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in partnership with the Urban EpiCenter
and the Center for Community Change**

THE STATE OF BLACKS IN MIDDLE TENNESSEE

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**Urban League
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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Urban League of Middle Tennessee's *State of Blacks in Middle Tennessee (SBMT)* report examines the multi-faceted predicament of blacks/African Americans¹ in Middle Tennessee in the twenty-first century. This report is comprised of six sections covering a myriad of issues affecting blacks: education, housing, employment, voting, criminal/juvenile justice, faith, child welfare/foster care, higher education, health care, politics, and immigration. Introducing each section is a "Letter to Nashville," or brief essay about race and livability in Middle Tennessee. Also included in this report is a section called "A Different Look," which offers a close look at race and socio-economic conditions in Nashville's neighborhoods.

SBMT reveals that Nashville is still *separate and unequal*, even 50 years after social justice and civil rights activists successfully challenged Jim Crow racism in the city's downtown sector. The taxonomy of contemporary racism (overt racism, institutional racism, racial disparity, racial polarization, racial steering, the black-white achievement gap) is as pervasive in the twenty-first century as it was in the 1960s. Despite this phenomenon, those reading this report will be encouraged by the authors' varied recommendations for addressing the crises affecting blacks in Middle Tennessee.

This report also highlights the mosaic of African-American life in Middle Tennessee, particularly Nashville-Davidson County. Nashville is home to four Historically Black Colleges and Universities (Tennessee State University, Fisk University, Meharry Medical College, American Baptist College) and a faith-based community that offers foundational support for civic participation and advocacy. Coverage of immigration issues typically focuses on Spanish-speaking immigrants, but this report shows that African immigrants have also enriched the region's cultural milieu. At the same time, activists, educators, and advocates continue to innovate with new initiatives to help improve the status of African Americans, especially those living in economically distressed communities.

SBMT is deeply grateful to the many persons and organizations that assisted with the development this publication. Patricia Stokes, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Urban League of Middle Tennessee, developed the initial idea and broader vision of the report. The Urban EpiCenter, a Nashville-based grassroots organization, and the Center for Community Change, a national organization that provides capacity building for grassroots organizations, both partnered with the Urban League and provided institutional support for this study. The *SBMT* also benefited from the consultation of the Resistance Movement and Social Justice Committee (RMSJC), a Nashville-based group initiated by Rev. James Lawson, one of the country's renowned theoreticians on nonviolent political struggle. Middle Tennessee State University's Department of Political Science also provided institutional resources in support of this project.

SBMT owes a special gratitude to Dr. Lucius Outlaw, Jr., Professor of Philosophy at Vanderbilt University, and M. Elizabeth Kirkland, a member of Urban EpiCenter's Board of Directors. Dr. Outlaw thoroughly reviewed the entire report and offered invaluable comments for improving it grammatically and substantively. His superb intellectual and editorial talents greatly enhanced the content of the report. Kirkland offered additional editorial recommendations and assisted with the formatting and design of the report.

¹ The terms "black and "African American" are used interchangeably throughout this report. The latter term, "African American," is hyphenated when it is used as an adjective.

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Finally, the authors/essayists in the *SBMT* report deserve a special thank you. Their thought-provoking, passionate essays and empirical studies will have a long-lasting impact on racial discourse and activism in Middle Tennessee.

Sekou M. Franklin, Editor

THE STATE OF BLACKS IN MIDDLE TENNESSEE

Letter to Nashville

50 Years of Civil Rights, 1960-2010: “So Little Gain, So Much Pain”

Those of us who participated in the 1960 sit-in movement that desegregated the City’s downtown corridor, the 1961 Freedom Rides that attacked segregated interstate transportation and commercial activities, and other racial/social justice and civil rights struggles in the 1960s, believed that Nashville really wanted to change. Yet we underestimated the resilience of institutional racism and white supremacy, which continue to cause great injury to black Nashvillians in the 21st century.

While my generation exposed the naked truths of U.S. racial apartheid and the racial caste system in Nashville, the City’s political and economic elites undermined our efforts by initiating policies that harmed the black community’s highly developed cultural politics, economic vitality, educational institutions, and neighborhoods. Sadly, 50 years after Nashville experienced some of the most important civil rights and social justice campaigns in U.S. history, most residents cannot accurately name the dates, places, targets, activities of historically black colleges and universities, and legal strategies that defined and augmented the sit-ins, “stand-ins,” “sleep-ins,” and freedom rides of my generation. Moreover, the gains of using desegregated bathrooms and restaurants must be measured against the pains in the last 50 years as described below:

- 1. Land-use policies such as urban renewal (once referred to as “Negro removal” by cultural and social critics) that displaced blacks from downtown Nashville, the Capitol Hill neighborhood, South Nashville’s Edgehill and Belmont communities, and other historically black neighborhoods.*
- 2. Contemporary (1990s and 2000s) land-use, housing, and zoning policies that have led to the racial gentrification of Germantown, Salemtown, and Hope Gardens in North Nashville, as well as historically black communities in East and West Nashville.*
- 3. The building of Interstate 40 through North Nashville’s Jefferson Street corridor, which destroyed decades of black progress and economic vitality.*
- 4. The creation of the Metropolitan Nashville and Davidson County consolidated government in 1963, which diluted black political and cultural influence in Nashville’s central city and prevented the City from becoming a “Black Mecca.”*
- 5. The continued segregation of city-owned swimming pools throughout the 1960s. Shortly after the 1960 sit-in movement, Nashville’s city leaders drained city-owned swimming pools to prevent black and white children from swimming together.*
- 6. The demolition or closure of lunch counters, theaters, hotels, and transportation depots that were successfully desegregated by civil rights activists. This rendered invisible the shame of government-sanctioned racism in Nashville.*
- 7. The closure of inner-city black schools such as North High School and Pearl High School. This effort was even endorsed by some prominent African-American leaders.*
- 8. The de-concentration of blacks from Nashville’s central city and their dispersion to neighboring suburban communities.*

Despite the pains endured by African Americans, the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, and specifically our efforts in Nashville, helped inspire new movements. The women's rights movement, anti-Vietnam War protests, the environmental and consumer advocacy movements, the organizing activities of the disability rights activists and senior citizens, the expansion of the 1964 Civil Rights Act's Title VI and VII provisions to non-blacks and women, the tenant rights movement, and the adoption of regulatory protections for nursing homes, daycares, and child care centers were all influenced by the Civil Rights, social justice, and black student movements of the 1960s.

Nashville was and is central to this narrative of justice. Our protest movement that began on the snowy day of February 13, 1960, ignited a spark in middle Tennessee that fanned the flames of social change throughout the country. Since then, a few of us have continued to stay the course and remain committed to justice and freedom, despite the pitfalls, drug epidemics, racial hostilities, and economic cutbacks that harmed our communities during the past few decades. But still, with God's help, our determination and steadfast commitment demonstrate the force of the rallying cry by South African freedom fighters: "Amandla Nawethu – We Have the Power."

Kwame Leo Lillard is the Director of the African American Cultural Alliance and Co-Founder of the Nashville Student Movement Legacy Foundation. The former Metro Councilman was a well-known leader in the sit-in and freedom ride movements of the 1960s.

State of the Black Church in Middle Tennessee

Harold Moses Love, Jr.

With the emergence of Jim Crow laws and black codes in the 19th century, African Americans were asking the question of how to deal with these problems. The African-American Church seemed to be the medium through which blacks could confront the problems posed by Jim Crow laws and black codes. The problem was that there were different views on what role the African-American Church should play. Some believed that accommodation was best and the Church should cease trying to force integration, civil rights, and the achievement of political power. The solution for this camp was to concentrate on training blacks for service in society. Others saw the Church as the most important social institution in the black community, and followed a tradition of prophetic radicalism that would confront the system with demands for justice. This is still the dilemma in the African-American Church: what role should the Church play and how should it play its role?

The dictionary defines dialectic as ‘the contradiction between two conflicting forces viewed as the determining factor in their continuing interaction.’ With reference to the black religious tradition, the forces of protest and accommodation are contradictions but not necessarily conflicting. Both forces are moving toward a common goal of removing what is causing pain and distress. Accommodative ideologies allow religion to ease the pain of a cruel, white, oppressive world. Protest allows for the removal of that thing which causes pain. Science would view these two forces as being energies: accommodation is the potential energy that can be transformed into the kinetic moving energy of protest. The Black Church in Middle Tennessee is part of a religious tradition that has not been, and does not have to be, ‘either or’ when it comes to accommodation and protest. It can be both accommodative and protesting. According to Albert Raboteau, it does not always follow that belief in a future state of happiness leads to an acceptance of suffering in this world.¹ So, for many who were being oppressed, accommodation was a mechanism for dealing with their current state until they could find a way to remove the oppression.

The Black Church has often been viewed as both shield and sword in a harsh, violent world of racial oppression. As shield, it has often been a place of refuge for persons trying to make sense out of the situation they have found themselves in. As sword, it has been the tool by which many persons liberated themselves from the state of oppression. The Black Church has always been a mixture of various ways to combat the ill treatment of oppressed people. The problem that has arisen of late is the fact that the Black Church in Middle Tennessee has leaned more toward the side of accommodation than protest.

According to Eddie S. Glaude, Jr., Professor of Religion and Chair of the Center for African-American Studies at Princeton University, the Black Church is dead.² One of the main reasons that he believes this is related to the role the Church plays in black life and socio-economic issues. There was a time in our history when the Black Church was the center of black

¹ Albert J. Raboteau, *A Sorrowful Joy: The Spiritual Journey of an African American Man in Late Twentieth Century America* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2002).

² Eddie S. Glaude, Jr., “The Black Church Is Dead,” February 24, 2010, Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/eddie-glaude-jr-phd/the-black-church-is-dead_b_473815.html.

life and was the moral compass for the city, state, and nation. Several reasons can be listed for the Black Church no longer holding this position, but the major problem is leadership. Black clergy, through various acts, have failed to keep the Church at the center of the community. One of the most devastating acts on the part of black clergy has been the refusal to engage themselves and their community in the politics that affect so many of their members.

There are many ways to initiate social change activities and engage the political process without jeopardizing the tax exempt status of a church. Ensuring that members are educated about the fact that there is an upcoming election and who are the persons that will be on the ballot is simple enough. Clergy can then go a step further and host town hall meetings, candidate forums, and other public events along with other churches to ensure that people in the community around the churches are aware of the views of those seeking election. They can also sponsor social programs that assist residents in the churches' immediate communities. Some examples of how the Black Church has effected social and political change in Nashville are outlined below:

1. St. Paul AME Church (Pastor Harold Love, Jr.) served as the flood relief headquarters for the West Hamilton Road neighborhood in the Bordeaux section of North Nashville. The community was devastated by the May 3, 2010 flood. St. Paul helped to direct federal and local relief (food, clothing, supplies, and housing assistance) to residents severely impacted by the flood. Love also lobbied the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to provide equitable recovery services to African-American neighborhoods affected by the flood.
2. Pastor Henry Blaze of Progressive Missionary Baptist Church, located in the Edgehill Community of South Nashville, has been a leading voice for TennCare enrollees and working-poor residents seeking affordable health care in Tennessee. He has served as the Co-Chair of the TennCare Saves Lives Coalition, served on the Board of the Tennessee Justice Center, and founded the grassroots organization, Ad Hoc Committee for Equity. He received the 2009 Consumer Health Advocate of the Year Award by Families USA, the nation's leading advocacy group for health care consumers.
3. Schrader Lane Church of Christ offers comprehensive programs for low-income youth, elderly residents, and families. Led by Dr. David Jones, Schrader Lane sponsors several initiatives: a Blood Drive Program in collaboration with the American Red Cross; a Senior Citizens Center and Assisted Living Center for the elderly and their families; and tutoring, financial management, and life skills training for residents of Nashville's public housing developments.
4. Nu Beginnings, Inc., founded by Minister Robert Grant, Jr. of Temple Church, offers workforce development, job placement, rehabilitative services, and legal seminars for people with histories in the criminal justice system. Nu Beginnings works closely with individuals exiting the Corrections Corporation of America (CCA) and other penal institutions in Nashville.
5. The Interdenominational Ministers' Fellowship (IMF) Peniel Initiative is actively involved in crime prevention and reduction activities in Nashville. It coordinates several programs that assist individuals and families victimized by crime and violence in Nashville's poorest neighborhoods.

6. Pastor Floyd Stone is the founder of You Can't Hurt God's People (Y.C.H.G.P.) training institute. The institute is located in the Buchanan Street/D.B. Todd neighborhood of North Nashville. It offers two dozen trade and technical programs for Nashville residents seeking to obtain vocational training. It also sponsors an assortment of youth programs.
7. The First Response Center of Metropolitan Interdenominational Church, founded by Rev. Edwin Sanders, II, is perhaps the most prominent HIV/AIDS faith-based advocacy group in the South. Since 1994, the Center has served persons, predominantly Africans Americans and the underserved of Nashville, who are either HIV-positive or deemed to be at risk of contracting the virus. The First Response Center provides assistance to individuals struggling with drug and alcohol abuse as well as sexual violence, and offers outreach and a safe haven to gay and bisexual men.

These are a few of the many faith-based initiatives that are at the forefront of social and political change in Nashville. Still, it is important for black clergy to understand that the tension between the various ways the Black Church should confront problems is nothing new. W.E.B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington held different opinions about social and political activism, which for the purpose of this essay, can be reinterpreted to assess the role of the Black Church. Following a tradition of accommodation, Washington held the view that the Church should cease to force integration, civil rights, and the quest for political power, and concentrate on training blacks for service in society. Du Bois saw the Church as the most important social institution in the black community. Following the tradition of prophetic radicalism, Du Bois thought the Black Church should confront the system with demands for justice. Du Bois felt that the Church was responsible for the social betterment of the community since it was the center of social activity.

The Black Church in Middle Tennessee is not dead, but it is in the hospital. It has been suffering from depression because it does not know how to regain its place in the black community. To some degree it is suffering from some heartbreak because those who should be loyal to it have abandoned it. These would be the children that grew up in the church but now have lost their way, forgotten what they were taught, and found themselves victims of the system. The Black Church has known that it has been sick for some time, but did not want to go see the doctor because there was fear of what people would say if they saw the Black Church asking for healing and help. But there is hope because the Black Church now knows that it cannot let pride or complacency stand in the way of progress for the black community.

The Evolution of African-American Muslims in Nashville, Tennessee

Amiri Yasin Al-Hadid

This essay assesses the evolution of the Muslim community in the “buckle of the Bible Belt.” The main argument is that Islam brings cultural and religious diversity to Nashville’s religious landscape and social institutions. Attention is given to the evolution of the Muslim community in Nashville from the 1960s-present. The essay demonstrates that as Nashville grows into a more cosmopolitan and international city, mosques and Islamic schools will add to the City’s cultural diversity and will attract families, professionals, students, and tourists.

ISLAM AND AFRICAN AMERICANS IN THE UNITED STATES

The history of African-American Muslims begins in West Africa. As Muslims in the Western region of the Ummah (world community of Muslims), the cultural and spiritual roots of African-American Muslims extend to the Sudanic empires of Mali, Songhay, and Moorish Spain. African Muslims were in the Americas and Caribbean centuries before the explorations of Christopher Columbus in 1492. Moreover, Muslims made up 40% of the African prisoners of war who were brought to the Americas and forced into chattel slavery. After more than two centuries of enslavement (1619-1865) and one century of colonization (1865-1965), the practice of Islam declined and African Muslims were gradually converted to Western Christianity. Christianity existed in Africa during this period. However, Coptic Christianity in Egypt and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church differed from the Catholic and Protestant denominations in the West.

In the 20th and 21st centuries, Americans of African descendant are reverting to Islam for cultural identity, historical significance, and spiritual empowerment. In the early 1900s, a hybrid form of Islam emerged that was a direct response to American apartheid. The Moorish Science Temple (1916), founded by Noble Drew Ali, and the Nation of Islam (1930), founded by Fard Muhammad and developed by Elijah Muhammad, are the best examples of these hybrids. As theologies, these unorthodox interpretations were a synthesis of mysticism, Freemasonry, fundamental beliefs of Islam, and black nationalism.

When Malcolm X made the Hajj in April 1964, he came to realize that color consciousness, nationalism, racism, tribalism, and sexism had no place in Islam. He, like Martin Luther King, Jr., understood that a human being should be judged by “the content of the character and not the color of the skin.” Today, the vast majority of African-American Muslims subscribe to this universal interpretation of Islam.

African-American Muslims became a visible faith community in Nashville during the 1960s. Within this population, most were members of the Nation of Islam, however, a significant number of African Americans were converts to Sunni or mainstream Islam. Their practice of Islam was identical to the practices in West Africa and the Ummah. Furthermore, in 1965 the United States’ immigration policies became somewhat friendly toward Muslim countries. Consequently, Muslim immigrants started coming to the United States in larger numbers seeking education, jobs, and democracy. The Gulf wars (1991 and 2003-present) forced thousands of Kurdish refugees into Nashville, many/most of whom are adherents of Islam. For many Kurds, Nashville is known as “Little Kurdistan.” Somali refugees, many of

whom are also adherents of Islam, came to Nashville fleeing the civil war and tribal warlords. Consequently, today, there are more than 40,000 Muslims in Nashville.

Cognizant of the differences between the theologies of Nation of Islam and Sunni Islam, African-American Muslims in Nashville started to attend prayer services and other activities at mosques established by immigrant Muslims. These associations gave African-American Muslims new perspectives on Islam, the Holy Qur'an, the traditions and proverbs of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), and the correct path to Islamic knowledge and wisdom. Most mosques in Nashville are multi-ethnic. Dr. King once observed that "11:00 on Sunday morning...[is] the most segregated hour in this nation." [Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Speech at Western Michigan University's "Conscience of America" Lecture Symposium, December 18, 1963.] On the other hand, the Jumu'ah prayer on Friday is perhaps one of the most integrated times in American cultural and social life.

After the death of Elijah Mohammad in 1975, his son, Warith Deen Mohammed, assumed the mantle of leadership and immediately introduced his father's followers to Sunni Islam and the Sunnah (traditions) of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). The transition was not easy. Imam Warith Deen Muhammad visited Nashville in 1978. He gave a public address in Kean Hall at Tennessee State University (TSU) and met with the faithful to correct mistaken ideas from the era of his father and Fard Muhammad. This period was known as the "First Resurrection." He defined his reformation period of Dawah (Islamic propagation) as the "Second Resurrection (1975-2008)."

The Sunni Islamic consciousness of African-American Muslims was further supplemented by Muslim missionaries from Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, and the Middle East. Wearing their national attire, these Arab and Asian missionaries frequently visited the African-American community. Their cultural orientation influenced some African-American Muslims to wear similar attire and garb. Another group of African-American Muslims wore Islamic attire from North and West Africa in recognition of African Islamic heritage.

MOSQUES AND EID PRAYERS IN NASHVILLE

When Islam began to flourish in Nashville in the 1960s and 1970s, the Nation of Islam houses of worship were called "temples." Minister Earl X (now known as Imam Ilyas Muhammad) came to Nashville in 1970 to fortify the followers of Elijah Muhammad and to establish Muhammad Temple #60. In order to align the name of the Nation of Islam houses of worship with universal Islam, Warith Deen Mohammad changed the names of the houses to "mosques." For example, Temple #7 that was established by Malcolm X in Harlem, New York, was changed to "Masjid Malcolm Shabazz." Following this lead, Temple #60 in Nashville was renamed "Masjid Al-Islam."

Masjid Al-Islam, Masjid An-Nas, and Muhammad Mosque #60 are the three predominantly African-American masjids in Nashville. All three are located in North Nashville. Immigrant and white Muslims attend Masjid Al-Islam and Masjid An-Nas on a regular basis, but rarely attend Muhammad Mosque #60 because of its strict adherence to the tenets of the Nation of Islam. Masjid Farooque is a predominantly Somali mosque, and it is also attended by Muslims of other ethnicities on a regular basis. The largest attendance for all mosques is on Friday at the Jummah prayer services.

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In addition to the mosques that are predominantly African or African American, the African Muslim Association is an organization whose members are primarily from the West African countries Liberia, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Nigeria, and Senegal. East African Muslim countries such as Somali are also represented. These are the countries of origin of African-Americans' Muslim ancestors. It is fascinating to attend their meetings and cultural functions and observe the similarities between West African Muslims and African-American Muslims. The blood, culture, and spirituality are the same. In this organization, Pan African sentiments are expressed within a dynamic Islamic framework.

Before the interstate freeway was constructed through the heart of the North Nashville African-American community, the Jefferson Street corridor was the cultural and economic mecca of the community. There were churches, colleges, hotels, mosques, restaurants, schools, theaters and night clubs. Three historically black colleges are located in the Jefferson Street corridor: Fisk University, Meharry Medical College, and TSU. A small group of African-American Muslims established a da'wah center on this street near Fisk University. It was at this location that the Talique Jammah, a missionary organization, taught mainstream Islam and answered questions about the faith.

Yusuf Islam (a.k.a Cat Stevens), a famous musician, came to Nashville and visited with various Muslim communities. He was so impressed with what he saw that he contributed a sizable donation to build a mosque in Nashville. An old house was purchased on 12th Avenue South and Sweetbriar to establish the Islamic Center of Nashville. Immigrant Muslims that had been holding Jumma prayer services in the Black Cultural Center at Vanderbilt University organized a committee to construct the new mosque. Drs. A.K.M. Fakruddin (a representative from the immigrant community) and Amiri Yasin Al-HadId (a representative from the African-American community) provided the leadership for the construction of the new Islamic Center mosque.

The Islamic Center of Nashville, due to its strong accents on mainstream Islam and cultural diversity, became the vanguard of the Muslim movement in Nashville. Kurdish and Somali refugees attended the Islamic Center before they constructed their own mosque and community center. The African-American Sunni Muslims that met on Jefferson Street eventually joined the Islamic Center of Nashville, and most are still active in this community today.

In 1978 Minister Louis Farrakhan left the community of Imam Warith Deen Mohammad to revive the old Nation of Islam. This theological shift on the national level was also manifested in Nashville. Thus, Nashville had followers of both leaders in the African-American community and on the three college campuses in the Jefferson Street corridor. Their presence was felt at cultural and intellectual forums such as the African Street Festival, Africana Studies conferences, Great Debates at TSU, Kwanzaa programs, and Martin Luther King, Jr. celebrations.

Eid Fitr is another Muslim contribution to Nashville's faith community. Eid Fitr is the annual prayer service at the end of the 28-29 days of fasting during the month of Ramadan and at the end of the Hajj. In Nashville these two prayer services attract more than 15,000 Muslims, roughly about the same attendance as the annual African Street Festival on the TSU campus. The cultural and ethnic diversity of the Nashville Muslim community is brilliantly and magnificently displayed by the cultural and ethnic attire worn by the brothers and sisters from most of the major countries in the Muslim Ummah. The cultural and spiritual atmosphere is

permeated with the Arabic language, peace, harmony, and unity. At the two Eids, one is reminded of the letters that Malcolm X wrote from Mecca about the spiritual unity and harmony that he observed on his Hajj.

ISLAMIC SCHOOLS IN NASHVILLE

Education has always been highly valued in the African-American community. African slaves risked their lives trying to learn reading, mathematics, and writing. The Great Debate between Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Du Bois highlighted the philosophies and purposes of African-American education. Washington advocated vocational education and Du Bois advocated a liberal arts education. Du Bois argued for the cultivation of a talented tenth of business men, doctors, lawyers and ministers that would provide the leadership for the African-American community. Washington, recognizing the economic imperatives of the early stages of American capitalism, argued for cultivating a class of producers in the fields of farming and industry that would provide the African-American community with a foundation for economic self-reliance.

These two philosophies are also reflected in Islamic education. The University of Islam was established by Sister Clara Muhammad, the wife of Elijah Muhammad, in 1934. Imam Muhammad changed the names of the elementary school to Sister Clara Muhammad School in honor of his mother. The Sister Clara Muhammad School is a parochial school based on an Islamic curriculum of Arabic, Islamic Studies, and the Holy Qur'an. The standard subjects of English, mathematics, science, and social studies are also taught.

The Clara Muhammad School of Nashville was established by Imam Ilyas Muhammad in 1971. Its current Director is Imam Yusuf Abdullah and the Principal is Sister Mahasin Abdullah. Clara Muhammad students are taught Islam based on the interpretation of Imam Warith Deen Muhammad. Cultural identity, religious knowledge, and economic self-determination are driving principles in the curriculum. In addition to the theological core, the standard subjects taught are language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies within an Islamic framework. The Clara Muhammad School is affiliated with Masjid Al-Islam and has its own governing board.

In 1995 a group of board members from the Islamic Center established the Islamic School of Nashville. The name was later changed to the Nashville International Academy. Both the Clara Muhammad School and the Nashville International Academy were established as alternatives to the moral and academic shortcomings of the public school system. The mission of the Nashville International Academy is to provide the highest standard of education in an Islamic environment where academic excellence, critical thinking, and cultural diversity are celebrated, respected, and valued. The school offers courses in grades Pre-Kindergarten to 6th grade. Although the school's students are predominantly immigrant, there is a very strong commitment to cultural diversity within the Muslim community and the general public. Dr. Amiri Yasin Al-Hadid was the first African-American Muslim principal and there are two Caucasian Christians teaching in the middle school.

CONCLUSION

The African-American Muslim community has evolved from a grounding in a nationalistic interpretation of Islam to being based on a universal interpretation. As the Civil Rights Movement shifted from a domestic focus to international issues, the Islamic movement

anticipated this shift by placing the focus more on human rights. Both immigrant and African-American Muslims are struggling with maintaining their Muslim identity and Islamic character, and with navigating the economic, political, and social contradictions in middle Tennessee. Islam provides a moral compass and worldview for Muslims who are sincere and consistently practice the faith.

The bombing of the World Trade Center by so-called Muslim terrorists radically changed the American and the world community's perception of Islam and Muslims. American racial profiling of African Americans was extended to the religious profiling of Muslims. This bigotry was exacerbated by the fact that African Americans are a common denominator of both communities. African Americans comprise about 40% of the Muslim community in America, and African-American males are converting to Islam at a faster rate than any other group. Islam is also the fastest growing religion in America and is poised to have a major impact on American culture and society. African-American Muslims will play a major role in this evolutionary process.

Nashville is considered to be the "buckle of the Bible Belt" with its many churches, divinity schools, parochial colleges, and schools. Islam brings cultural and religious diversity to the religious landscape and social institutions in Nashville. Islam is one of the three Abrahamic religions and shares some beliefs and practices with Christianity and Judaism. As Nashville grows into a more cosmopolitan and international city, mosques and Islamic schools will attract families, professionals, students, and tourists. Muslim professionals and businesses contribute to the Nashville tax base and to the cultural diversity of the city.

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Africans in Middle Tennessee¹

Moses Tesi

While some immigrants are heavily concentrated in certain parts of the United States, such as Chinese Americans in the San Francisco Bay Area and New York City, African immigrants are spread throughout the country. In states without large concentrations of African immigrants, such as Tennessee, their population has been steadily rising in the last two decades. Most African immigrants came to Tennessee within the last 25 years for several reasons: better educational opportunities, warm weather, and as refugees in Nashville's resettlement communities. These include diverse groups from West Africa, the Sudan, Somalia, Nigeria, and Ethiopia who have settled in Nashville, Hendersonville, Clarksville, and Shelbyville. In examining the factors that facilitate African integration and adaptation in Middle Tennessee – the region of the State where most Africans reside – it is argued that African immigrants are increasingly impacting the cultural and social milieu of the region. At the same time, many African migrants continue to face racism and anti-immigrant sentiments even as we head into the second decade of the twenty-first century.

CONTEMPORARY MIGRATION OF AFRICANS IN TENNESSEE

The majority of African immigrants arrived in Tennessee in the last twenty years. However, some of the leading figures of the African community have been in the State for more than two decades dating back to the 1980s and 1970s, and even to the 1960s. Many are professionals who came to the State to get an education, and stayed to pursue careers in various fields.

The majority of Africans in Tennessee came directly from Africa as refugees in the 1990s. Others entered the country as refugees and settled in other states before relocating to Tennessee. They moved to middle Tennessee because of better employment opportunities, warm weather, and to be close to relatives, friends and fellow countrymen.² Similar to other immigrant communities, members of the African community are quite diverse and come with varied experiences, expectations, and resources. Their modes of adaptation have also been varied, as have the responses of local/state governments and community groups.

The 2000 census identified almost 9,000 African immigrants in Tennessee, or 5.5% of the 159,000 foreign-born residents of Tennessee.³ Yet when supplemented with census head counts as well as discussions with representatives from the Somali Community Center and the Sudanese Association of Nashville, the actual number of African immigrants in the State may be as high as 20,000. This amounts to less than 1% of the state's population and less than 3% of its black population. Two countries, Sudan and Somalia, account for the largest number of Africans in Tennessee, followed by Nigeria. Ethiopia and Ghana come in a distant fourth and fifth

¹ A version of this essay appeared as a chapter titled, "Africans in Tennessee," in Wornie Reed, ed., *Blacks in Tennessee* (Dubuque Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Co., 2008).

² Interview, Salaad A. Nur, Outreach Coordinator, Somali Community Center of Nashville; Gatluak Thach, President, Sudanese Association of Nashville and the Nashville International Center for Empowerment; Anne Farris, "New Immigrants in New Places: America's Growing Global Interior," *Carnegie Reporter* vol. 3, no. 3, Fall 2005.

³ US Census Bureau, Census 2000: Table DP2, Profiles of Selected Social Characteristics: 2000.

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respectively. In addition to these countries, portions of the African population in Tennessee come from Cameroon, Liberia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Sierra Leone.

Based on census data, most Africans live in the Middle Tennessee region, primarily the Metropolitan Nashville area. The Sudanese communities are glaring examples of the preference for Middle Tennessee over other parts of the State. Of the approximately 8,000 Sudanese in Tennessee, approximately 2,000 to 3,000 are in Memphis, 200-300 are in Knoxville, 100 in Jackson, 100 in Chattanooga, and 4,500-5,000 in Middle Tennessee.⁴ Gallatin has close to 2,000 Sudanese.⁵

The Sudanese settlement pattern as well as the arrival of Somalis to Middle Tennessee reflects the settlement patterns of other African groups. Civil wars forced Somalis and Sudanese to migrate to middle Tennessee.⁶ Many were initially displaced into refugee camps in surrounding countries (Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia). Most left these camps for Tennessee once they found sponsors in charitable organizations, individuals, and relatives who were willing to host them.

Unlike individuals who came to Tennessee as refugees, many other Africans, including those who had been admitted as refugees in other states but upon resettlement chose to relocate to Tennessee, chose the Nashville area for economic, social, or climatic reasons. Middle Tennessee's booming economy and warm weather climate attracted thousands of Somalis and Sudanese who relocated to the region from other depressed parts of the country in search of jobs. In 2002, there were around 2,000 Somalis in Nashville. This number more than doubled in 2005 to 5,000.⁷ Most of the newcomers were from other states, mainly from the Columbus, Ohio, and Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota areas, which have the largest Somali populations in the country.⁸ Many of the migrants to Middle Tennessee left those areas to escape from the cold weather, while others just wanted to reunite with friends and families so as to have the network support base.

Employment opportunities also brought migrating Africans to Middle Tennessee. However, unlike the refugee immigrants, Africa's economic immigrants are highly skilled and well educated. The types of jobs they seek are different from those sought by refugees displaced by war. Many of the latter are employed in unskilled and semi-skilled service and industrial jobs with Tyson Fresh Meat Processing, the cell phone maker Assurion, Whirlpool, Kraft Ketchup, Dell, Gaylord, Ingram books, and Nashville's various parking facilities and hotels.

⁴ Estimated figures arrived at in interview with Gatluak Thach of the Sudanese Association of Nashville and the Nashville International Center for Empowerment.

⁵ Figures are from Gatluak Thach of the Sudanese Association of Nashville and the Nashville International Center for Empowerment. Also see Karen Jordan, "Praying for Sudan," *The Tennessean*, August 3, 2005.

⁶ The Somali civil war was in 1991. The Civil War in Sudan, mainly between the North and the South, has been going on since 1984. However, Sudanese refugees only started immigrating to the United States in 1991.

⁷ These figures are from Salaad A. Nur of the Somali Community Center of Nashville.

⁸ Nur, Somali Community Center of Nashville. According to Nur, Minneapolis-St. Paul has 40,000-50,000 Somalis, while Columbus has 20,000-30,000.

PATTERNS OF ADAPTION AND CHANGE

Like immigrants everywhere, African immigrants in Tennessee are faced with various challenges. Because many immigrants relocated to Middle Tennessee to move away from hardships, many believed their lives would improve. Yet, in some instances, their situations became worse. The main challenge Africans face in Tennessee is finding a good job that will enable them to make a decent living. Although most had worked in their home countries and had acquired valuable work experiences, such experiences have sometimes not been recognized and counted towards their advancement.⁹ Even among the skilled and educated, the bulk of those who have done very well in finding high paying jobs have been people in scientific and technically oriented fields, or those who hold advanced degrees. The number of African doctors, university professors, research scientists, computer scientists, engineers, and nurses has increased significantly in the State since the 1990s. Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU), the fastest growing institution of higher learning in the state, in the past fifteen years saw an increase in the number of African professors from fewer than five in 1990 to fourteen in 2003. The trend has been similar in other institutions of higher learning in the state, including Austin Peay State University, Tennessee State University, Fisk University, Meharry Medical College, the University of Memphis, and Tennessee Technological College.

Africans are also employed in state and local government agencies and corporations such as Nissan and Dell Computers. While their positions offer a measurable level of financial stability, the same cannot be said of their level of satisfaction, as many seem to feel that they do not get fair opportunities for occupying senior level positions and are relegated to underemployment.

A number of African-owned businesses have been established during the past fifteen years, the bulk of which are medical clinics opened and operated by African-trained doctors. The majority of these doctors are located in the Nashville area. Other independent businesses owned by Africans include restaurants, auto repair shops, hair salons, grocery stores, insurance agencies, and rental properties. The emerging African entrepreneurial class in Tennessee is a sign of their incorporation in the fabric of Tennessee society, but this has still come later than other immigrant groups such as Asians, Middle Easterners, or Latin Americans.

A Different Look

The Federal Financial Institutions Examination Council reports census data on race, income, and neighborhoods. At least 39 of 144 census tracts in Nashville-Davidson County were majority-minority (in which racial minorities comprise more than 50% of the population) in 2000. These numbers may be even higher after the completion of the 2010 census. Blacks made up the majority of these census tracts. However in at least 11 of the majority-minority tracts, no racial/ethnic group has a majority (above 50%) population. The racial/ethnic distributions in these neighborhoods are divided between blacks, immigrant groups, and whites. This portrait indicates that in some parts of Nashville-Davidson County, substantial numbers of blacks and immigrants live side-by-side in the same communities.

⁹ Daniel B. Cornfield, Immigrant Community Assessment, Prepared under Contract # 14830 for Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County, Tennessee, Final Report, Nashville, TN, August 15, 2003.

SOCIAL ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

As a result of the bombing of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, by the Islamic fundamentalist group, Al Qaeda, African Muslims, like other Muslims, complain of a rise in incidents of invidious discrimination and invidious racial profiling by law enforcement authorities.¹⁰ How much of such invidious discrimination is due to race and how much of it is due to religion is unclear. While race continues to be a source of invidious discrimination in Tennessee and the rest of the country, members of the predominantly Christian Sudanese community and other Africans of the Christian faith did not have as intense an impression of being subjected to discrimination as their Muslim counterparts.¹¹ For some African communities such as Sudanese Christians, most Americans considered their struggle against the Muslim Northern Sudanese-based government as an affront to Christians all over the world, requiring the support and aid of other Christians. Thus, the sharing of a common religion between Africans of Christian faith and Americans of similar faith in the face of the perceived threat posed by Islam has led to the development of greater harmony between the two groups and reduced the strains of the transition for the Christian Africans.¹² At the same time, suspicion and unease between Muslim Africans and other Americans have not subsided.

Two experiences of Africans based on religion and tradition have ignited passions in Middle Tennessee in the last several years. These were cases in which two companies, Whirlpool and Dell, refused to allow Muslims, mostly Somalis, to engage in prayer services at work.¹³ The cases generated much tension between the companies involved and their Somali employees, with each interpreting the other's conduct differently. The Somalis viewed the companies' unwillingness to allow them time to pray while at work as racist and anti-Islamic sentiments. The companies, on the other hand, justified their actions as merely based on a desire to maintain a disciplined work force that is critical for productivity, and their desire not to mix work with religion.¹⁴ The cases highlighted the challenges that Africans face in Tennessee as they cling to various elements of their traditions and beliefs as they venture out of their communities.

¹⁰ Anita Wadhvani, "9/11 Aftermath Brings Shutdown of Cash Transfers," *The Tennessean*, July 8, 2002.

¹¹ Karen Jordan, "As Service Raises Awareness of Nation's Plight," *The Tennessean*, July 25, 2005; Thach, Sudanese Association of Nashville.

¹² Karen Jordan, "Praying for Sudan," *The Tennessean* August 3, 2005; Kami Rice, "Foreign Born Find Nashville Desirable for Resettling, though Barriers Remain," *The Tennessean*, September 18, 2005.

¹³ See Eric Auchard, Reuters 3//11/2005; CNSNews.com, "Muslims Settle Prayer in the Workplace Dispute," March 18, 2005; Rob Johnson, "Somali Left Workstations at Sunset," *The Tennessean*, March 10, 2005; Anita Wadhvani, "Managers at the Whirlpool Corp. Plant in LaVergne Entered Restrooms," *The Tennessean*, May 3, 2002; Rob Johnson, "Nine Muslim Former Employees are Suing the Manufacturer," *The Tennessean*, September 15, 2004; Rob Johnson, "Whirlpool Argued Practice Would be too Disruptive," *The Tennessean*, September 18, 2004; Monica Whitaker, "Parents Want Facility to Respect Diet, Rituals," *The Tennessean*, July 6, 2001.

¹⁴ Adam Wild Aba, IslamOnline.net, March 12, 2005.

POLITICAL ORGANIZATION

Africans in Middle Tennessee could be described as apolitical. While most discuss the politics of their adopted country, especially at the national level, and have favorite candidates and issues, they have not actively participated in local or national political processes. Attending political rallies, working for candidates or parties, voting, and publicly expressing their views on current political issues are considered as unduly intrusive given their foreign origins. Most Africans in Middle Tennessee are still deeply attached to their countries of origin. Many harbor the nostalgia of one day returning to their country of origin, even if they cannot say how soon that will be. Active political life is thus interpreted as putting down deep roots in the United States.

Africans in Middle Tennessee do not have a single overarching organization that brings all the diverse groups together. They are, instead, organized by country of origin. The organizational missions of the various African groups focus on providing service and helping their members integrate into Tennessee.

SERVICES AND SUPPORT NETWORKS

The most successful of the African groups in galvanizing support for its mission is the Somali Community Center of Nashville. Through grants from various government agencies, including federal agencies, the State of Tennessee, and Davidson County, the Somali Community Center offers diverse programs to its members and even other African refugee groups. In 2002, the Somali Community Center of Nashville was a co-recipient of a grant, budgeted at \$211,000, from the U.S. Department of Human Services Office of Refugee Resettlement. The grant allowed the Center to link adult refugees with services and opportunities. In October 2004, the Center collaborated with the Sudanese Association of Tennessee, the Central African refugees, and Centerstone, Inc., on a \$150,000 grant funded by the Federal Office of Minority Health.¹⁵ This was a pilot program to educate refugees about “mental health, mental illness and treatment options.” Another project of the Center has been the Youth Enrichment program aimed at directing the youths in the community away from gangs, premarital sex, drinking, and substance abuse. The project was funded by the Tennessee Department of Health.

Although not all African groups in Tennessee have been able to raise the type of funds as has the Somali Community Center, many provide security, self-help, and psychological/emotional support for its members. The social support networks help these groups to sustain their individual members. Some have organized highly efficient and successful processes for raising monies through a rotating monthly fund-raising. Members of the group contribute a fixed amount of money each month while giving funds to one member of the group to carry out her/his transactions. This system is repeated every month.

Despite the resilience of African organizations, many face racism and the challenges of being viewed by Middle Tennesseans as un-American. But the well-being of Africans is an American burden—a burden embedded in the American experience that goes back more than four hundred years when the first African (who today is African American) was brought to the United States, not as an equal to whites, but as a slave. Yet, even though racism is embedded in the society, it is unlikely that it will inhibit future generations of Africans from seeking to come

¹⁵ Somali Community Center of Nashville, Annual Report 2004-2005, July 2005.

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to the United States and Tennessee, to the extent that they believe they will be able to successfully pursue their economic and educational goals.

CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND EDUCATION

Letter to Nashville Foster Care and Adult Support

The last couple of years have been eventful. I recently aged out of foster care when I turned 18 in October 2009. The succeeding year was the first time I hadn't been in foster care since I was 13.

My first foster home was the greatest. I stayed there for six years. My foster mom, Carlotta Mendez, has been my pillar throughout out my life. She taught me the true meaning of family. Even though I haven't lived with her since I was eight years old, she still found ways to be involved in my life. She never forgot to send birthday cards to me every year and she has always reassured me that I have a place to go if anything should ever go wrong.

I left the foster care system when I turned 18 because I was losing more than I was gaining. I had difficulty saving money since I was usually moving every year and could hardly find a job. I had to change schools often, work harder to get good grades, and did not have the chance to do extra-curricular activities. I would have been more socially developed and ready for independent living if I would have had those chances.

I'm a black female and I'm trying so hard to not to be another statistic. I feel that if I would have been given the same resources as the "average teen in America" I could have been better prepared for the "real life." I moved in with my birth mom in December 2009. Even though we didn't have that good of a relationship, I decided to take a chance and see how life is when you don't have someone documenting your every move. So far I am pleased with my decision.

I became a member of a youth action group called Tennessee Youth Advisory Council (TYAC), where we help advocate for the rights of youth in foster care. We also train foster parents to make a difference in the lives of youth like Mrs. Mendez did with me. I will also be entering college in the Fall 2010. Without caring adults working directly with older foster youth, independence is impossible. Indeed, I'm not sure where I would be without the assistance of adults and advocates who went far beyond the call of duty to assist me.

Danosha Edwards, Tennessee Youth Advisory Council (TYAC)

The *Cradle to the Prison Pipeline* in Nashville-Davidson County

Ainka Sanders Jackson

The *Cradle to the Prison Pipeline* describes the cumulative factors that lead to the disproportionate incarceration and marginalization of at-risk youth. The Children's Defense Fund, the nation's leading child advocacy group, states that one-third of black children and one-sixth of Latino children have a chance of going to prison in their lifetime.¹ Children performing poorly in elementary school will likely be incarcerated at some point in their lives. Unfortunately, the Cradle to the Prison Pipeline is a growth industry that disproportionately impacts black children. For example, black children are suspended from school at an alarming rate and there has been an increase in the number of children transferred to adult court despite the overall decline of violent crime in Nashville-Davidson County.² According to a Disproportionate Minority Contact and Confinement (DMCC) Taskforce report, as much as 80% of the local youth transferred to adult court are African Americans. Drawing from personal narratives as former teacher, a one-time case manager with the Department of Children Services, and as Assistant Public Defender in the Juvenile Court of Davidson County,³ I describe how the Cradle to the Prison Pipeline exacerbates the maltreatment of black children. I conclude the essay with a number of recommendations for dismantling the Pipeline system.

CRADLE TO THE PRISON PIPELINE

Six decades after the historic *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) court decision declared school desegregation as unconstitutional, many black children face a difficult future. In recent years, zero-tolerance measures, family instability, and incarceration have adversely impacted at-risk children and fortified the Cradle to the Prison Pipeline. The risk factors contributing to the Pipeline include illiteracy, poverty, poor health care, domestic violence, mental health issues, teen pregnancy, unemployment, the lack of positive role models, and truancy. Young people from communities with high and interrelated risk factors are more likely to fall victim to the Pipeline system.

One of the most significant indicators of the Pipeline system is the high detention of black youth in the juvenile justice system. This is costly to the individual, the black community, and Nashville-Davidson County. Juvenile Court Judge Betty Adams Green stated, "The people we lock up are not paying taxes.... Do you think you're going to pay now or you're going to pay later." The price of one youth incarceration, Green stated, is \$67,000 per year. It drains society of resources and takes potentially viable young people from their communities.

As an Assistant Public Defender in the Juvenile Court, I see many examples of the devastating impact of the juvenile justice system on families in Nashville. One day I had a case where a child had been transferred from Juvenile Court to Criminal Court. Though he was initially in detention on a minor charge, the child was transferred to the adult criminal justice

¹ Children's Defense Fund, *America's Cradle to Prison Pipeline*, 2nd edition, 2007, p. 4.

² Kyle Mothershead, "Reality Check: Debunking the Myth of the 'Growing Rate of Juvenile Crime in Nashville' and other Fantasies," *Nashville Bar Journal* vol. 10, no. 3 (April 2010): 14-15.

³ The views expressed in this essay are not those of the Metro Public Defender's Office, but from my experience as a mother, community parent, and community organizer/advocate.

system on another charge. I attempted to negotiate an offer with the Assistant District Attorney to have him released early so he could attend summer school. The District Attorney refused even though the child's release date was set just a few days after the start of school. I cried that day. I cried for the child and for his girlfriend who had been my student during my previous job as a substitute teacher. I cried because many of our young people are taught that punishment is valued over opportunity. I cried because our children are continuously taught that they are not good enough.

Equally devastating is that the Pipeline system reproduces a sense of inferiority and anger among black children. I learned this from a troubling conversation with my four year old son. One day as we were dropping off his older sister at school, my son said, "I don't want to be black. I want to be white...black is bad. I don't want to be black." What sparked this statement was the daily presence of a police car at his sister's school, routinely watching over black children. My son observed the invisible signs of inferiority communicated to black children at an early age.

Inferiority and anger cause black children, especially boys, to act out and rebel. They rebel by refusing to comply with orders from educators they feel don't care about them. They rebel by refusing to learn from schools that don't teach their history and self-worth. They rebel against any and all institutions that they perceive as unjust. Yet, nonetheless, as Professor Gilman Whiting points out in his essay, we must teach black boys that unconstructive responses to injustices only hurt them and our community. Thus, we must teach black boys that they don't have to be passive, but can actively resist injustice and inferiority in productive and effective ways.

Suspension, expulsion, and detention (zero tolerance measures) are other components of the Pipeline system. Although zero tolerance measures are used to discipline behavioral problems, studies have shown they are strongly correlated with high drop-out rates, the commission of crimes and incarceration, and poor school performance.⁴ According to a DMCC report, in the 2008-2009 school year, African Americans made up 48% of the Metropolitan Nashville Public School system, but 67% of suspensions and 66% of expulsions, compared to their white counterparts who made up 33% of the student body but 21% of suspensions and 17% of expulsions. Many children are suspended for minor infractions such as arriving late to classes or not wearing the proper uniforms to school. These disciplinary measures are likely to increase with the re-zoning of black children to segregated schools (or what are commonly referred to as "neighborhood schools") in 2009. Many children also face dual punishment as they are suspended from school and then prosecuted in court for the same offense.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGE

Despite the prevalence of the Cradle to the Prison Pipeline system, it is important to highlight some recommendations for remedying the crisis. Some positive initiatives are actually taking place inside of MNPS and need to be expanded. One of these is the School-wide Positive Behavior Support framework to address inferiority, anger, and the lack of discipline. It sets

⁴ Civil Rights Project (Harvard University), *Opportunities Suspended: the Devastating Consequences of Zero Tolerance and School Discipline Policies*, Report from a National Summit on Zero Tolerance (Washington, DC, June 15-16, 2000).

expectations that children must abide by, then defines the rewards and consequences of meeting the expectations required for maintaining a positive school climate. This framework, according to early indications, may reduce school suspensions.

Nashville may also look to the SHAPE program in Memphis, which reduces the amount of referrals from schools to the Juvenile Court, and minimizes the risk factors that contribute to the Cradle to the Prison Pipeline. SHAPE keeps children in school and gives them the requisite support, instead of exposing them to the juvenile justice system. The local DMCC Taskforce reinforces this program by reducing the number of citations/referrals that come to Juvenile Court from the schools.

Finally, the Children's Defense Fund has recommendations for dismantling the Cradle to the Prison Pipeline. A modified summary of the recommendations that can be adopted in Nashville are as follows:

1. A coalition of civic groups should establish a network of 2,000 black professionals who will mentor and tutor children from 15 of the lowest performing schools.
2. Civil rights groups should establish election and legislative scorecards that evaluate candidates' positions on child protection/empowerment policies, offer direction to voters about these candidates, and monitor the votes of elected officials once they're in office.
3. Child advocates should coordinate 30 house parties—local gatherings in the homes of concerned residents—to educate others about the Pipeline system, and what they can do to dismantle it.
4. Connect homeless and foster care youth to mentoring and tutoring programs.
5. Organize forums highlighting funding disparities between prisons and education in our nation.
6. Establish support networks that assist single-parents with child care and transportation to job readiness seminars.
7. Beginning with middle school, every school should require their students to attend a “next-educational level activity” that requires them to visit a college promotional activity. For example, every student from North Nashville's John Early Middle School should be required to visit Fisk University or another college, and this activity should be repeated until their senior year in high school.
8. Faith-based institutions such as the Interdenominational Ministerial Fellowship (IMF) should establish a “Cradle Roll” initiative that invites churches to connect children in their congregations to caring adults or mentors.
9. Encourage alternatives to incarceration such as restitution, community service, electronic monitoring, drug rehabilitation treatment, or placement in a “staff secure” (but not locked) community corrections facility. For example, the Juvenile Court may recommend that non-violent youth offenders be supervised by community groups with histories of working with at-risk youth such as Nashville's Dirty Dozen organization.
10. MNPS should adopt child-appropriate discipline policies and procedures. It should further establish a parent education program to inform families about conflict resolution in the home and neighborhoods.

11. Ensure that children in foster care and detention receive high-quality treatment to address their mental, behavioral and emotional needs.
12. Expand “second chance” programs for high school dropouts, ex-offenders, and at-risk youth to secure their GEDs or to assist with job training and employment.
13. Create partnerships with local businesses, schools, and churches to create high-quality exit programs for those leaving the juvenile justice system.

I believe these recommendations, if adopted, can help dismantle the Cradle to the Prison Pipeline, and help create a “Pipeline to Success” for many at-risk youth. They can provide tools to resist injustice, inferiority, and anger. They can help black children realize their power, brilliance, and humanity.

African-American Children in Mid-Cumberland Counties of Tennessee

Juanita Veasy

African-American children in Tennessee make up 20% of the total population. In Davidson County, African-American children represent 35% of the child population. This study, drawn from my experiences as the Executive Director of the Black Children’s Institute of Tennessee, assesses the state of black children in the Mid-Cumberland region. Although brief attention is given to public health epidemics such as incarceration and the experiences of African-American children in Tennessee’s child welfare system, much of this commentary focuses on how elite and bureaucratic decision-making affects the status of black children. This essay shows that *race matters*: institutional racism embedded in the face-neutral policies and practices of state and local government institutions exacerbate pain and suffering among at-risk black children. Elite decision-makers take advantage of rules and practices that evade accountability and federal mandates that have the potential to improve the conditions of black children. They also privilege non-profit groups which, historically, did not adequately serve black children.

STATE OF BLACK CHILDREN

There were 315,542 African-American children in Tennessee in 2008, representing 20% of the total child population. A racial/ethnic profile of a portion of Mid-Cumberland children is highlighted in Table 1. African-American children comprise 35% and 24% of the child populations in Davidson and Montgomery Counties, respectively. The largest African-American youth population is in Shelby County.

Table 1. Diversity of Youth Population In Mid-Cumberland, Tennessee

County	White	Black	American Indian	Asian	Hispanic	Total
Davidson	69,696	48,253 (35%)	472	4,821	14,264	137,506
Robertson	13,094	1,554 (9.8%)	26	79	1,159	15,912
Summer	31,217	3,089 (8.6%)	105	362	1,329	36,102
Wilson	22,199	2,072 (8.2%)	66	180	892	25,409
Rutherford	44,701	7,896 (13.6%)	136	1,713	3,976	58,422
Williamson	35,945	2,121 (5.2%)	46	1,047	1,910	41,069
Montgomery	28,194	10,177 (24.1%)	201	950	2,788	42,310

African-American children in Tennessee, including the Mid-Cumberland counties of Tennessee, are disproportionately impacted by premature mortality rates, and are less likely to attend quality and affordable early education programs. They also tend to live in communities plagued by environmental hazards. As indicated in Attorney Ainka Sander Jackson's essay in this volume, they are also referred to juvenile courts and incarcerated at higher rates than their white counterparts.

Many African-American children and families in Mid-Cumberland counties also live in communities with high rates of unemployment and underemployment, and attend low performing schools. These factors greatly impact other damaging and destructive conditions such as crime, violence, child abuse and neglect, teen pregnancy, drug abuse, single parenting, fatherless homes, hopelessness, homelessness, under-education, health and mental health problems—all of which weaken the foundation of the black family and the black community.

For over two decades, I have served as Executive Director of the only statewide black child advocacy organization in Tennessee. I have had numerous conversations with public officials, legislators, and other child advocates about the status of black children. Based on these conversations, I found that the most severe forms of discrimination and neglect occur in Tennessee's child welfare system (also referred as the Department of Children's Services). In 2000, the Black Children's Institute of Tennessee brought together a coalition of child advocates and attorneys and filed one of the most important lawsuits, *Brian A. v. Sundquist*, regarding the rights of the 9,000 children in the custody of Tennessee's Department of Children Services.

The federal lawsuit charged the state with providing inadequate foster care, inappropriate family support services to keep families together, little support for family reunification, poor assistance for children transitioning out of the system into independent living, and other systemic failures.¹ The troubling findings from the *Brian A.* case resulted in a federal consent decree that required the State of Tennessee to repair its child welfare system. However, three years after the lawsuit was initially filed, Dr. Ruth McCoy at the University of Texas (currently at Boston College Graduate School of Social Work)² finalized an eighteen month study of Tennessee's child welfare system. The study found racial disparities in the system in terms of adoption rates, the length of stay in foster care for black and white children, and the racial background of Department of Children's Services' staff.

RACE MATTERS AND CHILD ADVOCACY

The previous discussion of black children underscores the significance of race and institutional racism in the child welfare system, and refusal by policymakers to seriously consider community and policy-based solutions proposed by black child advocates and organizations. African-American communities in the Mid-Cumberland area have little, if any, input into the design or control of child-based programs. Even in cases where families, children, and advocates do have a voice, institutionalized practices and policies make it difficult for them to be heard. I recall that one of the first child advocacy groups was started by a group of African Americans in Chattanooga. Governor Lamar Alexander was so impressed with the group that

¹ See <http://www.childrensrights.org/reform-campaigns/legal-cases/tennessee-brian-a-v-bredesen/>; http://www.youthlaw.org/publications/fc_docket/alpha/brianavhattaway/.

² See <http://www.hwylaw.com/files/Black%20kids%20fare%20worse%20in%20foster%20care%202012.03.03.pdf>.

funding was provided to transform the organization into what is now called the Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth (TCCY). Yet, after the creation of TCCY, it did not seriously advocate for policy issues that could improve the lives of black children or produce more than a few articles about black children in its newsletter. After black advocates pressured black lawmakers to investigate the agency, TCCY took nine months to respond to their request.

Another troubling example is the funding streams for children and youth-based services. Twenty years ago, three Davidson County youth programs were designed by African-Americans from Meharry Medical College, the Urban League, and Bethlehem Center. These programs successfully implemented mentorship activities, pregnancy and violence prevention initiatives, and economic development and educational enrichment projects. However, the programs did not receive needed state and private funding, despite their proven histories of success.

Afterwards, several mainstream organizations in Davidson County led by whites established similar programs that served the same constituents as the African-American-led groups. They were integrated into funding streams and exalted as model programs, while the African-American-led initiatives lost funding. This example has been repeated many times and demonstrates that *race matters* when it comes to maintaining funding streams for black-led advocacy initiatives.

It's important to emphasize that black families and advocates have developed many community and policy-based solutions to address the crises mentioned throughout this essay. For example, some argue that initiatives to remove children from adult jails in Tennessee did not initially occur as a result of mandates within the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1988 and other federal laws, but was first proposed by a group of black ministers in Memphis who helped to start an orphanage and transitional housing home for youth as an alternative to incarceration. The *Brian A.* lawsuit, the origins of TCCY, and numerous mentor, violence prevention, and youth support programs were established as a result of pressure from and ingenuity by black advocates. However, once these programs were jumpstarted, they were neglected or their policies were not enforced.

Instead, paternalism pervades the child advocacy community in Mid-Cumberland counties, and the status of black children becomes regarded as what I call the *Black People Problem (BPP)* treatment. BPP reflects the numerous reports and programs established to purportedly improve the lives of black children, but, in reality, perpetuate a system of neglect. This orientation reflects the fact that local and state officials routinely visit black communities and promise to address various crises in exchange for votes, but do little to fulfill these promises after the election. The BPP also indicates that indigenous practices and solutions—positive initiatives developed by black families and advocates—are routinely neglected, or even undermined, if they compete with mainstream child advocacy groups.

Race matters, as philosopher and cultural critic Cornel West states, in the child advocacy arena. And the fact that race does matter makes it difficult to improve the lives of the most vulnerable children in middle Tennessee. If we are to be successful in finding solutions to the many problems affecting black children, we must address institutionalized racism in government, and black persons with proven track records and histories of success working with children and families must have input in the enforcement of policies designed to protect children.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGE

In concluding this essay, it is important to discuss some recommendations for improving the status of black children, especially the most vulnerable youth such as those in the child welfare system. Along these lines, recommendations from the *Brian A.* case and Dr. McCoy's study are instructive for advancing a justice framework for black children.

First, DCS must recruit suitable parents and relatives who can serve as caregivers, and the agency must develop innovative ways to reunite families. The agency must also provide financial assistance to relatives who assume the role of guardians. It is also important for state officials to comply with federal mandates that seek to reduce the disproportionate participation of black children and youth in the child welfare system. At-risk youth and those who commit minor and non-violent offenses should not be incarcerated but referred to community-based programs or monitored by youth-based organizations. Finally, support should be given to child advocacy groups led by black persons that have previous histories of successfully implementing youth-based programs. These groups generally compete with larger and well-funded (and often white-led) groups that work with black children, but often perpetuate institutional racism.

The Achievement Gap Between Black and White Students

Christon Arthur

One may argue that standardized tests measure more accurately the socio-economic status (SES) of students than their actual learning. That is to say, the results from standardized tests indicate that there is a large disparity in the performance of students from middle and upper SES and those from lower SES. Low-income students—a disproportionate number of whom are black in Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools (MNPS)—may have learned the required content, but the structure and vignettes used on the tests are foreign to them. However, whether or not the disparity in the test results are due to inappropriate testing measures or lack of student learning, the continuing achievement gap between black and white students is troubling. According to 2009 data from National Center of Education Statistics, white students, on average, continue to have higher scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAPE) than their black counterparts, on all assessments. These national trends, as this essay demonstrates, are reflected in MNPS test scores. This essay provides an overview of the achievement gap between black and white students, and offers brief commentary on the achievement gap between blacks and other groups, including Asians, Hispanics (Latinos), students with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged students. The tables assessing the test scores are included in the Appendix.

TEST SCORES IN METROPOLITAN NASHVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

According to 2009 National Center of Education Statistics (2009), white students scored, on average, at least 26 points higher (on a 0-500 scale) than black students in each subject. Although these are national data, the statistics for Tennessee, and particularly those for Nashville, are equally alarming. Table 1 reveals the persistent reading achievement gap between white and black students in the K-8 Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools (MNPS) despite the overall improvements from 2003-2009. In 2009, 92% of white students scored *Proficient* and *Advanced* on the TCAP compared to 83% of black students. However, that statistic is more alarming when the comparison is made among the students who scored *Advanced* on the TCAP. In 2009, more than twice as many white students compared to black students scored at the *Advanced* level. Strikingly, black students represented the lowest percentage of students who performed at the *Advanced* level.

Additional results for math proficiency among K-8 school-age children are found in Table 2. Consistently, from 2004–2009, black students received the lowest *Advancement* and *Proficient* scores, even scoring lower than Asian and Hispanic students. Only 24% of school-aged black students (K-8) were considered *Advanced* in 2009 compared to 53% of white students. However, the number was twice as much as the 12% of black students who were rated *Advanced* in math in 2004.

As indicated in Tables 3 and 4, the achievement gap is also evident at the high school level. White students outperformed black students from 2004-2009 in reading, language, writing proficiency, and high school math (Algebra 1). Once again, black students are the lowest performing racial group from 2004–2009. A comparison of their *Proficient* and *Advanced* math performance in 2009 indicates that their performance was a significant 10 percentage points lower than their white counterparts. In every category and at every grade configuration, black

students are performing well below their white counterparts, in particular, and all of their other counterparts, in general. Yet, notwithstanding this disturbing finding, math proficiency among black students increased between 2004 and 2009 by almost 40 percentage points.

In 2009, MNPS did not meet the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) benchmark of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act at the K-8 grade configuration. AYP is the standard measurement that school districts must satisfy in order to comply with the NCLB requirements. States have the flexibility to set the measurement as long as testing is the primary instrument for evaluating student proficiency.¹ Two groups, African Americans and economically disadvantaged students, did not meet AYP requirements for reading, language arts, and writing. There is likely a significant relationship between these two groups, and as detailed in Table 5, their performance on these subjects adversely impacted the overall AYP score for the school district. Strikingly, at the K-8 grade configuration, Limited English Proficient students and students with disabilities met the AYP benchmark and black students did not. The one glimmer of hope is that black students at the high school level satisfied the AYP standard for math (Algebra 1), yet, as discussed earlier, they were outperformed by their counterparts in other racial groups.

CONCLUSION

This brief essay demonstrates that there is an achievement gap between black and white students. This gap indicates the consistent pattern of black students scoring lower on standardized tests than white students. This gap extends to other groups as well. In other words, Asian and Hispanic students consistently outperform black students in reading, writing, language arts, and math. The results indicate that black students are not adequately served in Nashville schools, and invite public officials, school leaders, educators and community leaders to take urgent action to address the achievement gap and improve black proficiency in multiple subject areas.

¹ See <http://www.edweek.org/ew/issues/adequate-yearly-progress/>.

Appendix²

Table 1: Percent of Students Proficient and Advanced in Reading Language & Writing*

<i>K-8 Reading, Language and Writing by Racial subgroup</i>				
<i>Proficient and Advanced</i>				
<i>Year</i>	<i>White</i>	<i>Black</i>	<i>Asian</i>	<i>Hispanic</i>
2009	92%	83%	91%	81%
2008	93%	86%	93%	80%
2007	91%	83%	93%	77%
2006	90%	79%	92%	73%
2005	92%	84%	92%	76%
2004	88%	75%	86%	69%
2003	86%	74%	85%	66%
<i>Advanced Only</i>				
2009	49%	22%	50%	24%
2008	52%	25%	55%	26%
2007	49%	24%	52%	22%
2006	47%	21%	49%	21%
2005	45%	18%	51%	24%
2004	39%	14%	37%	15%
2003	39%	14%	33%	12

² The findings were initially prepared for the Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce’s 17th Annual Report Card.

Table 2: Percent of Students Proficient and Advanced in Math*

<i>K-8 Math by Racial subgroup Proficient and Advanced</i>				
<i>Year</i>	<i>White</i>	<i>Black</i>	<i>Asian</i>	<i>Hispanic</i>
2009	92%	81%	94%	87%
2008	92%	80%	94%	84%
2007	91%	77%	94%	80%
2006	89%	75%	94%	78%
2005	89%	75%	94%	77%
2004	85%	67%	87%	71%
<i>Advanced Only</i>				
2009	53%	24%	63%	30%
2008	50%	21%	59%	26%
2007	47%	19%	56%	23%
2006	44%	17%	53%	23%
2005	41%	15%	53%	17%
2004	37%	12%	41%	14%

Table 3: Percent of Students Proficient and Advanced in Reading/Language/Writing*

<i>High School Reading/language/Writing by Racial subgroup Proficient and Advanced</i>				
<i>Year</i>	<i>White</i>	<i>Black</i>	<i>Asian</i>	<i>Hispanic</i>
2009	96%	89%	96%	89%
2008	94%	88%	94%	87%
2007	93%	85%	93%	84%
2006	94%	85%	92%	85%
2005	91%	83%	93%	86%
2004	87%	80%	87%	79%

Table 4: Percent of Students Proficient and Advanced in Math (Algebra 1)*

<i>High School Math (Algebra 1) by Racial subgroup</i>				
<i>Proficient and Advanced</i>				
<i>Year</i>	<i>White</i>	<i>Black</i>	<i>Asian</i>	<i>Hispanic</i>
2009	87%	77%	91%	78%
2008	88%	75%	92%	82%
2007	79%	62%	91%	74%
2006	82%	59%	89%	67%
2005	79%	62%	88%	65%
2004	76%	38%	81%	59%

Table 5:
Adequately Yearly Progress (AYP), K-8 and High School*

Adequate Yearly Progress (Y=Yes, N=No)										
	All	Blacks	Asians	Hispanics	Native Americans	Whites	Economically Disadvantaged	Disabled	Limited English Proficiency	
K-8										
Math										
% Tested	Y	Y	Y	Y	<45	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
% Proficient	Y	Y	Y	Y	<45	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Reading/Language Arts/Writing										
% Tested	Y	Y	Y	Y	<45	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
% Proficient	N	N	Y	Y	<45	Y	N	Y	Y	Y
Additional Indicator										
Graduation Rate	Y									
Met AYP	N									
High School										
Math										
% Tested	Y	Y	Y	Y	<45	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
% Proficient	Y	Y	Y	Y	<45	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Reading/Language Arts/Writing										
% Tested	Y	Y	Y	Y	<45	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
% Proficient	Y	Y	Y	Y	<45	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Additional Indicator										
Graduation Rate	Y									
Met AYP	Y									

What's Derailing Sterling?

Gilman W. Whiting

The mere imparting of information is not education. Above all things, the effort must result in making a man think and do for himself...

No systematic effort toward change has been possible, for, taught the same economics, history, philosophy, literature and religion which have established the present code of morals, the Negro's mind has been brought under the control of his oppressor. The problem of holding the Negro down, therefore, is easily solved. When you control a man's thinking you do not have to worry about his actions. You do not have to tell him not to stand here or go yonder. He will find his "proper place" and will stay in it. You do not need to send him to the back door. He will go without being told. In fact, if there is no back door, he will cut one for his special benefit. His education makes it necessary.

Dr. Carter G. Woodson, *The Mis-education of the Negro*, 1933

Dear Dr. Whiting, by now you have met my King, Sterling... He's a fine young man who has an amazing heart and a good spirit. He is smart, articulate, in fact, talented beyond his age, good-natured and (mostly) well-mannered... He is not a 'lazy' young man. I could not ask for a better son.... Sterling finished the ninth grade with a 0.88 GPA and shows no signs of changing his attitude toward school. He says he wants to be a better student but his actions have not supported his assertions. When I learned of your Institute, however, I knew he needed to be a part of it. He does not want to be there. Please help me!!

Excerpted from email from the mother of Sterling [a pseudonym], June 16, 2009

For more than 20 years, I have worked with Black males, so many of whom are capable of doing phenomenal things academically, but so few of whom achieve this greatness. Most recently, while co-directing the Scholar Identity Institute at Vanderbilt University (Nashville, Tennessee) as a part of the 100 Kings Initiative of the 100 Black Men of Middle Tennessee, I had the opportunity to work with nearly 100 Black males in grades 5 through 12 for two weeks, for four consecutive summers (2006-2009), as well as meeting with the young men on weekends and during the academic year. While all of the young men are special, and many stood out within the group, one of these young men, Sterling, caught all of our attention. Sterling (age 15) is intelligent: he scored 137 on the *Naglieri Non-Verbal Ability Test*, which places him in the 'gifted' range. He is perceptive, intuitive, inquisitive, creative, and defiant. Sterling is also social/extroverted, unsure of himself, and angry. I recognized his potential to do great things: to be a leader, to complete assignments with high marks, and to show a strong work ethic. But, on a daily basis, Sterling instead chose the role of class clown and instigator of conflict among other male students. He refused to follow rules and directions, and usually denied contributing to or causing trouble. By all testing metrics, Sterling is a gifted and talented young man whose potential is limitless, yet he is also an unmotivated and underachieving Black male, and proud of it. Working with Sterling, I saw his promise for

becoming a strong student and leader, an intellectual and a scholar. Unfortunately, he has yet to see himself as such.

This limited self-perception by many young Black males, with Sterling as but one example, has motivated my work leading to the creation of the Scholar Identity Model™ (SIM). The SIM began as a theoretical model used to explore enhancing the psychological and social view one has of oneself such that one comes to view oneself as a capable, successful scholar/student. Use of this model has been further developed theoretically and implemented programmatically, in part, over the course of the last 12 years. Having worked with hundreds of male students similar to Sterling, each different in his own right, but all having one thing in common—poor school-related identities—it is clear that the ‘Sterlings’ throughout the nation remain on the fence of indecision and insecurity, hovering between embracing their potential and taking the road less travelled, or falling into the all-too-common crowd of underachieving gifted Black and Brown males. In an effort to assist those young men with deciding to embrace their gifts and potential, I developed the Scholar Identity Model (SIM), which has been used in the Summer Scholar Identity Institute (SII).

THE SUMMER SCHOLAR IDENTITY INSTITUTE

Many of the ‘Sterlings’, and those with fewer academic skills and support as well as a lack of opportunities, are finding unrealizable the prospect of graduation from high school and even the mere possibility of college and a full-time, good-paying job; all merely mirages in their eyes. The gaps in the achievement levels of Black males compared to their peers in other racial and gender groups are well-documented and need not be enumerated here. I argue that the SIM constructs (outlined below) are essential to the young men’s survival within the school setting because they offer a form of social and cultural capital necessary for success in school and life.¹ For without appropriate attitudes, expectations, and behaviors, no long-term usable knowledge and self-insights will be gained, understood, and appreciated.

The Institute’s program using SIM was designed to be flexible and is presented *here* as a two-week program model. What is also meant by flexible is that the Institute curriculum has been theorized both pragmatically and structurally. Accordingly, it can be conducted as a two-to ten-week summer program, a weekend program, a monthly program, and/or a ten-month school program. It can be targeted for K-12 students as well as for students of post-secondary ages. Philosophically, the model guides students’ attitudes, decisions, and actions on a daily basis. The goal is to place accountability on not only the student but all involved in the process of developing motivated, gifted male learners.

SIM assists with the cultivation of coping mechanisms and self-reflective skills/activities that students can transfer to multiple areas of life, including employment. These skills are critical to success, according to noted Harvard Professor William Julius Wilson in his latest work

¹ S. Aronwitz, and H.A. Giroux, *Education Under Siege: The Conservative, Liberal and Radical Debate over Schooling* (New York: Routledge, 1986); B. Martin and I. Szelenyi, “‘Beyond Cultural Capital: Towards a Theory of Symbolic Domination’,” in R. Eyerman, T. Svensson and T. Soderquist, eds., *Intellectuals, Universities and the State* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987); T. Perry, A.G. Hilliard III, and C. Steele, *Young, Gifted and Black: Promoting High Achievement among African-American Students* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2004); W.J. Wilson, *More Than Just Race: Being Black and Poor in the Inner City* (New York: Norton, 2009).

More than Just Race and Devah Pager in her 2007 book *Marked*.² Wilson argues that ‘cultural factors’ cannot be ignored; Pager discusses the inability of many of the young Black men in her study to display ‘water-cooler skills’ or a basic ability to smile. The Scholar Identity Institute is more than a place where programming occurs; using the SIM constructs, it is also characterized by a philosophy that guides the development and utilization of particular ways of interacting in life that lead to success in developing and exploiting talents.

Here, I describe the two-week summer program model, held Monday through Friday from 8 am to 2 pm in Nashville, Tennessee. Over the past four years, the 35-75 Black males in the program were in grades 5-12 and were in the same urban school district. Most of the males are considered ‘at risk’ for poor school achievement and dropping out, regardless of intellectual ability. The Institute offers lectures, readings, discussions, and individual and group activities (e.g., critical thinking vignettes, team building problems, discussion of healthy living habits, vocabulary enrichment, test preparation).

The core constructs of the concept of Scholar Identity are four relevant propositions: (1) Black and Latino males are more likely to achieve academically when they identify with being scholars; (2) Black and Latino males are more likely to be viewed as gifted if they achieve at higher levels; (3) these males are more likely to be viewed as gifted if they demonstrate characteristics of a scholar; and (4) these males are more likely to reach their potential when high expectations are normalized.

KEEPING STERLING ON TRACK: CONSTRUCTS OF THE SCHOLAR IDENTITY MODEL AND INSTITUTE

One could argue that Black and Latino males represent two entirely different student group populations and that to *lump* them together is a disservice to both. With this in mind, I want to make it perfectly clear that neither group is doing well, when compared to the majority groups of female and White students. As previously mentioned, in terms of the flexibility of the model, what is proposed with the Scholar Identity Model and Institute is not limited to either of these groups, to males, or to K-12 students for that matter. The Model is not bound by or limited to a specific age, gender, or culture, but, instead, can be tailored to a wide variety of groups. For example, the Model has been used in an upper-level undergraduate course for more than four years at a top twenty first-tier research university. It has been used in conjunction with an AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) program, as well as a YMCA math and science enrichment program. It is currently being proposed in two elementary schools. At this point, and for the purposes of this chapter, I focus on its application to Black males. What can educators do to develop or enhance a Scholar Identity among these students?

When Black and Latino males view themselves as academically serious, as studious, as competent and capable, and as intelligent; when they believe that their racial and social identity are not in jeopardy and their cultures are appreciated, these students have a strong Scholar

² Wilson, *More Than Just Race*; Devah Pager, *Marked: Race, Crime, and Finding Work in an Era of Mass Incarceration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

Identity.³ I have found several characteristics, in research and in real life settings, which contribute to this Scholar Identity. I will cover briefly each characteristic.⁴

Over the past four years, 9 of the 10 days of the Institute focus on a single construct. Testing in the form of a pre-test/post-test for each of the constructs is assessed each day. Formative data show that a majority of the students have begun to internalize higher degrees of understanding, critical thinking, utilization, and sharing of the Scholar Identity Model's constructs in their day-to-day academic and social settings. For gifted Black and Latino males, having a method to assist them in their decision-making, as well as with building resiliency, provides both qualitative and quantitative support for our efforts. Data continue to be collected and analyzed.

Day 1: Self-Efficacy – Self-efficacy sets the foundation for the SIM. Several studies have been dedicated to showing the importance for students of possessing high academic self-efficacy. Bandura states that “perceived self-efficacy is a better predictor of intellectual performance than skills alone.”⁵ Gifted Black and Latino males who have a scholar identity believe in themselves; they are resilient, have self-confidence, self-control, and a sense of self-responsibility. While recognizing their shortcomings or weaknesses, they, nonetheless, believe that they are intellectually and academically capable students. They repudiate negative stereotypes about Black and Latino males, and are not deterred by challenges or setbacks because they have personal conviction. They, in fact, welcome academic challenges.

Day 2: Future Orientation – Future orientation is defined as one's outlook and the extent to which one is thoughtful about his/her future.⁶ Future orientation is a multidimensional concept that includes such dimensions as self-efficacy, internal locus of control planning, as well as the structural tension caused by a desired image as compared to one's current reality. Future orientation is especially important for adolescents like Sterling because it is related to decisions about one's education, career, and family.⁷ Motivation theories indicate that people who have aspirations tend to stay focused and to prepare for success.⁸ They think about the past, present, and the future, especially about how one's past and current behaviors and decisions influence future achievements. Black and Latino males with a keen understanding of the need to plan ahead are not overly concerned about immediate gratification or short-term interests and goals. These students think about the big picture and set realistic goals. They recognize the importance of a high GPA, the importance of excellent school attendance, and the importance of

³ G.W. Whiting, “Promoting a Scholar Identity Among African-American Males: Implications for Gifted Education,” *Gifted Education Psychology Press*, 20 (3) (2006): 2-6.

⁴ U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights Data, 2004.

⁵ A. Bandura, *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. New York: Freeman, 1997), 216.

⁶ J.E. Nurmi, “How Do Adolescents See Their Future? A Review of the Development of Future Orientation and Planning,” *Developmental Review*, 11 (1991): 1-59; J.E. Nurmi, “Socialization and Self Development: Channeling, Selection, Adjustment, and Reflection,” in R. Lerner and L. Steinberg, eds. *Handbook of Adolescent Psychology* (New York: Wiley, 2004).

⁷ J.E. Nurmi, “How Do Adolescents See Their Future? A Review of the Development of Future Orientation and Planning,” *Developmental Review*, 11 (1991): 1-59.

⁸ T.C. Grantham, “Rocky Jones: Case Study of a High-Achieving Black Male's Motivation to Participate in Gifted Classes,” *Roeper Review*, 26(4) (2004): 208-215.

participating in challenging courses (e.g., advanced placement courses) for realizing their dreams.

Day 3: Willing to Make Sacrifices – Unlike adolescents, many successful adults have learned through experiences, trials, and tribulations that sacrifices are a necessary ‘evil’ for reaching both short-term and long-term goals.⁹ Black and Latino males who have a Scholar Identity also understand how some sacrifices are essential for academic success. Therefore, they are more likely to let go of some aspects of a social life (e.g., parties, joining a fraternity, dating, popularity, and so forth) and other potential distractions (e.g., TV) to reach desired goals.

Day 4: Internal Locus of Control – Sterling and other Black and Latino males who develop an internal locus of control¹⁰ become optimistic: they believe they can do well because they work hard, study, and complete school assignments. When facing poor grades or failure, they ask for help. Essentially, if Sterling had a high degree of internal locus of control, he would be less likely to blame low achievement, failure, or mistakes on his teachers, families, or peers. Ultimately, those with a well-developed internal locus of control understand that effort is just as important, or more important, than ability to be successful.¹¹

Day 5: Self-Awareness – Self-awareness is the capacity for developing an honest appraisal and understanding of one’s strengths and limitations. Recognition of weaknesses does not detract from the self-aware student’s belief in themselves. Self-aware Black and Latino males are able to adapt, cope, and find ways to compensate for their weaknesses (e.g., they seek a tutor in classes in which they are not doing well, they study longer and more often, they work with others). In accordance with principles of the Johari Window Model developed by Luft and Ingram,¹² Black and Latino males with self-awareness are cognizant of the image they portray to others and of changes they need to make to paint a positive picture.

Day 6: Need for Achievement / Need for Affiliation – For many Black and Latino males, the need for achievement is often stronger than the need for affiliation.¹³ Thus, unlike Sterling, their pride and sense of worth are not determined by the number of friends they have or their popularity. While they may be social or extroverted and want to have friends, they are not concerned about being popular for the sake of popularity. Black and Latino males with a strong need for achievement understand that high academic achievement carries much weight—hence, learning receives the higher priority.

Day 7: Academic Self-Confidence – Black and Latino males with academic self-confidence believe they are academically capable students. They feel comfortable and confident

⁹ L. Gutman L. and C. Midgley, “The Role of Protective Factors in Supporting the Academic Achievement of Poor African American Students During the Middle School Transition,” *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, vol. 29, n. 2, 2000; D.H. Schunk, (1989). Self-efficacy and cognitive skill learning, in R.E. Ames and C. Ames, eds, *Research on Motivation in Education* vol. 3 (New York: Academic Press, 1989), 13-44.

¹⁰ J.B. Rotter, “Generalized Expectancies for Internal Versus External Control of Reinforcement,” in G.A. Kimble, eds., *Psychological Monographs*, 80 (1), 1966.

¹¹ Carol Dweck, *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success* (New York: Random House, 2006).

¹² J. Luft and H. Ingham, “The Johari Window, a Graphic Model of Interpersonal Awareness,” *Proceedings of the Western Training Laboratory in Group Development* (Los Angeles: UCLA, 1955).

¹³ D.C. McClelland, *The Achieving Society* (Princeton, NJ: Van Nostrand, 1961).

in academic settings.¹⁴ Unlike Sterling, they do not see any reason to negate, deny, or minimize their academic abilities and skills. These males have a strong work ethic: they spend time doing school work, they study, and they push themselves.

Day 8: Racial Identity and Pride – Racial identity (another type of self-awareness) influences students' achievement and motivation.¹⁵ For Black and Latino males, race has high salience; they are comfortable identifying and affiliating as Black or Latino. They want greater self-understanding as racial beings, but are also aware of the importance of adapting to their environment and a multicultural society.¹⁶ Just as important, they do not equate achievement with 'acting white' or 'selling out'.¹⁷ They refuse to be inhibited by social injustices based on race or ethnicity.

Day 9: Masculinity – Masculinity is a sensitive and controversial topic. I am referring to the notion that Black and Latino males with a scholar identity do not equate being intelligent or studious or talented with being 'feminine' or 'unmanly.' Instead, these Black and Latino males believe that males are intelligent and that being gifted or intelligent does not subtract from one's sense of masculinity or self-worth in any way; they are in fact additives, or plusses, to their identities as young men.¹⁸

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

However unfortunate, it is becoming increasingly common for too many Black and other minority males across middle Tennessee and across the Nation to fall through the gaps of opportunity for a successful life. Much of society, including schools, has become desensitized to the catastrophic directions young Black and Latino males are taking. When underachieving students with high potential fail to embrace, or choose not to display, their talents, it is tragic. For those choosing underachievement, it appears that no amount of promised rewards (*e.g.*, money, college admission, employment) is sufficient to make it worth navigating the maze of the formal educational process.

When the constructs of the Scholar Identity Model are regularly and routinely explained *and* infused into the core values of a student who is attempting to reach goalposts that appear to

¹⁴ F.A. Hrabowski, *Beating the odds: Raising Academically Successful African American Males* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

¹⁵ W.E. Cross Jr. and B.J. Vandiver, "Nigrescence Theory and Measurement Introducing the Cross Racial Identity Scale," (Ch. 21), in J. Ponterotto, J.M. Casas, L.A. Suzuki, and C.M. Alexander, eds. *Handbook of Multicultural Counseling*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2001.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ R.F. Ferguson, *Analysis of Black-White GPA disparities in Shaker Heights, Ohio* (New York: Brookings Institute, Papers on Educational Policy, 2001); D.Y. Ford, *Reversing Underachievement Among Gifted Black Students: Promising Practices and Programs* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1996); S. Fordham, "Racelessness as a Strategy in Black students' School Success: Pragmatic Strategy or Pyrrhic Victory?" *Harvard Educational Review*, 58 (1988): 54-84; and D.Y. Ford, et al., "Conducting Cross-Cultural Research: Controversy, Cautions, Concerns, and Considerations," *Roeper Review*, vol. 30, (2) (April 2008): 82-92.

¹⁸ G.W. Whiting and T. Lewis, "On Manliness: Black Masculinity Revisited," *AmeriQuests* 6, (1) (2008). Retrieved from <http://ejournals.library.vanderbilt.edu/ameriquests/viewarticle.php?id=171&layout=html>.

move away as he approaches, to cross a finishing line that fades the closer he gets, the constructs provide social and psychological insights for guidance, motivation, empowerment, and fortitude. Students who possess talents and gifts have additional pressures to achieve at higher levels each day and stage of the developmental process. Black or Latino males are more likely than others to not reach those levels due to external as well as internalized pressures.

It has been estimated that as many as 250,000 Black gifted children or more in the United States have not been identified as such and therefore are not being adequately served and nurtured in this regard.¹⁹ Unidentified gifted Black students is an area requiring more exposure and research. The theories contained in the Scholar Identity Model are not a panacea for all that is not going well with this population specifically, or with schools in general. Rather, the SIM serves as a foundation upon which self-regulated learning, thought, and action come together. It is this author's hope that Sterling and the hundreds of thousands like him choose that *road less traveled*, opt to stay both physically and psychologically engaged, and truly learn to take full advantage of what is available to them. My deepest fear is that the Sterlings, as gifted and talented as they are, will not take advantage of those options, gifts, and talents, if we do not change their self-perceptions and attitudes toward school. The Scholar Identity Institute and Model offer hope to many of these young men and their families and teachers. And just when hope appears to be a distant, unobtainable goal, it can be rejuvenated by something as simple as an email from a parent.

Dr. Whiting,

Thank you for encouraging and making a deposit in Sterling that I believe will have a lasting impact. Although he was reluctant to attend the Institute this summer, I sense that your words and work stirred something inside of him that has enlarged his belief in his capabilities. Yesterday (Sunday) he went to work and wore his Scholar Identity t-shirt. I think he wanted to show it off to his school mates. Sterling mentioned to me that he told you of his learning difference. This too is significant. I can remember the time he wouldn't talk about it. In more than a small way I know this experience was what he needed. I want to thank you more than words can express.

Excerpt of email from Sterling's mother, June 30, 2009

History shows that it does not matter who is in power ... those who have not learned to do for themselves and have to depend solely on others never obtain any more rights or privileges in the end than they had in the beginning.

Dr. Carter G. Woodson, *The Mis-education of the Negro*, 1933

¹⁹ OCR, 2004.

ECONOMIC RECOVERY, JOBS, AND HOUSING

*Letter to Nashville
Employment Opportunities for Homeless and
Formerly Homeless Residents*

My name is Al. T. Star, and I was born and raised in Nashville. I grew up poor, experienced a lot of racial discrimination and humiliation, and felt cheated out of many opportunities afforded to other Nashvillians.

For the better part of my 58 years, I was in and out of prison. However, in 1994, at 42 years of age, I realized that in order to stay out of prison, I had to become a law-abiding citizen. This was a gradual process. Because of my past criminal record, it is nearly impossible for me to find stable employment. This is probably the case for many formerly incarcerated persons.

Racism and unfair hiring practices targeting ex-offenders, combined with the economic recession, make it extremely difficult for ex-offenders and homeless residents to find stable employment. In essence, we are not treated like full-fledged citizens and human beings in the metropolitan areas.

When I was released from prison in 1998, temporary employment services were available to ex-offenders in Nashville. But with a bad economy a decade later, many temporary employment agencies refuse to hire anyone with a criminal background.

As an ex-offender who experienced long periods of homelessness, I now devote most of my time to assisting grassroots organizations and advocacy groups that work with homeless and transitional housing populations. In 2009, I was appointed the Chair of the Board of Directors for the Nashville Homeless Power Project. I also work with the Green-Collar Jobs Task Force of Nashville-Davidson County, an advocacy group that pushes for clean energy jobs for people with barriers to employment. These two groups (the Homeless Power Project and the Green-Collar Jobs Task Force) show more concern for non-violent, ex-offenders than most community leaders and public officials in Nashville.

In the past few years, community leaders and public officials, through the work of the homeless and poverty commissions, have recommended workforce development and transitional jobs initiatives. Yet, we need to move beyond rhetoric and into action. We need our public agencies and social service sector, along with the Tennessee Department of Labor and Middle Tennessee Workforce Investment Board, to establish targeted programs for the homeless. We need state and municipal laws that penalize the discriminatory treatment of the homeless. We need rights afforded to every citizen in Nashville.

Al. T. Star, Chair of Board, Nashville Homeless Power Project

How Soon Will It Be Too Late? Economic Recovery for Blacks in Middle Tennessee

Ronnie T. Mitchell

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) (or what is generally referred to as the stimulus bill) was signed into law by President Barack Obama in February 2009. Similar to President Franklin Roosevelt's National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933 during the Great Depression era, the stimulus bill was intended to transition the United States out of its worst economic crisis in decades. ARRA allocated \$800 billion to states, cities, educational institutions, and small businesses. Tennessee will have received close to \$5 billion by December 2010, with \$700 million allocated to Middle Tennessee's fifth congressional district, an area that encompasses most of Nashville-Davidson County.

Despite ARRA's success, national studies confirm that many of the stimulus dollars did not trickle down to black communities. It also has not seriously mitigated black unemployment in Tennessee, especially among males, which in early 2010 was nearly 30%. The lack of economic recovery is not only indicative of the bureaucratic difficulties typically associated with transferring large sums of federal dollars to state and local entities. It also reflects the long-standing pattern of economic marginalization of Nashville's black population. For example, the racially exclusionary procurement policy of Nashville's metropolitan government marginalizes black contractors from profitable business opportunities, thus making economic recovery even more challenging. This chapter examines ARRA data, a disparity study conducted in 2004 of Nashville's minority contracting practices, and the recent debate over minority contracts for the Music City Convention Center, the largest economic development project in the history of Nashville, to further illuminate the non-occurrence of black economic recovery in Nashville.

THE ILLUSIVENESS OF ECONOMIC RECOVERY

Throughout President Barack Obama's presidential campaign and during his first year in office, he routinely said, "Change Has Come to America." Yet, the optimism regarding "change" and the President's "change" agenda has had mixed results. As mentioned above, the stimulus package rescued the U.S. economy from a catastrophic situation. However, it has not alleviated the pain and suffering in the black community, especially resulting from long-lasting unemployment and underemployment. According to the ARRA accountability website, as of May 2010, only 143 jobs for adults were created or maintained by the stimulus package for the 37208 and 37209 zip codes, predominantly African-American areas that have some of the highest unemployment rates in Davidson County. Because many stimulus jobs were created as a result of grants to higher educational institutions, it is likely that many of the 143 jobs were within Meharry Medical College, Fisk University, and Tennessee State University, which are located in zip codes 37208 and 37209. For the most part, vulnerable members of communities in these zip code areas did not experience economic recovery prompted by job stimulus/maintenance of the stimulus package.

ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Economic recovery is also hindered by racially exclusionary practices in the construction industry and governmental procurement process. Although Nashville has a talented array of black business leaders and contractors, they often are denied contracts awarded by metropolitan government agencies that are in charge of hundreds of millions of contracting dollars. A study (the “disparity study”) was conducted in 2004 analyzing Davidson County’s minority contracting policies. The disparity study, conducted by Griffin and Strong, P.C., identified the distribution of contracts in three areas from 1998-2003: construction, professional services, and goods and services.

Table 1 displays the determination of fair representation in the awarding of construction contracts for Metro Nashville agencies. Taken together, minorities (African Americans, Latinos, Asians, Native Americans, and white women) were not adequately allocated prime contracts and subcontracts by Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools and the Metropolitan Nashville Airport Authority. Metro Purchasing produced mixed results, as it scored poorly in its distribution of prime construction contracts, but received a high score for its allocation of subcontracts to African Americans. Racial minorities did not receive a fair share of the prime construction contracts from Nashville Electric Service and the Metropolitan Development and Housing Agency (MDHA). Of particular note, blacks are the most underrepresented in construction contracts from Metro Purchasing and subcontracts from the Airport Authority, yet they are adequately represented in subcontracts from Metro Purchasing and MDHA. White women, notably, received a much greater share of the construction subcontracts than black firms.¹

Table I. Construction Contracts for Minorities in Metropolitan Nashville, 1998-2003		
Departments	Fair Representation (Prime Contracts)	Fair Representation (Subcontracts)
Metro Purchasing	No	Yes
Metro Nashville Public Schools	No	No
Nashville Electric Service	No	Not Available
Metropolitan Transit Authority	Not Available	Not Available
Metropolitan Development and Housing Agency	No	Inconclusive
Metropolitan Nashville Airport Authority	Inconclusive	No

¹ Griffin & Strong, P.C., *Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County Disparity Study: Executive Summary*, December 17, 2004, p. 24. Obtained at: http://www.nashville.gov/dmsba/docs/disparity_study_exec_summary_041217.pdf.

The findings are better when taking into account the number of years a business has been in operation, the number of employees it has, and who owns the firm. Overall, an assessment of the three categories of municipal contracting for six agencies (Metro Purchasing, Metro Nashville Public Schools, Metropolitan Nashville Airport Authority, Metropolitan Transit Authority, Nashville Electric Service, and Metropolitan Development and Housing Authority), shows that Nashville had a poor record of awarding contracts to firms owned and managed by persons of color. Griffin and Strong, P.C. stated that there was “evidence of discriminatory barriers to participation by minority and women-owned firms in Nashville Metropolitan Area.”²

While the disparity study assessed procurement policies and practices from 1998 through 2003, we may surmise that Metro’s procurement policy has shown little improvement in more recent years. In 2009 and 2010, Nashville debated whether city government should support the construction of the new Music City Convention Center, Metro Nashville’s largest ever and most costly construction project, estimated to cost \$600 million. Many who are attentive to the Convention Center debate believe that costs for the project will reach \$1 billion, should the County approve construction of a hotel next to the Convention Center.

Although African Americans are members of the Convention Center authority that oversees the project, it appears that the project’s goals for diversity and inclusion have not been met. Early reports to the Middle Tennessee Diversity Contractors Association indicate that qualified and certified black contractors have not received a fair share of the demolition and excavation work, which is the first phase of the construction project. Before the Convention Center received final approval, Metro Council Black Caucus members advocated for a fair contracting policy for the Convention Center. They actually pushed the Convention Center supporters to approve a Memorandum of Understanding that specified that under-utilized groups, especially blacks, would receive an equitable distribution of contracts. However, this was a non-binding agreement that lacked the muscle of a legally binding measure such as a community benefits agreement (CBA) or best value contracting (BVC) policy.

One of the problems with Nashville’s procurement policy is how it classifies and measures disadvantaged and minority contractors. All small business as well as businesses owned by white women are classified as Disadvantaged

A Different Look

According to the census reports collected by the Federal Financial Institutions Examination Council, there were 39 (out of 144) majority-minority census tract neighborhoods in Nashville at the time of the 2000 census. Thirty-nine percent (39%) of these tracts were classified as low-income/poor, as defined by having a median income of less than one-half or 50% of the median income of Nashville-Davidson County. Seventeen or 44% of the census tracts were moderate income, as defined by a median income of less than 20% under the median income, but no less than 50% of the median income. Over 80% of blacks lived in neighborhoods below the median income of Nashville-Davidson County. Only one majority-minority tract (and in this example, the tract was barely above 50% minority) – is classified as upper income. If the 2010 census report parallels the 2000 census – and considering the economic downturn at the end of the decade, one can expect that it will – an overwhelmingly majority of racial minorities will be living in communities below the median income of the area.

² *Ibid.*, p. 35.

Business Enterprises (DBE). Accordingly, African-American contractors, also classified as DBE, must compete for contracts with all small businesses and firms owned by white women. This tends to limit the actual amount of work that is available to black contractors. Moreover, there have been occasions when firms owned by white men have used female relatives as proxies to win bids targeting DBE groups, thereby subverting the goal of the policy promoting more involvement of businesses and firms owned by persons of color.

Another major obstacle for blacks is that there are only a handful of substantive grassroots workforce development programs – and particularly programs that focus on black men. There is a severe shortage of black men who are qualified to engage in commercial construction and skilled trades. Even when or if opportunities do become available, unless we re-industrialize middle Tennessee and train black men to engage in commercial and residential construction, Depression-era unemployment will become a normal way of life in black communities throughout the region.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ECONOMIC RECOVERY

Several initiatives can help facilitate economic recovery in Nashville, for black people in particular. The first would be implementation and enforcement of the recommended changes to Nashville's procurement and contracting procedures from the Nashville disparity study authored by Griffin and Strong. This study outlined more than a dozen recommendations, including a "Mandatory Covenant of Nondiscrimination" that should be adopted by the six Metro agencies that were the focus of the study.³ If these recommendations were followed, black contractors and workers could have greater access to such capital development projects as schools, police precincts, fire halls, libraries and parks, sidewalks, and those to rebuild Middle Tennessee's deteriorating infrastructure.

Jumpstarting grassroots workforce development programs can also address black unemployment and underemployment. I believe we need to *re-school* and *re-tool* black men and women for the construction and skilled trades. The construction industry is an engine that drives our City's economy. Yet, many of our workers, especially those who are black, are ill-prepared for viable employment opportunities in this arena. Furthermore, many grassroots workforce development groups in Nashville that train black men and women are excluded from the procurement process and have difficulty obtaining workforce development funds to sustain their programs.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 33-43.

Driving Towards Poverty: Immigrant Taxi Cab Drivers in the Athens of the South¹

Sekou M. Franklin

So it is obvious that if man [or woman] is to redeem his [or her] spiritual and moral “lag” he [or she] must go all out to bridge the social and economic gulf between the “haves” and the “have nots” of the world. Poverty is one of the most urgent items on the agenda of modern life.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Nobel Lecture, 1964

Since the 19th century, Nashville-Davidson County has been referred to as “the Athens of the South,” a moniker that symbolizes the city’s progressive political culture and sophisticated citizenry. Yet, hidden in the shadows of Nashville is a deep and disturbing socio-economic division that has created a society of haves and have-nots. This is no more evident than when assessing the social status and current work conditions of Nashville’s taxi drivers, many of whom are East African and Kurdish immigrants who migrated to the metro area from war-torn countries. Nashville’s taxi drivers are among the lowest paid workers in the United States. And, as described later in this essay, their average gross income is lower than the federal and state minimum wages.² This is due to the “independent contractor” status assigned to most drivers, an arrangement that requires drivers to assume many of the risks inherent in the taxi industry. This includes paying for operating costs, which, according to our survey³ (administered in the summer of 2008) of close to 300 taxi drivers, consist of:

- gas for automobiles (an average daily cost of \$42.56);
- permits (an average daily cost of \$22.02);
- car insurance (an average daily cost of \$8.30);
- a fee of \$10.50 per day for drivers who service the airport.

This arrangement is embedded in the taxi industry’s unregulated political economy. The companies that have proprietary influence in the metropolitan area—principally Allied Cab and Nashville Cab—assume few risks and require drivers to pay for these costs out of their own

¹ An early draft of this report was prepared for Nashville-Davidson County’s Transportation and Licensing Commission. Also, I want to thank Megan Macaraeg, Jobs with Justice, the Center for Third World Organizing, and the Center for Community Change’s Gen Change program for leading the project and administering the surveys.

² The federal minimum wage as of July 24, 2008 is \$6.55 per hour. Currently, there is no established state minimum wage law in Tennessee. See the following: The U.S. Department of Labor, “Compliance Assistance – Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA),” <http://www.dol.gov/esa/whd/flsa/>; The U.S. Department of Labor, “Minimum Wage Laws in the States – July 24, 2008,” <http://www.dol.gov/esa/minwage/america.htm>.

³ Close to 300 surveys from a pool of 700 taxi drivers were administered over a period of 4 weeks. The surveys were conducted on different weekdays and shifts to ensure an accurate portrayal of the industry. The surveys used in the study are also representative of the demographics of the workforce of the taxi industry in Nashville.

salaries. As an example, if the same arrangement were applied to higher education, it would mandate that a percentage of college professors' salaries be extracted each week to pay for school insurance and classroom space. This would reduce the take-home pay of the professoriate and erode the integrity of the academy.



Joon Powell, Photographer

Nashville's taxi drivers are among the hardest working and underappreciated residents in the metro area. Many work 14-15-hour days and seven-day work weeks, and each driver supports an average of five family members with his/her salary. This study found that the average gross income for taxi drivers in 2008 was \$105.77 per day. However, because of operating costs, the average net income—the daily, take-home pay after deducting operating costs—was only \$32.89 for double-shift work days. This amounts to less than \$2.40 per hour. If a driver works every day of a 30-day month at this rate, the person would make less than \$1,000.00 per month. If drivers work every day of the year, their annual net income would be less than \$12,000.00. This net income is half of the 2008 federal poverty guidelines of \$24,800 for a family of five.⁴

There are additional health risks that come with driving a taxi in Nashville. The taxi industry has a poor workers' compensation policy despite the fact that drivers work in hazardous conditions, drive in dangerous neighborhoods, and some are targets of discriminatory attacks. Further, almost 75% of the drivers did not have employer-based, government, or private health insurance, and only 32% said their children and spouses had insurance. Many who need preventative care or have acute medical conditions end up in emergency rooms and community health centers/clinics. Thus, the industry's uninsured workforce virtually guarantees that taxpayers will bear the costs of paying for their medical care.

⁴ United States Department of Health and Human Services, "The 2008 HHS Poverty Guidelines," <http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/08Poverty.shtml>.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

On June 6, 2008, the Nashville Metro Taxi Drivers Alliance (NMTDA) organized a rally to highlight the work conditions of immigrant taxi drivers. The rally received support from the Urban EpiCenter, Jobs with Justice, the Homeless Power Project, and the Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition. Over 300 marchers rallied in solidarity with the taxi cab drivers, including many African Americans who believed in the importance of alliances between African Americans and the largely East African taxi cab work force. NMTD believes Metro's taxi code should be amended to "cap the weekly fees and prohibit extra fees [operating costs] companies like Allied Cab include."⁵ Another recommendation is to ensure taxi drivers' right to unionize Nashville's unregulated taxi cab industry.

The social location of taxi drivers in the lower rungs of Nashville's society should be embarrassing for a city and metropolitan area that claim to cherish egalitarian values and take pride in being the Athens of the South. For many tourists visiting Nashville, their introduction to the metropolitan area will take place in the back seat of a taxi. It will occur through dialogues and conversations with drivers whose quality of life is among the lowest in the United States, and whose social status is largely obscured from public view and scrutiny. If Nashville is to truly live up to its Athenian image, municipal and civic leaders must take an active role in reforming the taxi industry to enhance the livelihood of its low-wage labor force.

⁵ See "Allied Cab drivers organize to fight, join union," *The City Paper*, August 1, 2008, <http://nashvillecitypaper.com/content/city-news/allied-cab-drivers-organize-fight-join-union>, Retrieved on May 24, 2010.

The Impact of the Foreclosure Crisis on African-American Communities in Nashville

Andrew Greer, Susan Saegert, Michael Nelson, and Paul Speer

While the relationship between high-risk loans and high foreclosure rates has been well-established, foreclosure experts are currently investigating lending disparities in neighborhoods with high percentages of minorities as compared to neighborhoods with high percentages of white residents. Their findings indicate that neighborhoods with high percentages of minority households are more likely to also have high percentages of sub-prime loans, even when many individuals in these neighborhoods could have qualified for prime loans.

Several of us at Vanderbilt's Center for Community Studies have also been investigating the relationships between minority status, financial qualifications, loan types, housing features, neighborhood characteristics, and foreclosure rates. Both statistics-based approaches (quantitative) and narrative-based approaches (qualitative) have been employed, so as to have a more complete understanding of the impacts of the foreclosure crisis on neighborhoods and on individuals in Davidson County.

WHAT DO THE NUMBERS SAY? A QUANTITATIVE APPROACH

An analysis combining data from multiple sources to investigate the relationships between foreclosure rates and other characteristics over time was conducted. The Davidson County Assessor of Property provided a data set of completed foreclosures or "trustee deeds" (*i.e.*, the "trustee" of the deed has taken over property ownership). This data set includes information specific to each foreclosed property and covers a five-year time period. These data reveal two interesting details: 1) foreclosures appear to be clustered in particular neighborhoods; and 2) individual foreclosures increased from 2005 to 2009. Numbers of completed foreclosures grew each year from 2005 (1,324 completed foreclosures) to 2009 (3,173 completed foreclosures) – a 140% increase (see Appendix, Figure 1, "Nashville (Davidson County) Foreclosures: 2005-2009).

Foreclosures increased both in absolute numbers and in terms of rates. Because the numbers of newly constructed homes did not increase as quickly as the numbers of foreclosures over the 2005-2009 time period, foreclosure *rates* substantially increased. Foreclosure rates were generated by dividing each foreclosure count for individual census tracts (neighborhoods) by the total count of addresses (from the United States Postal Service) for the corresponding census tracts. An example of the trustee deed locations in Davidson County is provided in Figure 2 (See the map in the Appendix section, "Trustee Deeds in Nashville from January 2009 to February 2010). Each of the dots represents one completed foreclosure from January 2009 to February 2010.

After noting that foreclosure rates climbed in Nashville during the last few years, we next examined the spatial distribution of foreclosures, looking to see if Nashville neighborhoods were impacted differently. In this examination, we relied on theory that linked neighborhood characteristics with lending disparities and foreclosure rates.¹ After all, high-risk loans (*e.g.*,

¹ K. Newman and E.K. Wyly, E. K. "Geographies of Mortgage Market Segmentation: The Case of Essex

sub-prime loans, high income-to-debt ratios, and predatory loans) have been some of the most powerful driving forces behind the current foreclosure crisis.

Newman and Wyly offer four hypotheses regarding lending disparities based on predatory lending practices.² First, the authors suggest that predatory-lending exploitation may be more achievable in neighborhoods where traditional mortgage lenders put less investment. This explanation most clearly accounts for neighborhoods that were historically *redlined*, where lenders drew red lines of credit exclusion around “undesirable” neighborhoods – based primarily on racist practices, or for neighborhoods that may have had high-risk loans tied to the properties in housing developments. Second, previous discriminatory practices that prevented minorities from obtaining loans created a market for predatory refinance loans intended to refurbish existing structures. Third, after fair housing laws were implemented, increasing numbers of minority homeowners had built significant equity amounts. By the 1990s, many minority homeowners had substantial equity, thus allowing these individuals to acquire additional loans. However, access to such loans often remained limited for minority borrowers, or these borrowers were steered toward high-risk refinance loans. While wealthier white homeowners also had built-up equity, these homeowners may have had more access to traditional prime loans, which protected white neighborhoods from high-risk loans. Fourth, higher foreclosure rates in minority neighborhoods as compared to white neighborhoods have decreased the lender competition in minority areas, thereby allowing predatory lenders to strengthen their presence. These hypotheses suggest why predatory lending and subprime foreclosures could be more concentrated in neighborhoods with high percentages of minority households as compared to white neighborhoods, a pattern suggested by other studies as well.³

Building on these four hypotheses, we examined the influence of minority status, loan type, and other neighborhood characteristics on foreclosure rates in Nashville neighborhoods. Our study found that high-risk loans significantly predicted high-foreclosure rates. Further, positive relationships between high-risk loans and foreclosure rates were stronger in neighborhoods with greater percentages of African Americans (see Figure 3 in Appendix, “Foreclosure Rates in African-American Neighborhoods”). As percentages of African Americans increased, the gap between high and low rates of high-risk lending increased dramatically. This study found that while there were significantly higher foreclosure rates in neighborhoods with high percentages of African Americans as compared to neighborhoods with lower percentages of African Americans, the concentration of high-risk loans had a stronger influence on foreclosure rates than minority status. Thus, the pattern in Nashville is consistent with other studies: predatory lending exacerbates foreclosure; and predatory lending is much greater in Nashville neighborhoods with high percentages of African Americans.

This quantitative example highlights differences in neighborhood composition and lending disparities in Davidson County, but this study does not capture the stories of the people who have experienced default and foreclosure. For that reason, we turned to housing agencies to

County, New Jersey,” *Housing Studies* 19 (1) (2004): 53-83.

² *Ibid.*

³ D. Immergluck, and G. Smith, G. “Measuring the Effect of Subprime Lending on Neighborhood Foreclosures: Evidence from Chicago,” *Urban Affairs Review* 40 (3) (2005): 362-389.

connect us with community members who have defaulted on their mortgages, so that these Nashville residents could discuss their challenges with homeownership, their connections to their homes and communities, and their views of the foreclosure crisis.

WHAT'S THE STORY? A QUALITATIVE APPROACH

In a study of Nashville neighborhoods, we sought to uncover differences in resident connections to their homes and communities in high-foreclosure neighborhoods through one-on-one interviews with residents who had defaulted on their mortgages. Two high-foreclosure neighborhoods, North Nashville and Antioch, were examined through participant interviews based on strong differences in neighborhood composition. The descriptions below include information from those knowledgeable about processes impacting neighborhoods, such as long-time residents, researchers, builders, and media. Additionally, historical literatures were consulted to better understand each neighborhood's unique qualities.

Neighborhood 1: North Nashville.

North Nashville was historically a thriving neighborhood showing a classic pattern of inner-city decline. Long-time residents report that this neighborhood was middle class with a more heterogeneous population during the 1950s. At least two major changes to this neighborhood led to an isolation of poorer residents: 1) Middle-class white residents moved to suburban areas, strongly associated with avoiding the required desegregation of metro schools and 2) two major highways were driven through the heart of North Nashville, cutting off neighborhood residents from downtown businesses, thus impairing community members' access to services. Although the North Nashville neighborhood has seen an increase in the number of community- and faith-based organizations since the 1980s, in 2010 this neighborhood remains low income with high percentages of African Americans.

Neighborhood 2: Antioch.

Prior to the 1960s, Antioch consisted mostly of rural farmland. According to one key informant, a flood of middle class, white residents moved outside of the greater metro area into areas like Antioch when schools were mandated to desegregate. When outer areas were consolidated into the local government in 1962 – the consolidation referendum occurred in 1962, thus paving the way for the formation of metropolitan government in 1963⁴ – metro policy applied to the newly formed suburbs, possibly accounting for the growing heterogeneity in this neighborhood. Increasing numbers of developers and builders have expanded the number of homes available to Antioch residents. As neighborhoods closer to the urban core are gentrifying and becoming unaffordable, the Antioch area is attracting minority groups (especially immigrant minorities) that can more easily afford the cheaper properties in this suburb.

INTERVIEWS

Although the previous neighborhood descriptions capture some of the relevant histories, resident interviews highlight the current connections that defaulters share with their homes and communities. All ten of the interview participants in North Nashville were African American, and many of the interviewees had strong connections to their homes, families, and communities.

⁴ B.D. Rogers and C. McCurdy Lipsey, "Metropolitan Reform: Citizen Evaluations of Performances in Nashville-Davidson County, Tennessee," *Publius* 4 (4) (Autumn, 1974): 21.

Residents in foreclosure often focused on the use of their home as the center of family and community, lamenting the loss of community and expressing hope for relying on family to help in the wake of losing their home:

I hope that there's family with a heart that's open that's willing to open their doors until times get better, and um, they can find something that they can afford to get into.

This particular North Nashville interviewee had, prior to her mortgage default, hoped to leave her house to her family after she died, which further supports the notion of strong family and community connections in this neighborhood.

Alternatively, the ten defaulters who were interviewed in Antioch were racially diverse, and family and community connections seemed to be weaker than connections in North Nashville. A male Antioch resident illustrated his lack of a strong connection to family and friends in his community when he said:

Some folks like me and yourself (referring to the interviewer), we're not at home. You know, like home-home, where we're from. Like I don't have no family here... I don't think a lot of people go back to buy homes; they go back to the renting-stage thing for at least a while...

While this man felt connected to his family, he did not feel that he had strong connections to his community. Additionally, this individual mentioned renting as a place to go for foreclosed residents in his neighborhood, which was much more common in Antioch interviews than in North Nashville interviews.

WHAT MATTERED TO INTERVIEWEES?

In North Nashville, quality of life, family, and community seemed to matter most to interviewees. Defaulters in this largely African American neighborhood did not explicitly identify race, but they discussed predatory-lending practices consistently. Participants in North Nashville seemed to accept high-foreclosure as just another form of disinvestment in an already marginalized neighborhood.

Alternatively, opinions in Antioch varied depending on the interviewee. Most white participants, however, identified minority populations as the cause of property-value decline; thus, white participants saw minority populations as contributors to the foreclosure crisis. The following quote illustrates this point directly:

Now you see minorities everywhere...it just worries me that it's going to be bringing down the whole area, the value of and people's opinions of the area.

Many of the white interviewees felt trapped in a neighborhood that is becoming more racially and ethnically diverse. Structural and institutional causes of the foreclosure crisis were not articulated by the whites interviewed in Antioch; instead, the racial characteristics of homeowners and renters were identified as the problem.

The ongoing housing studies at the Center for Community Studies illustrate that foreclosure continues to be a growing problem in multiple communities. Until citizens and law makers realize that foreclosure does not affect neighborhoods equally, policy that seeks to provide recovery to areas with high foreclosure rates may miss their intended targets or

encourage gentrification that forces original residents out of their neighborhoods. Alternative forms of homeownership, like limited equity co-ops or community land trusts, may be a better response to this crisis than simply extending credit to residents who previously were not able to qualify for loans.⁵ Media reports that suggest a *universal* level of suffering further perpetuate faulty policy-making and reinforce practices that encourage conditions reminiscent of those shortly before the current economic crisis (*e.g.*, poor credit to minorities). In order to respond to this controversy, this essay has shown that inequities in neighborhood conditions and unfair lending practices led to higher foreclosure rates over time. It is obvious that we are all *not* suffering equally from the foreclosure crisis, and policies that aim recovery efforts at neighborhoods suffering *more* from the foreclosure crisis are not only appropriate, such policies are necessary in order that future economic crises do not further harm already marginalized populations.

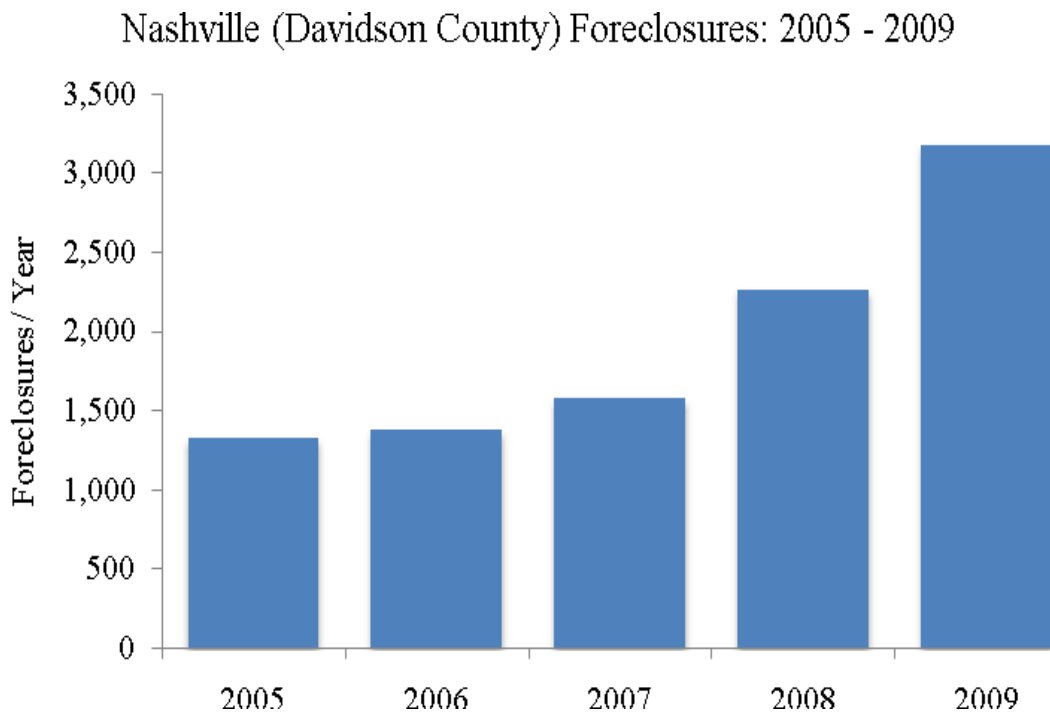


Figure 1.

⁵ J. Leavitt, and S. Saegert, *From Abandonment to Hope: Community-Households in Harlem* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990); S. Saegert and L. Benitez, "Limited Equity Housing Cooperatives: Defining a Niche in the Low-Income Housing Market," *Journal of Planning Literature*, 19 (4) (2005): 427-439.

Trustee Deeds in Nashville from January 2009 to February 2010

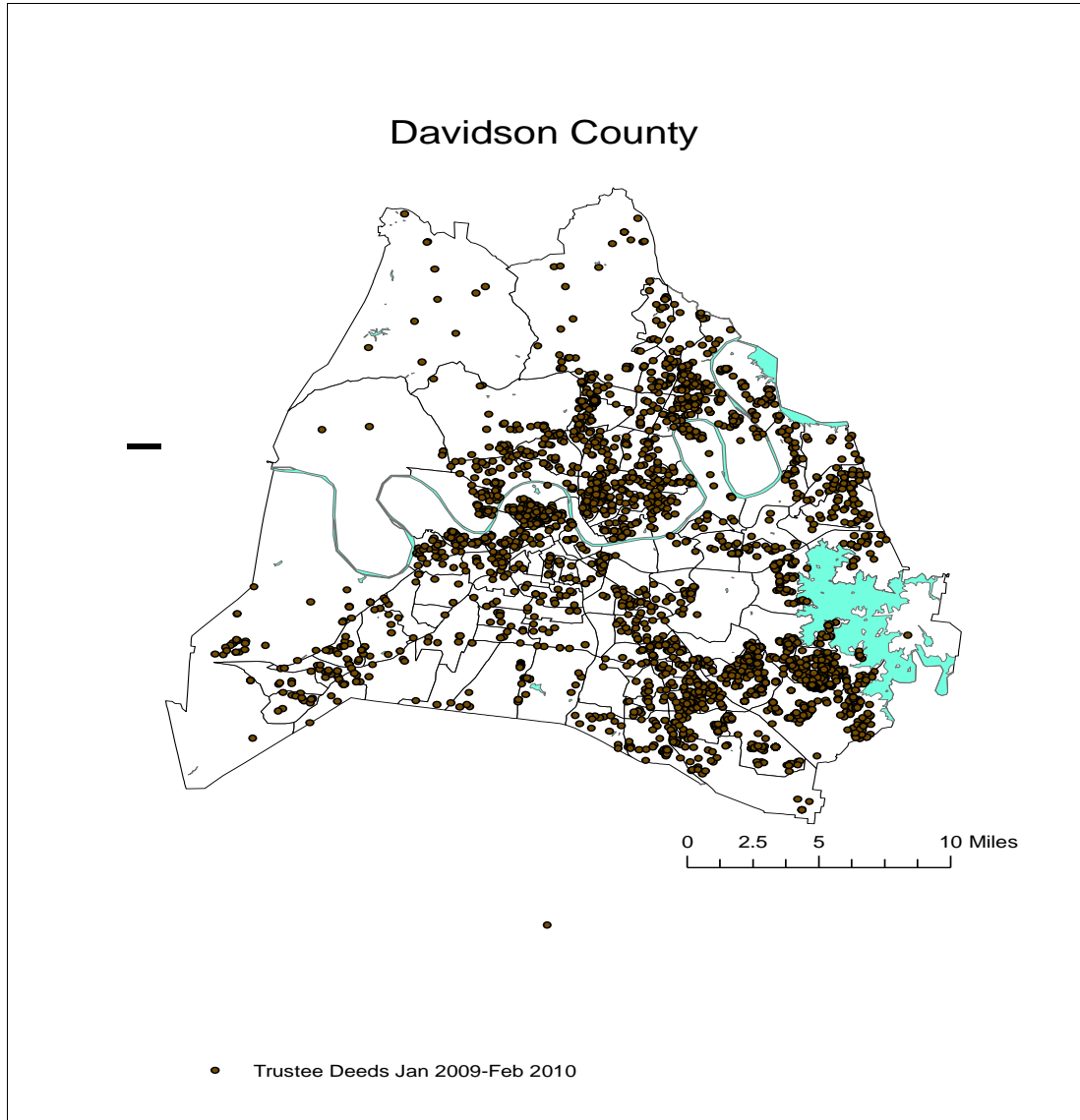
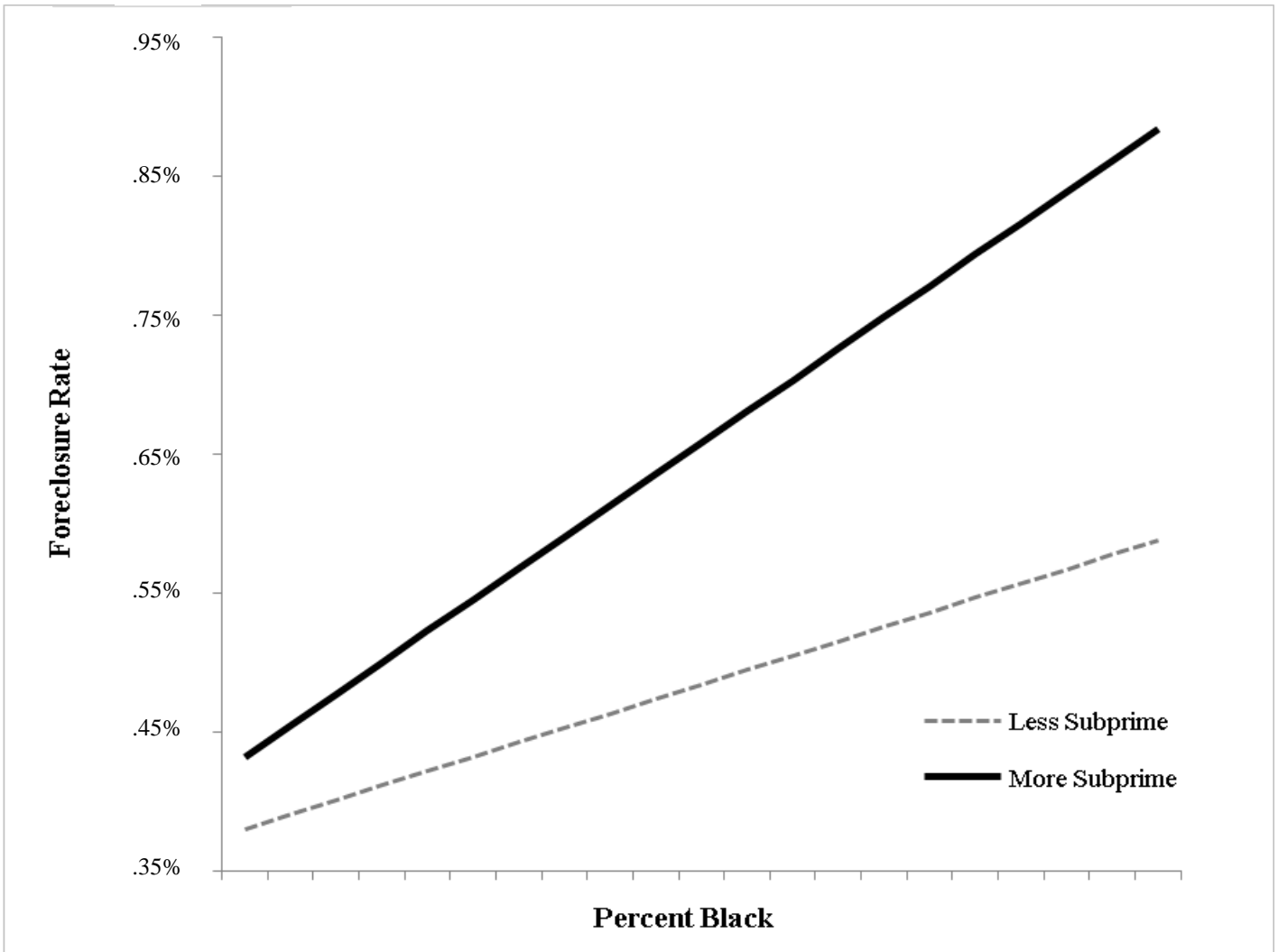


Figure 2.

**Foreclosure Rates in African-American Neighborhoods:
An Interaction between a Concentration of Subprime Loans and Race**



Racial Residential Segregation in Nashville¹

M. Elizabeth Kirkland

We are a nation segregated residentially by race, and this structural condition is created and perpetuated by the racial discrimination which permeates the housing market and the mortgage lending industry. The National Fair Housing Alliance, which collects information on housing discrimination from local, state, and federal government agencies and conducts its own testing as well, has estimated that more than 3.7 million violations of the Fair Housing Act occur annually, with more than 99% of them going unreported. Numerous studies, tests, and analyses reveal a myriad of institutionalized practices and policies that treat homeseekers differently, depending upon their race. This report briefly summarizes much of the research and evidence on racial discrimination in the housing market and the mortgage lending industry, and highlights an anecdotal examination of two home-buying experiences in Nashville, Tennessee.

HOUSING MARKET AND MORTGAGE INDUSTRY DISCRIMINATION

Racial discrimination in the housing market has been researched extensively in cities across the country and takes numerous forms. Homeseekers, whether they are searching for a place to rent or a house to buy, will face different experiences depending on their race, and will face more and greater obstacles if they are not white. Whites are more likely than African Americans to be told that an advertised house or apartment is available, and whites are more likely than African Americans to be shown the advertised house or apartment.² Whites are more likely than African Americans to be recommended and shown homes in addition to the advertised house or apartment,³ but African Americans are more likely than whites to be shown additional houses that are less expensive than the advertised house.⁴

Racial steering, in which an agent in the housing market differentially directs or guides the homeseeker toward particular neighborhoods and away from others on the basis of race, is alive and well in the housing market. Agents may steer potential homebuyers by declining to inform them of desirable features of a home or neighborhood in order to discourage their interest, or by communicating to homeseekers that they would not be comfortable or compatible with neighborhood residents.⁵ Real estate agents are less likely to recommend and show houses in predominantly white neighborhoods to African Americans than to whites, and agents'

¹ Sections of this essay were included in the author's previously published material, a series entitled *Where We Live: The Color Line*, through the Race Relations Institute of Fisk University.

² M. A. Turner, et al., *Discrimination in Metropolitan Housing Markets: National Results from Phase I HDS 2000* (Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute, 2002). Submitted to U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ J. Ondrich, S. Ross, S., and J. Yinger, J. "Now You See It, Now You Don't: Why Do Real Estate Agents Withhold Houses from Black Customers?" Unpublished manuscript. Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY, 2000. Available online at <http://www-cpr.maxwell.syr.edu/cprwps/pdf/wp24.pdf>.

⁵ G.C. Galster and E. Godfrey, "By Words and Deeds: Racial Steering by Real Estate Agents in the U.S. in 2000," *Journal of the American Planning Association* (2005) 71: 251-268.

editorializing provides more information to white homeseekers and encourages them to choose areas with more whites and fewer poor households.⁶

Racial discrimination in the mortgage lending industry has also been researched and documented at various levels of the interaction: in preliminary discussions with real estate agents, at pre-screening, at the point of acceptance or rejection of the mortgage application, and with regard to property insurance and appraisals. Whites are more likely than African Americans to be told by real estate agents that they qualify as homebuyers, and real estate agents are less likely to discuss down payment requirements with African Americans than with whites.⁷ Lenders more often communicate more loan options to white customers than to African American customers,⁸ and whites are more likely than African Americans to get advice from mortgage lenders on how to improve their loan applications.⁹

Lenders more often emphasize to African American applicants than to white applicants that the application procedures are difficult, and lenders more often urge African-American customers to go to another lender.¹⁰ Ultimately, African Americans are more likely—about twice as likely, according to recent reports—than whites with the same personal and property characteristics to have their mortgage applications rejected.¹¹ On average, African Americans who do get mortgages are charged higher interest rates than equally qualified white mortgage customers.¹² Whites may be offered more options and more comprehensive policies for property insurance than African Americans, and insurers often charge higher prices for property insurance in predominantly African-American neighborhoods.¹³

A Different Look

Of the 144 census tracts in the 2000 census, 69 or 48% of the tracts experienced hyper-racial concentration (more than 80% black/racial minority or more than 80% white). The majority of 144 census tracts experienced heavy racial concentration (more than 50%) of a racial group according to census data gathered by Federal Financial Institutions Examination Council. We can expect similar findings of the racial make-up of Nashville's neighborhood upon the completion of the 2010 census.

⁶ Turner, *et al.*, 2002.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ J. Yinger, J. “Discrimination in Mortgage Lending: A Literature Review,” in J. Goerring and R. Wienk, eds. *Mortgage Lending, Racial Discrimination, and Federal Policy* (Washington, DC: Urban Institute Press, 1996), pp. 365-397.

⁹ J. Yinger, *Closed Doors, Opportunities Lost: The Continuing Costs of Housing Discrimination* (New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation, 1995).

¹⁰ Yinger, 1996.

¹¹ S.L. Ross and J. Yinger *The Color of Credit: Mortgage Discrimination, Research Methodology, and Fair-Lending Enforcement* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2002). See also A.H. Munnell, *et al.*, “Mortgage Lending in Boston: Interpreting HMDA Data,” *The American Economic Review* 86 (1996): 25-53.

¹² T.M. Shapiro, *The Hidden Cost of Being African American: How Wealth Perpetuates Inequality* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2004). See also Ross, S.L., *et al.*, 2002.

¹³ G.D. Squires, S. O’Connor, and J. Silver, J. “Insurance Redlining and the Absence of Geocoded Disclosure Data,” *Housing Policy Debate*, 12 (2001): 347-372.

A TALE OF TWO HOUSE SEARCHES IN NASHVILLE

Looking for real estate in a new city can be daunting, and all the more so when searching for an integrated neighborhood. The “Smiths,” a white couple, moved from the Northeast to new jobs in Nashville; they had been connected by the new employer with a white real estate agent and shopped for a house while here for the job interviews. They gave the agent a price range for the house search, and the agent proceeded to take them to “pricey” neighborhoods, says Ms. Smith, where the only houses in their range were somewhat dilapidated or otherwise undesirable homes.

They described to their agent the racially integrated neighborhood where they had lived and raised their children in a northeastern state. The agent did not talk about the racial composition of Nashville neighborhoods, but he did talk about schools—even though he knew that the Smith children were grown and living on their own on the East Coast—and Ms. Smith felt certain that the communication about schools was meant to convey a signal about race and class.

He told us that the people we will work with live in these neighborhoods [where the agent showed them houses] because there are good schools. That kind of stuff was said. What he didn’t really say was, ‘if you’re going to work in this place and you’re going to know these people, these are the neighborhoods they live in and these are basically middle class white people,’ I mean that stuff didn’t need to be said. And, ‘these are people that want good schools for their children, and these are their neighborhoods.’ That was kind of the feeling. And, ‘the person who had the job before you lived in this neighborhood, so you might want to live here.’ It was more associational; it was like, ‘These are your people.’

Frustrated, Mr. Smith went on the internet, and found houses in their price range that happened to be in a historically black area of Nashville that is currently home to Hispanic, African American, and immigrant families, with a smattering of white households as well.

My husband said to the realtor, ‘Look at all these houses that are in our price range; can I see them?’ And he went, ‘Oh, well, um, you must be an urban pioneer.’ Being urban pioneers, that clearly meant, people of a certain class and race buying a house where other people of their class and race did not live. That’s clearly what it meant when he talked to us about it.

The agent, Ms. Smith says, was surprised but solicitous, and he said, “There must be somebody in our company that would be assigned to these neighborhoods; you know, they aren’t my neighborhoods.” He did then agree, though, to go ahead and show them the houses they had found on line; ultimately the Smiths bought one of them.

The Smiths’ advice, in the aftermath of this home search and what Ms. Smith refers to as the “coded language about schools and being urban pioneers”? “Go on the web,” says Ms. Smith, or find a realtor “who knows the integrated neighborhoods in town and will take you there.”

Black homeseekers may consider the threshold choice of shopping for a house in black neighborhoods or predominantly white neighborhoods, and may face daunting obstacles if they opt to buy property in a white neighborhood. The “Todds,” a young black couple with a baby girl, were returning to Nashville after graduate work in New York City and a couple of years of

work on the East Coast. They recall they were initially “dead-set” to live in a particular well-established black middle-class area of Nashville, a subdivision with beautiful homes and a strong sense of community. “I would prefer to live in an all-black neighborhood,” says Mr. Todd.

They foresaw, though, certain downsides to settling in that locale. For one thing, the amenities were lacking. “Unfortunately,” Mr. Todd explains, “developers don’t see a market in the South gearing toward African Americans. So, the things that you like to have if you live in Nashville around the Green Hills-Hillsboro area, all the amenities that are in that area, you don’t get, they don’t see you as that kind of person that they will market to.” In addition, as a young couple starting a family, they were understandably cognizant of the investment aspect of home ownership. “As we were looking,” says Ms. Todd, “the problem was, you wondered about the equity in your home and how rapidly that’s going to rise, because there are no other things—other than the nice homes—that make the neighborhood attractive.” And even though the black neighborhood they were interested in was full of beautiful houses, they were uncomfortable with some of the surrounding area, which was run-down, and the schools. “That’s the trade-off,” according to Mr. Todd, “that either you just don’t have that true community feeling, or...you go and you get the community feeling and then you lose a lot of the other things that you want.”

The Todds, still on the East Coast, began to consider housing that happened to be in predominantly white areas. They found on the internet a house they loved in a white area of West Nashville and put in a phone call to the listing agent. After four days and no return phone call, they tried again by contacting the agency’s general office number, and subsequently the listing agent called them back. “We had an agent, and [the sellers’ agent] gave our agent the run-around,” says Mr. Todd. “Finally we got a contract, we submitted the contract, they wouldn’t accept it. Full market price. They wouldn’t accept it.” The Todds and their agent were “baffled” when the sellers would not accept the contract. The sellers first contended that they had another buyer, but when the Todds’ agent asked to see a ratified contract from the alleged buyer, the seller could not produce one.

It was suspicious to the Todds that they would submit a contract for the full asking price and get rejected, with the specter—but no evidence—of some other interested buyer. Ms. Todd was curious about it.

I had so many of my friends upset about it, that I almost got my white co-worker to call; I’m like, ‘Call and ask about that house,’ because they were telling us that somebody else was interested and they were getting together a contract, and I’m like, ‘Call and see if that’s true.’ But I didn’t, because I felt powerless at that point, like even if I catch them in that, I’m looking for a house here, I’m not looking for a battle, my whole point isn’t to catch you up in this lie and then say, ‘you lied!’ I’m trying to find a home; I’m not trying to do an experiment. But I was so upset and so curious to know that I almost asked [my white friend] to call. And he was like, ‘Do you want me to call?’; he was so game for it, and I didn’t, because if they said, ‘Yeah, the house is available, would you like to take a look?’, I don’t know how I would have felt about it—I already felt emotional about it—I don’t know.

When the Todds’ agent complained to the seller that there was no reason not to sell them the house, the seller then suggested that he would sell to the Todds if the Todds would pay \$40,000 more than the asking price for a finished basement. At that point, says Ms. Todd, “We

felt like we were pushing this guy, and I thought, ‘What is it about this situation?’ So we just decided to walk away from it.”

They also decided to get a different real estate agent, one who was older and had been in the business longer. “We knew that this was going to be a battle,” says Mr. Todd, “and we were going to need a more experienced agent.” But the Todds had already made the conscious decision to work with a black agent (and a black mortgage broker). Again, like the choice between black and white neighborhoods, it’s a trade-off. Using a black agent tips off the sellers that the buyers are black, says Mr. Todd, and brings race into the transaction, if the sellers are inclined to see that as a factor. “[T]hat is the way they know you are ethnic; you know, white people don’t use black agents. I don’t care whether you buy or sell, you’re not going to use a black agent. Period. So that’s the first telltale sign of who your customer is, who your agent is.” Nevertheless, to the Todds, it is very important to choose an African American agent. Says Ms. Todd, “The bad thing is, I felt like—and I don’t know how serious or jokingly—I said, ‘Well, this probably would have been a lot easier if we had a white agent.’ I hate to say that.” “It would be easier,” acknowledges Mr. Todd, “but I would never do it...[b]ecause [black] agents don’t get enough work. I’m being more conscious. If I’m going to spend at this level, there are people who can represent me.”

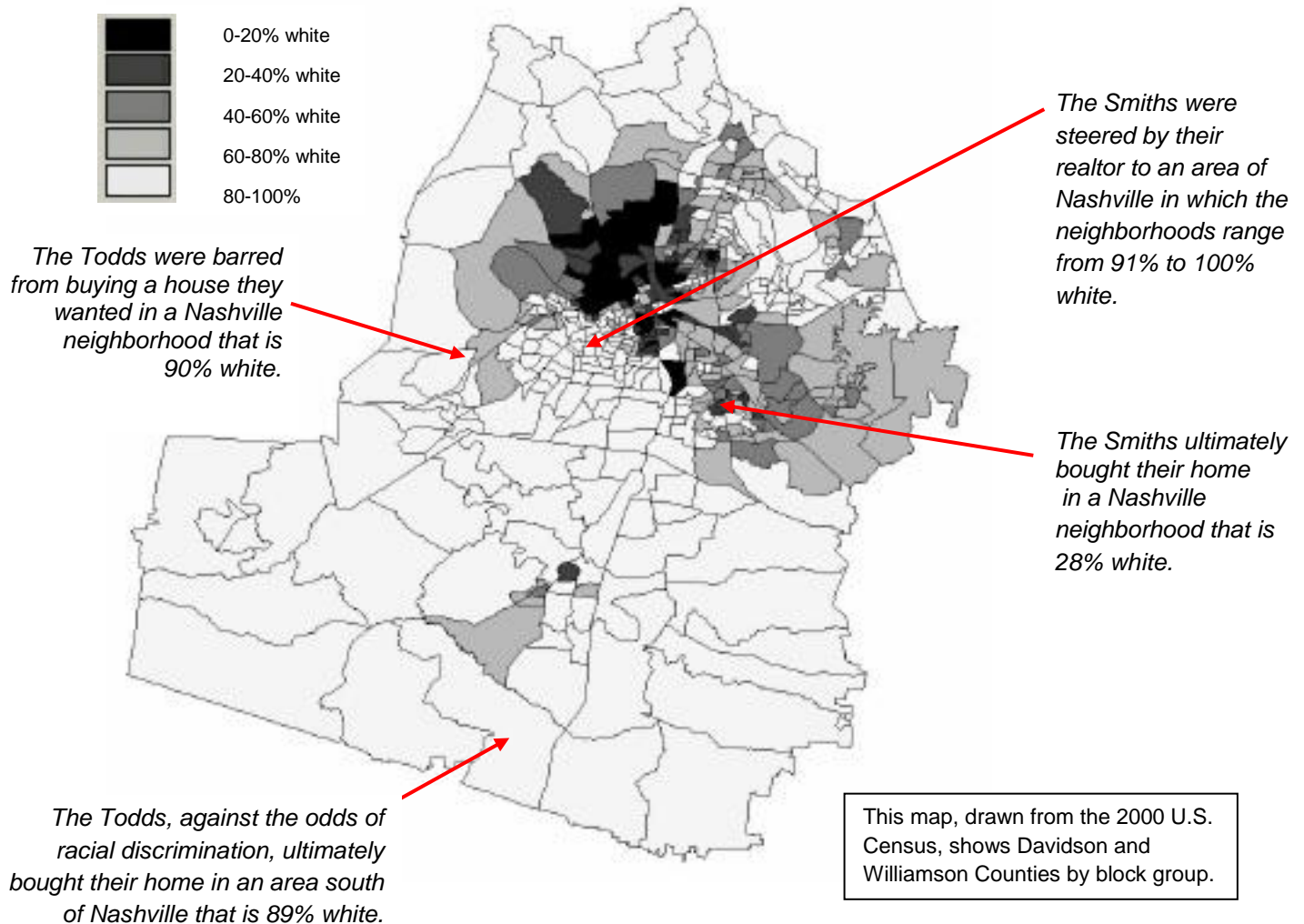
Having walked away from the West Nashville house, they resumed their internet search from their East Coast location, and found a promising house—a beautiful, 3,000-plus square foot, newly constructed home—being completed by a builder in Williamson County (just south of Nashville). Mr. Todd recounts:

This was it, this was the one that we wanted. We called our agent and said, ‘Go look at it. You’ve been working with us, and you know what we like.’ He called back and said, ‘This is the one, you don’t have to fly down.’ [We submitted a contract and] began the negotiation process. And initially, it was decent at first. We weren’t asking for anything more, they weren’t asking for anything ridiculous. But I think they thought we were fishing. You know, they didn’t have a buyer yet, [but] then when we got more serious, supposedly someone else got serious about the house as well. And they just flat out tried to refuse to sell us the house....And then we gave them a deposit, and he was like, ‘No one’s ever given us a deposit without seeing the house in person,’ and I said, ‘You have my check, you have my contract, what’s the problem?’ He said, ‘I don’t think you’re serious.’

The seller, referring to the other interested buyer, refused to consider any negotiations, so the Todds, who had initially tried to negotiate for a refrigerator and window blinds, agreed then to pay the full price for the house, as is.

The builder had two smaller houses for sale in the subdivision and offered to show those to the Todds’ agent, who brought his wife along to look. The agent and his wife felt certain that the Todds would not prefer the smaller homes; the builder continued to refer to another couple, but had no contract or deposit from them, and continued to reject the Todds’ contract on the home they had chosen. The agent’s wife finally said, “You’re not selling them this house because they’re black, I know that’s what it is. I’m going to have to call somebody because I just think this is racism.” At that point, the builder agreed to sell the house to the Todds.

THE STATE OF BLACKS IN MIDDLE TENNESSEE



The struggle did not end there. “It was the worst house-buying experience that anyone could have,” Mr. Todd reflects. “And especially for a new company. This was a new builder—they’re a very good builder now, a very popular builder—but at the time, we were like their eighth house that they had built, and they were entering a market, you know, into semi-custom homes, so they were looking to sell. And, literally, no interaction, no cordiality, at all.” The Todds say that the builder never seemed to believe that they could actually afford the house and get a mortgage on it. “[T]here was a prejudice there,” says Mr. Todd. “One is, we’re young, we’re the youngest people in our subdivision. And, we’re African American.” The builder expressed to the Todds’ agent that allowing them to put a contract on the house would only take the house off the market and away from other potential buyers who were, presumably, more financially qualified: the implicit assumption was that the Todds were not. The Todds’ mortgage broker became increasingly frustrated, saying he’d never been asked to provide all the documentation up front for other mortgage customers that this builder was asking for on the Todds. “They just kept asking for more than the lender could even show,” says Mr. Todd. “Our broker finally said, ‘What’s going on? We’re not giving you any more information, this is it. If it closes, it closes.’...He was just furious.” Says Ms. Todd about the builder, “They didn’t even

meet us at closing. They came earlier to do their portion, and when we came to close on the house they were already done. They dropped off the keys and everything, they were not present at all. We walked past them on the way in, and [the builder] didn't even ...it was weird, it was really strange.”

In an ironic epilogue to the Todds' home-buying experience, the builder became more acquainted with the Todds—and appreciative of them—after the sale, when minor repairs were necessary to the new home. For instance, the marble in the shower was broken and had to be repaired. “We said, ‘As long as you're doing everything, that's fine, it doesn't bother me, I understand, this is the nature of your business,’” explains Mr. Todd. “[A]s with all new construction, there are always things that happen, and they have to come back in and repair. And after the entire process, the builder finally came around and said, ‘You are the best customers that we've had, that have been so understanding.’”

THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY COLOR LINE

Any system is constituted by its minutia, the nuts and bolts, the little components that together make up the whole working conglomerate. Just as Jim Crow was made up of every single little retailer on one street after another, and every back seat on every bus in every city. Housing market discrimination, another system, is composed of similarly small elements, each a singular act of exclusion, like the single whites-only sign on the rusty water fountain in the sleepy southern town, replicated ubiquitously and affecting individuals on a constant basis.

Research studies prove that the minority homeseeker faces racial discrimination from the moment he or she begins to look for a house or apartment, throughout the home-search process, and culminating, for the potential homebuyer, at the point of having an 80% greater likelihood of being turned down for a mortgage simply by virtue of being nonwhite.¹⁴ The many increments may seem minor, ripples in an ocean of housing options, some barely detectable, others strongly suspected but unverifiable, and still others blatant and definitive. The research, however, lays bare much of the discrimination; nearly 40 years after passage of the Fair Housing Act, researchers continue to find that individual homeseekers of minority races encounter numerous obstacles in their pursuit of housing, disproportionate to those met by their white counterparts.

These obstacles, by themselves or in combination with other deterrents, determine if a homeseeker gets a home and where that individual homeseeker lives. Taken cumulatively, these limits on access determine largely where whole races of people live. In short, all these individual discriminatory acts, taken together, constitute the contemporary system of residential segregation. The color line, carved across neighborhoods and sections of American cities during the twentieth century, is thus perpetuated and even carved anew in the twenty-first.

¹⁴ Munnell, *et al.*, 1996.

POLITICS, VOTING, AND CITIZENSHIP

*Letter to Nashville
Waging War Against Our City's Vices*

When I first became involved in politics, it was because I wanted to make a difference. This sounds clichéd and trite, but, nevertheless, this was the driving force behind my involvement. There were areas of Nashville, and specifically North Nashville, where I live, which were so neglected and drained that it brought tears to my eyes. I became involved in politics because I wanted these concerns and sentiments to enter the dialogue in public spaces.

The brothers and sisters I saw daily had difficulty obtaining gainful employment. Many lived in dilapidated housing and in communities plagued by economic decay. Drugs were also rampant, and it was common to see men standing on the corner drinking alcohol. These were issues that I sought to address when I became involved in politics.

Someone once said that politics was the allocation of resources, yet this is only partially correct. Politicians allocate money for a neighborhood, but take it away from another one. Some neighborhoods get high quality police and fire protection, but others do not. This is politics at its most basic level. It is an uphill battle when you are working for those who don't have a seat at the table of power or who are viewed as irrelevant. It is a fight - a true struggle.

Abolitionist Frederick Douglass said, "If there is no struggle, there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom, and yet depreciate agitation, are men [and women] who want crops without plowing up the ground. They want rain without thunder and lightning."* I admit that I would love to know the rain-god and ask for the blessings of crops. There are many seeds that are being planted, but, nevertheless, tilling has begun. There are many fights that I have lost, but, still, my community's concerns are in the public space – in the dialogue of politics – and agitation has begun. While working and enduring the lightning and thunder, I have noticed that my brothers and sisters are a variety of hues and that many of them share the same concerns whether they realize it or not. They all need excellent schools, safe neighborhoods, and viable economic opportunities.

The role of the black politician is to recognize that there are many injustices and anytime that she or he has the opportunity to address them she or he should do so. The politician is an agent for change, not an actor for a scene that has already been written.

Council Lady Erica Gilmore, 19th District, Nashville & Davidson County

*Douglass, Frederick. [1849] (1991) Letter to an abolitionist associate. In *Organizing For Social Change: A Mandate For Activity In The 1990s*. Edited by K. Bobo, J. Kendall, and S. Max. Washington, D.C.: Seven Locks Press.

Citizenship Rights for Nashville-Davidson County Residents with Histories in the Criminal Justice System

Kenneth Caine and D. Yobachi Boswell

The term “civil death” was first coined during the medieval period of 15th century Europe. It characterized the effects of a set of policies advanced by Lords and Kings to strip “undesirables”—those deemed as threatening to the political and economic hierarchies—of their citizenship rights. Consequently, undesirables had no influence through their own initiatives on the political process and public policies.

The passage of national and state felony disenfranchisement laws has essentially contributed to the “civil death” of millions of Americans, of which a disproportionate number are African Americans. According to the Sentencing Project, a Washington DC-based national organization working for a fair and effective criminal justice system, over 5.3 million Americans across the United States are excluded or marginalized from the political process because of felony disenfranchisement laws. Nearly 4 million of these individuals are not in prison and an increasing number are women and veterans.¹ As of June 2009, almost 95,000 Tennessee residents had a felony or were formerly incarcerated and potentially limited by the State’s disenfranchisement laws.² The majority of these individuals, almost 77,000 or over 80%, were no longer in confinement but living, working, and worshipping in communities across the state.

People with histories in the criminal justice system often experience a contemporary version of a civil death on a daily basis: in the market place, at the work site, and in their own communities. Further, and seemingly in violation of U.S. constitutional principles, ex-felons are often subject to *taxation without representation* since many state laws prohibit them from voting.

Through participant observation, this chapter examines felony disenfranchisement in Tennessee, with a particular focus on Nashville-Davidson County. The second half of this essay looks at the “From Civil Death to Citizenship Rights” project, an initiative established by the Nashville Black Covenant Coalition (NBCC) in 2008 that was designed to educate people with criminal histories of their voting and citizenship rights.

CIVIL DEATH IN MIDDLE TENNESSEE

Felony disenfranchisement is one of the most troubling voter dilution policies in the United States. In addition to disproportionately impacting African Americans, felony disenfranchisement laws adversely affect poor communities. Yet, prohibition from voting is but one of the many obstacles confronting people with criminal histories. Most out-of-prison individuals have difficulty obtaining employment that pays a living wage, and many are barred from decent housing and financial assistance for higher education. Even the nomenclature of “ex-felon” is problematic and amounts to a life-time badge of servitude. As author Michelle Alexander describes in her brilliant book, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of*

¹ See the Sentencing Project’s home page, www.SentencingProject.org.

² Tennessee Department of Correction Policy, Planning, and Research Division, *Statistical Abstract* (Fiscal Year 2009) pp. 21-25.

Colorblindness, people with criminal histories are permanently excluded from life-sustaining institutions.³ This amounts to a civil death or economic and social death.

Many males exiting from prison are disqualified from voting until they have paid their legal fees and are current with child support payments, which may be substantial, depending on length of time in prison. Alexander claims that:

Up to 100 percent of [formerly incarcerated persons'] wages can be garnished—to pay the cost of their imprisonment. Increasing numbers of states are requiring former prisoners to pay back the cost of their imprisonment, pay back court costs, court processing fees, even the cost of their representation, even if they've been assigned a public defender, and...you're required to pay back all of the accumulated child support that you incurred while you were in prison.⁴

As discussed at the outset of the essay, Nashville-Davidson County has a considerably high number of residents who were incarcerated in penal institutions. More troubling is that the incarceration rate has grown dramatically from 1993-2009. According to the Department of Corrections, the number of incarcerated persons in Nashville-Davidson County increased by over 80% in this period, from 15,038 to 27,325,⁵ with the largest increase occurring among women. While the male felon population increased 77%, the female felon population grew by 165% in this period.⁶

“FROM CIVIL DEATH TO CITIZENSHIP RIGHTS” PROJECT

The dramatic growth of people with histories in the criminal justice system has created a moral and political crisis, which should concern Nashville's public officials and community leaders. To address this crisis, the Nashville Black Covenant Coalition (NBCC) created the “From Civil Death to Citizenship Rights” project. The NBCC was formed in 2006 by a dozen activists and intellectuals, largely in response to media personality and activist Tavis Smiley's book, *The Covenant with Black America*. Since the book's publication, the NBCC has hosted several gatherings and events focusing on social justice issues, including the political rights of convicted people exiting the criminal justice system.

NBCC's “From Civil Death to Citizenship Rights” project helps convicted people exiting the criminal justice system with voter registration and related post-conviction issues. This includes informing state probation and parole employees about rules and procedures pertaining to voter restoration, and institutionalizing a public education campaign highlighting the moral imperative of citizenship rights. Aiding this effort is the faith-based community, which usually offers frontline support and social services for vulnerable populations like ex-offenders.

Beginning in 2008, the authors of this essay held monthly meetings at libraries and churches located in neighborhoods with sizeable populations of people with histories in the

³ Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. (New York: New Press, 2010). The excerpts are from Alexander's interview with radio show host Amy Goodman of Democracy Now, March 12, 2010).

⁴ The excerpts are from Michelle Alexander's interview with radio show host Amy Goodman of Democracy Now, March 12, 2010, See www.democracynow.org.

⁵ Tennessee Department of Correction Policy, Planning, and Research Division, *Statistical Abstract*.

⁶ *Ibid.*

criminal justice system. We recruited attorneys to these meetings to hold face-to-face meetings with our targeted population and to walk them through the voter restoration process. This community outreach strategy was experimental: that is, we wanted to connect these individuals to the political process and shed light on the barriers to citizenship expressed by attorneys, activists, and our targeted population.

This initiative revealed several important findings. First, Tennessee's convoluted disenfranchisement and voter restoration laws make it difficult for residents who transition out of prison to regain their voting rights. The laws vary depending on when the persons were convicted of felonies.

Second, there is little cooperation between probations/parole employees, the Nashville-Davidson County Election Commission, and community leaders, especially regarding the distribution of rules and procedures pertaining to voter restoration. In conversations with public officials (the election commission and probations/parole employees), we received conflicting instructions from them about the appropriate process for assisting our targeted population with the voter restoration process.

Third, the actual voter restoration process is confusing and capricious. If a person with a felony wants to regain the right to vote, she/he is required to seek out the court clerk in the county where the offense occurred (even if she/he lives in a different county). Then the clerk has to sign-off on the status of their sentence. Afterwards, the probation and parole office must sign a voting release application. The final step requires the submission of papers to the local election commission office for approval provided that the applicant has paid past court appointed fees/charges and, if applicable, child support payments. This cumbersome process deters people with felonies from seeking to restore their voting rights. Based on our conversations with attorneys, we believe this process undermines the 14th amendment's equal protection clause of the U.S. Constitution.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Almost 5% of Nashville-Davidson County's residents have transitioned through the criminal justice system. Not surprisingly, incarceration intersects with political participation, employment, and housing. The citizenship rights project in Nashville is part of a broader campaign for civil rights and equity. In promoting the project's objectives, community leaders and public officials must first work to change the nomenclature of "felons" to "people convicted of a felony." Many studies point to the relationship between framing and policy success.⁷ Individuals transitioning out of prison are taxpaying citizens who have paid their debt to society. Therefore, it seems logical that they should at least be treated with the dignity that most Nashvillians take for granted.

Secondly, we need a comprehensive set of policies that help to reintegrate people with criminal histories back into their communities. This includes assistance with child support repayments and changing local housing policies that exclude this group.

⁷ Drew Westen, *The Political Brain: How We Make Up Our Minds Without Using Our Heads* (New York: Public Affairs, 2007); and George Lakoff, *Don't Think of an Elephant: Know Your Values and Frame the Debate* (White River Jct, Vermont: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2004).

THE STATE OF BLACKS IN MIDDLE TENNESSEE

Another set of recommendations calls for a change in national and state enfranchisement laws. A new state law may establish an agency that coordinates restoration activities between election commissions, county clerks, and probation/parole officials. The Democracy Restoration Act of 2009 (H.R. 3335) is a federal proposal that can also assist state laws and local community organizing efforts. If approved it would restore the voting rights of millions of Americans with past felony convictions. It will also standardize the felony restoration process throughout the country.

Racially Polarized Voting in Nashville's 2007 Mayoral Election

Sekou M. Franklin

In 2007, Vice-Mayor Howard Gentry, Jr. finished third in the mayoral race for Nashville-Davidson County. If elected, he would have become Nashville's first black mayor. Overall, voter turnout was low (only 22.8% of the voting age population and 30.4% of registered residents voted). This was expected, considering that in non-concurrent election cycles (elections taking place in between presidential and congressional mid-term elections) turnout tends to be low. Yet, Gentry still ran a competitive race and came within 400 votes of forcing a run-off election, and of becoming the first black mayoral candidate to do so in Nashville.

However, the election uncovered racially polarized voting patterns. Using the ecological inference method (developed by Harvard University's Gary King) to analyze voter turnout in 159 of 170 election precincts in Nashville-Davidson County (precincts with inconsistencies were excluded), blacks and whites were divided on Gentry's mayoral candidacy. While at least 80% of blacks voted for Gentry, only 11% of whites supported his campaign.

The election underscores the difficulty that black candidates have winning metropolitan-wide elections that limit run-off/special elections to the top two candidates. (This contrasts with at-large elections in which multiple candidates can advance to a run-off election.) It also points to the difficulty black candidates have winning metropolitan-wide or district elections that require substantial support from white voters.



Howard Gentry, Jr.

Blacks in the Queen City (Clarksville, Tennessee)

Jimmy Garland, Sr.

Clarksville is the fifth largest city in the state of Tennessee. It is located approximately fifty miles northwest of Nashville, Tennessee. The demographics of the city are broad while the political contributions of citizens of color are miniscule. This conjecture is based upon the fact that few people of color are in spheres of influence in which decisions can be made on behalf of black and other communities of color. Currently, only a select few blacks are privileged to serve on major committees formed to make broad decisions affecting the sources of revenue for the citizens of this community.

Members of the black community who do aspire to make the cut soon realize that their seat at the table only materializes when there is a need for diversity. Currently, the leader of the City does not appreciate those who speak *truth to power*. It is not only devastating for people of color but for anyone who dares question the actions of some who have been elected to serve. In a true spirit of compromise, some elected officials do understand the need for diverse opinions, especially when making important decisions affecting the welfare of citizens of this City.

Clarksville, Tennessee is best described as a melting pot consisting of many cultures and ethnic groups. Yet, people of color do not receive family-supporting jobs in the City. Each group brings a different set of core values to the nucleus of our community. The City is located in close proximity to Fort Campbell, Kentucky, which borders the Kentucky state line. Because of the military post, many residents are soldiers who rotate in to the area and choose to make Clarksville their home. One of the main reasons soldiers settle in this area is due to the commonality of purpose and the close proximity of the City to the military base. The low cost of living is a contributing factor as well.

Two governmental bodies currently serve residents of Clarksville-Montgomery County. They are the County Commission and the City Council. Each has its areas of responsibility. The County Commission consists of 21 members, including the County mayor, while the City Council consists of twelve representatives and the City mayor.

Over the years, there has been a great migration of outsiders who have chosen to make Clarksville-Montgomery County their home. As new residents, we have become the nucleus of the leadership of the community. Because of our classification as transients, we are often criticized for our forthrightness in demanding that our rights be honored.

Sadly, there are still residents who are determined to hinder the accumulation of wealth by members of the black community. Some are so adamant in prohibiting racial minorities from prospering that they resist economic development and industrialization in the predominantly black, New Providence area of Clarksville. They fear that blacks would be energized to invest in that area. The sad commentary is that few blacks in this community find it worth the effort to take a chance on establishing a viable business in this city. Among their reasons is the lack of cohesiveness amongst the residents of the minority communities.

Nepotism is still the game of the town when it comes to hiring and advancement to positions of higher responsibilities. Being a city of 160,000 residents and having many positions of leadership, there is only one department headed by a person of color who has hiring and firing

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responsibilities. The rest of those in semi-leadership positions are refrained from possessing the authority to fire unruly employees.

Jim Crow is still alive and well here in the Queen City. Those in power still effectively manipulate some of the few affluent blacks into seeing things their way, or make the non-affluent leaders feel they will gain some type of status or power if they buy in. Although we are living in the 21st century, the mannerisms of many members of the minority communities resemble those of the blacks who survived the 1950s and 1960s. It is still hard for us to trust each other, yet we go out of our way to appease the oppressor.

With all of her challenges, the Queen City is still a good place to raise a family. I conclude this because of its stable economy and low cost of living. The cost of living here is very modest thereby making the area a good choice for young families, black or white, to make their start. I look forward to the day that we will rise out of the quandary we find ourselves in and aspire to higher heights. Then, and only then, we will assume our rightful place in society and become the role model our ancestors intended us to be. That can happen, even in Clarksville, Tennessee.

RACE, ENVIRONMENT, AND HEALTH

Letter to Nashville Green Economic Solutions for Distressed Communities

Environmentally sustainable policies and the shift to a clean energy economy can lead to a reduction of pollution and greenhouse gases. It can also lead to the creation of clean energy jobs (green-collar employment and family supporting jobs such as weatherization, solar panel installation, urban forestry, and ecological landscaping/composting) for Nashville residents. If Nashville is truly interested in becoming a modern, 21st century city, then it must make these jobs accessible to residents from economically distressed communities. Similar programs targeting underemployed residents, formerly incarcerated persons, transitional housing residents, and low-income women have been established in Chicago, Illinois; Washington, D.C.; Oakland, California; Boston, Massachusetts; Portland, Oregon; and Newark, New Jersey.

Consider a green jobs program targeting hundreds of at-risk young adults from Nashville's inner-city neighborhoods. Imagine if this program were extended to dislocated workers from communities devastated by the collapse of the auto industry. Or, consider the creation of green-based micro-enterprises for women in low-income communities. These initiatives would offer an antidote to ecological decay, poverty, and the hopelessness that contaminate the communities in which such persons live.

Many persons in civil rights, women's rights, and youth groups believe green jobs initiatives can reduce racial and gender inequities in the clean energy sector. The National Urban League, the NAACP, the Climate Equity Alliance, the Commission to Engage African Americans on Climate Change, Wider Opportunities for Women, the Applied Research Center, and the Hip-Hop Caucus's Green the Block initiative insist green jobs programs can remedy the structural violence and twin evils of poverty and pollution.

An innovative program that Nashville may consider replicating is Clean Energy Works (CEW) of Portland, Oregon. This initiative brought together a diverse group of stakeholders (business, labor, environmentalists, utilities, and community activists) to create the most advanced, public sector green jobs program in the country. The initiative will create 10,000 new green jobs by weatherizing 100,000 Portland homes. There will be no up-front costs to homeowners, since the payment for the weatherization will come out of lowered utility bills. Through a community workforce agreement—a binding legal agreement signed by the city council, community leaders, labor unions, and businesses—CEW allocates 30% of the weatherization jobs to residents from high-poverty communities, and includes language guaranteeing fair employment practices and Best Value Contracting (BVC) for minority businesses.

The Green Ribbon Committee, the Poverty Reduction Initiative, and the Nashville and Davidson County Metropolitan Council all endorsed a green jobs corps proposal initially authored by the Green-Collar Jobs Task Force of Nashville-Davidson County. In order to make green jobs accessible to at-risk populations and to simultaneously enhance the environment, it is necessary to implement this recommendation.

Sekou M. Franklin and Nell Levin, Green-Collar Jobs Task Force of Nashville-Davidson County

Under Siege: Health Care for Tennessee's African Americans

Henry Blaze and Gordon Bonnyman

Racial disparities in health care and health status, which strongly affect a person's quality and length of life, shame America's health care system. The enactment of the federal Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (also known as President Barack Obama's health care reform bill) of 2010 brings hope for future improvements in health care and health status for all Americans. But, it will be years before the Act is fully implemented, and still longer before the effects of its reforms are felt. In the meantime, African Americans must contend with continuing inequality in health care. In Nashville and Middle Tennessee, state and local government policies threaten to make those problems worse.

Racial disparities in Nashville and the state as a whole are stark. For example, in 2003, 15.7% of African Americans living in North Nashville had diabetes, as contrasted with a statewide incidence of diabetes of only 11.1% for all Tennesseans over 18 years of age.¹ A 2005 study found that the prevalence of hypertension among African-American adults in the same community was 52.3% compared to a 33.5% rate for the nation as a whole.² (See the essay by Sanders, Wyche-Etheridge, and Riley for analyses of chronic health conditions across all age groups.) The rate of new AIDS infections among white American women was 2.1 per 100,000; in Tennessee the rate of new infections among African-American women was 32.4 per 100,000.³ Tennessee's infant mortality rate for African-American babies is 16.3 deaths per thousand live births, more than twice the state's rate (7.0) for white infants.⁴

Far from ameliorating these tragic conditions, the State has pursued policies in recent years that have seriously undermined access to health care for minority Tennesseans. In the wake of those state policies, public officials must take immediate action to prevent the imminent worsening of racial disparities in access to care.

In 2005-2006, the State of Tennessee eliminated coverage for 200,000 patients enrolled in TennCare, the State's Medicaid managed care program for the poor and uninsured. The great majority of those affected suffered from serious chronic illness; indeed, the cuts consistently targeted the most costly patients. At the same time, the State imposed the most stringent quotas on prescription drug coverage of any Medicaid program in the nation. These cutbacks

¹ *REACHing African Americans in Nashville, Tennessee* available at: http://www.cdc.gov/REACH/pdf/TN_Matthew_Walker.pdf.

² M.J. Blaha, et al., "Hypertension prevalence awareness, treatment and control in North Nashville," *Tennessee Medicine*, 99 (4) (April 2006): 35-37.

³ Kaiser Family Foundation State Health Facts, *Putting Women's Health Disparities on the Map: Examining Racial and Ethnic Disparities at the State Level: Tennessee* available at: <http://www.statehealthfacts.org/downloads/womens-health-disparities/TN.pdf>.

⁴ Kaiser Family Foundation State Health Facts, *Infant Mortality Rate by Race/Ethnicity, 2003-2005*, available at: <http://www.statehealthfacts.org/comparebar.jsp?typ=3&ind=48&cat=2&sub=13&show=76>.

eliminated \$1.7 billion in medical services annually for the sickest subgroup of the TennCare population.⁵

The massive purge produced the largest single increase in the number of uninsured Americans in the nation's history. Further cuts in the program have continued, with the result that over 350,000 patients lost their TennCare coverage over the past five years. The cumulative disinvestment in public health—now over \$2.5 billion annually—represents the deepest cuts ever in funding for a public health program.

Because chronic and disabling illnesses are more prevalent among African Americans, and because a much larger percentage of African Americans than white Tennesseans live in or near poverty, African Americans were disproportionately reliant on TennCare for their health coverage. Before the cuts, 40% of African Americans in Tennessee relied on TennCare, twice the rate of white enrollment in the program.⁶

When the Governor announced the first round of reductions, it was apparent that they would have a serious adverse impact on minorities. The NAACP Legal Defense Fund, the state chapter of the NAACP, and a number of other national civil rights and advocacy groups wrote to the Governor pointing out the impact and asking that the state not implement the cuts. Prominent clergy added their voices to the objections. These concerns were never acknowledged, and State officials insisted that the only objections were from a few irresponsible local attorneys.⁷

The grave health consequences of the State's policies were quickly felt among the chronically ill patients who bore the brunt of the cuts. Based on the massive numbers of people who lost their coverage, and extrapolating from an analysis by the University of Tennessee Center for Health Services Research, it is estimated that there have been several hundred preventable deaths each year among those terminated from TennCare.⁸ In the year following the TennCare purges, Tennessee became one of only two states (the other being Mississippi) to see a rise in infant deaths, reversing the nation's two-decade record of steady improvement in infant mortality.⁹ TennCare has been shredded and is no longer there for many of Tennessee's sickest, most vulnerable residents, including many African Americans.

Although the Governor and other TennCare officials contended that the cuts were unavoidable because of budget pressures, those claims were later disproved. Even as the State continued to cut the program, it amassed billions in TennCare surpluses that were first held in

⁵ G. Bonnyman, *The TennCare Cuts: Plunging into the Unknown*, *TN Business Magazine* (June 2006), available at: <http://frank.mtsu.edu/~berc/tnbiz/pdfs/healthcare/bonnyman60906.pdf>.

⁶ Families USA, *TennCare and African Americans: The Truth Behind the Rhetoric* (September 2004), available at: http://www.familiesusa.org/assets/pdfs/TennCare_AfrAmer_Sept2004.pdf.

⁷ "State Moves Toward Medicaid: Persistent Lawsuits Block Reform" *Nashville Pride* (November 12, 2004).

⁸ UTCHSR, *Special Bulletin: The Impact of Reducing TennCare Enrollment on Mortality Rates* (March 2002), available at <http://www.tnjustice.org/pdfs/UT%20Ctr%20for%20Hlth%20Svc.Res.%20Bulletin%203-02.pdf>.

⁹ "In Turnabout, Infant Deaths Climb in South", *New York Times*, (April 22, 2007) available at: http://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/22/health/22infant.html?_r=1&scp=1&sq=Infant%20Mortality%20Mississippi&st=cse.

TennCare reserves, and then transferred out of the TennCare program to other parts of the state budget.¹⁰

As predicted, the consequences for the health care infrastructure and social safety net that serve Tennessee's needy have also been very serious. Shortly after the cuts, reports of medical emergencies and premature deaths began to emerge throughout the state. For example, over 1,000 HIV patients were possibly left without coverage as a result of the disenrollment plan.¹¹ Urban Ministries in Clarksville reported an increase in the number of people coming to its food bank, 55% of whom were TennCare enrollees who either had their health care cut or downsized.¹² Many hospitals that relied on Medicaid reimbursements experienced budget shortfalls due to the number of uninsured patients using their emergency rooms. Nashville's St. Thomas Hospital and Chattanooga's Erlanger Hospital both experienced an influx of emergency room patients who were former TennCare disenrollees.¹³ The two most prominent institutions affected serve the State's largest African-American communities, which are located in Memphis and Nashville. The State's largest public hospital, The Regional Medical Center at Memphis ("The Med") is the safety net for a disproportionately African-American population residing not just in Memphis but in the Delta areas of Mississippi, Arkansas, and rural West Tennessee. In Middle Tennessee, Nashville General Hospital at Meharry serves a similar safety net function. It is no surprise that, following the massive loss of TennCare funds as a result of the cuts, both The Med and Nashville General are now threatened with closure. Despite the implications for worsening health disparities, TennCare continues to divert federal matching funds earned by the two hospitals and desperately needed for their survival.¹⁴

The impact of Nashville General's closure on racial disparities would not be limited to the Nashville community. The hospital is the primary teaching and research facility for Meharry Medical College. Meharry is the largest private, comprehensive historically black institution for

¹⁰ "TennCare transitions to full risk health care", *Chattanooga Times-Free Press*, Monday, January 5, 2009; "Bredesen committed to BEP changes", *Chattanooga Times-Free Press* Monday, January 14, 2008, available at:

<http://www.timesfreepress.com/absolutenm/templates/local.aspx?articleid=28307&zzoneid=77>;
"Ketron, Hood Hit on Hot Topics of '08", *Daily News Journal*, Murfreesboro, TN (1-20-08), available at:

<http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/dnj/access/1775672601.html?FMT=ABS&FMTS=ABS:FT&date=Jan+20%2C+2008&author=&pub=The+Daily+News+Journal&edition=&startpage=n%2Fa&desc=Hood%2C+Ketron+hit+on+hot+topics+of+%2708>.

¹¹ "TennCare Once Was Model for Public Health Care, But Now Is Cautionary Tale. Over 1,000 HIV Patients Left With No Coverage," *AIDS Alert* vol. 21, no. 1 (January 2005): 4-5.

¹² Amy Ritchart, "TennCare Cuts, Gas Costs Send More to Food Banks," *The Leaf-Chronicle* (February 25, 2006).

¹³ Roy Moore, "Close to the bone: Hospitals counting cost of uninsured," *Nashville Business Journal*, 6 March 2006,

<http://nashville.bizjournals.com/nashville/stories/2006/03/06/focus2.html>; 10 News Extra, "The consequences of TennCare cuts in East Tennessee," <http://www.wbir.com/news/local/story.aspx?storyid=32372>.

¹⁴ "TN withholds federal funding for Nashville General Hospital, backers say", *The Tennessean* (March 15, 2010); "The Med seeks cash, political pledges," *Tennessee Journal* (February 19, 2010).

educating health professionals and scientists in the United States. Founded in 1876, Meharry continues to play a uniquely important role in educating professionals to address the health needs of underserved Americans. With an annual budget of \$135 million, Meharry is one of the largest African-American enterprises in Tennessee and a major engine of Nashville's economy.

Meharry has warned that its clinical and teaching partnership with General Hospital is “critical” to the medical college's ability to continue to fulfill its national mission of addressing health disparities.¹⁵ As an irreplaceable part of the nation's health care infrastructure, Meharry's survival—and, hence, the survival of its principal teaching hospital—are matters of great urgency.

The Governor has proposed to continue to hold back substantial TennCare reserves while pressing ahead with a new, draconian round of TennCare cuts. Those policies, if implemented, will adversely affect the hospital industry statewide and could destabilize both The Med and Nashville General Hospital.¹⁶ To forestall those cuts, the Tennessee Hospital Association has proposed that most private hospitals in the State pay a “coverage fee” that would enable TennCare to leverage additional federal matching funds.¹⁷ However, the proposal only raises enough funds to maintain the *status quo*, not restore TennCare revenues lost in previous years. The proposal is therefore inadequate to save the two big hospitals that are so critical for the African-American community and other disadvantaged Tennesseans.

The health crisis confronting African Americans in Tennessee, and especially in Nashville and Memphis, is coming to a head. Crucial budget decisions will be made by state and local government officials that will determine whether those hospitals survive, and whether Meharry remains viable. Although support is mobilizing in some quarters, the issue has yet to register as an urgent priority for the entire Nashville community. Unless it does, the burden of poor health and inequality will soon become even heavier for African Americans in Tennessee.

¹⁵ Meharry Medical College, *White Paper: Nashville General Hospital at Meharry* (August 2009).

¹⁶ “State Plans More Funding Cuts for MED”, *The Daily News*, Memphis, TN (December 28, 2009); “Proposed TennCare trims 'devastating'”, *Chattanooga Times Free-Press* (January 7, 2010).

¹⁷ “Hospitals May Ask TN to Tax Them: Alternative is Bigger Loss in Federal TennCare Funds”, *The Tennessean* (February 7, 2010).

Health Conditions Among African Americans in Nashville

Edwin C. Sanders, II, Kimberlee Wyche-Etheridge, and Wayne Riley

In 2009, the Vanderbilt Institute for Medicine and Public Health Women's Health Research, along with its partners, published the first Tennessee Women's Health Report Card. The Report Card highlighted failing grades and disparities in almost every category, with African-American women experiencing morbidity rates and mortality rates that were 1.5-2 times higher than their white counterparts. Although these results focused exclusively on women over the age of 18, Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance data shows similar disparities. Tennessee received a grade of F in the following categories: low birth weights, infant mortality, access to prenatal care, all categories of sexually transmitted diseases, and death rates for cervical cancer, lung cancer, breast cancer, and homicides. A grade of "F" was also received in the modifiable risk categories including obesity, the percentage of smokers, the percentage of women with high blood pressure and cholesterol, and the percentage of women who did not engage in leisure time activity. Indeed, if scientific assessments were translated into a traditional evolutionary system, the grade of "F" would be applicable in every health-related category among blacks in Nashville. Whether we are talking about the aforementioned conditions, diabetes, heart disease, or high blood pressure, African Americans are disproportionately impacted.

In examining the health status of Nashville's black community, this essay argues that the deteriorating health conditions are a manifestation of systemic, institutional, and structural racism. Yet solutions to this predicament can be found in locally based activities such as the Nashville Healthy Start initiative, which seeks to reduce infant mortality in North Nashville, and the national health care bill signed into law by President Barack Obama in March 2010.

NASHVILLE: AN UNHEALTHY RACIAL DIVIDE

Despite Nashville-Davidson County's cosmopolitan culture, it is plagued by severe racial disparities and divisions. African Americans (AA) make up 27% of the county's 626,144 residents, while whites comprise 66% of the population. Yet, according to the U.S. Census's American Community Survey (ACS), 40% of African-American children live in poverty compared to 21% of white children; both numbers are higher than the national average. Similar racial disparities exist in education, housing, and unemployment. Even adult guardianship reveals a huge gap between blacks and whites. Countywide, 68% of African-American residents and 36% white residents were responsible for their grandchildren compared to national estimates of 51% of African-American residents and 42% of white residents.

The health status of blacks and whites is emblematic of the racial divide in Nashville. Claritas, Inc. found that blacks visited Davidson County emergency rooms at almost twice the rate of whites from 2004-2006, and overnight inpatient stays in hospitals were 1.7 times higher among blacks than whites. The death rate due to chronic diseases (cardiovascular, diabetes, heart diseases, hypertension), as shown in Table 1, was higher among African Americans in Davidson County than whites in 2007 and 2008.

Table 1: Age Adjusted Mortality Rate due to Selected Conditions in Davidson County 2007 and 2008: Rates per 100,000

Condition	2007					2008				
	All	White	AA	Oth±	Hisp	All	White	AA	Oth±	Hisp
Cardiovascular	49.5	45.8	64.1	32.7	17.6	48.6	44.1	70.4	11.5	86.3
Diabetes	31.5	23.6	63.4	13.6	7.1	27.4	19.7	59.3	37.7	86.3
Heart Diseases	217.6	209.4	255.3	71.0	162.9	221.3	209.0	279.1	123.0	145.5
Hypertension	8.2	6.3	17.1	0.0	0.0	8.5	4.7	25.2	0.0	0.0
Cancer	198.2	190.6	239.6	92.9	126.6	196.6	186.8	244.5	76.4	107.0

Source: Tennessee Dept. of Health ± Other Races

Huge racial disparities characterize the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Nashville. The 2009 HIV/AIDS Needs Assessment conducted by the Nashville Transitional Grant Area Planning Council, which is the governing body for allocation of Ryan White funds granted to the Metro Public Health Department for Nashville-Davidson County and the 12 surrounding counties, found a dramatic increase in HIV/AIDS patients over the five-year period from 2004 to 2008, and the majority of these HIV-positive persons are African Americans and live in Nashville. During this same period, African-American females experienced a 93% increase in the number of new cases, and there was a 39% increase in the number of new cases among African Americans overall (as against a 9% increase for whites in Nashville in that same period). Also troubling is that youth (ages 15-24)—65% of whom are African Americans—make up a considerable amount (15%) of new HIV/AIDS patients, and there was a 35% increase in HIV/AIDS infections among this age category.

At end of 2008, 3,787 people in Davidson County had HIV/AIDS, with African Americans comprising 51% of the infected population despite making up less than 30% of the County’s population. Overall, African Americans are three times more likely to be infected by HIV than whites, and the rate of infection among women is five times greater among African Americans than whites.

Additionally, health risks and disparities are greater in North Nashville, a majority black area with high rates of infant mortality and families on the Women, Infant, and Children (WIC) Supplemental Nutritional program. According to 2001-2005 data collected by Project REACH (Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health), African Americans living in North Nashville are more likely to be diagnosed with diabetes, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol than African Americans in Tennessee, whites in Davidson County, and whites in Tennessee (See Table 2).

Table 2: Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Chronic Conditions in North Nashville (NN), Davidson County (DC) and Tennessee (TN) 2001-2005

	NN AA s (n=4,753)	TN AA s (n=1,989)	DC Whites (n=1,389)	TN Whites (n=14,499)
Diabetes	18.6%	14.0%	6.8%	9.1%
Hypertension	53.9%	40.8%	30.2%	33.5%
High Cholesterol	36.4%	19.6%	28.3%	28.2%

One can predict that the health disparities discussed throughout this essay are salient in many cities in the United States. Although statistics are rather painful, there are fortunately a variety of solutions to remedy the health crises. In the concluding section of this essay, we discuss several recommendations for improving the health status of African Americans in Davidson County.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGE

An important initiative that can help reduce health injustices is the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010. Signed into law on March 23, 2010, the measure provides comprehensive health insurance for 32 million of Americans. The headlines about the legislation highlighted the major reforms of insurance markets, such as the elimination of lifetime coverage caps and pre-existing condition clauses for children immediately and later adults, and the expansion of preventive health services to all within a decade. Yet, several components of the bill address racial disparities in the health care arena. For example, the bill establishes Offices of Minority Health at six government agencies and elevates the National Center on Minority Health & Health Disparities at the National Institutes of Health to a full-fledged entity called the Institute of Minority Health & Health Disparities.

Moreover, the law requires the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) to collect and analyze data (making the data available to certain agencies, including the Office of Minority Health and the National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities) concerning health disparities in our country. The HHS Secretary will also be required to collect uniform data on race, ethnicity, gender and disability to help program administrators and researchers work to end disparities among these groups. Additionally, the law authorizes the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (also referred to as the CDC) Director to convene an independent Community Preventive Services Task Force, which will develop recommendations for specific populations disproportionately affected by chronic diseases. This provision could help reduce health disparities in Nashville and the State of Tennessee.

The Nashville Healthy Start (NHS) project, coordinated by the Metro Public Health Department, is another health care justice initiative that aims to prevent infant mortality in North Nashville. NHS brings together health advocates, medical and service providers, local universities, and activists to carry out this objective. It aims to give women access to a variety of important services including medical/clinical services, social services, traditional public health services, and a variety of education opportunities ranging from classes about menstruation for young girls, responsible sexual behavior for teens, prenatal nutrition and parenting for pregnant women, and infant development for interconceptional women. Fatherhood programs are also offered for the husbands and partners of NHS participants.

The NHS model is designed for interacting with women across the entire reproductive life span. Women will be identified primarily through intense outreach. Once identified and interested, they are referred into the program and assigned case managers. Participants also receive need-based home visiting services for themselves and their infants, access to risk reduction services, and special attention to their mental wellness.

The NHS project goes beyond the traditional model to address the looming problem of economic instability. Through partnerships with two local nursing schools, a group of NHS participants with an interest in nursing will be identified, tutored, mentored, and helped to apply

and matriculate as nurses. These nurses will then be recruited to work in the public hospital that serves North Nashville. Not only will this increase the economic capacity in the community, but also address the impending nursing shortage. Lastly, scholarships for college will be set up for infants born into the program.

Another approach to improving health outcomes in Nashville seeks to reduce risk behaviors. A 2008 CDC Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System survey found that eating and exercise behaviors contribute to overweight and obesity, which increase the likelihood of becoming chronically ill with high cholesterol, hypertension, diabetes, and cardiovascular diseases. Reducing risk behaviors also means addressing sexual activity in high schools. In Davidson County, 35% of high school students in grades 9 through 12 said they were sexually active. Sixty-one percent of African-American students said they had sexual intercourse, which was much higher than white students, 38% of whom reported sexual activity. A substantial portion of students (16%), across racial groups, reported they did not use birth control (a condom or birth control pill), and 40% said they had unprotected sex during last sexual intercourse. According to the CDC, both casual and chronic substance users are more likely to engage in high-risk behaviors, such as unprotected sex, when they are under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

Prevention, intervention, and education programs can help reduce the high-risk behaviors associated with bad health outcomes. Sexual education and prevention programs, for example, must be carried out by traditional health institutions such as hospitals and clinics as well as black civic and indigenous institutions, including black churches. Nashville also needs neighborhood-based exercise facilities that are easily accessible to low-income families who live in unsafe neighborhoods or may not have automobiles to travel to gymnasiums.

Urban Food Deserts and their Potentially Negative Impacts Upon Low-Income and Black Communities in Nashville, Tennessee

David Padgett and Heather O’Hara

Food deserts are generally defined as geographic areas with little, if any, access to the types of nutritious foods needed to maintain a healthy diet. Such areas are usually overpopulated with convenience stores and/or fast food restaurants. People living within food deserts typically lack private automobiles and/or are dependent upon public transportation. Residents are often faced with lower-quality, yet higher-priced food choices. In 2004, Tying Nashville Together (TNT), a Nashville community-based organization (CBO), embarked upon a campaign to assess the quality of grocery stores available to the local population based upon race and socioeconomic status. The group eventually contacted Dr. David A. Padgett, Director of the Geographic Information Sciences Laboratory at Tennessee State University, and requested maps of the grocery store locations within the locations of various communities. The mapping exercise resulted in the delineation of four distinct “food deserts” within metropolitan Nashville (Figure 1).

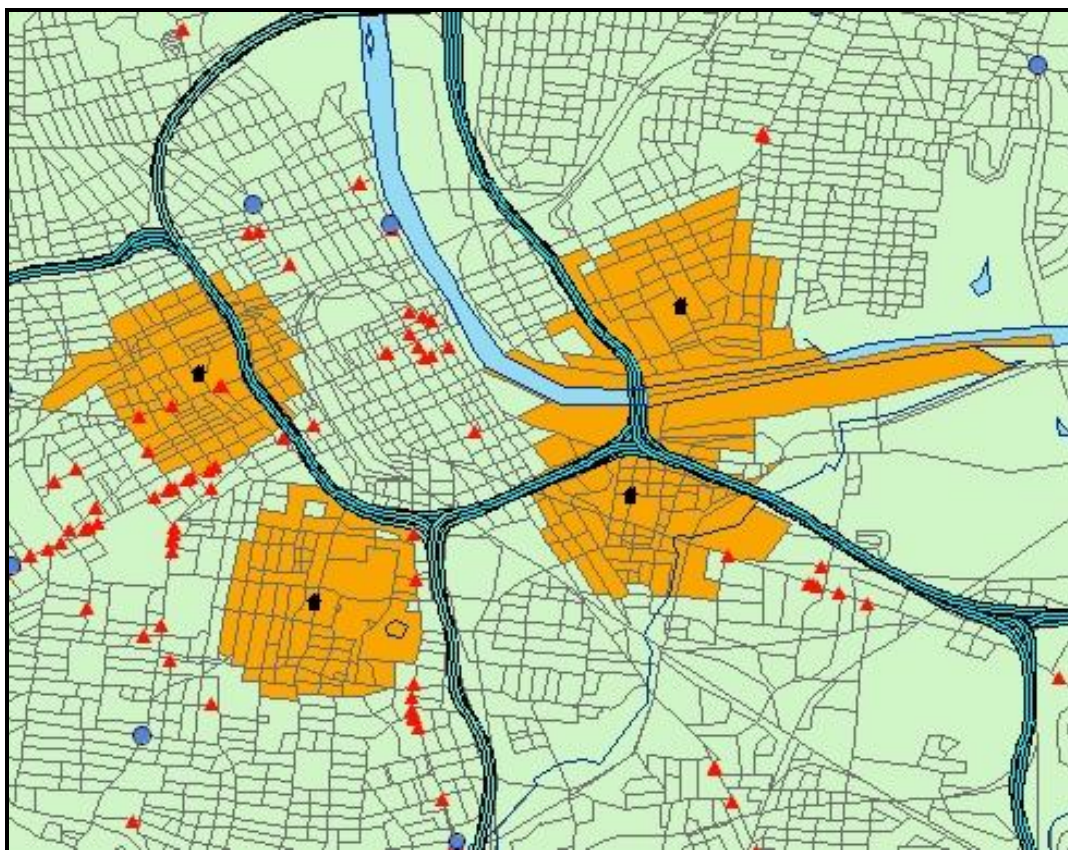


Figure 1 – Locations of Nashville’s food deserts as of December 2009. The blue circle point symbols are locations of full-service grocery stores. The red triangle point symbols are fast food establishments.

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The identified food deserts included one just west of downtown in the vicinity of the Charlotte Avenue corridor (Figure 2). The East Charlotte Avenue food desert includes the typical low levels of private vehicle ownership among the residents. Also, at the time of the project, the closest food outlet was relatively poorly stocked and under-performing in terms of meeting local health requirements.

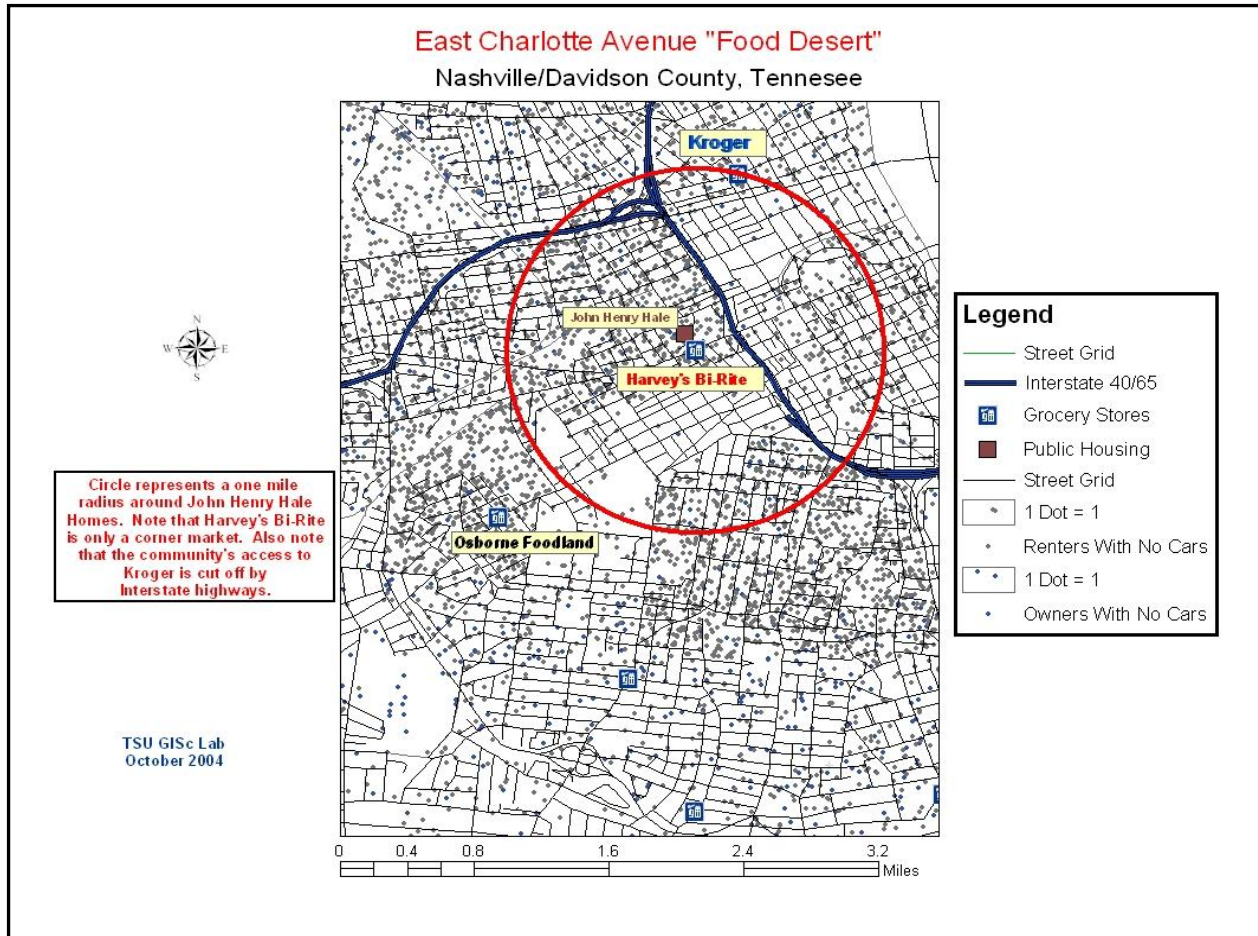


Figure 2 – The East Charlotte Avenue neighborhood food desert and environs.

OVERVIEW AND ASSESSMENT

In 2007, 30 states within the U.S. had an obesity prevalence of greater than or equal to 25%, with 3 of these 30 states—Alabama, Mississippi, and Tennessee—having rates greater than 30% (see <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/obesity/trend/maps/index.htm>). In 2003-2004, 45% of non-Hispanic Blacks, 36.8% of Mexican Americans, and 30% of non-Hispanic whites were considered obese. Of these populations, women had a higher prevalence of obesity.¹ The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Healthy People 2010 also found that obesity was worsening among most socio-demographic groups, including blacks, in the United States.

¹ C.L. Ogden, M.D. Carroll, and L.R. Curtin, "Prevalence of Overweight and Obesity in the United States, 1999-2004," *Journal of the American Medical Association* (2006); 295(13):1549-1555.

The prevalence of obesity is cause alone for immediate action, as it is representative of an unhealthy lifestyle. However, even more serious are the co-morbidities that are associated with obesity. Hypertension, diabetes, cerebrovascular accidents, cardiovascular disease and various cancers can all be tied to and worsened by obesity.² Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) data show that in 2002 the overall medical expenditure of obese and overweight individuals was estimated to have exceeded \$92.6 billion.³ There is a clear urgency to the need to understand obesity and its causes, and the need to implement prevention/intervention strategies in the very near future.

One explanation for obesity is the consumption of certain types of foods. It is a well-accepted idea that if you eat healthily, consume plenty of leafy green vegetables and fruits, stay away from over-processed and fried foods, the risk of becoming overweight, or obese, diminishes.⁴ Studies have shown that a relationship exists between socioeconomic status (SES) and diet quality, suggesting that higher SES is related to higher quality diets, as low SES is associated with nutrient poor diets.⁵ The argument here is that healthy foods are out of financial reach for low-income communities, and the trend is to go for faster, cheaper, and unhealthy options like fast food instead. Research has shown that families that have this trait tend to purchase more ‘junk food’ when they do get a chance to go to the store.⁶

Another study dealing with a causal relationship for obesity has explored the impacts of the decrease in regional access to supermarkets. The guiding hypothesis was that spatial accessibility to supermarkets has an effect on healthy eating habits and is a potential attributor to obesity. Some believe that there may be a racial component to this accessibility factor as well.⁷

² M. J. Freidrich, “Researchers Explore Obesity-Cancer Link,” *Journal of the American Medical Association* (2003); 290 (21):2790-2791; A. Must, J. Spadano, E.H. Coakley, “The Disease Burden Associated with Overweight and Obesity,” *Journal of the American Medical Association* (1999); 282(16):1523-1529; M.A. Pereira, *et al.*, “Fast-Food Habits, Weight Gain, and Insulin Resistance (the CARDIA Study): 15-year Prospective Analysis,” *The Lancet* 265 (Jan 2005): 36-42.

³ E. Finkelstein, I. Fiebelkorn, and G. Wang, “National Medical Spending Attributable to Overweight and Obesity: How Much, and Who’s Paying?” *Health Affairs* (May 2003): :219-226.

⁴ C. Befort, *et al.*, “Fruit, Vegetable, and Fat Intake among Non-Hispanic Black and Non-Hispanic White Adolescents: Associations with Home Availability and Food Consumption Settings,” *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* 106 (Dec 2006): 367-373. T. Dubowitz, *et al.*, “Neighborhood Socioeconomic Status and Fruit and Vegetable Intake among Whites, Blacks and Mexican Americans in the United States,” *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* 87 (2008):1883-1891.

⁵ A. Darmon and A. Drewnowski, A, “Does Social Class Predict Diet?” *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* 87 (5) (May 2008): 1107-1117; E. Hemphill, *et al.* “Exploring Obesogenic Food Environments in Edmonton, Canada: the Association Between Socioeconomic Factors and Fast-Food Outlet Access,” *American Journal of Health Promotion* 22 (6) (Jul-Aug, 2008):426-432; J.A. Satia, J.A. Galanko, and A.M. Siege-Riz, “Eating at Fast Food Restaurants is Associated with Dietary Intake, Demographic, Psychosocial and Behavioral Factors Among African Americans in North Carolina,” *Public Health and Nutrition* 7 (8) (Dec 2004):1089-1096.

⁶ K. Boutelle, *et al.*, “Fast Food for Family Meals: Relationships with Parent and Adolescent Food Intake, Home Food Availability and Weight Status,” *Public Health Nutrition* 10 (2007):16-23.

⁷ J. Pearce, *et al.*, “Neighborhood Deprivation and Access to Fast-Food Retailing: A National Study,” *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 32 (2007): 375-382; S.N. Zenk, *et al.*, “Neighborhood Racial Composition, Neighborhood Poverty, and the Spatial Accessibility of Supermarkets in Metropolitan Detroit,” *American Journal of Public Health* 95 (2005): 660-667.

There have also been studies that show a greater number of obesity cases in communities where fresh fruits and vegetables may not be readily available, whether it be by distance to the supermarket and/or lack of transportation, or actually not having high quality, healthy food.⁸ These areas are referred to as “food deserts,” which are areas with little, if any, access to the types of nutritious foods needed to maintain a healthy diet. There are some data which suggest that Nashville-Davidson County has areas that fit this definition. However, little research was done to analyze these data.

METHODOLOGY AND STUDY DESIGN

A cross-sectional ecological study design was used to analyze secondary data sets of median income, supermarkets in Davidson County, fast food establishments in Davidson County, and mean Body Mass Index (BMI) data by census tract. Data from the United States Census Bureau were obtained for median income data by census tracts; the BMI data were obtained through the REACH data set by Dr. David Schlundt, Associate Professor of Psychology; and the grocery store and restaurant data were obtained through Nashville Metropolitan Public Health Department. Through the use of these variables, independent and dependent classifications were assigned. Through the study, it was determined that income, the number of supermarkets, and the number of fast food establishments would be independent variables, and the BMI would be the dependent variable.

Data from the Metro Public Health Department of Nashville-Davidson County were obtained drawing on the Department’s method of identifying various categories of grocery stores. Previous studies have produced selection criteria for what is to be considered a grocery store, convenience store, or other retail food market. Therefore, for the purposes of this study it was decided that classification that Nashville’s Health Department uses for grocery stores would be best. Using this classification, a complete list of grocery stores in Davidson County was compiled. Additional selection criteria were used to capture grocery stores that were well-known and would have some selections of fresh fruits and vegetables, and were most often frequented by patrons in a given community. Therefore, chain supermarkets were selected from the list of 357 food stores labeled “Retail Market with Deli” and “Retail Market with Meat Department and Deli,” which included convenience stores and gas station mini marts. Chain supermarkets were further delineated from this data set by the designation of having more than one grocery store within the borders of Davidson County. Prior knowledge of chain supermarkets in Nashville, Tennessee, aided the creation of a list of names to look for. After all exclusions were made, 61 supermarkets remained for investigation.

Metro Public Health Department of Nashville-Davidson County also supplied the restaurant data for this study. These data included the most up-to-date survey of restaurants located within Davidson County, since the data set included the Health Department scorings of each establishment. As for the characterization of this variable, it was noted in previous studies that fast food restaurants have a predilection towards more energy-dense foods. It was also important to capture the main fast food restaurant chains to have a better distribution of fast food establishments that were not preferred by any one group of people. Consequently, therefore, out

⁸ A. Drewnowski and N. Darmon, “Food Choices and Diet Costs: an Economic Analysis,” *Journal of Nutrition* 135 (2005): 900-904; S.N. Zenk, *et al.*, “Neighborhood Racial Composition, Neighborhood Poverty, and the Spatial Accessibility of Supermarkets in Metropolitan Detroit.”

of the 2,779 restaurants listed in this data set, a total of 484 restaurants were found to match the criteria.

The U.S. Census Bureau was accessed for the income data by census tract, using Tract American Factfinder software. These data gave the median income levels for each census tract in Davidson County. The data obtained were from the most accurate time-period from the 2000 Census. It is noted that these data are most likely out of date. It would have been better to use more current data, but this study preceded the 2010 Census.

The BMI data used in this study were obtained through the REACH (Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health) 2010 data collection. REACH 2010, now REACH U.S., is an effort driven by a CDC initiative which funds 40 grantees to conduct research either as a Center of Excellence in the Elimination of Disparities (CEED) or an Action Community (AC). Nashville, Tennessee, was selected as one of the sites in 2001. The BMI data collected were from two randomized telephone surveys which consisted of questions that inquired about weight and height, among other matters. From these answers, BMIs were calculated. Mean BMIs were collected along with address data for participants (which were available through the phone book) and were geocoded using ArcGIS to approximate the locations of the responses. The mapping of these BMIs allowed for grouping of the BMIs into census tracts, thus resulting in identifying Davidson County BMIs by census tract. On a large scale, the total sample size used in this study of interviewed persons was 7,606. However, there was a total of 10,707 people interviewed. Various reasons for excluding different data points ranged from having fewer than 10 respondents in a census tract to having missing data.

Operational Definitions

Body Mass Index (BMI): measurement of weight in kilograms divided by height in meters squared. A BMI of greater than 30 is considered obese, and a BMI between 25-29 is considered overweight.

Income: poverty threshold is defined as an income of \$10,787 for a single person under the age of 65, and \$21,027 for a family of four (including 2 children); low income and high income were determined by the median income level of the U.S., according to Census Bureau data, as above or below \$49,901.

Supermarkets: Chain supermarkets are used for the baseline of a high quality grocery store and include Kroger, Publix or Harris Teeter for Nashville, Tennessee. Convenience stores are considered to be of lower quality and include gas stations, neighborhood corner stores, Walgreens, Dollar General, etc.

SUPERMARKET ACCESSIBILITY ANALYSIS

The first phase of this study involved comparing the number of supermarkets in lower median income areas to the number in higher median income areas, using census tracts as the focus of the comparison and analysis. The comparison was made by totaling the number of supermarkets for each census tract and comparing the differences in the numbers first at a gross level. The comparison revealed that the areas with a higher median income included both a larger number of supermarkets per census tract (maximum number being four in any census tract) along with a smaller number of supermarkets overall. This was in contrast to areas with low median income, which have a smaller number of supermarkets per census tract (maximum number being three in any census tract), but a larger number of supermarkets overall.

The findings are probably influenced by the limited number of supermarkets used for the overall study. Other locations considered as food retail stores such as convenience stores and snack shops, as explained in the study design, were not included in this study to limit their potentially confounding effects on the findings.

FAST FOOD DISTRIBUTION AND FOOD DESERTS

The next assessment was to determine whether there were more or fewer fast food establishments in lower median income areas when compared to higher median income areas. While there was a larger number of fast food establishments, as well as more fast food establishments per census tract in the lower median income areas, the comparative difference between the numbers of fast food establishments in the high median income areas was not significant. A difference of almost 100 more fast food establishments in lower median income areas did not prove to be a significant difference between these two areas as their resultant means were found to be fairly close in size: 3.4 and 2.8 in low median income and high median income census tracts, respectively. As this is the measure used for the overall comparison, it makes sense that there would not be a significant effect.

In keeping with the data collected, the results could be skewed, as by the criteria used to determine fast food establishments. Using these criteria, several places that were considered as not frequented by a majority population were not used for this analysis. Also, the number of census tracts that fit the criteria for low median income were larger in number than those for high median income, which allowed for the average/census tract in the high median income areas to be somewhat elevated, which would not have been the case if even numbers of census tracts/median income level had been used. As mentioned in the results section, within Davidson County, 70% of census tracts have no supermarkets, and 70% of census tracts have at least one fast food establishment.

Although the purpose of this study was to determine whether there was a higher propensity for fast food establishments in lower median income levels along with a lower number of supermarkets, the results of the analysis of the census tracts described above can still be considered a matter of concern and calling for further investigation. The results of this study revealing a larger number of fast food establishments in lower income levels are supported by several studies. However, the findings in these studies were determined by *zip code* boundaries.⁹ With the use of census tracts, this study is able to show similar results on an even smaller scale and within a potentially more homogenous region.

OBESITY DATA ANALYSIS

We examined BMI (obesity) rates in low-income and middle/upper-income communities in Nashville. We found higher BMI rates in poor neighborhoods than in middle-income and affluent communities. There were also noticeable differences in BMI rates (based on standard deviation results) between lower and higher income neighborhoods within the two types of communities (lower and middle/upper middle income). In low-income communities, obesity was greater in the poorest neighborhoods or census tracts. Similarly, in middle and upper-

⁹ Troy Blanchard and Thomas Lyson, "Food Deserts in the Nonmetropolitan South," no. 11, April 2006. This special food assistance policy series was funded in part by the USDA Economic Research Service and the Farm Foundation, in partnership with the Southern Rural Development Center.

income communities, the highest BMI rates were in the census tracts or blocks that had the poorest residents. As such, the socio-economic status of a neighborhood appears to correlate with BMI rates between neighborhoods (lower and higher income) as well as within the neighborhoods.

We also discovered that even in middle-class and affluent neighborhoods, less affluent residents tended to have a higher BMI—they were more obese—than their higher income neighbors. For example, in middle-class and affluent census tracts, where the bottom cut-off income was \$49,901 and the highest median income level reported in the data was \$152,936, the less affluent had a higher BMI. The major point is that in both low and high median income neighborhoods, the poorer or less affluent, compared to more affluent neighbors, tended to have higher rates of obesity.

GEOSPATIAL ANALYSIS OF SUPERMARKETS/FAST FOOD ESTABLISHMENTS

Accessibility of chain supermarkets compared to the accessibility of fast food restaurants was determined by comparing the number of supermarkets and fast food establishments per census tract. Many studies show that for many persons, easier and faster access to foods is a more desirable outcome than going to the grocery store and cooking for oneself.¹⁰ The geocoded maps of fast food establishments, along with supermarkets, represents several areas of greater access, in terms of proximity to a central point, to fast food restaurants compared to supermarkets located within these same areas.

Although it is impossible to assume the preference determining a person's spending habits and food intake without having done a survey, it can be postulated that by the greater proximity of fast food establishments and their propensity for offering inexpensive, yet energy dense foods, persons in lower median income census tracts have greater access to fast food establishments than to supermarkets. There is also reason to mention that an interstate system that intersects such areas might affect the ease of access to healthier food options by reducing the likelihood of residents being able to reach a supermarket without the use of a car or public transportation.

The findings reported in this chapter essay reveal that in taking into account a general overview of Nashville's healthy food infrastructure (the census tract level information on supermarkets, fast food establishments, income and mean BMIs), there were no significant inter-correlations. However, parts of the analysis do show that, on some level, the individual variables help to explain BMI across census tracts. For example, we found a significant BMI and income correlation as low-income residents had higher rates of obesity. While it had been expected that the strength of association between these variables would be statistically stronger, this study has given us insight into the relationships among health, socio-economic status, and food desert communities. As with most aspects of life, a better understanding of a problem leads to a better plan for remedying the problem.

¹⁰ United States Department of Agriculture, Report to Congress, "Access to Affordable and Nutritious Food: Measuring and Understanding Food Deserts and Their Consequences," June 2009, Retrieved from <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/AP/AP036/AP036fm.pdf>.

**HIGHER EDUCATION AND
UNIVERSITY-COMMUNITY RELATIONS**

Letter to Nashville
Higher Educational Opportunities for Non-Traditional Students

***M**y name is Elizabeth A. Buckhanon and I am a graduating senior in Tennessee State University's Social Work program. As a non-traditional student, I find there is a need for more support for those of us who are seeking a college degree but are older and have significantly more family responsibilities than younger students. When I first arrived at Tennessee State University, I discovered that higher education is generally geared for younger students. Orientation for incoming students, the location of classes, and the availability of courses were not favorable for older, non-traditional students.*

Currently, I work with several community organizing groups and agencies in North Nashville. Many activists know my story. I suffered from domestic violence during the early 1990s. This eventually led to drug use, family instability, the intervention of child protective services, and personal tragedies such as the deaths of several close friends. After receiving help, including treatment for drug abuse, and moving from my hometown of Memphis to Minneapolis, I finally changed my life. Since moving to Nashville, I have been able to help many people who faced similar circumstances as I did two decades ago.

Graduating from college is the culmination of my personal transformation. Access to higher education can also assist others who are returning to school. However, most of the support services on college campuses are geared toward younger students. We need educational programs for non-traditional students such as older students, single mothers, and people coming out of prison. These services should be made available to students attending four-year universities as well as community colleges and vocational schools such as the Tennessee Technology Center. They should focus on traditional educational activities such as tutoring, assistance with financial aid, and career coaching as well as offer emotional support for many of those who have to overcome tremendous odds to return to school. If support services were available, then more older Nashvillians would return to school, graduate, and contribute to Nashville's vibrant economy.

Elizabeth A. Buckhanon, Community Organizer, Urban EpiCenter

Building Bridges and Reaching Beyond Barriers: The Role and Responsibility of the Black Middle Class in Tennessee

Frank E. Dobson, Jr.

There appears to be a troubling dichotomy in Middle Tennessee between the haves and have-nots. This dichotomy is reflected between African Americans or blacks who have made it (college graduates, professionals, and those who have achieved material security) and African Americans who seemingly have limited opportunities to experience social, financial, and educational mobility. In examining the relationship between the black haves and have-nots, this essay discusses how the former group can positively address the ills plaguing many in Nashville's black community.

The community-based initiative of Vanderbilt University's Bishop Joseph Johnson Black Cultural Center (BJJBCC)—and its attempt to build a bridge between the haves and have-nots—is the particular focus of the essay. In recent years, the Center has established an interesting mix of community outreach, youth, and service initiatives, all of which provide unique opportunities for students to serve and learn from Nashville's urban communities. Vanderbilt University is situated at the cusp of a poor/working-class black community in transition (the Edgehill neighborhood), which is beset by high unemployment, poverty, and public health crises. (The nature of the transition is gentrification, which is not the subject of this essay but must also be mentioned.) Historically, with few exceptions, students and university officials have had little connection to the Edgehill neighborhood and its indigenous human infrastructure, *e.g.*, churches, residents, and community organizations. Yet, the Black Cultural Center's (BCC) outreach initiatives in communities such as Edgehill offer a refreshing look at town-gown relationships in Nashville. This outreach effort may also serve as a model for social agency and *responsibility* among the black middle-class of Metropolitan Nashville and for explaining how persons in this social class may help address the ills plaguing the city's distressed communities.

OVERVIEW OF THE CENTER

The Bishop Joseph Johnson Black Cultural Center provides educational and cultural programming on the African and African-American experience for the Vanderbilt and Nashville communities. Dedicated in 1984, the Center is named for the first African-American student admitted to Vanderbilt (in 1953), Bishop Joseph Johnson (B.D., '54; Ph.D., '58). The Center represents one of Vanderbilt's numerous efforts at acknowledging and promoting diversity.

One of the Center's aims is to foster an understanding of the values and cultural heritages of people of African descent worldwide. In this regard, the Center serves as a resource for information on African and African-American life and culture. Symposia, lectures, musical performances, art exhibitions, audiovisual materials, and publications on the African and African-American experiences provide a broad spectrum of activities for the University and the general public. The Center also provides an office space for the journal the *Afro-Hispanic Review*, which is edited by Vanderbilt faculty and graduate students.

Another of the Center's aims is student support. The Center does this by providing a meeting space for numerous Vanderbilt student groups. Additionally, Center staff members advise campus student organizations on a range of projects, and the Center promotes student recruitment by hosting various pre-college groups and efforts.

An additional goal of the Center is community outreach and service. To this end, the Center sponsors a Community Speakers Series designed to bring community leaders to campus for talks and forums. The Center reaches out to civic and cultural groups and works cooperatively with them. The BJJBC also provides space for tutoring sessions and mentoring activities for young people from the Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools and other institutions, such as the YMCA and Progressive Baptist Church.

PHILOSOPHY OF COMMUNITY COMMITMENT

This commitment to serve the African-American community is rooted, philosophically, in an acknowledgment of our responsibility to care for “the least of these.” The viewpoint adopted by the Black Cultural Center regarding the entire African-American community, particularly working class young people, is summed up in this statement by the great Frederick Douglass (1893 Speech at Easton, MD): “What was possible for me is possible for you.” Our commitment reaches back to, and seeks to make manifest, those words of the great abolitionist, author, and statesman. Our commitment to serve our community is rooted in a sense of the continuity of the struggle and an acknowledgement that “We are All the Same” in the African-American community; there is no “Big I” and “Little you.” (That phrase, “we are all the same,” is the title of a splendid book about the courage of a young African lad in confronting his own personal battle with AIDS.)

Regarding the schism in the contemporary black community, Cornel West observes the following in his work, *Race Matters*:

One reason quality leadership is on the wane in black America is the gross deterioration of personal, familial, and communal relations among African Americans. These relations—though always fragile and difficult to sustain—constitute a crucial basis for the development of a collective and critical consciousness and a moral commitment to and courageous engagement with causes beyond that of one’s self and family. . . . Where there is no vital community to hold up precious ethical and religious ideals, there can be no coming to a moral commitment—only personal accomplishment is applauded.”¹

The Bishop Joseph Johnson Black Cultural Center endeavors, in the spirit which energized Bishop Johnson when he chose to integrate Vanderbilt University at no small personal cost, to “give back” and make clear its historical connection to black struggles for freedom, education, and dignity. Clearly, one might say, “youth outreach programs are not about freedom, education, and dignity,” but indeed, they are, as the Center seeks to help “uplift the race” through an understanding of its position of privilege and influence at Vanderbilt University. This “uplifting of the race,” to borrow a seemingly outdated term is ultimately about using positions of leadership within institutions and organizations to reach those who might not otherwise be the beneficiaries of those institutions and organizations. Again, to turn to Dr. West for further clarity on this concept: “Black political leadership reveals the tame and genteel face of the black middle class. The black dress suits with white shirts worn by Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr., signified the seriousness of their deep commitment to black freedom, whereas today the expensive tailored suits of black politicians symbolize their personal success and individual

¹ Cornel West, *Race Matters* (New York, Vintage, 1994), 55-57.

achievement. Malcolm and Martin called for the realization that black people are somebodies with which America has to reckon”²

Rooted in a stance that “all black people are somebodies,” the Bishop Joseph Johnson Black Cultural Center strives to reach, help mentor, and teach young people from our community—some of whom have substantial scholastic credentials and some of whom who do not. We do this because it is the right thing to do. Our mission is not simply to reach and help young people from black middle-class families, but those from the working class, as well. Again, turning to the wise words of Cornel West:

The crisis in black leadership can be remedied only if we candidly confront its existence. . . . [I]t is a matter of grasping the structural and institutional processes that have disfigured, deformed, and devastated black America such that the resources for nurturing collective and critical consciousness, moral commitment, and courageous engagement are vastly underdeveloped. We need serious strategic and tactical thinking about how to create new models of leadership and forge the kind of persons to actualize these models. These models must not only question our silent assumptions about black leadership—such as the notion that black leaders are *always* middle-class.³

From a philosophical stance, then, the Black Cultural Center seeks to work with members of the black community across class lines in such a manner that the Center serves as a model for how to provide important and critical leadership to African-American young people.

OUTREACH EFFORTS AND PROGRAMS OF THE BCC

The overall aims of the outreach efforts and programs of the Black Cultural Center can be summarized follows:

1. Giving Back (to the Community).
2. Reaching Out (to youth).
3. Opening the Center (to the Community).
4. Providing mentoring and service opportunities for Vanderbilt students.

The means of achieving the aims:

1. Tours of the Center for various groups.
2. Talks and lectures on Black culture and history.
3. Visits to community sites and schools, to discuss education, black culture and history.
4. Community service partnerships with other Vanderbilt University offices, such as the Office of Active Citizenship and Service, Undergraduate Admissions, and the School of Engineering, among others.

² *Ibid.*, 57.

³ *Ibid.*, 69-70.

5. Community service partnerships with Vanderbilt University student groups such as the Black Student Alliance, and the Organization of Black Graduate and Professional Students.

The Black Cultural Center has formed lasting partnerships with various community agencies throughout the Nashville community, in an effort to reach young people, in particular. These Community Partners include: The Bridge Program of the YMCA; the YMCA Black Achievers Program; OASIS Center Youth Programs; Stratford High School Men of Distinction; the International Black Film Festival of Nashville; JUMP (Jefferson Street United Merchants Partnership); Youth Speaks of Nashville; African American Cultural Alliance/African Street Festival; and others, such as the P-Team Program at Progressive Baptist Church.

The Black Achievers Program of the YMCA meets twice monthly, every other Saturday, during the academic year, in the BCC and in Featheringill Hall (courtesy of the Dean of the School of Engineering). The Black Achievers (high school students) are mentored by Vanderbilt University students, particularly by members of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. One example of the Center's special outreach efforts is our annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Essay and Oratorical Contest. Each January, the Center (along with Vanderbilt's Martin Luther King, Jr., Commemorative Lecture Series) sponsors an essay and poetry contest in honor of the life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Young people from the Nashville community recite their essays and poems on the legacy and vision of Dr. King, at the Black Cultural Center. Winning participants receive prizes and all receive recognition for their efforts.

PROGRESSIVE TUTORING, ENRICHMENT, AND MENTORING PROGRAM

Each Wednesday during the academic year, Vanderbilt University students tutor and mentor young people from the Edgehill community through the Progressive Tutoring, Enrichment and Mentoring Program (P-T.E.A.M.). The objective is to create programs for the children of Progressive Baptist Church (membership) and those of the surrounding community that will enhance and reinforce their educational endeavors as well as broaden their horizons by providing them relationships and opportunities that may not be otherwise afforded. The Vanderbilt University students are led by a group of faculty and administrators, including the staff of the Black Cultural Center (Dr. Frank Dobson and Mr. Jeff King), and Professor Paul Lim of the Divinity School and Crawford House in The Commons, and Professor Donna Ford of Vanderbilt's George Peabody College.

The Vanderbilt students who provide tutoring, enrichment, and mentoring are a multi-racial group of first-year students and upperclassmen. The first-year students are mainly from Gillette House, headed by Dr. Dobson, and Crawford House, headed by Dr. Lim. The upperclassmen are mainly from the Black Student Alliance and also from Dr. Donna Ford's classes at Peabody College. The commitment of the tutors is exemplary, as they volunteer to come to Progressive Baptist Church each Wednesday to tutor, mentor and bond with young people from Edgehill. Through this particular intervention, over 30 young people were mentored by over 20 Vanderbilt University students.

CONCLUSION

The Bishop Joseph Johnson Black Cultural Center is committed to serving the Nashville Black community through its various initiatives and partnerships. Clearly, it is only through

THE STATE OF BLACKS IN MIDDLE TENNESSEE

such efforts that we can begin to effect change and help others, regardless of their class, reach their full potential.

Fisk University: An Urban Institution in the Twenty-First Century

Sheila Peters

Fisk University has a tremendous legacy dating back to 1866. As the oldest institution of higher education in Nashville, Tennessee, and one of the first Historically Black College and Universities (HBCUs) to have a chapter of Phi Beta Kappa, Fisk was founded to educate newly freed slaves. With famous alumni including but not limited to W. E. B. Du Bois, John Hope Franklin, and Nikki Giovanni, in the 21st century Fisk is poised, under the leadership of President Hazel R. O’Leary, to recapture the greatness of this beloved institution and soar to great levels of academic excellence and service to humanity. With the mounting cost of college education, Fisk remains one of the best buys among America’s institutions of higher education as evidenced by its ongoing recognition by *Money Magazine* as “100 Best College Buys.” Fisk maintains one of the most diverse faculties in colleges and universities while serving a diverse student body of individuals from across the African Diaspora. With 700 students, Fisk maintains its reputation as a small, nurturing learning community steeped within a rich liberal arts tradition.

Within the area of race relations and social justice, Fisk has a legacy of social activism as evidenced by alumni such as Du Bois, Congressman John Lewis, former Washington, DC, Mayor Marion Berry, and Nashville Movement leader Diane Nash. During the 1960s, Fisk students challenged the City’s administration in confronting the social injustices perpetuated through the Jim Crow laws of the time. Through the Race Relations Department founded by former Urban League Research Director Charles Spurgeon Johnson (who was also the first African-American president of the University), Fisk was at the forefront of researching race relations during the early days of the desegregation of public accommodations and major societal structures such as the Armed Forces. Charles S. Johnson utilized his research skills, honed within the Urban League, to facilitate access to major publications for distinguished young authors such as Langston Hughes during the historic era of the Harlem Renaissance. Through the arts, Johnson believed that culture could manifest the richness of black heritage. Through his leadership and the respect afforded Fisk, many of the pioneers of the Harlem Renaissance lectured or taught at Fisk. Through the historic summer Race Relations Institutes, Johnson convened multiracial dialogues among activists throughout the United States, including a young Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who participated during the historic Montgomery Bus Boycott, and future Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall, then a young lawyer for the N.A.A.C.P. Legal Defense and Education Fund. Those multiracial dialogues serve as the framework for racial discourse in contemporary diversity training activities. Fisk students and faculty continue to contribute to racial understanding through diversity dialogues with students, faculty, and staff with sister institutions such as Vanderbilt University, Ripon College, and Case Western Reserve University.

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND THE CULTURAL ARTS

Today, Fisk continues to provide a rich intellectual and cultural environment in which students and the community at-large can embrace the journey of descendants of the African Diaspora. Students from across the globe are trained to become scholars and leaders along with students whose families and communities have supported Fisk throughout its existence as well as first generation students. Through the HBCU Wellness project, Fisk provides an infrastructure

for students and faculty to address health disparities within underserved communities, particularly communities of color. Fisk's FM radio station, WFSK 88.1, provides a culturally competent perspective on the challenges and struggles within contemporary life. With the Fisk community, faculty are engaged in research on contemporary issues such as environmental justice, nanotechnology, and creating a pipeline of students and teachers in the STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) disciplines. *Washington Monthly* has ranked Fisk first in research among liberal arts institutions in the South. Moreover, this small, intimate learning environment contributes 42 million dollars to the local Middle Tennessee economy.

With the Stieglitz collection and the art of the Black Masters, Fisk provides a rich cultural learning environment for art enthusiasts. The Fisk art collections are complemented by the holdings within the John and Aurelia Franklin Library's Special Collections. Young and old can become immersed in the fabric of American and Southern experiences dating back to the post-Civil War era. The musical legacy of the famed Jubilee Singers is uplifted throughout the country and the globe, as these students continue the tradition of service to the institution initiated by the original Jubilee Singers. Moreover, the Negro spiritual is embodied in the songs of the Grammy-nominated Jubilee Singers. The original singers are responsible for Nashville being named "Music City." Today, students and potential students are afforded the opportunity to learn about the contemporary music industry through a partnership between Fisk University and Belmont University.

SERVICE AND ACTIVISM

As an institution of higher education, Fisk contributes to Middle Tennessee through the intellectual courage and determination of her students, faculty, and administrators. Through the scholarship of service learning, Fisk was one of two Tennessee universities, including Middle Tennessee State University, that provided the academic structure for the implementation of the Honorable Al Gore's family-centered community building course. Through this initiative, students, faculty, and community activists both locally and nationally, addressed crucial issues of the 21st century including fostering family-centered work environments, models of care in the health industry, and how to use social capital to transform depressed communities.

Today, Fisk remains poised to serve the Middle Tennessee region by contributing to the intellectual growth, scholarship, research, and service in the region. Students, faculty, and staff are committed not exclusively to training a new generation of leaders, but to improving the quality of life within the Middle Tennessee region. For example, the Rocket Team provides educational outreach to schools and youth-serving organizations. The GUSTO and THRUST programs provide gender-specific academic enrichment to African-American youth who aim to successfully complete their higher education. Fisk students provide service, mentoring and outreach to various schools and not-for-profit institutions in North Nashville and greater Nashville. Located within the heart of North Nashville, Fisk serves as a partner in the intellectual nexus involving its sister institutions Meharry Medical College and Tennessee State University.

CONCLUSION

With a new cohort of first generation college students, the legacy of Fisk as a nurturing, intimate learning environment steeped in a rich, liberal arts tradition that is culturally sensitive allows Fisk to continue to serve as an incubator for young minds who have dared to dream of

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fulfilling the goal of a college education. With students from America's urban centers to the rural back roads, these individuals are welcomed into a supportive learning environment in which service to humanity, scholarship in addressing real world problems, and critical thinking skills for new discoveries are taught within and outside of the classroom.

As Middle Tennessee prides itself on being the home of over seventeen colleges and universities, Fisk remains a beacon of light within the region. As an institutional partner, Fisk maintains collaborations with many Middle Tennessee institutions while providing a small, intense learning environment coupled with growing opportunities for scholarship and research in other research institutions.

The *Geier* Consent Decree Years: Fulfilled or Unfulfilled Promises?

Jewell G. Winn

Organizations such as the National Urban League (NUL) and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) have been instrumental in advocating racial equity in the educational arena. Despite these efforts, racial marginalization still exists in higher education.¹ White males have generally dominated the professoriate and receive the majority of senior administrative appointments.

The *Geier* consent decree (*Geier, et al. v Sundquist, et al*, 2001), approved in 2001, attempted to eliminate vestiges of invidious racial discrimination in higher education in Tennessee. The court-supervised, legal agreement provided a framework for creating a diverse educational system for Tennessee's public colleges and universities.² In addition to expediting the recruitment and retention of black students in the University of Tennessee (UT) and Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR) systems, it facilitated the placement and promotion of African-American faculty and administrators in the same. Relying on reports, evaluations, and interviews of faculty and staff at three higher educational institutions (Middle Tennessee State University, the University of Memphis, and University of Tennessee at Knoxville), this essay examines the significance of the *Geier* consent decree and affirmative action.

The study reveals that Tennessee's historically white institutions are still burdened by the underrepresentation of African Americans. Though the study looks at diversity in higher education across the State, it has major implications for Middle Tennessee. Seven historically white public colleges (three universities and four community colleges) and several technology centers are located in the mid-region. If these public colleges seek to recruit students of color from the region, then it is important for the institutions to have diverse faculty and staff.

EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF *GEIER*

The *Geier* consent decree changed the face of higher education in Tennessee. It established an affirmative action program for the University of Tennessee and Tennessee Board of Regents systems, and forced the institutions to create diversity committees on faculty and administrative hiring. While affirmative action (or what President Lyndon B. Johnson called positive action involving preferential treatment) is a contested issue in higher education,³ its result, when effective, provides opportunities for people of color, women, and other underrepresented groups.⁴

¹ D.J. Davis, *The Summer Research Opportunity Program Mentorship and the Socialization of Underrepresented Minorities into the Professoriate*. Doctoral Dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2005.

² Brian Noland, *The Fruits of Judicial Decision: An Analysis of Geier v Sundquist*. A Doctoral Dissertation, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Tennessee, 2001.

³ See Executive Order 11246, September 24, 1965.

⁴ Robert Fullinwider, "Affirmative Action," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. March 4, 2005. Also see the following court cases: *Defunis v. Odegaard* (1974); *Grutter v. Bollinger* (2003) *Bakke v. Regents of the University of California* (1978); and *Sanders, et al. v. Ellington*.

The consent decree was actually the result of a three-decades-old lawsuit called *Geier v. State of Tennessee* (1968). It developed procedures for planning, assessing, and monitoring affirmative action; it enhanced educational opportunities for black and white students in Tennessee's public colleges and universities; and it encouraged public colleges and universities to recruit and promote black faculty and staff. The estimated cost for implementing the consent decree for the TBR over a five-year period was \$41,505,000. In September 2006, the State of Tennessee asked the federal court to dismiss the 38-year lawsuit on the grounds that it successfully fulfilled the objectives of the consent decree. The parties to the suit agreed that each campus fulfilled the promises of the consent decree, which was subsequently ended.

Still, the *Geier* consent decree raises several important concerns about the significance of affirmative action in the state's higher education systems. In the Fall 2006, I conducted interviews with 15 African-American faculty and administrators at the UT and TBR affiliated institutions. The interviewees articulated three themes regarding *Geier's* effectiveness: opportunities for promotion created by *Geier* and affirmative action; the persistence of racism in higher education, despite the positive impact of *Geier*; and the procedures for implementing *Geier*. I highlight several observations from the interviews below. However, to guard against potential retribution, the identities of the interviewees are confidential.

Several of the interviewees said *Geier* presented opportunities for career advancement. A male employee at the University of Memphis said, "As a result of *Geier*, we had programs that would allow minorities to work on advanced degrees...to kind of better themselves and [have] a chance for advancement." Another male from Middle Tennessee State University stated that, "Affirmative action is necessary to level the playing field. Having come up during segregation and seeing the inequities that were all around me...as a result of affirmative action, we were given an equal chance to compete." Many interviewees said *Geier* had a positive impact on the placement, promotion, and retention of African-American faculty and administrators throughout the State of Tennessee. However, others said Tennessee's higher education institutions could have been even stronger and that the increase in the number of African-American faculty and administrators was relatively small.

Despite the opportunities provided by *Geier*, many interviewees said that racism still exists in Tennessee's higher education system. A University of Tennessee at Knoxville employee said, "...We work here in spite of the racism because we really like being here...we like the contributions we make...Moreover, I like the way a few of the brothers and sisters deal with things. I just like the way they handle the racism with such tenacity, dignity, professionalism, and uncompromising self respect." The interviewees believed that racism could be address if African Americans were hired in all administrative and academic departments in the UT and TBR systems. There should not be any academic department on any college or university campus in Tennessee without tenured/tenure track African-American faculty members. Longevity for African Americans should be equal or at least close to other white colleagues in departments across institutions. Furthermore, institutional leaders should have a greater understanding of the history of exclusion on their campuses. They should also publicly talk about the need to more inclusive.

Many black faculty and staff expressed disappointment with the implementation of the consent decree. Every TBR and UT institution was supposed to establish an administrative mechanism for implementing *Geier*. This entailed mentoring and providing financial support for promotion, retention, and recruitment activities. Yet, some faculty and staff said higher

education institutions were not held accountability for poor administration. A woman at the University of Memphis said, "...Somebody has to be held accountable...there is not an awful lot geared towards us...I heard that we had some *Geier* money...we were begging for money and the money was not coming forth..." According to Coleman, Palmer, and Richards, higher education institutions must periodically evaluate the effectiveness of their programs (*i.e.*, affirmative action, diversity, etc.).⁵ Additionally, they must adjust the programs' goals or policies if they are determined as ineffective. To resolve this problem, diversity and affirmative action programs need a reporting mechanism demonstrating that their affirmative action initiatives are effectively administered and funded. Inconsistent and unclear reports as well as miniscule funding should not be acceptable.

CONCLUSION

The *Geier* consent decree was applauded by some, yet despised by others. Notwithstanding the difficulties with implementing the legal agreement, it provided a framework for increasing racial diversity in Tennessee's higher education institutions. Shortly before the federal court ended the consent decree, the Special Assistant to the Chancellor of the TBR said, "We are not abandoning the principles of *Geier*, we are just expanding on them."⁶ This sentiment was echoed by Governor Phil Bredesen after the consent decree's dismissal when he stated, "the future of our state depends on us achieving the goals set forth by *Geier*, and...if we work together, we can make it happen."⁷

If campus leaders address these challenges, they are more likely to gain broader support for diversity initiatives and other programs that are designed to improve campus climates. Moreover, leaders who acknowledge their institution's history of exclusion demonstrate to internal and external constituents that the institution is willing to acknowledge its past transgressions, and is indeed making efforts to redress its exclusionary past.⁸ These efforts cannot cease just because the *Geier* lawsuit has been dismissed. Each TBR and UTK campus is unique and has its own institutional culture, which may require a distinct approach to the issues of desegregation and diversification. Therefore, in order to successfully champion diversity, the State, governing boards of both university systems, and the individual universities must establish long-term affirmative action and/or diversity initiatives.

⁵ Arthur L. Coleman, Scott R. Palmer, and Femi S. Richards, *Federal Law and Recruitment, Outreach, and Retention: A Framework for Evaluating Diversity-Related Programs* (New York: College Board, 2005).

⁶ TBR General Counsel Webpage, Tennessee Board of Regents General Counsel, http://www.tbr.state.tn.us/general_counsel, 2001.

⁷ Tennessee State University webpage, 2006.

⁸ Jeffrey F. Milem, Mitchell J. Chang, Anthony Lising Antonio, *Making Diversity Work on Campus: A Research-Based Perspective*. AACU, 2005.

List of Authors

Amiri Yasin Al-Hadid is the former Chair of the Department of Africana Studies at Tennessee State University. He is Co-Author of *Between the Cross and Crescent: Christian and Muslim Perspectives on Malcolm and Martin*.

Christon Arthur is Associate Dean of the College of Education at Tennessee State University. He is Co-Chair of the 17th Annual Education Report Card: 2008-2009 for the Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce.

Henry Blaze is Pastor of Progressive Missionary Baptist Church. He was named the 2009 “Consumer Health Advocate of the Year” by Families USA, a national group advocating for high-quality, affordable health care.

Gordon Bonnyman is the Executive Director of the Tennessee Justice Center and the 2003 Tennessean of the Year by *The Tennessean* newspaper.

D. Yobachi Boswell is the Communications Director of the Nashville Black Covenant Coalition.

Elizabeth Buchkanon is a community organizer with the Urban EpiCenter.

Kenneth Caine is the Chairperson of the Nashville Black Covenant Coalition.

Frank E. Dobson, Jr. is Director of the Bishop Joseph Johnson Black Cultural Center at Vanderbilt and also Adjunct Prof. of English at Fisk University.

Danosha Edwards is a youth activist with the Oasis Center.

Sekou M. Franklin is an Associate Professor of Political Science and Coordinator of the Urban Studies Program at Middle Tennessee State University. He is also Chair of the Board of the Urban EpiCenter.

Jimmy M. Garland, Sr. is the President of the Clarksville (TN) NAACP Branch and Vice-President of the Tennessee State Conference of the NAACP.

Erica Gilmore is a Councilmember, representing District 19, on the Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County council.

Andrew Greer is a doctoral student in the Peabody Community Research and Action (CRA) program at Vanderbilt University.

Ainka Sanders Jackson is an Assistant Public Defender of Metropolitan Nashville Davidson County.

M. Elizabeth Kirkland is the Administrative Director of Community Food Advocates. She is also a Board member of the Urban EpiCenter.

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Nell Levin is the Coordinator of the Tennessee Alliance for Progress and a founding member of the Green-Collar Jobs Task Force of Nashville-Davidson County.

Kwame Leo Lillard is the Director of the African American Cultural Alliance and Co-Founder of the Nashville Student Movement Legacy Foundation. The former Metro Councilman is also well known as a leader in the sit-in and freedom ride movements of the 1960s. He has been featured in numerous works on the civil rights movement.

Harold Moses Love, Jr. is the Pastor of St. Paul African Methodist Episcopal Church. He has been actively involved in the May 2010 flood recovery efforts in North Nashville.

Ronnie T. Mitchell is the Pastor of New Livingstone Church. He is the visionary and organizer of the Middle Tennessee Diversity Contractors Association.

Michael Nelson is with the College of Education and Human Development at Vanderbilt University.

Heather O' Hara is a medical doctor and public health advocate at Meharry Medical College. She is an expert in urban food deserts and obesity, and has been featured in the *Tennessean* newspaper.

David Padgett is Associate Professor of Geography, Geographic Information System, and Environmental Justice at Tennessee State University

Sheila Peters is Associate Professor of Psychology at Fisk University.

Wayne J. Riley is the President and CEO of Meharry Medical College. Previously, he was the Vice-President and Vice Dean for Health Affairs and Governmental Relations at Baylor College of Medicine.

Edwin C. Sanders, II is the Pastor of Metropolitan Interdenominational Church. He is the founder and Executive Director of the First Response Center, one of the South's leading advocacy organizations for the HIV/AIDS community.

Susan Saegert is a Professor of Human and Organizational Development and Director of the Center for Community Studies at Vanderbilt University.

Paul Speer is Associate Professor of Human and Organizational Development at Vanderbilt University.

Al T. Star is a Nashville-based activist. He is the Chair of the Board of Directors of the Nashville Homeless Power Project.

Moses Tesi is Professor of Political Science and Director of African Studies at Middle Tennessee State University.

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Juanita Veasy is the Director of the Black Children's Institute of Tennessee, Inc.

Gilman W. Whiting is Assistant Professor in Human and Organizational Development and Director of the Undergraduate Studies Program in African American and Diaspora Studies at Vanderbilt University. He is also the Director of the Scholar Identity Institute.

Jewell G. Winn is Director of Business Operations at Tennessee State University.

Kimberlee Wyche-Etheridge is a medical doctor and the Director of Family, Youth, and Infant Health at the Metro Nashville Public Health Department.