK) and the demonstrations on the campus of the University of Louisville in 1969. Still, other forces were at work during this same period. Urban Renewal changed the racial geography of Louisville and Jefferson County in the late 1950s and 1960s. At the same time, for a decade and more, African-American unemployment declined and median incomes rose. However, economic gains were unevenly distributed and short-lived. Not surprisingly, long-festered racial tensions erupted in a race riot in West Louisville following an incident of police brutality in May 1968. By the mid-1970s, black unemployment rose and youth unemployment rose even more sharply. While some blacks prospered, the relative economic position of the local African-American community as a whole continued to deteriorate through the 1970s

and 1980s — e.g., with mean African-American family income dropping to roughly half of men white family income in the Louisville Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) by 1990.

From one perspective, the Civil Rights era was a time of progress, optimism and unprecedented inter-racial contact. However, racism did not disappear and, in the post-Civil Rights era, income, education and power "gaps" between the races remained significant. Some long-standing problems grew even more troubling. For example, in 1999, 58.2 percent of all the juvenile males and 52.8 percent of all juvenile females detained in Louisville area were black. Violent crime had become endemic in the most segregated and impoverished African American neighborhoods despite efforts by local government and financial institutions to build low-cost housing and stimulate economic development.

Under segregation, virtually all local African Americans were contained within the same cluster of black neighborhoods, but, with the end of legal segregation, uniform geographic containment was no longer possible. Many African Americans dispersed to mixed neighborhoods or more affluent enclaves on the fringes of existing black neighborhoods. The economic status of those left behind was ignored a generation ago, leaving a legacy of still unresolved second and third generation problems in the present.

Louisville did not become another "place," but the experience of living in Louisville became a different experience for African-American youth.

Social Characteristics, 1990–2000 (Parts I and II)

Based on recent Census and survey data, it is possible to describe local African-American youth and their contemporary conditions of life empirically. Among the most important facts:

With respect to sex ratio, the local population "begins" with a male majority, but by young adulthood and thereafter, becomes a population with an ever-larger majority of females.

Local African-American unemployment stood at 21.7 percent in 1987 and, by 1989, median African-American family income had dropped to only 52 percent of the white median in Louisville and only 43 percent in Jefferson County.

A large segment of the local black population remained in the lowest of the lower income ranges. In Jefferson County, among youth between 14 and 18, 9.5 percent of white youth and 36.6 percent of black youth live below the poverty line. Among youth between 19 and 24, 12.1 percent of white youth and 37.1 percent of black youth live below the poverty line. City residents are more likely to be poor (compared to black residents of the County) — and black City residents are most likely of all to live in poverty. African Americans remain a predominantly urban, rather than suburban, population group — but a group that is gradually moving from the City in increasing numbers. African Americans are also far more likely to be

“renters” than “owners”, and more less likely to have lived in their current residence for more than two years.

The combined effects of mediocre education, economic change and recent shifts in the sex ratio of local African Americans have resulted in the rapid and dramatic growth of one-parent households, usually female-headed, usually with children, and usually poor or economically marginal.

While poverty has the same relationship to delinquency and crime among young African Americans as among any other group — being black dramatically increases the likelihood of close and adverse encounters with police and the criminal justice system.

Survey Research and Focus Groups (Parts II, V and VI)

Surveys and the use of focus groups complemented the more traditional historical and empirical research methods. Several approaches were employed, with the following results.

West Louisville residents (a sample thereof) were surveyed in Fall 2000. Survey respondents reflected the demography of West Louisville neighborhoods quite closely. Respondents expressed general indifference to many of the political issues of the day, e.g., they had little idea of what the City/County merger issues were or the implications for their community. Still, a large majority of respondents expressed strong views regarding the poor quality of services provided to and in their community. While some resented, to a large extent, the recent actions of City of Louisville officials, such resentments did not translate into support for separation from the City. Most respondents placed more confidence in their religious leaders, e.g., Reverend Louis Coleman, than in politicians or organizations.

Other members of the Research Team surveyed several hundred young African Americans in Fall 2000. Youth responded in fairly conventional and predictable terms, e.g., most viewed their neighborhood, their school and themselves in a reasonably positive light, and viewed their future prospects as being relatively bright. Interestingly, where young people lived in the Louisville MSA was the only significant axis along which response patterns seemed to divide. The racial composition of a particular neighborhood did not have any direct effect on the attitudes of black youth. However, young African Americans from neighborhoods that were both “black and poor” viewed neither their circumstances nor their prospects in especially positive terms.

The issue of teen sexuality was explored in depth with two church youth groups, one school group, and one youth group from a community center. Participants talked freely about “temptation,” “urges,” creative sex play to avoid pregnancy, “oral sex protection” and “same sex relationships.” Access to medically accurate information and the ability to communicate with respected adults were deemed extremely important, along with the importance of self-control, the role of values in sexual decision-making and the need for relationships with like-minded partners to strengthen commitments to abstinence. However, the sexual risk-taking of which these groups were aware in their neighborhoods was widespread and troublesome — multiple partners,

“pleasing partner” emphasis, dating older men, and beginning sexual activity at age 14 and younger. Focus group comments reinforced local and national research findings that the sexual attitudes of and levels of sexual risk-taking behavior by black youth must be addressed with an organized and informed response from families and the community at large.

Education (Part IV)

Half of all African-American students in Kentucky reside in Jefferson County. Ten years after the passage of KERA, the achievement of Kentucky’s children has improved dramatically. However, despite the reforms engendered by the Kentucky Education Reform Act (1990), African American students remain largely segregated within local schools (by tracking and program assignment) and continue to achieve decidedly unequal educational outcomes. For example, there is little difference, by race, between elementary and secondary school attendance patterns and graduation rates. However, local whites remain far more likely to continue their education after high school.

African-American students perform below their white counterparts at nearly every grade level. State findings representing student achievement show that white females achieve the highest performance levels, followed by white males, African-American females and then African-American males.

African-American children make up just over 30 percent of total enrollment in Jefferson County Public Schools, with a disproportionate share of retentions, suspensions, dropouts and exceptional child placements. Over the past five years, three times as many whites as African Americans experienced a successful transition from high school and either attended college, obtained employment, enlisted in the military and/or enrolled in a vocational institution.

After more than fifteen years, the proportion of African-American teachers relative to the proportion of African-American enrollment is barely half of what it should be.

Research studies present possible explanations for these persistent inequalities by race. First, the curriculum used in Kentucky schools is mono-cultural, thus catering to the dominant group. Second, cultural misunderstandings exist between home and school in many districts. Third is the lack of the quality of teachers in the classrooms, especially in the middle schools, where student achievement appears to stall.

African-American Youth and Sexuality (Part VI)

Normal human adolescents, including African-American youth in Louisville, are sexually interested and, all-too-often, sexually active. Black teens in Louisville are no exception.

There has been a steady increase in the percentage of children born to black teens both under 15 and between 18 and 19 years old in Louisville and Jefferson County over the past twenty years. At the same time, the percentage of teen births to black girls between 15-17 declined. These patterns parallel similar declines in the state and nation. Furthermore, the rates of sexually

transmitted infections (STI) for black youth are disproportionately high based on population data for Jefferson County. Disproportionately high rates of sexually transmitted infections lead to an expectation of a higher number of reported cases of HIV/AIDS among black adults and youth. One complicating factor is that, according to Family Planning Perspectives (Nov/Dec, 1999), “black men and women are the least likely to have sexual partners outside their racial group. Consequently, the researchers observe, black individuals infected with an STI are likely to spread the infection within their community, but not to other racial or ethnic groups.”

Extract of Recommendations

There can be no meaningful and lasting improvement in the lives and life chances of African-American youth unless the larger scale inequalities between African Americans and whites are addressed in this metropolitan area. There is no historical or scientific evidence that these inequalities are “caused” by any innate differences in ability or by any learned differences in culture. In other words, change is possible. However, no constructive action(s) can be conceived or undertaken unless the local community first admits there is a problem, that it is a community problem — not merely an African -American problem. And African Americans must be centrally involved in defining this problem, choosing and implementing corrective strategies, and in assessing the effects of those strategies.

The conditions confronting African-American youth and the problems inherent in those conditions are not new. These problems have persisted and, in some cases, have grown more serious — not because solutions are lacking — but because this community has failed to act on certain specific recommendations advanced, time after time, over the past century and more. The recommendations are not exhaustive, but focus, in abbreviated form, on several of the specific domains in which action is needed urgently.

Education

- Provide a quality education that raises the achievement levels of all students with emphasis on narrowing the gap between the achievement levels of African-American students and other students.
- Systematically eliminate/replace lower level courses and tracking with more challenging curricula and supporting academic resources for students.
- Insist that all teachers have high expectations for all students and assess teachers accordingly. Promote and encourage the use of effective and innovative instructional strategies throughout the district that ensure culturally relevant and socially responsive teaching in all classrooms.
- Adopt requirements for continuing education in diversity for continuing employees and new hires. Partner with university teacher education programs and sponsor Diversity Institutes for Professional Development and continuing education credit. Provide the pedagogical retooling,

management retraining and prejudice reduction workshops necessary to implement these changes.

- Involve African-American parents and community groups.
- Initiate a major and sustained effort to increase the number of educators of color.

Sexual Behavior and Health

- Develop peer education programs and confidential adult-facilitated groups through which to address sexual issues, sexual values, contraception, and the effects of sexually transmitted infections (STI), HIV, and teen pregnancy on the lives of African-American teens.
- Develop educational programs for parents of teens that emphasize how to discuss openly sexual issues, sexual values, contraception, sexually transmitted diseases, relationships and family life issues, and to help adult men develop positive communication patterns with teens, especially daughters.

Recreation

- Develop an extensive menu of community-based, age-appropriate recreational and social activity programs for African-American youth throughout the Louisville MSA.

Juvenile Justice, Crime and Delinquency Prevention

- Develop and implement specific initiatives to address juvenile crime, delinquency and drug use. The emphasis should be on justice, prevention and diversion.
- The local community — through its elected civic, business, educational and religious leaders - must support a thorough restructuring of the local police department and criminal justice system. This process must emphasize: on-going diversity training for police and officials of the justice system; accountability standards that “make sense” to all segments of the community; creation of a viable civilian review board; treating juvenile offenders as juveniles; education and work programs for young offenders; and expanded drug education and treatment, as needed.

Community Support Structure

- Develop and implement community-based weekend and after school programs both to promote cultural education and to supplement enrich the quality of instruction received by African American youth in the local public and private schools.
- Develop and implement through local colleges and universities a network of “talent identification” and “talent development” programs for African-American elementary, middle and high school students. These programs would link youth with older students and university faculty and staff — for the purpose of mentoring and preparing youth for higher education.

Youth Employment

■ Employ African-American youth, particularly economically disadvantaged youth, to staff the educational programs above along with programs based in community centers, community social service agencies and civil rights organizations, extended school programs, services for seniors and pre-schoolers. The ultimate purpose would be to provide role models, mentoring and alternative sources of income.

Community Commitment and Support

■ Implement a modest increase in City/County taxes to create a “Community Fund” to support such initiatives as an investment in the development of the human infrastructure of the local community. Private funds would also be welcomed.

On-Going Research and Monitoring

Continue on-going monitoring and research. Future studies should build on and extend the base established by this preliminary investigation. Such studies should monitor changes in crucial indicators and focus, perhaps, more narrowly; for example, on juvenile crime and justice issues, sexuality, education, employment, poverty and other appropriate topics.

PART I

Introduction

The history of the human species spans nearly 8,000 generations. As the newest links in a chain spanning this vast expanse of time, children are the most vulnerable and, arguably, the most valuable of all human groups. However, their welfare is determined, not by themselves, but by their place in a world created by their ancestors and shaped by their elders. If children flourish, the foundation of our collective future is secure. If children flounder and fail, the future itself is in jeopardy.

For the first 246 years of American history (1619–1865), African Americans were subjected to conditions of unprecedented inequality and exploitation under the regime of American slavery. For the next century (1865–1965), under the racial caste system of legal segregation, African Americans were treated more as subjects of the American government than as citizens of the American nation. Since the end of the Civil Rights era, some African Americans have made meaningful progress while many others have become trapped in an inter-generational cycle of relative poverty, ignorance, powerlessness and deprivation. African-American children have been and remain the beneficiaries of this legacy.

For those still trapped by the past, the prospects for the future are bleak — unless the rest of us act responsibly and with foresight and determination. Because we cannot afford to fail, our actions must be informed by a clear and dispassionate understanding of the issues and problems we wish to address.

Purpose and Research Plan

With that in mind, on July 24, 2000, several members of the Educational Advisory Board of the Louisville Urban League’s Campaign for African-American Achievement were asked to prepare an overview and assessment of the state of African-American youth in Louisville, Kentucky (i.e., in the Louisville MSA). To conduct the research necessary to prepare a comprehensive assessment, the following consultants, chosen for their respective areas of expertise, were assembled as a research team:

Dr. J. Blaine Hudson: University of Louisville; Project Coordinator and Editor; Member of the CAAA Advisory Board. **History; Education; Race.**

Dr. Lateef O. Badru: University of Louisville. **Statistical Modeling and Methods; Family and Youth.**

Dr. Carole Cobb: Cobb & Associates; Chair, Campaign For African-American Achievement Steering Committee; Member of the CAAA Advisory Board. **Education.**

Kevin Fields: Urban Technologies; Member of the CAAA Advisory Board. **Education; African-American Youth.**

Bani M. Hines-Hudson: Planned Parenthood. **Education; Sexuality and Sexual Behavior.**

Dr. Theresa Rajack-Talley: University of Louisville. **Poverty; Gender and Family; Community Development.**

Dr. Clarence Talley: University of Louisville. **Community Development; Social Inequality; Poverty; Quantitative Sociology.**

The research team agreed that the conditions of black youth in the Louisville MSA could be described fully only by examining both the objective forces (historical, economic and social) shaping their lives and how young African Americans themselves perceived their circumstances. The team agreed further to a division of labor organized around major themes requiring survey research, empirical and/or historical analysis and interpretation. Other specialists and community activists were drawn into the various components of the project as needed. The research itself was conducted between September 2000 and the end of February 2001.

Because this type of comprehensive study has not been undertaken in this area since 1948, the following report — with its findings and recommendations — represents the fruits of a necessarily preliminary investigation. As such, this report is intended to illuminate current conditions, identify areas requiring action and further study — and answer the simple, but elusive question: “**What does it mean to be young and black in metropolitan Louisville, Kentucky?**”

PART II

African Americans in Louisville: An Historical Overview

The contemporary conditions and patterns of African-American life in Louisville have their origins in — and cannot be understood fully without knowledge of — the realities of local and regional history. While no attempt will be made to survey local African-American history comprehensively, a few key historical themes (to ca. 1990) related to the status of African-American youth will be summarized in this section of the report, focusing the most attention on those with both a “long” history and special relevance to the present.

Slavery: Patterns and Problems

African Americans were among the first residents of Louisville and Jefferson County and, through the antebellum period, local race relations were shaped both by the institution of slavery and by the presence of Kentucky’s only significant concentration of free people of color.¹ American slavery was fully institutionalized a generation or more before the settlement of Kentucky and, as Kentucky was part of Virginia, enslaved African Americans² crossed the mountains with the early settlers. The Kentucky climate was not conducive to large-scale plantation agriculture, but the spread of cotton cultivation in the deeper South created an unparalleled demand for slave labor in the Gulf States. Because international slave trade became illegal in 1808, this demand could only

be met within the United States through “domestic” slave trade — i.e., the sale of African Americans from the Upper South, where cotton could not be grown, to the Lower South, where cotton had become “king.”³ Domestic slave trade enabled the small slave-holding elite in Kentucky to maintain the profitability of slavery and its wealth and power as a class. As a result, the African American population grew steadily through the ante-bellum period — even though slave labor was not essential to the state’s economy.

Table II-1, below, reflects African-American population growth in antebellum Louisville:

Table II-1: African Americans in Louisville: 1800–1860

Year	Population		Total Population	Black % of City
	Enslaved	Free		
1800	76	1	77	21.5
1810	484	11	495	36.5
1820	1,031	93	1,124	28.0
1830	2,406	232	2,638	25.5
1840	3,430	619	4,049	19.1
1850	5,432	1,538	6,970	16.1
1860	4,903	1,917	6,820	10.0

African-American and white children appeared in early Kentucky at roughly the same time. As an example, York, the sole African American on the Lewis and Clark Expedition (1804-1806), entered Kentucky in 1784 or 1785 as part of a family of African Americans owned by John and Ann Clark, parents of George Rogers Clark, the founder of Louisville. After the death of the elder Clark, York was inherited in 1799 by a younger son, William Clark — who served as co-commander of the expedition. York was probably in his early teens, as was William Clark, when they lived at Mulberry Hill near modern-day Poplar Level Road and Eastern Parkway. As an adolescent and a young man, York performed some farm labor, learned to manage horses and probably accompanied Clark on hunting and fishing excursions.⁴

In spending much of his youth with his natural family, York was both fortunate and atypical. Through most of the antebellum period, African-American “family” structure (“slaves” could not marry legally) was particularly fragile. With free territory across the Ohio River, slave escapes were common, but few included children.⁵ Domestic slave trade caused an even heavier outflow of enslaved African Americans being “sold down the river” — and children were not especially marketable. Mortality rates were high for African Americans, with an average life expectancy of only ca. 35 years (compared to 45 years for whites) by the 1830s. For these and other reasons, children were often separated from their parents. Of course, even when one or both natural parents were present, parent/child relationships were inherently “unnatural” since enslaved African Americans had no legal rights to themselves or their children.

Several other objective realities shaped the lives of African-American youth in early Louisville. First, because the size of slave holdings was typically small (an average of between 5.5 and 6.5 per slaveholder) and population density was relatively low, most African Americans lived in some degree of relative isolation until the black population of Louisville grew significantly after 1820.⁶ Second, with few African-American adults living to middle-age, African American youth represented a significant segment of the African-American population and often assumed adult roles and responsibilities in adolescence. However, urban areas had fewer black children than did rural sections of the South — and Louisville was no exception, as shown in Table II-2, below.⁷

Table II-2: Children in Antebellum Louisville (% Under 10 years)

Year	White	African American	
		Enslaved	Free
1820	30.9	40.3	30.1
1830	22.6	23.7	25.0
1840	27.0	25.8	26.3
1850	26.1	22.1	22.4

Similarly, the ratio of males to females among African Americans is a key demographic characteristic with significant and far-reaching implications for African-American children.⁸ For example, by 1850, females were already a significant majority in Louisville and Jefferson County. Based on the 1850 Census, there were 830 black males in Louisville to every 1000 black females — and 850 black males to females in the surrounding county. In contrast, there were roughly 930 black males to every 1000 black females in Cincinnati — and 1,130 black males to 1000 black females in St. Louis.⁹ Placing these data in a national context, Table II-3 reflects how the number of black women increased relative to the number of black men in the pre-Civil War decades, eventually surpassing the number of men and then regaining relative parity by the early 1900s.¹⁰

Table II-3: Sex Ratio by Race¹¹ (N of Males to 1000 Females)

Census Year	United States		Kentucky	Louisville
	Black	White	Black	Black
1820	1,004	1,032		
1830	1,003	1,038		830
1840	995	1,045		
1850	991	1,052		
1860	996	1,053		
1870	962	1,028		
1880	978	1,040	972	
1890	995	1,054	993	870
1900	986	1,049	996	928
1910	989	1,066	1,010	937

Another consequence of this female majority in early Louisville and Jefferson County was the presence of numerous one-parent households among enslaved and free African Americans. There were “not enough black men to go around” and the white men who fathered the unusually large number of “mulattos” in the area were seldom available for parenting duty.

Free African Americans Origins of the Louisville Black Community

The least studied segment the social structure of early Louisville was a growing and increasingly viable free black community — as noted, the only meaningful concentration of free people of color in Kentucky. This community originated as a handful of marginalized free blacks in the early 1800s and grew to represent nearly one-fifth of all African Americans in the city by 1860. While free people of color were subjected to extreme discrimination and limitations with respect to their civil liberties, they were still free and were “persons” in some sense under Kentucky law. As free people, they could enter into contracts (such as marriage), own property, own businesses (if a license was obtainable) and form organizations. For these reasons, free blacks were the moving forces behind the establishment of the first black churches in Louisville (beginning in 1829), the first black schools (1841), black fraternal organizations (ca. 1850) and the local Underground Railroad.¹²

The eight antebellum black churches in Louisville were more important as social and educational centers than as religious institutions. In these centers, young African Americans could learn leadership and autonomy in the midst of slavery. Enslaved young African Americans could associate with free blacks and learn what freedom, however circumscribed, meant. Further, with no public support for black education before the Civil War, only a handful of African-American children had any opportunity to attend school — and such schools as there were could be found in local churches as well.¹³

Free people of color were disproportionately female and free black households in Louisville were disproportionately female-headed. Not surprisingly, the vast majority of free people of color were poor. Their employment opportunities were limited to labor and domestic service — the same occupations practiced by enslaved African Americans. Their ability to own and operate businesses was limited by law to prevent or regulate competition with whites.¹⁴

Given such poverty, “work” was the most important constant in the lives of young African Americans, free and enslaved, during the early period. Slavery was first and foremost a labor system — and one that allowed no “unemployment.” Under such a system, enslaved African American children were “put to work” very early in their childhood. The vast majority of free African Americans were desperately poor and each family/household unit depended on multiple small incomes. Here again, the vast majority of young African Americans were compelled to find what work they could at comparatively early ages.

Still, a closer inspection of antebellum census records indicates that these poor female-headed households — given crowded living conditions — were often family units consisting of a woman and her children living as boarders in the home of another black family. In other words, a significant number of antebellum free black households consisted of multiple, unrelated family units. Typically, at least one of these family units was male-headed. Thus, on one hand, black children often grew to adulthood in over-crowded, impoverished and sometimes rather tense circumstances. However, on the other hand, they were far less isolated from others and from adult (male) role models than would seem the case. Thus, most free black children were embedded in a network of supportive social relations — whereas, for enslaved black children, such a network was fragile and often transitory.

The Era of Racial Segregation

The determination to maintain the subordination of African Americans did not weaken after their emancipation, but new means of doing so were needed. In the crucible of reconstruction, racial segregation evolved as a means of ensuring status differences and social distance between the races. A “color line” was delineated that created two separate worlds of race. In the separate and unequal world forced upon African Americans, discrimination, poverty, poor housing, crime, and police brutality became commonplace.

As local African Americans faced the challenges of life in an increasingly segregated community, new forces were reshaping the internal structure of the local and national black communities. Two of the most important, with respect to the conditions of African-American youth, were dramatic increases in the number of traditional family units and in relative community stability. One development reinforced the other as these families became the backbone of an organized African-American community that pressed for economic opportunities, political rights, and access to quality education. By 1900, as shown in Table II-4, Louisville ranked seventh among all United States cities in African-American population (at 39,139) and these numbers — along with the ability to vote — gave African Americans some economic and political leverage despite the racial paternalism (“polite racism,” in the words of historian George Wright) of Louisville’s white leaders.¹⁵ Still, these advantages were largely relative and massive inequalities persisted between blacks and whites in wealth, power and status. African-American youth were often the most direct victims of these inequalities — much as they were usually the most immediate beneficiaries of any actions to reduce them.

Table II-4: African Americans in Louisville: 1870–1996*

Year	Black Population	Black % of City Population
1870	14,956	14.8
1880	20,905	16.8
1890	28,651	17.7
1900	39,139	19.1
1910	40,522	18.0
1920	40,087	17.0
1930	47,354	15.3
1940	47,158	14.8
1950	57,657	15.6
1960	70,075	17.9
1970	86,040	23.8
1980	84,080	28.2
1990	79,783	29.7
1996	83,420	32.0

*For African-American population in the Louisville MSA, see Table VI-2.

Black children were seldom granted a “long childhood” and promoting their welfare was a central community concern. First, through African-American churches and, later, through secular organizations, the evolving African-American community developed strategies to educate children, arrange apprenticeships and care for orphans, e.g., the establishment of a Colored Orphans Home in 1878. Of particular significance to young African Americans, public schools were established for blacks in Louisville in October 1870 and (what later became) Central Colored High School opened in October 1873.¹⁶ However, given poverty and the necessity of early workforce entry, few young people progressed beyond the elementary grades; for example, in 1900, only 31.1 percent of school-age African Americans in Kentucky were attending a school of any kind. Conditions improved significantly after 1900 and, by 1940, the attendance rate had risen to 68.4 percent.¹⁷

In higher education, the establishment of the Kentucky Normal and Theological Institute (renamed State University in the 1880s and then Simmons University in 1918) in 1879 provided meaningful access to higher education for the next generation. However, State University — under the control of the General Association of Colored Baptists of Kentucky — suffered severe financial reverses after 1900 and struggled thereafter to maintain the quality of its human and physical resources. To complicate matters, the 1904 Day Law barred African Americans from Berea College in eastern Kentucky. Consequently, with State University in decline and Kentucky State College committed to vocational education, black access to higher education became quite limited within the state. This prompted the

campaign (1920-1925) to wrest educational opportunities from the University of Louisville that culminated in the establishment of a black branch of the university, Louisville Municipal College, in 1931.¹⁸ Still, higher education, even if more accessible, was far beyond the reach of most African-American youth.

After World War I, local African Americans became more assertive in politics and more ambitious in entrepreneurship. Political organizations appeared, such as the NAACP, the Commission for Interracial Cooperation and the Louisville Urban League. A second generation of African-American businesses emerged.¹⁹ Yet, despite the achievements of this “Golden Age of Black Business” and the political maneuvering (e.g., the formation of the Lincoln Independent Party in 1921) that led to the hiring of black police officers and firemen, African Americans remained locked firmly in a separate and unequal “place” in Louisville and the larger American society. Because of this, African Americans were unusually vulnerable to economic and political slippage — as was demonstrated graphically when the onset of the Great Depression brought massive unemployment that, in turn, undermined the economic foundation of most African-American communities.²⁰

Negro Youth at the Crossways (1940) Revisited

One of the few comprehensive studies of African-American youth after the institutionalization of legal segregation, *Negro Youth at the Crossways* (1940) by Dr. E. Franklin Frazier, was conducted at this crucial juncture in African-American history. Frazier’s project was sponsored by the American Council on Education, focused on Louisville and other border-state cities, and enlisted the on-site assistance and collaboration of Dr. Charles H. Parrish, Jr., of Louisville Municipal College.

In 1940, roughly 27 percent of Louisville’s black population was under twenty years of age (i.e., 13,195 of 47,158), considerably higher than in the 1800s. As shown below, the overall age distribution by gender was intriguing.

Table II-5: Race and Age Distribution — Louisville and Jefferson County, 1940²¹ (N of Males of 1000 Females)

Age Range	African Americans	Whites	B/W Ratio
Under 5	980	1030	.95
5-9 years	1010	1030	.98
10-14 years	960	1010	.95
15-19 years	920	960	.96
20-24 years	780	850	.92
25-29 years	810	900	.90
30-34 years	790	900	.88
35-39 years	880	940	.94
40-44 years	940	960	.98
45-49 years	950	980	.97
50-54 years	1000	960	1.04

Table II-5: Race and Age Distribution — Louisville and Jefferson County, 1940²¹ (N of Males of 1000 Females) continued

Age Range	African Americans	Whites	B/W Ratio
55-59 years	1060	910	1.16
60-64 years	1000	850	1.17
65-69 years	1010	820	1.23
70-74 years	1000	780	1.28
75 and older	800	670	1.19
Overall	910	930	.98

Frazier analyzed data gleaned from 3,233 young African-American males and 3,950 young African-American females in Louisville, i.e., about half of all black youth and a sizeable percentage of black school age youth, with the broad goal of determining “what kind of person a Negro youth is or is in the process of becoming as a result of the limitations . . . placed on his or her participation” in the life of their community.²² His theoretical perspective rejected the belief, widely held among white Americans, that African Americans were innately inferior in their personality development and mental ability. Instead, Frazier

. . . attempted to discover in the experiences of Negro youth those influences which have determined their conceptions of themselves as Negroes, their attitudes toward other Negroes and toward whites, and their attitudes toward the world about them.²³

Given this perspective, Frazier and his associates drew several critically important conclusions regarding the conditions, experiences and world view of African-American youth in Louisville near the end of the Great Depression and the beginning of World War II. Among the most important were the following:

. . . the social and cultural world of the Negro is isolated in important respects from the larger white world despite its economic dependence upon the latter.²⁴

Social values and social distinctions stem from the experiences and actualities within the Negro world.²⁵

. . . youth in lower-class families, which comprise about two-thirds of the Negro population, were influenced in their conceptions of themselves as Negroes by their parents’ acceptance of the belief that the Negro is inferior and that his subordination to the white man is inevitable . . . the parents caution the children to avoid conflicts, ignore insults, and to adopt techniques for “getting by” . . .²⁶

. . . middle class families and their children show more sophistication toward their status. While it is true they believe that because the white man has power and money the Negro must accommodate himself to the white man’s world, they do not believe that the white man is inherently superior . . . They believe that the Negro should seek power, money and education in order to match his wits with the white man’s.²⁷

. . . upper class parents . . . never attempt to inculcate attitudes of subordination to whites . . . Upper class families attempt to identify themselves culturally with upper class whites and show considerable prejudice toward the middle and lower class as well as toward “poor whites” . . . However, upper class parents sometimes create conflicts in their children by attempting to keep them from learning the social implications of their racial identity.²⁸

Young African Americans in Louisville continued to benefit from educational opportunities far superior to those available in the deeper south. Still, both the realities of segregation and the internal class distinctions with the Louisville African-American community helped shape the educational experiences of black youth. For example, because black educators tended to be “middle” or, occasionally, “upper” class, Louisville’s segregated public schools were “under the control” and reflected “the outlook of the small upper class of mixed blood.”²⁹ Darker complexioned, “lower-class” youth often felt victimized by discriminatory treatment from both their teachers and fellow students. However, Frazier concluded:

In spite of these limitations, the public school does awaken ambition in some lower-class youth and gives them a sense of personal dignity, and to some extent equips lower-class and more especially the middle-class youth to compete with upper-class individuals in the Negro community and in the larger community.³⁰

Frazier found local African-American churches of this era a disappointment (to say the least). In an especially memorable passage, he concluded, in language that would seem more appropriate to the late 1960s rather than the late 1930s:

Paradoxical as it may seem, the Negro church, an institution which is the product of Negro leadership and cooperation, does little to give Negroes a sense of personal worth and dignity in a world where everything tends to disparage the Negro . . . the emphasis of its teachings is upon personal salvation. Moreover, the religious ideology of the Negro church tends to perpetuate such notions as a white God and white angels, conceptions that tend toward the disparagement of things black.³¹

In essence, black youth were “drifting away” from local churches that had become “religious,” rather than “community,” institutions — with a few operating more as “small businesses.”

African-American youth — and African Americans in the aggregate — were still most likely to have their “most important contacts . . . with the larger world” in the area of work. Of course, the Great Depression brought a far-reaching change in the patterns of African-American employment. Stated simply, through slavery and two generations following emancipation, African Americans — male and female, young and old — had an exceptionally high labor force participation rate. Because, African Americans earned comparatively little, one might say that blacks were “fully under-employed.” The Great

Depression, however, brought the collapse of employment opportunities for African Americans. Consequently, African Americans — in little more than a decade — underwent a crucial transformation from the most fully employed (or under-employed) racial group in the nation to the most chronically unemployed.

Black unemployment was highest among African-American youth. Frazier noted the difficult and unappealing alternatives available to most of these young people:

Negro youth of all classes agree that they do not have the same opportunity as whites for employment . . . this does not concern upper-class youth as seriously . . . since many of them are planning to enter professions within the Negro community itself . . . But lower-class youth have little hope of rising out of their class . . . Many of them turn to criminal and anti-social behavior in order to survive the struggle, while others become accommodated to low types of legitimate employment.³²

The economic woes of black America in the late 1930s also bred a degree of self-deprecatory cynicism in the thinking of young African Americans in Louisville. For example, black businesses failed because their patrons were exclusively black and, after 1929, millions of African Americans lost their jobs and, hence, their ability to support those businesses. However, as Frazier commented:

Upper class Negro businessmen . . . propagate the notion that the failure of Negro business is due to the fact the Negroes do not cooperate or patronize the Negro business, despite the obvious impossibility of a segregated economy.³³

He concluded that, because of this and other widely accepted notions and “folk rationalizations . . . Negro youth are critical of Negroes and skeptical of their possibilities.”³⁴

In a more fundamental sense, Frazier described African-American youth as living in a “black world within a world” — a separate black social structure forged and institutionalized over several generations. This segregated world was still as much a “community of the excluded” and the exploited as was the antebellum free black community. Thus, while many African-American children were nurtured and protected by this world, they were also isolated by it and “walled-off” from the opportunity structure of the Louisville community.

Perhaps, what lent Frazier’s cogent analysis even greater relevance was that these young men and women of the late 1930s would become the parents of African Americans born during the “Baby Boom” and the Civil Rights eras. Their experiences as children would shape their attitudes and their attitudes would influence the personality development of their children, the first “post-segregation” generation of African Americans — who would, in turn, influence the development of the young adults of today.

Desegregation and the Civil Rights Era

The economic and social crisis of the Great Depression laid bare the fallacy of the dream of Booker T. Washington. As a result, the goal of African-American struggle shifted from “making separate as equal as possible” to overthrowing both the principle and the fact of racial segregation. Under the leadership of adults such as Lyman T. Johnson and many others, Louisville began the process of gradual desegregation in the late 1940s — with the desegregation of the University of Louisville, hospitals, libraries and local parks by the mid-1950s. Young African Americans were generally more receptive to and more inclined to fight for change than were most of their elders. Long before racial barriers in employment and housing fell, young African Americans were the innocent and willing pioneers who broke the color bar repeatedly in local schools, in academic and athletic competitions and in cultural activities. African-American high school students were among the most important shock troops in the “Nothing New for Easter” demonstrations of 1961 for an enforceable public accommodations law. Young African Americans were also deeply involved in other protest movements during the 1960s, culminating in the Open Housing campaign in 1967, the formation of the Black Unity League of Kentucky (BULK) and the demonstrations of the Black Student Union on the campus of the University of Louisville in 1969.³⁵

Still, apart from political and cultural movements, other forces were at work in the Louisville area during this same period — two of which would influence significantly the conditions of life for African-American youth. First, Urban Renewal, which will be discussed separately in Part VI, changed the racial geography of Louisville and Jefferson County in the late 1950s and 1960s. Second, economic conditions improved for many African Americans after World War II as a result of the political struggle for racial justice. New opportunities strengthened and expanded the local black middle class in the 1950s and 1960s and attracted growing numbers of African Americans to the area. For example, local African-American unemployment declined to 6.9 percent in 1970 and median African- American income rose from 55 percent of white family median income in 1959 to 61 percent in 1969. Yet, because Louisville was an essentially industrial city, the advent of a post-industrial (i.e., service) economy soon undermined the city’s old economic base. African-American economic progress was unevenly distributed and often short-lived. Not surprisingly, long-festering racial tensions erupted in a race riot in West Louisville following an incident of police brutality in May 1968. Further, as the Vietnam War ended in the mid-1970s, black unemployment rose and youth unemployment rose even more sharply — and those able to find work were seldom able to find jobs that paid a “family wage.” Thus, ironically, African Americans gained greater access to a collapsing local economic opportunity structure and the relative position of the local African American community deteriorated through the 1970s and 1980s.³⁶

From another perspective, the Civil Rights era was also a time of optimism and unprecedented inter-racial contact. By the mid-1960s, most young African Americans attended school with whites for some portion of their school careers,

some lived near whites, most shopped and entertained themselves at establishments that could no longer bar them due to color — the list of changes is literally endless. This is not to imply that racism declined or that the income, education and power “gaps” between the races narrowed appreciably. Louisville did not become another “place,” but the experience of living in Louisville became a different experience for young African Americans of this era. However, as inter-racial social distance narrowed, intra-racial social distance widened — as class divisions grew more pronounced between the black middle class (and above), on one hand, and the black poor and working poor on the other.

The Post-Civil Rights Era: To 1990

The end of legal segregation brought African Americans closer to, but still failed to achieve, the goal of racial equality. This final sub-section of the historical overview will describe Louisville African Americans, in statistical terms, in the past generation and will both introduce and complement the subsequent sections of the report.

Gender composition remained a critical axis of difference between the local white and black populations and, as noted previously, one with tremendous significance with respect to family formation and stability — and, hence, the lives of African-American children. As Table II-6 indicates, the African-American population “begins” with a male majority, but by young adulthood and thereafter, becomes a population with an ever-larger majority of females. Readers should note the contrast between the 1990 and 1940 (Table II-5) age distributions.

Table II-6: Louisville MSA: Sex Ratio and Race 1990³⁷
(N of Males for 1000 Females)

<u>Age Range</u>	<u>African Americans</u>	<u>Whites</u>	<u>B/W Ratio</u>
Under 5	1010	1080	.97
5–9 years	1050	1060	.99
10–14 years	1040	1030	1.01
15–19 years	1050	1030	1.02
20–24 years	900	980	.92
25–29 years	730	940	.78
30–34 years	710	970	.73
35–39 years	780	960	.81
40–44 years	860	970	.89
45–49 years	780	950	.82
50–54 years	780	930	.84
55–59 years	770	880	.88
60–64 years	740	870	.85
65–69 years	730	810	.90

Table II-6: Louisville MSA: Sex Ratio and Race 1990³⁷
(N of Males for 1000 Females) continued

Age Range	African Americans	Whites	B/W Ratio
70-74 years	710	650	1.09
75-79 years	550	570	.96
80-84 years	440	430	1.02
85 and older	360	300	1.20
Overall	840	910	.92

Local African-American unemployment stood at 21.7 percent in 1987 and, by 1989, median African-American family income had dropped to only 52 percent of the white median in Louisville and only 43 percent in Jefferson County. The selected statistics shown in the Tables below illustrate the degree to which racial inequality remained institutionalized in the Louisville MSA in the post Civil Rights era.

Table II-7: African Americans in Louisville and Jefferson County Selected Comparative Statistics³⁸

Criterion	African Americans	Whites	B/W Ratio
<i>Family Income</i>			
1959	\$ 3,391	\$6,113	.55
1969	6,311	10,268	.61
1979	12,243	20,965	.58
1989	15,390	35,708	.43
<i>Per Capita Income 1990</i>			
Male	13,221	25,540	.52
Female	9,351	11,420	.82
<i>% Persons in Poverty</i>			
1969	32.2	8.5	3.79
1979	30.6	8.6	3.56
1989	34.2	9.3	3.68
<i>% Unemployed</i>			
1950	7.4	3.7	2.00
1960	9.3	4.8	1.94
1970	6.9	3.5	1.97
1980	15.7	6.6	2.38
1990	21.7	4.8	4.52
<i>% Female Headed Households 1990</i>			
With Children	22.8	5.1	4.47
Without Children	10.5	4.9	2.14
<i>Housing Patterns</i>			
% Owners	42.7	70.6	0.60
% Renters	57.3	29.4	1.95

Beyond gross statistics, a detailed breakdown of the income distribution by race over the past two decades indicates the extent to which a large segment of the local black population remained in the lowest of the lower income ranges. The effects of the regressive racial policies of the Reagan/Bush era are readily apparent.

Table II-8: 1980 Household Income by Race: Louisville MSA³⁹
(Column %)

Income Range	Number of Households		Black/White Ratio		
	White	%	Black	%	
Less than \$5,000	23,843	11.3	10,903	29.4	2.6
\$5,000 to 7,499	15,772	7.5	4,229	11.4	1.5
\$7,500 to 9,999	15,727	7.4	3,225	8.7	1.2
\$10,000 to 14,999	32,164	15.2	5,779	15.6	1.0
\$15,000 to 19,999	32,048	15.1	4,332	11.7	0.8
\$20,000 to 24,999	28,292	13.4	2,984	8.1	0.6
\$25,000 to 34,999	35,632	16.8	3,603	9.7	0.6
\$35,000 to 49,999	18,643	8.8	1,620	4.4	0.5
\$50,000 and Above	9,513	4.5	355	1.0	0.2
Total Households	211,634		37,050		
Median	17,789		10,135		0.57
Mean	21,055		13,156		0.62

Table II-9: 1990 Household Income by Race: Louisville MSA⁴⁰
(Column %)

Income Range	Number of Households		Black/White Ratio		
	White	%	Black	%	
\$50,000 and Above	9,513	4.5	355	1.0	0.2
Less than \$5,000	13,355	5.3	8,784	20.5	3.9
\$5,000 to 9,999	21,600	8.5	6,948	16.2	1.9
\$10,000 to 14,999	22,557	8.9	5,235	12.2	1.4
\$15,000 to 24,999	47,825	18.8	7,696	17.9	.9
\$25,000 to 34,999	43,435	17.1	5,317	12.4	.7
\$35,000 to 49,999	47,687	18.8	5,046	11.8	.6
\$50,000 to 74,999	37,304	14.7	2,957	6.9	.5
\$75,000 to 99,999	11,261	4.4	631	1.5	.3
\$100,000 and Above	9,232	3.6	310	0.7	.2
Total Households	219,835		41,882		
Median	29,473		15,390		.52
Mean	37,585		21,508		.57

Merger of the Louisville and Jefferson County schools systems (1975), and district wide busing mandated by the U. S. 6th Circuit Court of Appeals

(decision of December 28, 1973) caused civil unrest in southwestern Jefferson County. Despite the reforms engendered by the Kentucky Education Reform Act (1990), African-American students remained largely segregated within local schools (by tracking and program assignment) and continued to achieve decidedly unequal educational outcomes⁴¹ — issues that will be explored in depth in Part IV.

Viewed altogether, the combined effects of mediocre education, economic change and recent shifts in the sex ratio of local African Americans have resulted in the rapid and dramatic growth of one-parent households, usually female-headed, usually with children, and usually poor or economically marginal. While poverty has the same relationship to delinquency and crime among young African Americans as among any other group — being black dramatically increases (see Part VI) the likelihood of close and adverse encounters with police and the criminal justice system.

Summary

While the surface circumstances of everyday life have changed over the past two centuries, the objective status of African Americans compared to that of their white fellow citizens has changed little, if at all. Similarly, relations between the races have changed far more outwardly than in their inner dynamics. Although many African Americans are far more “integrated” into the economic and social fabric of the Louisville MSA than was the case a few generations ago, many others remain as marginal, as under-educated, as impoverished and as isolated as were their great-grandparents. It is important to remember that African Americans did not create these conditions and have struggled over time to transform them. However, this struggle has seldom brought permanent victories and African-American youth — the most vulnerable segment of the black population — have been more often its casualties than its beneficiaries.

Louisville, as described in this and subsequent sections of this report, was established long ago as two communities divided by race — and has remained so.

Endnotes

1. J. Blaine Hudson, “Slavery in Early Louisville and Jefferson County, Kentucky, 1780–1812”, *The Filson Club History Quarterly*, 73, 3(1999): 249-283.
2. A person can be “enslaved.” However, a “slave” is, essentially, a “thing.” Consequently, the term “enslaved African American(s)” will be used in preference to “slave(s)” to reflect both the humanity and the capacity for human agency of African Americans under slavery.
3. Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998); J. Winston Coleman, Jr., *Slavery Times in Kentucky* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1940).
4. Stephen Aron, *How the West was Lost: The Transformation of Kentucky from Daniel Boone to Henry Clay* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); J. Blaine Hudson, *A Taste of Freedom* (Louisville: Jefferson County Historic Preservation and Archives and Office of the “B” District County Commissioner, 2001).
5. J. Blaine Hudson, “Crossing the Dark Line: Fugitive Slaves and the Underground Railroad in Louisville and Northcentral Kentucky”, forthcoming in *The Filson Club History Quarterly* (2001).
6. Hudson, “Slavery in Early Louisville”, 1999.
7. Leonard P. Curry, *The Free Black in Urban America, 1800-1850* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981); Peter Kolchin, *American Slavery: 1619–1877* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993); Richard C. Wade, *Slavery in the Cities: The South, 1820–1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969).
8. Herbert Klein, *African Slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986). In the 1500s, as millions of Native Americans died of disease and mistreatment, the slave societies of the Caribbean, Spanish America and Brazil came to demand and depend upon African labor. Because most labor performed required brute physical strength, these slave societies developed a keen appetite for young adult African males. Not surprisingly, roughly two-thirds of all Africans torn from West sub-Saharan Africa and transported to the Americas were male, i.e., a sex ratio of 2,000 males to every 1,000 females. In contrast, several factors in North America worked toward balancing the black sex ratio over time, e.g. a generally temperate climate, the absence of large plantation systems in most of colonial America created a more balanced demand for labor with respect to gender. The estimated black sex ratio in colonial America was 1,500 males to 1,000 females. Between 1740 and 1760, the United States became the only major slave society in the New World in which enslaved African Americans achieved natural population growth — with two significant consequences: the percentage of African-born African Americans diminished rapidly after the American Revolution; and natural population growth produced a more balanced sex ratio.
Beyond that, a significant male majority means that women are relatively scarce and, therefore, “precious.” There may be numerous “unattached” males, but families that form (or can form) are likely to be relatively stable two-parent units (if slavery or extreme poverty do not interfere). On the other hand, a significant female majority means, most often, either numerous “unattached” females or various forms of polygamy. Unfortunately, men are at a premium and many women are far more likely to become mothers than to become (or remain) wives or mates.
9. Curry, 1981: 254.
10. U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Negro Population: 1790–1915* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1918): 147–148.
11. *Ibid.*, 147-150: U. S. Bureau of the *Census, Census of Population: 1870–1990*, 1990 Public Law 94–171 File.
12. Curry, 1981; William H. Gibson, Sr., *Historical Sketches of the Progress of the Colored Race in Louisville, Kentucky* (Louisville: n. p., 1897); J. Blaine Hudson, “African American Religion in Antebellum Louisville, Kentucky”, *The Griot: Journal of the Southern Conference on African American Studies*, 17, 2(1998): 43-54; Henry C. Weeden, *Weeden’s History of the Colored People of Louisville* (Louisville: H. C. Weeden, 1897).
13. Hudson, 1997.
14. Scott Cummings and Michael Price, *Race Relations in Louisville: Southern Racial Traditions and Northern Class Dynamics* (Louisville: University of Louisville College of Urban and Public Affairs, 1990); J. Blaine Hudson, “African Americans”, in John E. Kleber, Thomas D. Clark, Clyde F. Crews, and George H. Yater, Eds., *The Encyclopedia of Louisville* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2001): 14–18.

15. Hudson, "African Americans", 2001; Wright, 1985. For example, by 1900, the percentage of African American homeowners was higher in Louisville than in any other U. S. city.
16. Hudson, "African Americans", 2001; Lucas, 1992: 315.
17. J. Blaine Hudson, Education, Afro-American, in John E. Kleber, Thomas D. Clark, Lowell H. Harrison, and James C. Klotter, Eds., *The Kentucky Encyclopedia* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1992): 285–287.
18. J. Blaine Hudson, "The Establishment of Louisville Municipal College: Racial Conflict and Compromise, 1920–1931", *The Journal of Negro Education*, 64, 2(1995): 111–123. By the 1890s, with its affiliation with the Louisville National Medical College and the Central Law School, State University offered a truly comprehensive educational program.
19. The Mammoth Life and Accident Insurance Co, the largest African-American business in Kentucky, was founded in July 1915. Domestic Life and Accident Insurance Co, was established in June 1920, and the First Standard Bank — the first African-American bank in Kentucky — opened in December 1920. By the mid-1920s, there were two other insurance companies, another African-American bank, two building and loan associations, six real estate firms, three drugstores, eight undertakers, two photographers, fifteen grocery stores, four newspapers, three architectural firms, and three movie houses.
20. Hudson, "African Americans," 2001.
21. J. Harvey Kerns, *A Survey of the Economic and Cultural Conditions of the Negro Population of Louisville, Kentucky* (New York: National Urban League, 1948): 14; U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940: Population*, Vol. II, Part 3, Kansas–Michigan (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1943): Table 22.
22. Edward Franklin Frazier, *Negro Youth at the Crossways: Their Personality Development in the Middle States* (Washington, D.C.: The American Council on Education, 1940): 261.
23. Ibid., 262.
24. Ibid., 263.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid., 263–264.
27. Ibid., 264.
28. Ibid., 264–265.
29. Ibid., 266. For example, Franklin noted the degree to which class and color distinctions still overlapped during this period. Due largely to involuntary interracial mixing under slavery, the African-American population reflected considerable racial hybridity — most dramatically in a full spectrum of complexion shades. In general, social status "rose" as complexion grew "lighter" — although economic status had a much weaker relationship to "color" since income/wealth differences between the black upper, middle and working classes were usually slight.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid., 266–267.
32. Ibid., 267.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.
35. J. Blaine Hudson, "Civil rights in Kentucky" *Kentucky Bar Association Bench and Bar*, .63, 3(1999), 8–11.
36. Ibid.
37. 1990 Census of Population and Housing Summary Tape 3A, U. S. Bureau of the Census; United States Bureau of the Census, *1990 Census of Population: General Population Characteristics — Kentucky* (Washington, D. C.: United States Department of Commerce, 1992); United States Bureau of the Census, *1990 Census of Population: Social and Economic Characteristics — Kentucky* (Washington, D. C.: United States Department of Commerce, 1993).
38. Ibid.
39. 1980 Census of Population and Housing, KY-IND Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (Washington: U. S. Bureau of the Census, 1983): 193–210; United States Bureau of the Census, *1980 Census of Population and Housing: Louisville, KY.–IND. Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area* (Washington, D. C.: United States Department of Commerce, 1983).
40. 1990 Census of Population and Housing Summary Tape 3A, U. S. Bureau of the Census.
41. Hudson, "African Americans," 2001.

PART III

Social and Economic Profile: 1990–2000

This section of the Report presents a contemporary social and economic profile of African Americans in Jefferson County and the city of Louisville with a focus on individuals, households, families and youth. The section draws on two sources of data: a sample from the 1990 Census of Population, and a Fall 2000 case study of households in West Louisville.

The 1990 Census data cover three population areas: Jefferson County, including the City of Louisville; Jefferson County, excluding the City of Louisville; and the City of Louisville itself. The descriptive analysis employs cross tabulations of selected variables and the comparison of mean and median measures. The data on Jefferson County as a whole are used as the broader context in which to view the situation of black youth in the City of Louisville. Additionally, comparisons between social and economic conditions in the City of Louisville and the rest of Jefferson County highlight the impact of residence within the larger area.

The Fall 2000 case study was a close-ended survey of three hundred randomly selected households in West Louisville. The survey relied exclusively on a door-to-door questionnaire distributed to selected households. The questionnaire was designed to elicit opinions on various issues affecting residents in the area. Field assistants were divided into four separate groups, each of which was assigned a census tract. The groups spent approximately four months conducting door-to-door interviews.

The survey generally used systematic sampling with a random start to ensure a degree of reliability of the findings. This was also complemented by snowball and judgmental samples in situations where random samples were impossible to collect. During the planning stages of this research, the survey area was divided

by census track and at least sixteen tracks were randomly selected. Then, blocks from each track were randomly selected, with one student from each group assigned to particular block within a given track. House to house interviews were then conducted. Residents who could not read or write were then carefully taken through the questionnaire by the researcher with the help of another student whenever possible. Every effort was also made to ensure equal or proportional representation by gender. The area surveyed included most of West Louisville stretching out to the Algonquin area, Smoketown, Portland, and Broadway from 18th through to 42nd Streets.

Summary Characteristics of the General Population: 1990

Educational Attainment

The statistics on the general population show that 38.9 percent of the total population of Jefferson County does not have a high school diploma, 22.1 percent have only graduated from high school and 39.0 percent have completed some college education. Breaking these figures down by race shows blacks are over-represented in the category that has not graduated from high school and under-represented in the category that are attending college. High school graduation data show that 53.2 percent of African Americans have not graduated from high school compared to 36.6 percent of whites. On the other hand, 41.0 percent of whites have attended or are attending college compared to 26.2 percent of blacks.

Census data for the City of Louisville and the rest of Jefferson County show that there are more individuals (45.5 percent) who do not have a high school diploma in Louisville than in the rest of Jefferson County (35.7 percent). A total of 22.4 percent completed high school and a smaller percentage (32.1 percent) in Louisville have some college education compared to the rest of Jefferson County (42.3 percent).

Comparisons between blacks and whites show that, in Louisville, a higher percentage of the black population (57.8 percent) does not have a high school diploma compared to the white population (40.6 percent). The reverse is true when those with some college education are compared by race, e.g., 36.7 percent of the white population of Louisville have some college education while only 20.4 percent of the black population have some college education.

Employment Status

The general statistics show that, for Jefferson County, 38.7 percent of the total population is not employed or out of the work force. Comparison by race shows that 45.1 percent of Jefferson County's black population is not employed and 37.8 percent of the white population is not employed (High unemployment

figures include those who are not in the workforce and those in the workforce who are either seasonally employed or temporarily out of the workforce). Employment status by location shows that the percentage of the population that is employed is higher for Louisville (46.0 percent) than for the rest of Jefferson County (35.1 percent). The racial comparison of employment status between Louisville and the rest of Jefferson County also shows that unemployment is higher for blacks living in Louisville (53.6 percent) than for whites (43.4 percent). Interestingly, there is a higher percentage of whites (35.6 percent) than blacks (27.9 percent) who are not employed in the rest of Jefferson County, suggesting the presence of more white retirees.

The statistics also reveal that African-American unemployment is highest in the City of Louisville. For example, only 46.1 percent of the black population is employed in Louisville compared to 71.5 percent in the rest of Jefferson County. The corresponding percentage for white employment is 77.8 percent in the City of Louisville and 64.2 percent in the rest of Jefferson County. Once again, it should be borne in mind that these employment statistics do not control for differences in the age structure or distribution of the local population by race

Poverty

The figures on poverty show that 11.6 percent of the population of Jefferson County live below the poverty line and another 6.6 percent live within 50 percent of the poverty line. The rate of poverty is greater among the black than the white population. Among whites, 7.8 percent live below the poverty line compared to 34.5 percent of blacks, i.e., blacks are 4.4 times more likely to be poor (conf. Tables II-7, II-8 and II-9). On the other hand, among those persons who live 150 percent above the poverty line, the majority are white (10 percent compared to 6.1 percent of the black population).

Comparing poverty status by location, the data show that 22.9 percent of the population below the poverty line resides in Louisville compared to 6.2 percent in the rest of Jefferson County. Additionally, comparison by race shows that, of the percentage living in poverty in Louisville, 54.0 percent are black and 46.0 percent are white. For the remainder of Jefferson County, the statistics show that 5.3 percent of the white population lives below the poverty line compared to 17.9 percent of the black population. Of those who live within 50 percent of the poverty line there is little variation between blacks (10.9 percent) and whites (10 percent) in Louisville. However, the variation between the two groups is wider for the rest of Jefferson County where 4.6 percent of whites and 8.1 percent of the blacks live within 50 percent of the poverty line.

Stated simply, African Americans, as noted in Part II, continue to earn lower per capita and family incomes than whites. Blacks are much more likely to be poor. City residents are more likely to be poor — and black city residents are most likely of all to live in poverty.

Summary Characteristics of Households and Families

Home Ownership

The statistics show that for Jefferson County and the City of Louisville, white families are more likely to own their homes than black families. In all, 78.4 percent of the white population own their homes compared to 50.3 percent of blacks. In Louisville, the percentage of whites who own their homes (69.1 percent) is considerably greater than the percentage of black homeowners (46.8 percent). In the rest of Jefferson County, white home ownership is almost 10 percent less than in the City of Louisville — while the rate of black home ownership declines by only 3 percent from city to county.

Single Female-Head of Households

The statistics on single female head of household show that within Jefferson County, single females head 14.9 percent of all households. A comparison by race shows that the percentage of the black population that is headed by single females (17.5 percent) is not much higher than the percentage of the whites similarly situated (14.5 percent). The findings for the City of Louisville and the rest of Jefferson County show that the percentage of single female-headed households is about the same for blacks and whites. For example, 19.4 percent of the black and 19.5 percent of the white population in Louisville are single female-headed households, while 13.7 percent of black and 12.6 percent of white households outside Louisville were so structured.

Household Size

Households in Jefferson County have an average size of 3.18 persons per unit. Black households (3.53) tend to be slightly larger than those of whites (3.12) and this pattern holds true both for households in Louisville and the rest of Jefferson County. The standard deviation was also higher for black households (1.80 compared to 1.43), indicating a much greater range with respect to household size.

Among African Americans, the average size of households is 3.51 persons in Louisville and 3.56 in the rest of Jefferson County. Among the white population, the average size of households for both Louisville and the rest of Jefferson County are the same, i.e., approximately 3.0 persons per household. For both groups, the size of the households is slightly smaller within the city of Louisville.

Movement of Households

Households in Louisville tend to have been established somewhat more recently (in the previous two years) than households in the rest of Jefferson County. The findings indicate that 19.1 percent of all households in Louisville were established within the last two years from the date of the survey while, for the rest of Jefferson County, 16.7 percent of all the households were established

within the same time period. White households are also somewhat more likely to show residential stability than are black households both within and outside of Louisville. For example, in the city of Louisville, 18.5 percent of whites changed residence within the last two years compared to 20.8 percent of all black households. The difference is greater in the rest of Jefferson County, where 16 percent of all white households moved in the last two years compared to 26.4 percent of black households.

Of all black households in Louisville, 52.1 percent have been living in the city for more than five years and 48.0 percent moved to Louisville within the last five years. However, only 43.4 percent of all black households have been living in Jefferson County for more than five years, while 57.0 percent established residence within the last five years. In other words, African Americans remain a predominantly urban, rather than suburban, population group — but a group that is gradually moving from the city in increasing numbers.

Clearly, these patterns also reflect the underlying socio-economic status differences between the city and county, with city residents — regardless of race — tending to have lower annual family incomes in general and, particularly in the case of African Americans.

Summary Characteristics of the Youth (14–18 and 19–24 Years Old)

School Attendance of Youth

Statistics for the population of Jefferson County as a whole show that 85.3 percent of youth between the ages of 14 and 18, and 33.7 percent of youth between 19 and 24 are attending a school of some kind. For youth between the ages of 14 and 18, there is little or no variation in school attendance patterns by race, e.g., 85.7 percent of black youth and 85.2 percent of white youth are attending school. For the older youth between the ages of 19 and 24, the data reveal a greater variation between the two racial categories, e.g., in this age group, 22.1 percent of black youth and 35.9 percent of white youth are attending school.

Comparison by location shows that, in general, there is a slightly higher percentage of youth who are not in school in Louisville than in the rest of Jefferson County. Interestingly, racial comparisons show that, in the City of Louisville, a greater percentage of white youth (19.0 percent) between the ages of 14 and 18 are not in school compared to 14.6 percent of black youth. However, in the older age category, 19 to 24 years, the situation is reversed and there are more black youth (80.4 percent) than white youth (63.3 percent) who are not attending school. The same pattern of racial variation in school enrollment holds for the rest of Jefferson County, e.g., for youth 14–18 approximately the same percentage of black (13.7 percent) as white (13.4 percent) youth are not in school. However, among youth 19–24 years, black youth are less likely (73.0 percent) to be enrolled in some type of educational institution than white youth (64.4 percent).

There is wide variation between school enrolment patterns by gender with respect to young men and young women in the City of Louisville, but much less variation by gender for the rest of Jefferson County. For example, comparisons by age and sex for blacks in Louisville show that 11.4 percent of young black men 14–18 years old and 18.2 percent of the young black women are not in school. However, this pattern was reversed in the older age category, 19–24 years, with 84 percent of the young black men and 77.4 percent of young black women not in school.

To summarize, census data support the conclusion that there is little difference, by race, between elementary and secondary school attendance patterns and graduation rates. However, local whites remain far more likely to continue their education after high school.

Youth Educational Attainment

Educational attainment statistics for the total population of Jefferson County show that 78.6 percent of all youth between 14 and 18 have not yet completed their high school education.¹ In the older age category (19 to 24 years), 14.2 percent have not completed their high school education, 27.3 percent have a high school diploma, and 58.5 percent have some college education. For youth 19 to 24 years old, the statistics indicate that 20.3 percent of black youth have not completed high school compared to 13 percent of white youth. For youth with some college education, 43.6 percent were black and 61.4 percent were white — a significant difference.

In the City of Louisville, for youth 14–18, there is a higher percentage of black (84.4 percent) than white youth (74.4 percent) who have not yet completed high school, approximately the same percentage (10.2 compared to 10.6 percent) with only a high school diploma, but a much higher percentage of white (15 percent) than black youth (5.4 percent) with some college education. Racial comparisons for youth between the ages of 19 through 24 show more distinct disparities between blacks and whites. Specifically, more older black youth (22.3 percent) have not completed high school than white youth (17.3 percent). The pattern is reversed at the post-secondary level, with only 38.8 percent of black youth compared to 60.3 percent of white youth having some college education. In general, the pattern in educational attainment between black and white youth in the rest of Jefferson County is similar.

A breakdown of the data by gender in Louisville shows little variation between the percentage of young men and women between 14 and 18 who have not yet completed high school education and those with a high school diploma. However, in the 19–24 year-old category, 49.2 percent of the young men (black and white) have some college education compared to 58.3 percent of the young women. Comparison by age and gender for black youth in Louisville shows that, among youth in the age group of 14–18, there is little variation in educational attainment except at the college level where 3 percent of young black men have some college education compared to 8.1 percent of young black women. In the 19–24 year-old category, there is variation between young black

women and men at two levels. The statistics show that 26 percent of young black men have not completed high school compared to 19.4 percent of the young black women. At the college level, however, the situation is reversed and there are more black young women (48.4 percent) with some college education than young black men in the same age group (27 percent). This gender pattern for black youth 19–24 with some college education also holds for black youth in the rest of Jefferson County.

Youth Employment

The statistics on youth employment show that 53.4 percent of youth 14 to 18 years of age in Jefferson County and 25.8 percent of youth 19–24 are not in the work force. Racial comparisons show that the percentage of black youth 14–18 (70.5 percent) who are not employed is much higher than that for whites (49.2 percent) and nearly double the rate for whites in the 19–24 age group, i.e., 42.2 percent for blacks compared to 22.5 percent for whites.

Comparison by location shows that the percentage of youth who are not employed is higher in the City of Louisville than for the rest of Jefferson County. For example, in Louisville, 62.4 percent of all youth 14–18 are not employed compared to 49.2 percent for the rest of Jefferson County. For youth between 19 and 24, in Louisville, 33.6 percent are not employed compared to 21.1 percent in the rest of Jefferson County.

The difference in the rate of unemployment by race is much greater in the City of Louisville than in the rest of Jefferson County. Black youth in the City of Louisville, in the 14–18 age group, are much more likely than white youth to be unemployed, e.g., 76.7 percent compared to 53.1 percent among 14–18 year olds and 50.0 percent compared to 26.7 percent among 19–24 years. Comparable percentages for racial unemployment in the rest of Jefferson County show that black youth are around 10 percent more likely to be unemployed than white youth.

A comparison by race and gender in the City of Louisville shows that the burden of unemployment is shared relatively equally between black males and black females. The unemployment rate of black males between the ages 19 and 24 is exactly equal (50.0 percent) to that of black females in that age group. On the other hand, the statistics for the rest of Jefferson County show that unemployment of young black males is higher than that of young black women in both age categories.

Youth Employment and Educational Attainment

As described previously, unemployment for all youth and most especially black youth is higher for the City of Louisville — where the black population is concentrated — than in the rest of Jefferson County. The statistics show that, for youth without a high school education, 72.5 percent of black youth are unemployed compared to 69.5 percent of white youth. For those with only a high school diploma, 44 percent of black youth are unemployed compared to

43.3 percent of the white youth. At the highest level of education, the data show that, for youth with some college education, 32.9 percent of black youth are unemployed compared to 25.4 percent of white youth. The situation is reversed in the rest of Jefferson County where, in all three categories, a greater percentage of white youth 19–24 are unemployed, e.g., 24.6 percent of whites compared to 15.7 percent of blacks.

Gender comparisons for employment status and educational attainment in the City of Louisville show that young black women are more likely to be unemployed than young black men, both those without and those with only a high school education. However, approximately the same percentages of young black women and young black men with some college education are unemployed.

Once again, it is important, in interpreting these data, to remember that many of the young people in the 14–18 age range are too young to work and too young to have earned a high school diploma. Moreover, if youth in either age group are unemployed, that fact cannot necessarily be considered a negative social indicator. For example, a young person might come from an affluent home and/or be able to attend college full-time.

Employment Status and School Enrollment

In the city of Louisville, black youth between the ages of 19–24 who are not in school are twice as likely to be unemployed compared to white youth, i.e., 40 percent of black youth with a high school diploma are unemployed compared to 21.3 percent of white youth with a high school diploma. Similarly, 36.4 percent of black youth who are not in school, but have some college education, are unemployed compared to 14.5 percent of white youth in the same situation. The racial disparity is even greater when we compare the percentage of black youth (80 percent) in Louisville who have not completed high school and are unemployed with the 33.3 percent white youth 19–24 who have not completed high school and are unemployed.

Comparison by race and gender shows that a greater percentage of young black women (55.0 percent) between the ages of 19 and 24 who are not attending school are unemployed than black men (47.8 percent) in the same age range. However, young black men (65.2 percent) who are attending school are more likely to be unemployed than young black women (60 percent).

Youth Earnings

An examination of the average earnings of youth within Jefferson County shows that, of those employed, white youth earn on average more than black youth. White youth between the ages of 14 and 18 earn, on average, \$3265.80 per year while black youth in the same age category earn, \$2564.41 per year. Median (i.e., the point or value that divides the upper and lower halves of any group) earnings of the two groups of the same age group also show earnings differences between black and white youth. For example, the median earnings

of black youth 14–18 are \$1365.00 compared to \$2124.50 for white youth. Furthermore, the difference in earnings between white and black youth is larger in the older age category of 19–24 years. White youth in this age group earn, on average, \$9297.98 per year while Black youth in the same age group category earn \$6766.10 per year — with a median income of \$8,000 per year for whites compared to \$5,200.00 per year for blacks.

Comparisons by location show that, for both age groups, earnings are generally higher in the rest of Jefferson County than in the City of Louisville. Racial comparisons in the City of Louisville show that black youth between the ages of 14 and 18 earn less (\$2306.00) than white youth (\$3692.00) of the same age group. The statistics also show that black youth 19–24 earn \$5745.00 per year compared to white youth who earn \$8258.00.

Youth earnings by race for the age group 19-24 also vary by gender. In the City of Louisville, the difference in annual earnings between young black men and women is less than \$200.00 as the average annual income of young black males is \$5821.00, while that for black females is \$5682.00. In the rest of Jefferson County, the earnings gap between black males and females is larger with a difference of approximately \$2225.00. The statistics also show that overall white women and white men earn much more than black women and black men.

Poverty Status of Youth

In Jefferson County, of all the youth between the ages of 14 and 18, 14.7 percent are living below the official poverty line and, in this age group, there are disproportionately more blacks than whites in poverty, i.e., in this age category, 9.5 percent of white youth are living below the poverty line compared to 36.6 percent of black youth. Similarly, a greater percentage of black (11.8 percent) than white youth (5.5 percent) in this age category live within 50 fifty percent of the poverty line. The pattern is the same for the older youth between the ages of 19 and 24, i.e., 37.1 percent of black youth live below the poverty line compared to 12.1 percent of white youth of the same age.

Comparisons by location show that the incidence of poverty is higher in the City of Louisville compared to the rest of Jefferson County. Within the age group 14–18, Louisville has 29.4 percent and the rest of Jefferson County has 8.2 percent of all youth living below the poverty line. Similarly, in the age category 19–24, 28.2 percent of all youth in Louisville live below the poverty line compared to 9.5 percent in the rest of Jefferson County.

Racial comparisons for the City of Louisville show that there is an over-representation of black youth living below the poverty line. The statistics show that for youth between the ages of 14 and 18, 48.4 percent of black youth live in poverty compared to 17.2 percent of white youth of the same age. For youth 19 through 24, 45.2 percent of black youth live below the poverty line compared to 21 percent of white youth of the same age group. These figures illustrate that black youth are twice as likely to live below the poverty line as white youth.

Similarly, a comparison by gender in the City of Louisville shows that a higher percentage of young women live below the poverty line. For example, among young black women and men in Louisville, 14 to 18 years old, there is no gender variation in poverty status, i.e., 48.1 percent of young men and 48.6 percent of young women live below the poverty line. However, in the older, 19–24 age category, significantly more black women (53.4 percent) than black men (34.8 percent) live in poverty. The situation is the same for black women and men living within fifty percent of the poverty line. The statistics show that 12.7 percent of young black women, compared to 6.5 percent of young black men, live within 50 percent of the poverty line. The same relationship between gender, race and poverty holds true for black youth living in the rest of Jefferson County.

These data clearly reflect the persistence, in the present, of the social and economic patterns of racial inequality described in Part II of this Report.

A Case Study of West Louisville: 2000

The purpose of this phase of the study was to generate an empirical database reflecting the social and economic conditions of African-American residents of West Louisville in 2000. In addition, the survey also had as its secondary aim an assessment of African Americans' views regarding the type and quality of government services provided to residents of the area.

Personal Characteristics of Respondents

Demographic questions at the beginning of the questionnaire yielded crucial information about the respondents (see Table III–I). In all, there were a total of 210 valid responses of which 34.0 percent were from males and 66.0 percent were from females as heads of households. This reflects a population that is more than half female. A total of 54.0 percent of the sample reported that they had lived in the area for more than fifteen years while 36.0 percent reported that they had lived in the area for two to fifteen years. Only 10.0 percent of respondents reported that they had lived in the area for less than one year. Thus, a substantial segment of the sample was comprised of individuals who had lived in West Louisville since the Urban Renewal period (see Part VI).

Table III-1: Personal Characteristics of Respondents

Gender:	
Male	34%
Female	66%
Age:	
Median age	49
Age range	16-98
Years in Area:	
One year or less	10%
2 to 15 years	36%
More than 15 years	54%

Table III-1: Personal Characteristics of Respondents
continued

Education	
Less than High school	16%
High school graduate	57%
College graduate	25%
Professional degree	3%
Marital status	
Married	28%
Single	39%
Divorced\separated	24%
Widowed	9%

Educationally, the majority of the sample (57 percent) had at least a high school diploma, while 25 percent were college graduates — indicating a population that is reasonably well educated. Only 28.0 percent of the respondents were married and 39 percent were single, with divorcees and widowers making up the remaining 33 percent. Not surprisingly, 31 percent of the respondents reported having no children in their households.

Household Characteristics

Respondents were asked about their living situation, including the numbers of adults and children in the household. They were also asked whether they owned or were renting their homes. Household income was also reported. Generally, the majority of the respondents had more than one person in their household. Nearly 69 percent reported having more than one child living with them. Only 2 percent of the respondents lived in public housing. In all, 55 percent of the sample reported owning their homes, while 24 percent lived in rental apartments or rooms. On the whole, 43 percent of the respondents lived in rental properties. This figure includes those living in rented houses (19 percent). Also, rental properties were generally owned by absentee landlords, who lived outside the area and had no discernible family ties to the area. It should be noted, however, that the large proportion of respondents reporting owning their homes may be due to bias in the choice of location for the survey and may also be due to systematic error.

Table III-2: Household Characteristics of the Respondents

Household composition	
Adults:	
One	37%
Two or more	63%
Children:	
None	31%
One	20%
Two or more	49%

Table III-2: Household Characteristics of the Respondents
continued

Housing	
Public housing unit	2%
Rental apartment or rooms	24%
Mobile home	0%
Rented house	19%
Owned home	55%
Income	
No income at all (welfare)	3%
Less than \$10, 000	18%
10, 000 to \$19, 999	29%
\$20, 000 to \$29, 999	24%
\$30, 000 to \$49, 999	15%
\$50, 000.00 or more	11%

Clearly the figures reported above show that more than half of the respondents earned considerably less than \$20,000 a year, but only 3 percent of the respondents reported earning no income at all. African Americans earned less than whites in all categories of income. For example, only 11 percent of the sample reported annual incomes in excess of \$50, 000, while 24 percent reported incomes of between \$20,000 and \$29,999. The majority of the respondents 29 percent reported incomes of between \$10,000 and \$19, 000, with an average income of \$15,000. Of those reporting having no earned income (3 percent), most of them were single parents either still living on government transfer (i.e., welfare) payments or those who had been recently cut off.

Employment

Another section of the questionnaire asked respondents about their employment status and, if employed, whether they worked full or part time. More than half of the sample reported that they had full-time employment. Only 15 percent of respondents identified themselves as holding either professional or educational jobs. Homemakers, mostly women, represented 12 percent of the sample. Semi-skilled workers represented 23 percent and office workers and sales persons constituted 17 percent of the sample. Managers or proprietors represented only 8 percent of the sample. Except for those reporting their occupations as farmers (3 percent, probably farm hands or those working in dairy-related occupations), the distribution across occupational categories was roughly even.

Table III-3: Employment Characteristics of the Respondents

Type of work	
student	12%
semi-skilled worker	23%
sales or office workers	17%
skilled worker, craftsman or foreman	10%
farmer	3%
homemaker	12%
manager or proprietor	8%
educational or professional worker	15%
Current employment	
full time	67%
part time	17%
unemployed	3%
retired	12%
other	1%

Local Government Services

Questions were added to the survey to gauge respondents' views regarding the quality of services provided in the area by city government and to determine the extent to which respondents supported the creation of a separate local government in West Louisville. These questions were also structured to ascertain West Louisville residents' attitudes towards controversial issues of the day, especially the proposed merger of the city and county governments.

As the November 2000 election results underscored, the majority of respondents were indifferent to merger, had little idea about the merger issues or the implications for their community. Still, a large majority of respondents expressed strong views regarding the quality of services provided to and in their community. While some resented, to a large extent, the recent actions of City of Louisville officials, such resentments did not translate into support for separation from the city. Indeed, the prevailing mood seemed one of apathy and a sense of helplessness in the community. The majority of the respondents in the sample hardly cared about who represented them in City Government because of deep distrust toward black politicians — some of whom were often referred to as “pimps.” On the other hand, a large number of people did indeed have a measure of respect for grassroots activists like Reverend Louis Coleman, to whom some referred as a “modern day Moses.” In sum, the survey revealed a huge gap between the apparent leaders in the black community and those they claim to lead. Most respondents placed more confidence in their religious leaders (ministers) than in politicians or organizations.

The following tables reflect the opinions of the respondents regarding the quality of services in the community. In some cases, the respondents thought that local government was doing a “fair” job while other services were either rated as “poor” or in “need of improvement.”

Table III-4: Government Services (Ranked Percentage from Highest Rated to Lowest)

	% Good and Excellent	% Needs Improvement
City library	82.8	17.2
Fire protection	50.8	49.2
City Park	32.7	66.5
Police\Sheriff protection	72.8	52.6
Sewers	60.1	39.9
Street lightening	51.4	48.6
Planning and zoning	44.1	55.9
Animal control	38.1	61.9
Trash and litter clean up	51.5	48.5
Street/road maintenance	28.1	71.9
Sidewalks	42.8	57.2
Enforcing codes on property	33.3	66.7
Water	9.8	90.2
Economic development	59.7	40.3

Of all the services rated, water service received the least favorable ranking, followed by street or road maintenance, and parks. The city library received the highest ratings, indicating that a large segment of the population surveyed, especially those who used the services provided by the library, had positive experiences. On the other hand, policing and public safety received very poor ratings. Given the long history of police violence in West Louisville — along with recent incidents — these negative perceptions are, perhaps, understandable. Economic development received average ratings, which can be explained by city efforts to draw industries closer to the community and stimulate some neighborhood business development.

Summary

The totality of census and survey data reviewed in this section of the report attests to the stability and persistence in the present of the broader “macro-level” conditions and patterns of racial inequality discussed, historically, in Part II. Within these broad patterns, significant economic and demographic shifts occurred after 1990 that affected the local African-American community — the effects of which can be gleaned from these social statistics. Most importantly, the African-American community is more dispersed geographically — as is the Louisville metropolitan population in general. Persons who remained “in the city” were more likely to be marginal, economically and educationally, and to receive poorer public services. Those “in the county” were more affluent, better educated and more fully employed.

While there were many exceptions to these general trends, what becomes apparent is that neighborhood patterns (by race and class) that once characterized post-World War II Louisville have now expanded into a

metropolitan area pattern. Most importantly with respect to the conditions of African-American youth, in neighborhoods where race and poverty “come together,” a type of community fundamentally different from the racially homogeneous yet economically heterogeneous black community of fifty years ago has emerged.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the experiences of compiling a social and economic profile (1990–2000) of the black youth in the City of Louisville. While some of the recommendations are general for the purpose of this study, most are focused on the youth, particularly those between the ages of 19–24, who should be either high school graduates, in college and/or gainfully employed.

Recommendation 1: Initiate, set up and maintain an improved database that is original to and focused on minority communities in Louisville, especially West Louisville.

One of the problems encountered in the course of this research was the lack of an original database that could be used as a starting point. Periodic census data usually do not cover minority populations in their entirety since many, especially African Americans in urban neighborhoods, are often missed by the enumerators. In fact, both the 1990 and 2000 census enumerations demonstrate this fact. It is therefore imperative that we build an original database of minority communities, most especially in West Louisville. This database must be updated regularly as the demography of the area changes either due to movement out of the neighborhood or due to new residents moving in. The Louisville Urban League will be in a better position to keep record of these demographic trends. This information can then be used to inform social policy formulation or to challenge those state or local government policies that marginalize the African-American population.

Recommendation 2: Further investigations should be conducted on the question of Youth Education to determine the risk factors linked to the educational attainment of black youth. In particular, the following areas need further examination:

- Why are there not more young black youth attending and graduating from high school and college?
- Are young black men at risk given that 26 percent are without a high school diploma compared to 19.4 percent of young black women and what are some of the social and economic consequences associated with this gender disparity?

Recommendation 3: Identify organizations in the community capable of dealing with the educational under achievement of young black youth, particularly young black men in the City of Louisville, and work with them to strengthen and build their work programs.

The findings of the study show that educational under achievement (or the achievement gap by race) is a problem that confronts the black community (also, see Part IV). This problem is more acute among young black males. Therefore, it is important that the Louisville Urban League identifies organizations in the community capable of dealing with these problems and helps them with available resources to continue their work. One of these organizations is St George Community Center, located in West Louisville. This organization has done a remarkable job with black youth K-12 both in terms of improving their learning ability and providing alternative environments where so called “difficult” children can learn. Efforts should also be made to identify non-faith based organizations that are equally capable of providing the much needed services that will turn the lives of these young men and women around. All said, these organizations could only continue to function if funds are made available to them on a regular basis with strict guidelines from the funding organizations. A monitoring process must also be put in place, which will routinely assess the work of those organizations with the goal of ensuring that they meet their set goals.

Recommendation 4: Further investigations should be conducted on Youth Employment to determine in what activities the 80 percent of black youth (19–24 years) who are not enrolled in any school and who live in the City of Louisville are otherwise engaged. In particular, the following areas need further examination:

- In what activities are the 50 percent of black youth (19–24 years) who are not employed and who live in the City of Louisville otherwise engaged?
- What type of economic activities and opportunities are available to the 22 percent of the black youth (19–24 years) who do not have a high school diploma?
- What type of economic activities and opportunities are available to the 39 percent of black youth (19–24 years) who have a high school diploma but no college experience?

Recommendation 5: Further investigations should be conducted on Youth and Poverty to determine what factors contribute to 45–48 percent of the black youth in Louisville living below the poverty line of Kentucky. In particular, the following areas need further examination:

- Why do more young black women (53.4 percent) between the ages of 19–24 live below the poverty line compared to young black men (34.8 percent) in the same age range? Is there an association between age, gender and poverty?

Recommendation 6: Improve coordination of efforts among organizations in Louisville in the area of research and program development.

The findings of the study show that there are organizations and institutions in Louisville capable of conducting research and program development in

the interests of the black youth. However, there is need for better coordination of effort. Periodic review of community needs should be a part of this process. This will keep leaders and organizations in the black community aware of where the community is headed both in terms of the overall needs of black families and the education of their youth. The issues of poverty can properly be addressed by ensuring that those underprivileged children in the community have a good shot at life through proper education and skill based training.

Endnotes

1. A possible reason for the high figure of youth without a high school education is that a large majority of youth in that category may still be in school or too young to enter high school.

PART IV

Education

The summary of findings that follows represents a capsulated version of a great volume of information and data, which include: Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) test scores, JCPS Student Assignment Plan materials, Kentucky Department of Education Reports from the Equity and the Minority Student Achievement Task Forces, and recommendations from the African-American Strategic Plan (1999). These findings provide the basis for the recommendations proposed later in this section of the report.

Currently, Kentucky has a total population of 618,500 students at all grade levels of which 65,000 are African Americans (approximately 11 percent). Half of the African-American students reside in Jefferson County and make up just over 30 percent of the total enrollment in Jefferson County Public Schools (Minority Task Force, 2000). The purpose of this study was to examine and analyze key data sets that represent the present status of African-American school-age youth and explore the extent to which there were performance differences by gender and ethnicity (African American and White/Other). Ten years after the passage of KERA, our nation’s most comprehensive and systemic education reform effort designed to improve educational opportunities for all students, the achievement of Kentucky’s children has improved dramatically. However, despite Kentucky’s extensive efforts to ensure an equitable education for all children, students of color collectively have not reaped the benefits of KERA.

Categories explored were school achievement and school climate. The school achievement (cognitive index) analysis encompassed a two-year comparison of Kentucky Core Content Test results (KCCT) across categories of student work scored as novice, apprentice, proficient and distinguished. Subject areas tested were reading, science, on-demand writing, writing portfolio for grades 4, 7, 10, 11 and 12; and mathematics, social studies, arts & humanities, and practical living/vocational for grades 5, 8, 10 and 11. In 1999 these scoring levels were

expanded to allow schools to receive credit for student progress. However, for consistency, this report will only reflect the four major categories. A review of the JCPS test data, gathered from the grades assessed by the KCCT indicate several notable academic disparities between African-American students and other students that mirror statewide findings.

Student Achievement — Cognitive Index

Table IV–1 presents data on the performance of all students tested with and without disabilities in the content/cognitive areas of reading, science, on-demand writing and writing portfolio. There is a pattern of over-representation of African Americans in the Novice category, and under-representation in the Proficient/Distinguished category. For simplicity, the Apprentice classification is reported but not addressed so that the performance at the lower and higher levels is clear. Consult the “Glossary of Terms” at the end of this section for the definition of all abbreviations used below and in later phases of this analysis.

- **Elementary:** White (W) students outscored African American (AA) at the Proficiency Level in Reading 3 to 1; in Science 7 to 1; in On-Demand Writing 4 to 1; and in Writing Portfolio 2 to 1. Conversely, there were 2 1/2 times as many African Americans than whites who scored at the Novice Level in Reading; 2 3/4 times as many in Science; 1 1/3 times as many in On-Demand Writing; and 1 3/4 times as many in Writing Portfolio.
- **Middle:** White (W) students outscored African American (AA) at the Proficiency Level in Reading 4 to 1. There was no significant difference in Science, On-Demand Writing or Writing Portfolio. Conversely, there were twice as many African Americans than whites who scored at the Novice Level in Reading; twice as many in Science; 1 1/3 as many in On-Demand Writing; with even scores in Writing Portfolio.
- **High:** White (W) students outscored African American (AA) students at the Proficiency Level in Reading 2.5 to 1; in Science 5.6 to 1; and in On-Demand Writing 3 to 1. There was no significant difference in Writing Portfolio. Conversely, there were twice as many African Americans as whites who scored at the Novice Level in Reading; almost 2 3/4 times as many in Science; almost 1 3/4 times as many in On-Demand Writing; and just over twice as many in Writing Portfolio. {Because of the split in subject areas tested, total percentage of African Americans and Whites/Females and Males were not reported for grades 10th, 11th and 12th.}

Table IV–2 presents data on the performance of all students tested with and without disabilities in the content/cognitive areas of mathematics, social studies, arts and humanities, and practical living/vocational studies. There is a pattern of over-representation of African Americans in the Novice category, and under-representation in the Proficient/Distinguished category. For simplicity, the Apprentice classification is reported but not addressed so that the performance at the lower and higher levels is clear.

- **Elementary:** White (W) students outscored African American (AA) students at the Proficiency Level in Mathematics almost 4 to 1; in Social Studies 4 to 1; in Arts and Humanities Writing 5 to 1; and in Practical Living/Voc. Studies 4 to 1. Conversely, there were almost 2 1/2 times as many African American students than white (W) students who scored at the Novice Level in Mathematics; 2 1/4 times as many in Social Studies; 1 1/3 times as many in Arts & Humanities Writing; and 1 3/4 times as many in Practical Living /Voc. Studies.
- **Middle:** White (W) students outscored African American (AA) students at the Proficiency Level in Mathematics almost 4 to 1; in Social Studies 5 to 1; in Arts and Humanities 3 1/2 to 1; and in Practical Living /Voc. Studies 3 1/2 to 1. Conversely, there were 2 times as many African American (AA) students than whites (W) who scored at the Novice Level in Mathematics; almost twice as many in Social Studies; almost 1 1/2 times as many in Arts and Humanities; 1 1/3 times as many in Practical Living /Voc. Studies.
- **High:** White (W) students outscored AA at the Proficiency Level in Mathematics 3 to 1; in Social Studies 2 1/2 to 1; and in Arts and Humanities 3 1/2 to 1; and in Practical Living /Voc. Studies 4 1/2 to 1. Conversely, there were almost 2 1/2 times as many African Americans (AA) than whites (W) who scored at the Novice Level in Mathematics; 2 times as many in Social Studies; 1 1/2 times as many in Arts & Humanities; and 1 1/2 times as many in Practical Living /Voc. Studies. {Because of the split in subject areas tested, total percentage of African Americans and Whites/Females and Males were not reported for grades 10th, 11th and 12th.}

The overall scores indicated a steady state of performance across the two-year period; however, the unacceptable achievement gap between the performance of white and African-American students remains consistent. A disaggregation of test scores indicates that African-American students perform below their white counterparts at nearly every grade level. Consistent with state findings, representing student achievement from highest to lowest performers are white females, followed by white males, African-American females and then African-American males.

School Climate — Non-cognitive Index (1995–2000)

Disparities persist with respect to the educational choices, experiences and outcomes for African-American children in Jefferson County Public Schools. African-American children make up just over 30 percent of total enrollment in Jefferson County Public Schools, with a disproportionate share of retention, suspensions, dropouts and exceptional child enrollment.

Table IV-1: Spring 1999 and 2000 Disaggregated Data for Grades Assessed

Kentucky Performance Report (KCCT)
Reported by Gender and Ethnicity (in Percentages)

Gender	Ethnicity	Reading			Science			On-Demand Writing			Writing Portfolio		
		Novice	Apprentice	Proficient/ Distinguished	Novice	Apprentice	Proficient/ Distinguished	Novice	Apprentice	Proficient/ Distinguished	Novice	Apprentice	Proficient/ Distinguished
		Elementary-4th											
	AA 36	10	77	13	39	60	1	73	27	1	42	47	11
	W 62	4	61	36	14	81	7	54	43	4	25	51	25
F 49		5	63	33	23	74	5	54	43	4	26	51	24
M 51		8	71	23	23	73	4	68	31	2	36	49	16
		Middle-7th											
	AA 34	11	87	3	77	24	0	67	40	4	68	26	7
	W 63	5	84	13	41	59	0	48	39	4	68	27	6
F 48		5	83	13	54	47	--	44	50	6	58	33	10
M 52		9	86	6	53	47	--	64	34	3	70	24	6
		(10th Only)			(11th Only)			(12th Only)					
	AA	29	57	15	19	79	3	44	51	5	40	47	11
	W	14	50	37	7	78	17	26	61	14	19	51	31
F		12	51	37	9	80	11	26	63	13	20	51	30
M		25	52	24	11	74	15	39	53	10	31	49	21

Table IV-2: Spring 1999 and 2000 Disaggregated Data for Grades Assessed

Kentucky Performance Report (KCCT)
Reported by Gender and Ethnicity (in Percentages)

Gender	Ethnicity	Mathematics			Social Studies			Arts and Humanities			Pract. Living/Voc. Studies		
		Novice	Apprentice	Proficient/ Distinguished	Novice	Apprentice	Proficient/ Distinguished	Novice	Apprentice	Proficient/ Distinguished	Novice	Apprentice	Proficient/ Distinguished
		Elementary-5th											
	AA 35	44	50	8	41	56	4	85	14	1	60	39	2
	W 62	18	52	30	18	67	16	65	31	5	35	58	8
F 49		25	53	22	24	63	14	68	28	5	40	54	7
M 51		28	50	22	28	63	10	76	22	3	48	48	4
		Middle-8th											
	AA 33	60	30	10	59	2	74	24	2	86	13	2	7
	W 65	29	35	37	31	60	10	52	42	7	65	28	7
F 48		36	34	30	36	55	10	52	42	7	67	27	7
M 52		41	32	27	44	51	6	66	31	3	77	20	4
		(11th Only)			(11th Only)			(11th Only)			(10th Only)		
	AA	53	34	14	34	51	15	67	32	2	71	28	2
	W	22	36	42	16	48	37	44	50	7	47	45	9
F		29	37	34	18	50	33	43	50	7	48	44	9
M		32	33	35	24	47	29	58	39	4	60	35	5

Table IV-3: Retention

Elementary

Ethnicity Grade	AA Enrolled		Total Enrollment	Total Retained	W Enrolled		Total Enrollment	Total Retained
	Male	Female			Male	Female		
4	5365	5489	10,854	164	11,574	11,202	18,151	199
5	5022	5,252	10,274	55	11,468	10,972	22,440	71

- 1.5% of African-American (AA) students were retained in the 4th grade compared to 1.1% of white (W) students.
- .5% of African-American (AA) students were retained in the 5th grade compared to .3% of white (W) students.

Middle School

Ethnicity Grade	AA Enrolled		Total Enrollment	Total Retained	W Enrolled		Total Enrollment	Total Retained
	Male	Female			Male	Female		
6	5065	5181	10,246	410	11,190	10,517	21,705	332
7	4875	5120	9,995	378	11,448	10,863	22,311	447
8	4868	5033	9,901	216	11,482	10,966	22,417	347

- 4% of African-American (AA) students were retained in the 6th grade compared to 1.5% of white (W) students.
- 3.78% of African-American (AA) students were retained in the 7th grade compared to 2% of white (W) students.
- 2.2% of African-American (AA) students were retained in the 8th grade compared to 1.5% of white (W) students.

High School

Ethnicity Grade	AA Enrolled		Total Enrollment	Total Retained	W Enrolled		Total Enrollment	Total Retained
	Male	Female			Male	Female		
9	5861	5709	11,570	1958	13,570	13,014	26,584	2619
10	4378	4843	9,221	925	11,611	11,655	23,266	1245
11	3451	4184	7,635	490	10,266	10,701	20,967	680
12	2968	3782	6,750	102	8982	9777	18,759	158

- 16.9% of African-American (AA) students were retained in the 9th grade compared to 9.9% of white (W) students.
- 10% of African-American (AA) students were retained in the 10th grade compared to 5.4% of white (W) students.
- 6.4% of African-American (AA) students were retained in the 11th grade compared to 3.2% of white (W) students.
- 1.5% of African-American (AA) students were retained in the 12th grade compared to .8% of white (W) students.

Table IV-4: Suspension

Total number of suspensions over five-year period.

Level/ Enrollment (4th & 5th) Elementary (6th-8th) Middle (9th-12th) High	African American			White		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
	2324	520	2844	1190	164	1354
	12,777	6150	18,927	11,064	3280	14,344
	8715	3813	12,528	8784	3443	12,227

- Elementary: average student suspension over this five-year period was 840 of which 569 were African Americans (465 males/104 females); and 271 where white. (238 males/33 females). In all, 67 percent of students suspended were African Americans.
- Middle School: average student suspension over this five-year period was 6,654 of which 3,785 were African Americans (2,555 males/1,230 females); and 2,869 where white. (2,213 males/656 females). In all, 56 percent of students suspended were African Americans.
- High School: average student suspension over this five-year period was 4,951 of which 2,506 were African Americans (1,743 males/763 females); and 2,445 where white. (1,757 males/688 females). In all, 51 percent of students suspended were African Americans.

Table IV-5: Dropouts

Actual number of students who dropped out over a five- year period.

Ethnicity	Level	Grade						Grand Total
		7	8	9	10	11	12	
Black	M	53	91					144
	S			651	583	472	339	2045
	ECE	15	67	611	593	415	164	1864
Total Drop Outs		68	158	1262	1176	887	503	4054
Total Enrollment		9995	9901	11,570	9,221	7,635	6,750	55,072
Other	M	111	267					378
	S			1294	1051	912	717	3974
	ECE	23	78	807	899	758	338	2903
Total Drop Outs		134	345	2101	1950	1670	1055	7255
Total Enrollment		22,311	22,417	26,584	23,266	20,967	18,759	134,304
Gender	Female	75/12	168/52	782/568	655/643	562/536	414/245	4712
	Male	88/26	190/93	1162/850	979/855	821/653	642/257	6616
Grand Total		201	503	3362	3132	2557	1558	11,313

■ By the 12th grade 7 percent of African-American students dropped out of school over the past five years as compared to 5 percent of white students. As consistent with the literature, regardless of ethnicity the year with the largest number of dropouts is 9th grade.

Table IV-6: Successful Transitions

<i>School (12th Grade)</i>	<i>Fall '00</i>		<i>Fall '99</i>		<i>Fall '98</i>		<i>Fall '97</i>		<i>Fall '96</i>	
	<i>AA</i>	<i>O</i>								
Eastern	82	223	74	276	98	275	71	273	57	253
Fern Creek	70	174	94	229	66	171	63	182	43	168
Atherton	27	182	29	187	30	146	39	184	39	173
Southern	63	212	56	255	56	238	63	277	64	225
Valley	45	102	58	135	47	110	60	116	56	130
Butler Traditional	60	313	70	325	67	293	51	272	60	261
Louisville Male	90	291	104	267	97	280	64	275	104	248
Waggener Traditional	48	143	60	176	44	126	60	134	45	111
Fairdale	51	112	43	133	33	155	49	163	45	144
Jeffersontown	57	132	54	164	32	182	36	139	39	164
Seneca	66	257	92	213	89	221	86	246	81	203
Pleasure Ridge Park	68	311	68	317	68	323	67	281	89	306
Western	58	47	56	61	73	79	89	62	81	78
Moore	36	50	43	61	34	74	60	92	40	94
Doss	44	148	82	125	84	140	105	148	81	140
Ballard	65	325	55	316	49	335	52	315	81	350
Central	83	82	71	67	123	78	95	80	149	83
duPont Manual	94	356	71	346	68	344	85	351	76	320
Brown	15	34	17	25	10	22	14	37	14	23
Iroquois	58	71	71	92	72	118	66	95	55	122
Shawnee	54	52	38	44	73	57	49	60	54	60
TOTAL Transitions	1238	3613	1306	3814	1313	3767	1324	3782	1353	3673
TOTAL Enrollment	1252	3626	1347	3819	1417	3875	1351	3755	1383	3710

On the average, over each of the past five years, three times as many whites as African Americans experienced a successful transition from high school and either attended college, obtained employment, enlisted in the military and/or enrolled in a vocational institution.

Another related issue concerns the continuing decline in the number of African-American educators in the local public school system, as illustrated in Table IV-7, below. After more than fifteen years, the proportion of African-American teachers relative to the proportion of African-American enrollment is barely half of what it should be.

Table IV-7: Jcps Teachers by Level, Race and Gender

<i>Elementary</i>				
1999-2000 Staff	African- American Male	African- American Female	Other Male	Other Female
Principal/Assist. Principal	4	23	26	36
Guidance Counselor/Deans	1	16	7	64
Full-time Teachers	43	353	131	1,850
Part-time Teachers	0	2	0	55
Librarian/Media Specialist	0	4	2	79
Grant Chapter 1 Teachers	1	32	15	177
Other Professional Staff	0	1	0	1
Total	49	431	181	2262
Total (Percentage)	2%	15%	6%	77%
<i>Middle School</i>				
1999-2000 Staff	African- American Male	African- American Female	Other Male	Other Female
Principal/Assist. Principal	7	10	13	24
Guidance Counselor/Deans	4	16	12	17
Full-time Teachers	45	136	213	688
Part-time Teachers	0	0	0	13
Librarian/Media Specialist	0	1	0	22
Grant Chapter 1 Teachers	0	6	6	31
Other Professional Staff	0	0	0	1
Total	56	169	244	796
Total (Percentage)	4%	13%	19%	63%
<i>High School</i>				
1999-2000 Staff	African- American Male	African- American Female	Other Male	Other Female
Principal/Assist. Principal	11	11	35	747
Guidance Counselor/Deans	4	9	13	41
Full-time Teachers	68	103	543	671
Part-time Teachers	0	2	2	4
Librarian/Media Specialist	0	2	1	22
Grant Chapter 1 Teachers	2	2	11	9
Other Professional Staff	0	0	1	1
Total	85	129	606	1495
Total (Percentage)	4%	6%	26%	65%
District Total	190	729	1031	4553
District Percentage	3.33%	11.33%	17%	68.33%

Given the low proportion of African-American teachers and continuing recruitment difficulties, more teachers and prospective teachers—regardless of their ethnicity—need to be prepared with appropriate diversity training and multiple intelligence/learning style pedagogy in the teaching of African-American children.

Summary

Though Kentucky celebrated signs of progress last year in its 10-year-old push for standards-based school improvement, it still faces hurdles in making sure this agenda reaches every classroom. “While the overall progress is impressive, a closer look at performance results reveals much work to be done,” according to the report “Results Matter.” The report also says that the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) has yielded superficial changes, but it is apparent that much has remained the same within the classroom. Relatively few students have reached the top levels (proficiency/distinguished) compared to the number who are still yet performing at the lowest level (novice). According to the literature, the achievement gap between white and minority students has not been closed nor has the dropout rate improved with any significance over the past five years.

Research studies present possible explanations for this reality. First, the curriculum used in Kentucky schools is mono-cultural, thus catering to the dominant group. Second, cultural misunderstandings exist between home and school (Ogbu, 1982) in many districts. Third, is the lack of the quality of teachers in the classrooms, especially in the middle schools, where student achievement appears to stall (Quality Counts 2001: Kentucky Policy Update).

Recommendations

Local business and community leaders and, particularly, the Jefferson County Board of Education should reaffirm and operationalize their commitment to:

Recommendation 1: Provide a quality education with equity for all students.

Recommendation 2: Provide an educational program that raises the achievement levels of all students with emphasis upon narrowing the gap between the achievement levels of African-American students and other students:

District Level — Systematically eliminate/replace lower level courses and tracking with more challenging curricula and supporting academic resources for students; ensure the adoption of non-bias textbooks (some written about and by various people of color).

School/Administrative Role — Include a category for assessing teacher attitudes toward diverse learners (this form of bias identification will require training for some administrators) on teacher evaluation forms. Become more visible and follow-up on complaints of parents, students and other teachers concerning teacher effectiveness; establish consequences/hold

teachers accountable. Create alternate times for parent/teacher conferences as to allow for caregivers who work different shifts

Teacher Role — A non-negotiable for all students to experience academic success is for teachers to have high expectations for all students. This will require pedagogical retooling, change management training and prejudice reduction workshops for many.

Parent Role — Demand excellence. Call/visit the school with questions concerning your child; join a support group such as the Parent Teacher Association; get involved in Site-Based Decision Making Councils; attend district sponsored Parent Universities and Parent Involvement Workshops sponsored by the Louisville Urban League to learn how to get involved.

Recommendation 3: Promote and encourage the use of effective and innovative instructional strategies throughout the district that ensure culturally relevant and socially responsive teaching in the classrooms:

District Level — Adopt requirements for continuing education in diversity as part of requirement for continuous employment and new hires. Partner with university teacher education programs and sponsor Diversity Institutes for professional development and continuing education credit.

Recommendation 4: A measure was passed by the legislature and signed by Governor Paul E. Patton that allocated \$24 million for professional development programs, concentrating on middle school teachers. To that end, JCPS should step up its fifteen year-old commitment to hiring minority teachers (1985 Minority Teacher Recruitment Program).

Recommendation 5: Initiate a major and sustained effort to increase the number of educators of color.

Recommendation 6: Provide a staff development program that prepares all staff to work successfully with all students regardless of ethnic, cultural or socio-economic backgrounds:

School Level — Designate those “free” professional development hours for training in multicultural educational, conflict resolution strategies, learning styles, multiple intelligences and authentic assessment techniques.

Notes

Glossary of Terms/Abbreviations

AA represents African American students

W represents white students

O represents all students except blacks

Retention is defined as not progressing to the next grade

Suspension is defined as involuntary separation from school as the result of an offense

Dropout is defined as a voluntarily separation from school

ECE is defined as special needs or disabilities

PART V

From the Perspective of Black Youth

Understanding how African-American youth view and “feel about” their circumstances is as important as describing those circumstances objectively. In order to sample attitudes and perceptions, members of the research team developed a short survey instrument and administered it in the fall of 2000 to several groups of contemporary African-American youth in the Louisville area. Every effort was made to ensure that the groups were a reasonably representative sample of local black adolescents — primarily high school students. Smaller focus groups were drawn from the larger sample and interviewed in greater depth to provide quantitative as well as qualitative information. The results of each phase of the analysis are reported below.

Survey Data Analysis

A total of 363 young African Americans completed the survey instrument. Only young people who answered nearly all questions were retained in the sample for analysis. Roughly half (194, or 53.4 percent) were participants in the Black Achievers program, while the remaining 169 (or 46.4 percent) were distributed across smaller clusters from various youth organizations and church-sponsored groups, e.g., Youth Alive, Teen Sense. Virtually all high schools in Louisville and Jefferson County were represented — with notable concentrations at Central (N=33), Male (N=35) and Manual (N=57).

Most respondents (ca. 80 percent) were high school age youth, i.e., between 14 and 18 years old, with the remainder falling in the middle school age range. Roughly two-thirds (ca. 68 percent) were female, suggesting (as random observation confirms) that young women tend to be over-represented in organized/structured, non-school based groups. Although most young people in the sample were eligible for employment of some sort, roughly two-thirds (67.5 percent) were unemployed.

Residence could be determined for 351 (96.7 percent) of the sample. Given some of the neighborhood patterns noted in Parts I and II, addresses were collapsed into broad sections of the local MSA producing the following geographic distribution of respondents:

Table V-1: Focus Group Survey Respondents by “Neighborhood”

Neighborhood	N	%
West Louisville	152	41.9
East Louisville (“Smoketown”, Clarksdale – City)	32	8.8
Racially Mixed Neighborhoods (City) “Black Suburbs”	17	4.7
Racially Mixed Neighborhoods (County)	47	12.9
No Data	103	28.4
Total	12	3.3
	363	

This residential distribution (see Part VI), along with recent census data, indicate that most African-American youth and their families (roughly two-thirds) still live in racially identifiable — if not wholly segregated — black neighborhoods in either the City or County (e.g., Newburg/Petersburg). However, a significant one-third of respondents live in predominantly white neighborhoods, which corresponds to the lower local segregation index of recent decades.

Participants were asked two questions regarding their attitudes toward their community and their school, with the following results:

Table V-2: Attitudes toward “Neighborhood” and School

Response	Neighborhood		School	
	N	%	N	%
Very Positive	60	16.9	77	22.1
Good	114	32.1	113	32.4
Average	141	39.7	117	33.5
Below Average	25	7.0	22	6.3
Very Negative	15	4.2	20	5.7
Total	355		349	

As these data reflect, respondents had generally positive attitudes toward both their community (88.7 percent “Average” or above) and their school (88.0 percent “Average” or above).

Young people in the sample were also asked a series of questions regarding how they envisioned their “future.” The salient results were as follows:

- 93.1 percent of the sample expected to complete high school;
- 79.9 percent intended to pursue some sort of post-secondary education;
- 78.2 percent expected to graduate from a post-secondary institution of some kind;
- 94.5 percent believed that a job was in their immediate future;
- only 9.4 percent had plans to enlist in any branch of the military;
- 87.0 percent “hoped” or expected to “make a lot of money”;
- only 44.1 percent felt they were “likely to get married”;
- only 44.0 percent felt they were “likely to have a child”;
- 86.5 percent felt it was unlikely they would be suspended from school; and
- 95.0 percent believed themselves unlikely ever to be arrested.

Beyond these descriptive, univariate statistics, disaggregating the data for more in-depth analysis revealed several important patterns and interactions between variables. These interactions are summarized below with, in some cases, appropriate references to tests of statistical significance (usually Chi-Square analysis).¹

Most interactions were not statistically significant. However, of those that were, the more interesting patterns are summarized below:

- A disproportionate number of young people from the Black Achievers group (64.2 percent, or 129 of 193) were county residents, while most of the young people from the other groups (83.5 percent, or 132 of 158) were city residents, Chi-square (N=351, DF=32) = 245.40, **p < .01**.
- While respondents in the aggregate felt positively toward their “neighborhood” or “community,” response patterns actually varied significantly by “neighborhood” of the city or section of the county. Specifically, only 41.4 percent (75 of 81) of the respondents from “West” and “East Louisville,” i.e., the predominantly black sections of the city, felt positively toward their “community” — compared to 56.8 percent (92 of 162) residents of other neighborhoods, Chi-square (N=343, df=16) = 41.02, **p < .001**.
- Based on MSA census data, “neighborhood” reflected, however loosely, the socio-economic status of respondents. Specifically, the older black neighborhoods within the city limits tended to be “poorer” (with the exception of the residential areas near the Ohio River in far western Louisville) than other sections of Louisville and Jefferson County. Consequently, “attitudes toward community” were likely to be more negative in neighborhoods in which the incidence of real or relative poverty was greatest. It is likely, as borne out by other research, that this response pattern exists independent of race, i.e., that residents of a poor white neighborhood might respond similarly.
- Similarly, respondents from “east” and “west” Louisville neighborhoods felt that there was a lower ceiling with respect to their future prospects. For example, while most respondents aspired to pursue post-secondary education, this ambition was far more prevalent among those living outside the older and poorer black neighborhoods (93.2 percent, 151 of 162, compared to 79.8 percent, 131 of 1640 — Chi-square (N=326, df=16) = 35.54, **p < .01**).
- This relationship between neighborhood and, hence, socio-economic status, held true in the responses to several other survey questions as well. For example, youth from poorer circumstances believed themselves more likely to be suspended, Chi-square (N=348, DF=32) = 28.71, **p < .03**; but less likely to graduate from high school, Chi-square (N=346, DF=16) = 31.98, **p < .01**.
- Although not statistically significant (Chi-Square, $p < .08$), males were more likely to have either very positive or very negative feelings toward school. Females were more likely to be “neutral.” Further, attitudes toward school grew more negative over time, i.e., high school students were more likely to view school negatively than were middle school students.
- Young women believed themselves more likely to graduate from high school than did young men, Chi-square (N=358, DF=8) = 46.93, **p < .01**. Young women (88.1 percent, 207 of 235) were also more likely to aspire to post-secondary education than were young men (81.1 percent, 82 of 101)— Chi-square (N=338, df=8) = 19.101, **p < .01** — while males were more likely to see military services as an attractive option, Chi-square (N=358, df=8) = 46.93, **p < .01**.

- Along this same line, females believed themselves more likely to graduate from college, Chi-square (N=359, DF=8) = 25.60, $p < .01$ — while young men believed themselves more likely to be arrested, Chi-square (N=360, DF=8) = 35.81, **p < .01**.

In summary, the young African Americans surveyed in this phase of the study responded in fairly conventional and predictable terms. Most viewed their neighborhood, their school and themselves in a reasonably positive light. Most viewed their future prospects as being relatively bright. In other words, these young people were burdened neither by despair or fear.

Focus Groups: Descriptive Analysis

A total of 66 young African Americans (18.2 percent of the total sample) were interviewed in four focus groups to gauge teen perceptions regarding education, crime, neighborhoods, family, youth needs, and sexuality. To preserve their anonymity, these focus groups were designated as two church youth groups (B and D) and two “girl groups” (A and C). Selected characteristics of the focus group sub-set are summarized in Table V-3, below.

Table V-3: Focus Group Characteristics

Group	N	Neighborhood		Gender	
		% City	% County	% Male	% Female
Girl A	15	60.0	40.0	0.0	100.0
Church B	11	100.0	0.0	45.5	54.5
Girl C	31	80.6	19.4	16.1	83.9
Church D	9	33.3	66.7	33.3	66.7

In addition, roughly 60 percent of the focus group sub-set were high school students.

Each group was asked the same questions on a broad range of topics. However, the flow of interaction, the particular interests of some groups or repetition of comments necessitated the elimination of some questions and slight revisions in others. Participant responses to questions regarding sexuality and sexual behavior are treated separately in Part VI.

Groups were first asked if there was “**anything they wanted to share about themselves**” before direct questioning. Participants in three groups chose to “share.” Their responses included self-descriptions (identifying themselves as nice, lovable, silly, emotional, blunt, talkative, good listener, boy-crazy, intelligent), references to their associations (faith, sports team, extracurricular activities) and talents (good basketball player, sings, technologically oriented). This feedback gave some insight into the diversity of the youth interviewed. Notable was the breadth of responses from Church Group D across all categories, as compared to the concentration of self-descriptions from both Girl Groups.

When asked how they would describe the **key(s) to a happy and successful life in personal terms**, responses from all groups included mention of “lots of money.” Youth from Church Group D and Girl Group C cited “love.” Youth from Church B and Girls C cited “family.” Differences appeared between church groups. Group D responses were primarily materialistic and several of those youth were adamant about leaving Kentucky as soon as possible. Church Group B cited achievement of academic and career goals unlike any other group to this question.

The groups were asked to discuss the **keys to their happiness and success in family life, school life and neighborhood/community life**. With respect to family life, the Girl Groups listed only a few simple keys such as “spending time”, “getting along”, “sharing feelings/problems” and “staying together.”

Church Groups had longer lists and distinctly different keys. Many in Church Group B stressed doing something positive, e.g., “coming together and eliminating family distance”; “staying connected wherever”; “helping financially”; and “tracing roots.” However, others stressed eliminating something negative, e.g., “the need for more distance between family members”; “eliminating family drama; taking madness out of the family;” stopping a stalker”; “not taking anger out on siblings”; and “leaving home.” Church Group D stressed more conventional religious values, e.g., the importance of “faith,” “love,” “peace,” “Jesus,” and “Compassion.”

When asked about the **keys to success in school**, Girl Group A identified “teachers who respect students,” “setting smart goals,” “paying attention” and being “organized.” Girl Group C cited “earning good grades,” “being good,” “staying in school” and “being on time.” Church B mentioned “transferring,” “eliminating prejudiced teachers,” “eliminating rednecks,” and “graduation.” Church Group D cited “friends,” “boys,” “faith,” “excitement,” “hard work” and “loving.”

In response to a question about the **keys to a happy neighborhood life**, Girl Group A noted “knowing and liking the neighborhood”; “having a quiet/peaceful” neighborhood; and, interestingly, “having sidewalks.” Girl Group C stressed eliminating negative factors, such as “violence,” “drugs,” “littering” and the absence of “speed bumps.” Church Group B cited a long list of neighborhood issues in need of corrective attention: “stopping gangs” and “false claimers” (those falsely claiming gang membership); “cleaning up trash”; “eliminating KKK neighbors”; “eliminating alcoholics”; “eliminating drug pushers”; “eliminating crooked cops”; “fixing abandoned housing”; “attracting more youth to the neighborhood”; and “improving communication between neighbors.” On the other hand, Church Group D expressed that “good attitude,” “positive role models/partners” and “tolerance” were key factors.

Participants were next asked **what they would do if they had the power to improve their lives in the areas of family, school, and neighborhood**. With respect to family, Girl Group A noted the need to “bring family back together” and “to bring back deceased family members to make family whole and happy again.” Girl Group C stressed “eliminating violence, lying, profanity, turning on

each other, smoking/drinking/drugs and bad attitudes” — and fostering “more consideration.” Church Group B emphasized the need for “more family outings”; for a “more friendly family”; more “non-holiday gatherings”; to “change attitudes and involvement with family”; to “connect with estranged siblings/family members.” On the other hand, Church Group D stated that they would build “better communication”; eliminate “violence”; promote a “gun-free home”; improve the “personality” of family members; “exile a relative”; show more “love”; and eliminate “punishment.”

With respect to improving their **school** experience(s), participants in Girl Group A cited the need to “improve the dress code”; “get respect”; have “more time to get to class”; “make ISAP a place to learn”; “eliminate rules unrelated to learning (e.g. wearing belts); and the need to improve “teachers attitudes and abilities.” Participants in Girl Group C would impose a “no littering policy”; “eliminate prejudiced teachers/students”; “lengthen lunch”; “get rid of bullies”; and permit “no disrespect.” Church B would “minimize weekend homework”; “not allow too many tests on the same day”; “get rid of teachers who don’t want to be there”; “establish a first name basis” (with teachers); “pay students to go”; and “allow students to excel without the pressure to be the best.” Church Group D “would change uniforms”; “get nicer, more caring teachers”; schedule “less class time”; have “no report cards”; allow “more time to get to class”; “revamp ISAP”; “substitute physical work for ISAP”; have more “knowledgeable teachers”; and “stop one size fits all teaching.”

The perceived or expressed keys to improving their **neighborhoods** varied markedly — suggesting the degree to which neighborhood conditions varied and influenced the views of participants. For example, Girl Group A stressed “eliminating violence and drugs” and creating a “more sociable neighborhood.” Girl Group C stressed “eliminating so much sexual activity”; “stopping older guys getting with young girls”; “stopping girls from flaunting their bodies”; installing “speed bumps”; “stop violence and drugs”; “stopping littering”; and “bringing the community together.” Church Group B emphasized the need for “more community centers”; an “up-to-date YMCA”; “block parties”; a “neighborhood full of ‘ideal’ guys.”

When asked **what they most liked about school**, Girl Group A cited “curriculum and classes”; “uniforms (variety and conformity)”; “counselors”; and “attendance rewards.” Girl Group C noted “school meetings held to let students express opinions”; “sensitive counselors and youth service coordinators”; “classmates”; and “programs.” Church Group B mentioned “sports,” “dances,” “boys,” “school programs,” “friends,” “school colors” and the “janitor.” Church Group D identified their “school’s acceptance of individuality” and “freedom for students”; “people”; “fun”; the “basketball team and other sports programs”; their “school’s reputation”; and the fact that there was “no dress code.”

When asked **what they disliked about school**, Girl Group A cited “administration and faculty”; “early morning bus rides”; “too short lunch periods,” “lunch food”; and some other “students.” Girl Group C cited “peer pressure,” the “hatfulness and jealousy” of other students and “food.” Church

Group B disliked “teaching,” “girls” and “everything else.” However, Church Group D felt negatively about “girls,” “roaches,” the school “administration,” “being a minority,” “food,” “teachers” and “racism” in their school(s).

When asked **what they liked most about their neighborhoods**, Girl Group C cited “friends,” “dances” and their “neighborhood youth board.” Church Group D noted “drama,” their “surroundings” in general, “tranquility,” “people” and “friendships.”

When asked **what they disliked about their neighborhoods**, Church Group D cited “gunshots,” “loneliness and too much quiet,” “drugs,” “location,” “lack of grass,” the “condition of streets” and a scarcity of “peers.”

When asked **what they would do as Mayor to help youth like themselves become successful citizens**, Girl Group A stated that they would “let teens vote on some issues,” create “more jobs for 14 year olds” and “change curfew laws.” Girl Group C stated that they would “help youth.” Church Group B cited the need for a “college fund,” a “clean river,” “programs to promote ‘self-liking,’” “teen Derby activities,” “getting rid of stray dogs” and “more jobs for youth.” Church Group D, if empowered to act, would create “many youth centers for learning and teen interests,” “more hang out spots” and would “expand Kentucky Kingdom to keep youth off the streets.”

When asked **what they would do as superintendent of schools to help youth like themselves get a good education**, all groups had long lists of issues. For example, Girl Group A would offer “classes for college credit” and “classes for drop-outs”; “limit class sizes”; create a “more comfortable environment”; hire “more teachers who are interesting and teach well”; have “more lessons related to life (e.g. why the Odyssey?)”; purchase “updated books”; “get better principals”; and hire “people who run school and athletics with integrity.” Girl Group C “would be stricter on teachers,” “discipline students fairly,” “treat students equally,” “give religion a role in school” and “have religion classes.” Church Group B would have “longer class and lunch periods,” “block schedule,” “less isolation of black students in class,” “eliminate special privileges like only getting in traditional schools,” more leniency for students “messing up (not throwing people off teams for one D),” “more time to get to class” and “more affordable a la carte items” for lunch. Church Group D would have “more lessons related to life,” “more interesting lessons,” “more classroom technology,” “more technical education,” “more educational fieldtrips,” “more college prep classes” and “more interactive lessons.”

Participants were then asked **what they thought was the cause of people committing crime in their neighborhoods**. Girl Group C cited “drugs,” “mental illness and emotional problems,” “acts of vengeance,” “gangs” and “stress.”

When asked **what can the community do to address crime**, Girl Group A took a “hard-line” and cited the need for “adult jail time for convictions,” “consequences for crimes,” “stricter laws and law enforcement” and “educating blacks about the criminal justice system and its biases.”

When asked **what was their greatest fear**, focus group participants responded at some length. Girl Group A cited “not making it to heaven,” “losing parents,” “failing in life,” a “return to slavery,” “losing my life,” being “taken from my family” and “going to jail.” On the other hand, Girl Group C cited “rape,” “guns,” getting “caught up in deadly rumors,” “things that crawl” and “something turning out wrong.” Church Group B cited “becoming a teen father,” “dying young,” “getting married,” “not graduating from high school,” “getting shot,” “fear of flying and heights,” “dying in childbirth,” “getting HIV/AIDS,” “not going to heaven” and, on a lighter note, “mountain climbing.” Members of Church Group D feared “fatherhood,” “rape,” “dying,” “pregnancy,” “getting jumped” (attacked), “injury,” and “not meeting self-expectations.”

When asked **what is your greatest concern about becoming an adult**, Girl Group A mentioned “harsher laws,” “bills” and other “responsibilities” and a “lack of respect from older adults.” Girl Group C cited “bills” and “kids and how expensive they are.”

Questions about **future plans and careers** elicited chaotic responses from all groups, including “shouts” about being independent and a range of specific career goals, e.g., becoming a doctor, teacher, pilot, missionary, coach, business owner, fashion designer, police officer, etc. Other participants stressed plans that emphasized material acquisitions (good life, money, car) and higher education.

When asked **how they would achieve their goals**, responses included “applying self,” “hanging around relevant things,” exercising their “self-determination,” “staying in school” and making good grades to gain admission to a good college.

Finally, when asked **if there was anything else they would like to add**, Girl Group A reiterated that “family is important” and noted that “people should be more sensitive and patient with one another.” Girl Group C declared that “more should be done to help the poor.” Church Group B stated a need to “improve 911 response time in black neighborhoods,” get access to provide “more college information,” to “take youth more seriously,” for adults to “stop thinking all youth are alike” and concluded that “kids act out because of no one to talk to.” Church Group D indicated that “youth need quality role models,” “kids have feelings,” “kids can be right about things like adults can be,” “people progress at different speeds” and that “all teens are not bad.”

In summary, although there were diverse viewpoints within each group, the overall tenor of responses differed far more dramatically between than within groups. Clearly, these response patterns indicate that some of the young African Americans who participated in these focus groups lived in rather conventional families and neighborhoods (Groups A and B), and had rather conventional concerns. However, others lived under far more difficult conditions (Groups C and D) and the realities of their lives influenced their perceptions.

Discussion

Where young people lived in the Louisville MSA was the only significant axis along which response patterns seemed to divide. Although a more detailed survey and more sophisticated data analysis would be required to clarify this point, the racial composition of a particular neighborhood did not seem to have any direct effect on the attitudes of black youth — in either a positive or negative direction. In other words, living in a predominantly black or predominantly white neighborhood could produce equally high levels of satisfaction. However, as noted, young African Americans from neighborhoods that were both “black and poor” viewed neither their circumstances nor their prospects in especially positive terms.

Perhaps, most fascinating and most troubling of all, these response patterns indicate that the confluence of race and poverty creates a social space for some young African Americans that is as much a “trap” as it was under legal segregation. For those young African Americans who are both “black and poor,” Louisville of 2001 is little different from Louisville in 1939 and earlier — and, consequently, their attitudes are disturbingly similarly to those of the young people studied by E. Franklin Frazier so long ago.

Endnotes

1. To avoid needless complexity, the key “numbers” in the statistical tests reported in this section are those related to **probability** (i.e., the “p”). If a relationship between any two variables could occur by chance less than 5 percent of the time, that relationship would be considered “statistically significant” at the .05 level of confidence — represented by “ $p < .05$.” The lower the probability, the stronger the relationship and the less likely it could occur by chance — e.g., “ $p < .01$ ” represents a stronger relationship than “ $p < .05$,” or, a “difference that had a very low probability of occurring by chance.”

PART VI

Black Youth and Sexuality in Louisville and Jefferson County, KY

Introduction

A January 2001 report, “Adolescent Sexuality,” from the Planned Parenthood Federation of America asserted the following:

“We are sexual from birth and sexual expression is a basic human need throughout our lives;

The transition from childhood to a healthy sexual adulthood is one of the most important tasks of adolescence;

Some adolescents have sex when the real needs they seek to satisfy may be

to increase self-esteem, alleviate a sense of loneliness, meet society’s expectations of masculinity and femininity, express anger, or escape from boredom; and

Premarital intercourse among young people was common well before World War II.”

These are a few of the findings in a comprehensive, yet accessible, report that is meant to help professional, faith-based and grassroots groups address sex education and teen pregnancy prevention. Highlighting the above assertions helps to put teen sexuality in a more objective and less judgmental context. The reality of sexual expression among those under legal voting and drinking age has been longstanding, going back generations. This reality transcends race, place, class, gender and religion. Because of the pathology associated with being black and living in urban areas, it is imperative that the sexual attitudes and behavior of black youth be viewed in this normative context. This report will consider the implications of black youth sexuality in terms of rates of teen births and sexually transmitted infections, as well as their sexual attitudes and beliefs communicated in focus groups.

Early Parenthood and Black Youth

Teen birth data were obtained from the Jefferson County Health Department (JCHD) for 1995 and 1999 and the Kentucky State Data Center (KSDC) for 1980, 1990, and 1998. As shown in Table VI-1, in 1999, 17 of 25 births to girls under 15 (68 percent) were to black girls, compared to 22 of 32 births (69 percent) in 1998; 29 of 47 births (60 percent) in 1995; 31 of 52 births (60 percent) in 1990; and 28 of 39 births (72 percent) in 1980.

Table VI-1: Births to Girls under 15 Years

	Total Births	Black Births	Percent
1980	39	28	72%
1990	52	31	60%
1995	47	29	60%
1998	32	22	69%
1999	25	17	68%

Table VI-2 indicates that, in 1999, 175 of 440 births to girls 15-17 (40 percent) were to black girls, compared to 287 of 640 births (45 percent) in 1995; 301 of 617 births (49 percent) in 1990; and 332 of 874 (38 percent) in 1980.

Table VII-2: Births to Black Girls ages 15-17

	Total Births	Black Births	Percent
1980	874	332	38%
1990	617	301	49%
1995	640	287	45%
1998	490	196	40%
1999	440	175	40%

Young black women 18 and 19 years old gave birth to 363 of 871 babies (42 percent) in this age group in 1999, compared to 320 of 828 births (39 percent) in 1995; 442 of 1099 (40 percent) in 1990; 377 of 1219 (31 percent) in 1980.

Table VI-3: Births to Girls ages 18–19

	Total Births	Black Births	Percent
1980	1,219	377	31%
1990	1,099	442	40%
1995	828	320	39%
1998	915	368	40%
1999	871	363	42%

As indicated in the tables above, there has been considerable variability in the percentage of children born to black teens both under 15 and between 18 and 19 years old in Louisville and Jefferson County over the past twenty years. At the same time, the percentage of teen births to black girls between 15–17 declined.

In this respect, the decline in both the raw number and rate of teen births in Jefferson County parallels similar declines in the state and nation. Nevertheless, JCHD comparative teen birth rate data for 1996-1998 show that Jefferson County's rate of teen births for all age groups has exceeded the rate for the nation and Kentucky during those years — with one exception. In 1997, the teen birth rate for 18–19 year olds in Jefferson County (92/1000) was lower than the Kentucky rate (94/1000) but remained consistently higher than the national rate (84/1000).

The Jefferson County Health Department analyzed teen birth rates by their Neighborhood Place service areas for 1996-1999. The Neighborhood Places are "one-stop social service agencies" that serve particular neighborhoods. The Neighborhood Place designations for teen birth data include Barrett Inside Water, Barrett Northeast, Barrett Southeast, Cane Run, First Neighborhood Place at Thomas Jefferson Middle, South Central, South Jefferson, Ujima, Northwest, and Bridges of Hope.

Neighborhood Place Ujima (includes Parkland, Park DuValle, and Chickasaw), Northwest (Russell, Portland, Shawnee) and Bridges of Hope (includes Park Hill, Algonquin, California, Beecher Terrace) had the highest teen birth rates in Jefferson County, sometimes followed or exceeded by the South Central neighborhoods which include Iroquois. The Neighborhood Place trends show:

- The Neighborhood Places with the highest rate of teen births in 1999 for those under 15 years of age were Ujima (5/1000), Northwest (4/1000), Bridges of Hope (1.85/1000). South Central's rate was 1.4/1000. The county rate was 1.04/1000.
- The Neighborhood Places with the highest rate of teen births for girls 15-17 in 1999 were Northwest area (61/1000), followed by Bridges of Hope (56/1000) and South Central (40/1000). The teen birth rate for Ujima was 30/1000 for 15-17 year olds. The county rate was 29.93/1000.

- The Neighborhood Places with the highest rate for births to 18-19 year olds in 1999 was the Northwest area (160/1000) and Ujima (121/1000), followed by South Central (106/1000). The rate for Bridges of Hope was 95/1000. The county rate was 85/1000.

Because of the higher rates in the Ujima, Northwest and Bridges of Hope areas, federal "Healthy Start" funding has been infused into those neighborhoods to combat teen births and infant mortality. There are promising trends when observing Neighborhood Place data from 1996-1999:

- The rates for girls 15–17 dropped dramatically all four years in the Ujima area (101/1000 to 30/1000) as well as the Bridges of Hope area (76/1000 to 56/1000) and three of the four years in the Northwest area (105/1000 to 61/1000.)
- The rate for 18–19 year olds dropped all four years in the Northwest area (186/1000 to 160/1000).

Other Neighborhood Place areas with declines in teen birth rates during the four-year period include:

- Barrett Inside Water (10–14 year olds);
- Barrett Inside Water, Barrett Southeast, Cane Run, South Central (15–17 year olds);
- First Neighborhood Place at TJ Middle and South Jefferson Neighborhood Place (18–19 year olds.)

There are some trends that are cause for concern, however. The Neighborhood Place data revealed that, after declining in 1997 and 1998, the teen birth rate for 18 and 19 year olds increased in the Ujima area to 121/1000 in 1999. The rate for 18 and 19 year olds in the Northwest area has been in decline since 1996, but remains the highest in the county at 160/1000 in 1999. Rates in both areas are noteworthy because of the overall county rate of 85/1000. In addition, the Ujima and Northwest areas have been consistently and significantly higher in births to those under 15 when compared to the other areas, and their rates ran 2 to 4 _ times higher than the rate for the county as a whole from 1996-1999.

These neighborhood statistics show progress in rates for 15–17 year olds and inconsistency among those under 15 and over 17. These data suggest an urgent need for earlier sex education and continued sex education after high school graduation. If requests for Planned Parenthood of Greater Louisville (PPGL) sex education programs are any indication, 15 to 17 year olds are more exposed to teen pregnancy programs offered by community centers, faith-based communities and schools. Of the sex education program requests analyzed by PPGL for 1998–2000, most programs (90 percent) were for middle and high school students, as opposed to elementary or post-high school groups. However, the number of requests for adult programs is increasing.

Sexually Transmitted Infections and Black Youth

According to the Jefferson County Health Department, in 1997 the following sexually transmitted infections (STIs) were reported among adolescents aged 10 to 19:

- 535 cases of gonorrhea (30 percent of all gonorrhea in Jefferson County);
- 739 cases of chlamydia (46 percent of all chlamydia in Jefferson County); and
- 16 cases of early syphilis (15 percent of all early syphilis in Jefferson County).

Racial breakdowns for 1997 were not readily available. However, the Jefferson County Health Reportable Diseases Division supplied the following figures for 2000 for 10-19 year olds:

- 368 cases of gonorrhea (30 percent of all reported gonorrhea in Jefferson County) 259, or 70.4 percent, of these 368 cases were black youth;
- 663 cases of chlamydia (40 percent of all reported chlamydia in Jefferson County) 310, or 46.8 percent, of these 663 cases were black youth; and
- 6 cases of syphilis (11 percent of all reported early syphilis in Jefferson County) 5, or 83.3 percent, of these 6 cases were black youth.

It is apparent that these figures for black youth are disproportionately high based on population data for Jefferson County. Some other disturbing observations can be made with the 2000 JCHD data:

- Black Girls ages 15–19 had the largest number of gonorrhea cases of all females reported in the county;
- Black men ages 20–24 had the highest number of all reported cases of gonorrhea in the County;
- Black boys ages 15–19 were the third highest group of all reported cases of gonorrhea, behind black girls 15–19 and black men 20–24;
- Black girls ages 15–19 had the largest number of all reported chlamydia cases, followed by black women 20–24;
- Of 26 females reported with syphilis, 4 of them were black girls 15–19.

Black females ages 15–19 in Jefferson County are especially hard-hit by chlamydia and gonorrhea according to 2000 data. Black males 15–19 and 20–24 are affected disproportionately by gonorrhea. According to the PPFa fact sheet on STIs (Feb. 2001) in 1999, 77 percent of the total number of cases of gonorrhea and 75 percent of the total of all cases of primary and secondary syphilis reported to the Centers for Disease Control occurred among African Americans. The fact sheet also points out that “young and minority women are disproportionately affected by other STIs, such as gonorrhea, syphilis and chlamydia . . . that make them two to five times more vulnerable to HIV infection.” Also reported was the fact that “as a group, men between the ages of 20 and 24 suffer some of the highest rates of gonorrhea.” Thus, black girls ages 10-19 opting for sexual relationships with older men place themselves at high risk for gonorrhea if they choose black males between the ages of 15 and 24 in Jefferson County.

Statistics on other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) were not readily available. However, according to the Centers for Disease Control, approximately one-fourth of the 15 million new cases of STIs diagnosed each year occur among teenagers. These statistics reveal that the need for information about sexually transmitted infections is an urgent one for black youth in Louisville and Jefferson County. Another urgent need is regular testing of sexually active youth for infections by health professionals.

With respect to HIV/AIDS, inconsistent reporting systems impact statistics on this deadly infection and make them an unreliable source for assessing the problem in Kentucky, according to the Jefferson County Health Department’s Reportable Disease Division. However, data were obtained showing a decline in the number of diagnosed AIDS cases from 112 in 1997 to 52 in 2000. Although gender and racial data were not reported, disproportionate rates for other sexually transmitted infections leads to an expectation of a higher number of reported cases among black adults and youth. In fact, the PPFa report on STIs states that “in 1999, more African Americans were reported with AIDS than any other racial/ethnic group. An estimated 63 percent of all women with AIDS were African American as were 42 percent of all men.”

Discussion

More sophisticated analyses of teen birth and infection rate data are possible. However, those presented in this section are the most up to date from very accessible sources: the Kentucky State Data Center, Jefferson County Health Department’s Vital Statistics and Reportable Diseases Divisions, and the Planned Parenthood Federation of America.

Based on these data, it is clear that progress is being made in reducing the number of school-age girls having babies before graduating. Yet the data also present a troubling picture of widespread sexually transmitted infections among those from 10 to 19. This trend provokes questions about how so relatively few youth in the general population account for so many cases of infections. Local and national experts cannot explain the higher rates of sexually transmitted infections among African Americans either to their own or the public’s satisfaction. However, Planned Parenthood Federation of America (PPFA) offers insight into the underestimation of “the national prevalence of such infections and the underassessment of personal risk of acquiring one” in their February, 2001 Fact Sheet on STIs. According to this report:

- Many infections are asymptomatic;
- A strong stigma remains attached to STIs — which are viewed by many as a moral issue; and,
- Many people are not being tested or treated.

A synopsis of “Confronting STDs: A Challenge for Managed Care” by Julianna Gonen appeared in PPFa’s “Educator’s Update” (April, 1999) and stated that:

In rapidly evolving markets, however, the incentive for health plans to make significant efforts in prevention is not always strong, particularly when

enrollee turnover is high . . . Prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases have been a priority of public health clinics serving at-risk populations, whereas less emphasis has been placed on screening and treatment among private sector providers.

It is important to note that the at-risk populations served (and reported on) by public health clinics are disproportionately African American and low income.

In addition to differences in emphasis, debates are ongoing about reporting differences between private and public providers and about the contribution of those factors to apparent racial disparities in sexually transmitted infections. One intriguing and potentially useful explanation of this disparity is that sexual relationships among African Americans occur within more limited social networks — which may, in turn, contribute to higher rates of infection. For example, *Family Planning Perspectives* (Nov/Dec, 1999) reported that

The analysis of interracial networks revealed that black men and women are the least likely to have sexual partners outside their racial group. Consequently, the researchers observe, black individuals infected with an STI are likely to spread the infection within their community but not to other racial or ethnic groups.

These reported rates are alarming for what they are (too high) and for what they may be (lop-sided under-reporting of other groups). Either way, intensive educational efforts are clearly recommended in those segments of the communities known to be at risk and among those who may be misled into thinking sexually transmitted infections are race-specific.

Focus Groups and Teen Sex

One member of the Research Team explored the issue of teen sexuality in depth with the same focus groups described in Part V (see Table V-3). The church groups consisted of boys and girls, while the high school and community youth groups were girls only, all of whom participated voluntarily. Though not requested by any site, the responses of the participating groups are not individually identifiable in order to encourage a continuation of uninhibited exchange between community subjects and those studying local sexual and reproductive issues.

As a context in which to understand participant responses, according to JCHD's brochure "FACTS about Teen Pregnancy and Sexually Transmitted Diseases" (1999), the 1997 Kentucky Youth Risk Behavior Survey revealed that:

- 54 percent of high school students had experienced sexual intercourse at least once;
- 34 percent of freshman females had experienced sexual intercourse at least once;
- 52 percent of freshman males had experienced sexual intercourse at least once; and,

- Almost half of those who had sex had done so at age 13 or younger.

Given this background, focus group youth were first asked what type of information they most needed about sex and sexuality. Sexual and reproductive health information led the list and participants noted strong interest/need for information regarding:

- Protection against diseases and against pregnancy;
- Condoms, usage and effectiveness; and
- Sexually Transmitted Infections and HIV/AIDS.

These responses were unanimous and reinforced the conclusions presented in the PPFA "White Paper on Adolescent Sexuality" (January 2001). A national survey of teens revealed that, "nearly half of high school students nationwide report that they need basic information on birth control, HIV/AIDS, and other STIs and nearly half are unaware that an STI increases the risk of getting HIV if sexually active."

While these needs were expressed by every group, there were needs specifically voiced by individual groups. Negotiation skills were a particular concern in Girl Group A. They wanted more information on the "proper time and place" and on "how you have a choice and that no means no." Youth in Church Group B wanted information on oral sex protection and same-sex relationships. The other Church Group D wanted additional information on increasing self-control of urges, how to avoid temptation, as well as birth control methods and their effectiveness. The remaining Girl Group C did not express a need for anything other than sexual and reproductive health information. These diverse needs also corresponded to research presented in the PPFA "White Paper," underscoring the fact that:

. . . the most effective programs in the U.S. combine abstinence education with medically accurate information on a variety of sexuality-related issues, including contraception, safer sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, and the risks of unprotected intercourse and how to avoid them, as well as the development of communication, negotiation, and refusal skills.

In answer to the question of where they got sexual information, "from friends" was the consistent first response, followed by "at school" and "from parents." The two girl groups indicated that programs at community centers and for youth groups were a source of information, and both groups mentioned clinicians as a source. Television was mentioned only by the two church groups. Trusted adults and mentors came up with Girl Group A and Church Group D. These patterns were not surprising since, according to a study cited in the PPFA "White Paper on Adolescent Sexuality:"

Only 16 percent of young women and ten percent of young men cited their parents as their primary source(s) of knowledge about sexuality . . . most young people first learn about sex from friends, siblings, teachers, or the media, rather than from their parents.

In response to a question about gender differences in handling sexual peer pressure, all groups said that some girls “give it up easy.” That was the only viewpoint wholly shared. Three of four groups (excluding Church Group D) said that some girls “say no and demand respect.” From Church Group D came the observations that some girls: a) “claim” boys by bragging about sexual involvement, real or imagined; b) tease/entice boys with sexy conversation; and c) girls “are hotter than boys.”

While there was no consensus across all groups about boys and sexual peer pressure (as there was about “easy” girls), each group offered interesting perspectives. Girl Group A observed that some guys would back down from a sexual challenge and walk away. Girl Group C accused boys of “lying,” “begging,” and “hooking up” with a girl known to be sexually active. Church Group B said that boys challenge each other to “get it,” boys will ridicule a virgin, and that boys lie. Church Group D noted that boys brag about sexual involvement. In a similar vein, the PPFA “White Paper on Adolescent Sexuality” discusses the role of “masculinity ideology” and “hyper-femininity” and how “for both women and men, the traditional stereotypical gender roles are associated with an increased risk for involvement in sexual aggression.”

The participants offered a variety of responses to a question about how sexually active youth are dealing with the possibility of pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. Girl Group A indicated that pregnancy precautions (birth control and withdrawal were cited) are fairly common among those they know are sexually active. However they also indicated that they knew of girls with multiple partners, on and off birth control. In addition, they mentioned condom usage is a precaution taken but did not know about consistency of usage. Once again, according to PPFA “two-thirds of adolescents use some method of contraception — usually the male condom — the first time they have sexual intercourse.” The report also acknowledged the simultaneous increase in the use of condoms by teens as well as the reduction in sexual activity among them, concluding that “these are significant findings and they run counter to the claim of those who say that educating teenagers about condom and contraceptive use, and promoting the use of condoms, will lead to more sexual activity among teens.”

The other Girl Group C said that “pleasing her partner” is the main priority of the sexually active girls they encounter. This mentality undermines birth control and disease prevention according to the group. Five of the girls from the same setting in this group said they each knew of a girl under age 14 having sex. Several also indicated they knew of girls that have been sexually abused.

These responses substantiate research findings in the white paper that “abused teens as well as teens that are sexually involved with older partners, are more likely to experience pregnancy” and sexually transmitted infections. They are less likely to insist on protecting themselves, have more sexual partners, and “need specialized programs to address their specific risk behaviors.”

Youth in Church Group B stated matter-of-factly that couples are worrying without using protection and “working without a plan.” While church

involvement has been shown to delay sexual activity, it “does not provide an absolute barrier to adolescent sexual activity.” For example, a survey of “born again” denominations showed that, “by the age of 18, 43 percent had had sex and 65 percent had participated in some form of sex play (intercourse or the fondling of breasts or genitals). Church B also said they knew of girls who “deal with older men” and trust them to help prevent against pregnancy and disease.” In terms of girls who trust the older men they date to help protect them, the unequal power in those relationships, coupled with the increased risk of contracting an infection with more sexually experienced partners, work against that “trust.”

Youth in Church Group D knew of many young people not taking precautions and also knew of condom usage. They also knew of couples staying monogamous and using the withdrawal method, as well as couples engaging in sex play that did not include vaginal-penis contact. “Most adolescents experiment with a broad range of sexual behaviors from petting, to oral sex, to sexual intercourse,” according to the PPFA white paper.

When asked what would make abstinence an easier choice for young people, a church and girl group (groups B and C) both suggested “staying in the house.” They diverged on their remaining suggestions. Church Group B recommended more usage of the “Baby Think it Over” parenting simulation doll, extracurricular activities, and community service. The Girl Group C suggested “take it (sex) off TV” and “stop talking about it so much.” The media is indicted by research as a culprit for not depicting sexual responsibility and negative consequences in TV programming containing sex scenes. According to The PPFA Fact Sheet “Reducing Teen Pregnancy” (December 1999), “research clearly shows that television portrayals contribute to sexual socialization — watching programs high in sexual content has been correlated with the early initiation of adolescent intercourse.”

The girls in Group A who knew of sexually active girls using protection and of sexually active girls with multiple partners identified childbirth videos, teen parent lecturers, and visits to schools for pregnant girls as contributors toward abstinence. The youth in Church Group D thought that dating virgins or strong determined partners with similar values was an effective combination for making abstinence an easier choice. They also suggested learning methods of self-control. These suggestions, in addition to the Baby Think it Over Doll, also surfaced in focus groups conducted by Professors Gagne & Tewksbury & Cummings in 1996.

Discussion

These focus groups contained black youth from almost every zip code in Jefferson County. While these groups were not statistically representative of all black youth in the city and county, they did represent a sample of the segment of that population that seems to be at greatest risk. Consequently, instructive observations can be drawn from the feedback offered in these sessions.

The views and concerns expressed by these youth demonstrate that sex education must be aggressively embraced by families, faith-based and secular community groups. The faith-based participants were unashamed to mention “temptation,” “urges,” creative sex play to avoid pregnancy, “oral sex protection” and “same sex relationships.” The ability of the youth to be candid in both church settings spoke to the comfort and perceived safety of their particular faith environments. Such communication and security can be scarce in faith communities and is usually indicative of progressive views on the part of faith-based leadership with respect to addressing the needs of the “whole person.” Access to medically accurate information and the ability to communicate with respected adults have both been found to help teens delay sex. Those youth with such access who choose to be sexually active tend to be responsible about avoiding pregnancy and disease. Nevertheless, those who question the propriety of sex education in the church should take note of what these youth considered necessary ingredients for sexual responsibility:

- the importance of self-control;
- the role of values in decision-making; and,
- the need for relationships with like-minded partners to strengthen commitments to abstinence.

These were offered without prompting and with sincerity. These comments reveal an awareness that sexuality encompasses more than physical dimensions. It is a point that faith-based institutions can build upon.

The comments from the two all-girl groups suggest that some girls are taking responsibility for their sexual and reproductive health by using birth control and condoms. However, the risk-taking these groups were aware of in their neighborhoods was widespread and troublesome — multiple partners, “pleasing partner” emphasis, dating older men, and beginning sexual activity at age 14 and younger. Issues concerning a lack of father figures and the impact of sexual abuse require a more thorough investigation than was possible for this project, but both warrant further in-depth study. Yet, seeing this combination of risks “through the eyes” of these girls yielded more practical recommendations from them for supporting abstinence, TV restrictions, childbirth videos, teen parent lecturers and visits to high schools for pregnant and parenting teens.

Recommendations

A report on local “Adolescent Views on Sex and Sexuality: Issues Affecting Teen Pregnancy Prevention Programs” (Gagne, Tewksbury, and Cummings, 1996) contains several recommendations germane to these research findings:

Recommendation 1: Develop peer education programs that utilize younger adults or teens living with STIs or HIV, as well as teen parents, to discuss with peers the effects of STI, HIV, and teen pregnancy on their lives.

Recommendation 2: Develop educational programs for parents of teens that emphasize how to discuss openly sexual issues, sexual values, contraception, sexually transmitted diseases, relationships and family life issues; part of this curriculum needs to include helping adult men develop positive communication patterns with teens, especially daughters.

Recommendation 3: Emphasize the importance of condoms for lowering risks of STIs and HIV.

Recommendation 4: Develop confidential, adult-facilitated support groups, where teens are provided the opportunity to discuss questions, concerns, and experiences informally and explore ways to manage sexual pressures through the open exchange of information. The role of the adult should be to facilitate communication among teens so that coping strategies are shared and accurate information can be provided.

Recommendation 5: Develop confidential, facilitated support groups for parents of teens wherein they are provided opportunities to informally discuss questions, concerns, and experiences and to empower one another (and themselves) regarding ways to openly discuss sexual issues with their children.

Though other recommendations emanated from the focus groups conducted by Gagne et al, these are most relevant to the concerns expressed in the focus groups conducted for this research.

Planned Parenthood of Greater Louisville (PPGL) is a logical vehicle through which to implement recommendations that recognize the need for sex education programming for youth and adults. For parents, PPGL partners with the Jefferson County Health Department on a parent-child communication program called “Let’s Talk”, which is designed to help parents feel more comfortable talking about sexuality issues with their children. PPGL’s teen peer education programs are available for teens that want to listen to knowledgeable teens lead discussions about a range of dating and sexual health issues. There are also workshops and presentations available to prepare youth workers to assist youth with questions about dating and sex, as well as training for youth who want to become peer educators in their various social networks or faith communities. There are also family sex education sessions to facilitate parent/child conversations in a safe and structured environment.

Relatively easy access to sexual and reproductive health services is guaranteed for black youth in Louisville and Jefferson County because of 1) laws ensuring confidentiality with service; 2) low-cost and no-cost services which are underwritten by federal Title X funds to those with limited ability to pay; and 3) the number and county-wide locations of community resources which include the Planned Parenthood clinics, the Jefferson County Health Department’s Family Health Centers and Specialty Clinic, and others.

The views of these focus group youth substantiated a large body of research that calls for more parent/child communication, and freer access to sex education

and sexual health services. However, the first step in this journey is to realize that there is a wide gap between the onset of puberty (which comes earlier) and age at marriage (which now comes much later) which leaves quite a few years during which many adolescents and young adults may choose to have sex. PPFA reminds us that:

Teaching young people that premarital sex is a moral failure does not prevent pregnancy. Studies show that those with fearful and negative attitudes about sexuality are less likely to use contraception when they have sex than those who believe they have a right to decide to have sex” (PPFA “Reducing Teen Pregnancy”); and

Adolescents are sexually active and society has a responsibility to address this reality directly rather than deny it, fear it, revile it or attempt to wish it away” (PPFA “White Paper”).

Resistance to these realizations has placed the United States at the top of industrialized countries with the highest rates of teen births and “with the highest rates of curable STIs in the developed world and higher than in some developing countries” (PPFA “STI”). Trends observable in Louisville and Jefferson County are consistent with this larger societal pattern. There is no question that the current state of black youth, their sexual attitudes, and levels of sexual risk-taking behavior must be met head on with an organized and informed response from their families and the community at large. The high rates demand it, sexual and reproductive health requires it, and community resources can support it.

PART VII

Selected Issues

Residential Patterns by Race

Louisville has been and remains a crazy quilt of neighborhoods (and now suburbs) identifiable by race and class. As noted previously, where African-American families “live” has far-reaching consequences in the lives of their children — and where African Americans live in the Louisville area has seldom been determined solely by either choice or chance.

In early Jefferson County, the vast majority of African Americans were enslaved and lived on their owners’ property. Otherwise, there were only a few scattered free black laborers and one embryonic black hamlet located near modern-day Newburg Road and Indian Trail, property probably used and then definitely purchased by Henry and Eliza Tevis in 1851.¹

In contrast, black residential patterns in early Louisville were far more complex. For example, African Americans were clustered in areas immediately east and west of “downtown” and, by 1860, African Americans lived as far west as Fifteenth Street and as far east as Hancock Street, north of Broadway (then the southern border of the city). Within these neighborhoods, the spatial

distribution of free blacks overlapped that of enslaved African Americans. Enslaved African Americans who were “hired out” often “lived out” as well — and often boarded with free African Americans. None of these neighborhoods were segregated, per se, although African Americans often lived in the alleys, in certain sections of a block or on a certain “side” of a street. Whites were always nearby and their proximity was seen as necessary to monitoring the free and regulating the enslaved black populations.² This would not remain the case after the Civil War.

Through an influx of rural African Americans, Louisville’s black population increased by 120 percent between 1860 and 1870, and continued to grow for decades thereafter. Postwar commercial growth, an expanded manufacturing base and railroad construction provided job opportunities for these new arrivals and some achieved limited success in the city’s thriving economy. However, the informal economy of Louisville’s households and streets absorbed most black migrants and often permitted only bare subsistence because of low wages and frequent unemployment.³

Such rapid population growth also produced extreme overcrowding and prompted the creation of new black neighborhoods in the city and new black hamlets in the county. These neighborhoods and rural communities became increasingly segregated over time as the physical proximity between blacks and whites permitted under slavery — when there was an immense status gulf between the races — gave way to an insistence on physical distance after emancipation eliminated, at least in theory, the status difference. This insistence manifested itself most graphically in the development, not of one “black-only” section of the city and county, but of a patchwork of racially identifiable neighborhoods scattered throughout the region. For example, the most important city neighborhoods to emerge after 1865 were: Smoketown, east of downtown Louisville and south of Broadway; Brownstown, near second Magnolia in the area later developed as St. James Court; the California neighborhood, south along Fifteenth and adjacent streets; “Fort Hill” near Shelby and Burnett; “Little Africa” (west Parkland) in southwest Louisville; and the “Russell neighborhood”, expanding westward to Twenty-first Street (by 1914). In the County, the most significant black settlements were: Berrytown and Griffytown near Anchorage in the 1870s; Petersburg, as an enlargement of Newburg (the Tevis section) in the 1870s; the “Neck” in the Harrod’s Creek area; and Orell in southwestern Jefferson County.⁴

By World War I, the western edge of the Russell Neighborhood was home to much of Louisville’s small black business and professional class. Continuing population growth produced intense pressure to extend this neighborhood farther westward and, in 1914, white Louisvillians sought to counter this pressure with a Residential Segregation Ordinance. African Americans opposed the ordinance in court and, with the support of the newly formed NAACP, were successful in having it ruled unconstitutional in the *Buchanan v. Warley* case (1917). Thereafter, African Americans began occupying the area between Twenty-First and the vicinity of Thirty-First Streets, between Broadway and

Market Streets. In a telling example of the attitudes of local whites, ordinances were passed that changed the names of the east-west streets that ran through both the “black” and “white” sections of West Louisville. Specifically, Thirty-First Street became the “boundary” at which Walnut Street became Michigan Drive, Madison Street became Vermont Avenue, Chestnut Street became River Park Drive, Magazine Street became Del Park Terrace, et al.⁵

By World War II, black population remained concentrated in these “zones”, as identified by Dr. C. H. Parrish, Jr., of Louisville Municipal College and described in Kern’s 1948 study of the local African-American community:

Negroes have almost crowded out the entire white population in the first zone (Sixth to Fourteenth Street). Within the boundaries of this zone are located most of the Negro business establishments, amusement centers, the Central High School, YMCA, and many professional men’s offices.

In the second zone (Fourteenth to Twenty-first Street) Negroes comprise approximately three-fourths of the dwellings. Up to about twenty-five years ago the farthest extension of the Negro population westward did not go beyond this zone.

The third zone (from Twenty-first to Thirty-first Street) has Negroes as approximately two-thirds of its residents. It is the most desirable residential area for Negroes, many of whom are homeowners. This is also the area of the higher social and economic class of the Negro population.

To the east of the central business district is a Negro area, the northern portion of which is often referred to as “Uptown.” This area has been characterized by abject poverty and high juvenile delinquency rates. The southern portion of the area, known as “Smoketown”, has on the whole a finer tone. The homes are much better than are those in “Uptown.” Many of the families are homeowners and are white-collar and professional workers. Within the area are such institutions as a junior high school, a branch of the public library, and a neighborhood theatre.

Southwest of the central business district there is a string of Negro communities extending with a single break to the city limits. These areas . . . are known as: “California,” “Cabbage Patch,” “Little Africa,” and “Parkland.”⁶

Louisville, like many older American cities, underwent “urban renewal” in the late 1950s and early 1960s. As in the case of other cities, renewal plans targeted and demolished inner city core neighborhoods occupied primarily by African Americans and some poor and working class whites. In Louisville, an interesting cascade effect unfolded: the older black neighborhoods east and west of downtown were razed; blacks from these neighborhoods moved into the far western section of the city, as white residents were stampeded (i.e., “block busting”, then “white flight”) into the south end of the city and county. Table VII-1 captures conditions in selected black neighborhoods as this transformation unfolded. These statistics also reflect the degree to which neighborhood and socio-economic status overlapped.

Table VII-1: Selected Population Characteristics: 1950–1964
Data Summary⁷ (Selected Neighborhoods)

Criterion	Chickasaw	Russell			Southwick	Parkland	East
		West	Middle	East			
<i>Population</i>							
1950	8,261	9,161	9,755	10,196	3,999	5,583	9,780
1960	9,248	7,786	7,715	6,710	10,656	5,293	7,775
1964	9,775	7,543	7,581	3,939	10,476	4,852	7,290
<i>% Black</i>							
	84	80	93	82	78	85	73
<i>% 0–19 Years Old</i>							
	41	36	36	40	60	41	44
<i>% in one or no Parent</i>							
	21	39	51	54	23	29	36
<i>Median Family Income</i>							
	\$5,300	\$3,900	\$3,300	\$2,100	\$3,900	\$4,700	\$2,800
<i>AFDC per 100 people</i>							
	25	103	131	112	127	64	119
<i>Juvenile Crime Referrals per 1000 people</i>							
	5	12	25	14	18	9	28
<i>Total Housing Units (1960)</i>							
	2,718	2,580	3,101	2,546	2,240	1,559	2,484
<i>% Deteriorating</i>							
	8	25	42	34	8	15	18
<i>% Owner Occupied</i>							
	76	47	30	9	36	64	27
<i>Median Years Education</i>							
	10.5	8.7	8.4	8.2	9.2	9.4	8.4

African Americans from the city also moved to and enlarged historically black enclaves in the county, e.g., Newburg. At the same time, the black population increased (as depicted in Table VII-2, below) through migration and, in less than a decade, the “West End” — with the exception of the predominantly white Portland neighborhood — became black. Thus, residential segregation actually increased. Given this background, one can understand the sense of urgency driving the struggle for Open Housing in the mid-1960s.⁸

Table VII-2: African Americans in Louisville MSA: 1940–1990⁹

Year	Blacks	%	Whites	%	Total
1940	58,565	11.6	447,956	88.4	506,565
1950	70,150	11.0	564,717	88.9	635,037
1960	87,212	11.0	704,120	88.9	791,953
1970	105,294	11.6	799,790	88.2	906,752
1980	120,610	12.6	829,217	86.7	956,756
1990	124,761	13.1	818,898	86.0	952,662

Along with these population shifts, the institutional framework of the African-American community was transformed radically by the end of legal segregation. African Americans were no longer compelled to duplicate in the black community the institutions from which they were barred in the larger community. Within a generation, the community itself would be transformed as Louisville's predominantly black neighborhoods became "bedroom" communities (where people lived but neither worked nor shopped), identifiable by race and class, with few community-based institutions or amenities, other than churches.

By 1990 the city's 79,783 African-American residents were concentrated primarily in the West End; another 44,978 were scattered throughout the metropolitan area. One indicator of the extent to which black and whites lived in separate "worlds" is the segregation index, as shown in Table VII-3, below. This index has values that range from 0 to 100 and represents the minimum percentage of African Americans who would need to move from their current place of residence to produce a non-segregated residential distribution, i.e., the higher the value, the higher the degree of residential segregation.

Table VII-3: Louisville Segregation Index¹⁰

	Louisville Population	Black Population	% Black	Segregation Index
1940	319,077	47,158	14.8	70.0
1950	369,129	57,657	15.6	73.6
1960	390,639	70,075	17.9	78.9
1970	361,472	86,040	23.8	83.6
1980	298,451	84,060	28.2	80.0
1990	269,063	79,783	29.7	75.4

The fluctuations in this index reflect the combined effects of Urban Renewal and suburbanization. Once again, African Americans became an ever-larger segment of a declining Louisville population after World War II — and tended to become increasingly segregated. However, in recent years, the growing African-American population has moved to the county and spread into previously all-white neighborhoods, causing a slight reduction (however temporary) in the degree of residential segregation. Early returns from the 2000 Census indicate that this process continued through the 1990s and that, while African Americans have become more dispersed geographically, local black population remains concentrated in certain neighborhoods. While some working class and most middle class African Americans and their children have a choice between living in segregated and non-segregated neighborhoods, those who are both black and poor do not.

Crime, Delinquency and the Criminal Justice System

Beginning in the post-emancipation era, it was not uncommon for poverty, slum conditions, limited opportunities for education and decent employment,

and limited social and recreational outlets to produce widespread delinquency among African-American youth. Through the era of segregation, such delinquency was an abiding community concern. For example, when wayward black youth were excluded from the "industrial home" (i.e., reform school) opened for delinquent white males in 1871, local African Americans protested loudly. With the support of some whites, a "black industrial home" was established for black males in 1877 (which usually housed more than one hundred occupants at any given time) and a home for delinquent black females was constructed in 1893. By the 1880s, movements to organize a YMCA and, in later years, to sponsor settlement houses were promoted as strategies for salvaging troubled youth. African-American churches, often under the leadership of African-American women, played a major role in such efforts.¹¹

Even an African-American community as stable as that in Louisville was still relatively poor and could support only a small class of black professionals and entrepreneurs. As a result, many of the children of Louisville's black middle class began moving to northern or western cities long ago — a process of out-migration that continues to this day. Among those less fortunate, relatively few completed high school by the 1940s and fewer still learned a trade or attended college. Most young African Americans began working in adolescence — most young men as unskilled or semi-skilled laborers and most young women as either laborers or domestic workers. For many young people, the lure of the "streets" led to crime and delinquency. What awaited young African Americans in those streets was a troubling and long-standing relationship between blacks, crime, the police and the courts. As Kerns noted in a 1948 study conducted for the Louisville Urban League:

... the laxity of police officers is a contributory factor to vice and crime in the city. Number playing, lottery and other gambling games are engaged in by both Negroes and whites with only periodic interference . . . Under the guise of clubs, some places are being operated as gambling houses . . . Much information on the operating of "speakeasies," and gambling under the guise of respectability of social clubs was provided by probation officers . . . A Negro businessman in discussing open gambling and policy games, stated that the "little man" is arrested, the operators of the "big places" are seldom interfered with by police officers . . .

The most frequent and largest number of Negro arrests come from the most destitute communities. The concern over the high homicide rates among Negroes in the city appear to be justified . . . In 1945 there were forty-eight homicides in Louisville of which eleven were whites and thirty-seven were Negro. . . During the period 1946 through 1947 there were fifty-five Negro males killed by other Negro males and fourteen Negro males killed by Negro females . . .

Prostitution among Negroes and whites which was a major problem during World War II continues to be of major concern to forces of law and decency.¹²

African-American youth in the poorer black neighborhoods lived in this atmosphere of crime and license, as Kerns also describes:

All evidence, statistical and otherwise, indicates that the problem of delinquency among Negro juveniles is far from being satisfactorily solved. This is without question due largely to environmental factors, employment limitations, in the absence of adequate recreational opportunities . . . the incidence of delinquency among Negroes is much greater than their ratio in the general population.¹³

To illustrate, a 1947 survey conducted by the Louisville Crime Prevention Bureau reported the data captured below, indicating that African-American youth were arrested in disproportionate numbers and were subject to more severe penalties than were white youth:

**Table VII-4: White and Black Youth: Arrests and Case Disposition
Louisville, 1946¹⁴**

Arrest and Disposition	N	%
<i>Total Arrests</i>	1,771	
White male	958	71.5
Black male	381	28.5
White female	369	85.4
Black female	63	14.6
<i>Paroled to Crime Prevention Bureau</i>	209	
White males	136	77.7
Black males	39	22.3
White females	31	91.2
Black females	3	8.8
<i>Referred to Juvenile Court</i>	1,562	
White males	737	68.3
Black males	342	31.7
White females	338	84.9
Black females	60	15.1

Kerns emphasized the lack of leisure time activities for youth and noted that much of the problem was centered in and around the “Old Walnut Street” business district, of which he offered a less romanticized and more historically accurate description than has been customary in recent years:

This area, which is heavily populated by Negroes, is one of blight with numerous beer taverns, clubs and cheap rooming houses, overcrowding, and an area at present in transition from residences to businesses.

He concludes by reiterating the “correlation between bad housing, poverty, crime and divorce, and the high incidence of juvenile delinquency . . . present to a more or less marked degree in Louisville.”¹⁵

Beginning in the late 1970s, the number of juveniles of color arrested and confined in the nation’s jails began to climb steeply. In a report prepared for the U. S. Department of Justice, “disproportionate minority confinement” is deemed to exist when “the proportion of minorities in detention, correctional facilities, and jails exceeds their percentage of the general population.” The report continued:

The most recent statistics available reveal significant racial and ethnic disparity in the confinement of juvenile offenders. In 1997, minorities made up about one-third of the juvenile population nationwide but accounted for nearly two-thirds of the detained and committed population in secure juvenile facilities. For black juveniles, the disparities were most evident. While black juveniles age 10 to 17 made up about 15% of the juvenile population, they accounted for 26% of the juveniles arrested and 45% of the delinquency cases involving detention. About one-third of adjudicated cases involved black youth, yet 40% of juveniles in residential placements were black. These are numbers that cannot be ignored.¹⁶

Thomas summarized the most recent Kentucky data for the Kentucky Department of Juvenile Justice:

- Kentucky has an estimated minority population of 10%.
- In 1999, 41% of the youth admitted to detention were minorities, a rate four times greater than their percentage of the general population.
- Just over 25% of the juveniles committed to the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) in 1999 were minorities.
- Males, both white and minority, are over-represented at all stages of the juvenile justice system.
- Black males are the most over-represented group of juveniles with a detention rate seven times greater than their proportion of the general population.
- In the calendar year 1999, black males were committed to DJJ at a rate five times greater than their overall representation in the total juvenile population.
- Overrepresentation was even more pronounced among those juveniles transferred to criminal court for prosecution as an adult. Minority youth made up over half (56%) of the transfer population.¹⁷

When gender and selected county are considered in the analysis, the degree of disproportion becomes quite striking, as revealed below:

**Table VII-5: Juvenile Detention in Kentucky 1999
By Race, Gender and Selected County¹⁸**

County	Females				Males				Grand Total
	Black	White	Other	Total	Black	White	Other	Total	
Breathitt	6	130	0	136	19	511	4	534	670
Daviess	60	238	1	299	188	562	5	755	1054
Hardin	29	188	7	224	84	453	17	554	778
Fayette	219	351	4	574	621	770	48	1439	2013
Jefferson*	242	203	13	458	1382	915	77	2374	2832

*Estimated

Based on these data, the degree of disproportion is most pronounced in Jefferson County — where 58.2 percent of all the juvenile males and 52.8 percent of all juvenile females detained were black. Thomas concluded that, “if minority children receive more punitive outcomes than similarly situated white youths, reforms are needed to ensure that juvenile justice decision making is racially neutral.”

One of the specific dangers inherent in the growing isolation of some segments of the local African-American community is that the many complex adjustments made to live under the often deprived and unnatural conditions can produce a “group” culture with behavioral and attitudinal norms that differ both from the mainstream of American — and African-American — culture. These differences can all-too-often be termed deviant and, once so defined, such differences can all-too-easily be criminalized. Young African Americans, as noted, have a long history of being viewed as “suspect” simply because they are young and black, particularly if they are young, black and male. Being “suspect,” poor, under-educated, unemployed and idle — many of these young people become “criminals” without having committed any crime. If criminalized — legitimately or not — they are less likely, as noted above, to receive help and more likely to be institutionalized. Once institutionalized, few escape the repeating cycle of jail, release, probation, crime and recidivism.

In any human society, there will be some criminals, but their numbers will be extremely small. Such is the case in most nations. However, when “difference” is viewed as an indicator of actual or potential criminality, the numbers may be much larger — particularly in an extremely diverse society. And, if the members of a particular racial and social class formation have the power to impose themselves and their norms as a societal standard — then those most different will be most suspect. And because of the visible marker of color, young African Americans who are not poor — are equally “suspect” and equally vulnerable to the same “racial profiling” and its potentially devastating consequences.

Thus, by the 1990s, violent crime had become endemic in the most segregated and impoverished African-American neighborhoods despite efforts launched by local government and financial institutions to build low-cost housing and stimulate economic development. In essence, African Americans are and have long been arrested and confined in significantly disproportionate numbers both

in Kentucky and the nation. African American youth are no exception. However, the sheer number of young people detained and confined in recent decades has reached crisis proportions — transforming what was once the likely fate of a small minority of black youth from marginal neighborhoods into a veritable “rite of passage” for a large minority of today’s young African Americans. Once again, those young African Americans most isolated and impoverished, and least educated, seem doubly penalized by a juvenile justice system disinclined to treat them fairly.

Class, Culture and Identity: “Community” and Youth in the Post-Civil Rights Era

African Americans followed two distinct economic and social trajectories after the Civil Rights reforms of the mid-1960s. In order to achieve middle class status, a large minority of African Americans took advantage of new educational and employment opportunities, and partook of less restricted access at least to the tributaries of the American mainstream. By the mid-1970s, this group had roughly tripled in relative “size.” However, American society did not become “color-blind.” As American politics shifted to the “right” and racism became respectable again in the Reagan era, many “middle class” African Americans — much as the older class and “color” elites — came inevitably to consider themselves a group both rejected by most whites yet separate from most poor and working class African Americans.

Under segregation, this group was contained within the same physical space and constrained by the same racial barriers as were other African Americans. However, with the end of legal segregation, geographic containment was no longer legal. Racial barriers were razed in some cases and strengthened in others. And both the “old” black “middle class” of the pre-Brown era and the “new” black “middle class” created by the Civil Rights era dispersed — whether to mixed neighborhoods or upscale segregated enclaves on the fringes of African-American communities, leaving the other two-thirds of the African-American population “behind.” That the economic status of this two-thirds of black America — and similar proportions of the Latino and Native American populations — was ignored a generation ago left a legacy of still unresolved problems. In this context, crime, social dysfunction, drugs and hopelessness are merely the second and third generation manifestations of these problems in the present. Such widening class divisions represented — not a measure of the “declining significance of race” of which William Julius Wilson wrote in 1977 — but merely the evolution of a new and more complex construction of race in post-Civil Rights America.

Along with the African-American “middle class” discovering it was not immune to discrimination and racial profiling, the relative isolation of poor and working-class African Americans (typically in urban areas) had cultural and social consequences beyond purely objective inequalities in opportunity and quality of life. Racial isolation in the present is not synonymous with racial segregation in the past. In communities now both racially and economically homogeneous, cultural values and behaviors have become “disconnected,” not only from

mainstream American culture but, in many respects, from the mainstream of African-American history and culture as well.

Dr. Kenneth Clark, whose research provided the social science basis for the 1954 *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education* decision, was keenly aware that the end of legal segregation would change the meaning of community for African Americans. For some, community would become an empty construct. For most, community would come to mean “shared racial identity” and “shared interests” — to varying degrees — but no longer “shared geography.” While the more fortunate would have their own problems, for those left behind, community would become a trap. Clark expressed this problem cogently in his seminal and all-too-often ignored masterwork, *Dark Ghetto* (1964):

Human beings . . . whose daily experience tells them that almost nowhere in society are they respected and granted the ordinary dignity and courtesy accorded to others will, as a matter of course, begin to doubt their own worth. Since every human being depends upon his cumulative experiences with others for clues as to how he should view and value himself, children who are consistently rejected understandably begin to question and doubt whether they, their family, and their group really deserve no more respect from the larger society than they receive. These doubts become the seeds of a pernicious self- and group-hatred, the Negro’s complex and debilitating prejudice against himself . . . whether a Negro woman uses hair straightener or whether she highlights her natural hair by flaunting au naturel styles, whether a Negro man hides behind a neat Ivy League suit or wears blue jeans defiantly . . . each is still reacting primarily to the pervasive factor of race and still not free to take himself for granted or to judge himself by the usual standards of personal success and character.¹⁹

In such circumstances, the responses of black youth to this unnatural social environment betray the same anger, bitterness and frustration, but without the framework provided by a deep sense of rootedness in one’s culture, a framework necessary to “making sense” of their experiences and devising strategies to change the conditions under which they live. Of course, by ignoring how this unnatural environment was created, many Americans, including many Americans of color, can focus only on what the environment itself created — a prison with invisible walls, with its many frightening and inchoate expressions of bitterness.²⁰ Clark noted that, if left alone, these conditions would worsen and recommended large-scale, sustained community-wide intervention to attack these problems directly.

Based on historical and objective data, his insights have been confirmed by developments in the generation and more since his book appeared. Unfortunately, Clark’s viewpoint was and is widely rejected by both blacks and whites. Perhaps, the reasons are both troubling and simple: seeing the “truth” of the present and past requires that white Americans, in general, acknowledge their own racial privilege; that “conservative” black Americans acknowledge the power and persistence of institutional racism; and that both “liberal” and “nationalistic” African Americans rethink the distinction between pluralism and

separatism.²¹ In other words, to address the problems of African-American youth in Louisville and elsewhere, a great many Americans must reject the comfort of illusions, face some unflattering “non-ideological” facts and do what they do not wish to do.

Endnotes

1. Hudson, “African Americans,” 2001.
2. Curry, 1981; Hudson, 1998; Wade, 1964.
3. *Ibid.*; George C. Wright, *Life Behind a Veil: Blacks in Louisville, Kentucky, 1865-1930* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985); George H. Yater, *Two Hundred Years at the Falls of the Ohio: A History of Louisville and Jefferson County* (Louisville: The Filson Club, 1987).
4. Hudson, “African Americans,” 2001.
5. *Ibid.*; Wright, 1985.
6. J. Harvey Kerns, *A Survey of the Economic and Cultural Conditions of the Negro Population of Louisville, Kentucky* (New York: National Urban League, 1948): 13, 15-16.
7. Louisville and Jefferson County Planning Commission, *Neighborhood Analysis — Inventory of Data* (Louisville: Louisville and Jefferson County Planning Commission, 1970).
8. J. Blaine Hudson, “Civil Rights in Kentucky” *Kentucky Bar Association Bench and Bar*, 63, 3(1999), 8-11.
9. U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Census of Population: 1870-1990*; 1990 Public Law 94-171 File; U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Negro Population: 1790-1915* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1918): 150.
10. Scott Cummings and Michael Price, “Race Relations and Public Policy in Louisville: Historical Development of an Urban Underclass”, *Journal of Black Studies*, 27, 5(1997): 615-649.
11. Marion B. Lucas, *A History of Blacks in Kentucky, Volume 1: From Slavery to Segregation, 1760-1891* (Frankfort: Kentucky Historical Society, 1992): 314-316; George D. Wilson, *A Century of Negro Education in Louisville, Kentucky* (Louisville: Louisville Municipal College, 1941); Wright, 1985.
12. J. Harvey Kerns, *A Survey of the Economic and Cultural Conditions of the Negro Population of Louisville, Kentucky* (New York: National Urban League, 1948): 117-119.
13. *Ibid.* 125.
14. *Ibid.*, 127.
15. *Ibid.*
16. U. S. Department of Justice, “Minorities in the Juvenile Justice System” (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Department of Justice, 1999) in Randy S. Thomas, *Kentucky Disproportionate Minority Confinement Initiative: Interim Report* (Frankfort, KY: Kentucky Department of Juvenile Justice, 2000): 3.
17. Randy S. Thomas, *Kentucky Disproportionate Minority Confinement Initiative: Interim Report* (Frankfort, KY: Kentucky Department of Juvenile Justice, 2000): i-ii.
18. *Ibid.*, 29.
19. Kenneth B. Clark, *Dark Ghetto: Dilemmas of Social Power* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1964): 63-64.

20. Bart Landry, *The New Black Middle Class* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987).
21. Pluralism stresses the importance of maintaining racial identity, history and culture within the context of shared and equal citizenship in a racially diverse society. In other words, pluralism is the goal of a truly multi-racial democracy. Separatism, in its extreme form, is based on the premise that one can reject being part of a country and somehow live independent of it — while still remaining within its boundaries. However, nearly four centuries of African-American history indicates that one must either stay or go — either choice is an individual matter and defensible as such — but one cannot do both simultaneously.

PART VIII

Conclusion and Recommendations

A wealth of historical and empirical information pertaining to young African Americans in Louisville has been reviewed in this preliminary report. However, it is crucial to distinguish between the facts that educate and edify, and those that provide the intellectual tools needed to bring about real change in the real world. Both are important and both have been presented in some “quantity.” However, in bringing closure, some facts and patterns are significantly more illuminating and more helpful than others.

First, it is essential to understand that **the most pressing problems of African-American youth have a long history.** If the history is wrong, the problems cannot be understood clearly — and, if the problems cannot be understood clearly, they cannot be solved (unless one believes in luck). In this regard, the conclusions are simple. While race relations and the surface circumstances of everyday life have changed dramatically for African Americans in the Louisville region over the past two centuries, the objective status of African Americans relative to that of their white fellow-citizens has changed comparatively little.

Second, it is essential to understand the empirical reality of young African Americans over time. If the facts of social science are excluded, problems and issues can only be approached through normative belief systems or unscientific anecdotes. And, once again, the conclusions are straightforward. **African Americans in the aggregate remain at the “top” of every list of “bad social indicators” and at the “bottom” of every list of “good social indicators.”** Although some African Americans are far more “integrated” into the economic and social fabric of the Louisville MSA, many remain marginal, under-educated and in some degree of relative isolation.

Third, as the data reviewed in this report have shown, such broad social indicators often obscure the internal diversity within the African-American population. In other words, **members of a diverse group may share a common history and a broadly defined identity and culture, but experience their daily lives in radically different ways depending on their neighborhood, education, economic status, etc.** To the extent that problems long-unaddressed have become conditions, the implications of the growing

internal complexity of the local African-American community must be kept clearly in mind in any efforts to formulate and implement solutions. And, oddly enough, the comparatively “good” economic times of the Clinton era improved the overall status of African Americans but served to create deeper class divisions among African Americans. African-American youth both benefited and suffered from these trends.

In these crucial respects, the forces of change at work over the past generations brought progress toward — but not the achievement of — multi-racial democracy and equality in this area. Such progress has been neither linear nor cyclical, but rather a history of “fits” and “starts,” and limited yet unevenly distributed opportunities. Based on these broad conclusions, there are several guiding assumptions that must frame specific recommendations to improve the status of local African-American youth.

Guiding Assumptions

There can be no meaningful and lasting improvement in the lives and life chances of African-American youth unless the larger scale inequalities between African Americans and whites are addressed in this metropolitan area. These strategies must focus on eliminating, over the next generation, measurable inequalities in: educational outcomes and attainment; employment and economic opportunities; income and wealth; and health care. In other words, there may be short- as well as long-term strategies, but no “quick-fixes.”

There is no historical evidence that these inequalities of condition, past and/or present, are “caused” by any innate differences in either physical or mental capacity between racial groups — or by any learned differences in culture. In other words, change is possible.

No constructive action(s) can be conceived or undertaken unless the local community first admits there is a problem, that it is a community problem — not merely an African-American problem.

African Americans must be centrally involved in defining this problem, choosing and implementing corrective strategies, and in assessing the effects of those strategies.

All strategies to improve the lives and life chances of African-American youth must be secular and non-ideological — and based on an objective understanding of the pertinent facts of history and social science. In other words, this problem can be solved if the community is committed and clear-sighted — and the dictates of knowledge and belief are not confused with one another.

Much as the two sides of the same coin, the different segments of the local African-American community are the same (both parts of the same coin) yet not the same (each a different side). Thus, each broadly defined problem/issue must have at least two solutions or strategies.

Recommendations

The conditions confronting African-American youth and the problems inherent in those conditions are not new. These problems have persisted and, in some cases, have grown more serious — not because solutions are lacking — but because this community has failed to act on certain specific recommendations advanced, time after time, over the past century and more. These recommendations, and the “bottom line” of this preliminary analysis, are simple, straightforward and far-reaching, and focus on several specific domains in which specific types of improvement are essential.

This final section will restate specific recommendations advanced in a few sections of the report and add a number of others. The research team believes that these recommendations are interdependent and should be implemented in their totality. There are no priorities; each is and all are important.

Education

- **Provide a quality education with equity for all students.**
- **Provide an educational program that raises the achievement levels of all students with emphasis upon narrowing the gap between the achievement levels of African-American students and other students. Implement all recommendations of the Kentucky Department of Education Minority Achievement Task Force (Fall 2000):**

District Level — Systematically eliminate/replace lower level courses and tracking with more challenging curricula and supporting academic resources for students; ensure the adoption of non-bias textbooks (some written about and by various people of color).

School/Administrative Role — Teacher evaluation forms should include a category for assessing teacher attitude toward diverse learners (this form of bias identification will require training for some administrators); become more visible; follow-up on complaints of parents, students and other teachers concerning teacher effectiveness; establish consequences/hold teachers accountable; alternate time of parent/teacher conferences as to allow for caregivers who work different shifts

Teacher Role — A non-negotiable for all students to experience academic success is for teachers to have high expectations for all students. This will require pedagogical retooling, change management training and prejudice reduction workshops for many.

Parent Role — Demand excellence. Call/visit the school with questions concerning your child; join a support group such as Parent Teacher Association; get involved in SBDM; attend district sponsored Parent Universities and Parent Involvement Workshops sponsored by the Louisville Urban League to learn how to get involved.

- **Promote and encourage the use of effective and innovative instructional strategies throughout the district that ensure culturally relevant and socially responsive teaching in the classrooms**

District Level — Adopt requirements for continuing education in diversity as part of requirement for continuous employment and new hires. Partner with university teacher education programs and sponsor Diversity Institutes for Professional Development and continuing education credit.

- A measure was passed by the legislature and signed by Governor Paul E. Patton that allocated \$24 million for professional development programs, concentrating on middle school teachers. To that end, JCPS should step up its fifteen year-old commitment to hiring minority teachers (1985 Minority Teacher Recruitment Program).
- Initiate a major and sustained effort to increase the number of educators of color.
- Provide a staff development program that prepares all staff to work successfully with all students regardless of ethnic, cultural or socio-economic backgrounds:

School Level — Designate those “free” professional development hours for training in multicultural educational, conflict resolution strategies, learning styles, multiple intelligences and authentic assessment techniques.

Sexual Behavior and Health

- **Develop peer education programs that utilize younger adults or teens living with STIs or HIV, as well as teen parents, to discuss with peers the effects of STIs, HIV, and teen pregnancy on their lives.**
- **Develop educational programs for parents of teens that emphasize how to discuss openly sexual issues, sexual values, contraception, sexually transmitted diseases, relationships and family life issues; part of this curriculum needs to include helping adult men develop positive communication patterns with teens, especially daughters.**
- **Emphasize the importance of condoms for lowering risks of STIs and HIV.**
- **Develop confidential, adult-facilitated support groups, where teens are provided the opportunity to discuss questions, concerns, and experiences informally and explore ways to manage sexual pressures through the open exchange of information. The role of the adult should be to facilitate communication among teens so that coping strategies are shared and accurate information can be provided.**
- **Develop confidential, facilitated support groups for parents of teens wherein they are provided opportunities to informally discuss questions, concerns, and experiences and to empower one another (and themselves) regarding ways to openly discuss sexual issues with their children.**

Recreation

Young people need “something to do” and, ideally, some menu of age-appropriate activities that are both enjoyable and even educational. An extensive menu of community-based, age-appropriate recreational and social activity programs should be developed in the Louisville metropolitan area.

Youth Employment

The community-based initiatives recommended above should employ, on as large a scale as possible, African-American youth themselves (14-24 years of age). Such programs should be supported by a combination of public and private funds, and would be used to staff community centers, community social service agencies and civil rights organizations, extended school programs, services for seniors and pre-schoolers. The ultimate purpose would be to provide role models, mentoring and alternative sources of income.

Juvenile Justice, Crime and Delinquency Prevention

Along with the programs outlined above, specific initiatives should be developed and implemented to address juvenile crime, delinquency and drug-use. The emphasis should be on justice, prevention and diversion.

The local community — through its elected civic, business, educational and religious leaders must support a thorough restructuring of the local police department and criminal justice system. This process must include:

- On-going diversity training for police and officials of the justice system;
- Accountability standards that “make sense” to all segments of the community;
- Creation of a viable civilian review board;
- Treating juveniles as juveniles;
- Education and work programs for young offenders; and
- Expanded drug education and treatment, as needed.

Community Support Structure

Identify organizations in the community capable of dealing with the educational under-achievement of young black youth, particularly young black men in the City of Louisville, and work with them to strengthen and build their work programs.

Develop and implement community-based weekend and after school programs both to promote cultural education and to enrich the quality of instruction received by African-American youth in the local public and private schools.

Develop and implement through local colleges and universities a network of “talent identification” and “talent development” programs for African-American elementary, middle and high school students. These programs would link youth with older students and university faculty and staff — for the purpose of mentoring and preparing youth for higher education.

Implement a modest increase in city/county taxes to create a “community fund” to support such initiatives. The community cannot get “something for nothing” and, as Frederick Douglass stated in 1857: “Men may not get all they pay for in this life, but they must certainly pay for all they get.”

On-Going Research and Monitoring

Finally, there is a compelling need for on-going monitoring and research. Future studies should build on and extend the base established by this preliminary investigation. Such studies should monitor changes in crucial indicators and focus, perhaps, more narrowly — for example, on juvenile crime and justice issues, employment, poverty, sexuality, education and other appropriate topics. More specifically:

Establish and maintain an improved database that is original to and focused on minority communities in Louisville, especially West Louisville.

Improve coordination of efforts among organizations in Louisville in the area of research and program development.

Further investigations should be conducted on the question of Youth Education to determine the risk factors linked to the educational attainment of black youth. In particular, the following areas need further examination:

- Why are there not more young black youth attending and graduating from high school and college?
- Are young black men at risk given that 26.0 percent are without a high school diploma compared to young 19.4 percent of young black women and what are some of the social and economic consequences associated with this gender disparity?

Further investigations should be conducted on Youth Employment to determine in what activities the 80 percent of black youth (19–24 years) who are not enrolled in any school and who live in the City of Louisville are otherwise engaged? In particular, the following areas need further examination:

- In what activities are the 50 percent of black youth (19–24 years) that are not employed and who live in the City of Louisville otherwise engaged?
- What type of economic activities and opportunities are available to the 22 percent of the black youth (19–24 years) that do not have a high school diploma?
- What type of economic activities and opportunities are available to the 39 percent of black youth (19–24 years) who have a high school diploma but no college experience?

Further investigations should be conducted on Youth and Poverty to determine what factors contribute to 45–48 percent of the black youth in Louisville living below the poverty line of Kentucky? In particular, the following areas need further examination:

- Why do more young black women (53.4 percent) between the ages of 19–24 live below the poverty line compared to young black men (34.8 percent) in the same age range? Is there an association between age, gender and poverty?

Finally, the “world” in which young African Americans live is shaped by forces few of them “see” and by circumstances with origins few of them know or

understand. Because the “world” of the young is “small” — centered around family, neighborhood and school — the young are even more the victims or the beneficiaries of their environment than are the old, who have at least some power to change the conditions of their lives. The perceptions of young African Americans, as explored in Parts V and VI, also underscore another important truth: however much they may differ from one another, young African Americans differ even more from adults, black and white, and live in a “world” that adults make little effort to understand.

Because many young people do not become financially independent until they are 25 or older, i.e., well after they become sexually and physically mature, the “world” of youth and prolonged adolescence is the world in which young people live for a third or more of their lives. Based on the historical and empirical data reviewed in this report, it seems that African-American youth often live in a “corner” of this “youth culture” from which there are few “bridges” to the world of independent, constructive and psychologically whole adulthood. This is not a question of attitudes, but a question of opportunities.

If young African Americans have few bridges “out” of their world, the rest of the community must build more bridges “in.” They are, after all, our children. The recommendations outlined above are a first step toward that end.



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