

# The Echo Foundation

presents

## *Charlotte: A Tale of Two Cities*



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Dear Teachers,

Inspired by the *Opportunity Task Force Report*, and in harmony with *Leading on Opportunity*, with its 2018 curriculum, The Echo Foundation brings to the table the significant power and vision of students. How many among us were surprised to learn that out of the nation's 50 largest cities, Charlotte ranks at the bottom in terms of opportunity for upward mobility of its citizens? For some, it was new information, for others, it was no surprise – it is their reality.

As teachers, students and Echo Trustees considered the Task Force Report, we found ourselves wondering about the role of young people. “Where are they in this process?” we asked. Do they understand the opportunity divide and what it means for their fellow students? Are we harnessing the power of the good minds and untethered spirits of Charlotte's youth as we look for answers? After all, they will inherit tomorrow, what we do today.

The Echo curriculum has three elements: 1.) Information & Opinions, 2.) Activities & Resources, and 3.) An Invitation to each school, teacher, classroom, club, and student to reach out to another school, another group, another individual for a serious discussion about opportunity. We did this at Echo this summer; most interestingly with members of the Young Black Leadership Alliance. We made new friends, learned a great deal that we had previously not known, and began brainstorming ideas for creating a better Charlotte – all this among students from diverse zip codes! But this isn't enough. We need solutions.

In these uncertain times of social divides in nearly every arena, here and around the globe, we believe in the power of young people and the urgency of their participation in finding lasting solutions to the substantial issues facing us today.

We invite each of you to expand on what we offer here. With minimal encouragement, your students will surely invent far better ways of building a sustainable upward mobility track for all citizens. Let's invite them to design the future for they see the meadow with no fences – they believe anything is possible. And perhaps it is!

Through Echo's unique collaborations with *Leading on Opportunity* and Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, we embrace the challenges to equal opportunity and look forward with hope to creating a better future as we experience the beauty and blessing of bonds that bind us to all people.

Wishing you an inspired and rewarding path forward,

*Stephanie G. Ansaldo*

President, The Echo Foundation

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## *Charlotte: A Tale of Two Cities*

2018 – 2019 Voices Against Indifference Initiative

## Foreword

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This summer, we were honored with the task of creating a collection of texts and activities addressing Charlotte’s pressing issues with social mobility. The problem has been building for decades, dating back to the Jim Crow era and the tumultuous fight for desegregation. Widespread awareness of this disparity, however, is quite new. In 2013, a Harvard/UC Berkeley study led by Professor Raj Chetty quantified the potential in 50 US cities for a person in the bottom fifth of the economic ladder to climb to the top fifth. The city that ranked dead last? Charlotte. This headline spurred city leaders to action, creating a Task Force to study Charlotte’s cracks, and after two years of work, releasing the *Leading on Opportunity* report. It is a great report, one that acknowledges the wide and systemic lack of opportunity for the already disadvantaged populations in Charlotte. However, we wondered, where was the crucial input of Charlotte’s youth, the future of our city?

This curriculum is designed to inform the students in the Charlotte Mecklenburg region and empower them to have insightful discussions about what’s happening in our community. The six chapters encapsulate the five factors the Chetty study listed at the source of issues with social mobility: Segregation, Income Inequality, School Quality, Social Capital, and Family Structure. An additional sixth chapter addresses disparity in the criminal justice system and its consequences in Charlotte. The curriculum ends with activities, interviews, and resources designed to include youth in the discussion and foster empathy among people of all backgrounds.

We’re a group of young adults, a group of *kids*, growing up in this divide, and we know how much power our voice holds. Our goal for this curriculum is to inform and inspire our fellow students to become active agents in making our community a more equal and just environment, no matter what zip code we are growing up in. Because if we don’t speak up about the future of our home, who will?

Here’s to Charlotte’s youth! Our passion, our ingenuity, our hope. We invite you to join us and shape this critical journey toward a better Charlotte! Be informed, and then become part of the solution!

With hope,

Julia Carr  
Duke University

Elise Palmer  
East Mecklenburg High

Seungmin Park

Molly Ruebusch



# *Charlotte: A Tale of Two Cities*

## **The Divide of Upward Mobility**

### Table of Contents

<b>Curriculum Alignment with North Carolina Standard Course of Study .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>I. Segregation and Race Relations .....</b>	<b>13</b>
A. “Segregation Had to Be Invented”	
B. A ‘Forgotten History’ of How the U.S. Government Segregated America	
C. How Redlining’s Racist Effects Lasted for Decades	
D. Extensive Data Shows Punishing Effects of Racism for Black Boys	
E. Trump’s EPA Concludes Environmental Racism Is Real	
F. White Flight Never Ended	
G. Shattering Charlotte’s Myth of Racial Harmony	
H. The Desegregation and Resegregation Of Charlotte’s Schools	
I. Black Charlotte’s Frustrated - And That’s by Design	
J. Discussion Questions	
<b>II. Education .....</b>	<b>54</b>
A. Good School, Rich School; Bad School, Poor School	
B. Charlotte Organizations Use Early Childhood Education to Help Break Poverty Cycle	
C. Bright, Low-Income Kids Are Missing Out on Advanced Classes. This Bill Would Force a Change.	
D. Church Saved Charlotte’s McClintock Middle School from Closing, Study Finds	
E. High Court Closes Historic Desegregation Case	
F. The Resegregation of Charlotte’s Public Schools	
G. Capacchione vs. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education	
H. Julius Chambers, a Fighter for Civil Rights, Dies at 76	
I. Discussion Questions	

<b>III. Income Inequality</b> .....	<b>89</b>
A. Why It’s So Hard to Get Ahead in the South	
B. N.C. Poverty Line, CMS Title I Schools, CMS Socio-economic Distribution	
C. Economic Hardship, Racialized, Concentrated Poverty, and The Challenges of Low-Wage Work: Charlotte, North Carolina	
D. Detailed New National Maps Show How Neighborhoods Shape Children for Life	
E. What Poverty Looks Like in Charlotte”	
F. ‘Money Rock’ Dives Deep into Charlotte’s History of Inequities	
G. Charlotte Spending Millions on Affordable Housing that the Poor Can’t Afford	
H. Discussion Questions	
<b>IV. Family Structure</b> .....	<b>124</b>
A. The Many Types of Family Structures in Our Communities	
B. Living with One Parent	
C. How do Poverty Rates Compare for Single Moms?	
D. Single Mothers Are Not the Problem	
E. Marriage Can Fight Poverty- But How Do You Promote It?	
F. Politicians Push Marriage, but That’s Not What Would Help Children	
G. Promoting Marriage Has Failed and Is Unnecessary to Cut Poverty	
H. Family Structure: The Growing Importance of Class	
I. What Actually Helped	
J. John Legend	
K. Discussion Questions	
<b>V. Social Capital</b> .....	<b>160</b>
A. Social Capital and Inequality: The Significance of Social Connections	
B. Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis (Excerpt)	
C. Vague Hopes and Active Aspirations Parts 1 and 2	
D. Inequality Matters	
E. Social Capital is a Critical Factor for change in Charlotte - 4 Experts Weigh in on What Needs to Happen Next	
F. We Must Attack Opportunity Gaps at Their Root Causes	
G. Discussion Questions	

**VI. Criminal Justice ..... 187**

- A. Mass Incarceration and the Cycle of Poverty
- B. Prisons of Poverty: Uncovering the Pre-incarceration Incomes of the Imprisoned
- C. The Color of Justice: Racial and Ethnic Disparity in State Prisons
- D. OpEd: Charlotte is Burning: Waking Up from the American Dream... Finally?
- E. Charlotte Police Shooting and Protest Timeline: How the Protests Started, Spread and City Reaction
- F. CMS’s Treatment of Black Boys Creates School-to-Prison Pipeline
- G. Mecklenburg D.A. Should Tackle Mass Incarceration
- H. 10 Ways to Put Justice Back in the Criminal Justice System
- I. Alternatives to Incarceration
- J. Why Norway’s Prison System Is So Successful
- K. Discussion Questions

**ADDENDUM**

**I. Community Outreach ..... 226**

- 1. Interview with Young Black Men (YBM)
- 2. Interview with Young Black Women (YBW)
- 3. Interview with Bethany Darnley, Teacher at Garinger High School and Founder of the Ultreia Society.

**II. Classroom Activities ..... 239**

- 1. American Mobility Discussion
- 2. Suburban Redlining Discussion
- 3. Cathartic Narrative
- 4. Privilege Race
- 5. “Spent” Poverty Simulation Game
- 6. Writing to Your Local School Board Member

**III. Reference Materials .....250**

- 1. Students Respond
- 2. Good Stuff Happening in Charlotte
- 3. Further Reading & Filmography
- 4. Bibliography

**APPENDIX** .....263

1. About The Echo Foundation
2. Footsteps Ambassador Responses



## *Alignment with NC Standard Course of Study*

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This serves as a resource for teachers and faculty working in North Carolina Public Schools and planning to attend Echo’s annual Student Dialogue. In preparation for the dialogue, we ask that teachers familiarize their students with the curriculum on Charlotte’s issues with social mobility. We at Echo have put together a list of State Common Core Standards that the curriculum addresses in various courses and subjects. This list showcases various North Carolina Requirements met by the *Charlotte: A Tale of Two Cities* Curriculum. Hopefully this resource will prompt teachers to integrate the pressing issues in our community into their coursework and inspire positive change in our students.

### **SOCIAL STUDIES**

1. **World History, WH.H.7.1:** “Evaluate key turning points of the modern era in terms of their lasting impact (e.g., conflicts, documents, policies, movements, etc.)”
2. **History, 7.H.1.3:** “Use primary and secondary sources to interpret various historical perspectives.”
3. **History 12.H.1.1:** “Evaluate historical interpretations and narratives on freedom and equality in terms of perspective, logic, use of evidence, and possible bias.”
4. **History 12.H.3:** “Understand the influences, development and protests of various 20th Century civil rights groups on behalf of greater freedom and equality.”  
**-12.H.3.6:** “Analyze civil rights movements in terms of the development, beliefs, and contributions of various leaders.”  
**-12.H.3.7:** “Analyze civil rights movements in terms of the contributions and beliefs of under-appreciated community activists.”
5. **American History, AH2.H.4.1:** “Analyze the political issues and conflicts that impacted the United States since Reconstruction and the compromises that resulted.”
6. **Geography 7.G.1.2:** “Explain how demographic trends (e.g. population growth and decline, push/pull factors and urbanization) lead to conflict, negotiation, and compromise in modern societies and regions.”
7. **Civics and Economics CE.C&G.1:** “Understand the roles authorities have in enforcing individual rights, rules and laws for the common good.”

8. **Civics and Economics CE.C&G.2.6:** “Evaluate the authority federal, state and local governments have over individuals’ rights and privileges (e.g., Bill of Rights, Delegated Powers, Reserved Powers, Concurrent Powers, Pardons, Writ of habeas corpus, Judicial Process, states’ rights, Patriot Act, etc.).”
9. **Civics and Economics CE.C&G.2.7:** “Analyze contemporary issues and governmental responses at the local, state, and national levels in terms of how they promote the public interest and/or general welfare (e.g., taxes, immigration, naturalization, civil rights, economic development, annexation, redistricting, zoning, national security, health care, etc.).”
10. **Civics and Economics CE.C&G.3.7:** “Summarize the importance of the right of due process of law for individuals accused of crimes (e.g., habeas corpus, presumption of innocence, impartial tribunal, trial by jury, right to counsel, right against self- incrimination, protection against double jeopardy, right of appeal).”
11. **Civics and Economics CE.C&G.3.8:** “Evaluate the rights of individuals in terms of how well those rights have been upheld by democratic government in the United States.”
12. **Civics and Economics CE.C&G.4.3:** “Analyze the roles of Citizens of North Carolina and the United States in terms of responsibilities, participation, civic life and criteria for membership or admission (e.g., voting, jury duty, lobbying, interacting successfully with government agencies, organizing and working in civic groups, volunteering, petitioning, picketing, running for political office, residency, etc.).”
13. **Civics and Economics CE.PFL.1.1:** “Explain how education, income, career, and life choices impact an individual’s financial plan and goals (e.g., job, wage, salary, college/university, community college, military, workforce, skill development, social security, entrepreneur, rent, mortgage, etc.).”
14. **Culture 12.C.1:** “Evaluate forming an identity in a diverse society founded on freedom and equality.”
  - 12.C.1.1: “Evaluate the effects of segregation and discrimination on the identity and relationships of people.”
  - 12.C.1.2: “Evaluate the impact of stereotypes on the identities of people.”
  - 12.C.1.3: “Analyze how movement and settlement in the United States impacted the cultural identity of individuals and groups.”
15. **Culture 12.C.3:** “Understand how poverty, affluence, and the "American Dream" have influenced American culture.”

16. **Culture 12.C.4:** “Understand how American culture has sought to balance individual rights with the common good.”

### **ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS**

1. **Reading Language RL.9-10.1:** “Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.”
2. **Reading Language RL.11-12.2:** “Determine two or more themes of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.”
3. **Reading Language RL.11-12.4:** “Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly engaging.”
4. **Reading Language RL.11-12.6:** “Analyze a case in which grasping perspective requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant.”
5. **Reading Language RL.11-12.9:** “Analyze how two or more texts from the same period treat similar themes or topics and compare the approaches the authors take.”
6. **Speaking and Listening SL.11-12.1:** “Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11–12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.”
7. **Speaking and Listening SL.11-12.2:** “Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media in order to make informed decisions and solve problems, evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source and noting any discrepancies among the data.”

## **MATH**

1. **Math 1, NC.M1.S-ID:** “Summarize, represent, and interpret data on a single count or measurement variable.”
2. **Math 3, M3.S-IC:** “Evaluate articles and websites that report data by identifying the source of the data, the design of the study, and the way the data are graphically displayed.”

## **SCIENCE**

1. **Earth and Environmental, EEn.2.8:** “Evaluate human behaviors in terms of how likely they are to ensure the ability to live sustainably on Earth.”

# *I. Segregation & Racial Relations*



Photo courtesy of Civil - Laws.c

Introduction .....	14
Pre-Study Questions .....	15
A. ‘Segregation Had to Be Created’	
B. A ‘Forgotten History’ Of How the U.S. Government Segregated America	
C. How Redlining’s Racist Effects Lasted for Decades	
D. Extensive Data Shows Punishing Effects of Racism for Black Boys	
E. Trump’s EPA Concludes Environmental Racism Is Real	
F. White Flight Never Ended	
G. Shattering Charlotte’s Myth of Racial Harmony	
H. The Desegregation and Resegregation Of Charlotte’s Schools	
I. Black Charlotte’s Frustrated – And That’s By Design	
J. Discussion Questions	

# *INTRODUCTION*

Seungmin Park, Echo Student Intern

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Opportunity Task Force Report describes segregation as a “cross-cutting factor” that affects all other barriers to opportunity. Upon reading about the disturbing history of segregation and racism in Charlotte and the U.S., one can see how accurate that statement is. When discussing inequalities in access to opportunity, it is imperative to understand that minorities and people of color suffer from such inequalities today due to long-term systemic oppression by various groups, from the federal government to white suburban homeowners. Racism has not quietly dissipated from our society nor has it lost its salience when discussing today’s issues and problems. Policy makers and social justice advocates must acknowledge racism and segregation when tackling the biggest challenges facing our city and nation.

Despite the amazing opportunities that our city offers to some people, Charlotte continues to be one of the worst cities in socioeconomic mobility because of its failure to undo decades of racist policies, from redlining to targeted urban renewal. This chapter focuses on bringing to light some of those racist policies that have quietly been shaping how our country and city look today. It also delves into the disastrous effects that racism and segregation have, long after the explicit policy itself is repealed. The hope of the Echo Foundation is that, people who read this chapter come to better understand this cross-cutting factor that impacts the lives of Charlotteans today and begin to actively think about ways to break down the walls that still persist for minorities and people of color.

## *Pre-Study Questions*

1. Have you ever experienced prejudice or discrimination? If so, how were you affected? How did the events play out?
2. In your opinion, what are some areas and institutions around Charlotte that still suffer from the effects of segregation and racism?
3. Do you believe that, in today's world, every individual has an equal opportunity to become successful independent of his/her race?
4. How well have your previous teachers taught you about the issues of racism and segregation beyond the time of the Civil Rights movement? Are there things that you've learned outside of school that you want included in your history classes?

## *“Segregation Had to Be Invented”*

From *The Atlantic*

By Alana Semuels

February 17, 2017



Photo courtesy of the Robinson-Spangler Carolina Room - Charlotte Mecklenburg Library

*During the late 19th century, blacks and whites in the South lived closer together than they do today.*

CHARLOTTE, N.C.—Growing up here in the 1940s and 1950s, Sevone Rhynes experienced segregation every day. He couldn’t visit the public library near his house, but instead had to travel to the “colored” library in the historically black area of Brooklyn, a neighborhood that used to be in the center of Charlotte. He attended a school for black children, where he received second-hand books, and where the school day was half the length of that of white schools, because the black school had too many children and not enough funds. Sixty years later, he says, Charlotte is still a segregated city. “People who are white want as little to do with black people as they can get away with,” he told me.

This is, unfortunately, not a surprising account of North Carolina, or of the South more generally. The South of the 1950s was the land of fire hoses aimed at black people who dared protest Jim Crow laws. Today, schools in the South are almost as segregated as they were when Sevone Rhynes was a child. Southern cities including Charlotte are facing racial tensions over the shootings of black men by white policemen, which, in Charlotte’s case, led to massive protests and riots.

But what few people know is that the South wasn’t always so segregated. During a brief window of time between the end of the Civil War and the turn of the 20th century, black and white people lived next to each other in Southern cities, creating what the historian Tom Hanchett describes as a “salt-and-pepper” pattern. They were not integrated in a meaningful sense: Divisions existed,



but “in a lot of Southern cities, segregation hadn’t been fully imposed—there were neighborhoods where blacks and whites were living nearby,” said Eric Foner, a Columbia historian and expert on Reconstruction. Walk around in the Atlanta or the Charlotte of the late 1800s, and you might see black people in restaurants, hotels, the theater, Foner said. Two decades later, such things were not allowed.

As Hanchett, the author of *Sorting the New South City: Race, Class, and Urban Development in Charlotte, 1875-1975*, puts it, “Segregation had to be invented.”

This amorphous period of race relations in the South was first described by the historian C. Vann Woodward, who wrote in his 1955 book, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, that segregation in the South did not become rigid with the end of slavery, but instead, around the turn of the century. “There occurred an era of experiment and variety in race relations of the South in which segregation was not the invariable rule,” he wrote.

During that time, Foner said, black residents could sue companies for discriminating against them—and win their lawsuits. Blacks could also legally vote in most places (disenfranchisement laws did not arrive in earnest until about 1900), and were often allied with poor whites in the voting booth. This alliance was strong enough to control states like North Carolina, Alabama, and Virginia at various points throughout the late 19th century.

This alliance was doomed. White elites, cast out of power and facing policies that threatened their economic hold on the state, launched a campaign that they knew would drive black and whites apart. They called it a campaign of “white supremacy,” and sought to unite whites of all economic backgrounds in hatred of black people. It was this campaign that tried to re-enforce the idea of black people as different, as lesser, and as a race that had to be separate from whites. Segregation was created in the South during this time period, and many of the ideas that drove it still exist more than a century later in the South of today.

\* \* \*

College Street runs through the heart of Charlotte’s downtown, passing by skyscrapers like the Bank of America Corporate Center, fancy hotels like the Hilton, and the concrete and glass of the Charlotte Convention Center. The street has grown quite a bit since the 1870s, when it was comprised of small homes and businesses right on top of each other, according to Hanchett, who went through city rolls, which list residents’ occupation, race, and address. Neighborhoods were not divided by class—business owners lived next door to workers—or by race—blacks and whites lived on the same block, he found. On the College Street of 1877, for example, the black renter Ben Smith lived next to white bookkeeper Thomas Tiddy and white cotton merchant T.H. McGill. “More than a decade after the Civil War, Charlotte had no hard-edged black

neighborhoods,” Hanchett writes, in his book. “Rather, African-Americans continued to live all over the city, usually side-by-side with whites.”

In fact, Hanchett says, it wasn’t immediately clear after the Civil War that race would necessarily be the biggest dividing line in America. The America of the late 19th century was, after all, a country in which social class and family history still played a big role in people’s fates. As the *Charlotte Chronicle*, a newspaper predominantly for white readers, wrote in 1887, wealth and position erected barriers “more despotic, if anything, than those based on prejudices of color.”

In the 1890s, an economic depression spread through the country, and white and black farmers and factory workers shared the belief that the pro-industry policies of the Democrats—usually elites who held land or owned businesses—weren’t serving them well. Black and white farmers were forced into sharecropping, which kept them mired in poverty. White workers in nascent factories were subject to terrible working conditions for low wages.

In 1894, black Republicans and white Populists joined together to create a “fusion” ticket of candidates to oppose Democrats. They shocked the political establishment and won two-thirds of the legislature.

This wasn’t the first time whites and blacks had allied politically. In Virginia in the late 1870s, black and poor white voters formed the Readjuster Party, which worked together to overcome the power of white political elites. In North Carolina; they also worked together to write the Constitution of 1868, which mandated the creation and funding of a state system of public education.

Yet the Fusion Party proved to be more powerful than anyone had anticipated. In 1896, it gained even more seats and elected a Republican as governor of North Carolina after decades of Democratic rule. (Fusion tickets also gained power in other Southern states, but none to the extent of the ticket in North Carolina, according to James Leloudis, a professor of history at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.)

Fusion was a ticket of the working class, and the alliance soon began implementing policies that helped its supporters. They capped interest rates, increased public-school funding, and allowed symbols to be put on ballots to enfranchise people who could not read or write. Their policies were designed, in the words of one supporter, to protect “the liberty of the laboring people, both white and black,” according to Leloudis.

The white elite were threatened by these new policies, especially because Fusion had shifted the burden of taxation from individuals to corporations and railroads. Yet they had little connection

with poor voters, and so had few ideas about how to address their economic concerns. Instead, they tried to convince poor whites that they should not associate with blacks in any way. Democrats began to talk of blacks as an “other,” warning of the dangers of miscegenation, portraying blacks as rapists who would come after white women.

Democratic-controlled newspapers published cartoons about the horror of “Negro Rule” that had emerged from a Fusion ballot box and stepped up coverage of black crime. “The Anglo Saxon Must Rule,” an editorial from *The Charlotte Observer* argued. A rising Democrat, Charles Aycock, gave speeches across the state urging Democrats “to unite the white people against the negroes, an infamous race,” according to Hanchett.

To ensure that they’d win in the elections of 1898, Democrats also resorted to physical intimidation. Their paramilitary arm, the Red Shirts, marched on black communities across North Carolina, disrupting black church services and Republican meetings.



Photo courtesy of Tom Hanchett, *Sorting the New South City*  
A newspaper cartoon (1898) warns of “Negro Rule”.

The places they couldn’t win, they seized by violence. When the Red Shirts found out the Fusion ticket had won in Wilmington, North Carolina in the elections of 1898, a mob marched on town, killing black residents and forcing the mayor, board of aldermen, and police chief to resign at gunpoint. It was the only successful coup in American history.

Statewide, the white supremacy campaign was effective. In 1898, Democrats won 52.8 percent of the vote in North Carolina and ousted many Fusionists from office. “Fusion Downed. The State Democratic. Whites to Rule,” *The Charlotte Observer* blared after the election.

Back in power, Democrats were determined to never lose power again. There were two ways of ensuring this, according to Leloudis: making sure blacks could no longer vote, and making poor whites feel superior to and animosity toward black voters.

In the 1899 legislative session, Democrats wrote an amendment to the state constitution that required that anyone who wanted to vote demonstrate to local elected officials that they could

read and write any section of the Constitution. Voters ratified it in 1900, disenfranchising the state's black voters for decades. Between 1890 and 1908, every state in the South adopted new state constitutions that sought to disenfranchise black voters. Democrats reigned in North Carolina and in the South for the next 60 years.

"The Democratic Party fought back, and said, 'Look, the only way to stop this kind of thing is to take the vote away from black people,'" Foner said.

The elite then set about normalizing imagined racial hierarchies, according to Leloudis. It was in 1899 that North Carolina passed its first Jim Crow law requiring separate seating for blacks and whites on all trains and steamboats. New regulations in Charlotte in 1899 required that blacks and whites be seated separately in courtrooms, and that separate Bibles be provided. In 1905, when Charlotte opened its first city-owned recreation ground, the local government passed a law stipulating that black people were not allowed inside. In 1907, North Carolina passed a law requiring segregated seating on all inter-urban trolleys in the state. Jim Crow laws were "a way of encouraging whites to see people of color as outcasts and pariahs," Leloudis told me. They were a direct reaction to the short-lived political alliance between blacks and whites.

As whites were more and more encouraged to see blacks as the "other," they increasingly lived in separate places, too. In 1876, for example, African Americans were scattered throughout the First Ward (the center of downtown) in Charlotte. Only three blocks of the ward were all black, according to Hanchett. By 1899, Charlotte's First Ward blocks were mostly all black or all white, although those black and white blocks alternated and were close to one another. But between 1889 and 1910, segregation accelerated. What Hanchett calls "micro-segregation" gave way to patterns of sizable black and white clusters. Writes Hanchett: "In a topsy-turvy world, it might as well be wise to put some physical distance between one's own group and these others who could seem so strange. During the late 1880s to late 1920s, Charlotte leaders set to work to re-create their town in a modern urban image, abandoning old-fashioned salt-and-pepper intermingling in favor of a city sorted out into a patchwork quilt of separate neighborhoods for blue-collar whites, for blacks, and for the 'better classes.'"

\* \* \*

Charlotte today is an extremely segregated city. Whites largely live in a triangle in the city's south, between South Boulevard and Providence Road, where neighborhoods are between 80 and 95 percent white. "Drive down our street, just about everyone is white," Jimmy Carr, a white resident of that triangle, told me.

Blacks and the city's growing Latino community live everywhere else. Census tracts in the north and west parts of the city are 70 percent black or more. And 43 of the 51 tracts that are 70

percent or more black or Hispanic are high poverty, according to 2014 Census data.

This segregation has proven an increasingly uncomfortable fact for a city that prided itself on racial harmony in the 1990s, as my colleague David Graham has written. In September, the city experienced demonstrations and riots after a police officer shot black resident Keith Lamont Scott.



Photo by Gerry Broome / AP

And the city has been reckoning with damning data from the economist Raj Chetty that suggests that poor children in Charlotte have a worse shot at economic mobility than do poor children in 49 of America’s largest metro areas. Segregation plays a central role in that.

Of course, it wasn’t just the nasty politics of the early 1900s that made Charlotte into the segregated city it is today. Redlining in the 1930s made it difficult for black homeowners to get loans to buy or repair their homes. Federal highway construction in the 1960s and 1970s decimated traditionally black neighborhoods and displaced whole communities to the outer edges of town (including the neighborhood where former transportation secretary Anthony Foxx grew up). Gentrification continues to displace black and Latino Charlotte residents from neighborhoods where they had long lived.

But the policies that continue to segregate Charlotte and other Southern cities have their roots in the nasty racial battles of the late 19th century. To segregate residents, there had to first be an idea that white people were superior and that black people deserved less. That idea was a strategy pushed by elite whites to make sure they could hold onto power. It took hold and has never lost its grip.

# *A 'Forgotten History' of How The U.S. Government Segregated America*

From *NPR*  
By Terry Gross  
May 3, 2017



Photo by Paul Sancya / AP

*Federal housing policies created after the Depression ensured that African-Americans and other people of color were left out of the new suburban communities -- and pushed instead into urban housing projects, such as Detroit's Brewster-Douglass towers.*

In 1933, faced with a housing shortage, the federal government began a program explicitly designed to increase — and segregate — America's housing stock. Author Richard Rothstein says the housing programs begun under the New Deal were tantamount to a “state-sponsored system of segregation.”

The government's efforts were “primarily designed to provide housing to white, middle-class, lower-middle-class families,” he says. African-Americans and other people of color were left out of the new suburban communities — and pushed instead into urban housing projects.

Rothstein's new book, *The Color of Law*, examines the local, state and federal housing policies that mandated segregation. He notes that the Federal Housing Administration, which was established in 1934, furthered the segregation efforts by refusing to insure mortgages in and near African-American neighborhoods — a policy known as “redlining.” At the same time, the FHA was subsidizing builders who were mass-producing entire subdivisions for whites — with the

requirement that none of the homes be sold to African-Americans.

Rothstein says these decades-old housing policies have had a lasting effect on American society. “The segregation of our metropolitan areas today leads ... to stagnant inequality, because families are much less able to be upwardly mobile when they’re living in segregated neighborhoods where opportunity is absent,” he says. “If we want greater equality in this society, if we want a lowering of the hostility between police and young African-American men, we need to take steps to desegregate.”

### ***Interview Highlights***

#### **On how the Federal Housing Administration justified discrimination**

The Federal Housing Administration’s justification was that if African-Americans bought homes in these suburbs, or even if they bought homes near these suburbs, the property values of the homes they were insuring, the white homes they were insuring, would decline. And therefore their loans would be at risk.

There was no basis for this claim on the part of the Federal Housing Administration. In fact, when African-Americans tried to buy homes in all-white neighborhoods or in mostly white neighborhoods, property values rose because African-Americans were more willing to pay more for properties than whites were, simply because their housing supply was so restricted and they had so many fewer choices. So the rationale that the Federal Housing Administration used was never based on any kind of study. It was never based on any reality.

#### **On how federal agencies used redlining to segregate African-Americans**

The term “redlining” ... comes from the development by the New Deal, by the federal government of maps of every metropolitan area in the country. And those maps were color-coded by first the Home Owners Loan Corp., and then the Federal Housing Administration, and then adopted by the Veterans Administration, and these color codes were designed to indicate where it was safe to insure mortgages. And anywhere where African-Americans lived, anywhere where African-Americans lived nearby were colored red to indicate to appraisers that these neighborhoods were too risky to insure mortgages.

#### **On the FHA manual that explicitly laid out segregationist policies**

It was in something called the Underwriting Manual of the Federal Housing Administration, which said that “incompatible racial groups should not be permitted to live in the same communities.” Meaning that loans to African-Americans could not be insured.

In one development ... in Detroit ... the FHA would not go ahead, during World War II, with this development unless the developer built a 6-foot-high wall, cement wall, separating his

development from a nearby African-American neighborhood to make sure that no African-Americans could even walk into that neighborhood.

The Underwriting Manual of the Federal Housing Administration recommended that highways be a good way to separate African-American from white neighborhoods. So this was not a matter of law, it was a matter of government regulation, but it also wasn't hidden, so it can't be claimed that this was some kind of "de facto" situation. Regulations that are written in law and published ... in the Underwriting Manual are as much a de jure unconstitutional expression of government policy as something written in law.

### **On the long-term effects of African-Americans being prohibited from buying homes in suburbs and building equity**

Today African-American incomes on average are about 60 percent of average white incomes. But African-American wealth is about 5 percent of white wealth. Most middle-class families in this country gain their wealth from the equity they have in their homes. So this enormous difference between a 60 percent income ratio and a 5 percent wealth ratio is almost entirely attributable to federal housing policy implemented through the 20th century.

African-American families that were prohibited from buying homes in the suburbs in the 1940s and '50s and even into the '60s, by the Federal Housing Administration, gained none of the equity appreciation that whites gained. So ... the Daly City development south of San Francisco or Levittown or any of the others in between across the country, those homes in the late 1940s and 1950s sold for about twice national median income. They were affordable to working-class families with an FHA or VA mortgage. African-Americans were equally able to afford those homes as whites but were prohibited from buying them. Today those homes sell for \$300,000 [or] \$400,000 at the minimum, six, eight times national median income. ...

So in 1968 we passed the Fair Housing Act that said, in effect, "OK, African-Americans, you're now free to buy homes in Daly City or Levittown" ... but it's an empty promise because those homes are no longer affordable to the families that could've afforded them when whites were buying into those suburbs and gaining the equity and the wealth that followed from that.

The white families sent their children to college with their home equities; they were able to take care of their parents in old age and not depend on their children. They're able to bequeath wealth to their children. None of those advantages accrued to African-Americans, who for the most part were prohibited from buying homes in those suburbs.



# *How Redlining's Racist Effects Lasted for Decades*

From *The New York Times*

By Emily Badger

August 24, 2017

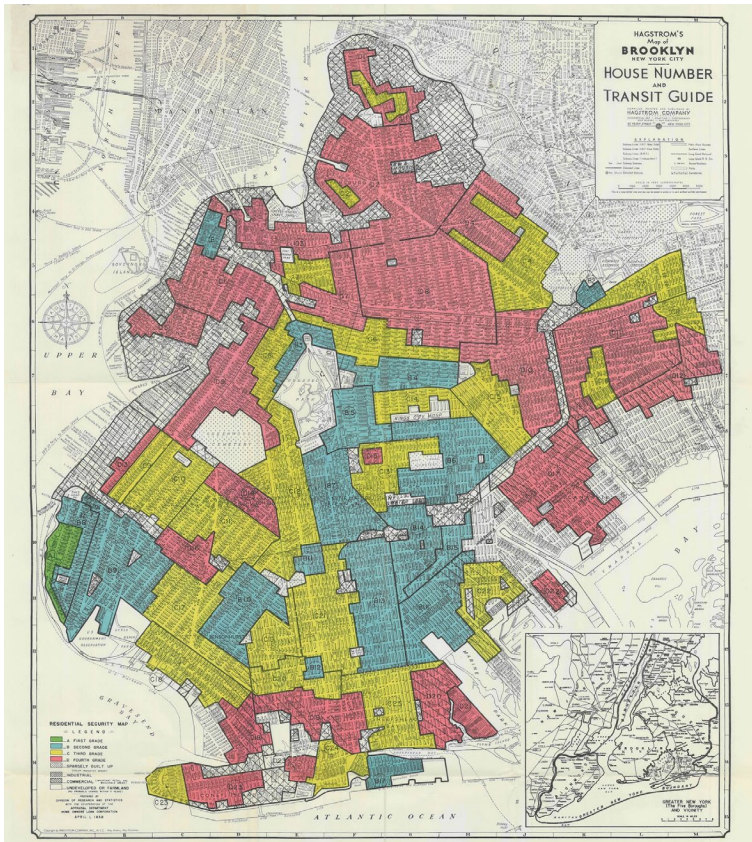


Photo from the National Archives and Records Administration, Mapping Inequality  
*The 1938 Home Owners' Loan Corporation map of Brooklyn.*

The appraiser who went to Brooklyn in the 1930s to assess Bedford-Stuyvesant for the government summarized the neighborhood's prospects on a single page. Many brownstones in "obsolescence and poor upkeep." Clerks, laborers and merchants lived there, about 30 percent of them foreign-born, Jews and Irish mostly.

Also, this: "Colored infiltration a definitely adverse influence on neighborhood desirability."

The government-sponsored Home Owners' Loan Corporation drew a line around Bedford-Stuyvesant on a map, colored the area red and gave it a "D," the worst grade

possible, denoting a hazardous place to underwrite mortgages.

Lines like these, drawn in cities across the country to separate "hazardous" and "declining" from "desirable" and "best," codified patterns of racial segregation and disparities in access to credit. Now economists at the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, analyzing data from recently digitized copies of those maps, show that the consequences lasted for decades.

As recently as 2010, they find, differences in the level of racial segregation, homeownership rates, home values and credit scores were still apparent where these boundaries were drawn.

"Did the creation of these maps actually influence the development of urban neighborhoods over the course of the 20th century to now?" said Bhash Mazumder, one of the Fed researchers, along with Daniel Aaronson and Daniel Hartley. "That was our primary question."

The economists now believe that appraisers like the one in Bedford-Stuyvesant weren't merely identifying disparities that already existed in the 1930s, and that were likely to worsen anyway. The lines they helped draw, based in large part on the belief that the presence of blacks and other minorities would undermine property values, altered what would happen in these communities for years to come. Maps alone didn't create segregated and unequal cities today. But the role they played was pivotal.

The maps became self-fulfilling prophecies, as "hazardous" neighborhoods — "redlined" ones — were starved of investment and deteriorated further in ways that most likely also fed white flight and rising racial segregation. These neighborhood classifications were later used by the Veterans Administration and the Federal Housing Administration to decide who was worthy of home loans at a time when homeownership was rapidly expanding in postwar America.

"Housing policy can have a really long-lasting impact, since structures last a long time," Mr. Hartley said.

The new research reaffirms the role of government policy in shaping racial disparities in America in access to housing, credit and wealth accumulation. And as the country grapples with the blurred lines between past racism and present-day outcomes, this new data illustrates how such history lives on.

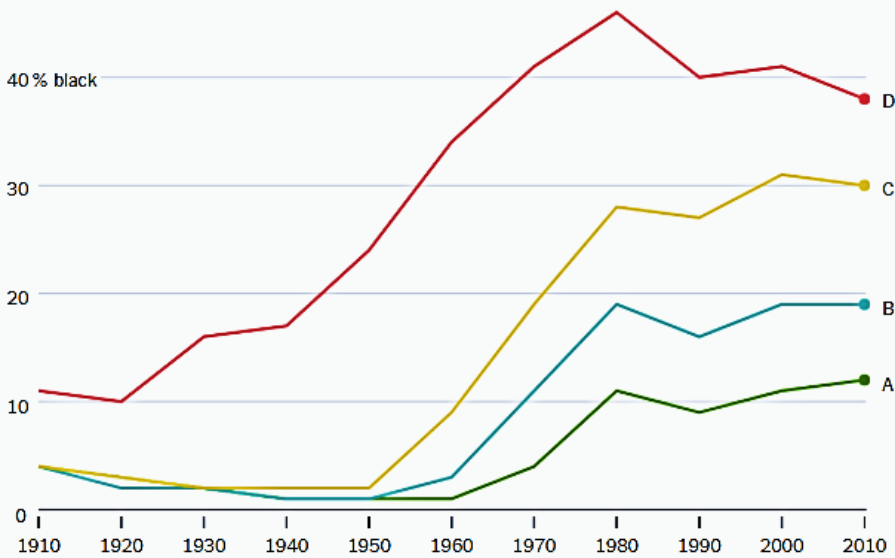
"We now have evidence that is very systematic and nationwide that has detailed that these borders did matter," said Leah Boustan, an economic historian at Princeton familiar with the research, which she called "pathbreaking."

Historians have long pointed to the significance of the Home Owners' Loan Corporation maps. But a large collection of the 239 cities that were originally appraised was only recently digitized by a collaboration of schools and housed at the University of Richmond, making the underlying geographic data widely available.

The Chicago Fed economists used that data to identify boundaries between neighborhoods with different ratings. As of 1930, there were already clear differences along some of the borders in racial demographics and homeownership rates. Blacks were already more likely to be living in "D" neighborhoods than "C" neighborhoods, for example. But differences in the black share of the population and homeownership rates widened after the 1930s, reaching a peak in the 1970s, when federal laws requiring equal access to housing and credit took effect.

## Redlined Neighborhoods Have the Highest Share of Black Residents

D-rated neighborhoods were considered 'hazardous,' A-rated neighborhoods the 'best.'



Data from 149 cities mapped by the Home Owners' Loan Corporation in the 1930s.

Source: 'The Effects of the 1930s HOLC "Redlining" Maps' by D. Aaronson, D. Hartley, B. Mazumder.

Those patterns alone don't prove that the maps caused widening gaps in segregation or homeownership. To do that, the researchers drew their own hypothetical boundaries to compare what might have happened had the Home Owners' Loan Corporation placed the lines in other locations where similar differences existed at the time. The disparities along those simulated borders didn't widen; they disappeared.

The differences the researchers detected from the maps kept reappearing whether they looked across whole neighborhoods or just at blocks adjacent to these borders. They reappeared even when the researchers looked at a subset of boundaries where the nearby demographics were barely changing before the 1930s. By analyzing the differences in several ways, the researchers say they feel confident they have picked up on effects that were actually caused by the maps.

They estimate that the maps account for 15 to 30 percent of the overall gaps in segregation and homeownership that they find between "D" and "C" neighborhoods from 1950 to 2010.

"It doesn't surprise me at all," said Richard Rothstein, a researcher with the Economic Policy Institute who has written a new book, *The Color of Law*, on how official policies like redlining fostered segregation. These maps — and their lingering effects — derive from a time when the American government, he writes, believed that "inharmonious racial groups" should be separated.

# Extensive Data Shows Punishing Reach of Racism for Black Boys

From *The New York Times*

By Emily Badger, Claire Cain Miller, Adam Perce, and Kevin Quealy

March 19, 2018

Modified for length by Echo Intern Seungmin Park

Black boys raised in America, even in the wealthiest families and living in some of the most well-to-do neighborhoods, still earn less in adulthood than white boys with similar backgrounds, according to a sweeping new study that traced the lives of millions of children.

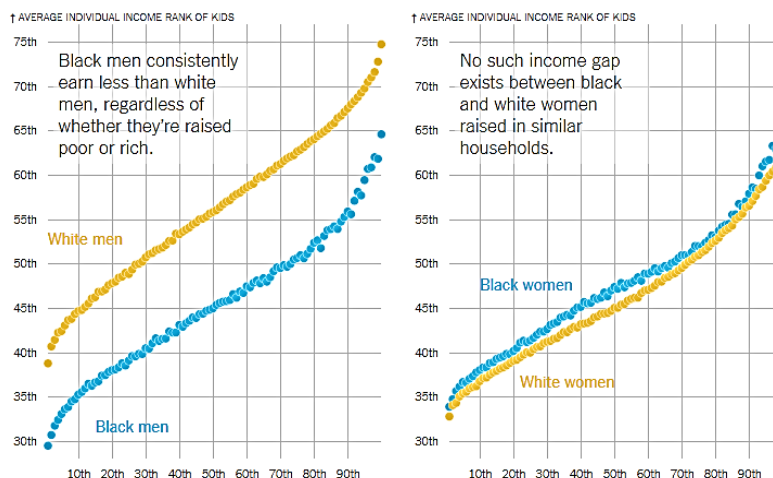
White boys who grow up rich are likely to remain that way. Black boys raised at the top, however, are more likely to become poor than to stay wealthy in their own adult households.

Most white boys raised in wealthy families will stay rich or upper middle class as adults, but black boys raised in similarly rich households will not.

Even when children grow up next to each other with parents who earn similar incomes, black boys fare worse than white boys in 99 percent of America. And the gaps only worsen in the kind of neighborhoods that promise low poverty and good schools.

According to the study, led by researchers at Stanford, Harvard and the Census Bureau, income inequality between blacks and whites is driven entirely by what is happening among these boys and the men they become. Though black girls and women face deep inequality on many measures, black and white girls from families with comparable earnings attain similar individual incomes as adults.

## Large income gaps persist between men — but not women.



Black men consistently earn less than white men, regardless of whether they're raised poor or rich.

No such income gap exists between black and white women raised in similar households.

“You would have thought at some point you escape the poverty trap,” said Nathaniel Hendren, a Harvard economist and an author of the study.

Black boys — even rich black boys — can seemingly never assume that.

The study, based on anonymous earnings and demographic data for virtually all Americans now in their late 30s, debunks a number of other widely held hypotheses about income inequality.

Gaps persisted even when black and white boys grew up in families with the same income, similar family structures, similar education levels and even similar levels of accumulated wealth.

The disparities that remain also can't be explained by differences in cognitive ability, an argument made by people who cite racial gaps in test scores that appear for both black boys and girls. If such inherent differences existed by race, “you've got to explain to me why these putative ability differences aren't handicapping women,” said David Grusky, a Stanford sociologist who has reviewed the research.

A more likely possibility, the authors suggest, is that test scores don't accurately measure the abilities of black children in the first place.

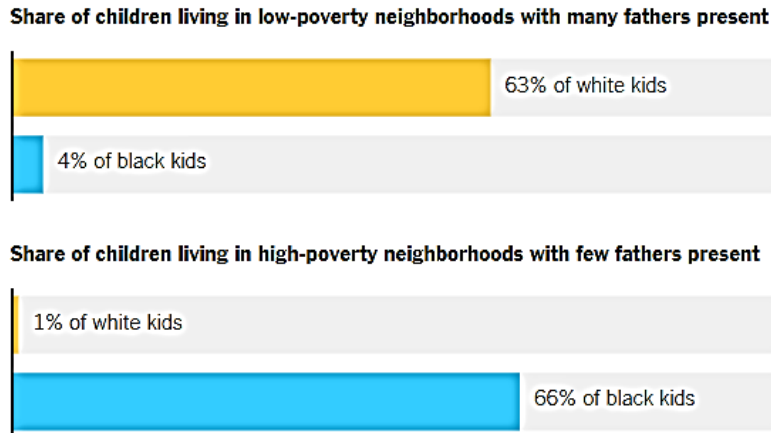
If this inequality can't be explained by individual or household traits, much of what matters probably lies outside the home — in surrounding neighborhoods, in the economy and in a society that views black boys differently from white boys, and even from black girls.

“One of the most popular liberal post-racial ideas is the idea that the fundamental problem is class and not race, and clearly this study explodes that idea,” said Ibram Kendi, a professor and director of the Antiracist Research and Policy Center at American University. “But for whatever reason, we're unwilling to stare racism in the face.”

The authors, including the Stanford economist Raj Chetty and two census researchers, Maggie R. Jones and Sonya R. Porter, tried to identify neighborhoods where poor black boys do well, and as well as whites.

“The problem,” Mr. Chetty said, “is that there are essentially no such neighborhoods in America.”

The few neighborhoods that met this standard were in areas that showed less discrimination in surveys and tests of racial bias. They mostly had low poverty rates. And, intriguingly, these pockets — including parts of the Maryland suburbs of Washington, and corners of Queens and the Bronx — were the places where many lower-income black children had fathers at home. Poor black boys did well in such places, whether their own fathers were present or not.



“That is a pathbreaking finding,” said William Julius Wilson, a Harvard sociologist whose books have chronicled the economic struggles of black men. “They’re not talking about the direct effects of a boy’s own parents’ marital status. They’re talking about the presence of fathers in a given census tract.”

Other fathers in the community can provide boys with role models and mentors, researchers say, and their presence may indicate other neighborhood factors that benefit families, like lower incarceration rates and better job opportunities.

The research makes clear that there is something unique about the obstacles black males face. The gap between Hispanics and whites is narrower, and their incomes will converge within a couple of generations if mobility stays the same. Asian-Americans earn more than whites raised at the same income level, or about the same when first-generation immigrants are excluded. Only Native Americans have an income gap comparable to African-Americans. But the disparities are widest for black boys.

For poor children, the pattern is reversed. Most poor black boys will remain poor as adults. White boys raised in poor families fare far better.

“This crystallizes and puts data behind this thing that we always knew was there because we

either felt it ourselves or we've seen it over time," said Will Jawando, 35, who worked in the Obama White House on My Brother's Keeper, a mentoring initiative for black boys. Even without this data, the people who worked on that project, he said, believed that individual and structural racism targeted black men in ways that required policies devised specifically for them.

Mr. Jawando, the son of a Nigerian father and a white mother, grew up poor in Silver Spring, Md. The Washington suburb contains some of the rare neighborhoods where black and white boys appear to do equally well. Mr. Jawando, who identifies as black, is now a married lawyer with three daughters. He is among the black boys who climbed from the bottom to the top.

Will Jawando was raised in a low-income household in Silver Spring, Md. A lawyer and a former Obama White House staffer, he is among the rare black boys who reached the top fifth of the income distribution as an adult.



Photo by T.J. Kirkpatrick for *The New York Times*

*Will Jawando was raised in a low-income household in Silver Springs, Md. A lawyer and former Obama White House staffer, he is among the rare black boys who reached the top fifth of the income distribution as an adult.*

He was one of the 20 million children born between 1978 and 1983 whose lives are reflected in the study. Using census data that included tax files, the researchers were able to link the adult fortunes of those children to their parents' incomes. Names and addresses were hidden from the researchers.

Previous research suggests some reasons there may be a large income gap between black and white men, but not between women, even though women of color face both sexism and racism.

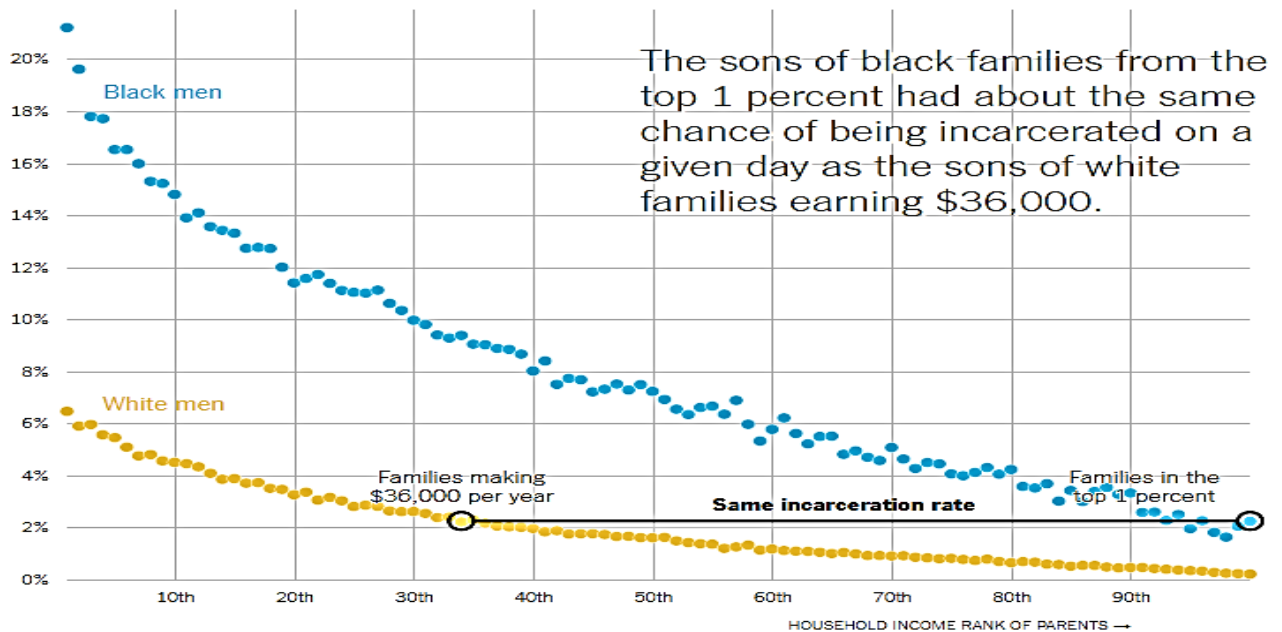
Other studies show that boys, across races, are more sensitive than girls to disadvantages like growing up in poverty or facing discrimination. While black women also face negative effects of racism, black men often experience racial discrimination differently. As early as preschool, they are more likely to be disciplined in school. They are pulled over or detained and searched by police officers more often.

"It's not just being black but being male that has been hyper-stereotyped in this negative way, in which we've made black men scary, intimidating, with a propensity toward violence," said Noelle Hurd, a psychology professor at the University of Virginia.

She said this racist stereotype particularly hurts black men economically, now that service-sector jobs, requiring interaction with customers, have replaced the manufacturing jobs that previously employed men with less education.

The new data shows that 21 percent of black men raised at the very bottom were incarcerated, according to a snapshot of a single day during the 2010 census. Black men raised in the top 1 percent — by millionaires — were as likely to be incarcerated as white men raised in households earning about \$36,000.

**Share of the men incarcerated on April 1, 2010**



Includes men who were ages 27 to 32 in 2010.

At the same time, boys benefit more than girls from adult attention and resources, as do low-income and nonwhite children, a variety of studies have found. Mentors who aren't children's parents, but who share those children's gender and race, serve a particularly important role for black children, Ms. Hurd has found. That helps explain why the presence of black fathers in a neighborhood, even if not in a child's home, appears to make a difference.

### A. The Real Starting Positions

The ladder charts so far have shown equal numbers of black and white boys raised by rich or poor families — what would happen, in other words, if we started with 10,000 boys, and half were black and half white.

In reality, whites and blacks are not represented equally across the income spectrum. More than two-thirds of black boys are raised by poor or lower-middle-class families, while more than half of white boys are raised by rich or upper-middle-class families.



# *Trump's EPA Concludes Environmental Racism is Real*

From *The Atlantic*

By Vann R. Newkirk II

February 28, 2018

Modified for length by Echo Intern Seungmin Park



Photo by Gerald Herbert / AP

A new report from the Environmental Protection Agency finds that people of color are much more likely to live near polluters and breathe polluted air—even as the agency seeks to roll back regulations on pollution.

Late last week, even as the Environmental Protection Agency and the Trump administration continued a plan to dismantle many of the institutions built to address those disproportionate risks, researchers embedded in the EPA's National Center for Environmental Assessment released a study indicating that people of color are much more likely to live near polluters and breathe polluted air. Specifically, the study finds that people in poverty are exposed to more fine particulate matter than people living above poverty. According to the study's authors, "results at national, state, and county scales all indicate that non-Whites tend to be burdened disproportionately to Whites."

As the study details, previous works have also linked disproportionate exposure to particulate matter and America's racial geography. A 2016 study in *Environment International* found that long-term exposure to the pollutant is associated with racial segregation, with more highly segregated areas suffering higher levels of exposure. A 2012 article in *Environmental Health Perspectives* found that overall levels of particulate matter exposure for people of color were higher than those for white people. That article also provided a breakdown of just what kinds of

particulate matter counts in the exposures. It found that while differences in overall particulate matter by race were significant, differences for some key particles were immense. For example, Hispanics faced rates of chlorine exposure that are more than double those of whites. Chronic chlorine inhalation is known for degrading cardiac function.

The conclusions from scientists at the National Center for Environmental Assessment not only confirm that body of research, but advance it in a top-rate public-health journal. They find that black people are exposed to about 1.5 times more particulate matter than white people, and that Hispanics had about 1.2 times the exposure of non-Hispanic whites. The study found that people in poverty had about 1.3 times more exposure than people above poverty. Interestingly, it also finds that for black people, the proportion of exposure is only partly explained by the disproportionate geographic burden of polluting facilities, meaning the magnitude of emissions from individual factories appears to be higher in minority neighborhoods.

These findings join an ever-growing body of literature that has found that both polluters and pollution are often disproportionately located in communities of color. In some places, hydraulic-fracturing oil wells are more likely to be sited in those neighborhoods. Researchers have found the presence of benzene and other dangerous aromatic chemicals to be linked to race. Strong racial disparities are suspected in the prevalence of lead poisoning.

It seems that almost anywhere researchers look, there is more evidence of deep racial disparities in exposure to environmental hazards. In fact, the idea of environmental justice—or the degree to which people are treated equally and meaningfully involved in the creation of the human environment—was crystallized in the 1980s with the aid of a landmark study illustrating wide disparities in the siting of facilities for the disposal of hazardous waste. Leaders in the environmental-justice movement have posited—in places as prestigious and rigorous as United Nations publications and numerous peer-reviewed journals—that environmental racism exists as the inverse of environmental justice, when environmental risks are allocated disproportionately along the lines of race, often without the input of the affected communities of color.

The idea of environmental racism is, like all mentions of racism in America, controversial. Even in the age of climate change, many people still view the environment mostly as a set of forces of nature, one that cannot favor or disfavor one group or another. And even those who recognize that the human sphere of influence shapes almost every molecule of the places in which humans live, from the climate to the weather to the air they breathe, are often loathe to concede that racism is a factor. To many people, racism often connotes purposeful decisions by a master hand, and many see existing segregation as a self-sorting or poverty problem. Couldn't the presence of landfills and factories in disproportionately black neighborhoods have more to do with the fact that black people tend to be disproportionately poor and thus live in less desirable neighborhoods?

But last week's study throws more water on that increasingly tenuous line of thinking. While it lacks the kind of complex multivariate design that can really disentangle the exact effects of poverty and race, the finding that race has a stronger effect on exposure to pollutants than poverty indicates that something beyond just the concentration of poverty among black people and Latinos is at play. As the study's authors write: "A focus on poverty to the exclusion of race may be insufficient to meet the needs of all burdened populations." Their finding that the magnitude of pollution seems to be higher in communities of color than the number of polluters suggests, indicates that regulations and business decisions are strongly dependent on whether people of color are around. In other words, they might be discriminatory.

This is a remarkable finding, and not only because it could provide one more policy linkage to any number of health disparities, from heart disease to asthma rates in black children that are double those of white children. But the study also stands as an implicit rebuke to the very administration that allowed its release.

Under the guidance of President Trump and Administrator Scott Pruitt, the EPA has begun to walk back already anemic federal environmental-justice work, putting a stop to some civil-rights investigations and replacing or firing many of the scientists with deep technical knowledge of the subject. Last year, facing cuts to the environmental-justice program that seem likely to continue, former assistant associate administrator Mustafa Santiago Ali resigned. Further changes to move the offices of environmental justice into a policy office staffed by Pruitt hires promise to further reduce the autonomy of life-long environmental-justice staffers and reduce the effectiveness of their work.



Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

## *White Flight Never Ended*

From *The Atlantic*  
By Alana Semuels  
July 30, 2015



Photo by Wesley Fryer / Flickr

Nearly 50 years ago, after a string of race-related riots in cities across America, President Lyndon B. Johnson commissioned a panel of civic leaders to investigate the underlying causes of racial tension in the country.

The result was the Kerner Report, a document that castigated white society for fleeing to suburbs, where they excluded blacks from employment, housing, and educational opportunities. The report's famous conclusion: "Our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white—separate and unequal."

Much of America would like to believe the nation has changed since then. The election of a black President was said to usher in a "post-racial era." Cheerios commercials now feature interracial couples. As both suburbs and cities grew more diverse, more than one academic study trumpeted the end of segregation in American neighborhoods.

But now, a new report calls into question that much-vaunted progress. In a study published Thursday in the August issue of *American Sociological Review*, a trio of academics looks into the data and finds that segregation is actually becoming more pronounced in many American neighborhoods. The practices derided by the Kerner Commission, including white flight, exclusionary zoning, and outright prejudice, are continuing to create black areas and white areas, but this time around, those areas exist in both the cities and the suburbs.

"We're more negative than other researchers who see declines in segregation," Daniel Lichter, the lead author and a sociologist at Cornell, told me. "I have a hard time putting a positive spin

on this research.”

Previous data has suggested that segregation between black and white populations is declining. But much of that research looked at entire metropolitan areas, and found more minorities in suburbs, which led researchers to conclude that the nation was no longer divided into black cities and white suburbs. Lichter and his colleagues looked at smaller communities, and found that while black residents don't just live in inner cities anymore, the suburbs they've moved to are majority black, while other suburbs are majority white.

“Our substantive point is straightforward,” they write. “Segregation between places may be increasing, even as overall metro-neighborhood segregation declines.”

In the 1960s, white families moved from cities to suburbs when they saw black neighbors move in next door. Now, they move from suburbs to farther-out fringe areas often not counted in academic studies “hunkering down in all-white neighborhoods, affluent gated communities, or unincorporated housing developments at the exurban fringe,” the researchers write.

And more white Americans, drawn by walkable neighborhoods or transit, are moving back into the inner cities that were once shunned. Young whites and baby boomers, for example, are moving to areas of central cities such as Washington, D.C., which was, for years, a majority-minority city. That, in turn, prices out minority residents.

Segregation isn't just happening between black and white towns. Hispanic and Asian residents are segregated into their own cities and towns, too. Dover, New Jersey, for instance, a town 30 miles west of New York, was 70 percent Hispanic in the 2010 Census. In 1980, it was only 25 percent Hispanic.

These patterns of segregation are governed by housing practices on individual and municipal levels, like they were 50 years ago. Lenders and real estate agents still steer families to areas with populations of similar races, white families still flee areas with growing minority populations, and family and immigrant networks still attract groups of people similar to themselves.

Over time, communities become known as “black” or “white” or “Asian” or “Latino,” but local policy choices govern some of these categorizations. For example, in Ferguson, Missouri, the percentage of the population that was black increased to 67.4 percent from 25.1 percent between 1990 and 2010. The white population there dropped to 6,206 from 16,454 over the same time period. As whites started to leave, the local government began to allow for the construction of low- and mixed-income housing apartments. Investment firms bought out underwater mortgages and rented the homes to minorities.

“Ferguson became recognized as a ‘black suburb’ that could be distinguished from other nearby suburban communities that made different zoning and administrative decisions,” the authors write.

On the flip side, white communities make decisions that keep minorities out. Exclusionary zoning laws make it difficult to build mixed-income housing or apartment buildings in some towns, despite court cases seeking to make cities more diverse. These housing policies mean that cities compete for different types of people, and by banning apartment buildings or affordable housing, cities can better attract affluent white taxpayers.

Black-white segregation accounted for much of the divide between different communities, but whites seem more amenable to Asian or Hispanic families moving into their neighborhoods, researchers found.

Hispanic-white and Asian-white segregation in metropolitan areas has remained virtually unchanged between 1990 and 2010, while black-white segregation has declined in metropolitan areas. But segregation between suburban places has increased for blacks and whites, Hispanics and whites, and Asians and whites during that period.

“People know what is a white suburb and what is a black suburb,” Lichter says. “Whites are still attracted to those suburbs that are white.”

The study takes on added importance in the wake of a Supreme Court decision that upheld parts of the Fair Housing Act that could help bring further legal challenges to discriminatory practices. A few weeks later, the Obama Administration announced an overhaul of how the federal government distributes housing money. The new rules will require metropolitan areas to use data to measure segregation, and then take steps to address it, at least if they want to receive money from the federal government.

Such new policies could be a start to addressing this new version of an old problem. Even if they do, though, it was a divide that the country had hoped to solve half a century ago.

“Equality cannot be achieved under conditions of nearly complete separation,” the 50-year-old Kerner report concluded. “The primary goal must be a single society, in which every citizen will be free to live and work according to his capabilities and desires, not his color.”

## *Shattering Charlotte's Myth of Racial Harmony*

From *The Atlantic*  
By David A. Graham  
September 22, 2016

You often don't have to scratch too hard on the surface of the New South to find the Old South right below it.

This is clear in Charlotte, North Carolina, this week, where intense demonstrations and riots have followed the shooting of Keith Lamont Scott by a police officer on Wednesday. The banking mecca—the Southeast's second-largest city—has tended to see itself as an avatar of modernity and moderation in a state where both are uneven. Although Uptown's gleaming skyscrapers and chain restaurants seem to suggest a city that is both without, and untethered from, history, the Queen City was built on slavery and its racial politics remain fraught, just like those of nearly every other city. It struggles with a history of segregation, racial tension, and difficult relations between African Americans and their police department.



Photo by Jason Miczek / Reuters

Charlotte does have a history, one that stretches back to before the American Revolution; Mecklenburg County claims to have declared independence from Britain way back in 1775, though historians aren't sold. At one time, it was just another small Piedmont town. That changed when railroads came through in 1852, transforming Charlotte into a central hub for the plantation economy. The ability to easily move the produce of the slave economy out of the region and to markets transformed the village into a prosperous hub, its population more than

doubling between 1850 and 1860. On the eve of the Civil War, Mecklenburg County had nearly 7,000 slaves, accounting for about 40 percent of the population.

After the Civil War, African Americans briefly gained political power in North Carolina, but by 1900, Democrats had returned to power and purged blacks from government.

Charlotte was not at the forefront of protests during the height of the civil-rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s. Greensboro, with a large, middle-class black population and North Carolina A&T University, took the lead. Charlotte-Mecklenburg schools desegregated after *Brown v. Board of Education*, with Dorothy Counts enrolling at Harding High School, an all-white school, in 1957, surrounded by jeering whites. A photo ran in newspapers around the country.

By 1965, however, there were still 88 segregated campuses. That year, a black couple wanted to send their son James Swann to an integrated school, and were refused. The NAACP Legal Defense Fund sued the Board of Education, with the case eventually going to the Supreme Court six years later. The justices ruled that busing was an appropriate remedy for racial imbalances in school districts.

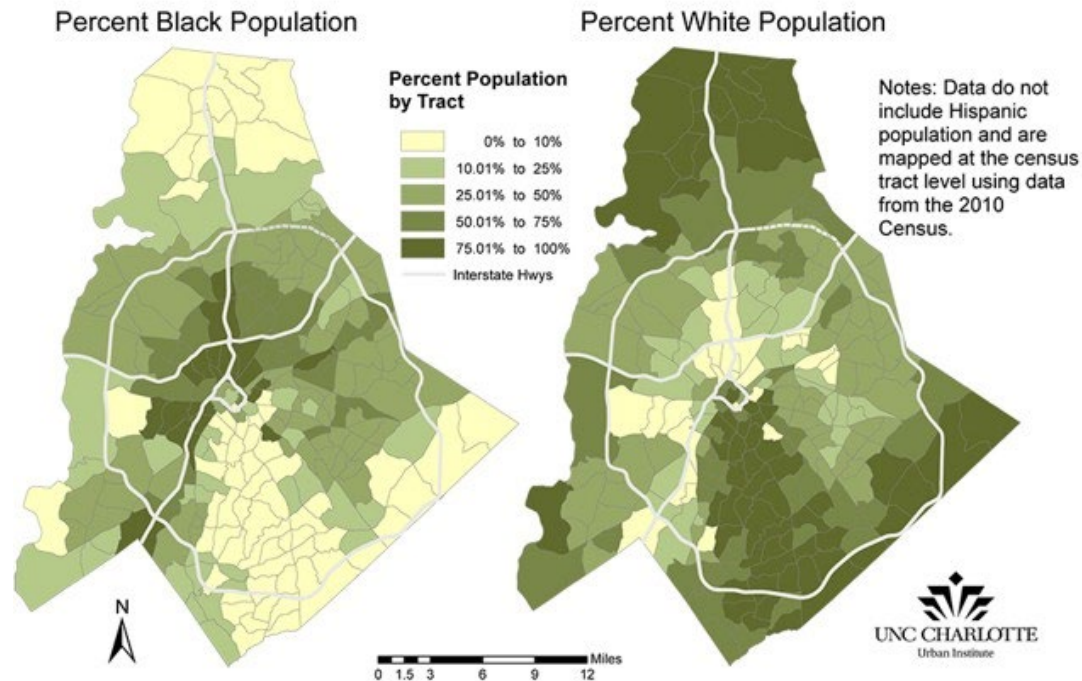
What followed in Charlotte was a surprisingly successful experiment. The city undertook busing, producing a school district that was both well-integrated and produced strong student outcomes. In stark contrast to violent and deadly riots in Boston over busing, Charlotte was widely known as “the city that made desegregation work.” In the meantime, Charlotte was becoming a gleaming, corporate city, home to corporate giants like Bank of America, Wachovia, and Duke Energy.

The rosy period of integration didn’t last. After a lawsuit in the late 1990s against the school district from parents who opposed busing, Charlotte-Mecklenburg returned to a “neighborhood school model.” The result was a massive reversal. As *Scalawag* reported in an excellent, deep examination of Charlotte’s schools:

Just before the end of court-ordered desegregation, during the 2001-02 school year, 10 Charlotte-Mecklenburg schools were isolated by race or poverty—or both, according to a UNC Charlotte analysis of data from the state Department of Public Instruction. By the 2013-14 school year, the number of racially or economically isolated campuses had quintupled, to more than 50.

It’s not hard to understand why this might be the case. Despite the city’s makeover, it remains extremely segregated, as this map from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte’s Urban Institute shows:





A 2014 paper in the *Quarterly Journal of Economics* explored the results of the shift:

*We find that the resegregation of CMS schools led to an increase in racial inequality. Both whites and minorities score lower on high school exams when they are assigned to schools with more minority students. Our estimates imply that rezoning in CMS widened the racial gap in math scores by about 0.025 standard deviation. Similarly, we find that white students are about 1 percentage point less likely to graduate from high school or attend a four-year college when they are assigned to schools with 10 percentage points more minority students. Finally, we find that rezoning in CMS led to a large and persistent increase in criminal activity among minority males—a 10 percentage point increase in share minority of a minority male’s assigned school led to an increase in the probability of incarceration of about 1.3 percentage points.*

The result is that some African American residents of the city are actually seeing gains reversed.

Meanwhile, socioeconomics aside, there has been a tense relationship between the Charlotte Mecklenburg Police Department and its black citizens for years. Given the ambiguity around Scott’s death—police say he was holding a gun, but family members say he was reading—it might not immediately seem like an obvious rallying point. Police Chief Kerr Putney argued that protestors are reacting to a false narrative about Scott, but it seems likely that the incident was simply the trigger for protests rooted in years of resentment of police, similar to how the death of Freddie Gray exposed the deep cleavages in Baltimore for many years.

In September 2013, a black man named Jonathan Ferrell was in a car crash in Charlotte in the early hours of the morning. Seeking help, he banged on the door of a house. The resident called

police, who shot Ferrell when they arrived. He was unarmed. The white officer who shot him 10 times, Randall Kerrick, was tried for involuntary manslaughter, but the case ended in a hung jury. Kerrick resigned from the police force under an agreement. The city also reached a \$2.25 million settlement with Ferrell's family.

A review by The Charlotte Observer in 2015 found that few officers were disciplined for shootings of civilians, even when the city was paying out large settlements:

*The city has paid \$3.4 million to families in settlements over the last decade in cases involving five shootings. Despite the payments, which meant the cases never went to court, Charlotte officers have rarely been suspended or fired for their use of deadly force.*

*The Observer obtained city documents listing current and former CMPD officers involved in 67 shootings since 2005. Only one police officer was fired. Another was suspended for two days.*

A University of North Carolina study several years ago found that blacks were far more likely to be stopped by police in Charlotte, especially young black men, and that the racial disparity in traffic stops was growing. The city of Charlotte also considered instituting controversial "exclusion zones" for fighting prostitution in 2015, a solution that critics noted was likely to produce racially disparate results. The city eventually decided against the zones.

The chief of Charlotte's police force, Kerr Putney, is black, as was his predecessor, Rodney Monroe. But recent experience in cities like Baltimore has shown that having black police chiefs, as well as black mayors, is not a panacea for racist law enforcement and racially based community tension. The department is also 76 percent white and only 17 percent black, while Mecklenburg County overall is 64 percent white and 28 percent black. Brentley Vinson, the officer who shot Scott, is black.

Putney has been outspoken about racial issues, weaving in his own experiences as both a black man and a cop.

"Even now when I see blue lights, it hits me in the stomach. I've had that reaction since I was eight years old," Putney said in July, after police officers were killed in Dallas. "But what you don't know is I'm sometimes more fearful when I put this uniform on. I'm gonna tell you a secret, I'm always black—I was born that way, I'm gonna die that way, but I chose to put myself in harm's way with the honorable people who wear these uniforms to protect the people who need us most."

Recently, the city has worked to cut a more progressive profile. Governor Pat McCrory, a Republican, previously served as mayor of Charlotte, operating as a pro-business moderate,

though he has governed the state as more of a conservative. The current mayor, Jennifer Roberts, is a Democrat. In 2012, Charlotte hosted the Democratic National Convention. In early 2016, the city passed an ordinance banning discrimination against LGBT people and requiring that businesses allow transgender people to use the bathroom corresponding to the gender with which they identify.

In response, the state General Assembly entered a special session and passed HB2, a controversial law overturning the local ordinance and banning other cities from passing their own. It also required transgender people to use bathrooms in public facilities corresponding to the sex on their birth certificate. The backlash to the law has cost the state millions of dollars in economic benefits, many of which would have helped Charlotte, including the 2017 NBA All-Star Game. The contest will be played in New Orleans instead.

The LGBT ordinance highlighted Charlotte's unusual position in the state. While North Carolina's cities tend to be far more liberal than rural and suburban areas, this battle represented either Charlotte trying to lead the city in a more progressive, just direction (as its boosters argued) or the latest evidence that Charlotte was a self-righteous metropolis separated from the rest of the state.

It is true that the Queen City has tended to see itself as more progressive and less troubled by the old bonds of race than other cities, which is one reason the riots have shocked residents so much. In July, after the Dallas killings, Putney touted Charlotte's efforts to fight racial bias.

"We're different in Charlotte, y'all," he said "And we're a good kind of different. We're a good kind of different."

It turns out Charlotte wasn't as different as it believed.

# *The Desegregation and Resegregation Of Charlotte's Schools*

From *The New Yorker*

By Clint Smith

October 3, 2016

Modified for length by Echo Intern Seungmin Park



Photograph by John Rayford, Getty

In 1954, the Supreme Court ruled in *Brown v. Board of Education* that “separate educational facilities are inherently unequal” and thus unconstitutional. The decision mandated that schools across the country be integrated, though, in reality, little actual school desegregation took place following the ruling. It took years for momentum from the civil-rights movement to create enough political pressure for truly meaningful integration to take place in classrooms across the Country.

To understand what happened next, it helps to turn to a book published last year and edited by Roslyn Arlin Mickelson, Stephen Samuel Smith, and Amy Hawn Nelson, *Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow: School Desegregation and Resegregation in Charlotte*. It uses essays by

sociologists, political scientists, economists, and attorneys to illuminate how the city became the focal point of the national school-desegregation debate, with decisions that set a precedent for the rest of the country.

In 1964, a black couple, the Reverend Dr. Darius Swann and his wife, Vera Swann, attempted to enroll their son James in Seversville Elementary School, one of the few integrated schools in the city and one that was closer to their home than the one he attended. The Swanns' request was denied, and James was told that he must attend an all-black school in a different neighborhood. The N.A.A.C.P. sued on behalf of the family and the case moved to the federal district court.

The ruling came down in 1969, and James McMillan, the judge presiding over the case, ruled in favor of the Swann family, ordering and then overseeing the implementation of a large-scale busing program, which would go on to make the school system for Charlotte and surrounding Mecklenburg County a case study in integration. In 1971, the Supreme Court upheld the decision, and *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education* concretized what *Brown v. Board* had put into motion more than a decade before. District after district modelled its integration plans on Charlotte, and the city was lauded as an example of what successful integration could look like. By 1980, the school district had reached an unprecedented level of integration. In 1984, *The Charlotte Observer* editorial board stated, "Charlotte-Mecklenburg's proudest achievement of the past 20 years is not the city's impressive new skyline or its strong, growing economy. Its proudest achievement is its fully integrated schools."

The success of the integration program lasted for almost three decades, until William Capacchione, a white parent, sued the school district because he believed his daughter was not admitted into a local magnet school because of her race. Over the course of the trial, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school board forcefully defended its desegregation plan. But in 1999 Federal District Court Judge Robert Potter—who as a private citizen had been active in the anti-busing movement of the nineteen-sixties—ordered the district to stop using race in pupil assignments. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, fearful of seeing three decades of desegregation work wiped away, appealed the decision. However, in 2001 the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals sided with Capacchione and the other parents who joined him on the case, ending the mandatory-busing program.

Under the new "Family Choice Plan," students were largely made to attend the schools in their neighborhood. But most neighborhoods in Charlotte are deeply segregated and racially homogenous communities, as a result of decades of housing segregation, and so schools that were once integrated and high-achieving soon became stratified by race and income. In 2005, as part of a separate, and far-reaching, case originally brought against the state of North Carolina for its failing school system, Judge Howard Manning issued a report on the state of schools in Charlotte. He concluded, "The most appropriate way for the Circuit to describe what is going on

academically at CMS’s bottom ‘8’ high schools is academic genocide for the at-risk, low-income children.”



Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

When Charlotte-Mecklenburg eliminated race as a factor in student assignment, it not only meant less diverse schools; it also created a feedback loop that made the problem worse. Families with the means—most often white families—started to move into whiter neighborhoods, where they knew their kids would go to whiter schools. As a result of the relationship between race and wealth, the social, political, and economic capital became ever more concentrated in a small number of very white neighborhoods.

The power of the 1999 court order and Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools’ subsequent racial stratification is perhaps best evidenced by a conspicuous change in the school system’s vision statements over a twenty-year period. In 1991, the vision statement read, “The Vision is to ensure that the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School System becomes the premier, urban integrated system in the nation in which all students acquire the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to live rich and full lives as productive and enlightened members of society.” Today, it reads, “Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools provides all students the best education available anywhere, preparing every child to lead a rich and productive life.” That the word “integrated” was no longer a part of the district’s self-espoused vision for itself reflects a dwindling sense of political possibility to build a truly desegregated school system.

Some might wonder why a commitment to school desegregation matters. Can’t we just inject more resources into poor schools so that they have the opportunity to compete on an equal playing field? But research has long shown that singularly investing capital into a school in which the vast majority of students live in poverty has limited impact on achievement. The social science on the impact of desegregation is clear. Researchers have consistently found that students in integrated schools—irrespective of ethnicity, race, or social class—are more likely to make academic gains in mathematics, reading, and often science than they are in segregated ones. Students in integrated K-12 schools are more likely to both enroll in and graduate from college. While the most disadvantaged students—most often poor students of color—receive the most

considerable academic benefits from attending diverse schools, research demonstrates that young people in general, regardless of their background, experience profound benefits from attending integrated schools. As the editors of “Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow” make clear, “Students who attend desegregated schools exhibit greater levels of intergroup friendships, demonstrate lower levels of racial fears and stereotypes, and experience less intergenerational perpetuation of racism and stereotypes across multiple institutional settings.”

The racial composition of schools affects the quality of the teachers, too. A 2009 study by Kirabo Jackson in the *Journal of Labor Economics* found that as student populations in Charlotte-Mecklenburg became increasingly black, the most qualified teachers transferred to other schools. In other words, the more a school resegregated, the less qualified the teachers became. Additionally, school segregation was deeply correlated with the likelihood of a student becoming entangled in the criminal-justice system. In Charlotte, the chances of black males coming into contact with the criminal-justice system increased with the resegregation of their high schools.

There is also an economic imperative to move toward integration. School desegregation is associated with higher graduation rates, greater employability, higher earnings, and decreased rates of incarceration. Higher earnings mean more tax revenue. Decreased incarceration means less money spent keeping people in prison. All of which means more money for localities.

## *Black Charlotte's Frustrated – And That's by Design*

From *The Nation*

By Greg Lacour

September 26, 2016



Photo by Jeff Siner / AP

Here's an illuminating pair of stories about race, planning, economics, and destiny in Charlotte.

A boy grew up in his grandmother's house in Lincoln Heights, a black neighborhood just north of downtown. When his grandmother bought the house in 1961, it was a stable community with longtime homeowners and locally owned businesses. Later in the 1960s, two crisscrossing interstates cut Lincoln Heights off from its neighbors. Homeowners moved out; businesses dried up. As a teenager in the '80s, the boy couldn't even get a pizza delivered to the house. "The people in my community were not invisible," Anthony Foxx would say years later. "It's just that at a certain point in our history, they didn't matter."

A girl moved with her family to Belmont, a neighborhood just east of downtown, a half-century ago, when she was 5. She made the majority-black community her home, serving for years on the board of its neighborhood association, even as it devolved into one of the city's most violent and drug-infested areas in the late '80s and early '90s. She's still there, renting a rickety one-story house for \$465 per month, but in the last few years new people and new dollars have been pouring into her once-desolate corner of the city. She's thrilled by the sudden prosperity, though it carries a new threat. She's worried about a steep rent hike when her lease comes up for renewal in May. "I live between two \$300,000 houses now," says Brenda Erwin. "It's kind of pushing people out, 'cause the majority of the people I grew up with don't make that kind of money."



Anthony Foxx and Brenda Erwin lead very different lives from each other today. Foxx, 45, is the US Secretary of Transportation, a native Charlottean who just a few months ago launched a nationwide speaking tour to explain how the highway planning of the past still disrupts the lives of poor people and people of color to this day. Erwin, 55, just hopes her landlord won't price her out of her home. But between them, their pasts encompass much of the social and economic history of modern-day Charlotte, a gleaming Southern city and financial dynamo with no significant history of civic disruption—until last week, when the police shooting of 43-year-old Keith Lamont Scott ignited massive demonstrations and city-center rioting that left another man shot dead and numerous businesses vandalized and looted.

The violence came as a profound shock to a city whose government and business leaders pride themselves on what they call “the Charlotte way”—a legacy of amicable cooperation and shared solutions to civic problems. Charlotte's larger neighbor and rival, Atlanta, was dubbed the “city too busy to hate” in the 1960s, but the label has applied more to Charlotte in the last two decades. It's home to the nation's second-largest financial-services sector, behind only New York City. Its population has nearly doubled since 1990, bringing about its status as the nation's 17th-most populous city. In the last decade, the city has built new museums, won the NASCAR Hall of Fame, and constructed a light-rail line that's transformed a dismal area of warehouses and abandoned textile factories into a hip neighborhood called South End, filled with craft breweries and townhome complexes.

Yet even as the city center has flourished, pockets of the city remain as isolated and bereft as before—and the contrast between the glittering downtown and neglected neighborhoods on the city's west and east sides helped drive protesters' frustration last week. “For the people we serve,” the pastor of an east-side black Baptist church told the Associated Press, “the Queen City is only the Queen City if you get on the train and ride into the glimmering, crystal core.”

A much-discussed 2014 study by Harvard economists Raj Chetty and Nathaniel Hendren ranked Charlotte last among 50 large American cities for economic mobility. The study showed, among other things, that children born into the bottom fifth of household incomes in Charlotte have only a 4.4 percent chance of rising to the top fifth at some point in their lives.

The divide is “a maddening paradox,” says local historian Tom Hanchett, author of *Sorting Out the New South City: Race, Class, and Urban Development in Charlotte, 1875-1975*. “Here, there is indisputably a rising tide as strong as, maybe even stronger than, in any place in America. Nevertheless, there are chunks of the population that are not feeling that lift.”

The reasons for the divide are complex and, among Southern cities, not peculiar to Charlotte. Atlanta, Memphis, and Birmingham, among others, face many of the same issues. But they've taken a particular shape here, and they largely boil down to the inequity and immobility of black

Charlotte springing not from coincidence but design and planning—of our highways, our schools, and, lately, our gentrifying neighborhoods.

Take the once-established black neighborhood called Brooklyn, once the hub of black cultural life in Charlotte, was wiped out of the city center through urban-renewal projects in the '60s and '70s. Those projects included the construction of Interstate 277, which loops around the downtown area and which protesters last week briefly shut down by occupying the lanes. Land acquisition—seizure, really—forced hundreds of residents in Brooklyn and other black neighborhoods to the west side, a part of town that Harvey Gantt, Charlotte's first black mayor in the '80s, recently referred to as “the catchment area for people displaced by urban renewal.”

Another highway project, the Brookshire Freeway—named after the city's mayor for most of the '60s—sliced between two west-side black neighborhoods, McCrorey Heights and Biddleville, home to 149-year-old Johnson C. Smith University, a historic black college. The highways restricted business growth in those neighborhoods as the rest of the city grew, and the west side remains Charlotte's poorest and blackest quarter.



Photo courtesy of Johnson C. Smith University

With the city chopped up along racial lines, the courts then choked off educational opportunity for those on the wrong side of the highway. Charlotte's public-school system was once seen as one of the country's best examples of successful integration through busing, approved in a landmark 1971 US Supreme Court decision that paved the way for busing as a tool for desegregation throughout the United States. But 28 years after that decision, a federal judge ordered the busing plan stopped, ruling that the systemic discrimination that made it necessary no longer existed.

Now segregation is back in force, not mandated by policy but enabled by economics. The

federal-court ruling reinstated neighborhood schools, which has concentrated school resources in affluent and white areas and drained them away from the poor parts of town where black and Latino people live. The “achievement gap” between those groups has risen significantly since 1999, and today, in half of Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools’ 170 campuses, at least 80 percent of the student body belongs to one race.

The recession worsened the impact of this segregation. The city’s real-estate market slumped, as it did throughout the country, but the recovery may create a longer-term problem. Starting around 2012, housing markets exploded again, with more than 25,000 units under construction or planned at the beginning of 2016, driven by the demand of young, affluent professionals flooding into the city.

The demand has, of course, driven up prices, forced low-income renters to relocate, and exposed a desperate lack of affordable housing in Charlotte. From 2000 to 2013, the number of homes that extremely low-income renters (households earning no more than \$19,550 a year for a family of four) could afford in Mecklenburg County shrank from 32 per 100 renters to 15, according to an Urban Institute report in June 2015. The average monthly rent for an apartment in Charlotte in May 2011 was \$847; in August 2016, it was \$1,366, a 57 percent increase. Charlotte’s real-estate market gains between 200 and 300 affordable units per year, according to Pamela Wideman of the city’s Neighborhood and Business Services office, but “There’s a need for 34,000.”

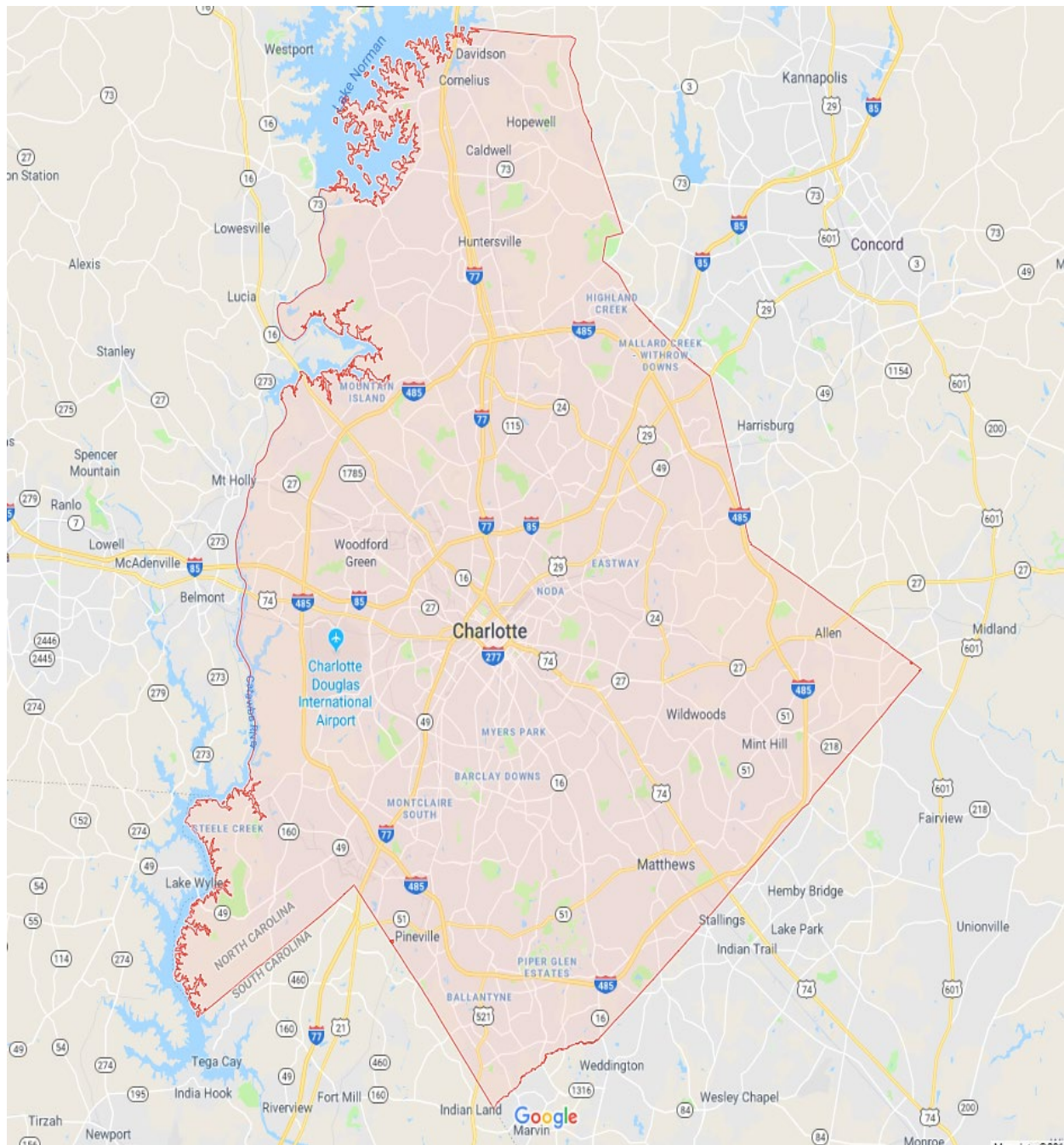
It’s not that civic and business leaders don’t know about these problems. After the Harvard study on economic mobility, the city and county formed a task force to study them and recommend solutions. But its work has been as slow and frustrating as that of any civic task force; it has yet to settle on recommendations, much less induce officials to act. The city has finished the first section of a streetcar line meant, eventually, to link the east and west sides to Uptown, improving mobility for the poor and spurring business growth in their neighborhoods. But the project depends largely on federal transportation funding that might not materialize, and even if it does, the project’s second phase isn’t expected to open until 2019.

While Charlotteans wait, the prospect of more unrest remains, along with the conditions that animate it. “This feeling among many people that the system is out to get them is rising because the reality of this change in our city is rising, too,” says Hanchett, the historian.

Hanchett added that if all you know of the Queen City is the shine of the bank towers in Uptown and the new, mammoth apartment complexes of South End, “it’s really easy to be disconnected.” Last week, a lot of Charlotteans learned the hard way just how disconnected they’d been.

## *Discussion Questions*

1. After reading the articles, how would you define segregation? Are there examples of segregation that you've witnessed that were not mentioned in these articles?
2. Give some examples of racism and discrimination still occurring in Charlotte today. What are some ways to make others more aware of the problems caused or exacerbated by racism?
3. How could we create a more diverse body of students in public schools in the Charlotte region?
4. "How Redlining's Racist Effects Lasted for Decades" details how the federal government's use of redlining ended up becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy for many minorities. What other historical policies related to minorities and segregation have led to self-fulfilling prophecies in today's world?
5. An issue that is often mentioned when discussing segregation in Charlotte is the white flight that occurred in the mid-1900s. Is white flight still a concern in Charlotte today? If so, how should policy makers anticipate it as a possible repercussion to any policies that they strive to implement for integration?
6. An issue that many people worry about for the future of Charlotte is the significant amount of gentrification that is occurring. Do you see gentrification as a major problem that should be addressed and how do you see it playing a role in the future of our city?
7. A major episode in Charlotte's history was the groundbreaking implementation of mandatory busing that occurred in response to integrating the schools. Do you see the mandatory busing policy as having a positive impact for Charlotte? Also, if you were responsible for increasing the integration of Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools, would you use mandatory busing? Why or why not?
8. Do you know someone who was bused because of Charlotte's court order? Who taught during busing? Interview them about their experience.
9. "Segregation Must've Been Invented" makes the claim that segregation was a tool actively used by groups to suppress minorities rather than a passively lasting effect from slavery. Do you agree with this statement? If so, is segregation still being used here in Charlotte and nationally? What are some ways that it is being created?



Mecklenburg County, Charlotte, NC

## II. Education



Photo courtesy of DiverseEducation.com

Introduction .....	55
A. Good School, Rich School; Bad School, Poor School	
B. Charlotte Organizations Use Early Childhood Education to Help Break Poverty Cycle	
C. Bright, Low-Income Kids are Missing out on Advanced Classes. This Bill Would Force a Change.	
D. Church Saved Charlotte’s McClintock Middle School from Closing, Study Finds	
E. High Court Closes Historic Desegregation Case	
F. The Resegregation of Charlotte’s Public Schools	
G. Capacchione vs. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education	
H. Julius Chambers, a Fighter for Civil Rights, Dies at 76	
I. Discussion Questions	

# *INTRODUCTION*

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Julia Carr, Echo Student Intern

As we delve into Charlotte's issues with social mobility, it is imperative that we acknowledge the inequity in the educational opportunities in our public school system. Qualified teachers and well-funded schools are key ingredients for school completion and higher education. Quality education is key for students to climb the ladder to success. The perception is that our schools are unequal. This section explores what youth, educators, legislators and community member are doing to eliminate the disparities.

**“Knowledge is power. Information is liberating. Education is the premise of progress, in every society, in every family.”**

**-Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations**

# *Good School, Rich School; Bad School, Poor School*

From *The Atlantic*

By Alana Semuels

August 25, 2016

Modified for length by Echo Intern Julia Carr



Photo courtesy of Alana Semuels, *The Atlantic*

HARTFORD, Conn.—This is one of the wealthiest states in the union. But thousands of children here attend schools that are among the worst in the country. While students in higher-income towns such as Greenwich and Darien have easy access to guidance counselors, school psychologists, personal laptops, and up-to-date textbooks, those in high-poverty areas like Bridgeport and New Britain don't. Such districts tend to have more students in need of extra help, and yet they have fewer guidance counselors, tutors, and psychologists, lower-paid teachers, more dilapidated facilities and bigger class sizes than wealthier districts, according to an ongoing lawsuit. Greenwich spends \$6,000 more per pupil per year than Bridgeport does, according to the State Department of Education.

The discrepancies occur largely because public school districts in Connecticut, and in much of America, are run by local cities and towns and are funded by local property taxes. High-poverty areas like Bridgeport and New Britain have lower home values and collect less taxes, and so can't raise as much money as a place like Darien or Greenwich, where homes are worth millions of dollars.



“The system is unconstitutional,” the attorney for the plaintiffs Joseph P. Moodhe argued in Hartford Superior Court earlier this month, “because it is inadequately funded and because it is inequitably distributed.”

In every state, though, inequity between wealthier and poorer districts continues to exist. That’s often because education is paid for with the amount of money available in a district, which doesn’t necessarily equal the amount of money required to adequately teach students.

This is mainly because school funding is so local. The federal government chips in about 8 to 9 percent of school budgets nationally, but much of this is through programs such as Head Start and free and reduced lunch programs. States and local governments split the rest, though the method varies depending on the state.

Nationally, high-poverty districts spend 15.6 percent less per student than low-poverty districts do, according to U.S. Department of Education. Lower spending can irreparably damage a



child’s future, especially for kids from poor families. A 20 percent increase in per-pupil spending a year for poor children can lead to an additional year of completed education, 25 percent higher earnings, and a 20-percentage point reduction in the incidence of poverty in adulthood, according to a paper from the National Bureau of Economic Research.

Photo courtesy of Spencer Platt / Getty Images

Violet Jimenez Sims, a Connecticut teacher, saw the differences between rich and poor school districts firsthand. Sims, who was raised in New Britain, one of the poorer areas of the state, taught there until the district shut down its bilingual education programs, at which point she got a job in Manchester, a more affluent suburb. In Manchester, students had individual Chromebook laptops, and Sims had up-to-date equipment, like projectors and digital whiteboards. In New Britain, students didn’t get individual computers, and there weren’t the guidance counselors or teacher’s helpers that there were in Manchester.

“I noticed huge differences, and I ended up leaving because of the impact of those things,” she told me. “Without money, there’s just a domino effect.” Students frequently had substitutes because so many teachers got frustrated and left, they didn’t have as much time to spend on computer projects because they had to share computers, and they were suspended more frequently in the poor district, she said; in the wealthier area, teachers and guidance counselors would have time to work with misbehaving students rather than expelling them right away.

All of this contributes to lower rates of success for poorer students. Connecticut recently implemented a system called NextGen to measure English and math skills, college and career readiness. Bridgeport's average was 59.3 percent and New Britain 59.7 percent; Greenwich, by contrast, scored 89.3 percent and Darien scored 93.1. Graduation rates are lower in the poorer districts, there's more chronic absenteeism.

Many of the problems that have arisen in Connecticut's school system can be traced back to how public education was founded in this country, and how it was structured. It was a system that, at its outset, was very innovative and forward-thinking. But that doesn't mean it is working for students today.

According to Michael Rebell, Professor of Law and Educational Practice at Columbia University, "The origins were very progressive, but what might have been progressive in one era can become inequitable in another,"

\* \* \*

In the early days of the American colonies, the type of education a child received depended on whether the child was a he or a she (boys were much more likely to get educated at all), what color his or her skin was, where he or she lived, how much money his or her family had, and what church he or she belonged to. States like New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and New York depended on religious groups to educate children, while southern states depended on plantation owners, according to Charles Glenn, a professor of educational leadership at Boston University.

It was the Puritans of Massachusetts who first pioneered public schools, and who decided to use property-tax receipts to pay for them. The Massachusetts Act of 1642 required that parents see to it that their children knew how to read and write; when that law was roundly ignored, the colony passed the Massachusetts School Law of 1647, which required every town with 50 households or more hire someone to teach the children to read and write. This public education was made possible by a property-tax law passed the previous year, according to a paper, "The Local Property Tax for Public Schools: Some Historical Perspectives," by Billy D. Walker, a Texas educator and historian. Determined to carry out their vision for common school, the Puritans instituted a property tax on an annual basis—previously, it had only been used to raise money when needed. The tax charged specific people based on "visible" property including their homes as well as their sheep, cows, and pigs. Initially, this system of using property taxes to pay for local schools did not lead to much inequality. That's in part because the colonies were one of the most egalitarian places on the planet—for white people, at least. Public education began to become more common in the mid-19th century. As immigrants poured into the country's cities, advocates puzzled over how to assimilate them. Their answer: public schools. The education reformer Horace Mann, for example, who became the secretary of the newly formed

Massachusetts Board of Education in 1837, believed that public schooling was necessary for the creation of a national identity. He called education “the great equalizer of the conditions of men.”

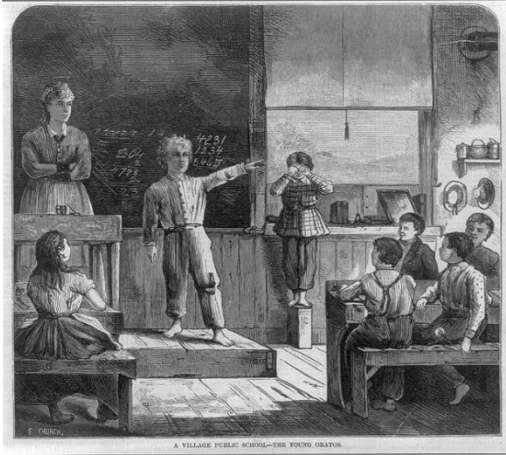


Photo Courtesy of Library of Congress

Though schooling had, until then, been left up to local municipalities, states began to step in. After Mann created the Board of Education in 1837, he lobbied for and won a doubling of state expenditures on education. In 1852, Massachusetts passed the first law requiring parents to send their children to a public school for at least 12 weeks.

The idea of making free education a right was controversial—the “most explosive political issue in the 19th century, except for abolition,” said Rebell. Eventually, though, when reformers won, they pushed to get a right for all children to public schooling into states’ constitutions.

Despite widespread acceptance of mandatory public education by the end of the 19th century, the task of educating students remained a matter for individual states, not the nation as a whole. And states still left much of the funding of schools up to cities and towns, which relied on property tax. In 1890, property taxes accounted for 67.9 percent of public-education revenues in the U.S. This means that as America urbanized and industrialized and experienced more regional inequality, so, too, did the schools. Areas that had poorer families or less valuable land had less money for schools.

In the early part of the 20th century, states tried to step in and provide grants to districts so that school funding was equitable, according to Allan Odden, an expert in school finance who is a professor emeritus at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. But then wealthier districts would spend even more, buoyed by increasing property values, and the state subsidies wouldn’t go as far as they once had to make education equitable.

The disparities became more and more stark in the decades after World War II, when white families moved out of the cities into the suburbs and entered school systems there, and black families were stuck in the cities, where property values plummeted and schools lacked basic resources.

The most aggressive attempt to ameliorate these disparities came in 1973, in a Supreme Court case, *San Antonio Independent School District v. Rodriguez*. It began when a father named

Demetrio Rodriguez, whose sons attended a dilapidated elementary school in a poor area of San Antonio, sued the state of Texas, claiming that the way that schools were funded fundamentally violated the U.S. Constitution's equal-protection clause. Rodriguez wanted the justices to apply the same logic they had applied in *Brown v. Board of Education*—that every student is guaranteed an equal opportunity to education. The justices disagreed. In a 5-4 decision, they ruled that there is no right to equal funding in education under the Constitution.

With *Rodriguez*, the justices essentially left the funding of education a state issue, forgoing a chance for the federal government to step in to adjust things. Since then, school-funding lawsuits have been filed in 45 out of 50 states, according to Rebell.

Though it might seem odd that the Supreme Court has ruled that Americans have a right to live in a better zip code and a right to work at a company no matter their race, but not that every American child has the right to an equal education, there is legal justification for this. The founders didn't include a right to an education in the country's founding documents. Though the federal government is involved in many parts of daily life in America, schooling is, and has always been, the responsibility of the states.



Photo Courtesy of Frances Benjamin Johnston / The Library of Congress

# *Charlotte Organizations Use Early Childhood Education to Help Break Poverty Cycle*

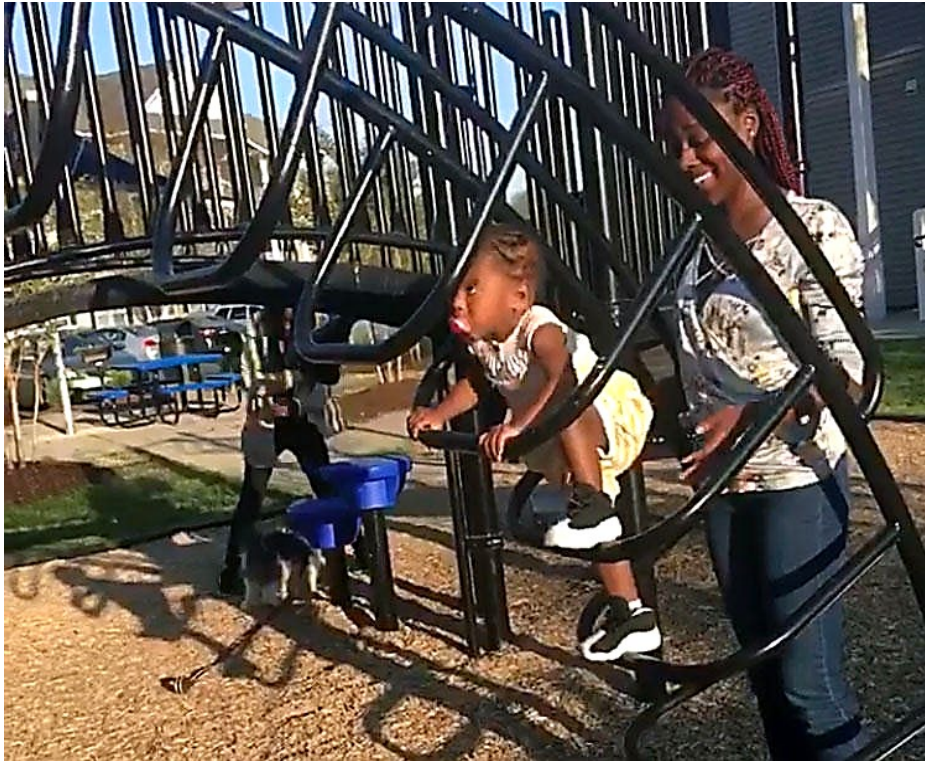
From WFAE 90.7

By Jessica O'Connor

May 1, 2018

A Charlotte study that came out last year identified access to quality pre-kindergarten education as a key factor in making sure that children who are born into poverty have a chance of rising out of it in their lifetimes.

North Carolina has a well-respected pre-kindergarten program that's free for low-income families, and CMS offers its own program. But they don't nearly meet the need, so some local organizations are trying to fill in the gap. They're working to make early childhood education affordable for low-income families in an effort to break the poverty cycle.



*Shadé Joseph with her daughter*  
Photo by Jessa O'Connor / WFAE

Shadé Joseph, 24, has a lot on her plate. She works full-time as a cook at Chipotle and is pursuing her dream of owning a catering company. She's also a young mother of a 2-year-old girl, named Fola Sadé, which means "crowned with honor and wealth" in Yoruba - a common

language used in Nigeria. Joseph's partner, Fola's father, goes to school full time at Johnson C. Smith University and studies criminology.

Joseph said she got lucky when the time came to find child care for Fola, so she could go back to work. Just a few blocks from her apartment, the new Howard Levine Child Development Center was being built.

"Once I saw [the center], I told my daughter 'you're gonna go there, you're gonna go there,' " Joseph said. "It's right up the street, I live like right there." The Howard Levine Child Development Center, which started enrolling students in February, offers classes for infants to children the age of five. The center is run by the YMCA in partnership with the Renaissance West Community Initiative – a housing development that offers a range of services to low-income families that live there, including workforce development programs, educational opportunities and subsidized housing.

Mack McDonald, the Chief Executive Officer of Renaissance West, said a quality early education program is one of the most important components for the community. "When we talk about the cradle to career education, this is what I call the 'tip of the spear,'" McDonald said.

The center's director Nikki Hildebran said their mission is two-fold: to provide safe, high-quality care for children and to ensure school readiness. "[We] make sure that the kids who are leaving us at the end of their pre-K year are school ready," she said.

The teachers use lesson plans from *Creative Curriculum*, a research-based curriculum that incorporates learning and play for preschool-aged children. Research shows that children involved in an early education program are less likely to be involved in a violent crime by the age of 18, and for every dollar invested in early childhood education, there is a 13 percent return on investment.

At the Howard Levine Child Development Center, the goal is to mainly serve residents from the Renaissance West Community. The tuition for the program is \$16,000. Hildebran said she knows that's expensive, so the center offers options to bring that cost down - including scholarships, work incentives for the parents and vouchers.

Fola and her mother Joseph live at Renaissance West, so the 2-year-old qualifies for a scholarship. "Her scholarship pretty much pays almost 75 percent of the portion," Joseph said. "My portion is less than \$300."

Joseph clarified that she pays \$300 a month. She said that even at her daughter's early age, Fola is developing advanced skills that Joseph believes are the direct impact of the center. But the Howard Levine Child Development Center is not the only organization offering a quality education for low-income children in Charlotte.



A teacher at the Bethlehem Center made a treadmill out of boxes for his students to run on.  
Photo by Jessa O'Connor / WFAE

The Bethlehem Center, which runs educational programs from birth to high school graduation, offers the Head Start program – which began in the 1960s and is federally-funded. They have nine locations around Charlotte and serve 625 students, ages six weeks to 5 years old. The program is free of charge and only accepts students from low-income households.

Jared Keaton is Bethlehem's chief operating officer. He said the teachers at the Bethlehem Center also use *Creative Curriculum*, but mix it with what he calls "student choice."

"It looks like what I describe as organized chaos because of our student choice," Keaton said, "But our educators are very skilled in being able to extend the choices that the children make in center time."

In a Bethlehem classroom, a teacher created a treadmill for his students out of a cardboard box. Two young boys get on the treadmill and, at their teacher's command, start to walk, jog, then run in place. They're learning to follow simple commands, which Keaton said is an important skill that needs to be taught early on.

“At the preschool age we are developing the skills students will need to be successful in Kindergarten and beyond,” Keaton said. “In early childhood, the first 2,000 days – as we refer to it – are very important.”

Dr. Colleen Whittingham, a professor of reading and elementary studies at UNC Charlotte, agreed and explained why. “The brain is growing, and the brain is at a very early age influenced by external factors in ways that it's not as much as you grow older,” Whittingham said.

Meaning that positive experiences, like a quality early education or the influence of a good teacher, can shape the brain in a way that starts the child down a path of success. But adverse experiences, like instability at home, exposure to violence or poverty, can set the stage for a downward trajectory.

That’s why early development is key in upward mobility, but Whittingham said it’s not an isolated factor. She said to serve the whole child, a good early education program also has to serve the parent. She recommended resources like an on-site food pantry or workforce development programs for parents.

Both the Howard Levine Child Development Center and the Bethlehem Center take this multi-generational approach, focusing on the parent as well as the child, and partner with other Charlotte organizations to do so.



## *Bright, Low-income Kids are Missing Out on Advanced Classes. This Bill Would Force a Change.*

From *The Charlotte Observer*

By T. Keung Hui

June 6, 2018



Photo Courtesy of Diedra Laird, The Charlotte Observer

### RALEIGH

A year after a *News & Observer* and *Charlotte Observer* series showed that thousands of bright, low-income students were being excluded from advanced classes, state lawmakers took steps Wednesday to address the issue.

The state House voted 114-0 to back a bill that requires North Carolina public schools to place in advanced math classes any students who scored a Level 5 — the highest level on state end-of-grade or end-of-course math exams. Lawmakers pointed to the *N&O and Observer's* "Counted Out" series for why the legislation is needed.

"An investigation by *The News & Observer* and *The Charlotte Observer* that spanned all of North Carolina's districts, with testimony by some of this state and this nation's most brilliant educational minds, revealed the truth," Rep. Ed Hanes, a Forsyth County Democrat, said before the vote. "That truth is that thousands of low-income children who get superior marks on end-of-

grade tests are not getting an equal shot at advanced math classes designed to challenge these students. They are being intentionally left out."

*House Bill 986* goes to the Senate, where Hanes said he's hopeful they'll take action on the bill this year.

Hanes and Rep. Chris Malone, a Wake Forest Republican, had originally sponsored a bill that would have required school districts to identify as academically gifted any students who scored Level 5 on state exams. They pared the bill down and had it inserted in a separate bill about requiring school districts to report how they're teaching cursive handwriting and multiplication tables.

"Counted Out" showed that as bright children from low-income families start fourth grade, they are much more likely to be excluded from the more rigorous classes than their peers from families with higher incomes.

The unequal treatment during the six years ending in 2015 resulted in 9,000 low-income children in North Carolina being kept out of classes that could have opened a new academic world to them.

These high-potential, low-income students are less likely to take high school math in middle school, an important step toward the type of transcript that will open college doors. Only one of every two low-income third-graders who scored above grade level in 2010 took high school math in middle school, compared with three of four more-affluent students with the same scores.

"They love being challenged," says a teacher pushing for opportunities for gifted students. Linda Robinson, who teaches gifted children at Fox Road Elementary in Raleigh, says her students are bright, hard workers who can be overlooked because of barriers involving poverty and language.

Hanes blamed the problem on educational specialists who he said want to keep low-income students out of advanced courses. He said the bill attacks the "soft bigotry of low expectations."

Under the bill, students who score a Level 5 on state math tests would be enrolled the following school year in the advanced course for their next math class. For seventh-grade students who scored a Level 5, they'd be placed in a high school-level math course for eighth grade.

The bill says no student would be excluded from taking the advanced math course unless the child's parent or guardian provides written consent.

"It was our moral imperative to give these children an opportunity to break out of their generational cycle of poverty," Hanes said at a news conference.

"By passing this legislation and giving these low-income students the opportunity to post-secondary studies, we are providing them the means to possess the intellectual capital, the social capital, and the cultural capital necessary to change their impoverished conditions."

Malone, a former Wake County school board member, pointed to how Wake saw a 44 percent increase in Algebra I placement in 2011 after it removed subjective standards for placing middle school students in the course. He noted that student achievement also went up on the tests, which he said shows "those students can thrive in more rigorous classrooms."

"It is an economic imperative to ensure that all students reach their highest potential," Malone said.

The bill doesn't include any funding, something Hanes said he and Malone would work to provide in future years. But Hanes said they're not asking schools for now to create new spaces but to make sure that the most qualified students are getting them.

"We're asking teachers ... and specialists and administrators to simply do the right thing by poor students and give these students an opportunity at advanced math classes," Hanes said.

## *Church Saved Charlotte's McClintock Middle School from Closing, Study Finds*

From *The Charlotte Observer*

By Ann Doss Helms

September 29, 2015



McClintock Middle School, via FWA Group's website <http://www.fwagroup.com>

Without the Christ Lutheran Church volunteers who helped turn McClintock Middle School into a hub of robotics and engineering activity, the school might be nothing but a vacant lot today.

That's one finding from a UNC Charlotte Urban Institute study of an eight-year partnership between the church and McClintock, which now boasts a technology magnet program and a new building with state-of-the-art labs.

McClintock Partners in Education, known as McPIE, has long stood out as the gold standard for community engagement with one of Charlotte-Mecklenburg's high-poverty schools. Christ Lutheran has hosted family nights that bring hordes of parents and students after school hours and has helped the faculty develop the kind of extras that often elude schools without affluent families.

On a gut level, it seems obvious that volunteers are good for a school. But the study, which CMS and the church presented at a Tuesday news conference, represents a rare and detailed attempt to quantify the value of that work.

The report shows that students who took part in camps and activities sponsored by McPIE missed less school than counterparts at McClintock and in all CMS middle schools. Those who took part in two or three math- and science-related activities outperformed classmates on state math and science exams.

Amy Daniels, a Christ Lutheran staffer who helped create McPIE in 2007, said the study finally matched tangible results to the labor of love. “That’s huge,” she said.

“How do you actually know that relationships matter?” asked Assistant Superintendent LaTarzja Henry. “This absolutely confirms that they do.”

But it was the human side that grabbed attention at the news conference. Kiah Silver, a 16-year-old East Mecklenburg High student who took part in the program when she was at McClintock, came prepared with a speech. But she broke into tears when she thought about how hard middle school had been and what a difference the volunteers made.

“They go beyond helping the student. They help your family,” she said, gulping back tears. “It helps you believe that you can do something, that people really care about you.”

Kiah now volunteers at McPIE family nights. “I came back because I want to be a part of this movement,” she said.

The study also shows that even a volunteer program with hundreds of volunteers, a big vision and staying power isn’t a cure-all for the challenges of urban education. Despite efforts to boost achievement and attract middle-class families in the area to the school, poverty remains high (more than 80 percent) and academic performance low (McClintock earned a D on state ratings this year, up from an F the year before).

Attendance gains didn’t last when the students moved up to high school, with absenteeism soaring in ninth grade for former McPIE participants.

But McClintock, on Rama Road in southeast Charlotte, remains alive and drew more than 200 students this year to a magnet program specializing in science, technology, engineering, arts and math. It has more than 900 students this year, up from 630 a few years ago.

Without McPIE, that probably wouldn’t be the case, says the report from Diane Gavarkavich, a data and research specialist for the school’s Institute for Social Capital.

“After the 2010-2011 school year, three low-performing, high-poverty CMS middle schools were closed. Initially, McClintock Middle was also on this list,” the report says. “McPIE was instrumental in stopping McClintock from being shut down. Thanks to a white paper from a McPIE volunteer coupled with the energy McPIE was bringing to the school, McClintock stayed open and has since served over 2,000 students who would have been dispersed elsewhere.”

Superintendent Ann Clark said she hopes the report will inspire others to follow Christ Lutheran’s lead. “Thank you to Christ Lutheran for being a trailblazer,” Clark said.



Christ Lutheran Church, Photo Courtesy of MapQuest

After the news conference, though, Henry and Daniels acknowledged it’s far from easy to pull off a partnership of this scope. The church, with more than 3,000 members, has four staff people working with McPIE – and the report recommends adding to that.

Christ Lutheran puts about \$350,000 a year into McPIE, paying for weekly family-night meals, summer camps and school clubs, Daniels said. Some of that comes from donations and the church budget, while some comes from grants. The report suggests finding new sources of money because some grants will end.

Henry said other churches have checked out McPIE and been intimidated. “It is expensive,” she said. “I heard that loud and clear from faith partners: This is wonderful, but I can’t afford it.”

But Henry said groups that are willing to work patiently and listen to a school community, rather than coming in with a predetermined plan, can do meaningful work on a smaller scale.

And Daniels noted that the church had no budget when the founders plunged in after then-Superintendent Peter Gorman rallied them to action at a 2007 faith summit.

“The biggest lesson we learned: Just do it,” Daniels said. “We weren’t perfect in the beginning. This is a long-term commitment.”

## *High Court Closes Historic Desegregation Case*

From *Education Week*

By Mark Walsh

April 24, 2004

A 37-year-old lawsuit that became one of the landmarks of the desegregation era reached a quiet conclusion last week with a one-sentence order from the U.S. Supreme Court.

The high court declined without comment on April 15 any further review of desegregation efforts in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg County, N.C., school system. In a 1971 ruling, the Supreme Court used the Charlotte case to uphold broad remedial powers for federal judges to shape desegregation remedies, including for the first time court-mandated busing.

The justices last week refused to hear two separate appeals stemming from the latest phase of lower-court rulings in the case. One was from black families who argued that courts were premature in declaring the 109,000-student system "unitary," or legally desegregated, because of recent trends resulting in resegregation.

The other was from a group of white parents who sued the school system in 1997 seeking an end to the use of racial quotas to assign students to magnet schools. That suit was consolidated with the district's long-running desegregation case, and when a federal district judge in Charlotte declared the school system unitary, he awarded \$1.5 million in attorneys' fees to the lawyers for the white parents.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the 4th Circuit, in Richmond, upheld the finding of unitary status last year, but reversed the award of lawyers' fees. The white parents appealed that part of the decision to the Supreme Court.

The court's refusal to hear the appeals in *Cappachione v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education* (Case No. 01-1094) and *Belk v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education* (Case No. 01-1122) was a victory for the district.

"This decision, today, represents the final chapter in one of the nation's longest-running and most historic school desegregation cases," Arthur Griffin, the chairman of the school board, said at a news conference. "As an old soldier and one who has been engaged in this battle for a very long time, let me tell you that our job is far from over in terms of providing equity and excellence in education for all of our children."

The desegregation program in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg district, which still includes mandatory busing, has enjoyed an unusually high level of community support in recent years. But district parents are perhaps eager for the desegregation era to come to a close. The district

has for at least two years been fine-tuning its Family Choice Plan, which would allow parents to choose neighborhood schools and other options once the court supervision ended. Early this year, in anticipation of the plan going into effect in fall 2002 (which it now will), more than 96 percent of district students completed applications.

### **Restoring Control**

Few legal experts expected the Supreme Court to get involved in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg case. In several desegregation cases during the 1990s, the court's conservative majority signaled its impatience with continuing court supervision of school systems.

In its 1995 decision in *Missouri v. Jenkins*, the court's most recent desegregation opinion, the majority frequently mentioned the need to "restore state and local authorities to the control of a school system that is operating in compliance with the Constitution."

When the lawsuit was filed against Charlotte-Mecklenburg in 1965, foot-dragging was the typical response by Southern districts to such suits. The federal district court in Charlotte and the 4th Circuit court ruled that the district had no affirmative duty to desegregate. But the Supreme Court gave recalcitrant school systems a kick in the pants in a 1968 decision, saying they must develop plans that promise "realistically to work now." The next year a federal judge in Charlotte ordered a sweeping remedy that included busing for desegregation purposes.

In its 1971 ruling in *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education*, the Supreme Court unanimously upheld the desegregation plan ordered by the district court. Chief Justice Warren E. Burger wrote the opinion, and while it is remembered for ushering in the controversial idea of busing, the discussion of that issue was relatively short.

Bus transportation was a "normal and accepted tool of educational policy," the chief justice wrote. But "an objection to transportation of students may have validity when the time or distance of travel is so great as to either risk the health of the children or significantly impinge on the educational process."

Although busing and other desegregation remedies met some resistance in Charlotte, the plan ultimately gained far more acceptance than in other cities in the 1970s, particularly Northern cities facing court-mandated busing such as Boston.

Over time, Charlotte began relying more on magnet schools to encourage voluntary desegregation. But in 1997, the district's use of race to determine admissions to those schools led to a lawsuit by a white parent, William Capacchione. While that suit sought to end the use of race in magnet school admissions, other white parents intervened to seek a declaration that the system had met its obligations to desegregate.

In its 7-4 ruling last year upholding the finding of unitary status for the district, the full 4th Circuit court said, "the 'end purpose' of federal intervention to remedy segregation has been



served" and it was time "to show confidence in those who have achieved this success and to restore to state and local authorities the control of their school system."

In their appeal to the Supreme Court, lawyers for the black parents opposing the end of the case argued that the Charlotte-Mecklenburg district had fostered resegregation by building 25 of 27 new schools from 1980 to 1997 in white residential areas "while allowing existing schools in black areas to deteriorate."

The appeal, filed with the aid of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund in New York City, argued that the lower-court rulings declaring Charlotte-Mecklenburg unitary "promise the nation an end to school desegregation decrees even where a school district has taken actions that resegregate its schools ... and where tangible vestiges of segregation exist."

# *The Resegregation of Charlotte's Public Schools*

From *Longreads*  
By Aaron Gilbreath  
April 3, 2018



*AP Photo/Wilfredo Lee*

In the late-20th century, Charlotte, North Carolina's public schools became a shining example of successful racial integration. Many affluent white residents even embraced the efforts by sending their white children to predominantly black schools like West Charlotte High, showing their commitment to making integration work and distinguishing themselves from violently resistant cities like Memphis and Birmingham. For *Newsweek*, Alexander Nazaryan looks at [the history of Charlotte's school integration and bussing programs](#), and how far the city and America have degenerated since those promising years.

By the time Foxx became mayor, the *Capacchione v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools* decision had largely resegregated schools in Charlotte. "Neighborhoods became more segregated following the declaration of unitary status," says Amy Hawn Nelson, a University of Pennsylvania education researcher who has closely studied Charlotte's demographics (a school district has reached "unitary status" when it is no longer deemed segregated). The result, Nelson says, was that real estate brokers could lure buyers by promising that their children would be

guaranteed a spot in some well-regarded suburban school, since the fear of those children being bussed elsewhere was pretty much gone. And what typically burnishes a school's reputation? Racial composition, not academic achievement. "Even when you look at school quality metrics, Nelson told me, "white families are more likely to pick a white school rather than a high performing school."

There have been efforts by school Charlotte-Mecklenburg superintendents—who are independent of the mayor—to skirt the ruling by creating more magnet schools and implementing "student reassignment" plans that modestly push for reintegration. Only the countervailing push is stronger. The internet allows for subatomic analysis of each school's demographics and academics. If they can get a child into Providence, one of the best high schools in Charlotte, they will. Who wouldn't? And thanks to Capacchione, they can do so without resorting to a federal lawsuit.

Most of these people are liberals: Mecklenburg County voted for Obama twice, while Hillary Clinton nearly doubled Donald Trump's vote total in 2016. Yet it is one thing to vote in a school gymnasium for a politician you have never seen, quite another to watch your own child ascend the steps of a yellow bus. It used to be that voting and public education were seen as part of the same set of behaviors collectively called civic participation. No longer so, not when a scholarship to Stanford hangs in the balance. As the education writer Nikole Hannah-Jones has put it: "We began moving away from the 'public' in public education a long time ago. In fact, treating public schools like a business these days is largely a matter of fact in many places." Once citizens, we are now customers.

**Capacchione v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Bd. of Educ., 9 F. Supp. 2d 572  
(W.D.N.C. 1998)**

**U.S. District Court for the Western District of North Carolina - 9 F. Supp. 2d  
572 (W.D.N.C. 1998)**

**April 20, 1998**

**9 F. Supp. 2d 572 (1998)**

**William CAPACCHIONE, Individually and on Behalf of Cristina Capacchione, a Minor, Plaintiff,**

**v.**

**CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBURG BOARD OF EDUCATION, et al., Defendants.**

**James E. SWANN, et al., Plaintiffs,**

**v.**

**THE CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBURG BOARD OF EDUCATION, et al., Defendants.**

Nos. 3:97CV482-P. Civ.A.No. 1974.

**United States District Court, W.D. North Carolina, Charlotte Division.**

April 20, 1998.

**\*573 \*574** John O. Pollard, Kevin V. Parsons, McGuire, Woods, Battle & Boothe, L.L.P., Charlotte, NC, William S. Helfand, Stephen A. Katsurinis, Magenheim, Bateman, Robinson, Wrotenbery & Helfand, P.L.L.C., Houston, TX, Lee Meyers, Meyers & Hulse, Charlotte, NC, for William Capacchione.

Anita S. Hodgkiss, James E. Ferguson, Luke Largess, Ferguson, Stein, Wallas, Gresham & Sumter, P.A., Charlotte, NC, Adam Stein, Ferguson Stein Wallas Adkins, Gresham & Sumter, Chapel Hill, NC, Elaine Jones, Norman J. Chachkin, Gloria J. Browne, NAACP Legal Defense & Educational Fund, Inc., New York City, NY, for Swann.

James G. Middlebrooks, Irving M. Brenner, Smith, Helms, Mulliss & Moore, LLP, Charlotte, NC, Allen R. Snyder, Kevin J. Lanigan, Maree Sneed, Hogan & Hartson, L.L.P., Washington, DC, Leslie J. Winner, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education, Charlotte, NC, for Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools.

James G. Middlebrooks, Irving M. Brenner, Smith, Helms, Mulliss & Moore, LLP, Charlotte, NC, Allen R. Snyder, Kevin J. Lanigan, Maree Sneed, John W. Borkowski, Hogan & Hartson, L.L.P., Washington, DC, Leslie J. Winner, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education, Charlotte, NC, for The Board of Education of Charlotte-Mecklenburg.

James G. Middlebrooks, Irving M. Brenner, Smith, Helms, Mulliss & Moore, LLP, Charlotte, NC, Allen R. Snyder, Kevin J. Lanigan, Maree Sneed, Hogan & Hartson, L.L.P., Washington, DC, for Susan Burgess, Chair of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School Board, Eric Smith.

A. Lee Parks, Kirwan, Parks, Chesin & Miller, P.C., Atlanta, GA, Thomas J. Ashcraft, Charlotte, NC, for Michael P. Grant, Richard Easterling, Lawrence Gauvreau, Karen Bentley, Charles Thompson, Scott C. Willard.

**MEMORANDUM OF DECISION AND ORDER**

ROBERT D. POTTER, Senior District Judge.

THIS MATTER is before the Court on the Motion of John O. Pollard, Kevin V. Parsons, and Blakeney & Alexander, now practicing as McGuire Woods, Battle & Boothe, L.L.P. (hereinafter "McGuire Woods") for Leave to Withdraw as Counsel for the Plaintiffs ("Motion to Withdraw") [document no. 19, filed on 19 February 1998] and the Defendants' Statement of Position on Motion for Leave to Withdraw and Alternative Motion to Disqualify ("Motion to Disqualify") [document no. 29, filed on 23 March 1998]. For the reasons enunciated *infra*, the Court will deny the Motion to Withdraw and the Motion to Disqualify.

**I. FACTUAL BACKGROUND AND PROCEDURAL HISTORY**

Capacchione retained Pollard and Parsons as local counsel in this litigation on or about 22 August 1997 when Pollard and Parsons were associated with the Charlotte law firm of Blakeney & Alexander.

Capacchione is also represented by William S. Helfand, Esq., Magenheim, Bateman, Robinson, Wrotenbery & Helfand, P.L.L.C., of Houston, Texas and Lee Meyers, Esq., Meyers and Hulse, of Charlotte, North Carolina. On or about 1 January 1998, the law firm of McGuire Woods, a law firm based out of Richmond, Virginia, merged with Blakeney & Alexander.

In the Fall of 1996, and prior to Blakeney & Alexander and McGuire Woods initiating merger discussions, James W. Dyke, Jr., a partner with McGuire Woods, contacted Dr. Eric Smith, Superintendent of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School District, and engaged in discussions concerning the same subject. \*575 During the course of those conversations, Dr. Smith allegedly provided information to Mr. Dyke pertinent to the subject of this litigation. While Dyke has not shared the information with the Blakeney & Alexander lawyers, the details of Dyke's discussions have been shared with counsel for the Defendants and the Defendants have advised that they regard the continued representation of Capacchione by Pollard and Parsons, now a partner and associate, respectively, in McGuire Woods, as a conflict.

Accordingly, citing Rule 5.11 of the Rules of Professional Conduct of the North Carolina State Bar (now Rule 1.10 of the Revised Rules of Professional Conduct of the North Carolina State Bar ("Revised Rules")), and with very little discussion, Pollard and Parsons, and Blakeney & Alexander, now practicing as McGuire Woods, believe imputed disqualification may operate to prevent them from representing Capacchione in these matters and, accordingly, moved the Court for leave to withdraw as counsel. For their part, Defendants Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education ("CMBOE"), Arthur Griffin, Jr., and Dr. Eric Smith (collectively, the "Defendants") support the Motion to Withdraw, and, alternatively, move the Court to disqualify McGuire Woods. Defendants cite to Rules 1.6, 1.7, and 1.10 of the Revised Rules and to the transcript of the testimony of Mr. William Broaddus, partner and member of McGuire Woods's conflict committee, and, without discussion, conclude that McGuire Woods should be allowed to withdraw or, alternatively, disqualified.

The Court first took up the Motion to Withdraw at a hearing on another matter held on 5 March 1998 at which all the attorneys for the parties were present.<sup>[1]</sup>

Mr. Helfand, on 4 March 1998, filed a Statement of Position on the Motion to Withdraw in which he requested that the Court closely scrutinize the specific facts and circumstances underlying the Motion in which he submitted that no lawyer of the firm of McGuire Woods provided any substantive legal services to CMBOE which would require withdrawal of counsel based upon representation of Capacchione in this case under the Rules of Professional Conduct of the North Carolina State Bar.

On 23 March 1998, the Defendants filed their Motion to Disqualify.

The Court held a hearing on the Motions on 27 March 1998 in which all parties were present, and Dr. Smith and attorneys Dyke, Pollard and Parsons testified under oath.<sup>[2]</sup>

### ***FINDINGS OF FACT***

After viewing the witnesses and hearing the evidence presented at the 5 March Hearing and the 27 March Hearing and considering the briefings of the parties, the Court makes the following findings of fact:

1. Dr. Smith contacted Dyke in the Fall of 1996 for the purposes of having Dyke present a briefing on the updates in the law of school desegregation and unitary school systems since the Supreme Court's decision in *Swann* in 1971. The briefing was to be educational in nature, and Dyke was not to give legal advice concerning whether the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school system was unitary or what actions the CMBOE should take regarding school desegregation. (Tr. p. 37, lines 8-25, p. 38, line 25; p. 39, lines 1-24; p. 15, lines 3-9; p. 16, lines 24-25; p. 17, lines 1-25; p. 18, lines 1-24.)
2. Dyke was to present a briefing to CMBOE in January of 1997 in response to Dr. Smith's and the CMBOE's request. (Tr. p. 23, lines 20-25; p. 24, lines 1-5.)
3. When he had his conversation with Dr. Smith, Dyke was not aware of the *Capacchione* matter because it had \*576 not yet been filed. Dyke was aware of the existence of *Swann* as he remembered it from law

school, and he was aware that the Court had not declared the school system unitary. (Tr. p. 23, lines 20-25; p. 24, lines 1-7.)

4. The *Capacchione* lawsuit had not been filed when Dyke addressed the CMBOE. (Tr. p. 24, lines 1-5.)

5. The *Swann* suit had been remanded from the active court calendar by Judge James B. McMillan on July 11, 1975 (67 F.R.D. 648).

6. The *Swann* case was not reopened until this Court granted the Swann Plaintiffs' Motion to Reopen on 5 March 1997. (Tr. 5 March 1998 Hearing, p. 29, lines 6-14.)

7. The discussions between Dr. Smith and Dyke addressed the general state of the law with respect to desegregation and unitary school systems. Dr. Smith and Dyke did not discuss the specific facts related to the situation in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school district. Dr. Smith made it clear that McGuire Woods was to speak generally about the issue of desegregation and unitary status, and that McGuire Woods would not attempt in any way to relate or apply the current status of the law to the facts in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school system. (Tr. p. 15, lines 3-9.)<sup>[3]</sup>

8. Dr. Smith imparted information to Dyke about the school system in general and about the CMBOE. (Tr. p. 9, lines 7-22). That information helped Dyke to give a better presentation to the CMBOE. (Tr. p. 10, lines 21-24.)

9. Dr. Smith did not discuss with Dyke matters related to the *Capacchione* matter because that matter was not in existence at that time. (Tr. p. 12, lines 3-5.)

10. Through the briefing, Dyke's intention was to present to the CMBOE the current state of the law with respect to desegregation and the factors considered and the determination whether a school system is unitary. (Tr. p. 17, lines 4-6.)

11. McGuire Woods represented Dr. Smith, in his personal capacity, during contract negotiations on two prior occasions: one in Virginia, and one in Charlotte. (Tr. p. 36, lines 14-19.)

12. McGuire Woods represented Dr. Smith in his official capacity on one occasion when Dr. Smith was working in Virginia. The representation was regarding the dismissal hearing of a school employee. (Tr. p. 36, lines 14-25; p. 37, line 1.)

13. Dr. Smith sought Dyke because in August of 1996 Dr. Smith had started as superintendent at the CMBOE and was heavily involved in student reassignment at the time and he felt that it would be useful to get some briefing as to the kind of history on a general level that has evolved in the federal courts since *Swann* and try to do that in a way that had information brought to the Board from outside sources from Charlotte. This was general information for the Board retreat. At that time he had not had discussions with the Board members about the question of whether the school system had achieved unitary status. (Tr. p. 37, lines 12-25; p. 38, lines 1-4.)

14. Dr. Smith picked Dyke because he wanted a firm that was not immersed in local history, and could therefore give a broader national perspective "and not have history here locally." Dr. Smith knew Dyke from his time as Secretary of Education in Virginia and he felt that Dyke could give a national perspective without having the local history. (Tr. p. 38, lines 5-10.)

15. Dr. Smith testified that he gave Dyke information that he considered to be confidential. The "confidential" information "revolved around trying the \*577 [sic] set the context for the retreat so that

Dyke and his firm could do an effective job in describing the changes in the law over the years. So it pertained to a variety of issues related to the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School System and the Board and its administration." (Tr. p. 39, lines 10-20.)

16. Dr. Smith did not give Dyke his assessment of where he, the Board as a whole, or the individual board members were on the question of unitary status. "Again it was not that specific." (Tr. p. 39, lines 21-24.)

17. Dr. Smith did not tell Dyke facts that he considered were important to determination of unitary status. His conversations with Dyke were of a more general nature. (Tr. p. 39, line 25; p. 40, lines 1-3.)

18. Dr. Smith asked Dyke to be part of the retreat because he was an attorney. The sum total of Dr. Smith's request was to receive an update on the developments in the law and the current status of the law in the nation regarding the issue of desegregation in the schools and unitary school systems. (Tr. p. 40, lines 21-25; p. 41, lines 6-11.)

19. It was Dr. Smith's judgment, not CMBOE's, as to which issues Dyke should address. (Tr. p. 43, lines 1-15.)

20. Dr. Smith did not give Dyke any information that was not a matter of public record. Moreover, any member of the public could readily obtain such information by simply surveying the open records of the School District (Tr. p. 42, lines 2-8.)

21. Dyke, as a member of the law firm of McGuire Woods, presented a briefing to the CMBOE in January of 1997. (Tr. p. 7, lines 8-9.)

22. The briefing did not include anything specific about the *Capacchione* case (which was not in existence at the time) or the *Swann* case. The briefing was educational in nature, and addressed, in general, unitary school systems and school desegregation and the changes in the federal law since the *Swann* decision in 1971. (Tr. p. 7, lines 13-21; p. 11, lines 16-25; p. 12, lines 1-5.)

23. The presentation was made at a conference room at the Charlotte-Douglas Airport and there were people other than the CMBOE present. In fact, there were members of the media as well as other members of the CMBOE staff. (Tr. p. 17, lines 7-11.)

24. Dyke or one of his associates at the presentation specifically advised the members of the CMBOE that McGuire Woods could not, and would not, offer legal advice on the status of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School District with respect to the issues that were being spoken of that day. Dyke and his associates made it clear that they were speaking generally to the state of the law nationally and were not in any way trying to relate that law to the facts in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg County school system, and the purpose of the briefing was merely to educate the School Board on the state of the law with respect to this particular subject. (Tr. p. 17, lines 21-25, p. 18, lines 1-12.)

25. Dyke did not give the CMBOE legal advice as to how the update in the law might apply to the CMBOE and the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school system. (Tr. p. 18, lines 19-24.)

26. Neither Dyke nor McGuire Woods have ever represented CMBOE in any matter at all. (Tr. p. 7, lines 22-25.)

27. Regarding his conversations with Dr. Smith, Dyke has not discussed the content of those conversations with either Pollard or Parsons. (Tr. p. 8, lines 2-5.)

28. Neither Pollard nor Parsons have learned from Dyke or anyone else the content of the conversations between Dr. Smith and Dyke. (Tr. p. 19, lines 1-5.)

\*578 29. The *Swann* Plaintiffs moved that the *Swann* case be reopened, and the Court granted the *Swann* Plaintiffs' Motion to Intervene in *Capacchione* and stated that the Court would entertain a motion by *Capacchione* to intervene in the *Swann* case. (Tr. 3/5 Hearing, p. 29, lines 6-15.)

30. Pollard has never been privy to any information that may have been discussed between Dyke and Dr. Smith. (Tr. p. 29, lines 6-17.)

31. Pollard feels he can adequately represent Mr. *Capacchione* without being privy to the information that may have been discussed between Dr. Smith and Dyke. (Tr. p. 29, lines 18-25.)

32. As in Pollard's case, Parsons has not been privy to any information that may have been discussed between Dyke and Dr. Smith in this case or the *Swann* case. (Tr. p. 32, lines 4-9.)

33. Parsons feels he can adequately represent Mr. *Capacchione* without being privy to the information that may have been discussed between Dr. Smith and Dyke. (Tr. p. 32, lines 10-16.)

## II. ANALYSIS

In the Motion to Disqualify, the Defendants moved to disqualify McGuire Woods for the same reasons Pollard and Parsons moved to withdraw. In their Motion to Withdraw, counsel contend that they are ethically obligated to withdraw from this matter due to the existence of a conflict in violation of Rules 1.6(a), 1.7(c), and 1.10(a) of the Revised Rules.

Specifically, counsel maintain that information obtained by Dyke, a member of McGuire Woods, obtained in private conversations with Dr. Smith, the Superintendent of the CMBOE, is confidential information as defined by Rule 1.6(a).<sup>[4]</sup> Next, they aver that Dyke would have a conflict of interest in representing *Capacchione* in this matter, as defined by Rule 1.7(c),<sup>[5]</sup> because of the information Dr. Smith provided to Dyke. Finally, the argument goes, because Dyke would be prohibited from representing *Capacchione*, Rule 1.10<sup>[6]</sup> prohibits Pollard and Parsons from representing *Capacchione* because the attorneys are currently associated in the same law firm.

The Court will first address the Motion to Disqualify.

### A. MOTION TO DISQUALIFY

A motion to disqualify an attorney is addressed to the discretion of the trial court. *Plant Genetic Systems, N.V. v. Ciba Seeds*, 933 F. Supp. 514, 517 (M.D.N.C.1996) (citations omitted). In ruling on a motion to disqualify, a trial court applies a two-part test. The moving party must establish that: (1) an attorney-client relationship existed with the alleged former client; and (2) the former representation is substantially related to the current controversy. *Id.*, see also *Rogers v. Pittston Co.*, 800 F. Supp. 350, 353-54 (W.D.Va.1992).

\*579 A court must apply this two-part test in the context that disqualification is a drastic remedy. *Shaffer v. Farm Fresh, Inc.*, 966 F.2d 142, 146 (4th Cir. 1992).<sup>[7]</sup> Thus, the moving party has a very high standard of proof in moving to disqualify an opposing party's counsel. *Id.* It follows that a court should not disqualify a party's chosen counsel on imagined scenarios of conflict. *Aetna Casualty & Surety Co. v. United States*, 570 F.2d 1197, 1200 (4th Cir.1978).

It is true that in a close case the trial court should not engage in "hair-splitting" niceties and resolve doubts in favor of disqualification. Nevertheless, this Court is mindful of the Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit's clear statement that courts should not mechanically apply ethical canons; rather, they should decide disqualification issues on a case-by-case basis:



The drastic nature of disqualification requires that courts avoid overly-mechanical adherence to disciplinary canons at the expense of litigants' rights freely to choose their counsel; and that they always remain mindful of the opposing possibility of misuse of disqualification motions for strategic reasons. *Shaffer*, 966 F.2d at 146.<sup>[8]</sup> This is so because no ethical canon can be an all-encompassing bright-line rule that will easily apply to all circumstances no matter the facts of the individual case. *Smith v. Bryant*, 264 N.C. 208, 210, 141 S.E.2d 303(1965).

The Court also recognizes that a party's right to have counsel of its choosing is a fundamental tenet of American jurisprudence, and therefore a court may not lightly deprive a party of its chosen counsel. *United States v. Smith*, 653 F.2d 126, 128 (4th Cir.1981) (citing *Powell v. Alabama*, 287 U.S. 45, 53, 53 S. Ct. 55, 58, 77 L. Ed. 158 (1932) ("It is hardly necessary to say that the right to counsel being conceded, a defendant should be afforded a fair opportunity to secure counsel of his own choice.")). Finally, the ultimate purpose of granting a motion to disqualify counsel is to eliminate the threat that the litigation will be tainted; therefore, the guiding principle for a court considering a motion to disqualify counsel is safeguarding the integrity of the court proceeding. *Ciba Seeds*, 933 F. Supp. at 517; *Rogers v. Pittston*, 800 F. Supp. 350(W.D.Va.1992), *aff'd*, 996 F.2d 1212 (4th Cir.1993). Hence, when ruling on a motion to disqualify counsel, in addition to the two-part test a court must weigh and balance several factors: the important right of a party to retain its chosen counsel and the substantial hardship which may result from disqualification against the public perception of and trust in the judicial system. *Shaffer*, 966 F.2d at 146 ("These are practical considerations that we must take into account, along with a party's ability to secure alternative representation, in assessing the propriety of disqualifying counsel on "likely" conflict grounds.") (quoting *Aetna*, 570 F.2d at 1200-02); *Ciba Seeds*, 933 F. Supp. at 517 (citations omitted).

### **1. Attorney-Client Relationship**

The Court will first address whether there was an attorney-client relationship between the Superintendent or the CMBOE and attorney Dyke. After reviewing the parties' briefs, and viewing the witnesses and the evidence in two evidentiary hearings, the Court is convinced that Dr. Smith did not disclose any confidential information to McGuire Woods. In addition, there was not an attorney-client relationship between Dr. \*580 Smith as Superintendent of the School Board and the law firm of McGuire Woods. The Revised Rules of Professional Conduct adopted by the Council of the North Carolina State Bar April 4, 1997 and approved by the North Carolina Supreme Court on July 24, 1997, Rule 1.6(a) provides:

#### Rule 1.6 Confidentiality of Information

(a) "Confidential information" refers to information protected by the attorney-client privilege under applicable law, and other information gained in the professional relationship that the client has requested be held inviolate or the disclosure of which would be embarrassing or would be likely to be detrimental to the client. For the purposes of this rule, "client" refers to present and former clients.

After hearing the witnesses and parties, and reviewing the evidence, the Court determines that Dr. Smith did not reveal any confidential information to Dyke or anyone else. The following findings of fact support this determination:

1. Neither Dyke nor McGuire Woods has ever represented the CMBOE or the Superintendent of the CMBOE in any matter. (Finding of Fact "FF" no. 26.)
2. Dr. Smith picked Dyke because he wanted a firm that was not immersed in local history, and could therefore give a broader national perspective "and not have history here locally." Dr. Smith knew Dyke from his time as Secretary of Education in Virginia and that felt he could do a good job at that. (FF no. 14.)
3. The conversations between Dr. Smith and Dyke occurred in the Fall of 1996. (FF no. 1.)

4. The *Swann* case was not reopened until this Court granted the Swann Plaintiffs' Motion to Reopen on 5 March 1997. (FF no. 6.)
5. Dr. Smith requested that Dyke present a briefing of a general overview of the development of the law of school desegregation and unitary school systems since the Supreme Court's decision in *Swann* in 1971. (FF no. 1.)
6. Dyke's only activity was to give a briefing which was educational in nature, and addressed, in general, unitary school systems and school desegregation and the changes in the federal law since the *Swann* decision in 1971. It did not specifically address the facts regarding the unitary status of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school district. (FF nos. 1, 21, 22.)
7. Dyke did not give the CMBOE legal advice as to how the update in the law might apply to the CMBOE and the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school system. (FF no. 25.)
8. Regarding Dr. Smith's and Dyke's discussions, Dyke has not disclosed any of the content of those conversations to either Pollard or Parsons. (FF no. 27.)
9. Dr. Smith did not discuss with Dyke matters related to the *Capacchione* matter which was not in existence in the Fall of 1996 or January 1997. (FF nos. 4, 9.)
10. The presentation to the CMBOE was made at a conference room at the Charlotte-Douglas Airport and there were people other than the CMBOE present including members of the news media. (FF no. 23.)
11. At the briefing, Dyke and his associates made it clear that they were speaking to the members of the CMBOE generally as to the state of the law and could not offer legal advice to CMBOE. (FF no. 24.)
12. The *Capacchione* suit was not filed until September 7, 1997. (*See* document no. 1.)
13. The *Swann* case was not reopened until this Court granted the Motion to Reopen by the Swann Plaintiffs on March 5, 1998. (FF no. 29.)
14. Regarding his conversations with Dr. Smith, Dyke has not discussed the content of those conversations with either Pollard or Parsons. (FF no. 27.)
- \*581 15. During the briefing, Dyke did not address anything specific regarding *Swann*. (FF nos. 22, 24, 25.)
16. Dr. Smith did not tell Dyke facts that Dr. Smith considered to be important when determining the unitary status of a school system. His conversations with Dyke were of a more general nature. (FF no. 17.)
17. Dr. Smith did not give Dyke his assessment of where he, the Board as a whole, or the individual board members were on the question of unitary status. (FF no. 16.)
18. It was Dr. Smith's judgment, not CMBOE's, as to the issues Dyke should address. (FF no. 19.)
19. Dr. Smith did not give Dyke any information that was not a matter of public record. Moreover, any member of the public could readily obtain such information by simply surveying the open records of the School District (FF no. 20.)

In sum, the Court finds that the evidence does not indicate that any confidential matters were revealed to Dyke by Dr. Smith or anyone else. Further, nothing Dr. Smith discussed with Dyke was, or could be, reasonably considered confidential because it was all a matter of public record. While this admission, by itself, may not be dispositive, it militates strongly against a finding of an attorney-client relationship and the need to disqualify. Moreover, because the information disclosed by Dr. Smith is all in the public record, the Court finds that Dr. Smith could not have had a reasonable expectation of confidentiality regarding his discussions with Dyke that would now preclude Mr. Pollard or Mr. Parsons from representing Capacchione. McGuire Woods did not represent the CMBOE, and has never represented that body. Dyke's role was merely educational and in the nature of a seminar on a point of law; it in no way was connected with the particular facts of this litigation and does not rise to the level of an attorney-client relationship under the ethical rules which would prevent McGuire Woods from representing Capacchione. While the Court must give some weight to Dr. Smith's and Dyke's subjective belief that some of the matters they discussed were confidential, the facts cited above show that the matters discussed were in fact not confidential and, for the purposes of this motion to disqualify, there was no attorney-client relationship that would disqualify McGuire Woods.

### **2. Substantially Related Test**

The second prong is whether the matters were substantially related. At first blush, it appears that the matters were substantially related. However, a closer analysis reveals that they were not. With respect to the briefing and Dyke's discussions with Dr. Smith in the Fall of 1996, Dyke's only activity was to give a briefing which was educational in nature, and addressed, in general, unitary school systems and school desegregation and the changes in the federal law since the *Swann* decision in 1971. Thus, it is true that Dyke's briefing did address the issue of school desegregation and unitary school systems, but only in a general and educational manner. Importantly, Dyke specifically, and expressly, did not address the facts regarding the unitary status of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school district. (FF nos. 1, 21, 22.) In fact, when asked, Dyke and his associates refused to attempt to apply the law to the facts of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school system. (FF no. 24.) Further, Dr. Smith did not tell Dyke facts that Dr. Smith considered to be important when determining the unitary status of a school system; his conversations with Dyke were of a more general nature; and Dr. Smith did not give Dyke his assessment of where he, the Board as a whole, or the individual board members were on the question of unitary status.

Here, the specific determination of whether the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school system is unitary is a fundamental issue in the matters before the Court. This fundamental issue is precisely what Dyke and his associates refused to address, and the information about which Dr. Smith did not convey to Dyke. For these reasons, the Court finds that the matters were not substantially related. \*582 See *Travco Hotels, Inc. v. Piedmont Natural Gas Co.*, 332 N.C. 288, 420 S.E.2d 426 (1992).

In sum, because there was no attorney-client relationship between McGuire Woods and CMBOE, and the matters were not substantially related, CMBOE failed to establish either part of the two-part test. Accordingly, the Court will deny CMBOE's Motion to Disqualify.

### **3. Balancing the Practical Considerations**

Further, when considering the motion under the particular circumstances of this case, as the Court must, the Court finds that, even if there was an attorney-client relationship, nothing transpired between Dr. Smith and Dyke which would require McGuire Woods, or Pollard and Parsons in particular, to be disqualified from representing Capacchione in this matter.

In this case, it is clear that Capacchione chose to have Pollard and Parsons represent her in this lawsuit, and she now objects to the motion to disqualify them. The Court is mindful that disqualifying a party's chosen representative is a very serious matter. Further, disqualifying chosen counsel in this case would prejudice Capacchione. As the School Board itself noted, Mr. Pollard, and his former firm, Blakeney and Alexander, have been involved in the issues regarding the school system and the desegregation order in *Swann* on numerous occasions. (School Board's Mem. in Support of Motion to Dismiss at 3.) Pollard's

and his firm's prior involvement in *Swann*, coupled with the common issues of law and fact between the matters in *Capacchione* and *Swann*, give Pollard and his firm an enhanced ability to be *Capacchione's* zealous advocate in this matter.<sup>[9]</sup> Moreover, the Court also finds that, given Pollard's and his former law firm's prior experience in these matters, Pollard's and Parsons's representation of *Capacchione* will assist the Court in an efficient resolution of the matters before the Court. Thus, their representation of *Capacchione* is in the interests of justice.

Next, there is little, if any, prejudice to the School Board if Pollard and Parsons continue to represent *Capacchione*. As discussed *supra*, nothing Dr. Smith discussed with Dyke was confidential. Even if it were, there would be no prejudice to the School Board because Dyke did not, and affirmed that he would not, disclose any of the information to Pollard, Parsons, or any other attorney at the firm associated with the *Capacchione* matter. In the same vein, both Pollard and Parsons testified that they have not been privy to the content of the conversations and were not aware that the conversations took place until just before they raised the issue with the Court. What's more, even if Pollard and Parsons would become privy to the discussions between Dr. Smith and Dyke, by accident or otherwise, there would continue to be little or no prejudice to the School Board because everything Dr. Smith discussed with Dyke is a matter of public record and readily obtainable through discovery.

Further damaging to the School Board's Motion to Disqualify are the safeguards against a conflict developing. First, there is the ethical obligation of counsel which binds all of the attorneys at McGuire Woods and prevents Dyke from divulging, and Pollard and Parsons from seeking, the content of the conversations between Dr. Smith and Dyke. In fact, the present Motions have prompted specific assurances in this regard, and the Court will give that obligation significant weight. *See Shaffer*, 966 F.2d at 146. Similarly, the deterrent effect of sanctions is an additional safeguard. *Id.*

Finally, the Court finds that denying the Motion to Disqualify in this case would not in any manner compromise the integrity of this proceeding. As stated *supra*, there was no attorney-client relationship, and Dr. Smith did not divulge any confidential matters to Dyke. Further, the conversations between Dr. Smith and Dyke occurred in the Fall of 1996 while Dyke was a member of McGuire Woods working in the firm's main office in Richmond, Virginia. This was long before McGuire Woods and Blakeny & Alexander \*583 began merger negotiations. Further, Pollard and Parsons agreed to represent *Capacchione* well before the merger was complete, and certainly were not aware of the alleged conflict until after the merger was complete. Thus, at the time the conversations occurred, the two law firms were totally separated and insulated without any reason, or opportunity, for Pollard and Parsons to become privy to the conversations.

In addition, Dyke is an attorney practicing law in Virginia and is not licensed in North Carolina and the record does not show that he ever practiced in North Carolina. In the same vein, because McGuire Woods is a very large law firm with more than 350 attorneys, and Dyke works at the firm's main office in Richmond, Virginia and Pollard and Parsons work in the Charlotte, North Carolina office, a "Chinese wall" between Dyke and Pollard and Parsons would be an effective tool to safeguard the integrity of this proceeding.<sup>[10]</sup> Out of an abundance of caution, the Court will order that Dyke and his associates involved with the briefing given to the CMBOE be totally insulated from this litigation.

On the other hand, *granting* the Motion to Disqualify might have the undesirable effect of compromising the integrity of the proceedings. As the Fourth Circuit and other federal courts have noted, the Court must remain "mindful of the opposing possibility of misuse of disqualification motions for strategic reasons," *Shaffer v. Farm Fresh, Inc.*, 966 F.2d 142 (4th Cir.1992) (quoting *Woods v. Covington County Bank*, 537 F.2d 804, 813 (5th Cir.1976)).<sup>[11]</sup>

Under these circumstances, it simply cannot be said that allowing McGuire Woods to continue to represent *Capacchione* would compromise these proceedings.

In sum, the Court finds that the important right of *Capacchione* to chosen counsel and the substantial hardship which may result from disqualification weighs heavily in favor of denying the Motion to Disqualify. Next, the Court finds that the School Board would be harmed very little, if at all, by McGuire Woods continuing to represent *Capacchione*. Finally, McGuire Woods's continued representation of *Capacchione* will not compromise the trust in, and integrity of, the judicial system and these proceedings.

For all of the foregoing reasons, even if there were an attorney-client relationship between Dr. Smith and McGuire Woods, the Court would deny the School Board's Motion to Disqualify.

### **B. MOTION TO WITHDRAW**

District courts may, under local rule, condition withdrawal of representation on leave of the court, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1654. *Towns v. Morris*, 50 F.3d 8 (4th Cir.1995) (Table); *Daniels v. Brennan*, 887 F.2d 783, 784 n. 1 (7th Cir.1989). In the Western District of North Carolina, the court has made such provision under Rule 1(c) of the Rules of the United States District Court \*584 for the Western District of North Carolina. Local Rule 1(c) provides:

If it will not delay a scheduled hearing or trial, counsel may file written consent of their client to their withdrawal and at the same time cause to be filed an appearance by other counsel, and such substitution of counsel shall be effective without court approval. Except for such substitution of counsel, there shall be no effective withdrawal except on order signed by one of the judges of the court.

Because counsel has not filed written consent of their client to their withdrawal, counsel is precluded by Rule 1(c) from withdrawing without leave of the court.

An attorney seeking to withdraw must establish that his client consents or that a valid and compelling reason exists for the court to grant the motion over an objection. *Stafford v. Mesnik*, 63 F.3d 1445, 1448 (7th Cir.1995).<sup>[12]</sup> Similar to a motion to disqualify counsel, a motion to withdraw is not to be taken lightly. An attorney's obligation to represent his client is one of the paramount obligations undertaken in the attorney-client relationship. *Smith v. Anderson-Tulley Co.*, 608 F. Supp. 1143, 1146-47 (S.D.Miss.1985), *aff'd*, 846 F.2d 751 (5th Cir.1988). Thus, once an attorney or law firm undertakes these duties, the attorney or law firm may not be relieved of these duties without compelling reasons. *Stafford*, 63 F.3d at 1448.<sup>[13]</sup> Of course, an attorney has a continuing obligation to completely disclose to his client any conflicts. Finally, whether an attorney is justified in withdrawing from a case will depend upon the particular circumstances of the case, and no all embracing rule can be formulated. *Smith v. Bryant*, 264 N.C. 208, 210, 141 S.E.2d 303, 305 (1965).

In this case, Pollard and Parsons move to withdraw from this matter for the same reasons the School Board filed its Motion to Disqualify: the possible existence of a conflict because the information obtained by Dyke in conversations with Dr. Smith may have been confidential disqualifies Dyke from representing Capacchione, and Dyke's disqualification is imputed to Pollard and Parsons because the attorneys are associated in the same law firm. First, the Court notes that Pollard and Parsons have met their ethical obligation to raise the issue of possible conflicts by filing their Motion to Withdraw. Second, for all of the same reasons the Court denied the Motion to Disqualify, the Court finds that there is no compelling reason for Pollard, Parsons, or McGuire Woods to withdraw from representing Capacchione in the matters before the Court. Accordingly, the Court will deny the Motion to Withdraw.

### **III. CONCLUSION**

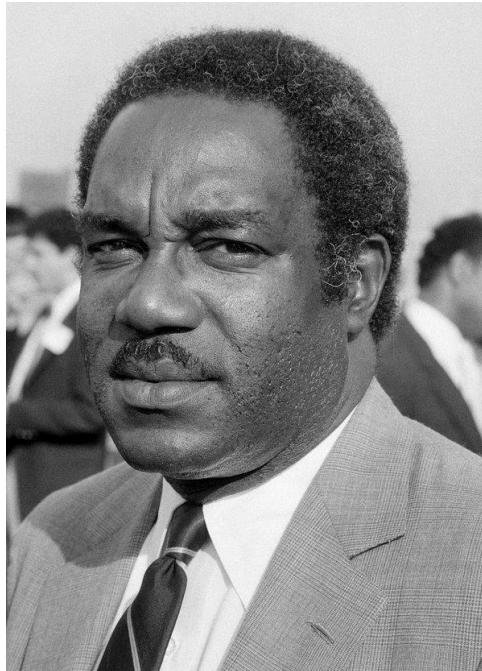
In sum, the Court will deny the Motion to Disqualify and the Motion to Withdraw because there was no attorney-client relationship between Dr. Smith or CMBOE and McGuire Woods, the matters were not substantially related, and McGuire Woods's continued representation of Capacchione will not compromise the public's trust in, and integrity of, the judicial system and this proceeding.

NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS ORDERED that Defendants' Motion to Disqualify [document no. 29] be, and hereby is, DENIED.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that McGuire Woods's Motion to Withdraw [document no. 19] be, and hereby is, DENIED.

## *Julius Chambers, a Fighter for Civil Rights, Dies at 76*

From *The New York Times*  
By Douglas Martin  
August 25, 2016



*Julius L. Chambers in 1984. Credit: Don Hogan Charles/The New York Times*

Julius L. Chambers, a civil rights lawyer who endured firebombings of his house, office and car in winning case after case against racial segregation, including one that led to a landmark Supreme Court decision allowing forced busing, died on Friday at his home in Charlotte, N.C. He was 76. Geraldine Sumter, a law partner, confirmed the death, saying Mr. Chambers had had a heart attack in April and had been in declining health.

Mr. Chambers began championing civil rights well before he succeeded Thurgood Marshall and Jack Greenberg as president and director-counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund in 1984. Two decades earlier, he had left an internship at the fund to open a one-man law practice in Charlotte specializing in civil rights, its office in a cold-water walk-up. It grew to become North Carolina's first integrated law firm.

In 1965, his second year in private practice, Mr. Chambers was working alongside the legal defense fund when he took on 35 school desegregation suits and 20 suits charging discrimination in public accommodations. One court victory that year barred the Shrine Bowl of the Carolinas, a charity football game, from excluding black players.

Another, far-reaching 1965 case was filed on behalf of a 6-year-old, James Swann, and nine other families alleging that school district policies had put black students in segregated schools. Mr. Chambers and the legal defense fund persuaded a federal judge, James B. McMillan, to order busing to promote integration of public schools.

The case went to the Supreme Court, and in 1971, in Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education, the justices upheld the judge's ruling, granting federal courts the power to order busing to force racial integration. The ruling had the effect of ending government-sanctioned segregation in Southern schools.

In 2002, the Supreme Court allowed Charlotte, like many other cities, to end busing as a means to achieve integration, saying the goal had been achieved. Mr. Chambers opposed the ruling, arguing that blacks continued to receive an inferior education in racially imbalanced schools.

Mr. Chambers took on job discrimination in a suit that also found its way to the Supreme Court. In the case, Griggs v. Duke Power Co., the court ruled in 1971 that some of Duke's hiring requirements, like a high school education or a certain I.Q. level, were irrelevant to some jobs and had the effect of excluding qualified black workers. It said employers must justify any rule that has disproportionate effects on minorities by proving that the rule is necessary for business reasons. Mr. Chambers's victories came with a cost. In the wake of the Supreme Court's decision in Swann, his offices were firebombed. After his successes in 1965, his car was firebombed and two bombs exploded in his home.

His response was defiant; he said he would "keep fighting." It was also measured. "We must accept this type of practice," he said, "from those less in control of their faculties."

Julius LeVonne Chambers was born on Oct. 6, 1936, in Mount Gilead, N.C., where his father, William, owned a garage and general store. As the third of four children, Julius was looking forward to following his two older siblings to the Laurinburg Institute, a historically black preparatory school. But his father told him that there would be no money for his tuition because a white customer had refused to pay for repairs to a truck. His father had paid for the parts out of his own pocket.

The elder Mr. Chambers sought the help of white lawyers in town, but all refused to take the case. In that moment, Julius Chambers said, he decided on a legal career.

Mr. Chambers graduated from high school in May 1954, the month the Supreme Court ordered an end to school segregation in Brown v. Board of Education. He went to North Carolina College, a historically black institution now known as North Carolina Central University, where he was student body president and graduated summa cum laude.

He earned a master's degree in history from the University of Michigan and a law degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, which had only just begun admitting blacks, reluctantly. He was elected editor in chief of The North Carolina Law Review.

He also graduated first in his law school class but was barred from attending its end-of-year banquet at the segregated Chapel Hill Country Club.

## *Discussion Questions*

1. In what ways does your school reflect the pattern of racial segregation in our county?
2. As much as there can be inequality in school districts, there can be inequality in schools themselves. Some students feel discouraged from taking AP/IB/honors classes, regardless of ability, pulling them further from qualified teachers and a valuable education. What is your experience with this?
3. It's clear that racial segregation didn't end in the 1960s; its scope on America is still affecting schools today. Is your school diverse racially? Economically? Ethnically?
4. A CMS teacher's salary starts at around \$35,000. For reference, an engineer's salary begins around \$66,000 (2018), a doctor's roughly \$140,000 (Greenwood). Is this salary enough to pull the talent needed to teach our youth? Can we rely on passion for the career alone to draw in well-qualified teachers?
5. If CMS received extra funding for the next school year, where should it go?



### *III. Income Inequality*



Photo Courtesy of Industry Week

Introduction .....90

- A. Why It's So Hard to Get Ahead in the South
- B. North Carolina Poverty Line and CMS Title I Schools
- C. Economic Hardship, Racialized, Concentrated Poverty, and the Challenges of Low-Wage Work: Charlotte, North Carolina
- D. Detailed New National Maps Show How Neighborhoods Shape Children for Life
- E. What Poverty Looks Like in Charlotte
- F. 'Money Rock' Dives Deep into Charlotte's History of Inequities
- G. Charlotte Spending Millions on Affordable Housing that the Poor Can't Afford
- H. Discussion Questions and Activities

# *INTRODUCTION*

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Julia Carr, Echo Student Intern

Income inequality is a powerful factor on social mobility. Poverty in the Charlotte area is very real, and worse depending on whether you're a black, Latino, or living in a single parent household. Poverty is what forces parents and kids alike to put aside self-betterment- e.g. education, networking- in order to care for their family by getting a job, or another, or staying home to care for younger siblings and the elderly. This chapter explores the reality of poverty in Charlotte, and I think you will discover that equal opportunity has not been alive for a long time.

**“No person can maximize the American Dream on the minimum wage.”**

**-Benjamin Todd Jealous, American Civic Leader, 2013**

## *Why It's So Hard to Get Ahead in the South*

*In Charlotte and other Southern cities, poor children have the lowest odds of making it to the top income bracket of kids anywhere in the country. Why?*

From *The Atlantic*  
By Alana Semuels  
April 4, 2017



Homeless residents of Charlotte, North Carolina, wait in line for food. // Photo by Carlos Barria / Reuters

CHARLOTTE—Shamelle Jackson moved here from Philadelphia, hoping to find work opportunities and better schools for her four children, who range in age from two to 14. Instead, she found a city with expensive housing, few good jobs, and schools that can vary dramatically in quality. “I’ve never struggled as hard as I do here in Charlotte,” Jackson, 34, told me.

Jackson isn’t alone. Data suggests that Charlotte is a dead-end for people trying to escape poverty. That’s especially startling because the city is a leader in economic development in the South. Bank of America is headquartered here, and over the last two decades the city has become a hub for the financial services industry. In recent years, Charlotte and the surrounding area, Mecklenburg County, have ranked among the fastest-growing regions of the country. “Charlotte is a place of economic wonder in some ways, but it’s also a city that faces very stark disparities, and that increasingly includes worrisome pockets of real deprivation,” said Gene Nichol, a

professor at the UNC School of Law who has completed an extensive report on local poverty. Some of these disparities bubbled to the surface in September, when protests erupted after a black man, Keith Lamont Scott, was shot and killed by police.



Photo courtesy of *The Charlotte Agenda*

Charlotte ranked dead last in an analysis of economic mobility in America’s 50 largest cities by the Equality of Opportunity Project, a team of researchers out of Harvard, Stanford and Berkeley led by Stanford’s Raj Chetty. Children born into the bottom 20 percent of the income distribution in Charlotte had just a 4.4 percent chance of making it to the top 20 percent of the income distribution. That’s compared to a 12.9 percent chance for children in San Jose, California, and 10.8 percent change for children in Salt Lake City. These statistics are troubling because mobility is essentially just a formal term for the American Dream—the ability to find a good job, provide for children, and do better than one’s parents did. Rather than making it into the middle class in Charlotte, poor children, who are majority black and Latino, are very likely to stay poor.

In some ways, Charlotte is indicative of a more widespread problem in the region. Map out the data from the Equality of Opportunity Project and you’ll find that much of the South has low mobility rates. The chance of a child moving from the bottom to top quartile in Atlanta is 4.5 percent, the chance of moving up in Raleigh is 5 percent, and the chance of moving up in New Orleans is 5.1 percent. These are among the lowest odds of advancement in the country. “The South really does struggle,” said Erin Currier, who directed the financial security and mobility project at the Pew Charitable Trusts. Pew found that mobility lags in states including Louisiana, South Carolina, Alabama, and North Carolina.

There’s no obvious reason why cities in the South would perform so poorly across the board. After all, economies like those in Charlotte are booming. In other places with significant economic growth, such as San Jose, this prosperity seems to be widely shared (or at least it was

between 1980 and 2012, the time period over which children were tracked in Chetty’s data). In cities across the South though, economic success seems not to have trickled down to lower-income populations.

Chetty and colleagues say that there are a few key factors that play into where people struggle with economic mobility. These areas tend to be more racially segregated, have a higher share of poverty than the national average, more income inequality, a higher share of single mothers, and lower degrees of social capital, which means people interacting with others who can help them succeed, according to Nick Flamang, a predoctoral fellow with the Equality of Opportunity Project.

All these indicators are present in Charlotte, and throughout much of the South. Segregation took root in the early 1900s, and was reinforced by Jim Crow laws and redlining in the later part of the century. It remains a problem today. The white, affluent population lives in a wedge south of the city. The census tracts north and west of the city are where the low-income people live, and those people are predominantly black and Latino.

The South also has among the highest poverty rates in the country. Mississippi ranks last, Louisiana is 49th, and North Carolina is 39th in the country when it comes to the percentage of people living below the poverty line. While Southern poverty has traditionally manifested itself in rural areas, cities are now home to some of the worst poverty in the region, according to Nichol. “If you look at census tracts, the deepest poverty in North Carolina is right in the middle of Charlotte, the middle of Greensboro, middle of Winston-Salem, the middle of Raleigh,” he said.



*Homes in an upper-income neighborhood of Charlotte // Photo by Alana Semuels / The Atlantic*

Indeed, concentrated poverty is becoming a pressing problem in Charlotte. The Brookings Institution data shows that in 2000, just 2 percent of poor families lived in a census tract with poverty rates of 40 percent or higher in Charlotte. That percentage had climbed to 10 percent by 2012. According to Nichol's work, 17 census tracts in Mecklenburg County had poverty rates higher than 40 percent, a dramatic increase from 2000, when just four did. I visited neighborhoods like Lockwood, just north of downtown, where homeless people hung out at the gas stations and the small box homes had bars on their windows.

Concentrated poverty is related to another factor Chetty and his colleagues mention: social capital, which is essentially the mechanism that allows people to interact with others and become a part of broad networks that can lead to opportunity. It can help people get hooked up to first jobs, internships, and scholarships. Without these types of connections, children are more likely to take a similar path to their parents. For those who live in areas of concentrated poverty, this means they don't learn about opportunities that might get them out of poverty, or about people in different income brackets.

Latasha Hunt, 36, is an example of what it means to lack social capital. She grew up in northern Charlotte, far from the wealth of the city's south side. Her parents did ok, she told me—her mother worked in manufacturing and her father worked for the school system. But growing up, she didn't know people who went to college or who worked in finance. Almost no one at her high school went to college—they all ended up getting a job right out of high school, or going to jail, she told me. Neither Hunt nor her two brothers went to college. Her brothers are both barbers, she now works in customer service at a local nonprofit. She doesn't think she's better off than her parents were. “My generation is struggling,” she told me. “We work every day, but it's like we're working just to pay for daycare.”

Hunt is a single mother, which creates its own unique challenges. She juggles taking care of her two children and working a full-time job. Many other women in Charlotte experience similar issues; in North Carolina, 65 percent of African-American children live in single parent families, according to the Kids Count Data Center from the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Jackson, who moved from Philadelphia, told me she lost her job in Charlotte because of “single mom stuff.” She was frequently tardy to work because she had to drop kids off at school or pick them up when they were sick, attend parent-teacher conferences, and otherwise take care of her family.

Latasha Hunt grew up in an era when the schools were more integrated than they are now in Charlotte—which should have led to easier mobility by helping with issues of social capital and quality education. A 1971 ruling in a Supreme Court case, *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education*, essentially required Charlotte to integrate its schools. The district's model proved so successful that other cities copied it. Yet the school integration may not have helped mobility that much, according to Jeff Michael, the director of the UNC Charlotte Urban Institute. If students are getting on buses right after school and going back to their segregated

neighborhoods, they may not get enough exposure to people from other backgrounds. And the schools have returned to being extremely segregated, after a 1999 court ruling forced Charlotte to abandon its busing plan.

According to Nichol, 77 percent of black students attend majority-poverty schools, while only 23 percent of white students do. The best-performing schools are located in the wedge of wealth in the southern part of the city, while the worst-performing schools are located in high-poverty census tracts. Hunt, determined to make sure her daughter went to a better school than the one in their neighborhood, entered her daughter in a lottery and arranged for her to go on three separate public buses to get to a better school. “The school system is very racially segregated, housing is racially segregated,” Gene Nichol told me. “When you put that big stew together, it’s hard for people born in economically challenging circumstances to work their way out of them in Charlotte.”

Of course, some of the reasons the South is lagging behind when it comes to economic mobility have to do with very specific policy choices made by state governments. Southern states have low minimum wages, so many poor people make less than they do in other regions, and have less money to spend on creating opportunities for their children. Paltry wages negate any potential benefit that might be derived from lower housing costs or number of open positions. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average hourly earnings of workers in the leisure and hospitality field, which is where many low-wage workers are concentrated, is \$20 in New York, and just \$13 in North Carolina. (The minimum wage in North Carolina is \$7.25 an hour.) Southern states also generally spend less on education than other states do. While states like New York, New Jersey, and Massachusetts spend \$15,000 per student on elementary and secondary education, North Carolina spends almost half that, at \$8,500 per student, and other states such as Tennessee and Mississippi spend around the same, according to *Governing* magazine. Research also suggests that tax policy is especially regressive in the South, meaning the tax burden falls the hardest on low-income families.

The low wages have meant that even as the South grows and cities like Charlotte boom, people are left out. Hunt’s mother could earn a decent wage in manufacturing without a college education; now someone without a college degree is stuck struggling in a low-wage job. And disinvestment in education has made it more difficult for people from all backgrounds to make it past high school. “We had an economic philosophy in the South, in the Jim Crow era and beyond, that we would lead with cheap labor, cheap land, and low taxes,” said David Dodson, the president of MDC, a nonprofit research group that produces assessments of the South. “And this is what you get.”

Charlotte is well aware of its mobility problems. Shortly after the Chetty data emerged, it convened an Economic Opportunity Task Force and sought to come up with recommendations

for how Charlotte can be more inclusive. Its report, released at the end of March, concluded that segregation and a lack of social networks had a widespread influence on whether someone made it out of poverty, and that three determinants had a big influence: early care and education, college and career readiness, and child and family stability.

The report recommended “systemic and structural change” and included ideas such as addressing school segregation in order to make sure that all children in Mecklenburg County had access to early childhood education. It recommended making it easier for students to navigate college and other career pathways, encouraging the formation of two-parent families, and addressing the community’s affordable housing crisis. Many of the recommendations don’t have clear policy answers, and Charlotte seems slow to make any changes. When presenting the task force report, leaders announced the creation of yet another task force that will decide how to proceed.

Nichol says the biggest problem in Charlotte is that city leaders are happy to try and tackle the problem of economic mobility, but that they are not as interested in addressing the real problem, which is poverty. “There’s a greater reluctance to engage in programs which fight poverty in the South than in the rest of the country,” Nichol told me.

This, Nichol says, has largely to do with race. People in the South view poverty as a “problem that black people have,” and don’t support programs to fight poverty because those programs are targeted at black people, he said. Research backs this up. As I’ve written before, efforts to cut back welfare and other programs for the poor arose once black people were able to get on those programs—there was widespread support for them when they had been majority white. And states that had the largest share of black people on welfare programs adopted some of the most stringent policies in the wake of welfare reform of 1996.

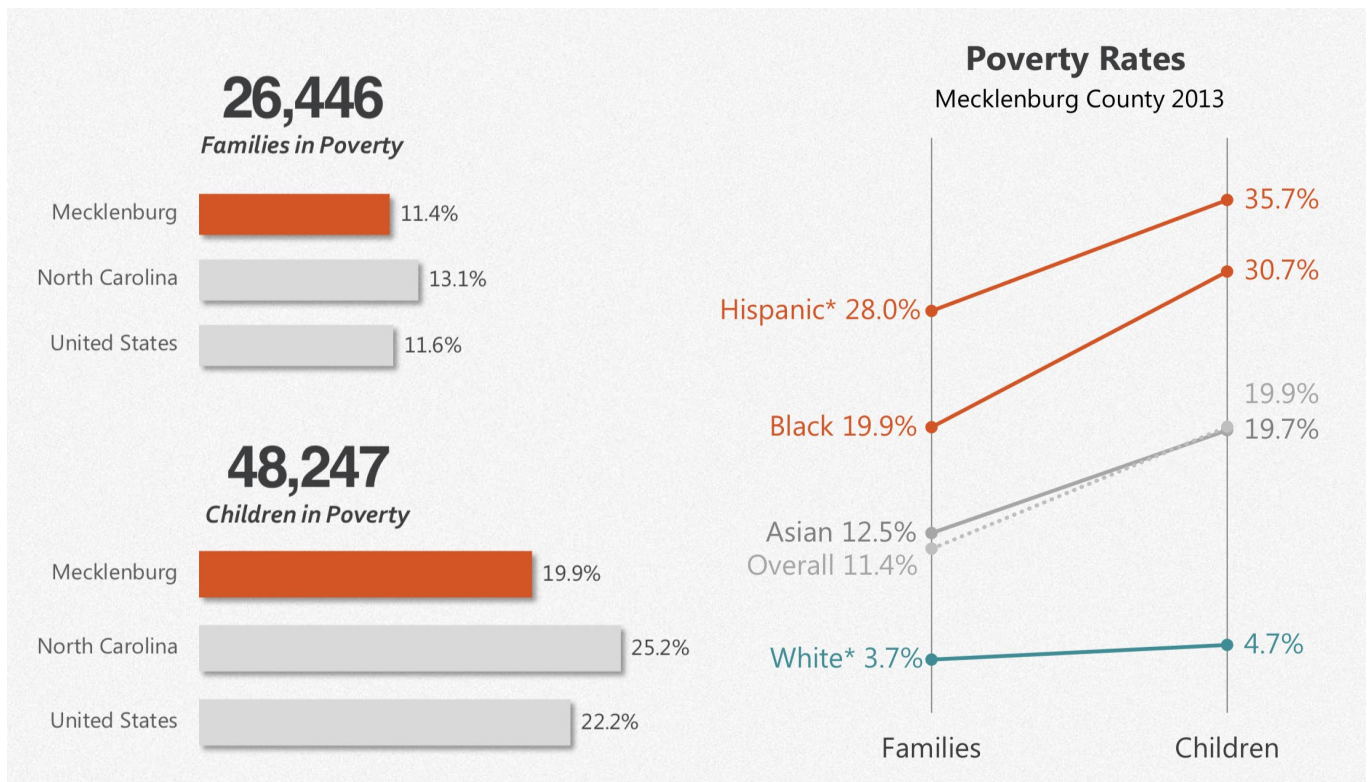
While Charlotte grapples with issues of stunted mobility, North Carolina is rolling back benefits for the poor. It eliminated its state Earned Income Tax Credit in 2014, cut unemployment benefits to a maximum of 14 weeks (the lowest in the nation), and made it more difficult for poor people to get food stamps. Benefits for families on Temporary Assistance for Needy Families are among the lowest in the nation, at just \$272 a month. “The link between poverty and race is very strong in the South and in North Carolina,” Nichol said. “The willingness to ignore it, and regard it as a broad-ranging public challenge, is closely tied with ideas of race.



## 2018 Poverty Line for North Carolina:

PERSONS IN FAMILY/HOUSEHOLD	POVERTY GUIDELINE
For families/households with more than 8 persons, add \$4,320 for each additional person.	
1	\$12,140
2	\$16,460
3	\$20,780
4	\$25,100
5	\$29,420
6	\$33,740
7	\$38,060
8	\$42,380

<https://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty-guidelines>



# ***TITLE I Schools***

From *National Center for Education Statistics*

The US Department of Education's Title I program provides financial assistance through state educational agencies (SEAs) to local educational agencies (LEAs) and public schools with high numbers or percentages of poor children to help ensure that all children meet challenging state academic content and student academic achievement standards.

LEAs target the Title I funds they receive to public schools with the highest percentages of children from low-income families. Unless a participating school is operating a schoolwide program, the school must focus Title I services on children who are failing, or most at risk of failing, to meet state academic standards. Schools enrolling at least 40 percent of children from low-income families are eligible to use Title I funds for schoolwide programs designed to upgrade their entire educational programs to improve achievement for all students, particularly the lowest-achieving students.

## **Title I High Schools in CMS:**

Garinger High School

Harding University High School

Military and Global Leadership

Performance Learning Center

West Charlotte High School (Priority)

West Mecklenburg High School (Priority)

Zebulon Vance High School

## *CMS High School Socioeconomic Distribution*

High School Name	% Low SES Students	% Med SES Students	% High SES Students
Ardrey Kell	0.33%	4.75%	94.91%
Phillip O. Berry	50.51%	43.35%	6.14%
Butler	19.04%	63.61%	17.35%
Cato Middle College	18.93%	59.26%	21.81%
East Meck	61.21%	21.68%	17.11%
Garinger	94.87%	4.73%	0.40%
Harding	94.66%	4.75%	0.59%
Harper Middle College	22.64%	43.40%	33.96%
Hawthorne	47.78%	45.00%	7.22%
Hopewell	13.10%	57.48%	29.43%
Independence	33.63%	47.32%	19.06%
Levine Middle College	11.02%	40.82%	48.16%
Mallard Creek	1.46%	68.65%	29.89%
Myers Park	20.65%	12.65%	66.70%
North Meck	38.40%	40.70%	20.90%
Northwest SotA	30.80%	43.41%	25.79%
Olympic	4.02%	81.09%	14.89%
Providence	0.54%	23.13%	76.34%
Rocky River	30.81%	65.56%	3.63%
South Meck	35.14%	37.08%	27.78%
Vance	40.05%	48.28%	2.67%
West Charlotte	93.45%	6.16%	0.39%
WA Hough	6.38%	21.69%	71.94%
West Meck	37.15%	61.79%	1.05%

Data from CMS SES Distribution Data Report, 2016

\* **SES= Socioeconomic Status-** An individual's or group's position within a hierarchical social structure. Socioeconomic status depends on a combination of variables, including occupation, education, income, wealth, and place of residence. Sociologists often use socioeconomic status as a means of predicting behavior.

# *Economic Hardship, Racialized, Concentrated Poverty, and the Challenges of Low-Wage Work: Charlotte, North Carolina*

From UNC Chapel Hill & NC Poverty Research Fund

By Gene R. Nichol and Heather Hunt

Spring 2016



Photo Courtesy of Alex Grichenko

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At first glance, Charlotte may seem an odd choice for a study of economic distress in North Carolina. Charlotte is, on most fronts, an economic powerhouse. It can boast one of the state's highest per capita personal income levels and, likely, its greatest accumulations of wealth. It is North Carolina's largest city. A massive financial and energy center, it is home to the Carolina Panthers, the NBA Hornets, NASCAR, strong colleges and universities, vast and imposing medical centers, a bevy of Fortune 500 companies, one of the country's busiest airports, and a congenial system of light rail. It is stocked with surprisingly impressive galleries and museums. The symphony is first rate. It places well on lists of America's best cities. It enjoys an outsized sense of civic pride.

Mecklenburg County, which Charlotte sprawls across, is home to 13% of all the private establishments in North Carolina and 16% of the state's private sector jobs. The gross regional product of the greater metro area (over \$131 billion in 2014) is 30% of the equivalent North Carolina gross product. Per capita personal income in Mecklenburg is 125% of that of the state; and is the 4th highest, after the affluent Triangle area (Orange, Wake and Chatham counties) in North Carolina.

Its job growth and relative wealth have attracted new residents at a prolific pace. One of the fastest growing large cities in the country, the number of people who call Charlotte home increased by 10% between 2010 and 2014, more than twice the statewide average. Charlotte is the 17th largest city in the United States by population. Mecklenburg County crossed the million-person mark in 2014 and contains over 10% of North Carolina's total population.

Yet a more searching examination reveals splintering fault lines beneath Charlotte's often gleaming surface. Racial and economic divides attest to the reality that Charlotte's enviable growth is not widely shared. Warning signs have been documented in a series of national studies, some of which have been covered widely by local media, and have led to the formation of an impressive Charlotte-Mecklenburg Opportunity Task Force in response to the varied challenges. An array of reports by the Equality of Opportunity Project, led by Stanford economist, Raj Chetty, revealing intense economic mobility concerns; an Urban Institute analysis of the availability of affordable housing; a recent Brookings Institute measure of economic inclusion and an earlier Brookings study on concentrated poverty have all cast a critical light on Charlotte. It is to the city's credit that these revelations have elicited both self-exploration and initial responsive actions by civic leaders.

A dive into demographic and economic data confirms both Charlotte's economic prowess and its shortcomings. Charlotte's economy generates tremendous prosperity. But the tangled confluence of poverty, racial disparity, segregation in housing and education, neighborhood disadvantage, wage segmentation, and other forces have relegated many residents to the sidelines. If unchecked, such trends will imperil the Queen City's long-term growth. Gaps by race are especially worrisome as they appear in multiple reinforcing and 4 interlocking guises that accumulate over time. Mushrooming levels of poverty, concentrated poverty, segregation, income inequality, labor force polarization, and a shortage of affordable housing threaten to bolster and entrench Charlotte's noted economic mobility challenges. A racialized, concentrating poverty has led to the creation of some of North Carolina's most intense pockets of economic distress in the state's most commercially vibrant city. Inequality in educational opportunity and housing access have followed. In the last decade, significant labor market fragmentation—with the disappearance of much middle income employment—threatens to make highly disparate patterns of community and opportunity even more rigid.

No single measure, of course, can be proposed to successfully combat such worrisome challenges. The troubling vectors merge. Mobility, inequality, segregation and poverty cannot be effectively separated. They are the joined cousins of economic injustice. Fostering equity and inclusion can boost opportunities for individuals, strengthen communities, and build more vibrant, encompassing economies. In a city of immense economic prowess and noted civic pride, economic deprivation of such magnitude and intensity presents a potent and haunting moral question as well.

**“They don’t want to help you when you’re in crisis– child care, food stamps, and stuff. But they also don’t want to pay you enough that you can get by without those things either. I think they do it on purpose, to leave you trapped. We’re made to feel like we don’t count. No matter how hard we work, we can’t get ahead. Everything we get, everything our kids get, is the worst. I’m angry about it. We work as hard as the folks in the offices do, even harder. They get rich off of the work we do. I want to ask them, ‘why don’t you pay us a wage we might be able to live on?’ You make plenty of money to do that. ‘Why don’t you care whether the people who work for you can have a life if they work hard and do right by you?’ You know you can’t make food and rent and transportation and electricity and day care on eight or nine dollars an hour.**

**I work hard. I do a good job and I’m responsible. But I’ve gone for years without a raise. I want a life like other people do. I want a chance to get ahead. Maybe, just for a minute, to enjoy life a little. And all you people talk about being so religious all the time. Where’s the Christianity in this? What’s decent about it? If you feel so responsible to your shareholders, why don’t you feel any responsibility to the people who work for you? Why don’t we matter? Why won’t you pay us a wage we can live on?”**

**- Cynthia L.  
Low-wage worker, Charlotte, NC  
Volunteer, Crisis Assistance  
Ministry**

## *Detailed New National Maps Show How Neighborhoods Shape Children for Life*

**Some places lift children out of poverty. Others trap them there. Now cities are trying to do something about the difference.**

From The New York Times  
By Emily Badger and Quoc Trung Bui  
October 1, 2018

SEATTLE — The part of this city east of Northgate Mall looks like many of the neighborhoods that surround it, with its modest midcentury homes beneath dogwood and Douglas fir trees. Whatever distinguishes this place is invisible from the street. But it appears that poor children who grow up here — to a greater degree than children living even a mile away — have good odds of escaping poverty over the course of their lives.

Believing this, officials in the Seattle Housing Authority are offering some families with housing vouchers extra rent money and help to find a home here: between 100th and 115th Streets, east of Meridian, west of 35th Avenue. Officials drew these lines, and boundaries around several other Seattle neighborhoods, using [highly detailed research](#) on the economic fortunes of children in nearly every neighborhood in America.

The research has shown that [where children live](#) matters deeply in whether they prosper as adults. On Monday the Census Bureau, in collaboration with researchers at Harvard and Brown, [published nationwide data](#) that will make it possible to pinpoint — down to the census tract, a level relevant to individual families — where children of all backgrounds have the best shot at getting ahead.

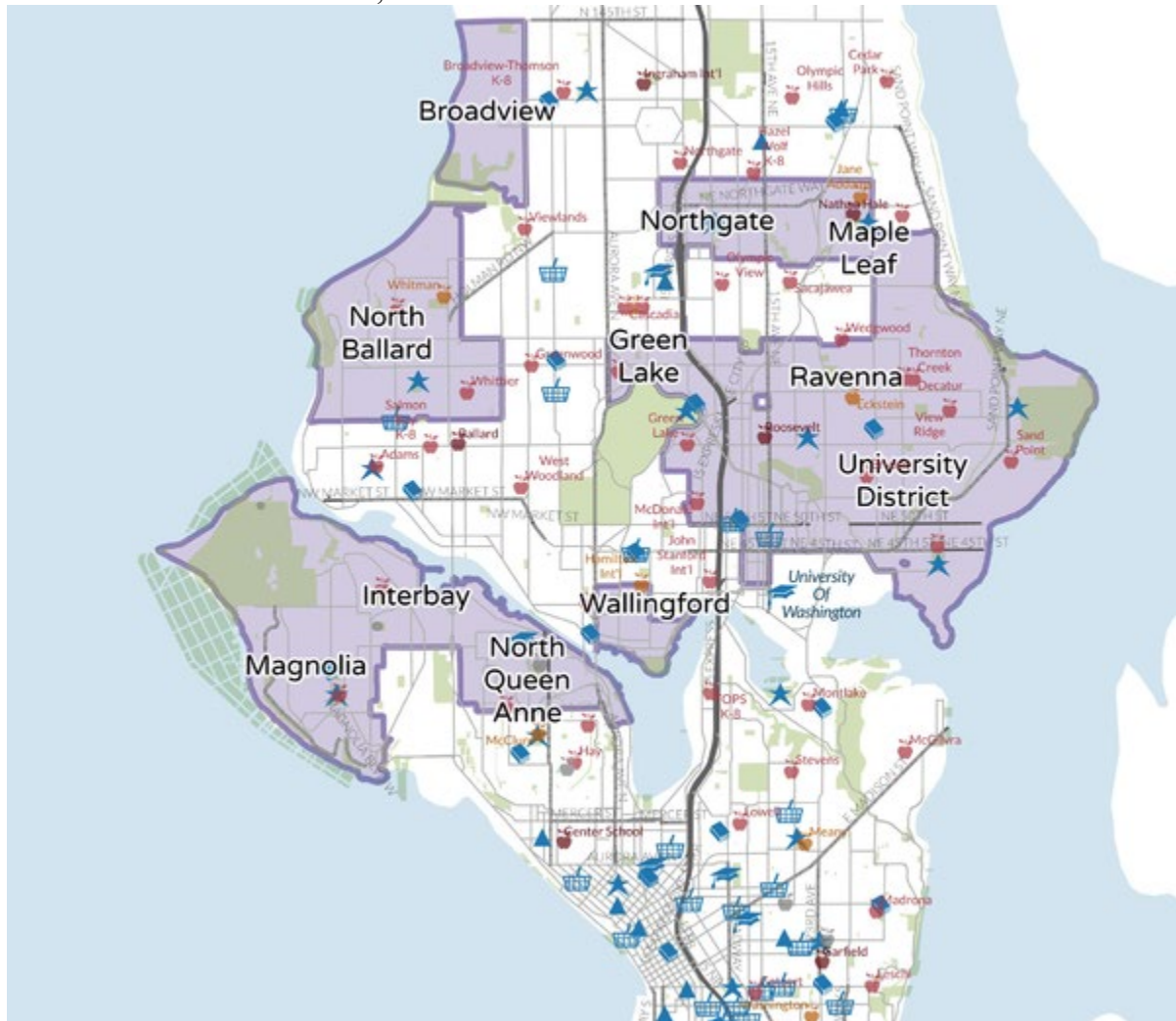
[This work](#), years in the making, seeks to bring the abstract promise of big data to the real lives of children. Across the country, city officials and philanthropists who have dreamed of such a map are planning how to use it. They're hoping it can help crack open a problem, the persistence of neighborhood disadvantage, that has been resistant to government interventions and good intentions for years.

Nationwide, the variation is striking. Children raised in poor families in some neighborhoods of Memphis went on to make just \$16,000 a year in their adult households; children from families of similar means living in parts of the Minneapolis suburbs ended up making four times as much. The local disparities, however, are the most curious, and the most compelling to policymakers. In one of the tracts just north of Seattle's 115th Street — a place that looks similarly leafy, with access to the same middle school — poor children went on to households earning about \$5,000

less per year than children raised in Northgate. They were more likely to be incarcerated and less likely to be employed.

The researchers believe much of this variation is driven by the neighborhoods themselves, [not by differences](#) in what brings people to live in them. The more years children spend in a good neighborhood, the greater the benefits they receive. And what matters, the researchers find, is a hyper-local setting: the environment within about half a mile of a child's home.

At that scale, these patterns — a refinement of previous research [at the county level](#) — have become much less theoretical, and easier to act on.



*A map used by the Seattle Housing Authority identifies neighborhoods, shaded in purple, where housing officials and researchers believe that poor children have particularly good odds of rising out of poverty. Seattle Housing Authority*

“That’s exciting and inspiring and daunting in some ways that we’re actually talking about real families, about kids growing up in different neighborhoods based on this data,” said the Harvard



economist Raj Chetty, one of the project’s researchers, along with Nathaniel Hendren at Harvard, John N. Friedman at Brown, and Maggie R. Jones and Sonya R. Porter at the Census Bureau. The Seattle and King County housing authorities are testing whether they can leverage their voucher programs to move families to where opportunity already exists. In Charlotte, where poverty is deeper and more widespread, community leaders are hoping to nurse opportunity where it’s missing.

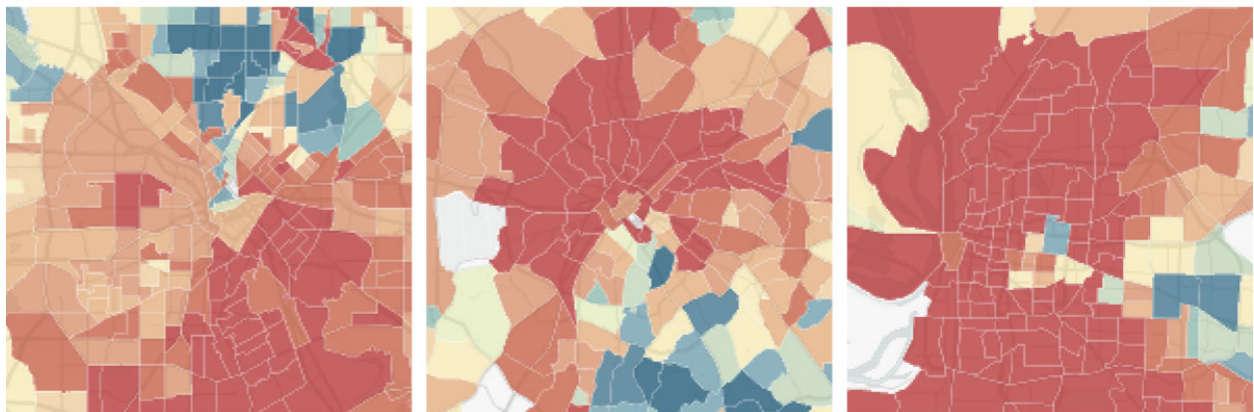
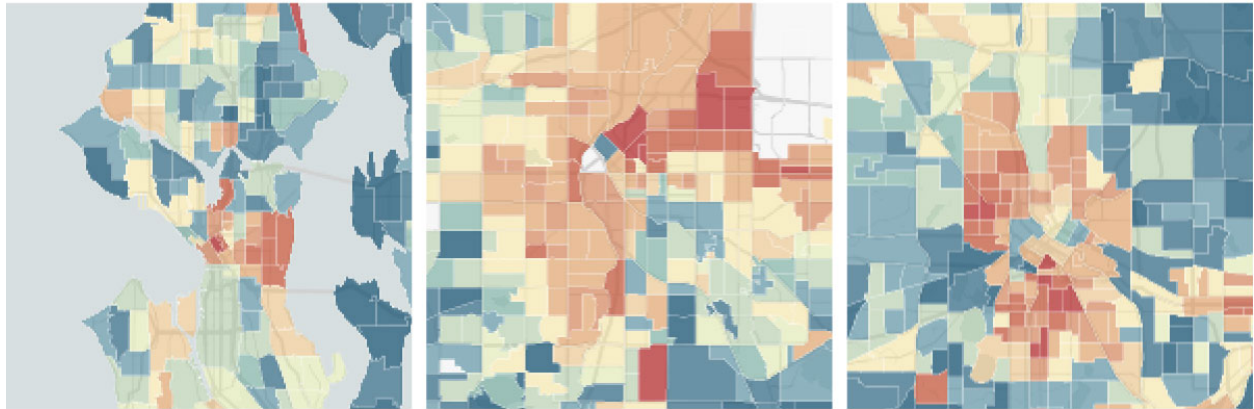
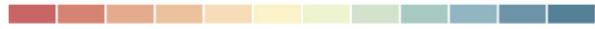
In other communities, the researchers envision that this mapping could help identify sites for new Head Start centers, or neighborhoods for [“Opportunity Zones”](#) created by the 2017 tax law. Children from low-opportunity neighborhoods, they suggest, could merit priority for selective high schools.

For any government program or community grant that targets a specific *place*, this data proposes a better way to pick those places — one based not on neighborhood poverty levels, but on whether we expect children will escape poverty as adults.

That metric is both more specific and more mysterious. Researchers still don’t understand exactly what leads some neighborhoods to nurture children, although they point to characteristics like more employed adults and two-parent families that are common among such places. Other features like school boundary lines and poverty levels often cited as indicators of good neighborhoods explain only half of the variation here.

“These things are now possible to think about in a different way than you thought about them before,” said Greg Russ, the head of the Minneapolis Public Housing Authority, which is also planning to use the data. “Is opportunity a block away? These are the kind of questions we can ask.”

The answers shown here are based on the adult earnings of 20.5 million children, captured in anonymous, individual-level census and tax data that links each child with his or her parents. That data covers nearly all children in America born between 1978 and 1983, although the map here illustrates the subset of those children raised in poorer families. The research offers a time-lapse view of what happened to them: who became a teenage mother, who went to prison, who wound up in the middle class, and who remained trapped in poverty for another generation. Few of the children from Northgate still live in the neighborhood, but the data traces their outcomes as adults today back to the place that helped shape them.



**Expected adult household income for poor children**

The patterns broadly hold true for children growing up today, the researchers believe, even though the data reflects the experience of people now in their 30s. In rapidly changing cities like Seattle, some neighborhoods will look quite different now. So in drawing their opportunity maps, the housing authorities here, working with Mr. Chetty’s team, also considered indicators like poverty rates and test scores for poor students today.

The researchers argue, however, that this data that looks back over the last 30 years can reveal something about a place that’s not captured in snapshots of its conditions today.

In Seattle, that picture confirmed what housing officials feared — that their voucher holders had long been clustered in neighborhoods offering the least upward mobility.

“It really struck us as, well, we are contributing to this problem, not solving the problem,” said Andrew Lofton, the executive director of the Seattle Housing Authority.

Here the response means offering some of those families more choices in where to live. But that solution won't help every child, or even many of them. The larger question is how to convert struggling neighborhoods into places where poor children are likely to thrive.

In other regions, the differences between such places are more visible than in Seattle.

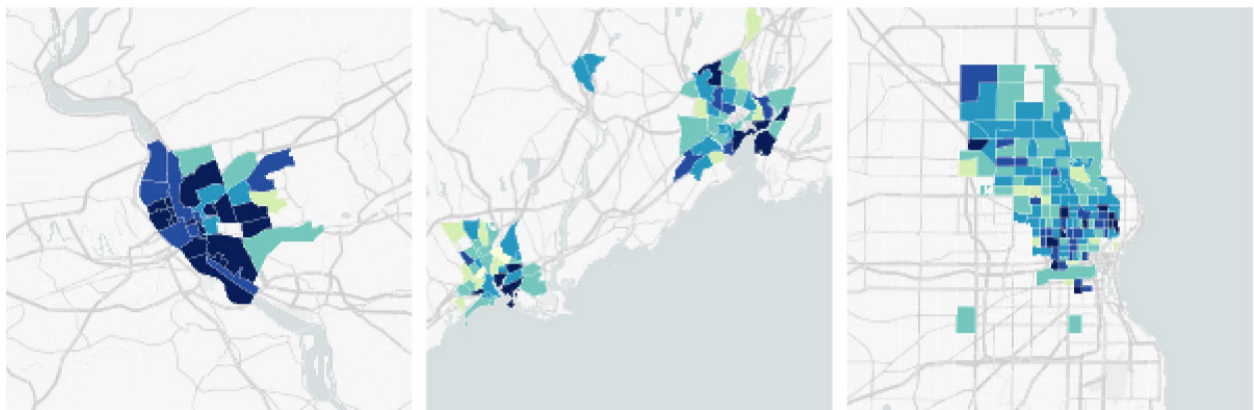
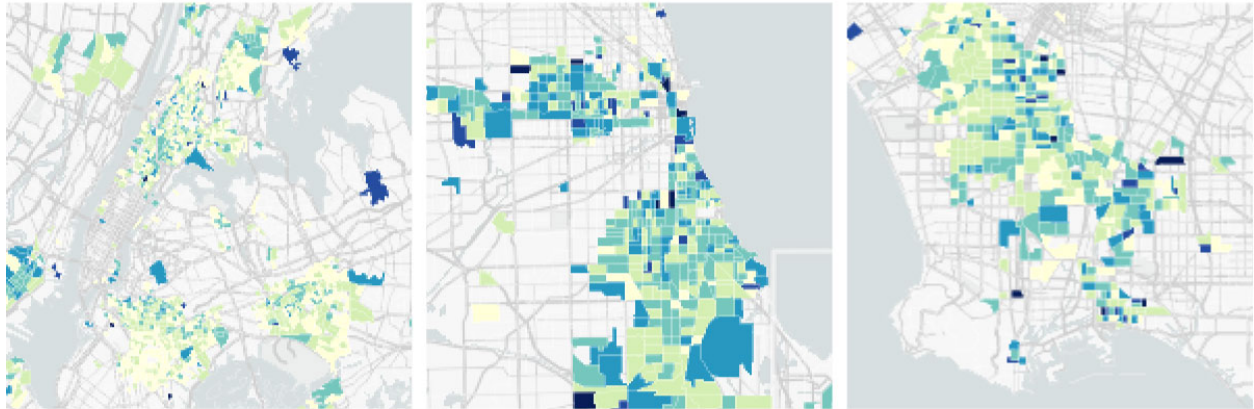
In the Charlotte area, Ophelia Garmon-Brown, a longtime family physician, sees in these maps clear traces of where the fewest jobs are, where the high-poverty schools are, where African-American families live.

“You could drive from your home in south Charlotte to your banking job downtown and never see poverty, because we're so segregated,” said Dr. Garmon-Brown, who grew up poor herself, in Detroit. “In some of this, we have to admit that was intentional.”

The earlier research showed Charlotte as among the [worst large metropolitan areas in the country](#) in creating opportunity for poor children, a realization that prompted the community to create [a task force](#) co-chaired by Dr. Garmon-Brown. At this finer scale, parsing outcomes by race and neighborhood, poor white children in Charlotte have had more opportunity than poor black children, even when they've grown up in the same neighborhoods. In many parts of the region, however, their worlds simply don't overlap.

In other communities, what separates neighborhoods is probably tied to incarceration. Included in the new census data are neighborhood-level rates of children who were later counted in the census in prisons or jails on April 1, 2010.

About 1.5 percent of the entire cohort, adults then in their late 20s to early 30s, were incarcerated on that single day. For some neighborhoods in Milwaukee or New Haven, that number was far higher: As many as one in four poor black boys growing up in those places were incarcerated. Their neighborhoods — or something about how those neighborhoods were policed — sent more poor children into prison than out of poverty.



**Share of black men from poor families  
who were incarcerated on April 1, 2010**

Underscoring how difficult it will be to transform these places, the federal government has spent billions in struggling neighborhoods over the years, funneling as much as \$500 million into some individual census tracts since 1990, according to a tally by researchers of major placed-based initiatives like block grants and housing redevelopment programs.

“And yet we’ve never been able as a country to fully know whether and to what degree those investments were efficacious,” said Kathryn Edin, a Princeton sociologist.

Ms. Edin and other researchers working with Mr. Chetty plan to re-examine those past government programs with the new data, which makes it possible to identify where children lived when they were exposed to those investments, and what happened to them afterward.

If the answers are not clear yet, there is a hint of answers coming, now that we have fine-grained data on millions of children, now that cities alarmed by the results are taking notice, now that philanthropists are lining up to help.

In Seattle, where all these pieces have converged, housing officials were recently driving past neighborhoods their map doesn't identify, into "opportunity areas" where families have begun to move.

"I believe the results of the data, but we all wish we knew what the distinguishing attributes are, so that we could build them in other neighborhoods," said Andria Lazaga, the director of policy and strategic initiatives with the Seattle Housing Authority. "That's the dream — to figure that out."

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*The poor children shown here were raised in families making about \$27,000 a year (in 2015 dollars), at the 25th percentile of the national income distribution. Not all neighborhoods were home to such families, so researchers calculated tract-level estimates by extrapolating from the results of families at other percentiles who were present there. Data is not shown in tracts with few children. Results not shown here covering other income levels and full outcomes including incarceration are [available here](#).*

**Josh Williams** contributed research.

## *What Poverty Looks Like in Charlotte*

From *The Charlotte Observer*

By Gene R. Nichol

July 16, 2016



A homeless woman on North Tryon last year. Robert Lahser File photo

My colleagues and I – in partnership with friends at Crisis Assistance Ministry – have, for some months, been studying poverty and economic hardship in Charlotte. I know that seems odd. The Queen City is, on an array of fronts, an economic powerhouse.

Charlotte is America's 17th largest city, one of the country's fastest growing. It is home to 10 percent of North Carolina's people, but produces 30 percent of its GDP. Over 25 percent of Charlotte households make at least \$100,000 a year, a much higher ratio than the state's.

But, as most Charlotteans know, the city's ample prosperity has often, of late, been said to be inadequately shared. Stanford Professor Raj Chetty identified intense economic mobility challenges. The Urban Institute documented shortages of affordable housing. The Brookings Institute noted trends of economic exclusion and concentrated poverty. It is fair to say these embarrassing negative markers spiked the city's attention.

We've attempted, therefore, a somewhat deeper and more particularized dive into Charlotte's economic polarization. We've explored a good deal of demographic data. Perhaps more tellingly, we've also done extensive interviews with low-income residents through Crisis Assistance – hoping to help put a face on the city's "working poverty." The results have been eye-opening.

Charlotte's impressive income figures mask notable racial disparities. Seventy percent of black households make less than \$60,000 a year, while almost 60 percent of white ones make more than that. The median income for white families is 86 percent higher than for black and Hispanic ones.

Poverty appears at surprising and disparate levels. It has almost doubled since 2000 (from 10 to 18 percent), one of the sharpest increases in the nation. Roughly three times as many African-Americans and Hispanics live in wrenching poverty as whites. For kids, it's worse. A quarter of Charlotte children are poor – 5 percent of white kids, 36 percent of blacks, 39 percent of Hispanics.

Jaw-dropping as the poverty figures are, Charlotte's trends toward concentrated poverty may be even more worrisome. In high-poverty neighborhoods, the poor must cope not only with the challenges of their own deprivation, but also with those of their neighbors. Dangerous streets, substandard housing, challenged schools, sparse transportation, isolation from commercial opportunities and services – the list is long.

In 2000, 19 percent of Charlotte census tracts were deemed high poverty (over 20 percent of residents poor). By 2014, 34 percent of tracts were – again, one of the country's steepest increases. Seventy of the 79 high poverty tracts are majority-minority. Four of North Carolina's 10 most severely distressed neighborhoods are in Charlotte.

Charlotte's economic polarization is also increasingly entrenched by highly stratified patterns of employment and compensation. Over the past decade, large percentages of middle income jobs have been lost. Almost 85 percent of job gains, on the other hand, have been either low wage (under \$36,000) or high wage (over \$82,000). And salaries for the low wage positions have often proven to be either stagnant or falling.

Intense pockets of distress present a distinct moral issue in North Carolina's wealthiest city. A metropolis of commercial genius becomes, or maintains, a potent landscape of economic apartheid. Stunning numbers are locked out, denied meaningful prospects, as they serve others who prosper.

As Melissa, from Crisis Assistance, explained:

“I don't mind hard work. Done it all my life. But I also want to have a life – a chance to advance. I'm tired of living below mediocre, always the worst of everything. Where we live, the schools our kids go to, the very bottom of the barrel. Why is it always a desperate fight?”

# *'Money Rock' Dives Deep into Charlotte's History of Inequities*

From *The Charlotte Observer*

By Theodore O. Fillette

September 23, 2018



*The Piedmont Courts public housing complex in Charlotte, days after a drug dealers' shootout in December 1985. Photo: Jeep Hunter, courtesy of the Charlotte Observer*

If I were emperor, *Money Rock: A Family's Story of Cocaine, Race and Ambition in the New South* would be required reading for all local, state and federal elected officials with jurisdiction over any part of Mecklenburg County, as well as for the Charlotte city manager and police chief, the county manager, all members of the Charlotte Housing Authority board of commissioners and all Charlotte Chamber members.

Pam Kelley has written a powerful book about one family who struggles with poverty, crime, incarceration, domestic violence, dysfunctional relationships and loving ones, extreme tragedies and intense religious experiences. Using her training as a journalist, Kelley – formerly an award-winning reporter for the *Charlotte Observer* – covers efficiently the four W's: who, what, when and where.

But what makes this book so important for government and civic leaders is Kelley's pursuit of the fifth and most difficult W: Why?

In telling the "why" she offers two related, interwoven stories. One is Charlotte's history of race relations, poverty and severe inequality of wealth and opportunity. The second recounts the



national policies that established and maintained institutional racial segregation and economic inequality, as well as the criminalization of conduct and mass incarceration of black males.

The book focuses on Belton Lamont Platt, who became a successful and notorious cocaine dealer known on the streets of Charlotte as “Money Rock.”

Platt’s parents were low-income African Americans, high school dropouts without marketable skills. His father, Alphonso, was a small-time drug dealer who abused alcohol and committed extreme domestic violence against his wife, Belton Platt’s mother, Carrie. He and Carrie had five children who suffered instability, poverty and fear of domestic violence. All the males went on to lives of crime and incarceration.



*Belton Platt, top row center, as a Boy Scout. His stepfather Lonnie Graves is at lower left.*

*Photo: Tom Franklin, courtesy of The Charlotte Observer*

Belton Platt, as a child, showed entrepreneurial ambition and skills. He was a natural salesman. His mother was charismatic, politically aware, socially conscious and skilled in survival. But Carrie Platt, now Carrie Graves, was trapped in a violent domestic relationship for which, in the 1960s, there was no feasible legal remedy in North Carolina and, in Charlotte, no shelter for battered women.

Eventually Carrie Graves found a way to take her children and escape Alphonso. She quickly found a young, honorable, law-abiding husband who served as a positive role model to Belton and his siblings. That was a rare thing in public housing in Charlotte during the 1970s and, based on this writer’s observations, afterward as well.

Compared to other families living in extreme poverty and in public housing, Belton Platt seemed to have a relatively promising opportunity. But when he reached adolescence, he rediscovered his biological father. Alphonso’s life in a pool hall, trafficking drugs, was more exciting and

powerful than the bland life of janitorial service and Boy Scouts offered by Belton Platt's stepfather, Lonnie Graves.

For a short while Belton Platt and a high school girlfriend dabbled in the straight life of janitorial work. But he grew weary of laboring from 10 p.m. to dawn to earn only \$750 a week. That could not compete with the entrepreneurial success of drug trafficking where, by age 22, he could earn as much as \$30,000 a week, with expensive cars, jewelry, clothes and women. He became a local rock star.

Platt enjoyed the power and respect he won. He helped his mother and others in need. Platt (and later his sons) lived by the "code of the street" – personal respect was the highest value, meaning a man had to have the right clothes and cars and the ability to fight for what he wanted. Drug traffickers disregarded the laws of the larger society, embodied by police and the courts, because they thought they had nothing to lose.

What Platt came to lose was everything except his life. Caught in a federal drug sting, he was convicted of felony conspiracy to traffic cocaine. The federal district judge, Robert Potter, nicknamed "Maximum Bob," for his harsh sentencing, sentenced Platt to 24 years in federal prison. Potter, as it happens, was the judge who in 1999 presided over a civil claim by white parents in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools challenging part of the policy that reserved seats in magnet schools for minority students. Potter went further than the parents' request and declared the entire school integration system, which the U.S. Supreme Court had affirmed in 1971, to be obsolete. That resulted in the resegregation of the local public schools within another two years.



*Belton Platt during a 1986 interview in Raleigh's Central Prison with author Pam Kelly, then a reporter for The Charlotte Observer. Photo: Candace Freeland, courtesy of The Charlotte Observer*

In a series of federal prisons, Platt found Christ and new mentors. He became a prison minister of sorts and began using his religious beliefs to guide his life decisions. He was incarcerated for 21 years. Meanwhile, all eight of his male children were arrested for felony crimes by the time they were teens. Some went to state prison for long periods; some were killed; one committed suicide.

Why did all this happen to Platt and his family? Kelley does not answer that precisely, instead offering multiple, interrelated causes. But rather than point to the simplistic answer, “They made bad choices,” Kelley postulates correctly that the fundamental factor was the abject poverty and lack of viable, legitimate means to make a decent living.

From exhaustive research, Kelley provides the historic framework for how poverty was created and maintained in Charlotte and the nation as a whole. It is a history of white supremacy, voter suppression, unequal and separate education, employment discrimination, redlining of real estate that prevented black citizens from obtaining home mortgages and accumulating wealth, and many other devices. At one point Charlotte was ranked the fifth most racially segregated city in the country.

Juxtaposed with that ugly factual history was Charlotte’s record of boosterism and its work to create a self-image as a “progressive” place in race relations and to distinguish itself, as a “New South” city, from places like Birmingham, Ala.

This image was cracked and then shattered in recent years. In 2013, researchers at Harvard and Cal Berkeley showed that among the 50 largest U.S. cities, Charlotte ranked dead last for upward economic mobility among its poor residents. Then, in September 2016 came violent reactions when Charlotte police shot and killed a black man, Keith Lamont Scott.

Kelley describes how those challenges to the city’s self-image triggered a series of soul-searching meetings and discussions in Charlotte. This is not a new method of community reaction to embarrassing developments in Charlotte. This writer has spent many an hour in similar undertakings, which have resulted in numerous studies and proposals that, high-minded as they were, have been largely ignored.

In her epilogue Kelley aptly sums up this exercise: “If conversation alone could transform a place Charlotte would be a burgeoning utopia.”

If reading an analysis of the causes of crime, violence, pathological poverty and injustice could begin to transform a place, then having enough people of power and conscience read *Money Rock* would be this writer’s prescription.

## *Charlotte spent millions on low-income housing, but poor people can't afford it*

From *The Charlotte Observer*

By Fred Clasen-Kelly and Julianna Rennie

October 18, 2018

Over the last 16 years, the city of Charlotte has spent or committed at least \$124 million to build affordable housing. Next month, city leaders will ask voters for \$50 million more.

But the money hasn't helped people like Curtis Simpson.

He's worked full-time as a custodian for nine years at Independence High School, but on his \$25,500-a-year salary, he said he can't find a decent place to live.

Simpson said he and his longtime partner, Tameka Boone, and their four children once lived in a motel room for a year because they could not afford an apartment near good schools. Three years ago, the family moved into a duplex east of uptown. They were nearly evicted in May when medical debts piled up and they fell two months behind on rent.

Simpson said he juggles bills to pay \$650 a month for a three-bedroom duplex with roaches,



mold and plumbing so bad sometimes he can't take a bath. Simpson said he wants to move because the conditions in the duplex aggravate his 16-year-old son's asthma, but he found nothing he can afford.

"I work my butt off to pay the bills," said Simpson, 47, a lifelong Charlotte resident. "My reward is to fix this and fix that. It makes you feel like something less than a man."

*Curtis Simpson and his longtime partner, Tameka Boone, said their east Charlotte duplex has roaches, mold and plumbing problems. Simpson wants to move to a new home, but says his \$25,500 a year salary as a school custodian isn't enough for safe and decent housing in Charlotte. Photo: David T. Foster, courtesy of The Charlotte Observer*

"It's ridiculous," Corine Mack, president of the Charlotte chapter of the NAACP, said of the city's spending from the Housing Trust Fund. "The people who need the most help should get the most help."

### **City satisfied with choices**

Unstable housing has been linked to poor school performance, economic inequality, racial segregation and other social problems. The Charlotte Mecklenburg Opportunity Task Force cited a shortage of affordable housing as a major reason a Harvard and UC-Berkeley study found poor children in Charlotte are less likely to escape poverty than their peers in America's 50 largest cities.

Charlotte's failure to provide enough affordable housing threatens to force out residents who could benefit most from access to jobs, education and transportation that living in the city can provide, said Robert Dawkins, a longtime community activist who has lobbied city leaders for more low-cost housing.

"Charlotte is unaffordable for the people who wash your car and who wait on your table," Dawkins said. "What's going to happen to city workers who don't make a lot of money? We need to reframe to focus on the least among us."



*Despite spending \$100 million for new low-cost apartments and homes, Charlotte has a shortage 34,000 affordable housing units needed to meet demand. That's about double from a decade ago.*  
Photo: Jeff Siner, courtesy of The Charlotte Observer

But most city leaders have said that Housing Trust Fund money has been spent wisely, and that they have helped pay for apartments and other projects for people with extremely low incomes when they could.

Mayor Vi Lyles said it is counter productive to debate who is the most deserving of government aid.

Social workers, firefighters and other lower-paid professionals have been impacted by rising housing costs as well as custodians, daycare workers and others who make closer to minimum wage, Lyles said.

"When people start to parse out, 'Well, who are you going to do this for? And who are you going to do (that) for?' — sometimes I wonder if we're really trying to create division instead of unity," Lyles said. "And my goal is that everyone in this community should have a decent place to live."

At the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department, where starting officers make around \$45,000 a year, officers have publicly [complained](#) about their ability to live in Charlotte on their salaries. Teachers, whose starting salaries are about \$40,000 a year in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, protested on the State Capitol in May for better pay.

"The concern about 30 percent of area median income is a little overstated," council member Ed Driggs said. "At 60 and 80 percent of area median income, rents are rising faster than incomes. We tried to take a broad spectrum approach."

However, [a city-hired consultant told the City Council last year](#) that the largest deficit for affordable housing is for households with extremely low incomes. It marked the second time in five years that a consultant told Charlotte leaders that the private market generally provided enough housing affordable to people with higher incomes, according to a September 2017 Observer report.

Housing trust funds in many cities fail to deliver enough rental apartments and other housing for the poorest of the poor, said Michael Anderson, director of the Housing Trust Fund Project for the Center for Community Change, a social justice group that advocates for affordable housing.

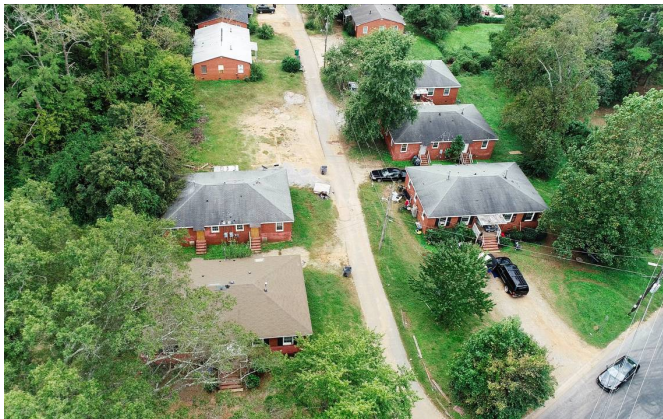


Anderson said that doesn't mean voters should not support Charlotte's ballot proposal. Housing trust funds serve a need and create jobs in construction and home building, he said. Some cities have enacted policies that ensure more money goes to the very poor, Anderson said. "To expand its housing trust fund, Charlotte has got to get that right," he said.

*Curtis Simpson said roaches swarmed the inside of his east Charlotte duplex after his neighbor was evicted. He said he is hesitant to have people come to his home because bugs may crawl on guests. Photo: David T. Foster III, courtesy of The Charlotte Observer*

### **Out of reach**

Even in Grier Heights — one of Charlotte's most challenged neighborhoods with poverty, crime and unemployment — the duplexes where Simpson lives stand out. Weeds, overgrown shrubbery and trash surround two rows of brick one-story buildings. A stench from dirty diapers and other garbage wafts through the air. Records show city inspectors have investigated more than a dozen complaints at the duplex since 2016. The complaints included mold, broken sinks, faulty heating and electrical and inoperable smoke detectors. Wooden boards cover windows and doors of one vacant building, but neighbors said drug dealers, prostitutes and squatters sometimes occupy empty units because the doors are not locked and windows are not secured.



*City inspectors have investigated more than a dozen complaints since 2016 at the row of duplexes along Billingsley Road in east Charlotte. The owners are negotiating to sell the property, neighbors said. Photo: David T. Foster III, courtesy of The Charlotte Observer*

Inside Simpson's unit, he said, roaches swarmed the walls after his next-door neighbor was evicted. When the plumbing fails, he said, the family has been forced to use water from a sink to fill the toilet. Other times, they put towels on the floor to soak up water when the toilet leaks. Simpson said he has remained in the duplex for three years because he has nowhere else to go. The family previously lived in a weekly motel on Albemarle Road in east Charlotte, paying \$265 weekly. Six of them slept on one bed and a sofa.

So when he found the duplex on Billingsley Road, Simpson said, he felt lucky despite the foul odor and a hole in the kitchen floor. There was no credit history check and no questions asked, he said.

“When I came in here (the first time), I was like ‘Lord have mercy,’” he said, recalling the stench and damaged floors throughout the unit. “I said a little prayer...I pulled my shirt over my nose.” The federal Department of Housing and Urban Development says families in Charlotte whose incomes are less than 30 percent of area median can afford about \$400 a month in rent and utilities.

That ensures they have enough left for food, medicine, clothing and other basic needs, the agency says.

But Charlotte has given money from the Housing Trust Fund to developers building rental housing that costs \$750 to \$1,300 a month.

That leaves out people like Simpson.

After taxes, he said, he brings home about \$1,600 a month. Boone, his partner, said she suffers from diabetes and that multiple foot surgeries have left her unable to work at a daycare center, where she once made \$11 an hour. Simpson said he also had surgery this year because he was diagnosed with polyps in his stomach.

Between medical bills, groceries, phone bills and other expenses, Boone said they often run out of money before all the bills are paid. “Something is not going to get paid,” Boone said. “It may be.... we get a little less food.”



*Curtis Simpson said his family lived in a motel until they moved into a duplex in east Charlotte three years ago. Simpson said the conditions inside the home aggravate his son’s asthma, but he can’t move because of a lack of affordable housing in Charlotte. Photo: David T. Foster III, courtesy of The Charlotte Observer*

### **What other cities do**

When Charlotte officials established the Housing Trust Fund in 2001, they worried that increasing housing costs could slow the city’s economic and population growth by forcing families with lower incomes to move to outlying towns and cities.

They vowed to help developers build affordable homes for police officers, teachers and other lower-paid professionals and the very poor, which included minimum-wage earners, the disabled and homeless.

But unlike some other cities, Charlotte does not set aside a large portion of Housing Trust Fund money for people who have extremely low incomes. Places such as Pittsburgh, Detroit and Philadelphia, have pledged that at least half of Housing Trust Fund money benefit their poorest residents.

[A 2016 report](#) from Pittsburgh leaders called those policies a national best practice.

Pamela Wideman, Charlotte’s director of housing and neighborhood services, said her goal is to pursue a more balanced approach.

Rent has jumped 36 percent in the past five years in Charlotte, climbing to a monthly average of \$1,142, while wages have not kept pace.

As a result, Wideman said, the city has a responsibility to help as many people as possible.

The City Council earlier this year approved a [new plan](#) that calls for developers receiving public money to set aside 20 percent of units for the very poor when it is financially feasible, Wideman said.

“It’s about finding the right balance,” Wideman said. “If we find the right balance, it will lift all boats.”

But a [national report found](#) the Charlotte area has 34 units of available affordable housing for every 100 families with extremely low incomes. Metro Charlotte has more than enough housing for families with middle and high incomes, the report says.



*Charlotte leaders are asking voters to approve \$50 million in bonds for affordable housing over the next two years on November’s ballot. The Charlotte Mecklenburg Opportunity Task Force cited a shortage of affordable housing as a major reason a Harvard and UC-Berkeley study found poor children in Charlotte are less likely to escape poverty than their peers in America’s 50 largest cities. Photo: Jeff Siner, courtesy of The Charlotte Observer*

### **Counting beds**

Wideman told the City Council earlier this year that about half the money from the Housing Trust Fund supports projects that help people earning no more than 30 percent of area median income.

But that doesn’t mean people got permanent housing.

In 2004, for example, the city gave \$192,000 from the Trust Fund to a renovation project at the Salvation Army’s Center of Hope homeless shelter for women. City officials then counted that as 114 units of affordable housing even though the shelter provides clients with only a temporary place to sleep.

Ten years later, the city provided the shelter another \$500,000 for an expansion. Officials calculated that as 64 units of affordable housing.

In all, records show, city officials counted about 670 shelter beds and other transitional shelters as affordable housing units since they started using money from the Trust Fund 16 years ago.

Angie Forde, a longtime affordable housing activist, said city leaders are using those numbers to hide how few apartments the Housing Trust Fund provides to the very poor. Expanding the supply of housing affordable to people with extremely low incomes would reduce the need for homeless shelter beds, Forde said.

“What the city is doing is a cynical joke,” she said.





Wideman acknowledged that officials counted shelter beds as housing units. In some cases, Wideman said, people remain in transitional housing for months or years instead of a few days.

#### **A case study**

A planned apartment complex near the old Charlotte Coliseum site on Tyvola Road is an example of the type of project the Charlotte City Council has supported financially.

*The Charlotte City Council agreed to provide \$5.6 million to help a developer build affordable housing along West Tyvola Road near the old Charlotte Coliseum site.*

*Google Street View*

Laurel Street Residential, a Charlotte-based developer, [bought 11.6 acres from the city](#) last year, according to a March 2017 report from the Observer. In September, the Charlotte City Council agreed to provide the developer money from [the Housing Trust Fund](#).

When complete, the developer and city officials say, it will bring 200 new units for people with lower incomes. But most people who need low-cost housing cannot afford the apartments even though taxpayers are providing more than \$5 million to help build them.

Interviews and a review of city documents found:

- Of the 200 units, none are priced to be affordable to people making 30 percent of area median income or less. The lowest-priced units — 80 of them targeted to senior citizens with low incomes — would rent for \$700 to \$800 a month.
- Some 120 of the proposed apartments will rent for \$850 to \$1,300 a month. That’s roughly the same price range as some other nearby apartment complexes that did not receive taxpayer dollars.

In the Yorkmount neighborhood, near the development, rent averages between \$795 and \$1,181 a month, depending on the number of bedrooms, [according to RentCafe](#), a website that tracks rent prices.

Lee Cochran, senior vice president for Laurel Street, said his company used the CityPark View housing complex across the street from the planned development as a comparison for prices. [CityPark View](#), which advertises luxury apartments, a swimming pool and fitness center, is renting one and two-bedroom apartments for \$1,042 to \$1,343 a month, according to Zillow, a real estate tracking website.

“It’s a wasted opportunity,” said Terry Allebaugh, community impact coordinator for the North Carolina Coalition to End Homelessness. “What have you really done? Is that the best use of public dollars?”

Asked why there wasn’t a bigger difference in the prices between proposed homes and nearby apartments, Cochran said subsidies from the Housing Trust Fund will keep many of the units in his company’s development affordable into the future even as rents rise at other places.

Laurel Street agreed to deed restrictions that mean the company must offer affordable rents on units for at least 15 years, Cochran said.

But the agreement for the project guarantees affordability for a far shorter period than other projects awarded Housing Trust Fund money.

Deed restrictions for similar projects historically call for affordable rents to remain in place for 30 or 40 years, affordable housing advocates said.

And Cochran said 59 units in the West Tyvola development will have unrestricted deeds, meaning that the developer can set rents at private market rates.

Still, council member Braxton Winston said the West Tyvola apartments deserved public support because they provide homes for seniors, a growing segment of the city's population.

"We are sometimes forced to ask ourselves, 'What will be built there if we don't try to bring some sort of affordability to this area?'" said Winston, who was elected last November.

### **A new home?**

Curtis Simpson and his neighbors may have to move from their homes. They said the landlord has put the property up for sale.

One resident complained about the roaches in his unit, snakes that come in the yard and other problems, but said he is afraid he will find nothing else in Charlotte he can afford.

Simpson is in the same predicament.

Just in May, he was two months behind in rent when the landlord started eviction proceedings.

Simpson said he took \$1,400 from his 401(k) retirement account to pay a portion. The family got \$1,000 from Crisis Assistance Ministry, a Charlotte nonprofit that helps families avoid eviction, to pay the remainder of the balance.

Now, he said he heard the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Housing Partnership, a non-profit affordable housing builder, is going to help him and other tenants find new homes.

Housing Partnership Executive Director Julie Porter refused comment, saying she did not want to jeopardize her agency's negotiations to buy the property from its owners.

Simpson said the stakes are high for him and his family.

"I don't want my family in the streets," he said.

*Fred Clasen-Kelly: 704 358-5027; @fred\_ckelly*

## *Discussion Questions*

1. How do you define success?
2. How do you think most Americans define success?
3. What is the American Dream?
4. How important is success to you?
5. Do you think different groups of people define success differently?
6. How have your ideas about success changed over time?
7. Give some examples of people you believe are successful. Why did you think they are successful?
8. Is growing inequality a problem in our country? Why or why not?
9. Is poverty in Charlotte a problem for all Charlotteans or just those who are poor? Why?
10. What can teenagers do to help other teenagers become more successful?

## *Activity*

1. Interview your family members about how they define success.
2. Is there someone in your family who you consider to be more successful than other family members? Write about why you think they have been more successful.

## *IV. Family Structure*



Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

Introduction .....125

- A. The Many Kinds of Family Structures in Our Communities
- B. Living with One Parent
- C. How Do Poverty Rates Compare for Single Moms
- D. Single Mothers Are Not the Problem
- E. Marriage Can Fight Poverty- but How Do You Promote It?
- F. Politicians Push Marriage, but That’s Not What Would Help Children
- G. Promoting Marriage Has Failed and Is Unnecessary to Cut Poverty
- H. Family Structure: The Growing Importance of Class
- I. What Actually Helped
- J. John Legend
- K. Discussion Questions

# *INTRODUCTION*

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Molly Ruebusch, Echo Student Intern

Both the ideals and circumstances of an individual play a significant role in determining the structure of the familial unit. In turn, a familial structure characterized by stability and access to social capital correlates with upward mobility. As the United States continues to change in the modern era, the perceived norm of the family unit alters. The Echo Foundation acknowledges the differing circumstances each individual must confront when establishing the structure of the family.

The following chapter will explore the differing opinions and information in regard to family structure, specifically the economic disparities which occur between single-parent households versus dual-parent households. In addition to offering a generalized perspective, the chapter will discuss the situation in relation to the Charlotte-Mecklenburg community.

# *The Many Kinds of Family Structures in Our Communities*

Adopted from Sonoma County Office of Education

By Julie Olsen Edwards

Based on the author's work with Louise Derman-Sparks in *Anti-bias Education for Children and Ourselves* NAEYC 2009

Charlotte is a community of many kinds of family structure. Here is an outline based on Julie Olsen Edwards' work in anti-bias education.



Photo courtesy of Pixnio

***Adoptive family:*** A family where one or more of the children has been adopted. Any structure of family may also be an adoptive family.

- *Sometimes children (as well as adults) use the term "real parents" instead of "birth parents". Be clear that the adoptive parents are the real parents because they are raising the child. Intervene if other children tease an adopted child with comments such as "That isn't your real mommy". Do not automatically assume that any problems a child may be having are due to adoption.*

***Bi-racial or multi-racial family:*** A family where the parents are members of different racial identity groups. ***Trans-racial adoptive family:*** A family where the adopted child is of a different racial identity group than the parents.

- *Children in these families are not "half and half," nor do they have to choose one identity over another. Each child is fully who they are. Find out what terms the family uses to describe their various racial identities. As racial identity remains one of the most contentious and difficult issues in the United States, be prepared to listen especially carefully and respectfully to what the family believes and what they want their child to value about her/his identity.*

**Blended family:** A family that consists of members from two (or more) previous families.

- *Families may use a variety of terms for the various family members (Step Dad, Gary, Poppop, etc.) and have varying connections with extended family members. Encourage children to show all of their family in drawings and to make gifts for everyone (if you do that kind of activity). Be clear that all family members are “real” and that all the relationships are important to the child.*

**“Broken home”:** A highly derogatory term used to describe the homes of children from divorced families. Very hurtful.

- *Be clear that there is no such thing as a broken family. Each family form is what it is and is a family!*

**Co-custody family:** An arrangement where divorced parents both have legal responsibility for their children. Children may alternatively live with both parents or live with one and have regular visitation with the other.

- *Find out right away which parent is responsible for the child on what days, who picks up child, etc. Encourage children to acknowledge both homes—do not ask them to choose.*

**Conditionally separated families:** A family member is separated from the rest of the family. This may be due to employment far away; military service; incarceration; hospitalization. They remain significant members of the family.

- *Support the child to deal with a difficult emotional time. You can help the child to stay connected by making drawings, dictating letters or stories about favorite activities at school, taking photos doing a favorite activity, creating a special calendar that marks off the days until the family will be reunited.*

**Extended family:** A family where grandparents or aunts and uncles play major roles in the children’s upbringing. This may or may not include those relatives living with the children. These family members may be *in addition* to the child’s parents or *instead of* the child’s parents.

- *Be sure to include in school invitations/conferences all the people in an extended family who play major socialization roles. Intervene if others deny the central role of these relatives, for example if a child says “Mama puts you to bed – not your Auntie!”*

**Foster family:** A family where one or more of the children is legally a temporary member of the household. This “temporary” period may be as short as a few days or as long as the child’s entire childhood. Kinship care families are foster families where there is a legal arrangement for the child to be cared for by relatives of one of the parents.

- *Use whatever terminology the child uses about their foster parents (they may call them Mom or Dad or they may use their first names or may call them Mama 2 and Papa 2, etc.). Check with the foster parents about what they have told the child about the absent family and the likelihood*

of reuniting. If the original parents are able to visit, and wish to come to the school, make them welcome. Never ask a child to choose who is most important to them.

**Gay or Lesbian family:** A family where one or both of the parents' sexual orientation is gay or lesbian. This may be a two-parent family, an adoptive family, a single parent family or an extended family.

- *In many parts of the United States these families may not be allowed full legal rights to their children, and in most parts of the country they face significant social prejudice. It is up to the Early Childhood professionals to prove that they are open and safe to talk with. No one but the members of the family has the right to "out" a family (reveal their sexual orientation) to anyone else. Find out what terms the child uses to describe her/his parents (Daddy & Pops, Mama Jan & Mama Lisa?). Be sure that all letters, forms, invitations use language that makes clear that these families are welcome.*



Photo Courtesy of Flickr

*JCPenney features gay fathers in one of their advertisements.*

**Immigrant family:** A family where the parents have immigrated to the United States as adults. Their children may or may not be immigrants. Some family members may continue to live in the country of origin, but still be significant figures in the life of the child.

- *Each of these families brings with them a set of culturally based behaviors for raising their precious children. And each of these families is continually navigating between what made sense in their country of origin, and what is needed in their new country. ECE programs must take special care to strengthen the bonds between the child and the family and not set up a "right or wrong" way for things to be done. Supporting the child's home language (the child's mother tongue), is as essential for the child's survival, as is supporting the child as an English language learner. While language is the most obvious of the differences for ECE staff to manage, cultural beliefs and behaviors are equally important.*

**Migrant family:** A family that moves regularly to places where they have employment. The most common form of migrant family is farm workers who move with the crop seasons. Children may have a relatively stable community of people who move at the same time - or the family may



know no one in each new setting. Military families may also lead a migrant life, with frequent relocation, often on short notice.

- *Document what the child does in your program both for new programs and for the families to take with them. Provide pictures that the child can take with them of friends, teachers, activities. It may take longer for the child and the family to settle in to your program and “take root.”*

***Nuclear family:*** A family consisting of a married man & woman and their biological children.

- *This family form is the one most reinforced in the dominant society. The main issue for children is to help them understand that their two-parent, heterosexual family is a fine family, and is one kind among many other kinds of families. It is essential that early childhood teachers do not assume that just because a family has a nuclear structure, they do not need support and connection.*

***Single parent family:*** This can be either a father or a mother who is singly responsible for the raising of a child. The child can be by birth or adoption. They may be a single parent by choice or by life circumstances. The other parent may have been part of the family at one time or not at all.

- *Find out what other supports the single parent has in their life, and which other people play a significant role in the child’s life. It may be particularly significant for this type of family that the early childhood program build a caring community of parents.*

***Transnational family:*** These families live in more than one country. They may spend part of each year in their country of origin returning to the U.S. on a regular basis. The child may spend time being cared for by different family members in each country.

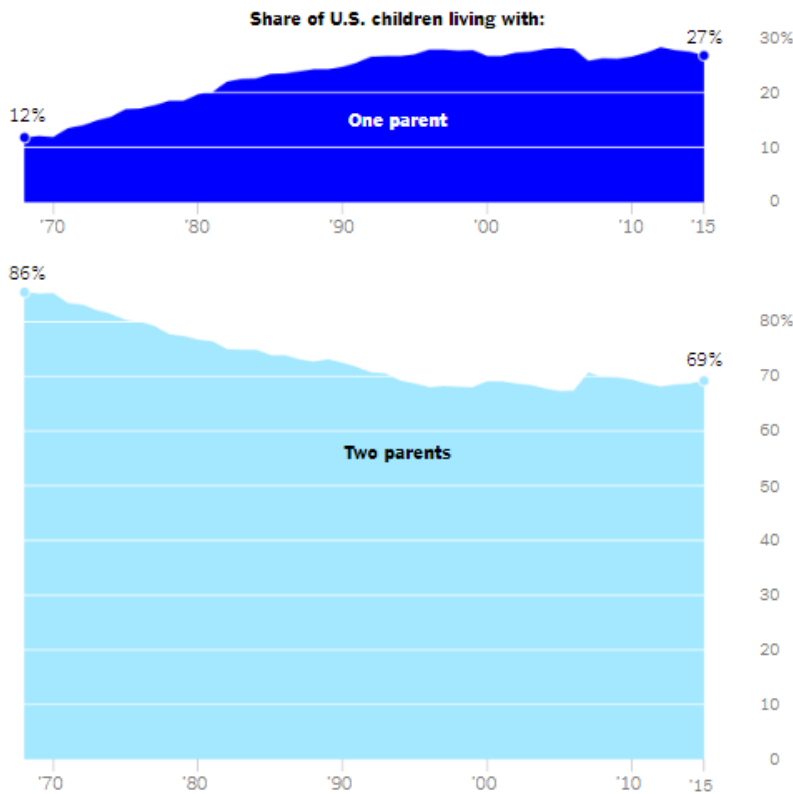
- *Culture clash may be a very difficult issue for these families as they work to have their children be “at home” in both places. Be sure to find out the words the child uses for their various family members in both countries and what (if any) kinds of group care the child experienced.*

# Living with One Parent

From *The New York Times*  
By Karl Russell and Eduardo Porter  
March 22, 2016

Children living with a single parent tend to do worse in life than those who grow up in a stable two-parent family. The United States has one of the highest percentage of children living without a father among advanced countries, as well as one of the highest shares of children living in poverty.

## The Number of Children Living with a Single Parent Has Doubled

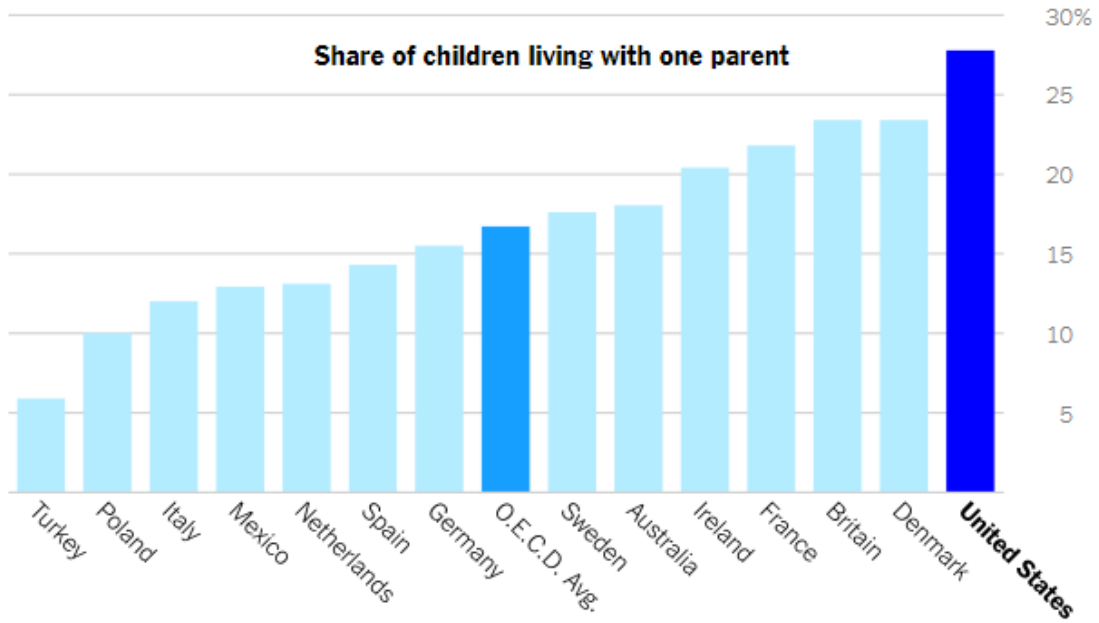


In 1968, about 8.3 million children in the United States lived with only one parent. By last year that number had more than doubled to almost 20 million, or 27 percent of all children under 18. Those living with two parents fell to 69 percent, or to 51 million from 60 million.

Photo courtesy of *The New York Times*. Source: Census Bureau

## A Comparatively High Share of U.S. Children in Single-Parent Homes

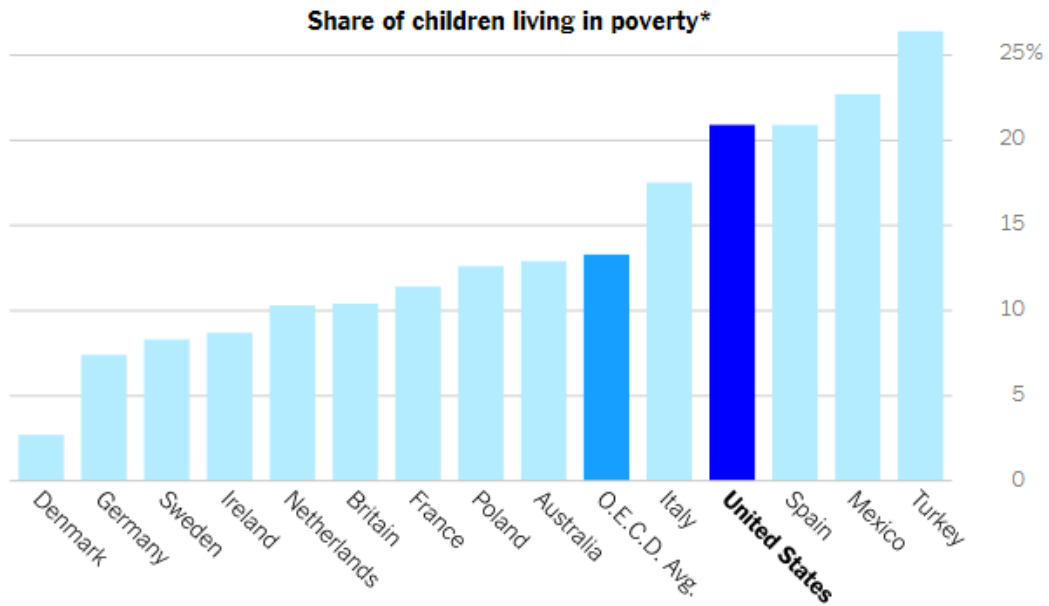
The share of children living with a single parent is higher in the United States than in other developed nations.



Courtesy of *The New York Times* / Source: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development  
 Figures for 2013, the most recent available.

### A Greater Proportion Also Live in Poverty

Among rich industrialized nations, the United States has a very high share of children living in poverty.



Courtesy of *The New York Times* / Source: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development  
 Figures for 2012.

# How Do Poverty Rates Compare for Single Moms?

From *The University of North Carolina at Charlotte*  
 By UNC Charlotte Urban Institute  
 July 31, 2015

## How do poverty rates compare for single moms?

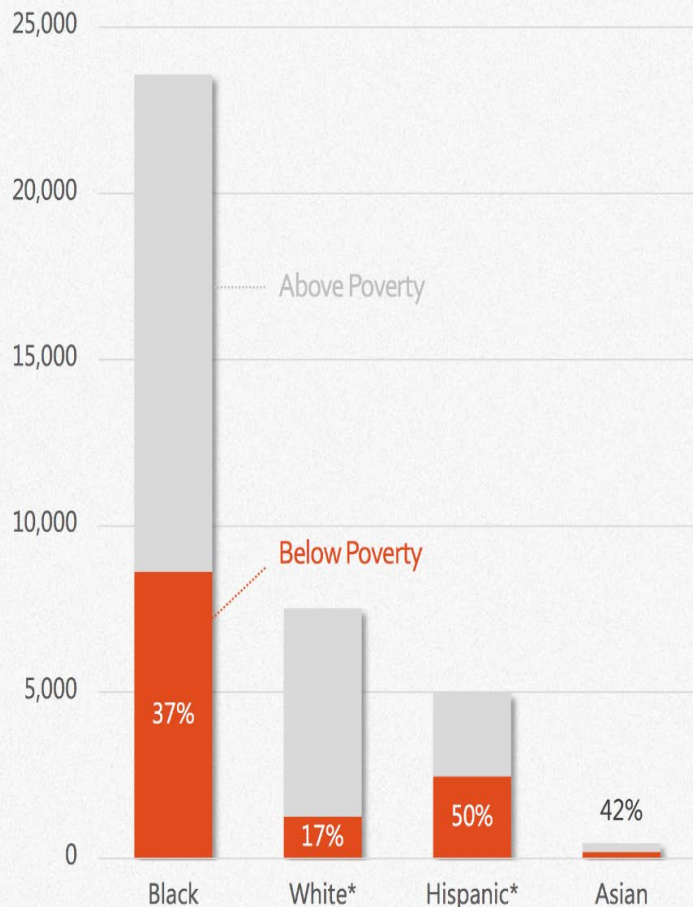
**12,163**

*Single moms in poverty*

*One-third of all single moms in Mecklenburg are in poverty.*

Although black single moms outnumber those of all other racial/ethnic groups in Mecklenburg County, the poverty rate is highest among Hispanic families, with half of Hispanic single moms in poverty. Asian single moms also have a high poverty rate at 42%, although their overall numbers are much lower.

Single Moms by Race, Poverty Status  
 Mecklenburg County 2013



Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013 American Community Survey 1-year estimates. \*Hispanic is considered an ethnicity, not a race. Hispanic individuals can be of any race. \*White, non-Hispanic.

# *Single Mothers Are Not the Problem*

From *The New York Times*

By David Brady, Ryan M Finnigan and Sabine Hubgen

February 10, 2018



By Anna Parini

No group is as linked to poverty in the American mind as single mothers. For decades, politicians, journalists and scholars have scrutinized the reasons poor couples fail to use contraception, have children out of wedlock, and do not marry.

When the American Enterprise Institute and the Brookings Institution formed a bipartisan panel of prominent poverty scholars to write a *Consensus Plan for Reducing Poverty* in 2015, its first recommendation was to “promote a new cultural norm surrounding parenthood and marriage.”

The reality, however, is that single motherhood is not the reason we have unusually high poverty in the United States, compared with other rich democracies. In fact, we recently published a [study](#) in *The American Journal of Sociology*, using data from the [Luxembourg Income Study](#), which demonstrates that reducing single motherhood here would not substantially reduce poverty.

Single-mother families are a surprisingly small share of our population. Among households headed by working-age adults, 8.8 percent of people lived in single-mother households in 2013 — the most recent year we were able to analyze. The share of people in single-mother households actually declined from 10.5 percent in 1980 and has increased only modestly since 1970, when it was 7.4 percent. True, compared with other rich democracies, America does have a relatively high portion of families headed by single mothers. Nevertheless, we still fall below Ireland and Britain and are quite similar to Australia and Iceland.

Because fewer people are in single-mother families than you'd think, even large reductions in single motherhood would not substantially reduce poverty. We can illustrate this in two ways. First, what would the poverty rate be if single motherhood in the United States was as common as it is in the typical rich democracy? Second, what would poverty in America be if single motherhood returned to the rate it was in 1970?

If single motherhood in the United States were in the middle of the pack among rich democracies instead of the third highest, poverty among working-age households would be less than 1 percentage point lower — 15.4 percent instead of 16.1 percent. If we returned to the 1970 share of single motherhood, poverty would decline a tiny amount — from 16.1 percent to 15.98. If, magically, there were no single mothers in the United States, the poverty rate would still be 14.8 percent.

What really differentiates rich democracies is the penalty attached to single motherhood. Countries make political choices about how well social policies support single mothers. Our political choices result in families headed by single mothers being 14.3 percent more likely to be poor than other families.

Such a severe penalty is unusual. In a majority of rich democracies, single mothers are not more likely to be poor. Denmark, for example, has chosen to provide universal cash benefits and tax credits for children, publicly subsidized child care and health care, and paid parental leave. Because of these generous social policies, single mothers and their children have a similar level of economic security as other families.

A common knee-jerk reaction against generous social policies for single mothers is that they pose a moral hazard and encourage more single motherhood. The problem with this argument is that it is overwhelmingly contradicted by social science. Did the 1996 welfare reform, which made social policies less generous for single mothers, cause a large reduction in single motherhood? No. Do rich democracies with more generous policies for single mothers have more single mothers? No. Do rich democracies with higher penalties for single motherhood have fewer single mothers? No.

Single motherhood is one of four major risks of poverty, which also include unemployment, low levels of education and forming households at young ages. Our research demonstrates a broader point about the risks of poverty. Poverty in America is not unusually high because more people have more of these risk factors. They are actually less common here than they are in the typical rich democracy, and fewer Americans carry these risks today than they did in 1970 or 1980. Even if one infers that risk factors result from bad choices and behaviors, Americans apparently make fewer such choices and engage in fewer such behaviors than people in other rich democracies or than Americans in the past.

The reality is we have unusually high poverty because we have unusually high penalties for all four of these risk factors. For example, if you lack a high school degree in the United States, it increases the probability of your being in poverty by 16.4 percent. In the 28 other rich democracies, a lack of education increases the probability of poverty by less than 5 percent on average. No other country penalizes the less educated nearly as much as we do.

More generous social policies would reduce the penalty for all four risk factors. In fact, increasing the generosity of American social policies would lower poverty more than increasing high school graduation or employment, and more than decreasing the number of people heading a household at a young age or the number of single mothers. Nor would reducing these penalties encourage people to drop out of high school, be unemployed, form households too young or become single mothers.

Ultimately, there simply aren't enough single mothers to explain our high poverty. Even if they all married or never had children, poverty would not be substantially lower. We should stop obsessing over how many single mothers there are and stop shaming them.

Instead — even though we all get sick of hearing about how great Scandinavian countries are at handling these issues — we should be following the lead of countries like Denmark. If we did, we could reduce poverty among all American families, including those headed by single mothers. No amount of stigmatization could do the same. Rather than falsely claiming that single motherhood is a major cause of poverty, we should support single mothers in raising America's children.

## *Marriage Can Fight Poverty- But How Do You Promote It?*

From the *Christian Science Monitor*  
By Lonnie Shekhtman  
June 1, 2017



Photo by Mark Gilliland / AP

*A couple laugh during a premarital class offered by First Things First in Chattanooga, Tenn. The program is a long-running effort to help participants prepare for marriage.*

At the Maclellan Shelter for Families, Gena Roberts Ellis stands in front of about two dozen residents, blending humor with what she views as an urgent mission: helping these families stay intact.

The jovial and freckled Ms. Ellis holds the group in rapt attention as they eat boxed dinners and then settle into rows of chairs set up for a weekly parenting workshop in Chattanooga. A family with two teenagers sits in a corner. A young couple in the front row holds hands; behind them, another couple bounces a newborn baby.

Ellis uses the analogy of a car's fuel gauge to describe how kids change the family dynamic and why parents need some personal time. "When we parent on 'E,' we're really not parenting," Ellis says to nods of agreement from the audience.



For 20 years the organization Ellis works for, First Things First, has been trying from every angle to help lower divorce rates and raise marriage rates in this Southern city with higher-than-average poverty. Staff lead dozens of local workshops that range from teaching high-school girls about healthy relationships, to couples counseling at churches, to classes in jails, for fathers in trouble for missing child-support payments.

The effort is rooted in research suggesting that, despite diverging opinions on the value of marriage in modern society, kids who grow up with married parents are more likely to go to college and far less likely to end up poor.

But across America, it's proving remarkably difficult to successfully promote more and stronger marriages. Here in Tennessee, for all the couples First Things First may have helped along the way, the effort hasn't reversed what appear to be deeply rooted trend lines. The rate of people marrying in Hamilton County, which includes Chattanooga, declined between 2009 and 2014, and nationally the trend has been downward since the early 1980s. Some positive news, here in Tennessee and nationwide, is that the divorce rate has been declining, yet it remains considerably above 1960s levels. [**Editor's note:** *This paragraph has been updated to correct an inaccuracy on divorce rates.*]

This doesn't mean efforts to support and promote marriage are useless, but it suggests that programs like First Things First are at best a partial response. Experts are promoting a range of options, from lowering welfare penalties for joint incomes to building a national public awareness campaign to illuminate the positive effect that marriage has on children. "There's a surprising degree of agreement that the country needs marriage," says Ron Haskins, a senior fellow and co-director of the Center on Children and Families at the left-leaning Brookings Institution. "The problem is that nobody really has a good agenda."

Marriage rates in the United States have been declining for decades, particularly among the poor and less educated, despite considerable federal- and local-government promotion efforts. But historically, the idea of the federal government telling people to marry has been contentious, and now it has fallen out of favor even among many former supporters.

### **Ideas that might help**

"I'm a fanatic about marriage, but I will admit that we haven't demonstrated impacts to a degree that we know how to do this," Dr. Haskins says. Still, he and other social-policy experts see other strategies that could be pushed, to try to make marriages stick.

One of the simplest, says Angela Rachidi, a poverty expert at the conservative American Enterprise Institute, would be to lower the marriage penalties embedded in federal welfare

benefits. She and many others point out, for example, that the Earned Income Tax Credit, a federal tax rebate for lower-income people, is reduced when people marry and join their incomes.

“It’s probably not the government’s role to encourage marriage, but it shouldn’t be in the business of disincentivizing it,” Dr. Rachidi says.



Photo by Jacquelyn Martin / AP

Other marriage and poverty scholars, such as Isabel Sawhill, recommend that Americans focus on preventing unplanned pregnancies among young women by offering easy access to affordable birth control. She knows that’s a politically polarizing idea, but for her the rationale is compelling.

“Fifty percent of all babies born to the youngest generation are born outside of marriage, and overwhelmingly they’re unplanned,” says Dr. Sawhill, a senior fellow in economics at the Brookings Institution. “If we don’t like the idea of unwed parenthood or single parents, then we need to empower these women to be able to use effective forms of contraception.” There’s also an opportunity, she says, to influence young people to wait until they’re married to have children. It’s an approach that worked for teen pregnancy, points out Sawhill, who helped found The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy. The 21-year-old public-awareness effort has contributed to a 55 percent decline in teen pregnancies over the past two decades, and a 64 percent drop in teen births, the nonprofit reports.

The idea is also popular among a bipartisan group of scholars who – inspired by successful teen-pregnancy and anti-smoking efforts – proposed in 2015 a national public-awareness campaign about the positive effects of stable marriages on children.

“In the same way that leading institutions advise us to abstain from smoking, eat healthy foods, get plenty of exercise, read to our children, volunteer, give to charity, wear seatbelts, and finish school, they should advise young people to postpone having a child until they have a stable partner and are ready to be parents,” wrote the group. “For the overwhelming majority, that means marriage.”

## **Daunting economics**

For now, the data on marriage are foreboding. About half as many less-educated, low-income American women marry as do their educated, elite counterparts. Today, 40 percent of children are born out of wedlock, up from 5 percent in 1960.

Against this backdrop, researchers wrestle with chicken-or-egg questions: If more marriages might help reduce poverty, it's also possible that less poverty would make more Americans marriageable. So, some experts say another way to promote marriage is to help more people get access to education and career opportunities.

The poverty trap for children of single parents was one thing that Chattanooga's First Things First was trying to avoid when the organization was founded in 1997 by the city's business leaders. "It's not that single parents aren't good and aren't trying, but there's only so much to go around when you have one human being," says Julie Baumgardner, the group's president and CEO.

Community leaders were alarmed by the local divorce rate, says Ms. Baumgardner, which at the time was 50 percent above the national average. "These businessmen said, 'This is going to affect our ready-to-work workforce, and ultimately it's going to impact us as a community,' " she says.

First Things First is among the many local efforts that received grants during the biggest federal attempt to stem the marriage decline, under former President George W. Bush. But the Bush-era programs that have been evaluated – from ones in Orlando, Fla., to Wichita, Kan., and the Bronx, N.Y. – were found to have had little to no effect on marriage rates or family stability. (First Things First was not among those evaluated.)

Though the outcome was discouraging for marriage advocates, they hope for lessons that can inform better marriage programs in the future. Baumgardner, for one, simply refuses to give up. She says: "The question is: Do we want to sit here and do nothing and let things happen as they will, or do we want to make an attempt to help people do what they're trying to do?"

# *Politicians Push Marriage, but That's Not What Would Help Children*

From *The New York Times*  
By Eduardo Porter  
March 22, 2016



Photo by Bryan Meltz for *The New York Times*

Should the government push poor people to marry?

The urge to do so has a long pedigree, dating perhaps as far back as 1965. When serving as a Labor Department official in the Johnson administration, Daniel Patrick Moynihan — who was later a top adviser to President Richard M. Nixon and ultimately one of the most influential Democrats in Congress as a senator from New York — argued that the surge in African-American families headed by single mothers was condemning many black children to fail in school and in life.

Promoting marriage and two-parent families was part of President Bill Clinton's welfare overhaul of 1996. His successor, George W. Bush, offered up a Healthy Marriage Initiative. The Obama administration policy quiver included marriage promotion, too.

And today, when almost 40 percent of new mothers are unmarried, when one in five white children, one in four Hispanics and one in two blacks live without a father at home, fixing the American family has again acquired urgency across the political spectrum.

“Marriage matters,” proclaimed a report published in December by scholars on the left and right discussing strategies to combat poverty. “Marital commitment remains the principal foundation upon which most Americans can build a stable and secure family.”

And yet, after all those efforts to strengthen the bonds between mothers and fathers, husbands and wives, it is hard to resist the conclusion that much of this is misdirected, a waste of resources and time.

Births out of wedlock can be sharply reduced by providing young women with access to sex education and long-term contraception, so they might delay having children until they feel ready. And instead of trying hopelessly to reconstitute the conventional family of yore, why not devote resources to improving the welfare of the families as they are?

There's no question that children generally do worse in single-parent families. They engage more in risky behavior. They drop out of high school and are more likely to end up in the criminal justice system. Research by Raj Chetty of Stanford and others have found that boys living in poor single-mother homes are particularly disadvantaged later in life.

And yet despite years of research to identify how changes in family structure hurt children, there is much less agreement on the "why."

Selection is clearly at work: Single mothers and the fathers of their children are generally less educated than married parents. They tend to have lesser-paying jobs and more mental health issues. They would have a tough time raising children in a healthy environment even if they stayed together.

"Family disruption is not a random event," wrote Sara McLanahan of Princeton, Laura Tach of Cornell and Daniel Schneider of the University of California, Berkeley, in a study assessing efforts to disentangle the effect of selection from that of family structure. "The characteristics that cause father absence are likely to affect child well-being through other pathways."

Then, of course, there is the issue of resources. Families headed by single mothers are poorer.

Studies in Britain suggest that children in single-parent homes suffer because they are poor, or because of the shortcomings of their parents — not because their parents do not live together.

Given the evidence, marriage promotion might even backfire. Encouraging a mother to stay with a father who deals in drugs, can't hold a job and beats her can actually lead to worse problems for the children, according to Sara R. Jaffee of the University of Pennsylvania.

But the strongest case against a policy to deliver strong marriages and stable families is that the government has no clue how to do that.

Remember the Healthy Marriage Initiative? When MDRC, the policy evaluation organization, performed a careful evaluation of its program of marriage education for low-income married

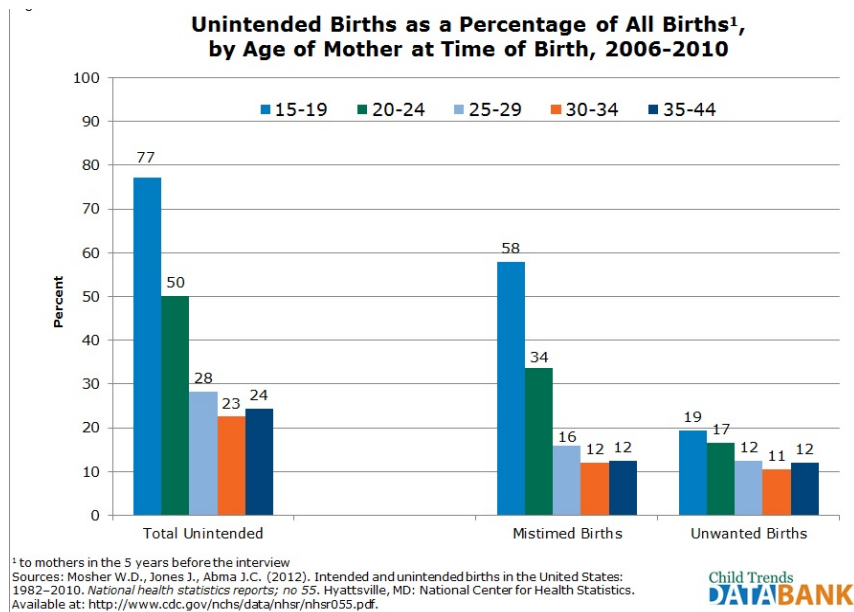
couples who had or were expecting children, it had to conclude that it “did not lead more couples to stay together.”

Similarly, researchers at the National Center for Family and Marriage Research at Bowling Green State University in Ohio concluded in 2014 that there was little to show for the \$600 million spent on the Healthy Marriage Initiative since 2001. Notably, the divorce rate had not budged and the marriage rate continued to decline.

There is good reason to believe that it was the demise of the solid blue-collar job — squeezed out by globalization and technological change — that played the principal role in putting an end to the stable working-class family. Perhaps men with poor job prospects feel unprepared to marry. Perhaps women will not marry men who cannot provide.

What seems clear is that we don’t know how to undo that dynamic. Most efforts to improve the job prospects of less-educated men do little to increase their chances of marrying.

Isabel Sawhill of the Brookings Institution suggests we accept that the government cannot bring the stable two-parent family back. What it can do is encourage more responsible parenthood.



Six out of 10 children born to single mothers under the age of 30 are unplanned, Ms. Sawhill notes. They come too soon, when mothers have not finished school, before they have a good job. Offering young women access to effective long-term contraception, research shows, would allow them to delay motherhood until they really want it.

This sounds like a sensible approach. But there are other options to improve the lot of American families and children. We just have to look around.

Marriage is increasingly unpopular around the industrialized world. Births out of wedlock have surged across the board. Yet somehow families in other rich countries have avoided the depth of dysfunction of their American peers. This is not a result of policies encouraging marriage.

Rather, it is a result of policies aimed at increasing families' and children's well-being. In France, though marriage declined sharply over the last two decades, fewer French children than American children are overweight. Fewer French teenagers commit suicide. Far fewer French children live in poverty.

Part of this might be because of cultural differences. Cohabitation out of wedlock is more stable in France. Even though fewer French children than American children live with two married parents, more live with their mothers and fathers.

But culture cannot explain America's deficits away. It is critical to keep in mind the role of the French welfare state in fostering this stability.

The French government devotes about 3 percent of its total economic activity to what the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development calls family benefits. That is four times the share spent in the United States. Government transfers have typically reduced the child poverty rate to under 10 percent, according to O.E.C.D. figures. In the United States, they shave it by only a few percentage points.

The point is, families at the bottom end of French society, and their children, did a better job of overcoming the economic transformations that shook the industrialized world over the last quarter-century because France's welfare state did not let them fall that far.

And when families did split up, the state doubled down: 36 percent of French children living with a nonworking single parent are poor. That sounds like a lot, but in the United States, according to O.E.C.D. statistics, it is 92 percent.

If we are making policy for the sake of the children, it's not hard to figure out who made the better call.

# *Promoting Marriage Has Failed and Is Unnecessary to Cut Poverty*

From *Demos Non-Profit Organization*

By Matt Bruenig

December 4, 2015

The Brookings/AEI anti-poverty consensus consists of three points: education, work, and marriage. In a prior post, I attacked the education focus as misguided: we've been massively ramping up educational attainment for decades with no poverty gains to show for it. Also in a prior post, I attacked the work focus as similarly misguided: most poor people cannot work more because they are children, elderly, disabled, students, or already fully employed, among other problems. In today's post, I take on the marriage point.

## **1. Marriage Promotion Doesn't Work**

Marriage promotion policy has been an utter failure, and not for lack of trying.

One of the main points of so-called Welfare Reform was to end the scourge of single motherhood and promote marriage, "the foundation of a successful society." Since that reform, which massively spiked extreme poverty in the US, the rate of birth to unwed mothers has continued to go up, and marriage rates have continued to go down. Nothing has been able to reverse this trend.

As part of Welfare Reform and other related measures, the government also got directly in the business of promoting marriage via projects like Building Strong Families, Supporting Healthy Marriage Project, and the Healthy Marriage Initiative more generally. As Bryce Covert has extensively pointed out at *The Nation* and elsewhere, assessments of these programs have found them to be utter failures. Nonetheless, states still redirect TANF funds meant to provide cash assistance to poor families to these dead-end ideology projects.

The Brookings/AEI report, which purports to be an evidence-based inquiry into how best to cut poverty, actually admits that efforts to inch the marriage rate up have been a failure, but nonetheless insists that we embark upon a vague cultural campaign to promote it:

So what can be done? We've said that marriage matters. But past government efforts to encourage unmarried parents to marry have not proven very effective. Promoting marriage to strengthen American families isn't primarily an issue of specific policies or programs in any case: it's in large part a question of culture. Political leaders, educators, and civic leaders—from both the political left and right—need to be clear and direct about how hard it is to raise children without a committed co-parent.

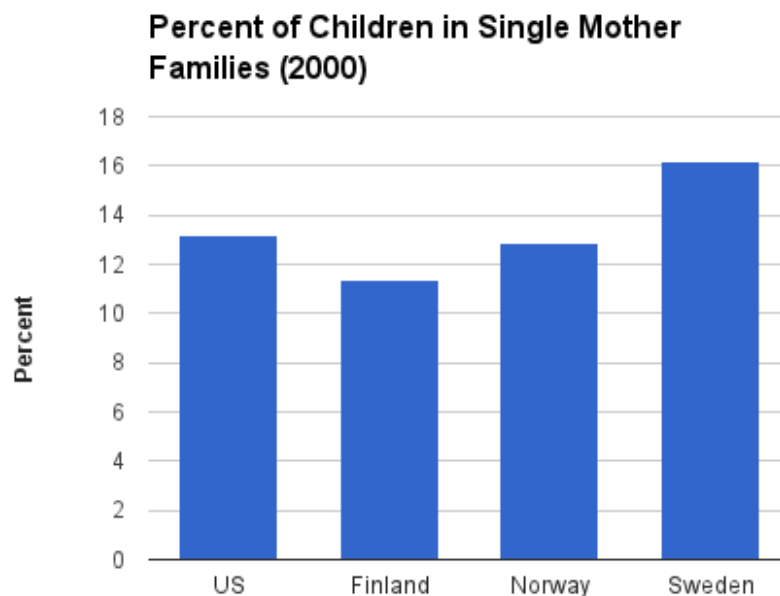


This is not a real policy in any meaningful sense. How would we get "political leaders, educators, and civil leaders" to promote these messages and where? Are they going to get funding to put up "Marriage Is Cool" billboards in their communities? Who will oversee this vague marriage cultural campaign? This is the kind of proposal you get from people who still cling on to something they know is a failure. It's intellectualized wishing for cultural transformations, not policy.

## 2. Marriage Is Not Necessary to Dramatically Cut Poverty

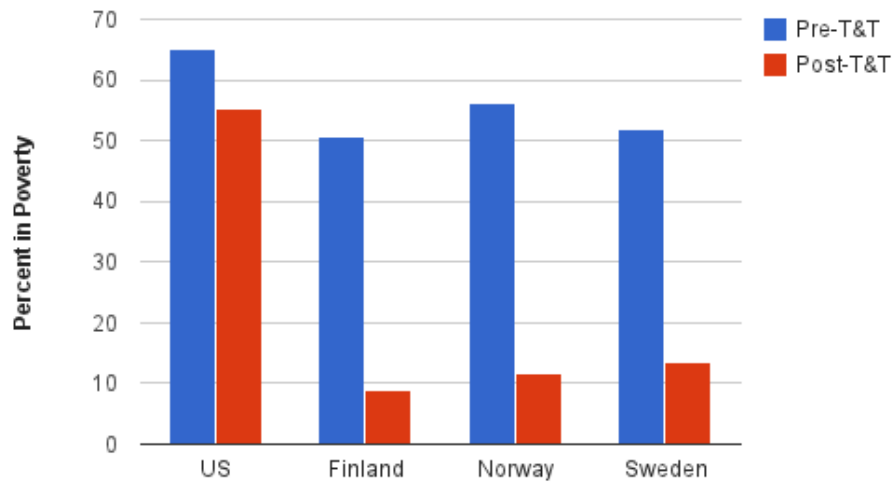
Typically, what people focus on with marriage arguments is children. And the Brookings/AEI report is no exception in this regard. Despite their pretention of exhaustively reviewing the evidence regarding how you might cut child poverty, they somehow missed the part where other countries do so very effectively, despite having similar rates of single motherhood and unwed births as we do.

As I discussed last year, cross-country research shows that differences in family composition across countries do not explain differences in childhood poverty across countries. The countries with the lowest child poverty rates in the world have similar rates of single motherhood as the US (this using 2000 LIS data):



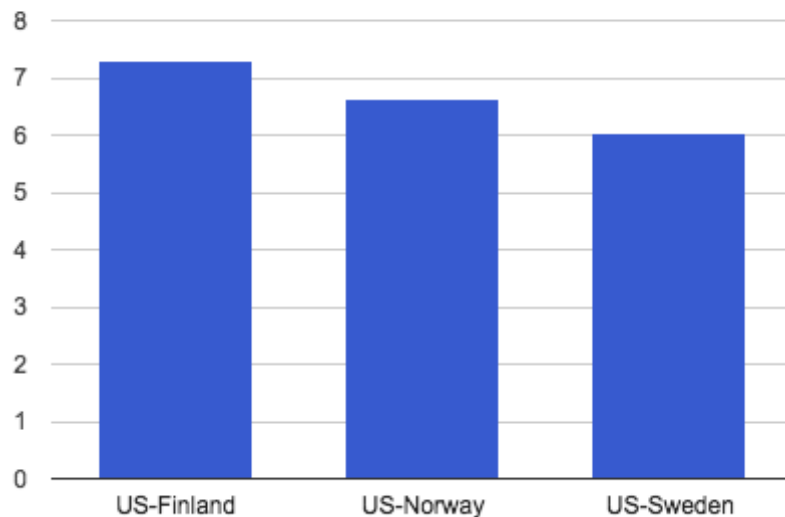
Yet they manage to keep child poverty quite low, overall and in single-mother families, by having a nice welfare state (T&T refers to taxes and transfers):

### Poverty Rates for Children in Single Mother Families (2000)

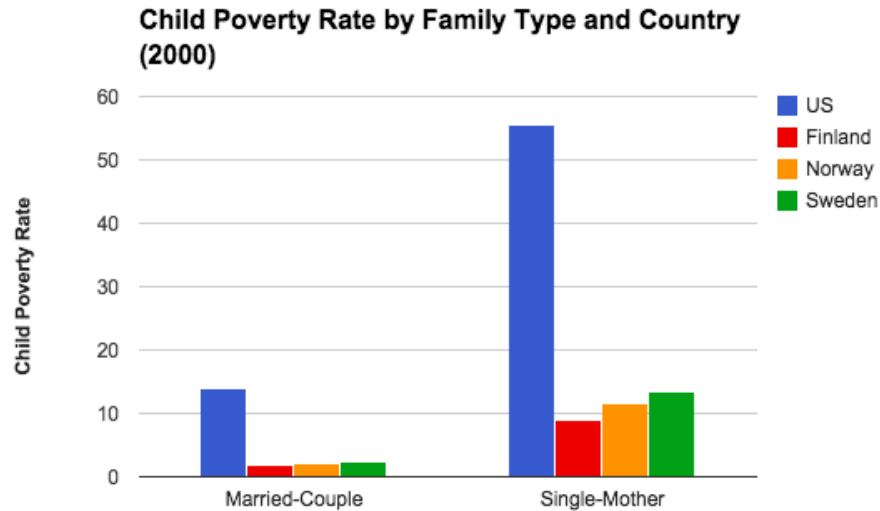


As much as Brookings/AEI touts the wonders of married-parent families in the US, the reality is that they too have mind-bogglingly high levels of poverty, compared to low-poverty countries. In the same 2000 LIS data used above, child poverty in married-parent families was 6x higher in the US than in Sweden and 7.3x higher in the US than in Finland:

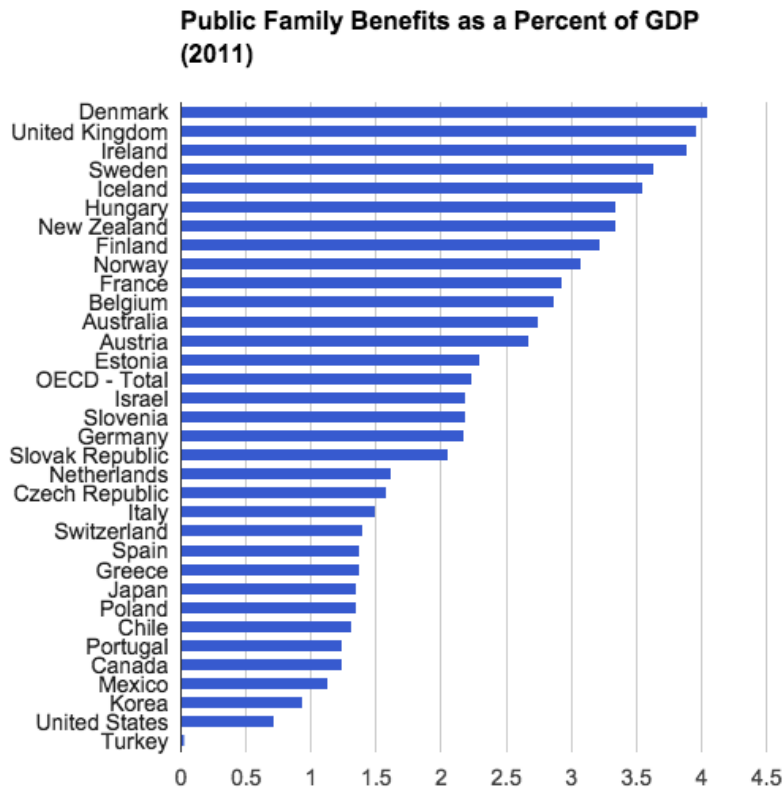
### Ratio of US Married-Couple Child Poverty to Married-Couple Child Poverty in Nordics (2000)



In fact, US married-parent child poverty is so high that it's higher than the child poverty rate in *single-mother families* in the low-poverty Nordics:



If you want to keep child poverty low (in all family types, not just unmarried families), one proven way to do that is to provide good child benefits. Sitting at the bottom of the OECD world in social expenditures on child-related family benefits helps to explain far more of our child poverty problem than declining marriage does:



If we beefed these benefits up, we would see child poverty (and other poverty) fall dramatically. For instance, as I discussed earlier this year, if we provided each family \$300/month for every child they are caring for, we could cut child poverty by 40% and overall poverty by 23%. Even

after doing that, we would still only find ourselves in the middle of the child-benefit pack for OECD countries (meaning there is even more room for spending on child care and related benefits, if we want them).

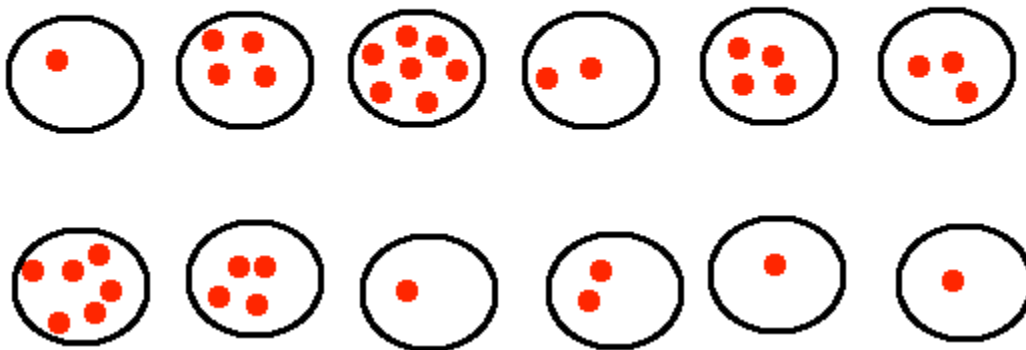
### 3. Why Not Shake Up Families in Other Ways?

The fact that marriage promotion doesn't work and you can easily cut child poverty without is all you need to know about this focus. Things that don't work and aren't necessary are things you discard as useless unless you're an ideologue.

Nonetheless, the marriage obsession is interesting for at least one reason. That reason is this: if reorganizing people into different households is an appropriate aim of anti-poverty policy, why on earth would you stop at getting low-income people to marry one another?

You see, the way this marriage anti-poverty stuff is supposed to work is pretty basic. For poverty calculation purposes, we draw circles around groups of individuals, placing all of them into different pods (household or family depending on how you want to measure). For an unnecessary graphic of what I mean, here is this (red dots are individuals):

## Individuals Organized into Pods



After we place each person in a pod, we go to each pod, add up all the income in that pod, and see if that combined income is enough to bring the overall pod out of poverty. The more people in the pod, the more combined income the pod needs to be out of poverty.

The primary way marriage is supposed to cut poverty is by reshuffling who is in which pod. So, imagine that the one-person pod on the top left contains a guy who makes \$15,000 per year and the three-person pod on the top right contains a mother and two kids whose total income is \$12,000 per year. The three-person pod is in poverty as \$12,000 is not enough for a family of three. But if we move the guy from the one-person pod into the three-person pod (and bring his income with him), then we get a new four-person pod with an income of \$27,000, which is

indeed enough for the pod to be out of poverty. Thus, through this reconfiguration of pods, we pulled three people out of poverty.

Once you understand how this marriage anti-poverty story works, two things should immediately occur to you. First, it's not marriage that's cutting poverty here. It's the recombination of income. If you marry someone who does not add extra income to your family, that will do nothing to reduce your chance of poverty and, because your family is now bigger, it could even drag your family into poverty. Adding someone to a resource pod only reduces that pod's chance of poverty where, as a result of the addition, the increase in the pod's income is greater than the increase in the pod's poverty line. Sometimes marriages accomplish this, sometimes they do not.

Second, you can recombine income across pods in much more effective ways than convincing two low-income people to marry and move in together. For instance, why not just move some of the high-earners from the very rich pods into the very poor pods? Alternatively, why not move some of the people from the very poor pods into the very rich pods? This kind of reshuffling of pod membership would seem to directly tackle the poverty problem in ways that getting two poor people to marry (note nobody ever seems to advocate imploring rich people to marry poor people, only exhorting poor people to marry each other) does not. If reshuffling pod membership (which is all marriage anti-poverty stuff is about) is fair game for poverty reduction, then these cross-class reshufflings offer a far more promising strategy.

The only objection I can see to class-based reshuffling is that you can't force people to move into families and households that they don't want to be in, and there is no reason to think that we could do anything policy-wise that would get people to take up this reshuffling themselves. That's a fair enough objection. In fact, that's the marriage promotion objection.

## *Family Structure: The Growing Importance of Class*

From *the Brookings Institution*

By Isabel W. Sawhill

January 13, 2013

In 1965, Daniel Patrick Moynihan released a controversial report written for his then boss, President Lyndon Johnson. Entitled “The Negro Family: The Case for National Action,” it described the condition of lower-income African American families and catalyzed a highly acrimonious, decades-long debate about black culture and family values in America.

The report cited a series of staggering statistics showing high rates of divorce, unwed childbearing, and single motherhood among black families. “The white family has achieved a high degree of stability and is maintaining that stability,” the report said. “By contrast, the family structure of lower class Negroes is highly unstable, and in many urban centers is approaching complete breakdown.”

Nearly fifty years later, the picture is even more grim—and the statistics can no longer be organized neatly by race. In fact, Moynihan’s bracing profile of the collapsing black family in the 1960s looks remarkably similar to a profile of the average white family today. White households have similar—or worse—statistics of divorce, unwed childbearing, and single motherhood as the black households cited by Moynihan in his report. In 2000, the percentage of white children living with a single parent was identical to the percentage of black children living with a single parent in 1960: 22 percent.

What was happening to black families in the ’60s can be reinterpreted today not as an indictment of the black family but as a harbinger of a larger collapse of traditional living arrangements—of what demographer Samuel Preston, in words that Moynihan later repeated, called “the earthquake that shuddered through the American family.”

That earthquake has not affected all American families the same way. While the Moynihan report focused on disparities between white and black, increasingly it is class, and not just race, that matters for family structure. Although blacks as a group are still less likely to marry than whites, gaps in family formation patterns by class have increased for both races, with the sharpest declines in marriage rates occurring among the least educated of both races. For example, in 1960, 76 percent of adults with a college degree were married, compared to 72 percent of those with a high school diploma—a gap of only 4 percentage points. By 2008, not only was marriage less likely, but that gap had quadrupled, to 16 percentage points, with 64 percent of adults with college degrees getting married compared to only 48 percent of adults with a high school diploma. A report from the National Marriage Project at the University of Virginia summed up the data well: “Marriage is an emerging dividing line between America’s moderately

educated middle and those with college degrees.” The group for whom marriage has largely disappeared now includes not just unskilled blacks but unskilled whites as well. Indeed, for younger women without a college degree, unwed childbearing is the new normal.

These differences in family formation are a problem not only for those concerned with “family values” per se, but also for those concerned with upward mobility in a society that values equal opportunity for its children. Because the breakdown of the traditional family is overwhelmingly occurring among working-class Americans of all races, these trends threaten to make the U.S. a much more class-based society over time. The well-educated and upper-middle-class parents who are still forming two-parent families are able to invest time and resources in their children—time and resources that lower- and working-class single mothers, however impressive their efforts to be both good parents and good breadwinners, simply do not have.

The striking similarities between what happened to black Americans at an earlier stage in our history and what is happening now to white working-class Americans may shed new light on old debates about cultural versus structural explanations of poverty. What’s clear is that economic opportunity, while not the only factor affecting marriage, clearly matters.

The journalist Hanna Rosin describes the connection between declining economic opportunities for men and declining rates of marriage in her book *The End of Men*. Like Moynihan, she points to the importance of job opportunities for men in maintaining marriage as an institution. The disappearance of well-paying factory jobs has, in her view, led to the near collapse of marriage in towns where less educated men used to be able to support a family and a middle-class lifestyle, earning \$70,000 or more in a single year. As these jobs have been outsourced or up-skilled, such men either are earning less or are jobless altogether, making them less desirable marriage partners. Other researchers, including Kathryn Edin at Harvard, Andrew Cherlin at Johns Hopkins, and Charles Murray of the American Enterprise Institute, drawing on close observations of other working-class communities, have made similar arguments.

Family life, to some extent, adapts to the necessities thrown up by the evolution of the economy. Just as joblessness among young black men contributed to the breakdown of the black family that Moynihan observed in the ’60s, more recent changes in technology and global competition have hollowed out the job market for less educated whites. Unskilled white men have even less attachment to the labor force today than unskilled black men did fifty years ago, leading to a decline in their marriage rates in a similar way.

In 1960, the employment rate of prime-age (twenty-five to fifty-five) black men with less than a high school education was 80 percent. Fast-forward to 2000, and the employment rate of white men with less than a high school education was much lower, at 65 percent—and even for white high school graduates it was only 84 percent. Without an education in today’s economy, being white is no guarantee of being able to find a job.

That's not to say that race isn't an issue. It's clear that black men have been much harder hit by the disappearance of jobs for the less skilled than white men. Black employment rates for those with less than a college education have sunk to near-catastrophic levels. In 2000, only 63 percent of black men with only a high school diploma (compared with 84 percent of white male graduates) were employed. Since the recession, those numbers have fallen even farther. And even black college graduates are not doing quite as well as their white counterparts. Based on these and other data, I believe it would be a mistake to conclude that race is unimportant; blacks continue to face unique disadvantages because of the color of their skin. It ought to be possible to say that class is becoming more important, but that race still matters a lot.

Most obviously, the black experience has been shaped by the impact of slavery and its ongoing aftermath. Even after emancipation and the civil rights revolution in the 1960s, African Americans faced exceptional challenges like segregated and inferior schools and discrimination in the labor market. It would take at least a generation for employers to begin to change their hiring practices and for educational disparities to diminish; even today these remain significant barriers. A recent audit study found that white applicants for low-wage jobs were twice as likely to be called in for interviews as equally qualified black applicants.

Black jobless rates not only exceed those of whites; in addition, a single-minded focus on declining job prospects for men and its consequences for family life ignores a number of other factors that have led to the decline of marriage. Male employment prospects can lead to more marriages, but scholars such as Harvard's David Ellwood and Christopher Jencks have argued that economic factors alone cannot explain the wholesale changes in the frequency of single parenting, unwed births, divorce, and marriage, especially among the least educated, that are leading to growing gaps between social classes. So what else explains the decline of marriage?

First, and critically important in my view, is the changing role of women. In my first book, *Time of Transition: The Growth of Families Headed by Women*, published in 1975, my coauthor and I argued that it was not just male earnings that mattered, but what men could earn relative to women. When women don't gain much, if anything, from getting married, they often choose to raise children on their own. Fifty years ago, women were far more economically dependent on marriage than they are now. Today, women are not just working more, they are better suited by education and tradition to work in such rapidly growing sectors of the economy as health care, education, administrative jobs, and services. While some observers may see women taking these jobs as a matter of necessity—and that's surely a factor—we shouldn't forget the revolution in women's roles that has made it possible for them to support a family on their own.

In a fascinating piece of academic research published in the *Journal of Human Resources* in 2011, Scott Hankins and Mark Hoekstra discovered that single women who won between \$25,000 and \$50,000 in the Florida lottery were 41 percent to 48 percent less likely to marry over the following three years than women who won less than \$1,000. We economists call this a



“natural experiment,” because it shows the strong influence of women’s ability to support themselves without marriage—uncontaminated by differences in personal attributes that may also affect one’s ability or willingness to marry. My own earlier research also suggested that the relative incomes of wives and husbands predicted who would divorce and who would not. Women’s growing economic independence has interacted with stubborn attitudes about changing gender roles. When husbands fail to adjust to women’s new breadwinning responsibilities (who cooks dinner or stays home with a sick child when both parents work?) the couple is more likely to divorce. It may be that well-educated younger men and women continue to marry not only because they can afford to, but because many of the men in these families have adopted more egalitarian attitudes. While a working-class male might find such attitudes threatening to his manliness, an upper-middle-class man often does not, given his other sources of status. But when women find themselves having to do it all—that is, earn money in the workplace and shoulder the majority of child care and other domestic responsibilities—they raise the bar on whom they’re willing to marry or stay married to.

These gender-related issues may play an even greater role for black women, since while white men hold slightly more high school diplomas and baccalaureate degrees than white women, black women are much better educated than black men. That means it’s more difficult for well-educated black women to find black partners with comparable earning ability and social status. In 2010, black women made 87 percent of what black men did, whereas white women made only 70 percent of what white men earned. For less educated black women, there is, in addition, a shortage of black men because of high rates of incarceration. One estimate puts the proportion of black men who will spend some time in prison at almost one third.



Photo Courtesy of PxHere

Despite this change in norms, however, most Americans, whatever their race or social class, still aspire to marriage. It’s just that their aspirations are typically unrealistically high and their ability to achieve that ideal is out of step with their opportunities and lifestyle. As scholars such as

Cherlin and Edin have emphasized, marriage is no longer a precursor to adult success. Instead, when it still takes place, marriage is more a badge of success already achieved. In particular, large numbers of young adults are having unplanned pregnancies long before they can cope with the responsibilities of parenthood. Paradoxically, although they view marriage as something they cannot afford, they rarely worry about the cost of raising a child.

Along with many others, I remain concerned about the effects on society of this wholesale retreat from stable two-parent families. The consequences for children, especially, are not good. Their educational achievements, and later chances of becoming involved in crime or a teen pregnancy are, on average, all adversely affected by growing up in a single-parent family. But I am also struck by the lessons that emerge from looking at how trends in family formation have differed by class as well as by race. If we were once two countries, one black and one white, we are now increasingly becoming two countries, one advantaged and one disadvantaged. Race still affects an individual's chances in life, but class is growing in importance. This argument was the theme of William Julius Wilson's 1980 book, *The Declining Significance of Race*. More recent evidence suggests that, despite all the controversy his book engendered, he was right.

To say that class is becoming more important than race isn't to dismiss race as a very important factor. Blacks have faced, and will continue to face, unique challenges. But when we look for the reasons why less skilled blacks are failing to marry and join the middle class, it is largely for the same reasons that marriage and a middle-class lifestyle is eluding a growing number of whites as well. The jobs that unskilled men once did are gone, women are increasingly financially independent, and a broad cultural shift across America has created a new normal.

# *What Actually Helped*

From *The Charlotte Observer*

By Heather Brown

May 4, 2018

I'm the only child of a poor, single mom. I'm the first person in my family to attend and complete college; I now have a doctorate. I earn enough money that I have my own home and support my significant other and my mother. I know about economic mobility through hard-fought experience. Here's my economic mobility story – what helped and what did not.

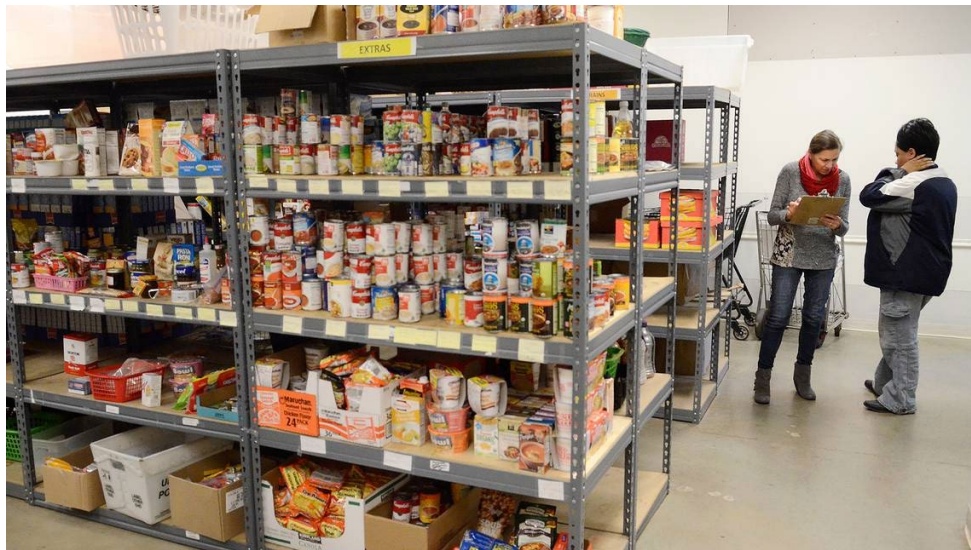


Photo by John D. Simmons

## **What Actually Helped**

**Welfare:** My mother rarely made more than minimum wage. We sometimes survived on fry bread, lamb's quarters, and squirrel as well as food stamps, Aid to Families with Dependent Children, the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, free school lunch, and Medicaid. With that social safety net, we knew we would always have something to eat, basic medical care, heat in winter, and \$50 a month toward household needs. We could survive.

**Public support for education:** I am a proud graduate of the public school system. However, what made the greatest impact in my journey was federal support for my undergraduate education in the form of Pell grants and work study. Without those, I would not have even started post-secondary education; I most certainly would not have finished.

**Reproductive choice:** My mother taught me my body belongs to me and only me from the time I was a very young child. I received comprehensive sex education starting in fifth grade. My

mom supported me in obtaining birth control as a teen. Because of this education and support, I have been able to make good decisions about my reproductive health, including whether or not to bear a child.

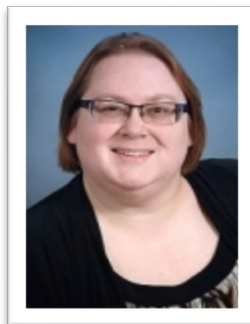
**White privilege:** I inherited the light-colored hair and white skin of the German side of my family. I have a common, bland Anglo name. I have had easier access to certain opportunities because of my name and the color of my skin. We were living-in-the-trailer-park poor; life was never easy, but it could have been so much more difficult.

### **What Did Not**

**Social capital:** I participated in several well-meaning programs designed to provide me with mentoring and exposure to opportunities for career development (such as my summer job as a high school janitor). Unfortunately, all of these programs were designed and implemented from the top down. I was never asked what I wanted or needed. Participating in them made me feel like a benighted poor person who was going to be given the tools needed to enter proper society – or else. I was exposed to well-intentioned, middle-class people who had absolutely no understanding of my life and no desire to understand, people who wanted to bequeath to me a few pearls of wisdom so they could feel good about helping the poor girl with “potential” make it.

I also felt that, no matter if I did “make it” out of poverty, I would never fit in. And it’s true. By all objective measures, I have made it. But I still feel like a poor person. I still think like a poor person. I still make purchases like a poor person. In a room with middle- and upper-class folks, I am the one who sticks out. I still bear the scars of poverty on my mind, body and spirit.

Everyone’s journey is unique. I will not pretend that my journey is universal. However, by sharing my experience, I hope that those who are making decisions about how to promote economic mobility will learn from what worked and what did not work for one person who, at least on paper, has made that journey.



*Heather Brown, Executive Director,  
Women and Girls Research Alliance,  
UNC Charlotte*

## *An Anecdote: John Legend*

From *the Huffington Post*

By John Legend

July 20, 2014



Photo by Zhiyi Zhang

My life could have gone differently though. At first, I had a pretty good childhood. I grew up in a small blue-collar city called Springfield, Ohio. I was surrounded by family, including 2 loving parents who cared so much about our education that they home-schooled us for several years during grade school. And they took the time to teach us more than academics. They taught us about character, about what it meant to live a good life.

My father often talked to us about his definition of success. He told us that it wasn't measured in money and material things, but it was measured in love and joy and the lives you're able to touch — the lives you're able to help. And my parents walked the walk. They gave of themselves to our church. They took in foster kids and helped the homeless, even though we didn't have much money ourselves.

Growing up in the Stephens house also meant you were immersed in art and music and encouraged to be creative. We had a piano and a drum kit in the house. I begged to take piano

lessons when I was 4. I started singing in the church choir and in school plays by the time I was 7. So I fell in love with music at a very young age.

My family was like a model family in our church and local community. My parents were leaders, raising intelligent, talented kids in a loving environment. We even had a little singing group called the “Stephens 5.”

But things started to fall apart when I was 10. My maternal grandmother passed away that year when she was only 58 years old, and her death devastated my family. She was our church organist, and on Sundays after church, I would go to her house just to hang out with her. She would make chicken and collard greens and cornbread. And she would teach me how to play gospel piano. She was one of my favorite people on the planet.

She and my mother were also very close, and her death sent my mother into a deep depression that eventually tore our family apart. My world was shattered. My parents got divorced. My mother disappeared into over a decade of drugs and despair. And I was confused and disoriented.

After the initial shock of my family breaking apart, my outward response wasn't very emotional. I coped by being stoic and seemingly unaffected. I thought if I didn't expose myself to any more pain and vulnerability, I could never get hurt. If I didn't fall in love, no one could ever betray me like that again.

I busied myself with school work and lots of activities, and tried not to think too much about my family situation, tried to avoid pain whenever possible. A big reason I only applied to colleges on the east coast was to make sure I had no reminders of home in my daily life.

The only thing I allowed myself to really love without reservation was music. I put all of my passion into it. I spent so much of my spare time working on it, that I barely got any sleep. At night, I was doing community choir, show choir and musicals in high school; a cappella and a church choir in college. I wrote my own songs. Played in talent shows. I put a lot of energy into becoming a better artist, a better writer and a better performer. And in some ways, it made me a better student and a better leader. Because when you actually care about something, you want to lead. Apathy's not so cool any more.

## *Discussion Questions*

1. How does a family's structure impact access to opportunities and success at school?
2. What can you do to ensure that your children have better opportunities than you had?
3. Do assistance programs provide valuable access to opportunities that strengthen family life? Which ones are most helpful? What could they do better?
4. What are the best ways for communities to effectively aid low-income single parent households?
5. Do societal expectations influence family stability (include positive ways and in negative ways)?
6. Why is teen pregnancy a major barrier to economic advancement for parents and children? What can be done to lower the incidence of teen pregnancy?
7. How can private and governmental organizations aid in spreading awareness about reproductive health—taking into account the varied perspectives regarding the topic?
8. Pretend you are an unmarried woman, a 20-year old secretary at a bank. How much money do you take home? What is your rent? Car payment? Insurance? You get pregnant. Who will care for your baby while you work? How much will childcare cost you? What haven't you paid for after paying rent, transportation, and childcare?

## *V. Social Capital*



Photo courtesy of the Connector Project

Introduction .....161

- A. Social Capital and Inequality: The Significance of Social Connections
- B. Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis (Excerpt)
- C. Vague Hopes and Active Aspirations Parts 1 and 2
- D. Inequality Matters
- E. Social Capital Is a Critical Factor for Change in Charlotte – Four Experts Weigh in on What Needs to Happen Next
- F. We Must Attack Opportunity Gaps at Their Root Causes
- G. Discussion Questions



# *INTRODUCTION*

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## **Social Capital and Inequality: The Significance of Social Connections**

From the *Handbook of the Social Psychology of Inequality*

By Karen S. Cook

Published August 18, 2014

Modified for length by Elise Palmer, Echo Student Intern

### **Abstract**

The study of social connections and their consequences is central to social psychology and represents a growing field of inquiry in the social sciences more broadly. It is linked to the analysis of social networks and to what is called “social capital,” a term made popular by Robert Putnam. A major dimension of inequality in society is the extent of access to social capital, to connections that matter. Differential access to such resources is one of the most enduring features of social inequality and a key reason for its reproduction across time and space. Networks structure access, and access to social capital is linked to variation in important life outcomes, revealing the significance of such factors for the study of inequality and its reproduction. Social capital has been linked to outcomes as diverse as health status, intellectual development, academic performance, employment opportunities, occupational attainment, entrepreneurial success or failure, and even juvenile delinquency, among other things. This chapter reviews some of the relevant theory and research on networks and inequality.

## *Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis (Excerpt)*

By Robert D. Putnam

March 10, 2015

Modified for length by Elise Palmer, Echo Student Intern

**Introduction to Robert D Putnam:** Robert Putnam is the Peter and Isabel Malkin Professor of Public Policy at The Harvard University John F. Kennedy School of Government. Putnam has made major contributions to understanding “Social Capital,” a term that refers to the bonds and bridges that exist between and among individuals and groups in a community. The Charlotte region was included in Putnam’s November 2000 Social Capital Benchmark Survey. It documents racial and ethnic differences in social capital and shows our region to be lower on social and racial trust than other communities in the study.

His 2015 book *Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis* explores patterns of upward mobility for members of his 1959 high school class in Port Clinton, Ohio, and explores why their children and grandchildren have faced diminished prospects of achieving the American Dream

Excerpt:

### ***Social Networks***

Social scientists often use the term *social capital* to describe social connectedness--that is, informal ties to family, friends, neighbors, and acquaintances; involvement in civic associations, religious institutions, athletic teams, volunteer activities; and so on. Social capital has repeatedly been shown to be a strong predictor of well-being both for individuals and for communities. Community bonds and social networks have powerful effects on health, happiness, educational success, economic success, public safety, and (especially) child welfare. However, like financial capital and human capital, social capital is distributed unevenly, and, as we’ll explore here, differences in social connections contribute to the youth opportunity gap.

Many studies have shown that better-educated Americans have wider and deeper social networks, both within their closest circle of family and friends and in the wider society. By contrast, less educated Americans have sparser, more redundant social networks, concentrated within their own family. (By “redundant,” I mean that their friends tend to know the same people they do, so that they lack the “friend of a friend” reach available to upper-class Americans.) In short, college-educated parents have both more close friends and more nodding acquaintances than less educated parents.

[...]

Holding race constant, parents in the top fifth of the socioeconomic hierarchy report about 20-25 percent more close friends than parents in the bottom fifth. (Holding social class constant, white

parents have 15-20 percent more close friends than nonwhite parents.) Contrary to romanticized images of close-knit communal life among the poor, lower-class Americans today, especially if they are nonwhite, tend to be socially isolated, even from their neighbors.

Perhaps more important, more educated Americans also have many more “weak ties,” that is, connections to wider, more diverse networks. The reach and diversity of these social ties are especially valuable for social mobility and education and economic advancement, because such ties allow educated, affluent parents and their children to tap a wealth of expertise and support that is simply inaccessible to parents and children who are less well off.

[...]

Upper-class parents enable their kids to form weak ties by exposing them more often to organized activities, professionals, and other adults. Working-class children, on the other hand, are more likely to interact regularly only with kin and neighborhood children, which limits their formation of valuable weak ties. (When those working-class neighbors had good jobs and could refer friends to those jobs, those neighborhood ties were more valuable.) When adjusting to college, choosing college majors, and making career plans, kids from more affluent, educated homes engage a wider array of informal advisors--family members, faculty, and outsiders--whereas kids from poor families typically consult one or two members of their immediate family, few if any of whom have any college experience at all. In short, the social networks of more affluent, educated families amplify their other assets in helping to assure that their kids have richer opportunities.

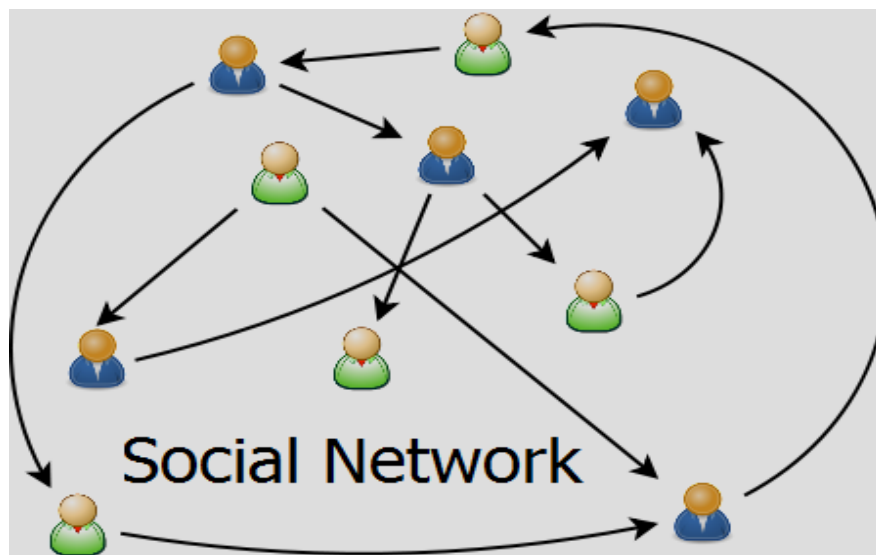


Photo Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

Affluent families provide their kids with connections that poor families can't. But connections are important not merely for getting into top schools and top jobs. At least as important as the pipeline from a prized internship to a corner office job are the ways in which social capital can

protect privileged kids from the ordinary risks of adolescence. Studies during the past 40 years have consistently shown that, if anything, drug usage and binge drinking are more common among privileged teenagers than among their less affluent peers. What is different, however, are the family and community “air bags” that deploy to minimize the negative consequences of drugs and other misadventures among rich kids.

[...]

Compared to their poorer counterparts, young people from upper-class backgrounds (and their parents) are more likely to use the Internet for jobs, education, political and social engagement, health, and news gathering, and less for entertainment or recreation. Affluent Americans use the Internet in ways that are mobility-enhancing, whereas poorer, less educated Americans typically use it in ways that are not. (The same was true of books and the postal system; the point is that the Internet is not immune from that inequality in usage.)

After talking with scores of teenagers nationwide about how they use the Internet, the ethnographer Danah Boyd concluded that offline inequalities carry over online. “In a world where information is easily available,” she writes, “strong personal networks and access to helpful people often matter more than access to the information itself.... Those whose networks are vetting information and providing context are more privileged in this information landscape than those whose friends and family have little experience doing such information work.... Just because teens can get access to a technology that can connect them to anyone anywhere does not mean that they have equal access to knowledge and opportunity.”

Kids from more educated homes learn more sophisticated digital literacy skills--knowing how to search for information on the Internet and how to evaluate it--and have more social support in deploying those skills. Such children are using the Internet in ways that will help them reap the rewards of an increasingly digital economy and society. Even though lower-class kids are coming to have virtually equal physical access to the Internet, they lack the digital savvy to exploit that access in ways that enhance their opportunities. At least at this point in its evolution, the Internet seems more likely to widen the opportunity gap than to close it.

### ***Mentors and “Savvy”***

As we have seen repeatedly, adults outside the family often play a critical role in helping a child develop his or her full potential:

- Cheryl, my black classmate in Port Clinton, was crucially supported in her college aspirations by the older white woman whose house she cleaned every week.
- Don, the working-class quarterback in my high school class, made it to college (about which his parents “didn’t have a clue”) with the support of his pastor.

- Andrew in Bend got detailed career guidance from his father’s high school classmate, the fire chief.
- In Orange County, Clara was urged toward graduate school by a supportive college teacher, and a generation later her daughter Isabella entered an unexpected career because of her screenwriting instructor at Troy High School. Meanwhile, Isabella’s classmate Kira survived the trauma of her father’s death with consistent help from her English teacher.
- Madeline’s writing instructor at Penn became a “life-changing” mentor, while Eleanor’s father’s female friend from graduate school became “the most important person in my life” (apart from her parents) during their long conversations on summer hikes.
- Youth pastors played critical roles as supportive mentors to all four of the Philadelphia young women, both in Lower Merion and in Kensington, during periods of family turmoil.

All of these examples represent “informal mentoring”--natural relationships that spring up with teachers, pastors, coaches, family friends, and so forth. “Formal mentoring,” by contrast, is the result of organized programs, like Big Brothers Big Sisters and My Brother’s Keeper.



Careful, independent evaluations have shown that formal mentoring can help at-risk kids to develop healthy relations with adults (including parents), and in turn to achieve significant gains in academic and psychosocial outcomes--school attendance, school performance, self worth, and reduced substance abuse, for example--even with careful controls for potentially confounding variables. These measurable effects are strongest when the mentoring relationship is long-term, and strongest for at-risk kids. (Upper-class kids already have informal mentors in their lives, so adding a formal mentor does not add so much to their achievement.) Measurably, mentoring matters.

Photo Courtesy of Pixabay

Formal mentoring is much less common and less enduring than informal mentoring. In 2013, a nationwide survey of young people asked about both formal and informal mentoring. Sixty-two percent of kids of all ages reported some sort of informal (or “natural”) mentoring, compared to

15 percent who reported any formal mentoring. Moreover, informal mentoring relationships lasted about 30 months on average, compared to roughly 18 months for formal mentoring. So combining frequency and duration, American kids get about eight times as much informal as formal mentoring.

Those national averages, however, obscure substantial class differences in access to mentoring. Informal mentoring--exactly as in the instances I've just recalled from our contemporary case studies--is much more common among upper- and upper-middle-class kids than among lower-class kids. (Our case studies in Port Clinton hint that informal mentoring of poor kids was more common in the 1950s, but I know of no quantitative evidence to support that conclusion.) Kids from affluent, educated homes benefit from a much wider and deeper pool of informal mentors.

For virtually all the categories of informal mentors outside the family--teachers, family friends, religious and youth leaders, coaches--kids from affluent families are two to three times more likely to have such a mentor. Privileged children and their less privileged peers are equally likely to report mentoring by a member of their extended family, but family members of privileged kids tend to have more valuable expertise, so family mentors tend to have more impact on the educational achievements of the privileged kids. All told, the informal mentoring received by privileged kids lasts longer and is more helpful (in the eyes of the kids themselves) than the informal mentoring that poor kids get. In short, affluent kids get substantially more and better informal mentoring.

# Vague Hopes and Active Aspirations, Part 1

From *the Brookings Institution*

By Richard V. Reeves and Kimberly Howard

April 15, 2014

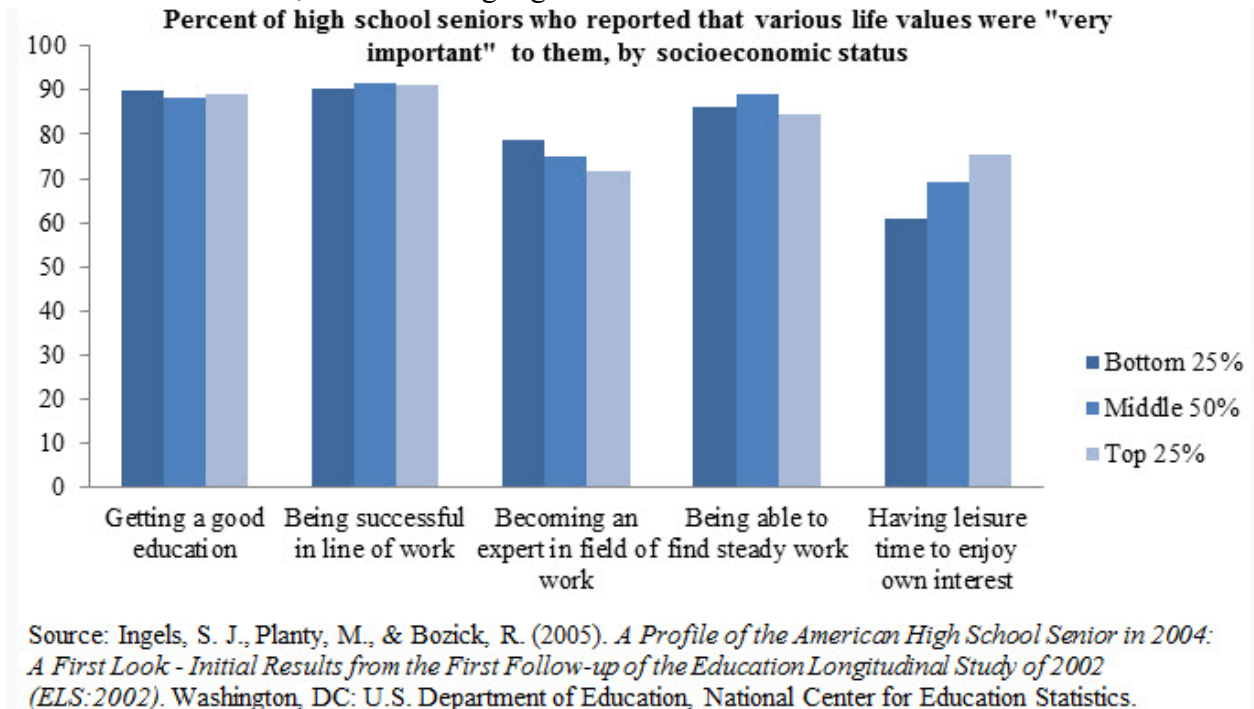
Skills—cognitive and non-cognitive—provide us with what James Heckman calls the “capacities to act.” But we need *reasons* to act, too.

That is why JFK, in a 1963 speech on civil rights, insisted: “every American has...the equal right to develop their talent and their ability *and their motivation*, to make something of themselves” [emphasis added].

Social mobility requires action on the part of policy-makers, to broaden the range of opportunities available to people. But it requires action from individuals, too: to seize those opportunities.

## NO CULTURE GAP IN LIFE VALUES

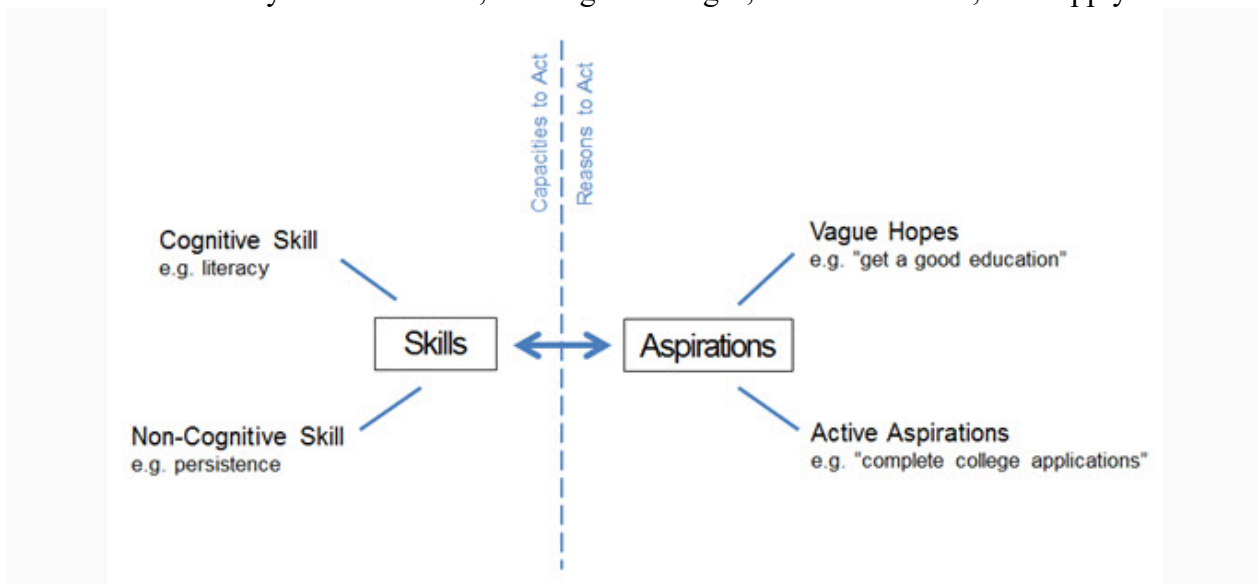
Americans share the same essential aspirations and values. There is little sign of a “culture gap” between social classes, at least among high school seniors:



## VAGUE HOPES AND ACTIVE ASPIRATIONS

But there is a big difference between a general aspiration with little palpable impact on a person's conduct and a strongly grounded aspiration, towards which an individual is actively working and planning. In a paper presented at the recent INET annual conference, "vague hopes" and "active aspirations" (you can watch the presentation here, my contribution is 1.09 minutes in).

- An **active aspiration** is a goal towards which a person is consciously and deliberately working. It requires investments of time, energy and other resources; and often, additionally, the ability to resist or defer gratification. Getting to college, for example, is likely to require study; and this will necessarily reduce the opportunities to party with friends.
- A **vague hope** consists of a loosely-stated goal or set of goals, largely untethered from current activities and decision-making. A teenager may hope for a college degree, but doesn't really work at school, investigate colleges, or in some cases, even apply.



## CLASS GAP IN ACTIVE ASPIRATIONS: EDUCATION

There may not be a class gap in vague hopes, but it looks like there is in active aspirations. Take education. There is unanimity about the importance of a good education, and high hopes of getting to college across the social classes. But there are sizable class gaps among high school students in time devoted to homework; personal predictions of post-graduate study; and rates of college application.



High school valedictorians from working class backgrounds are much less likely to apply to a selective private college (50% versus 80%), even though their admission chances, and enrollment ratios if accepted, are at least as good (in part because of the provision of financial aid). As the author of the study concludes, “the critical factor that prevented poorer valedictorians from attending a top college was simply failing to fill out an application and click ‘Submit.’”

Why the mobility-diluting class gap in active aspirations? And what can we do about it? We’ll pick up these questions in the next blog.

## *Vague Hopes and Active Aspirations, Part 2*

From the Brookings Institution

By Richard V. Reeves and Kimberly Howard

April 17, 2014

Why do some people have lower active aspirations (as opposed to vague hopes) than others?

Four broad possible explanations:

1. **I Don’t Want It.** A person might decide entirely autonomously that the accepted optimal path is simply not for them. (“You may think college is important, and I’ve thought hard about it, and could go. But I’d honestly rather work as a ranch hand for the rest of my life.”)
2. **It’s Beyond My Reach.** Individuals might lower their aspirations—or fail to develop active aspirations—because of a mistaken belief that the goal is beyond their reach. (“I guess I don’t want it that much, since I know I’m not going to get it.”)
3. **It’s Not For People Like Me.** Individuals may inherit or adopt values, preferences, and norms from others that place a lower weight on particular goals. (“I don’t want it, because I’ve inferred that it is not an appropriate goal for me.”)
4. **I Never Knew About It.** A person might not have an active aspiration for a particular end simply because of ignorance of the object of the potential aspiration, or of a pathway towards it. (“I don’t want it because I don’t know about it.”)

### **RAISING ACTIVE ASPIRATIONS**

If a well-informed person has simply chosen, for their own good reasons, different—if “lower”—active aspirations, anybody with a liberal bone in their body should leave them alone. But in the other instances, anybody with a meritocratic bone in their body should be worried. Can we do anything to raise active aspirations? It looks like it:

1. The Upward Bound program, aimed at students with parents with low incomes or who did not go to college, boosted enrollment at four-year colleges for students starting with low educational expectations (i.e., expecting less than a bachelor's degree) from 18% to 38%.
2. Youngsters in the Big Brothers, Big Sisters scheme, matched to an adult mentor, skipped half as many days of school, felt more competent about schoolwork, and missed fewer classes.
3. Information packets and fee waivers provided to high-achieving, low-income students via the Expanding College Opportunities project increased the number of college applications by these students by 19%.

We should not overstate the impact of this handful of interventions. Much deeper social trends are at work in the shaping of active aspirations. In some cases, an individual's assessment that a goal is beyond their reach might be pretty accurate. In that case, people won't raise their sights unless we improve their odds. Aspirations will not rise in the absence of real opportunities.

But nor should we assume that active aspirations are entirely beyond the reach of interventions. Fairly modest investments of time, energy, or money can increase active aspirations, with positive implications for upward mobility.

Alongside measures to close gaps in education, health, and parenting, policymakers ought to invest in complementary initiatives that address gaps in active aspirations.

Skills imbue people with the capacity to act. But they need a reason to act, too.



Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

## *Opinion: Inequality Matters*

*Conservative commentators have been arguing that the uneven distribution of wealth and income in America isn't a problem. They're wrong.*

From *The Atlantic*

By Jared Bernstein and Ben Spielberg

June 5, 2015

Modified for length by Elise Palmer, Echo Student Intern

Lately, one argument that's been making the rounds is that people should worry less about inequality and more about opportunity. Arthur Brooks, head of the conservative American Enterprise Institute, said, "I don't care about income inequality per se; I care about opportunity inequality." Senator and presidential candidate Marco Rubio believes that inequality is but a symptom of immobility and constrained opportunity. Tyler Cowen argued in the *New York Times* that what matters is not the fact that the top 1 percent is capturing a much larger share of total income growth than they used to, but that the poor are stuck in poverty.

These individuals have identified a worthy goal. Unequal access to opportunity offends deeply held American values, and poverty is not only a matter of near-term material deprivation—too often, it also robs low-income children of the chance to realize their intellectual and economic potential.

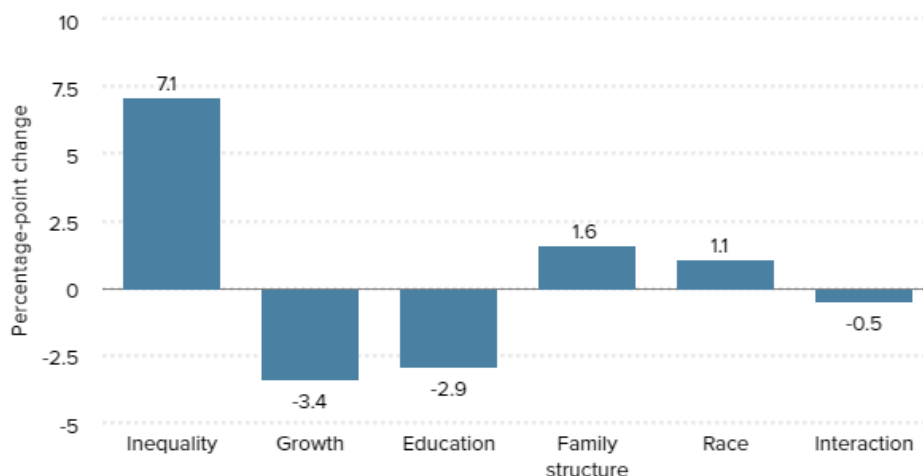
But it's not possible to effectively address either poverty or inadequate opportunity if America hives off its opportunity concerns from the broader problem of inequality (nor, as Senator Rubio intimates, can America reduce inequality by focusing solely on increasing mobility). Boosting mobility will require reductions in wage, income, and wealth inequalities.

For many in the opportunity-not-inequality camp, the relationship between the two concepts is an inconvenient truth. Concerns about inequality smack of "class warfare," of "going after" the top 1 percent and Wall Street. Cowen is revealing in this regard: "The inequality focus tends to draw us to redistribution, whereas a mobility focus is more conducive to ideas for wealth creation."

Many politicians and analysts would rather not address the power imbalances that have channeled so much of our economic growth to the highest-income families. They are much more comfortable focusing on the benign-sounding theme of "wealth creation" or insisting that economic growth alone can improve mobility without any redistribution of resources or political power, as if "a rising tide can lift all boats" matters when a few people are in yachts and many are stuck in dinghies.

But a growing body of research shows strong links among inequality, poverty, and opportunity. For example, new research by Elise Gould of the Economic Policy Institute reveals that of the factors most commonly cited as driving poverty in America—education, family structure, race and more (see chart below)—the number-one factor by far is the growth in inequality, which added seven percentage points to the poverty rate since the late 1970s.

**Impact on poverty rate of economic, demographic, and education changes, 1979–2013**



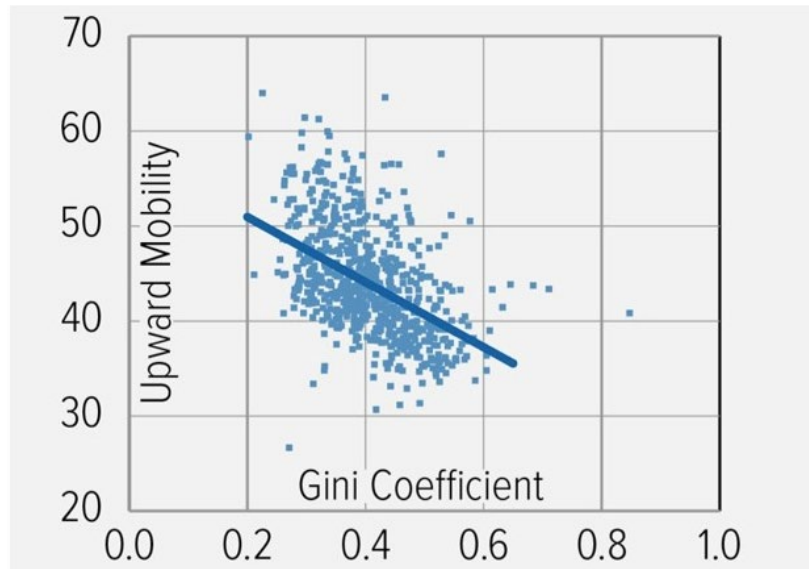
**Source:** EPI analysis of Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement microdata based on Danziger and Gottschalk (1995)

So why is that? How is it that inequality reduces mobility and deepens poverty?

\* \* \*

The relationship between childhood family income and life outcomes is well-established. Socioeconomic status is unfortunately the strongest predictor of a child’s academic achievement, as decades of social science research have found. A child’s income rank—her family’s income relative to the household income of other families—makes a difference for that child’s future adult-income rank as well. Research by Raj Chetty of Harvard and his colleagues links every 10-percentile-point gain in childhood income rank with a 3.4-percentile-point gain in income rank as an adult. Since inequality by definition means that less income will reach poor and middle class Americans for any given rate of economic growth, these facts alone highlight inequality’s relevance to mobility discussions.

In addition, a large and growing body of evidence, recently reviewed by Katharine Bradbury and Robert Triest of the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, directly connects inequality of outcomes to inequality of opportunity. As shown in the figure below, Bradbury and Triest find a significant, negative relationship between living in an area with greater income inequality and children’s expected upward mobility.



Commuting zones with greater inequality have reduced expected upward mobility for low-income children (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities)

It's critical to understand the fundamental difference between these findings and the Cowen, Rubio, et al. view that America can address poverty without addressing inequality. As just noted, rising inequality implies that the income and wealth generated by GDP and productivity growth increasingly flow to those at the very top of the scale. As a result, relatively fewer resources reach everyone else. One thus would expect to see low-income families less able (relative to the wealthy ones) to invest in children's futures, more indebted if they tried to go to college, more likely to be stuck in neighborhoods that lack opportunity, and more likely to experience the stressors that do permanent damage to children's later educational and earning outcomes.

And that's exactly what happens.

Research indicates at least three causal pathways via which inequality constrains opportunity for those at the lower end of the economic spectrum.

First, inequality is driving increasing residential segregation by income. The shares of families in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty and neighborhoods of concentrated wealth both more than doubled between 1970 and 2009, while the share of families in middle-income neighborhoods declined from 65 percent to 42 percent. Those high-poverty neighborhoods—where more and more families are living—create lasting disadvantages for many who grow up there: If a family with young children (less than age 13) relocates from a high- to a low-poverty neighborhood, the kids achieve better academic and economic outcomes later in life, as new work by Chetty et al. indicates.

Second, inequality leads to unequal access to quality educational experiences throughout a child's lifetime. Over the period of growing inequality, these disparities have increased. In 1995,

for example, families with education debt in the bottom half of the net worth distribution (a broader definition of income, including assets minus liabilities) had a mean debt-to-income ratio of around 0.26, meaning that for every dollar of their income, they owed 26 cents in college debt. For families in the top 5 percent, that ratio was eight cents on the dollar. But by 2013, the debt-to-income ratio had more than doubled to 0.58 for the bottom half (some of whom are poor but many of whom are middle class) while remaining unchanged for those at the top.

Third, and most importantly, inequality directly undermines equality of opportunity, likely through a variety of mechanisms. As the gap between the rich and poor widens, lower-income families have less ability relative to their rich counterparts to invest in enrichment goods for their children. Children from families with less income have relatively less extensive and privileged social networks and, compared to their rich peers, are more likely to experience the type of "toxic" stress that can hamper brain development and long term academic, health, and economic outcomes.

In short, inequality entrenches immobility not just by enabling increasingly unequal transfers of wealth from one generation to the next, but also through a number of more subtle pathways that affect opportunity on a daily basis. It may not yet be possible to explain all of these subtle pathways with great certainty, but the fact that "rich and poor children score very differently on school readiness tests before they enter kindergarten" should be viewed as an unsurprising consequence of the high levels of inequality American society currently tolerates.

Members of the "don't-mess-with-the-rich-to-help-the-poor" crowd also ignore the political dimension of inequality. While Rubio, Paul Ryan, and others are professing their concern for the poor, they're busy trying to repeal the estate tax (at a cost of \$270 billion over 10 years) and writing budgets that gut the safety net. These policies restrict mobility at both the bottom and top by exacerbating the burdens of being poor, increasing the privilege of being born into riches, and eliminating revenue sources for investments that might begin to reverse the inequality of opportunity. Why do politicians pursue such policies? Because they are nudged along by the interests of wealthy donors. Inequality begets greater inequality.

In other words, disadvantages faced by children in low- and middle-income families and advantages held by their wealthy peers are two sides of the same coin. The lack of opportunity for those in poverty is not some separate problem from the unequal distribution of wealth and income across society.

# *Social Capital Benchmark Survey for The Charlotte Region*

From the Social Capital Benchmark Survey Executive Summary for The Charlotte Region  
Prepared by Betty Chafin Rash, *Voices and Choices*; Billy McCoy, *UNC Charlotte Urban Institute*  
February 28, 2001

Note: The information presented below reports data from only the *Conclusions Section* of the Survey.

The purpose of the Social Capital Benchmark Survey, conducted nationally as well as in 40 U.S. communities, is to measure various manifestations of social capital as well as its suspected correlates to (1) provide a rich database for analysis by interested researchers who wish to better understand social capital and (2) provide a tool for communities and organizations to use in program development and evaluation, in part, by enabling relative assessment to other communities and the nation.

## **Conclusions**

The Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey, a massive research undertaking, was conducted to assess the level of social capital in the United States at the time the survey was done (2000). Because this was the first national survey on this topic, the findings from this study provide the benchmark against which further studies on this topic can be compared. The local communities have had access to the local and national data for a very short time. Therefore, we must make the caveat that all findings in this analysis should be viewed as preliminary. Additional research will help us better specify some of the findings.

Through an amazing array of measures of social capital, we can make statements about how much social capital (or some surrogate measure) a particular group has, but we can say little about the subjective issue of whether this is good or bad. Just as when talking about economic capital when we say not everyone is a millionaire, we can say about social capital that not everyone is as well connected as he/she could be. In fact, the most meaningful discussion about “how we are doing” on a particular dimension will occur after two or more of these social capital surveys are done in our locale.

The data and the analysis of those data available to us, however, provide some interesting discussion points for the participating communities.

The Charlotte region’s highest scores on the indices were on those related to religious activities: faith-based engagement, giving and volunteering, and associational involvement. Our lower scores were on the dimensions of trust, particularly inter-racial trust and informal socializing. Professor Putnam refers to this as using our social capital to “bond” with others who are like us rather than using it to “bridge” to those different from us.

Our analysis indicates that there is a substantial difference between Whites and Blacks on the trust indices; however, on the other measures of social capital the differences between Whites and Blacks are inconsequential. The real racial divide is between Hispanics and other racial groups. The findings show that those with higher incomes and education were more likely to rank high on the various measures of social capital. This finding is surprising to no one and is, in fact, almost universal. However, the characteristic that differentiates the South (and Charlotte) from the Northern tier of states and cities (such as Minneapolis) is the magnitude of difference between Hispanics and other racial groups, between those of higher and lower incomes, and between those of higher and lower educational levels. For example, when looking at the results in Minneapolis and Seattle (both of which are larger and arguable more diverse than Charlotte), one sees that the social capital levels are more uniform across the demographic groups.

In many ways, the central theme around which the social capital issue is analyzed is trust. For us in the Charlotte region, the paramount question is why do we rank so low of the two trust indices: social and inter-racial trust? Not only do we rank below the national sample, we also rank lower than Greensboro and Winston-Salem. Some might surmise that this low rating is because of all the turmoil about school reassignment in Mecklenburg county, but the data suggest that this is not a factor. Actually Charlotte and Mecklenburg County rank higher on both of the trust indices than do the other MSA counties and the rural counties outside the MSA but within the Charlotte region.

This lack of social and racial trust may be firmly rooted in our history. How Whites treated Blacks in the South—slavery, sharecroppers, and Jim Crow restrictions—is the legacy that we all live with and while conditions are much better, we all know the legacy continues. In this kind of situation, the building of social capital across racial groups was all but impossible. It is easier to do so now, both interaction and involvement continues to be restrained.

The Hispanic issue, which has been quietly dormant, is likely to become a significant social problem in this community. Hispanics essentially have no ties to the larger community because of language problems, their temporary residential status, their being here illegally, or some other reason. Whatever the cause, it is difficult to think that this large population group with almost no ties to the community can continue to co-exist with the rest of us without significant social problems surfacing. Some would say the social problems have already surfaced, but most of us have failed to recognize this situation.

The survey did ask people about barriers to civic involvement. The biggest barrier to becoming more involved in the community is the occupational barrier, that is, people simply do not have the time. In the Charlotte region, 85 percent said their occupation limited their involvement somewhat. While questions were not asked as to how occupation limited involvement, the answer is fairly clear. The Charlotte region has more two-parent households where both parents



work than most any other part of the nation. Many lower income people work two jobs to make ends meet. Many others may work only one job, but spend many more than 40 hours a week doing it. Of the other barriers asked about in the survey, 50 percent said lack of transportation was a limiting factor; 40 percent noted a feeling of being unwelcome; 67 percent mentioned safety concerns; 73 percent believed that their lack of information was an impeding factor; and, 56 percent mentioned their perceived inability to effect change. Time, however, is probably the major barrier.

The challenge ahead for the Charlotte region is how to build on the social capital that we already have and which results from the high level of religiosity in our communities. The time during the week that our people are most segregated is the very time that they are practicing their religious beliefs by attending services. In some way, we must become more tolerant of and better connected with people who are different from us. The faith community has a significant role to play but before that role can be undertaken for the community at-large, it must occur within our houses of worship.

Our task ahead is to build the infrastructure for community involvement. We are most likely to think of the social dimension when we think of infrastructure. How can we bring people together? How do we bridge the racial and socioeconomic divides? These and many other questions are being addressed by various groups in our community. These questions have no easy answers.

We would like to introduce the physical element of the infrastructure. It is difficult to have informal interaction, an important aspect of social capital, if we have no parks to go to, no sidewalks to walk on, no crosswalks to allow us to cross streets, no community centers to go to and no neighborhoods where services are available in easy walking distance. Our region is characterized by suburban and rural sprawl and the resulting long commuting trips. The isolation found in gated and walled subdivisions and in the steel frame of a car on a commuting trip are certainly not conducive to the formation of social capital.

Building mixed-use neighborhoods with services readily available, with sidewalks to get to the services and crosswalks to get across streets where traffic is already slowed by traffic calming devices, with mixed-income housing, and with a community center and parks may promote social capital more than we might believe and is, in many ways, easier to accomplish than changing the social dynamics.

In summary, many of the findings from this social capital survey simply confirm long-standing beliefs for many. Although for analysis purposes, we have talked about the Charlotte Region being either higher or lower on the measurement indices than the national sample, overall the Charlotte region is, in fact, very similar to the national findings. The most significant finding

from this study is that the Charlotte region needs to build social capital including social and inter-racial trust if it is to continue to be viewed as a growing, dynamic Southern and national city. Failure to develop a higher level of social capital will defer if not destroy this dream.

## *Social Capital is a Critical factor for Change in Charlotte – Four Experts Weigh in on What Needs to Happen Next*

From *Charlotte Agenda*

By Cristina Wilson

June 12, 2017

On Tuesday, June 13, Levine Museum of the New South’s Breaking Bread dinner series returns to deep-dive on a topic that has been top of mind for Charlotteans for the last several months — social capital.

The Charlotte Mecklenburg Opportunity Task Force has named social capital as one of the critical factors impacting social mobility and quality of life in Mecklenburg County. In other words, understanding the concept is necessary for making strides on some of Charlotte’s most serious issues.

### **So what is social capital, exactly?**

*Social Capital*, according to the task force’s 2017 report, “is defined as the relationship and networks people have that can connect them to opportunity.”



Photo Courtesy of Pixabay

Four of the panelists for Tuesday night’s event have weighed in, helping to kick off a dialogue they hope will continue in the community far beyond a shared meal tomorrow evening.

*Responses have been lightly edited for brevity.*

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## **Mario Shaw, Profound Gentleman**

*Mario Jovan Shaw serves as Chief Program Officer for Profound Gentlemen. He received his M.S.Ed from Johns Hopkins University School of Education in 2015 and a B.A from University of Cincinnati in 2012. Mario began his journey as an 7th-grade teacher in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools through Teach For America. During his time in the classroom, Mario created the BrotherHood, a program to address the needs of young black males in his classroom. Mario is a 2015 recipient of the Echoing Green fellowship. He has been recognized by Forbes 30 Under 30 as one of the world's brightest social innovators who seek to bring about change and equal opportunity for boys and male educators of color.*

### **In some areas of Charlotte, affluent and low-income neighborhoods sit right next to each other. How do we build bridges between the two?**

There are great non-profits in the city who focus on this issue and have established programs that aids to close the gap. In addition to what these organizations are doing, I personally believe that this work starts with self. Affluent communities have to acknowledge their privilege and understand the opportunities in our city that all Charlotteans don't have access to.

Additionally, we have to further acknowledge that Charlotteans of low-income communities have values. Money isn't the only thing that brings value to your life. In all communities, there are trades and skills like gardening and computer tech that make every individual unique. I believe part of this issue is not acknowledging the value in someone's life outside of their social status or wealth. We have the ability to change our minds in how we think about people.

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## **Dr. Lyndall Hare, Concierge Gerontologist**

*Dr. Hare has worked in the field of aging for 30 years, both in the United States and South Africa. Her Concierge Gerontology Services include highly personalized Eldercare Coaching, helping to navigate the tricky landscape of elder-caring and the maze of aging services for loved ones. As an Aging Consultant, she coaches organizations that serve boomers and elders by providing innovative visioning and creative programming and planning. She has a passion for social justice, to which she's devoted her life since coming here to the U.S. in political exile because of her work during the Apartheid regime in South Africa.*

### **What's the key to ensuring that all communities of Charlotte have social capital and the ability to exercise it?**

Conversations and attempts at bridging social capital in Charlotte have taken place amongst those with social capital, by and large, rather than insuring that these conversations are inclusive of those who are living in areas with very little infrastructure or affordable housing. I do think that one of the most important “keys” to unlocking access to social capital for those without it, is to pass an ordinance for a living wage.

**In some areas of Charlotte, affluent and low-income neighborhoods sit right next to each other. How do we build bridges between the two?**

By partnering to establish land trusts for long-time home owners of low-income neighborhoods to protect family assets instead of predatory pressure to sell at low prices. We can also protect the “third spaces” established in areas being gentrified – the corner grocery store, the ethnic restaurant, the barber shop, the “funk” and “otherness” that has historically created community spaces in neighborhoods for residents.

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**Andrew Plepler, Bank of America**

*Andrew D. Plepler is Bank of America’s Global Head of ESG. In this role, Plepler spearheads the company’s focus on environmental, social and governance factors. Plepler also founded and continues to serve on the board of the Washington, DC-based Urban Alliance Foundation, a nonprofit jobs and mentoring program that works with economically disadvantaged high school students. He also serves on the Boards of Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), Living Cities Inc., Charlotte-Mecklenburg Opportunity Task Force and Levine Museum of the New South.*

**What’s the key to ensuring that all communities of Charlotte have social capital and the ability to exercise it?**

The key is taking the time to develop stronger relationships. We need to get to know each other – understand the different experiences that together make us such a diverse and vibrant city. Break down the walls that are built by misconceptions instead of experience.

Spend time outside the normal course of your day, talk to people you don’t know, go to events you normally wouldn’t and build understanding of the many perspectives within our city.

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**Cynthia H. Knight, Castle’s Daycare Academy**

*Cynthia Knight is the owner and director of Castle's Daycare Academy located in Charlotte. It has been in operation for 28 years. Cynthia Knight has served as a community advocate for the educational development of the young child. She has developed teaching strategies to enhance the educational levels of the young child to a much higher level of knowledge than expected. She is committed to a process of education that will advance a child to reach the level of learning that will produce a positive and "bright" future.*

**We're at a moment when nearly all of Charlotte acknowledges that change is needed. But what will it take for Charlotte to actually achieve meaningful change?**

Social capital must first begin with fair work and hiring practices and notifications of opportunities to stimulate employment and entrepreneurship. In order to do so, we must stop the concentration of one type of market or demographic to one area or field of work. For example: building another fast food chain in a low-income neighborhood instead of a business park or school or warehouse.

There should be an equal distribution of economic opportunity to all areas, while at the same time investing in dreambuilders and those not in "ideal" situations or locations. We must also start by educating our youth to be proud of their achievements, not just to take tests. Teach trades and skills in order to make people more employable and able to stimulate networks between communities.

# *We Must Attack Opportunity Gaps at Their Root Causes*

From *The Charlotte Observer*

By Kay McSpadden

March 25, 2016



Photo by John D. Simmons

Education policy briefs can be dense reading for casual readers, but the National Education Policy Center at the University of Colorado Boulder has a mission of making peer-reviewed research accessible to both academics and the general public. Their newest infographic is a good example. Titled “[Lifting All Children Up](#),” it shows the current state of opportunity gaps in America and offers two possible directions for addressing them.

According to Kevin Welner, the professor of educational policy and law who heads NEPC, opportunity gaps are caused by policy decisions that affect children both inside and outside of school. Policies inside schools that create gaps include tracking students, narrowing the curriculum, and enforcing punitive rather than restorative discipline policies. Hiring practices that lead to quick teacher turnover or privatization that strips public districts of resources also widen the gap.

Probably the most ubiquitous harmful policy is using local income and real estate values for base funding of public schools. As someone who works in a poor rural district close to wealthy suburban ones, I see how the funding disparities limit the opportunities for my students. For

example, with more resources, we could hire enough faculty so that our classes wouldn't be overcrowded. We could buy more computers so that our many students without Internet access at home could do their online research here at school.

Larger structural inequalities outside of school are the bigger causes of opportunity gaps. These include concentrated poverty and the issues of housing, safety, access to health care and food security.

One way to counteract these larger forces is with "school-centric reforms" such as high-quality Pre-K and wraparound services like the dental van that comes to my school a couple of times of year. Recruiting experienced teachers and limiting class size can help, as can increasing early intervention for students who struggle with math and reading.

"This 'school-centric' approach calls on us to make the sort of serious and sustained investment in school resources that has never been attempted in the United States, particularly for the benefit of communities of concentrated poverty," Welner writes in the Washington Post. He notes, however, that even where school districts make a concerted effort to institute such reforms, they are rarely successful enough to overcome the larger systemic burdens students face outside of school.

Currently, addressing those systemic issues is hardly on the radar. Doing so would require putting in motion policies that insure a living wage, genuinely diverse communities, affordable housing, accessible educational resources, and nutrition and health care access. More than that, it would require a shift in how we perceive support for the poor – recognizing that helping them live better lives improves the health and safety of the community as a whole.

Attacking the root causes of opportunity gaps at the source is what Welner calls "the more sensible, efficient, and humane approach...it is wrongheaded to weigh our children down with obstacle after obstacle and then turn to our schools to overcome those burdens."

Despite the challenges, Welner ends on an optimistic note. "The overall opportunity gap is the result of a compilation – the cumulative effect of many separate gaps. When the time comes that we make a serious, sustained effort to close those gaps, we'll lift all children up. We'll see children succeeding at new levels, as high as their opportunities can taken them."



## *Discussion Questions*

1. Do you have individuals, classes or programs at your school that aim to provide students with opportunities, whether it be for jobs, internships, interviews, etc.? If so, what are these classes, and do you believe they are making a difference? What could make them more helpful to students?
2. Is social capital inequality just as important as income inequality? Which one is a more pressing issue and why? What solutions do you suggest to address this?
3. In the excerpt from *Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis*, Putnam says that one of the keys to success in terms of social capital is having a mentor. What ideas do you have to increase access to “life mentors” for kids of lower socioeconomic status?
4. Answer the social capital questions below to assess your social capital. What did you learn about yourself?

### **Social Capital Survey Questions:**

- A. Think about the people you know. Who has influenced you:
  - To do well in school?
  - To seek out opportunities to increase your skills?
  - To meet new people?
  - To meet people different from yourself?
  - To learn about jobs you might enjoy as an adult?
  - To choose friends who are a good influence on you?
- B. Have you ever had a formal mentor?
- C. Do you formally or informally mentor someone?
- D. Do you view your relationships more as a bond with people similar to yourself or use them more as a bridge to get to know people different from yourself?

**Activity**

Survey the class using questions similar to those from the Putnam study.

E. I trust most people.

*Strongly agree    Agree    Disagree    Strongly Disagree*

F. I trust my neighbors a lot.

*Strongly agree    Agree    Disagree    Strongly Disagree*

G. I trust the local police a lot.

*Strongly agree    Agree    Disagree    Strongly Disagree*

H. I trust Whites a lot

*Strongly agree    Agree    Disagree    Strongly Disagree*

I. I trust Blacks a lot

*Strongly agree    Agree    Disagree    Strongly Disagree*

J. I trust Asians a lot

*Strongly agree    Agree    Disagree    Strongly Disagree*

K. I trust Hispanics a lot

*Strongly agree    Agree    Disagree    Strongly Disagree*

How diverse are your friendships? Check all that apply.

\_\_\_\_\_ I have a friend who is a business owner.

\_\_\_\_\_ I have a friend who is a manual worker.

\_\_\_\_\_ I have a friend who is a welfare recipient.

\_\_\_\_\_ I have a friend who owns a vacation home.

\_\_\_\_\_ I have a friend who is of a different religion.

\_\_\_\_\_ I have a friend who is White.

\_\_\_\_\_ I have a friend who is Hispanic.

\_\_\_\_\_ I have a friend who is Asian.

\_\_\_\_\_ I have a friend who is African American.

\_\_\_\_\_ I have a friend who is a homosexual.

\_\_\_\_\_ I have a friend who is a leader in his/her community.

## VI. Criminal Justice



Photo courtesy of Pixabay

Introduction .....188

- A. Mass Incarceration and the Cycle of Poverty
- B. Prisons of Poverty: Uncovering the Pre-incarceration Incomes of the Imprisoned
- C. The Color of Justice: Racial and Ethnic Disparity in State Prisons
- D. OpEd: Charlotte is Burning: Waking up from the American Dream... Finally?
- E. Charlotte Police Shooting and Protest Timeline: How the Protests Started, Spread and City Reaction
- F. CMS's Treatment of Black Boys Creates School-to-Prison Pipeline
- G. Mecklenburg D.A. Should Tackle Mass Incarceration
- H. Ten Ways to Put Justice Back in the Criminal Justice System
- I. Alternatives to Incarceration
- J. Why Norway's Prison System is So Successful
- K. Discussion Questions

# *INTRODUCTION*

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Elise Palmer, Echo Student Intern

Over the past few years, the criminal justice system has become a hot topic of discussion in Charlotte and in the nation as a whole. Americans are the most incarcerated people in the world, and our country has one of the highest rates of recidivism. Tensions have grown considerably between the police and communities of color after deaths of unarmed citizens. Incarceration dramatically accentuates socioeconomic divisions. Many argue that the criminal justice system is in dire need of reform.

This chapter explores the many issues found within the criminal justice system, from racial and socioeconomic disparities to the destructive school-to-prison pipeline. What can Charlotte do to initiate meaningful and positive change to move towards justice for all?

**“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”  
- Martin Luther King Jr.**

# *Mass Incarceration and the Cycle of Poverty*

From *Generation Progress*

By Jessica Newman

October 15, 2010



Photo courtesy of Flickr / dombrassey

*Critical Resistance* is a group that works to highlight the problems with the high rates of incarceration in the U.S.

It's no secret that the United States hosts the largest prison-industrial complex in the world. It's also no secret that we imprison more people per capita than any other developed nation.

But what most people don't know is that America's prison system has so drastically institutionalized racism and wealth inequality that it has created another class of human beings.

According to a report released this summer in the review *Daedalus*, doing time, or coming from a family whose parental figures have done time, directly correlates to the inability to reach a higher socioeconomic status. In fact, the prison-to-poverty and poverty-to-prison cycles are described in the report as a "vicious feedback loop."

"In devastating detail in *Daedalus*, the sociologists Bruce Western of Harvard and Becky Pettit of the University of Washington have shown how poverty creates prisoners and how prisons in turn fuel poverty, not just for individuals but for entire demographic groups," writes Slate's Sasha Abramsky.

Between 1980 and 2008, the U.S. incarceration rate climbed from 221 people per 100,000 citizens to 762 people per 100,000 (seven times higher than China's rate). Even more telling, when taking incarceration into account for unemployment rates, 70 percent of all black males without a high school degree are jobless, according to the publication's research.

Society attaches a "criminal stigma" to anyone with a criminal history, often making it more difficult to find a job (who wants to hire someone with a record?) and most times making upward mobility within society impossible.

But the real problem lies in the truths behind America's shift to mass incarceration. The inequalities created by the prison-industrial complex are invisible to the average Joe because incarceration isn't factored into mainstream measures of wealth and wellbeing, like the unemployment or poverty rates. Mass incarceration also disproportionately affects people with an already-low socioeconomic status, so it "deepens disadvantage and forecloses mobility for the most marginal in society," according to the report. And last, but not least, incarceration does not just affect the person put in jail; unfortunately, it is intergenerational. A teenage boy is more likely to go to prison if his father, uncle, brother, friend or anyone in his immediate social circle has done time.

At present, nearly 2 million people in America are serving time in prison. These people represent a new class, one that can't pull itself up by its bootstraps in the good ol' American way because its persecution is so institutionalized within society that it is literally stuck in the vicious cycle. Crime is down across the country, yet arrests and prison populations continue to increase, and disproportionately impact low-income communities and communities of color.

The only hope is to revolutionize our criminal justice system, shifting its focus from incarceration to rehabilitation. Otherwise, it's just the same old story: once a poor criminal, always a poor criminal.

# *Prisons of Poverty: Uncovering the Pre-incarceration Incomes of the Imprisoned*

From *The Prison Policy Initiative*

By Bernadette Rabuy and Daniel Kopf

July 9, 2015

Modified for length by Echo Intern Elise Palmer

Correctional experts of all political persuasions have long understood that releasing incarcerated people to the streets without job training, an education, or money is the perfect formula for recidivism and re-incarceration. While the fact that people released from prison have difficulties finding employment is well-documented, there is much less information on the role that poverty and opportunity play in who ends up behind bars in the first place.

Using an underutilized data set from the Bureau of Justice Statistics, this report provides hard numbers on the low incomes of incarcerated men and women from *before* they were locked up.

## *Findings*

The findings are as predictable as they are disturbing. The American prison system is bursting at the seams with people who have been shut out of the economy and who had neither a quality education nor access to good jobs. We found that, in 2014 dollars, incarcerated people had a median annual income of \$19,185 prior to their incarceration, which is **41% less than non-incarcerated people of similar ages.**

The gap in income is not solely the product of the well-documented disproportionate incarceration of Blacks and Hispanics, who generally earn less than Whites. We found that incarcerated people in all gender, race, and ethnicity groups earned substantially less prior to their incarceration than their non-incarcerated counterparts of similar ages

	Incarcerated people (prior to incarceration)		Non-incarcerated people	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
All	\$19,650	\$13,890	\$41,250	\$23,745
Black	\$17,625	\$12,735	\$31,245	\$24,255
Hispanic	\$19,740	\$11,820	\$30,000	\$15,000
White	\$21,975	\$15,480	\$47,505	\$26,130

Figure 1. Median annual incomes for incarcerated people prior to incarceration and non-incarcerated people ages 27-42, in 2014 dollars, by race/ethnicity and gender.

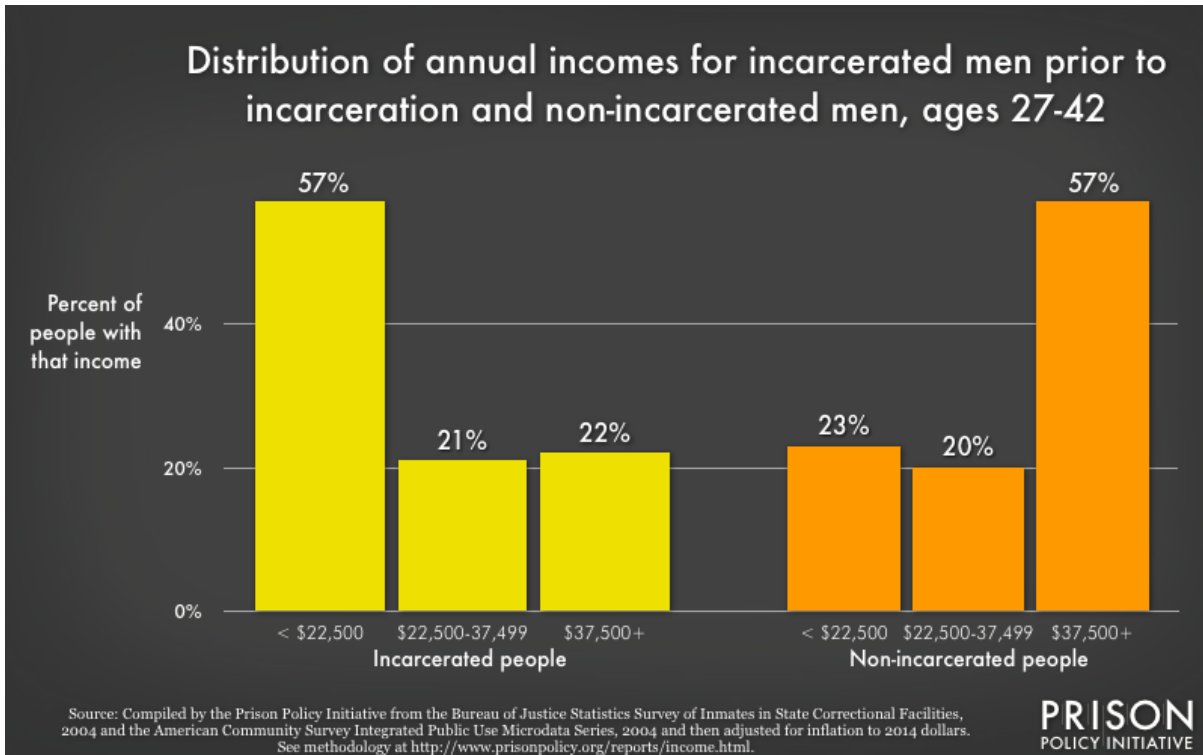
	Men	Women
All	52%	42%
Black	44%	47%
Hispanic	34%	21%
White	54%	41%

Figure 2. Percentage difference between the median annual incomes for incarcerated people prior to incarceration and non-incarcerated people ages 27-42, in 2014 dollars, by race/ethnicity and gender.

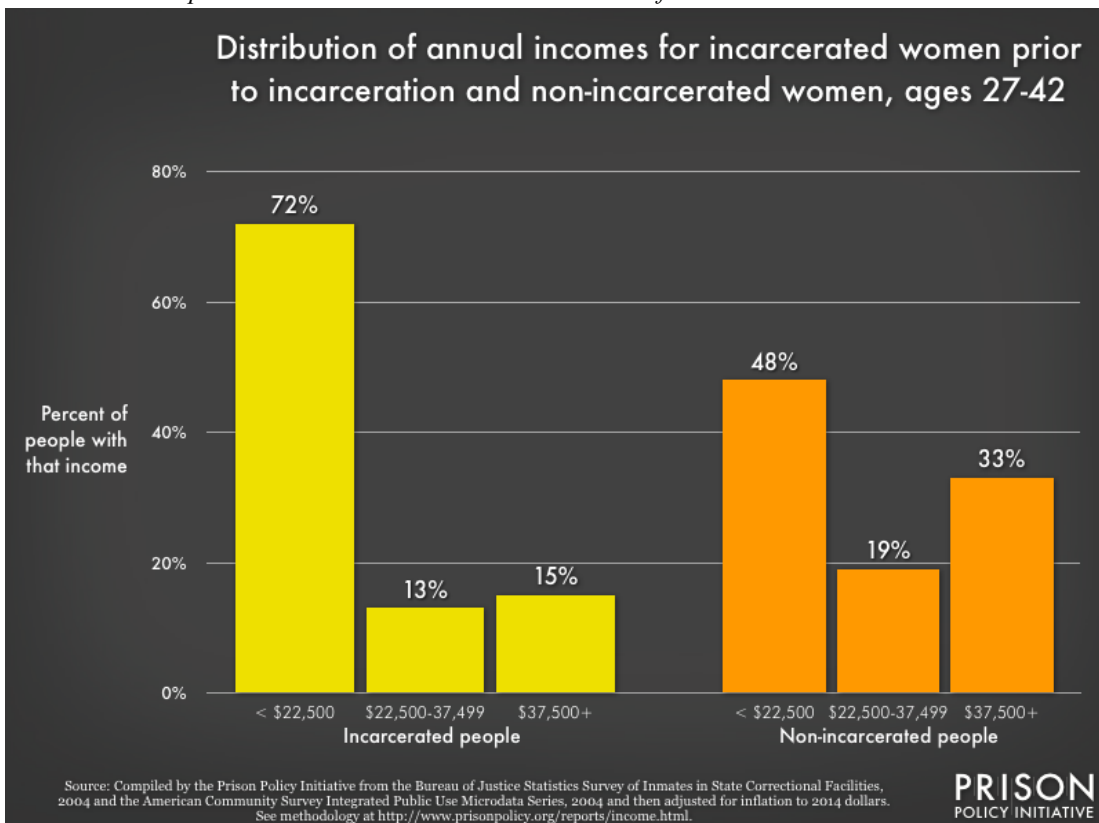
While the gap in income is most dramatic for White men, White men have the highest incomes. By contrast, the income gap is smallest for Hispanic women, but Hispanic women have the lowest incomes.

Not only are the median incomes of incarcerated people prior to incarceration lower than non-incarcerated people, but incarcerated people are dramatically concentrated at the lowest ends of the national income distribution:





*Incarcerated men are concentrated at the lowest ends of the national income distribution. The median incarcerated man had a pre-incarceration income that is 48% that of the median non-incarcerated man.*



*Incarcerated women are concentrated at the lowest ends of the national income distribution. The median incarcerated woman had a pre-incarceration income that is 58% that of the median non-incarcerated woman.*

## ***Conclusion***

Our society has, in the name of being tough on crime, made a series of policy choices that have fueled a cycle of poverty and incarceration. We send large numbers of people with low levels of education and low skills to prison, and then when they leave just as penniless as they were when they went in, we expect them to bear the burden of legally-acceptable employment discrimination.

Acknowledging, as this report makes possible, that the people in prison were, before they went to prison, some of the poorest people in this country makes it even more important that we make policy choices that can break the cycle of poverty and incarceration.

Reversing the decades-old policies that make it more difficult for people with criminal records to succeed may require political courage, but the options are plentiful and often straightforward. Federal, state, and local governments can repeal laws restricting incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people's access to welfare, public housing, Pell Grants, and student loans, and the private sector can voluntarily end its discrimination against people with criminal convictions. These reforms can help individuals succeed, but we will also need to explore how our single-minded focus on imprisonment blinded us to the needs of entire communities.

Permanently ending the era of mass incarceration will require reversing the decades of neglect that denied our most vulnerable communities access to good jobs, reliable transportation, safe housing, and good schools. Making these long-delayed investments in the basic building blocks of strong and stable communities will ensure that, once we turn the corner on mass incarceration, we never turn back.

# *The Color of Justice: Racial and Ethnic Disparity in State Prisons*

From *The Sentencing Project*

By Ashley Nellis, Ph.D.

June 14, 2016

Modified for length by Echo Intern Elise Palmer

## ***Overview***

Growing awareness of America's failed experiment with mass incarceration has prompted changes at the state and federal level that aim to reduce the scale of imprisonment. Lawmakers and practitioners are proposing "smart on crime" approaches to public safety that favor alternatives to incarceration and reduce odds of recidivism. As a result of strategic reforms across the criminal justice spectrum, combined with steadily declining crime rates since the mid-1990s, prison populations have begun to stabilize and even decline slightly after decades of unprecedented growth. In states such as New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, and California, prison depopulation has been substantial, declining by 20-30%.<sup>1</sup> Still, America maintains its distinction as the world leader<sup>2</sup> in its use of incarceration, including more than 1.3 million people held in state prisons around the country.<sup>3</sup>

At the same time of productive bipartisan discussions about improving criminal justice policies and reducing prison populations, the U.S. continues to grapple with troubling racial tensions. The focus of most recent concern lies in regular reports of police brutality against people of color, some of which have resulted in deaths of black men by law enforcement officers after little or no apparent provocation.

Truly meaningful reforms to the criminal justice system cannot be accomplished without acknowledgement of racial and ethnic disparities in the prison system, and focused attention on reduction of disparities. Since the majority of people in prison are sentenced at the state level rather than the federal level, it is critical to understand the variation in racial and ethnic composition across states, and the policies and the day-to-day practices that contribute to this variance.<sup>4</sup> Incarceration creates a host of collateral consequences that include restricted employment prospects, housing instability, family disruption, stigma, and disenfranchisement. These consequences set individuals back by imposing new punishments after prison. Collateral consequences are felt disproportionately by people of color, and because of concentrations of poverty and imprisonment in certain jurisdictions, it is now the case that entire communities experience these negative effects.<sup>5</sup> Evidence suggests that some individuals are incarcerated not solely because of their crime, but because of racially disparate policies, beliefs, and practices, rendering these collateral consequences all the more troubling. An unwarranted level of

incarceration that worsens racial disparities is problematic not only for the impacted group, but for society as whole, weakening the justice system's potential and undermining perceptions of justice.

This report documents the rates of incarceration for whites, African Americans, and Hispanics, providing racial and ethnic composition as well as rates of disparity for each state.<sup>6</sup> This systematic look reveals the following:

### ***Key Findings***

- African Americans are incarcerated in state prisons at a rate that is 5.1 times the imprisonment of whites. In five states (Iowa, Minnesota, New Jersey, Vermont, and Wisconsin), the disparity is more than 10 to 1.
- In twelve states, more than half of the prison population is black: Alabama, Delaware, Georgia, Illinois, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Mississippi, New Jersey, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia. Maryland, whose prison population is 72% African American, tops the nation.
- In eleven states, at least 1 in 20 adult black males is in prison.
- In Oklahoma, the state with the highest overall black incarceration rate, 1 in 15 black males ages 18 and older is in prison.
- States exhibit substantial variation in the range of racial disparity, from a black/white ratio of 12.2:1 in New Jersey to 2.4:1 in Hawaii.
- Latinos are imprisoned at a rate that is 1.4 times the rate of whites. Hispanic/white ethnic disparities are particularly high in states such as Massachusetts (4.3:1), Connecticut (3.9:1), Pennsylvania (3.3:1), and New York (3.1:1).

### ***Overall Findings***

The Bureau of Justice Statistics reports that 35% of state prisoners are white, 38% are black, and 21% are Hispanic.<sup>7</sup> In twelve states more than half of the prison population is African American. Though the reliability of data on ethnicity is not as strong as it is for race estimates, the Hispanic population in state prisons is as high as 61% in New Mexico and 42% in both Arizona and California. In an additional seven states, at least one in five inmates is Hispanic.<sup>8</sup> While viewing percentages reveals a degree of disproportion for people of color when compared to the overall general population (where 62% are white, 13% are black, and 17% are Hispanic),<sup>9</sup> viewing the composition of prison populations from this perspective only tells some of the story. In this report we present the rates of racial and ethnic disparity, which allow a portrayal of the overrepresentation of people of color in the prison system accounting for population in the general community.<sup>10</sup> This shows odds of imprisonment for individuals in various racial and ethnic categories.

It is important to note at the outset that, given the absence or unreliability of ethnicity data in some states, the racial/ethnic disparities in those states may be understated. Since most Hispanics in those instances would be counted in the white prison population, the white rate of incarceration would therefore appear higher than is the case, and consequently the black/white and Hispanic/white ratios of disparity would be lower as well. In four states, data on ethnicity is not reported to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, nor is it provided in the state department of corrections' individual annual reports. These states are Alabama, Maryland, Montana, and Vermont. There are most assuredly people in prison in these states who are Hispanic, but since the state does not record this information, the exact number is unknown.

Figure 1. Average rate of incarceration by race and ethnicity, per 100,000 population

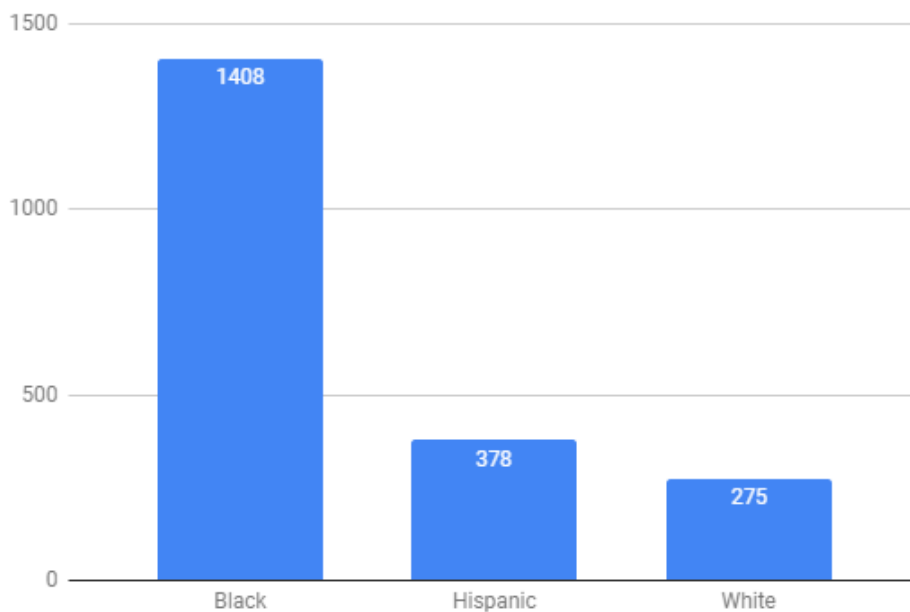


Figure 1 provides a national view of the concentration of prisoners by race and ethnicity as a proportion of their representation in the state's overall general population, or the rate per 100,000 residents. Looking at the average state rates of incarceration, we see that overall blacks are incarcerated at a rate of 1,408 per 100,000 while whites are incarcerated at a rate of 275 per 100,000. This means that blacks are incarcerated at a rate that is 5.1 times that of whites. This national look also shows that Hispanics are held in state prisons at an average rate of 378 per 100,000, producing a disparity ratio of 1.4:1 compared to whites.

The following tables present state rates of incarceration according to their rank. Table 1 shows how racial disparities play out at the state level. The states with the highest rate of African American (male and female) incarceration are Oklahoma, Wisconsin, Vermont, Iowa, and Idaho.

Table 1. Incarceration rates per 100,000 by race, by black (male and female) incarceration rate

<b>State</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>Hispanic</b>
Oklahoma	580	2625	530
Wisconsin	221	2542	563
Vermont	225	2357	Not Provided
Iowa	211	2349	361
Idaho	458	2160	619
Arizona	444	2126	842
Oregon	366	2061	395
Montana	316	1985	Not Provided
Colorado	260	1891	587
Texas	457	1844	541
Pennsylvania	204	1810	668
California	201	1767	385
Louisiana	438	1740	34
Kansas	246	1734	301
Michigan	253	1682	93
Nebraska	201	1680	359
Arkansas	443	1665	251
Missouri	404	1654	232
Ohio	289	1625	334
Florida	448	1621	85
Indiana	339	1616	302
Nevada	387	1592	337
Illinois	174	1533	282
South Dakota	309	1493	480
Utah	202	1481	333
Alabama	425	1417	Not Provided

Kentucky	431	1411	183
State Average	275	1408	378
Connecticut	148	1392	583
Virginia	280	1386	116
New Mexico	208	1326	422
Wyoming	375	1307	495
Washington	224	1272	272
Delaware	259	1238	220
West Virginia	348	1234	167
Minnesota	111	1219	287
Tennessee	316	1166	180
New Jersey	94	1140	206
Georgia	329	1066	235
Alaska	278	1053	148
Mississippi	346	1052	207
New Hampshire	202	1040	398
South Carolina	238	1030	172
North Carolina	221	951	221
Rhode Island	112	934	280
New York	112	896	351
North Dakota	170	888	395
Maryland	185	862	Not Provided
Maine	140	839	104
Massachusetts	81	605	351
Hawaii	246	585	75

[...]

***The Scale of Disparity***

The drivers of disparity may be related to policy, offending, implicit bias, or some combination. Regardless of the causes, however, the simple fact of these disparities should be disturbing given the consequences for individuals and communities. One has to wonder whether there would have

been more of an urgency to understand and remedy the disparity directly had the ratios been reversed. While chronic racial and ethnic disparity in imprisonment has been a known feature of the prison system for many decades,<sup>11</sup> there has been relatively little serious consideration of adjustments that can be made—inside or outside the justice system—toward changing this pattern.

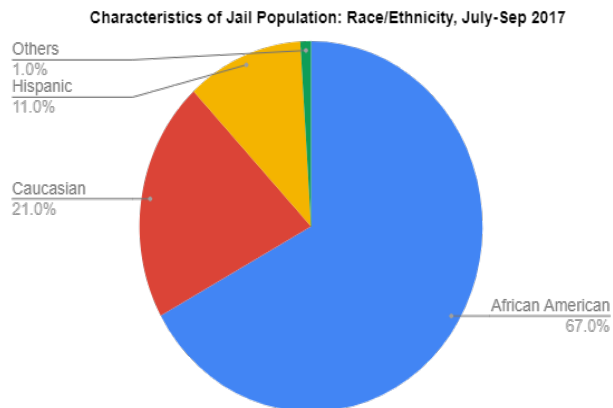
Racial disparities in incarceration can arise from a variety of circumstances. These might include a high rate of black incarceration, a low rate of white incarceration, or varying combinations. We note that the states with the highest ratio of disparity in imprisonment are generally those in the northeast or upper Midwest, while Southern states tend to have lower ratios. The low Southern ratios are generally produced as a result of high rates of incarceration for all racial groups. For example, Arkansas and Florida both have a black/white ratio of imprisonment considerably below the national average of 5.1:1 (3.8:1 and 3.6:1, respectively). Yet both states incarcerate African Americans at higher than average rates, 18% higher in Arkansas and 15% higher in Florida. But these rates are somewhat offset by the particularly high white rates, 61% higher than the national average in Arkansas and 63% higher in Florida.

Conversely, in the states with the highest degree of disparity, this is often produced by a higher than average black rate, but a relatively low white rate.<sup>12</sup> As seen in Table 3 below, seven of the ten states with the greatest racial disparity also have high black incarceration rates, while all have lower than average white rates. In New Jersey, for example, blacks are incarcerated at a rate twelve times higher than whites even though the black incarceration rate is 24% below the national average. This comes about through its particularly low incarceration of whites: 94 per 100,000, or one-third of the national average (275).

The scale of racial disparity in incarceration can also be seen by comparing states that have lower than average black incarceration rates to those with higher than average white incarceration rates. Here we find that the states with the highest white incarceration rates (Oklahoma, Idaho, Texas, Florida, and Arizona) fall below the states with the lowest black rates (Hawaii, Massachusetts<sup>13</sup>, Maine, Maryland, and North Dakota).



## *Drivers of Disparity*



*Data prepared by Mecklenburg County Criminal Justice Services Research and Planning*

Persistent racial disparities have long been a focus in criminological research and the presence of disparities is not disputed.<sup>14</sup> Proposed explanations for disparities range from variations in offending based on race to biased decision making in the criminal justice system, and also include a range of individual level factors such as poverty, education outcomes, unemployment history, and criminal history.<sup>15</sup>

Research in this area finds a smaller amount of unwarranted disparity for serious crimes like homicide than for less serious crimes, especially drug crimes.

Alfred Blumstein's work in this area examined racial differences in arrests and, after comparing these to prison demographics, determined that approximately 80% of prison disparity among state prisoners in 1979 was explained by differential offending by race, leaving 20% unexplained. He noted that if there was no discrimination after arrest, the racial makeup of prisoners should approximate the population of arrestees. The greatest amount of unexplained disparity was found among drug offenses: nearly half of the racial disparity for prison among those convicted of drug crimes could not be explained by arrest. In a follow-up study, Blumstein found that the proportion of racial disparities found in prisons explained by arrests in 1991 had declined to 76%.<sup>16</sup> Subsequent studies have replicated this work with more recent data and found even higher amounts of unexplained disparities, particularly in the category of drug arrests.<sup>17</sup>

One issue raised by Blumstein's approach is that the use of arrest records as a reflection of criminal involvement may be more accurate for serious offenses than less serious offenses. For less serious crimes, authorities may exercise greater discretion at the point of arrest.<sup>18</sup> Cassia Spohn's research on sentencing reasons that for less serious crimes, judges might depart from the constraints of the law, allowing other factors to enter into their judgment. These factors might include forms of racial bias related to perceived racial threat.<sup>19</sup> Despite the possibility of failing to account for all variance, research that relies on incident reporting (i.e., self-report data rather than police data) to circumvent these potential problems also reveals unexplained racial disparities. Patrick Langan's work, for example, estimated unexplained disparity to be in the range of 15-16%, and though this is a smaller amount of unexplained variance (compared to that

found by Blumstein, for example) it is likely due to the fact that his analysis did not include drug offenses.<sup>20</sup>

Analyses of more recent data all come to similar conclusions: a sizable proportion of racial disparities in prison cannot be explained by criminal offending.<sup>21</sup> Some analyses have focused on single states<sup>22</sup> while others have looked at all states individually to note the range of disparity.<sup>23</sup> Studies that examine regional differences within states are also revealing. Researchers Gaylen Armstrong and Nancy Rodriguez, whose work centers on county-level differences in juvenile justice outcomes found that it is not solely individual-level characteristics that influence outcomes, but the composition of the community where the juvenile resides that makes a difference as well. Specifically, they conclude that “juvenile delinquents who live within areas that have high minority populations (more heterogeneous) will more often be detained, regardless of their individual race or ethnicity.”<sup>24</sup> And finally, studies seeking to better understand the processes between arrest and imprisonment, particularly at the stage of sentencing, have been pursued in order to better understand the unexplained disparities in state prisons.<sup>25</sup>

### ***Causes of Disparity***

The data in this report document pervasive racial disparities in state imprisonment and make clear that despite greater awareness among the public of mass incarceration and some modest successes at decarceration, racial and ethnic disparities are still a substantial feature of our prison system.

Three recurrent explanations for racial disparities emerge from dozens of studies on the topic: policies and practices that drive disparity; the role of implicit bias and stereotypes in decision making; and, structural disadvantages in communities of color which are associated with high rates of offending and arrest.

### ***Policies and Practices***

The criminal justice system is held together by policies and practices, both formal and informal, which influence the degree to which an individual penetrates the system. At multiple points in the system, race may play a role. Disparities mount as individuals progress through the system, from the initial point of arrest to the final point of imprisonment.<sup>26</sup> Harsh punishment policies adopted in recent decades, some of which were put into effect even after the crime decline began, are the main cause of the historic rise in imprisonment that has occurred over the past 40 years.<sup>27</sup>

The rise in incarceration that has come to be known as mass imprisonment began in 1973 and can be attributed to three major eras of policymaking, all of which had a disparate impact on people of color, especially African Americans. Until 1986, a series of policies was enacted to expand the use of imprisonment for a variety of felonies. After this point, the focus moved to

greater levels of imprisonment for drug and sex offenses. There was a particularly sharp growth in state imprisonment for drug offenses between 1987 and 1991. In the final stage, beginning around 1995, the emphasis was on increasing both prison likelihood and significantly lengthening prison sentences.<sup>28</sup>

Harsh drug laws are clearly an important factor in the persistent racial and ethnic disparities observed in state prisons. For drug crimes disparities are especially severe, due largely to the fact that blacks are nearly four times as likely as whites to be arrested for drug offenses and 2.5 times as likely to be arrested for drug possession.<sup>29</sup> This is despite the evidence that whites and blacks use drugs at roughly the same rate. From 1995 to 2005, African Americans comprised approximately 13 percent of drug users but 36% of drug arrests and 46% of those convicted for drug offenses.<sup>30</sup>

Disparities are evident at the initial point of contact with police, especially through policies that target specific areas and/or people. A popular example of this is “stop, question, and frisk.” Broad discretion allowed to law enforcement can aggravate disparities. Though police stops alone are unlikely to result in a conviction that would lead to a prison sentence, the presence of a criminal record is associated with the decision to incarcerate for subsequent offenses, a sequence of events that disadvantages African Americans. Jeffrey Fagan’s work in this area found that police officers’ selection of who to stop in New York City’s high-profile policing program was dictated more by racial composition of the neighborhood than by actual crime in the area.<sup>31</sup> The process of stopping, questioning and frisking individuals based on little more than suspicion (or on nebulous terms such as “furtive behavior,” which were the justification for many stops) has led to unnecessary criminal records for thousands. New York’s policy was ruled unconstitutional in 2013 with a court ruling in *Floyd v. City of New York*.

Other stages of the system contribute to the racial composition of state prisons as well. Factors such as pre-trial detention—more likely to be imposed on black defendants because of income inequality—contributes to disparities because those who are detained pre-trial are more likely to be convicted and sentenced to longer prison terms.<sup>32</sup> Cassia Spohn’s analysis of 40 states’ sentencing processes finds that, though crime seriousness and prior record are key determinants at sentencing, the non-legal factors of race and ethnicity also influence sentencing decisions. She notes that “black and Hispanic offenders—particularly those who are young, male, and unemployed—are more likely than their white counterparts to be sentenced to prison than similarly situated white offenders. Other categories of racial minorities—those convicted of drug offenses, those who victimize whites, those who accumulate more serious prior criminal records, or those who refuse to plead guilty or are unable to secure pretrial release—also may be singled out for more punitive treatment.”<sup>33</sup>

Still other research finds that prosecutorial charging decisions play out unequally when viewed by race, placing blacks at a disadvantage to whites. Prosecutors are more likely to charge black defendants under state habitual offender laws than similarly situated white defendants.<sup>34</sup> Researchers in Florida found evidence for this relationship, and also observed that the relationship between race and use of the state habitual offender law was stronger for less serious crimes than it was for more serious crimes.<sup>35</sup> California's three strikes law has been accused of widening disparities because of the greater likelihood of prior convictions for African Americans.



Photo by John Moore/Getty Images

### ***Implicit Bias***

The role of perceptions about people of different races or ethnicities is also influential in criminal justice outcomes. An abundance of research finds that beliefs about dangerousness and threats to public safety overlap with individual perceptions about people of color. There is evidence that racial prejudice exerts a large, negative impact on punishment preferences among whites but much less so for blacks.<sup>36</sup> Other research finds that assumptions by key decision makers in the justice system influence outcomes in a biased manner. In research on presentence reports, for example, scholars have found that people of color are frequently given harsher sanctions because they are perceived as imposing a greater threat to public safety and are therefore deserving of greater social control and punishment.<sup>37</sup> And survey data has found that, regardless of respondents' race, respondents associated African Americans with terms such as "dangerous," "aggressive," "violent," and "criminal."<sup>38</sup>

Media portrayals about crime have a tendency to distort crime by disproportionately focusing on news stories to those involving serious crimes and those committed by people of color, especially black-on-white violent crime.<sup>39</sup> Since three-quarters of the public say that they form their opinions about crime from the news,<sup>40</sup> this misrepresentation feeds directly into the public's crime policy preferences.

Reforms to media reporting that more carefully and accurately represent the true incidence of specific crimes and their perpetrators, and victims, would change perceptions about crime, but in themselves would not necessarily impact how these perceptions translate into policy preferences. A 2013 study by Stanford University scholars found that public awareness of racial disparities in prisons actually *increases support* for harsher punishments.<sup>41</sup> Using an experimental research design, researchers exposed subjects to facts about racial compositions. When prisons were described as "more black," respondents were more supportive of harsh crime policies that

contribute to those disparities. On the other hand, some find that when individuals—practitioners in particular—are made consciously aware of their bias through implicit bias training, diversification of the workforce, and education on the important differences between implicit and explicit bias, this can mitigate or even erase the actions they would otherwise take based on unexplored assumptions.<sup>42</sup>

### **Structural Disadvantage**

A third explanation for persistent racial disparities in state prisons lies in the structural disadvantages that impact people of color long before they encounter the criminal justice system. In this view, disparities observed in imprisonment are partially a function of disproportionate social factors in African American communities that are associated with poverty, employment, housing, and family differences.<sup>43</sup> Other factors, not simply race, account for differences in crime across place. Criminologists Ruth Peterson and Lauren Krivo note that African Americans comprise a disproportionate share of those living in poverty-stricken neighborhoods and communities where a range of socio-economic vulnerabilities contribute to higher rates of crime, particularly violent crime.<sup>44</sup> In fact, 62% of African Americans reside in highly segregated, inner city neighborhoods that experience a high degree of violent crime, while the majority of whites live in “highly advantaged” neighborhoods that experience little violent crime.<sup>45</sup> Their work builds on earlier research focused on the harms done to the African American community by disparate living environments, and extends this knowledge to evidence that this actually *produces* social problems including crime.



Photo Courtesy of Getty Images

The impact of structural disadvantage begins early in life. When looking at juvenile crime, it is not necessarily the case that youth of color have a greater tendency to engage in delinquency, but

that the uneven playing field from the start, a part of larger American society, creates inequalities which are related to who goes on to commit crime and who is equipped to desist from crime.<sup>46</sup> More specifically, as a result of structural differences by race and class, youth of color are more likely to experience unstable family systems, exposure to family and/or community violence, elevated rates of unemployment, and more school dropout.<sup>47</sup> All of these factors are more likely to exist in communities of color and play a role in one's proclivity toward crime.

# *OpEd: Charlotte is Burning: Waking up from the American Dream... Finally?*

From *NBC News*

By Heather Ann Thompson

September 21, 2016

Another black man was shot to death by a police officer — this time in Charlotte, North Carolina.

The officer said he had a gun. The family of Keith Lamont Scott said he had a book. And then the city exploded.

And when people erupt in Charlotte, North Carolina, it gives the nation real pause. Why? Because this isn't a decaying northern city like Baltimore, nor is it a rust-belt city like Chicago. When police shoot unarmed citizens in those places, not a few wonder if the ugliness that takes place there in fact says more about the intractable violence of inner cities than it does about police aggression or unequal justice under the law.

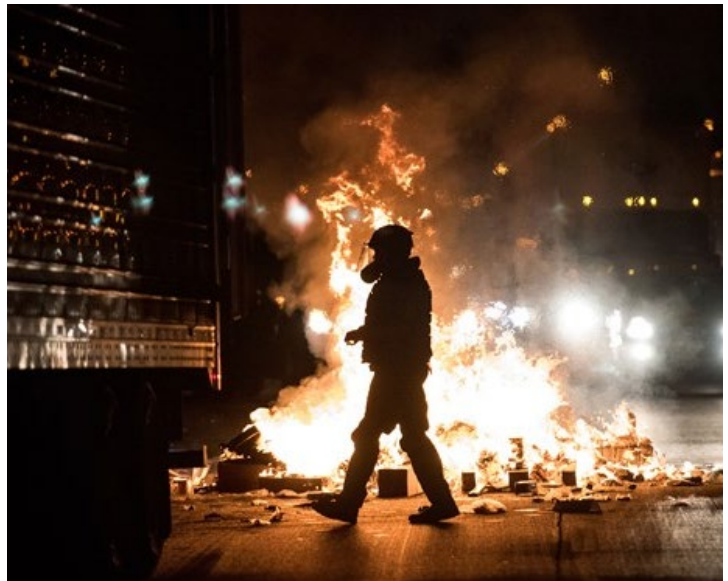


Photo by Sean Rayford / Getty Images

Charlotte isn't a crumbling urban ghetto. Charlotte is the place you move when you want sunshine, and a shiny new house in a sparkling new subdivision. Charlotte is a prosperous city where you not only can get a job in the bustling and very clean Uptown area, but that job affords you wonderful weekend getaways to a cozy cabin in the Appalachian mountains but an hour away, or to the sandy shores of the Atlantic, also an easy drive from the Queen City. Charlotte is a magnet for the young and old alike and its growth is the envy of not a few urban mayors.

It matters that Charlotte has been celebrated by *U.S. News and World Report* as one of the best places to live in the entire nation. It filled Charlotte's residents with pride when other media

outlets heralded their city as one of the very best places to raise a family in the entire state of North Carolina. Charlotte epitomizes the best of America in the 21st century. Or does it?

*Not really.*

Yes, Charlotte is a major and thriving metropolis of almost a million people. And, yes, the city has good jobs—72 percent of the city’s residents have jobs, and they own nice houses — houses with a median value of \$170,000.

What is more, more than 80 percent of Charlotteans have graduated from high school, and more than 40 percent have a college degree. These are impressive statistics for a city that is only 50 percent white in a nation where it’s the whitest spaces that are the wealthiest and filled with the greatest opportunity.

But like in every major city in America, Charlotte is also segregated, poor, and being destroyed by a drug war. Too many of Charlotte’s kids are hungry, and too many Charlotte parents see more police in their communities than they do job recruiters and grocery stores.

In short, Charlotte is one of the wealthiest cities in the country, but this prosperity hasn’t touched overwhelmingly black West and Northeast Charlotte and it is one of the most heavily policed. And the police don’t spend much energy policing — throwing people up against cars on a regular basis to search them for drugs — in overwhelmingly white South Charlotte.

And the excessive and aggressive policing of only Charlotte’s poorest and blackest neighborhoods leads there, as it does in every other city in the country, to the killing of citizens by the police. It has led there, as it has elsewhere to outrage.

And, thus, when Charlotte erupts, we need to pay particularly close attention.

Some still think that this nation is doing just fine except for those ugly pockets of poverty and segregation that routinely explode like Baltimore or Chicago. Others know better, but hope to move away from, and thus avoid addressing, the persistence of ugly racial injustice and the cries for help coming from black families.

Charlotte is their wake-up call.



## *Charlotte Police Shooting and Protest Timeline: How the Protests Started, Spread and City Reaction*

From *The Charlotte Observer*

By Mark Price

September 21, 2016

Following is a timeline of events that led to Charlotte's violent overnight protests.

**Tuesday 3:54 p.m.:** According to CMPD, officers from the Metro Division Crime Reduction Unit are searching for a suspect with an outstanding warrant at The Village at College Downs. Officers see Keith Lamont Scott inside a vehicle in the apartment complex. Scott is not the person being sought by police. Police say Scott exited the vehicle with a firearm. Officers see Scott get back into the vehicle at which time they began to approach Scott. Police say Scott gets back out of the vehicle armed with a firearm and poses an imminent deadly threat to the officers, who shoot Scott. The officers request Medic and begin performing CPR.

**Tuesday 5 p.m.:** Unverified reports spread via social and broadcast media that the victim was a disabled man, holding a book, and he was shot four times by an officer in civilian clothes. A woman who is reportedly the victim's daughter takes to Facebook Live to depict what was going on. A crowd of about 100 protesters show up at site of the shooting. #KeithLamontScott begins to trend on social media.

**Tuesday 7:11 p.m.:** A crowd gathers at Old Concord Road in the University City area and reportedly begins surrounding officers. Police say Civil Emergency Unit deployed "to safely remove our officers from the area."

**Tuesday 7:45 p.m.:** Police say crowd begins to transition from peaceful protesters "to a more aggressive group of agitators." A police officer is injured attempting "to de-escalate agitators during demonstrations." Crowd blocks road.

**Tuesday 8 p.m.:** Police report multiple people began damaging police vehicles and throwing objects at officers on the scene.

**Tuesday 8:51 p.m.:** Mayor Jennifer Roberts issues statement asking the community for calm. Follows up with statement minutes later saying community deserves answers and a full investigation into the shooting will ensue.

**Tuesday 9:58 p.m.:** Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department identifies the officer and the man who was shot. The officer involved was Brentley Vinson, an African American who has been with the police force since July 21, 2014 and is assigned to the Metro Division. The deceased man is identified as Keith Lamont Scott, 43, of Charlotte.

**Tuesday 11 p.m.:** Police give order for crowd to disperse. After an additional dispersal order was ignored by demonstrators, police officers deployed tear gas to disperse the demonstrators, who continued to throw objects and damage property.

**Tuesday 1:45 a.m.:** An additional group of protesters gathers near Interstate 85, throwing rocks at cars. The group spreads to travel lanes. Both north and southbound lanes are shut down. Motorists report rocks being thrown off overpasses into traffic below. Two or three tractor trailers stopped by the crowd are looted and the contents thrown onto the road. Two fires are started by protesters using items taken from the trucks.

**Wednesday 2:30 a.m.:** Protesters reportedly shut down W.T. Harris Boulevard in both directions near Interstate 85 ramps to Old Concord Road. Police in riot gear show up to disperse the group.

**Wednesday 3 a.m.:** Tear gas is deployed on the crowd and Interstate 85 reopens at 3:30 a.m.

**Wednesday 3 a.m.:** Protesters hit the Walmart on North Tryon, where someone throws a rock through a window.

**Wednesday 9:30 a.m.:** City Mayor Jennifer Roberts holds press conference promising city will be transparent with the facts in the case and repeats call for calm. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Chief Kerr Putney, speaking at the same press conference, says officers recovered a gun at the scene of the shooting, believed to be the victim's. Putney says no book was found. He says social media is perpetuating a different scenario than that of police investigators. Putney predicts protests will continue Wednesday, and he says the department will be prepared.

**Wednesday 10:30 a.m.:** Activist group of African-American religious leaders called T.H.U.G. holds press conference contradicting police investigators. The group says it will take legal action against the city and is hiring an attorney. The ministers call on the black community to stage an economic boycott of white-run businesses in Charlotte, including the community's largest malls.

# *CMS's Treatment of Black Boys Creates School-to-Prison Pipeline*

From *The Charlotte Observer*  
By Billy Maddalon  
January 23, 2018



Photo by Chris Walker/Chicago Tribune/MCT via Getty Images

Guests at my hotels often ask me how long I've been a "charlatan," when they actually mean "Charlottean." It's an innocent mistake, but there is a bit of irony in it. We brand ourselves as a progressive, New South city, vibrant and full of opportunity. We do so knowing we have significant issues we need to overcome involving economic mobility (folks born poor stay poor), our murder rate (black men killing black men) and diversity within our schools (poor kids going to school with poor kids). A charlatan is an imposter. Irony indeed.

If ever we get around to dealing with all this, we'll know where to start: Our education system is the canary in our coal mine. It's warning us in no uncertain terms what's coming.

We've turned our schools into prison pipelines. America leads the world in juvenile incarceration. We incarcerate almost 350,000 kids annually, costing more than \$5 billion. And Charlotte's not immune.

We call it "tough on crime." But it turns out tough on crime means tough on poor black kids. The numbers just don't lie. We've created zero-tolerance policies in our schools that have criminalized behavior. Of the almost 1,400 arrests at CMS last year, 300 were for assaulting personnel and the rest were for drug possession, anything deemed a weapon, fighting and even truancy. Hammer meet nail. And there's no evidence we make any attempt to differentiate between children who need help and those who need punishment.

As context, kids who get in fights today are arrested and charged with assault. I got sent home. Kids who get smart with a teacher are charged with disorderly conduct. I had to write “I will not be disrespectful” 500 times. And kids charged criminally in the community are presumed guilty by CMS and punished. Even if they’re a model student, they’ll likely be sent to an “alternative” school for something that didn’t even happen at school.

A statistics professor once told me, “What’s counted, counts.” I’ve learned if you don’t count what’s important, then the temptation is to make what you do count important. They are not the same thing. By multiple measures, CMS ranks among the best public systems in the nation. Although some might argue that given the competition, that’s like being the tallest dwarf in the room.

By all measures, it’s clear CMS discipline policies disproportionately affect black males. I’m not suggesting that’s intentional. The intention is certainly to keep our schools safe. But sometimes well-intentioned policies have unintended consequences. While young black boys are not the only problematic students, they are at the top of the list of consequences, intended or not. CMS is only 38 percent black, yet within CMS, if you set aside the arrest statistics, 94 percent of kids at the so-called alternative schools are black, 84 percent are male, and 99 percent are in poverty.

Why? My guess is they either tick us off or we fear them. And what do we do with kids whom we fear? Increasingly we lock them up. Just like we locked up their mothers, fathers, aunts and uncles. And in case you’re thinking problem solved, keep in mind learning continues whether a child is in a jail cell or in a classroom. Instead of learning the square root of 4, they learn how to cook crack.

What we’re doing isn’t working. We shouldn’t be arresting kids whose brains aren’t finished developing and we shouldn’t be arresting kids who scare us or tick us off. We should only be incarcerating people who are demonstrated threats to public safety. Because it’s clear incarceration isn’t a deterrent for juveniles. It’s only a highway into a justice system that barely has a footpath out. But this so disproportionately affects poor black kids, I worry that the political will doesn’t exist to address it.

I’m a white guy in a suit who drives a Buick. Maybe I’m not the perfect person to bring this up. Regardless of who the messenger is, it’s clear our future is at risk and our brand is in question. It’s time for us to stop locking up so many of our black students and sending them into lockdown schools. It’s time to be Charlotteans and not charlatans.

## *Mecklenburg D.A. Should Tackle Mass Incarceration*

From *The Charlotte Observer*

By Braxton Winston II

May 25, 2018



Photo courtesy of Flickr

In Charlotte and throughout Mecklenburg County, unequal justice and over-incarceration remain pressing issues that demand drastic reform. Nearly 70 percent of the county jail population has not been convicted of a crime, jailed while still presumed innocent, often because of unaffordable bail. African Americans comprise 30 percent of the county's population, but 68 percent of its prisoners. People are still jailed for minor offenses like possessing small amounts of marijuana. Children are still sentenced to spend their lives in jail without any chance of parole.

These are symptoms of a long-broken criminal justice system that cannot be cured with incremental change. It is a system that preys on the poor and vulnerable, threatens public safety, and leads to more crime as it disrupts and traumatizes already fragile lives. It is the product of a discredited and discriminatory "tough on crime" paradigm that has no place in 21st-century Charlotte.

To chart a new path, we need leadership from all corners of the community and local government, including from the Charlotte City Council on which I serve. But most urgently we need our district attorney to not only recognize the unfairness inherent in this destructive system, but to take real action toward de-carcerating Mecklenburg County. There is no official with more

power to spark immediate change, and only with a district attorney who stands firmly on the side of reform will progress be possible.

I endorsed District Attorney Spencer Merriweather in this month's primary and congratulate him on his victory. My support was based on his recognition that our criminal justice system jails too many people, unfairly targets the poor and people of color, and criminalizes addiction instead of treating it like the health issue it is. On issues ranging from drug prosecutions, to biased policing, to the death penalty, he has acknowledged an unjust system. Now with his win in the primary and no challenger in November, it's time for Merriweather to show real leadership on the reforms that Charlotte needs and justice demands.

The truth is that prosecutors have enormous power over both individual cases and the system as a whole. They decide who gets charged and with what crimes. They decide whether to focus on retribution or rehabilitation. They decide whether to seek incarceration and for how long. Prosecutors, more than anyone else, decide who is in jail and who is not, and who must navigate life with a criminal record and who avoids conviction. In some cases, they decide who lives and who dies.

Merriweather is well-positioned, and now electorally empowered, to wield his power for reform.

The money bail system would be one place to start. Every day in Mecklenburg County, people are jailed for even minor offenses solely because they cannot afford bail. Most people are jailed on bail of less than \$5,000, and some on bail as low as \$100. The practice effectively criminalizes poverty, locking away poor people while people with money walk free. People already struggling can lose their jobs and homes, forcing them into desperate circumstances where they are more likely to reoffend.

Merriweather should own this problem. He should immediately announce a list of charges for which his office will ask for release without money bail, and instruct his prosecutors to treat money bail as a last resort rather than common practice.

It is just one issue among many, but it is one way for Merriweather to show that he is ready to lead, and to work with the City Council and the rest of Mecklenburg County to create a just and fair criminal justice system.

# *Ten Ways to Put Justice Back in the Criminal Justice System*

From *The Hill*  
By India Thusi  
October 20, 2016



Public Domain Photo

*Thusi is the associate counsel for The Opportunity Agenda, a social justice communication lab. She has litigated cases on policing and structural inequality in the criminal justice system.*

To work for all of us, policing practices should be rooted in human rights principles and recognize the importance of maintaining a good relationship between communities and police. Yet, every day we see Black men racially profiled and treated brutally by law enforcement. Innocent poor people spend years in jail awaiting trial over charges for because they can't afford bail.

Nearly three million children are waiting for parents to return home from prison, while two in three families can't meet their basic needs because of the costs associated with a loved one's conviction and incarceration.

The U.S. is the worldwide leader in mass incarceration, but finally there is consensus that we must make major changes to fix a system fraught with injustice. It's already happening in some places: Ithaca is addressing its opioid epidemic with a public health approach — dealing with addiction rather than treating drug users as criminals. That city could establish the nation's first supervised injection site. In Memphis, crisis intervention teams send mental health responders to facilitate mental crisis interventions — rather than sending in the police to respond.

These examples show how the criminal justice system can be improved. Fully transforming the system means tackling several maligned policies across different agencies and jurisdictions at

once. This week, The Opportunity Agenda released an interactive report called "Transforming the System," which details concrete changes that policymakers can make to address our failing criminal justice system, including:

### **1) Invest in communities over incarceration**

The President should draft an Executive Order—based on the executive authority to set prosecutorial priorities and to manage the federal prisons system—directing federal law enforcement agencies to prioritize policies and practices that reduce incarceration and prioritize community investment over imprisonment as a strategy for ensuring public safety.

### **2) Prohibit “volume-based” performance measures**

Legislatures, prosecutor’s officers and law enforcement agencies should prohibit performance metrics that reward criminal justice agents for increasing their volumes of prosecutions, tickets, summonses, arrests, probation violations, and other punitive civilian encounters. They should also provide protection for whistleblowers who report the use of unofficial “volume-based” performance metrics; and create strict penalties for law enforcement agencies that practice these policies.

### **3) Use restorative justice**

Restorative justice programs seek to repair the harm caused to victims and communities, and include practices such as family group conferences, mediation, community decision-making, and mechanisms for restitution. Local governments and the judiciary should establish restorative justice programs that address community justice matters, including programs that address serious offenses.

### **4) Use more pardons and expedite commutations**

The President should ensure that pardons, which fully or conditionally forgive crimes, are used more extensively to address injustice in the criminal justice system. This includes taking steps to provide additional resources to the Pardons Office, expediting the commutations process and eliminating bureaucratic barriers to relief.

### **5) Include the voices of those directly affected**

Policymakers should incorporate the voices and policy suggestions of people who have been directly affected by the criminal justice system—including formerly incarcerated people and survivors of police violence—in the development of laws and policies that affect them.



## **6) Recommit to human rights**

Local, state, and federal governments should recommit to human rights by complying with human rights standards for racial equality and incorporating human rights into employee trainings, orientations, and handbooks for those working in the criminal justice system. Our federal government should also grant United Nations officials and experts unrestricted access to inspect U.S. detention facilities.

## **7) Establish truth & reconciliation commissions**

Where there is a history of past abuse and/or community mistrust of law enforcement, local and state legislatures should establish commissions for truth and/or reconciliation. Incorporating a cross-section of stakeholders, these commissions, would look closely at the issues affecting their communities and make recommendations based on their findings.

## **8) Fund community outreach**

The Department of Justice (DOJ) should reward healthy relationships between the community and law enforcement agencies by giving preference to law enforcement agencies that have a substantive community outreach strategy detailed in their funding applications.

## **9) Don't fund bad actors**

The DOJ Civil Rights Division and the DOJ Office of Community Oriented Policing Services should work together to ensure police departments are not awarded grants to hire additional police officers if they are under investigation or have outstanding cases for statutory or constitutional violations.

## **10) Enhance prosecutorial integrity**

Prosecutors can unintentionally rely upon prosecutions of low-income defendants and defendants of color to meet cultural and political pressures to increase convictions. Prosecutors should instead be incentivized to use qualified and effective diversion programs as a tool for promoting safe communities and ensuring arrestees receive drug and mental health treatment when needed.

None of these steps alone will fix our broken criminal justice system, but by approaching reforms systemically we have a much better chance putting a stop to the grave injustices this system perpetuates and ending mass incarceration.

# *Alternatives to Incarceration*

*Drug and mental health courts give certain offenders what they really need: treatment.*

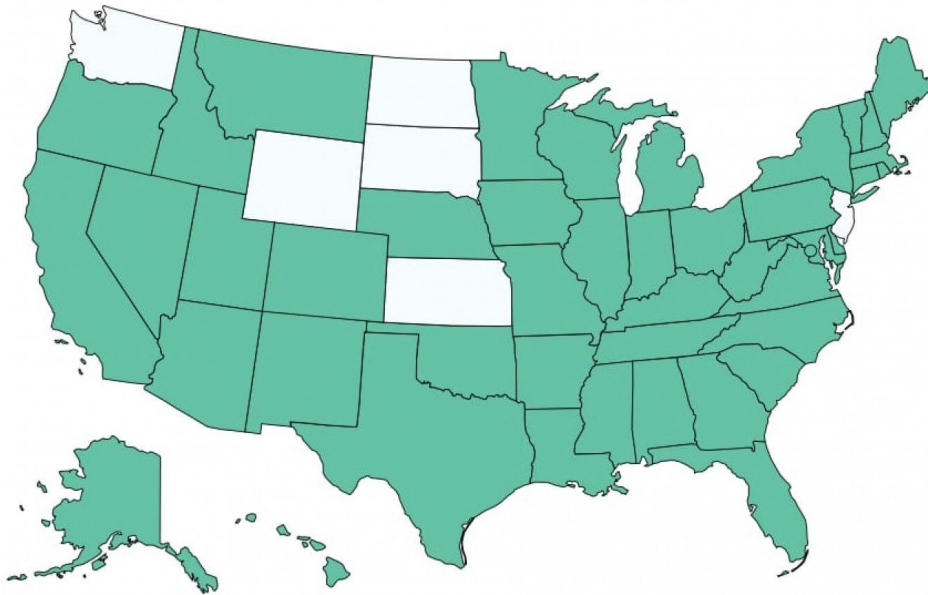
From *American Psychological Association*

By Deborah Smith Bailey

July/August 2003

## Where more people with mental illness are in jail than in hospitals

In 44 states and the District of Columbia, at least one prison or jail holds more individuals with serious mental illness than the largest psychiatric hospital operated by the state. The only exceptions are Kansas, New Jersey, North Dakota, South Dakota, Washington and Wyoming.



WASHINGTONPOST.COM/WONKBLOG

SOURCE: Treatment Advocacy Center, 2014

When people with mental illnesses are arrested for trespassing, drug possession and other nonviolent offenses in Oklahoma City, they are no longer automatically sentenced to jail or probation--where their illness would probably go untreated.

Instead, they can opt for a court specifically designed to give them the treatment and supervision they need. The judge, attorneys and community health organizations collaborate to coordinate treatment and ensure offenders stay on track.

The program is the first mental health court in the Southwest United States and part of a growing trend in America to divert nonviolent offenders with substance abuse and mental health problems from jail into treatment.

"It's wrong for people's undiagnosed and untreated mental illness to result in being incarcerated,"

says Rep. Ted Strickland (D-Ohio), a former maximum-security prison psychologist. "[Providing treatment] is more humane, it's more cost-effective and just simply the right thing to do."

In general, the courts hear the cases of nonviolent offenders who commit low-level felonies and misdemeanors and have mental health problems. Similarly, drug courts seek to address substance abuse problems in offenders commonly charged with possession and other drug-related offenses. In exchange for a guilty plea, the offenders enter treatment instead of prison. If they successfully complete treatment, authorities may remove the offense from their record, depending on the plea agreement.

The model has proven so successful that, since the nation's first drug court was established in 1989 in Miami, 946 drug courts have been implemented, and another 441 are in the planning stages, according to the National Association of Drug Court Professionals.

In 1997, Broward County, Fla., translated the drug court model to cases involving people with mental illnesses and created the nation's first mental health court. While mental health courts don't equal drug courts in numbers, recent funding from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration and the Department of Justice may jump-start their spread.

#### *A solution that works*

The growth in alternative courts has been spurred by research that has proved such courts' effectiveness. In fact, a 2000 California law that requires judges to offer nonviolent offenders substance abuse or mental health treatment instead of prison time is saving the state up to \$18 million a year, according to a report by the Judicial Council of California's Advisory Committee on Collaborative Justice.

Moreover, California's program reduced recidivism: Arrest rates for participants who completed the program declined by 85 percent, conviction rates by 77 percent and incarceration rates by 83 percent.

And considering that 15-20 percent of prisoners have a mental illness and more than 40 percent have participated in substance abuse programs or treatment, mental health and drug courts can reduce burgeoning prison rolls not only by initially diverting offenders, but also by reducing the likelihood they'll return to the justice system. That makes them an attractive option for states with strapped budgets looking to reduce prison costs.

"It's cheaper to provide outpatient services than to pay for their confinement in a prison," explains Strickland. "But more importantly, these are human beings who are worthy of receiving appropriate interventions and treatment."

Indeed, the courts' impact on the lives of those who are treated is just as important, say many psychologists. For example, 70 percent of California's drug court participants were employed upon completion of the program, a striking change from the fewer than 40 percent employed at program entry.

"Nationwide, the jails have become the No. 1 holding stop for the mentally ill," says clinical forensic psychologist Edith King, PhD, who works in the Oklahoma City mental health court. With fewer and fewer inpatient and outpatient services available for the mentally ill, she says, many people with mental health problems end up in jail for offenses, such as shoplifting, that stem from their illnesses.

But since many prisons aren't equipped to provide treatment or design release plans for people with mental health and substance abuse problems, the offenders are released only to be picked up again for another violation. Indeed, 75 percent of mentally ill inmates have been sentenced to time in prison or jail or to probation before their current sentences, according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics.

### ***Chasing funding***

Facts like those, coupled with the courts' documented successes, have prompted growing federal support for drug and mental health courts.

"We need to begin to change the way we deal with this problem," says Strickland. "And the way to do that is to empower communities by giving them the financial resources that will enable them to establish these specialty courts."

Strickland and his colleagues in Congress have been doing just that. In a push for more treatment, he teamed with then Rep. Mike Dewine (R-Ohio), who is now a senator, Sen. Pete Domenici (R-N.M.) and the late Sen. Paul Wellstone to pass a law authorizing federal funding for the creation of mental health courts in 2001. They garnered an additional \$3 million in 2002. And Strickland and DeWine are continuing the legislative push for prison alternatives (see box, previous page).

This spring, the Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance began doling out that money to 23 city, county and state organizations to establish or bolster mental health courts. Among the grant recipients is the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, headed up by psychologist Terry L. Cline, PhD. The department funneled the money to the Oklahoma County mental health court in which King works.

The court was established when its judge, Nancy Coats, donated \$20,000 of her own campaign money after the state legislature authorized its creation, but no funding, last July.

Since its start on Nov. 1, the group has taken on a handful of cases, and hopes to reach a maximum caseload of 25 by the end of the year. The court only accepts offenders with serious mental illness, such as bipolar disorder or schizophrenia, who have committed a misdemeanor or nonviolent felony. Psychologists also screen out applicants whose illness makes them unlikely to complete the treatment.

After the district attorney determines their records are free of violence, King determines whether candidates are competent to stand trial, and then psychologist Gail Poyner, PhD, screens them with personality inventories, an hour interview and a review of police reports and prior treatment information.

"People were afraid of letting them out into the community," King explains. "So we're bending over backwards to the extent that we have to leave out lots of people that we would like to work with."

Participants meet weekly with the court team, which monitors the offenders' progression through the program and also attends to co-occurring drug problems. The treatment usually lasts 12-24 months.

King and most of the court team donate their time or are on loan from their employers, such as the district attorney and public defender's office, Department of Corrections and Oklahoma Mental Health Consumer Council.

The new funding, \$150,000 over two years, will pay for temporary respite beds if needed for program participants, weekly group therapy and will cover the salary of an additional case manager.

The group therapy, designed by Poyner and King, will address the offenders' involvement with the legal system and the thinking errors that led to committing a crime to better prepare them when they leave the program.

"Everyone involved is impacted in a positive way, from court participants and family members to taxpayers and law enforcement," says Cline of the program. "If these individuals can receive treatment, they are more likely to avoid jail time in the future and they are more likely to maintain recovery in their communities."

# *Why Norway's Prison System is So Successful*

From *Business Insider*

By Christina Sterbenz

December 11, 2014

In Norway, fewer than 4,000 of the country's 5 million people were behind bars as of August 2014.

That makes Norway's incarceration rate just 75 per 100,000 people, compared to 707 people for every 100,000 people in the US.

On top of that, when criminals in Norway leave prison, they stay out. It has one of the lowest recidivism rates in the world at 20%. The US has one of the highest: 76.6% of prisoners are re-arrested within five years.



Photo by Knut Egil Wang / *The New York Times*

*Two inmates play a card game in Norway's radical Halden Prison.*

Norway also has a relatively low level of crime compared to the US, according to the Bureau of Diplomatic Security. The majority of crimes reported to police there are theft-related incidents, and violent crime is mostly confined to areas with drug trafficking and gang problems.

Based on that information, it's safe to assume Norway's criminal justice system is doing something right. Few citizens there go to prison, and those who do usually go only once. So how does Norway accomplish this feat? The country relies on a concept called "restorative justice," which aims to repair the harm caused by crime rather than punish people. This system focuses on rehabilitating prisoners.

Take a look at Halden Prison, and you'll see what we mean. The 75-acre facility maintains as much "normalcy" as possible. That means no bars on the windows, kitchens fully equipped with sharp objects, and friendships between guards and inmates. For Norway, removing people's freedom is enough of a punishment.

Like many prisons, Halden seeks to prepare inmates for life on the outside with vocational programs: woodworking, assembly workshops, and even a recording studio. Halden isn't an anomaly either. Bastoy prison is also quite nice.

As Bastoy prisoner governor Arne Wilson, who is also a clinical psychologist, explained to *The Guardian*:

In closed prisons we keep them locked up for some years and then let them back out, not having had any real responsibility for working or cooking. In the law, being sent to prison is nothing to do with putting you in a terrible prison to make you suffer. The punishment is that you lose your freedom. If we treat people like animals when they are in prison they are likely to behave like animals. Here we pay attention to you as human beings.



Photo by Knut Egil Wang / *The New York Times*  
Inmate Tom stands in his cell at Halden Prison in C8 - a special unit for addiction recovery.

All of these characteristics are starkly different from America's system. When a retired warden from New York visited Halden, he could barely believe the accommodations. "This is prison utopia," he said in a documentary about his trip. "I don't think you can go any more liberal — other than giving the inmates the keys."

In general, prison should have five goals, as described by criminologist Bob Cameron: retribution, incapacitation, deterrence, restoration, and rehabilitation. In his words though, "Americans want their prisoners punished first and rehabilitated second."

Norway adopts a less punitive approach than the US and focuses on making sure prisoners don't come back. A 2007 report on recidivism released by the US Department of Justice found that strict incarceration actually increases offender recidivism, while facilities that incorporate "cognitive-behavioral programs rooted in social learning theory" are the most effective at keeping ex-cons out of jail.

The maximum life sentence in Norway shows just how serious the country is about its unique approach. With few exceptions (for genocide and war crimes mostly), judges can only sentence criminals to a maximum of 21 years. At the end of the initial term, however, five-year increments can be added onto to the prisoner's sentence every five years, indefinitely, if the system determines he or she isn't rehabilitated.

That's why Norwegian extremist Anders Behring Breivik, who killed 77 people in a bombing and mass shooting, was only sentenced to 21 years. Most of the outrage and incredulity over that sentence, however, came from the US.

Overall, Norwegians, even some parents who lost children in the attack, seemed satisfied with the sentence, *The New York Times* reported. Still, Breivik's sentence, as is, put him behind bars for less than 100 days for every life he took, as *The Atlantic* noted. On the other hand, if the system doesn't determine Breivik "rehabilitated," he could stay in prison forever.

To those working within Norway's prison system, the short sentences and somewhat luxurious accommodations make complete sense. As Are Hoidel, Halden Prison's director, puts it: "Every inmate in Norwegian prison is going back to the society. Do you want people who are angry — or people who are rehabilitated?"



Photo by Knut Egil Wang / *The New York Times*



## *Discussion Questions*

1. Cities like Ferguson, Baltimore, and even Charlotte have made headlines after fatal shootings of unarmed black people by police. What ideas do you have to rebuild trust between the police force and communities of color?
2. How does the disproportionate rate of incarceration further impact low-income families?
3. How can both the Charlotte-Mecklenburg community and the nation as a whole combat the disproportionate representation of both African Americans and Hispanics in prison and with criminal records? How can we break the stigma of the criminal record to promote sustained change and break the cycle of incarceration?
4. Should the main purpose of America's prisons be to punish, or to reform? Explain your answer. What are pros and cons of each?
5. How do you view the police force and the criminal justice system as a whole? Why do you feel that way?
6. What are the pros and cons of alternative sentencing. What are your thoughts on alternative sentencing? Is it beneficial in the long run?
7. The Mecklenburg County Criminal Justice Services reported that in July to September of 2017, 67% of the incarcerated population was African American. What can be done to eliminate racial disparities in our county's prisons?
8. What makes the Norwegian prison system so successful? What ideas might we adopt here to improve our success rate?

## *Interviews with YBLA - Young Black Leadership Alliance*

Elise Palmer, Echo Student Intern  
August 13, 2018

YBLA is a Charlotte-based organization dedicated to helping young black leaders grow and make an impact in their communities. YBLA has two main programs: YBM (Young Black Males) and YBW (Young Black Women), which merged to form YBLA in January of 2018.

On July 11, 2018, we held a discussion with a group of ambassadors and ambassadors in training from YBM, which was founded in 2006. We had an open discussion focusing on the socioeconomic and racial disparities plaguing Charlotte, and we learned about the young men's personal experiences in their communities and with YBLA.

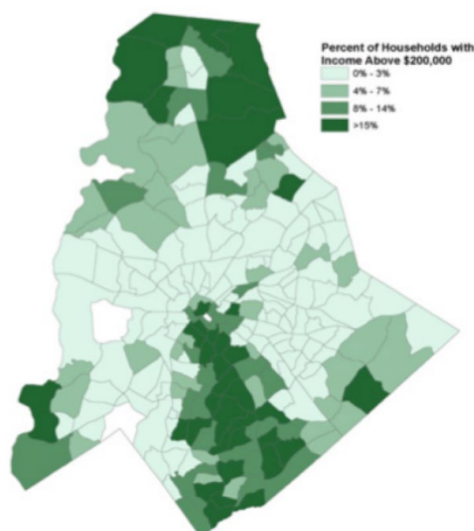


*From left to right: Mohamed Hijazi (Senior, Mallard Creek High School), Kavon Lewis (Freshman, Morehouse College), Justin Peterkin (Senior, Phillip O. Berry), Kaseen Smith (Freshman, Babson College), Ogbonna Uche (Senior, Cato Middle College), Arshad Zaidi (Senior, Ardrey Kell High School), Interns Julia Carr and Elise Palmer*

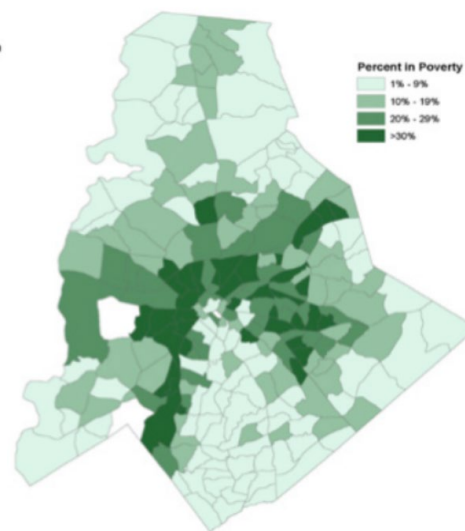
***Highlights from the discussion can be read below. Responses have been modified for brevity.***

**Looking at these maps, what does it say about racial segregation in Charlotte? Is this data surprising to you?**

### Segregation by Wealth

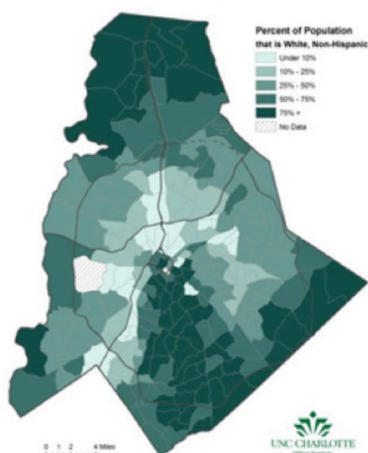


### Segregation by Poverty

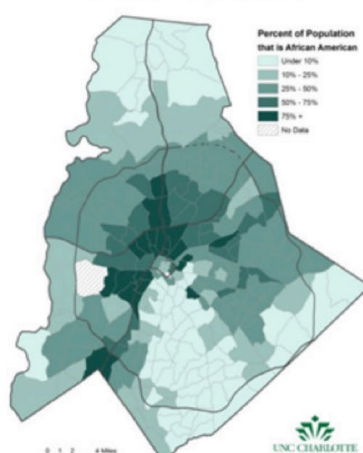


### Segregation by Race/Ethnicity

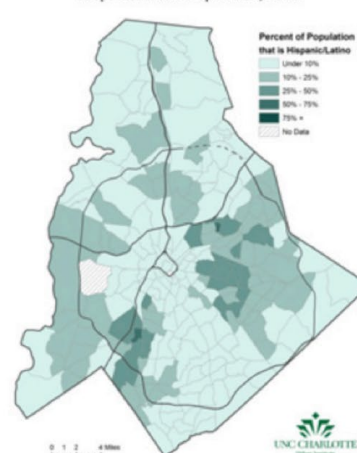
White, Non-Hispanic Population, 2010



African American Population, 2010



Hispanic/Latino Population, 2010



KL: I don't believe that there's actual racial segregation [in Charlotte]. I think there's social class segregation versus race, because on the outskirts of these [maps], that's where the wealthier schools are. In the center where the African American population mainly is, those are schools such as West Meck, West Charlotte, Harding, POB [Phillip O. Berry]. The Hispanic population is stratified, and they are going to all schools within CMS. Instead of saying that Charlotte is interracially segregated, I'll say that it's segregated by social class.

JP: I think that because it is segregated by social class, that leads to racial segregation. If I'm an African American male, I may not have the same opportunity as a white male to obtain success or get the same income. I agree that there is social class segregation, but I believe social class segregation leads to racial segregation.

MH: Racial segregation ended not even 60 years ago. In the 1960s, Charlotte was definitely segregated. The same trends keep persisting over time. The white people will stay over where they have been, and the black people will always stay where they have been. There isn't outright segregation, but there is a lack of integration.

**Seventy seven percent of black students attend majority-poverty schools in CMS, while only 23 percent of white students do. As a black student living in this divide, what are your thoughts on this?**

KL: This is not of any shock to me. For a black student that's attending a majority-poverty school in CMS, more than likely that school is very close to where you are, and it would be very costly to send you to a school that isn't in poverty. While our parents or caretakers may want the best for us, they may not be able to provide that for us. Seventy seven percent of us are attending majority-poverty schools, but the rest may be attending average or wealthy schools. It's all about what's familiar, or what your situation is. Not everybody can succeed, but those who can, will.

**What role did your family play in who you are? Do you think family is critical to your success?**

OU: Both of my parents came from Nigeria, so their mindset when they came here was that they wanted to build a life that they would want their children to be proud of. That's something that they didn't have back home. When I was growing up, I was always told to do my best in school, so I could create my own life that I could be proud of and happy with. They wanted me to set my own path for success. I believe that was the mindset that kept me going forward and it didn't allow me to go off track. I stayed focused in school and I was doing things outside of school that got me more integrated into the community.

MH: Ogbonna is from West Africa, and I'm from East Africa, and we both came over [to the US]. Being with American black people, there is definitely a different culture. Growing up I was around a lot of African American kids who fell into the stereotype, and my mom was not having it. She always pushed me and told me to stay true to my roots.

JP: I grew up with my father in my house. That plays a big role in who I am today, whereas some of my friends don't really communicate with their dad that much. A father is a very large role model in your life. My parents did a great job of making me a balanced young man - being able to strive in school but also being able to be a great person outside of the classroom. Starting in 10th grade, I began to realize that I wanted to be great in school, but also life is greater than school. There is so much going on outside of school that we don't expand to.

KS: I'm a first-generation student - my dad went to the army for a couple years, and then he luckily got into IT when it was booming in New York City, so he was making a pretty penny, even though he didn't go to college. My mom got pregnant with me in college so she didn't go back. They have always emphasized me going to college. My dad used to tell me when I was like 9 years old, 'Where are you going to get your masters?' My parents really ingrained that in me, and that's when education really became a priority in my life.

AZ: My mother is Trinidadian and my father is Pakistani. He was born in Pakistan, but shortly after he moved to the US. They both went to college together; that's actually where they met each other. They really pushed me to get a higher education. My dad was pretty relaxed, but he would always teach me stuff - my dad is a SAT/ACT tutor, so he was already teaching me in like 7th/8th grade. My mom made sure to also teach me and made sure that I got the basics down. I was always ahead of the curve, because my parents just kept pushing me, and I think that's why I am who I am today.

**Do you believe in the American dream? The idea that every US citizen has an equal opportunity to achieve success through hard work, determination, and initiative?**

JP: I believe that even though they may not have equal opportunity from what goes on in their home environment, that every child is given the opportunity to go to school and get an education. You may say a student that goes to West Meck doesn't get the same opportunity as a student that goes to Myers Park, but you still have the opportunity to go to school and get an education. So I believe, that even though it may not be equal, you still have the opportunity to obtain success.

MH: I definitely believe in it. And that's because of my parents. Coming from Sudan, my parents told me that even if you work really hard, you'll just end up with a mediocre job and you'll barely be getting by. That's why they came over here. They say if you put your mind to it and give it your best shot, there's no way you can possibly fail.

**What does it mean to you to be an ambassador for YBLA, a Charlotte organization that empowers black youth and builds leaders?**

KL: What it means to me is to serve your community for the better, to lead the new reality, and to maintain your excellence as a young black man.

KS: For me, I have the responsibility to impact others. We have the duty to mentor ten people - I like to take it beyond that. With the tools that they've given us, the resources that we got, working events, shadowing opportunities, I really like to help out those who don't have the same opportunities as me. So if I see someone that's interested in medicine - we just went over to Novant - I'm not interested in medicine, but I'll give them that connection. That's something that

I do with Tile Talks [Smith's nonprofit]. We bring in community and business leaders because [Tile Talks] is about entrepreneurship. We bring them to people who don't necessarily have access to those high caliber people. YBLA gave me that passion to really open up the doors for others. My mission statement is 'I inspire to encourage others to live without limits,' and I really try and do that.

OU: As an ambassador in training, I believe it's my goal to reach out to others and to make a difference. I have a cousin, who before wasn't interested in anything school-related, and ever since I joined this program he's been seeing me going to events. I have been telling him about the opportunities that we have and the different things that we have experienced in this program, and he recently got the letter in the mail inviting him to a leadership conference. He's a rising junior, so I told him about the ambassador in training program - what we do, the many connections that we have - and hopefully, he will apply for the ambassadors in training program.

### **What are your solutions to minimize this divide in upward mobility in Charlotte?**

KS: I think there's a big responsibility from our local government as well as the corporations that we have here to get together and figure out opportunities for the youth. One thing that I notice is with people that are successful in my age range, we want to go to the New Yorks of the world, LA, Chicago, but we don't want to stay here in Charlotte. I think we need to recognize the opportunities we have in Charlotte, and I think that would really help the corporations that we have.

JP: For us who are sitting here right now, who have made it, it's our responsibility to bring those who we know are in poverty or who don't have the same opportunities as us, we need to bring them up with us. We need to inform them, make them aware of what's going on, and share our personal experiences with them. I have friends who wouldn't even think about joining this program, but once they see the certain things that I do and what I tell them, I try to bring them along my journey. I know that if I wasn't to talk or socialize with them about this, they wouldn't be interested in doing the right thing or having success. Those who are in power or those who are in the upper class should take the responsibility of helping those who are lower.

KS: Information sharing is a big thing and that's why I really love what you guys are doing at Echo, writing the whole curriculum - that's sensational to write a whole curriculum. I think doing what you guys are doing but at a bigger scale, maybe partnering with more organization like YBLA, and just sharing that information because people don't know what they don't know.

**After a wonderful discussion with representatives from YBM, we decided to schedule another interview, but with representatives from YBW. We conversed with seven young women from the ambassadors program on July 24th, 2018.**



*Front row (left to right): Aria Jenkins (Senior, Phillip O. Berry), Talia Hood (Senior, Mallard Creek High School), Asheleigh Shuford (Senior, William Amos Hough High School) / Back row (left to right): Intern Julia Carr, Sydney McGregor (Senior, Mallard Creek High School), Janylah Smith (Freshman, UNC Greensboro), Intern Elise Palmer, Kayla Clark (Senior, Ardrey Kell High School), Nilaja Brown-Roberts (Freshman, North Carolina A&T)*

***Highlights from the discussion can be read below. Responses have been modified for brevity.***

**What is special about YBW? What has it done for you?**

JS: The question is what has it not done for me. I think any kind of outside resources that I know I am unable to get at my school or any other group or individual, I feel I can get it from YBLA or YBW, in particular. YBLA has provided me with internships, opportunities, and speaking engagements. I've been able to really strengthen myself as a leader through this organization. I always give YBLA 1000% credit for always sharpening me and fine tuning me and making me a better leader. YBLA has its way of catering to your every need, regardless of what path you want to go into. Everyone has different dreams and desires, but YBLA has a way of making sure that they get you to where you need to be.

KC: I think also that it's just empowerment. I've never felt so empowered by the people around me. I'm motivated to do more and be more in the world and go out to every opportunity. You can get all the opportunity thrown at you but if you don't take one, you're not growing. It's really

important to get women out speaking and participating in events, especially the way the world is now - we have to represent and come out and do our thing. I think I've grown so much - I can honestly say I don't know who I'd be right now if I didn't join the YBLA organization. It's incredible, honestly.

NBR: I'd also like to add that being a black woman - you're a double minority. You're black and you're female. A lot of the time, you don't receive a lot of support. The first time that we [YBW] had a leadership conference, we had Dr. Adrienne Pinkney, she had something called "10 Things Black Girls Don't Talk About." It was so incredible, I was like, 'Dang, how can this stranger be telling me literally what I think about to myself all day long?' As I was sitting in the room with all these other beautiful black girls who look like me and go through the same things as me, as Kayla said, it was empowerment, and as Janylah said, it was an opportunity. You don't find that often. I didn't have that support in my high school or within my community. I found it in YBLA. It's its own small community. It brings together so many different people, even though we are the young black leadership alliance, we have people from various backgrounds and cultures. All of these different perspectives merge into one in order to make me a stronger black leader. It's phenomenal.

**Charlotte Mecklenburg's story is a tale of two cities, one characterized by mobility and wealth, the other of poverty and struggle. What is your experience with this divide?**

KC: I attend Ardrey Kell [High School] and I live in Ballantyne, which is often called 'the Ballantyne bubble' - the idea that we're so shadowed [sheltered] in our own way of thinking in our community where the streets are clean, you never see a homeless person, everyone walks around, you see soccer moms everywhere.... It's that kind of concept. And it's a true thing. The bubble is so thick, when you travel outside of where I live, like when going into the office for YBLA, my eyes have opened when literally just driving 45 minutes away of the area. At my high school, I take all honors and AP courses, but in my classes, there's usually like one other black person. Maybe two. It's gotten to the point where I just stop looking. I'm so used to being surrounded by the same type of people, and I don't even realize that that's the case. I think that can really attest to the divide. It's so segregated. I think CMS is one of the most segregated school systems in the US.

NBR: I attended Phillip O. Berry, and that's on the West side of Charlotte. I live in that community - right down the street from the school. I can definitely attest to a huge divide. As Kayla said, when you go in to a Phillip O. Berry classroom versus an Ardrey Kell classroom, you're going to see totally different things. When I enter into a classroom, I don't look for a white student. Everybody in there looks like me. And although they look like me, everybody has different problems. Things like 'I want to do my best in school, but my mom can't pay the bills, so I'm sleeping in class.' You have some students that are working extra hard, but they can't find



outside motivation. You have a whole bunch of students with those kinds of problems. Other neighboring school such as Harding, West Charlotte, and West Meck have similar problems. But then you travel a little farther away, and you get to a school like Mallard Creek, and there's a contrast. There are more resources, just things like that. The divide is real, and I can feel it in my classroom, I can feel it in my community, and it's so unfair. There's so many students with so much potential. But they're never able to reach that potential because they're not given the resources and even a chance. Someone looks at you, they see where you come from, and then they assume things about you.

JS: There is a humongous divide in Charlotte. I live three miles away from my school - I'm in the Mallard Creek area, and I had to go get some conditioner for my hair. I drove like 15 minutes away from my house, and it's just totally different. I'm not saying I come from complete riches and gold toilets. I used to get a little nervous when I would go to certain sides of town, but what you have to do is remind yourself to keep an open mind. I feel like it starts with you. Keeping knowledge of your surroundings and just making sure that you're not judging people. The divide encompasses hate. We're all the same. We're all equal. You can't help where you came from. You have to take it and move forward. Both ends of the divide have to learn how to accept each other. It's really not that hard when you start to open your mind.

KC: Also, just acknowledging the fact that the divide is there and there's a place outside of where you live is important. There's so many people at my school who probably have never been to some poorer areas of Charlotte. They just haven't seen it. They can't make that choice to overcome their judgement just because they've never been in a situation where they could see it. They don't get to experience that.

TH: The divide is evident in my house too. My dad grew up in Charlotte, but his mom didn't make a lot of money, so he had to do a lot of stuff. His sisters had to go to work and they were still in high school. He talks about how when they were younger they had to sleep with cotton balls in their ears because there were bugs crawling around on the floor. He's like 'Y'all have it made now.' When we go to the West side of Charlotte, my mom gets uptight and she says to lock your doors, and my dad is like 'What are you saying? They're people too.' It's not just a divide between sides of Charlotte, it's a divide between the people that you talk to everyday.

AJ: As far as physically seeing the divide, I play softball, and travelling to schools like Ardrey Kell and Providence, their fields are amazing compared to ours. It makes you wonder. We are all CMS schools, so what do they have compared to what we have? Like Talia and Janylah were saying, you really have to be aware of [the divide] too. I went to private school from kindergarten to 5th grade, and I lived a very sheltered life. Kids really don't know what it's like to come out of their neighborhoods. You're oblivious.

**Spreading knowledge to battle ignorance is important in minimizing the divide. How should we interact with people who aren't just ignorant, but want the divide to continue?**

NBR: We can't seek out those who don't want to change. We have to seek out those who want to change. You need to get those people together and make a movement. Once there's enough of you, who can they deny? We can't change everybody. That's just a simple fact. It's unfortunate and it's sad. Even some people from lower socioeconomic background are stuck in their own mindset and don't believe in [the divide]. Even when you're trying to help them, they will say 'I'm fine. I'll continue to live the way that I am. I don't care.'

**Do you believe in the American Dream? The idea that every US citizen has an equal opportunity to achieve success through hard work, determination, and initiative?**

AS: People have different motives when living their lives. Let's say someone is born with AIDS, and they didn't ask for it. They have to work to get money for treatment. It's all based on where you've been and where you come from - you can't help what's given to you. You need outside help. People can't accomplish everything by themselves.

TH: I do believe in the American Dream. If you try and you be assertive and you put yourself out there, you will find somebody that will listen to you and help you. Everyone in the planet won't say 'You're wrong' and shut the door in your face. You have to try. You're going to fall and you're going to have a whole bunch of shortcomings and people are going to say, 'You're just a kid, you have no idea what you're talking about.' But you can't listen to them. That's where your grit and determination have to come in. You can't just settle when people say you won't go anywhere.

KC: Objectively, I believe the statement is false. It says 'equal opportunity.' In the US, equal opportunity is not true. Even acknowledging the fact that there's a ranking for economic mobility, obviously there's not equal opportunity. If kids have to change schools because of lack of opportunity, obviously there's not equal opportunity. I think the American Dream, it has aspects that are true, like what Talia was saying, if you overcome you can be successful. But it's all your own choice. And I don't think it has anything to do with America. Or with equal opportunity. If you look at it, the American Dream is all about overcoming and having a destination for yourself. You can do that wherever you are. It's not just America. If the American Dream is promising equal opportunity, then it's promising a lie.

AJ: I agree with you completely. I know that the things that you go through and the experiences you go through make you who you are, but then at the same time, you're not what you go through. Which is kind of contradictory. But at the same time, if something in the past happened you need to say, 'that was in the past and I can move forward.' Whatever neighborhood you

come from, like Talia was saying, there will be someone that listens. You can do it if you really want it.

AS: I know that rappers use it, but I think it applies to real life: ‘I didn’t choose this, it chose me.’ You’re given what you’re given. We didn’t ask to be here. You need to make the best out of it. Everything depends on your situation and what exactly you’re dealing with. There’s somebody that will listen, but you don’t always have the resources.

KC; This is a promise you can’t promise to anybody. You can’t promise someone that they are going to be successful. It’s all up to them. It’s all up to you and your decisions and where you take yourself. You can’t depend on a country or moving somewhere to ensure your success.

*If you want more information on YBLA, visit their website:*

<https://www.youngblackleadership.org/>

100% HIGH  
SCHOOL  
GRADUATION

98% COLLEGE  
ATTENDANCE

97% COLLEGE  
RETENTION

## *Interview with Bethany Darnley: Always Further, Always Higher*

Julia Carr, Echo Student Intern  
August 1, 2018



Recently we sat down with Bethany Darnley, a former Earth and Environmental Science teacher at Garinger, a Title I CMS High School. She's been teaching for four years and immediately noticed the huge dropout rate, with freshman class sizes being around 700 students and senior classes sizing only about 300.

*"For me there was this lack of connection, and so I wanted to get the root cause as to why so many students are leaving Garinger specifically, and what I found was a lack of resources, not only physical but also a lack of support or guidance at home."*

Over her few years at the school, she has completely built their leadership curriculum into an influential mentorship program that offers career networking, community involvement, and entrepreneurship training. It also includes a nonprofit, the Ultreia Society- meaning always further, always higher.

*"This nonprofit model is a wraparound support for students, based on three main pillars: leadership, advocacy and entrepreneurship. I kind of made my own standards for the leadership class, such as more specific guidelines, pulling in the opportunity task force report and bringing the students closer to the community. It was important for them to build social capital, and I think within the opportunity report I asked the same question: where is the student voice? They talked about building social capital and resources for student,s but they're not involving them in the conversation."*



*‘Within the course I started to figure out community partnerships that could identify and speak on different standards. Hosting workshops with local companies that could come in and with some of the standards they are passionate about and give students the opportunity to network. They also had conversations with school board members which touched on the advocacy piece. They would write letters to school board members, and then they would come visit Garinger and hold a student-facilitated conversation that was solution-based for what these students want for their long-term education, and how it compares to other students in CMS. Throughout that whole course, every Tuesday they’d go in to a freshman class and mentor with a curriculum they would design in alignment with the teacher’s. This allowed them to support a whole class and deal with some of the key challenges that a teacher can’t always take on, like chronic absenteeism and remediation. Having that extra mentor in the classroom then gives the underclassmen someone they see went through similar challenges and made it through, and hopefully this gives some motivation with students.’*

Darnley gives an inspiring example to somebody giving real solutions to the stark disparity in equal opportunity for Charlotte’s youth. Not only does she provide tools for mentorship, community advocacy, and entrepreneurship to “at-risk” students, she puts her faith into students who were never systematically pushed to excel. There’s no doubt that Darnley’s hard work is allowing students to rise, always further, always higher.



# *Utreia Society*

## *Guidelines & Syllabus, 2018 - 2019*

Instructor: Ms. Bethany Darnley

Email: [bethany1.darnley@cms.k12.nc.us](mailto:bethany1.darnley@cms.k12.nc.us)

Phone: (909) 547-485

Website: <http://www.ultreiasociety.com>

### Introduction

Utreia is the Latin meaning for "always further, always higher" - it is our hope for high school students to move "further and higher" striving for success. The course is comprised of leadership standards specific to the Charlotte community.

### Course Description

This is a two-semester course for students who have decided to assume an important leadership position in our school. Leadership students are motivated self-starters who make a commitment to be an example of excellence. They commit to positively participate in and contribute to community, student organizations, and their school.

- Utilizing the community, this course will provide students with the life skills to build their resume in order to be highly competitive among their peers upon graduation.
- Students will utilize standards (identified in the timeline and workshops to practice leadership skills mentoring current Freshman.
  - Each Mentor will have 2 mentees. They will utilize workshops hosted during class with their mentees in addition to navigating the system of high school. They are responsible for mentoring freshmen and for providing them with the tools and resources needed for success in high school.
  - Mentors will provide various forms of support for freshmen throughout the school year, including but not limited to tutorials, social/emotional support, and workshops.
- Mentors will track contact with mentees every week pertaining to workshops and student needs to ensure success.
  - Contact will be translated to data
  - Goals in contact shown in data
  - Increased retention from freshman to sophomore year
  - Decreased disciplinary action for freshman Increased attendance and accountability for students

## *Introduction to Activities*

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Dear Teachers,

We acknowledge that data can only do so much. The first six chapters are designed to inform students on the current state of affairs in Charlotte, but it's imperative that this curriculum also fosters meaningful discussion. The following set of activities are designed to open up classroom conversations about the systemic lack of social mobility in Charlotte-Mecklenburg.

Talking with the students of the Young Black Leadership Alliance, we realized that the root of disparity is a lack of empathy. If you completely empathize with the suffering of others, it is impossible for you to not care enough to work to solve it. These classroom conversations foster empathy and allow the sharing of stories across an array of diverse backgrounds. It's so important to cross cultural barriers and recognize the humanity of our fellow students and community members. And hopefully, these discussions will lead your students to develop creative ideas and generate personal activism for expanding opportunity to all.

Teachers, we encourage you to choose the activities that you deem most effective for your classroom and share your experiences! We have a student survey found under "Reference Materials" of this curriculum, we look forward to your responses.

**Lastly, if you're interested in having a discussion with classrooms from different zip codes in CMS, please email [charlottechoes@aol.com](mailto:charlottechoes@aol.com).**

Best of luck to you with these activities, and feel free to generate more ideas for connecting the reality of our community with your classroom.

With hope,  
Echo Student Interns

**Julia Carr**  
Duke University

**Seungmin Park**  
Williams College

**Elise Palmer**  
East Mecklenburg High

**Molly Ruebusch**  
Cuthbertson High

## *American Mobility Discussion*

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CLASS TIME: 20-40 Minutes

START: Ask students to spend 5-10 minutes journaling a response to the following question:

Do you believe in the American Dream? The idea that every US citizen has an equal opportunity to achieve success through hard work, determination, and initiative?

VIDEO: Play “Is America Dreaming?: Understanding Social Mobility” by Brookings Institution 3m40s YouTube  
[www.bit.ly/VGPTSu](http://www.bit.ly/VGPTSu)

DISCUSSION: Ask the class their thoughts on this video. Was it surprising to see the unequal distribution of wealth in our society? What are your thoughts on it being harder for you to advance if you’re a person of color or child of a single-parent home? Do you believe in the American Dream?

This activity can serve on its own or as an introduction to the entire curriculum or to Chapter 4: Family Structure.



## *Suburban Redlining Discussion*

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CLASS TIME: 20-40 Minutes

START: Ask students to spend 5-10 minutes journaling a response to the following question:

Where do you live? What is the racial makeup of your neighborhood? Do you think it's a coincidence that it is that way?

VIDEO: Play "Adam Ruins Everything- The Disturbing History of Suburbs" by TruTV 6m16s YouTube.  
[www.bit.ly/2vMBVnf](http://www.bit.ly/2vMBVnf)

DISCUSSION: Ask the class their thoughts on this video. Was it surprising to see the systemic racism and its current effects on minorities? What are solutions to this lack of residential mobility?

This activity can serve on its own or as an introduction to Chapter 1: Segregation and Racial Relations or Chapter 3: Income Inequality.

## *Cathartic Narrative*

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Julia Carr, Echo Student Intern

Near the end of my junior year, my English teacher, Mr. Conor McCaffrey from Hough High School, presented us with a writing prompt:

**In at least a page, write about whatever you want to write about. No literary topics or academia. Just catharsis.**

And frankly it was weird for all of us. We were taught for so long how to write trite three-bodied essays on predetermined topics we didn't really care about. This new assignment just wasn't what you did in an 11th grade English class. It wasn't about the eloquence or the grade, if the writing was too personal, you could still get a 100 by merely flashing your page(s) of writing without him reading it. It was about gaining your voice.

The next class, we were given the opportunity to share our writing to the class. Slowly students queued up to share, and speaking from personal experience, it was simultaneously terrifying and extremely liberating. There is so much value to be learned from a student's own experiences and thoughts. I heard my classmates speak on bullying and insecurity, on parental deaths, and financial struggle, even of attempted suicides and life afterwards. These were my classmates, the same faces I saw every day without a second thought.

Students often come to class long enough to get counted present, do some work, and talk to a handful of buddies. It's rare that the social bubbles present in a classroom pop, meaning a student may never hear of the touching struggles and triumphs of their peers, the same ones they sit next to for 90 minutes every day. Sharing our stories is so incredibly powerful, it undeniably brought our class closer together and opened connections to people we would have never broken out of our bubble to say hello to. It fostered empathy for the many kids facing hardship, and made us realize that everyone's character was the result of a unique background that you'd never know about without these types of conversations. Ultimately, it taught me that all of us are struggling with our own identities and purpose in a massively unknown world. That we're all human.

Teachers, I cannot tell you how much I encourage you to implement this. To trade in two of your classes in order to give your students tools they can't use on the final exam: self-identity, empathy, a closer relationships to their peers, and the priceless ability to value their own voices.

## *Privilege Walk Activity*

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CLASS TIME: 20-30 minutes

START: First watch the short clip “Andy Donye Privilege Activity” on YouTube to get a better understanding of how the activity works, found at this link: [www.bit.ly/2PcwO7B](http://www.bit.ly/2PcwO7B). Write down the questions about certain privileges that he lists in the video or make up your own if there are more you’d like to add. (Suggest/create characters for students to use in activity below to ensure they do not have to reveal their own personal situations.)

ACTIVITY: Take your students to an area large enough, either outdoors or indoors, so that they can take a lot of steps for this activity. Have them line up at a starting line and have a finish line at the other side of the field with a prize at the end (maybe a free homework pass). Then, read aloud your questions and have the students take a large step towards the finish line if that applies to them. The questions should all be about circumstances that they have no control over but still are benefiting from those situations, such as a two-parent household or enough money for private education. After you’ve read all the questions, have the students look around to see how close they are to the finish line compared to the other students. Talk about the relevance that privilege plays in everyone’s daily lives and the importance of being aware of one’s own privilege. Then have the students all race to the finish line; the idea is that those who took the most steps should reach the finish line first due to their privilege. If you do not have enough space for a race, the activity portion can end when all the questions have been read and the students look around at where they stand relative to others, instead of everyone running to a finish line

DISCUSSION: Afterwards, have everyone return to the classroom and discuss what they have realized about privilege. Was there anything new about their lives that they have not thought of as being privileged? What are some other areas of privilege that help people succeed in life? Why is it important to be aware of one’s own privilege in everyday life?

## *“Spent” Poverty Simulation Game*

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CLASS TIME: 10-30 Minutes

START: Have students go to **playspent.org**, a free game that guides them through the stresses and near impossibility of low-income living. They’ll inevitably run out of money, but ask them to restart and make it to the end, or until they’ve tried enough times to know they can’t stay afloat.

DISCUSSION: Did anybody make it to the end? How hard was it to stay afloat as a low-income worker? Over 26,000 families live below the poverty line in CMS. That includes 48,000 children, meaning one in five children in Mecklenburg live a standard of living similar to the one in “Spent”. Is this an issue we need to better address?

This activity can serve on its own or as an introduction to Chapter 3: Income Inequality

## *Civic Activism Activities*

These activities serve as tools for you to become involved in your community, but by no means are these your only options to get involved. Provided here are templates for you to use when contacting a school board member/politician. The content of your letter is completely dependent on you and what you want to see changed in your community.

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Templates courtesy of Bethany Darnley, Garinger HS Leadership Teacher

### **WRITING TO A SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER**

Choose a member of the school board to send your letter to.

School board member: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Drafting your letter** (Independently)

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

#### **Introduction**

- Introduce who you are and where you go to school
- Address why you are contacting them
- Address your understanding of their on-going search to identify equity in CMS
- Thank member for their time and efforts to address equity across schools and introduce research.

#### **Body**

- In one or two paragraphs, explain your research and how it connects to your high school career

#### **Closing**

- As part of the school board retreat, members discussed visiting different schools. Invite them to visit your school to continue the conversation on equity.
- Thank the members for their time and continued work
- Let the member know you look forward to hearing from them.

## *CMS Board of Education Contact Information*

### **Board Services Office**

- 980-343-5139
- 980-343-5163
- Mailing Address: P.O. Box 30035, Charlotte, NC, 28230-0035

### **Mary T. McCray, Chairperson, At-Large**

Phone: 704-281-6074

Email: [maryt.mccray@cms.k12.nc.us](mailto:maryt.mccray@cms.k12.nc.us)

### **Rhonda Cheek, Vice-Chairperson, District 1**

Phone: 980-231-1465

Email: [rhonda.lennon@cms.k12.nc.us](mailto:rhonda.lennon@cms.k12.nc.us)

### **Elyse C. Dashew, Member, At-Large**

Phone: 704-659-6994

Email: [elysec.dashew@cms.k12.nc.us](mailto:elysec.dashew@cms.k12.nc.us)

### **Ericka Ellis-Stewart, Member, At-Large**

Phone: 704-412-8565

Email: [ericka.ellis-stewart@cms.k12.nc.us](mailto:ericka.ellis-stewart@cms.k12.nc.us)

### **Thelma Byers-Bailey, Member, District 2**

Phone: 980-272-1943

Email: [thelmab.bailey@cms.k12.nc.us](mailto:thelmab.bailey@cms.k12.nc.us)

### **Ruby M. Jones, Member, District 3**

Phone: 704-579-1763

Email: [rubym.jones@cms.k12.nc.us](mailto:rubym.jones@cms.k12.nc.us)

### **Carol Sawyer, Member, District 4**

Phone: 980-292-0554

Email: [carole.sawyer@cms.k12.nc.us](mailto:carole.sawyer@cms.k12.nc.us)

### **Margaret Marshall, Member, District 5**

Phone: 980-231-1837

Email: [margarets.marshall@cms.k12.nc.us](mailto:margarets.marshall@cms.k12.nc.us)

### **Sean Strain, Member, District 6**

Phone: 980-343-5139

Email: [seanc.strain@cms.k12.nc.us](mailto:seanc.strain@cms.k12.nc.us)

## *Writing a Member of Congress*

1. Pick a bill relating to this curriculum or a bill about which you have passionate opinions. To get ideas, look at newspapers, magazines or online news sites, scan the websites of the Congress person, or go to [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov) or [www.congress.gov](http://www.congress.gov) .

**The issue that I will address in my letter is:**

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**My opinion on this issue is:**

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**2. Research your issue and come up with valid facts to back your argument.**

What I want the politician to know about:

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Facts I can use to back-up my position/argument:

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Then, use the template on the following page to draft a respectful letter to your chosen politician on the issue/bill you wish to discuss.

Your Name  
123 My House Rd.  
Sterling, VA 20165

August 10, 2018

The Honorable (name)  
United States Senate **OR** United States House of Representatives **OR** President  
(address from Congressman's website)  
Washington, D.C. (zip code from website)

Dear (Senator/Representative Lastname):

I am one of your constituents and I am writing in regard to (Short paragraph about the purpose of your letter and your position/argument)

(Next, use facts and details regarding your issue to show you have researched it)

(Close by asking for the Congressman's views, but do not demand support)

Sincerely,

(Your Name)



## TIPS ON WRITING YOUR LETTER

**Senators** and **Representatives** pay attention to their mail (both regular and e-mail). It's good politics. Responding to mail is crucial to reelection. Members know your vote can be won or lost by their response. **The most effective letter is a personal one, not a form letter.** The letter should be short, informed and polite. Some specific tips:

1. Try to stick to **one typewritten page**; two pages at most. (If writing in longhand, take care to write legibly and don't write on the back of a page.)
2. In a short paragraph, state your purpose. Stick with one subject or issue. Support your position with the rest of the letter.
3. If the subject of your letter is a bill, cite it by name and number.
4. Be factual and support your position with information about how legislation is likely to affect you and others. Avoid emotional, philosophical arguments.
5. If you believe legislation is wrong and should be opposed, say so. Indicate the likely bad effects and suggest a different approach.
6. Ask for the legislator's views, but do not demand support. Remember, Senators and Representatives respond to a variety of views, and even if they do not support your position on one issue or bill, they may support it the next time.
7. Currently, many legislators have e-mail capability, but can only respond by regular mail.

## *Student Response*

Please take 3-5 minutes to answer the following questions with the google form link provided.

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Link: <https://bit.ly/2OG5KwE>

1. With what chapter of the curriculum did you connect the most? Why?
2. Which articles did you find most valuable?
3. How is Charlotte your "Tale of Two Cities"? What is your experience with the overall divide in Charlotte?
4. In your opinion, are there other issues of concern occurring in Charlotte that were not addressed in the curriculum?
5. What are some ideas that will make Charlotte a better city for equal opportunity?
6. What is something the curriculum helped you better understand about the reality of obstacles and barriers that exist in Charlotte?
7. Would you be interested in being contacted by The Echo Foundation for further discussion and involvement?

Use the link provided or scan this QR code to access the Google Form:



## *Charlotte: Addressing the Issues*

*We applaud the organizations working to help those affected by the disparity in opportunity in Charlotte. Here is a partial list of many more to get you started! Many welcome donations and volunteers.*

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### **A Child's Place**

ACP works to erase the impact of homelessness on children and their education.

[www.achildsplace.org](http://www.achildsplace.org)

### **Ada Jenkins Center**

To improve the quality of life for the residents of our communities through the integrated delivery of health, education, and human services.

[www.adajenkins.org](http://www.adajenkins.org)

### **Assistance League of Charlotte**

Assistance League of Charlotte, a non-profit member volunteer organization, is dedicated to improving the lives of children and their families through five community-based philanthropic programs – we feed, we clothe, we mentor, we educate.

[www.assistanceleague.org/charlotte](http://www.assistanceleague.org/charlotte)

### **Bright Blessings**

A 501c3 non-profit organization serving the greater Charlotte region. The programs, including birthday celebrations for homeless children, blessing baskets filled with essentials for impoverished babies, literacy programs, and promotion of health and hygiene, will bring joy, care, and hope to more than 10,000 homeless and impoverished children this year.

[www.brightblessingsusa.org](http://www.brightblessingsusa.org)

### **Building Educated Leaders for Life**

BELL exists to transform the academic achievements, self-confidence, and life trajectories of children living in under-resourced communities.

[www.experiencebell.org](http://www.experiencebell.org)

### **Charlotte Career Discovery Day**

A day in Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools where more than 100 local businesses and universities will share hands-on experiences with 4,000+ students in a highly engaging, interactive event.

[www.charlottenc.gov/Mayor/Youth/MYEP/Pages/CCDD.aspx](http://www.charlottenc.gov/Mayor/Youth/MYEP/Pages/CCDD.aspx)

### **Child Care Resources Inc.**

CCRI works to ensure that all children have access to quality, affordable early learning and school-age experiences that enable them to succeed in school and in life. CCRI delivers free and low-cost professional development services to help early educators and school-age child care practitioners improve the quality of services provided to children (birth through age 12).

[www.childcareresourcesinc.org](http://www.childcareresourcesinc.org)

### **Classroom Central**

Classroom Central equips students living in poverty to effectively learn by collecting and distributing free school supplies.

[www.classroomcentral.org](http://www.classroomcentral.org)

### **Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools Child Nutrition**

The Child Nutrition Department provides free breakfast for all students, and free or reduced-price lunches. Also, at select schools in high-poverty areas, school lunches are provided during the summer months. These efforts are in excess of minimum regulatory requirements.

[www.cms.k12.nc.us/cmsdepartments/cns/](http://www.cms.k12.nc.us/cmsdepartments/cns/)

### **Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools Pre-K Program**

CMS provides high quality Pre-Kindergarten programs to approximately 4,000 four-year-old children who qualify for the program. Pre-K is incorporated into many of the high-poverty K-8 schools, thereby becoming Pre-K/8's. Approximately 8,000 Mecklenburg children qualify for this service. Pre-K is not a North Carolina Public school requirement.

[www.cms.k12.nc.us/cmsdepartments/ci/pre-k-services/](http://www.cms.k12.nc.us/cmsdepartments/ci/pre-k-services/)

### **Communities in Schools**

The mission of Communities in Schools is to surround students with a community of support, empowering them to stay in school and achieve in life. We are committed to helping students achieve success in school and continue their education in college or other post-secondary training. As a result, our youth will be better equipped to find meaningful employment, lead productive, gratifying lives, and become contributing members of our society.

[www.cischarlotte.org](http://www.cischarlotte.org)

### **Crisis Assistance Ministry**

Crisis Assistance Ministry focuses on preventing homelessness and preserving dignity for Charlotte-Mecklenburg's working poor. It provides emergency assistance with rent and utilities, clothing, household goods, furniture and appliances. It provides support and counseling to help families move toward financial stability. The agency focuses on educating the community about the realities of poverty in our community.

[www.crisisassistance.org](http://www.crisisassistance.org)

### **Families Forward Charlotte**

A nonprofit organization committed to easing the burden of poverty on children and their families in Mecklenburg County. They provide essential goods, educational programs, a comprehensive list of resources and assistance in navigating existing resources. The organization's goal is to establish long-term stability for the children and families we serve.

[www.familiesforwardcharlotte.org](http://www.familiesforwardcharlotte.org)

### **Freedom Schools Partners**

FSP gives children three fundamental resources needed to develop their potential: 1. Literacy skills 2. Social Emotional skills needed to make good decisions and 3. A community that believes in them. Freedom Schools Partners' impact extends to transform college student interns into advocates for children and inspire them to be future leaders, and to deepen the community's investment in children.

[www.freedom-schoolpartners.org](http://www.freedom-schoolpartners.org)

### **The King's Kitchen**

A nonprofit serving southern-inspired cuisine from Carolina farms and purveyors located in the heart of Uptown Charlotte. The King's Kitchen donates 100% of profits from sales to feed the poor in the Charlotte region. Additionally, The King's Kitchen partners with the Charlotte Mecklenburg Dream Center to provide job-training, life-skills training, social etiquette workshops, financial management guidance, and employment intern opportunities to Charlotteans in search of a new beginning.

[www.kingskitchen.org](http://www.kingskitchen.org)

### **Leading on Opportunity Task Force**

The Leading on Opportunity Task Force is a group of 20 diverse and dedicated volunteers led by Dr. Ophelia Garmon-Brown and Dee O'Dell. They spent nearly two years listening to members of the community and seeking knowledge from experts to understand the structural challenges that face our community. In March 2017, they released a comprehensive report outlining their findings and recommendations.

[www.leadingonopportunity.org](http://www.leadingonopportunity.org)

### **Learning Help Centers of Charlotte**

LHCC provides scholastic, spiritual, and social supports to empower at-risk families to lift themselves out of generational poverty. They engage with at-risk families through weekly homework support, mentoring and annual summer enrichment camps for children, mentoring and crises interventions for parents, and family enrichment events.

<http://www.lhcclt.org/>

### **Mayor's Youth Employment Program**

Works with local businesses to provide teens with exposure to job industries in the private, public, and non-profit sectors, as well as career-oriented internships.

[www.charlottenc.gov/Mayor/Youth/MYEP/](http://www.charlottenc.gov/Mayor/Youth/MYEP/)

### **MeckEd**

MeckEd is an independent, nonpartisan proponent of excellent public education. We believe all children, regardless of neighborhood or zip code, deserve a quality education to prepare them as contributors in our local and global economies. To fulfill that vision, MeckEd educates, engages and impacts the Charlotte-Mecklenburg community through work that supports strong, vibrant, and successful public schools.

[www.mecked.org](http://www.mecked.org)

### **Project LIFT**

Project L.I.F.T. stands for Project Leadership & Investment for Transformation. Our goal is to change the way traditionally underserved students are educated, supported and empowered to realize their full potential. Project L.I.F.T. operates with West Charlotte High School and eight elementary and middle schools. Our community's investment has made it possible for Project L.I.F.T. to make significant gains in many key areas: teacher retention, teacher leadership, academic growth, proficiency, and school and student culture.

[www.projectliftcharlotte.org](http://www.projectliftcharlotte.org)

### **Read Charlotte**

A collaborative, community-wide movement to double the percentage of 3rd grade students reading at grade level from 40% now to 80% in 2025 – by starting at birth, working together and investing only in programs that work.

[www.readcharlotte.org](http://www.readcharlotte.org)

### **The Salvation Army**

The Salvation Army operates a wide variety of programs designed to address poverty and upward mobility in Charlotte. The Center for Hope provides emergency shelter for women and children. The Boys and Girls Clubs offer several programs: Power Hour is a comprehensive

homework help and tutoring program. Money Matters helps teens ages 13-18 with money management. Project Learn supports classroom activities at the Club and in the home. Goals for Graduation works on academic goal setting, and Career Launch focuses on career exploration and mentoring for teens 13-18. Diplomas to Degrees is a new college readiness program that guides Club members to help them prepare for post-secondary education and career success.

[www.salvationarmycarolinas.org](http://www.salvationarmycarolinas.org)

### **Tech Charlotte**

An initiative aiming to provide 16 to 24-year olds with technology experiences, industry education and application, and career pathways. TechCharlotte will convene leaders in the technology industries to support the development of work-based learning and continuing education programs that prepare youth with the knowledge and skills needed to secure a computing job.

[www.charlottenc.gov/HNS/CE/Youth/Pages/Tech-Charlotte.aspx](http://www.charlottenc.gov/HNS/CE/Youth/Pages/Tech-Charlotte.aspx)

### **Young Black Leadership Alliance (YBLA)**

An organization identifying, educating and developing young black leaders to have a positive impact in the Charlotte community and beyond. The young leaders are trained to reach back and mentor elementary, middle and high school students as they achieve through Leadership, Service and Education.

[www.youngblackleadership.org](http://www.youngblackleadership.org)

### **YWCA**

YWCA serves over 60 single women and 10 families through a Transitional Housing Program and over 300 students in an after-school literacy program. The YWCA is a safe place for women and their families facing instability and an empowering place for children to reach higher education goals. The agency invites members of our community to learn, question and be heard through Racial Justice events. We are on a mission to eliminate racism, empower women, and promote peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all.

[www.ywcacentralcarolinas.org](http://www.ywcacentralcarolinas.org)

Find more great Charlotte nonprofits at [www.sharecharlotte.org](http://www.sharecharlotte.org).

## *Further Reading & Filmography*

Books, videos, and documentaries that expound upon the issues of race, class, and social mobility in America.

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**1. *Just Mercy* by Bryan Stevenson**

A powerful true story about the potential for mercy to redeem us, and a clarion call to fix our broken system of justice—from one of the most brilliant and influential lawyers of our time. Novel.

**2. *Cultural Proficiency: A Manual for School Leaders* by Randall B. Lindsey, Kikanza J. Nuri Robins, Raymond D. (Dewey) Terrell**

A book that gives readers a deeper understanding of the meaning of culture and cultural proficiency. The book includes many activities that surface insights into the perspectives of individual educator's and their teams of colleagues bring to student learning.

**3. *Excellence through Equity* by Alan Blankstein and Pedro Noguera**

Readers are challenged to create the conditions where race and class no longer predict student achievement. The anthology demonstrates how equity is the most powerful means available to lift all children to higher achievement in the most effective schools in the United States and worldwide.

**4. *13th***

A 2016 American documentary by director Ava DuVernay. The film explores the "intersection of race, justice, and mass incarceration in the United States; "it is titled after the Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution. 1h40m – Netflix

**5. *The Racial Wealth Gap* by Vox Explained**

Great short documentary on the racial *wealth* gap between whites and blacks and how that's come to be. 16m15s - Netflix / Appears on Season 1 of "Explained"



6. **“Episode 3- Taking Action” by Project C / Alabama Public Television**

A half-hour episode of the Project C series looking at historical examples of civic activism and recent student activists paving the way. 28m46s [www.aptv.org/project-C/](http://www.aptv.org/project-C/) (must make free account to view)

7. ***Racism in the United States: By the Numbers* by Vlogbrothers**

A video exploring modern racism in all areas of life in the US, supported by extensive, well-researched information. 3m55s – YouTube

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## APPENDIX

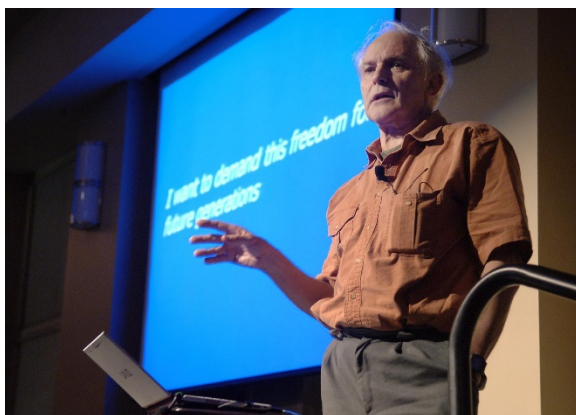
# ABOUT THE ECHO FOUNDATION

The Echo Foundation promotes understanding and inspires hope through education, service, and the development of leadership for a more humane world. Our programs teach responsibility to young people in the context of social justice.

Echo was founded in 1997 following Wiesel's visit to Charlotte that year. As the community-wide project *Against Indifference* concluded, Wiesel challenged the community to act on its convictions of human dignity, justice, and moral courage. He also offered his assistance in developing programs to address critical issues facing humankind.



Through comprehensive educational programs, The Echo Foundation equips individuals with moral and intellectual tools necessary to create positive change in their local and global communities. Echo initiatives use the power of example to educate about human rights, social justice, and urgent matters of sustainability. Experiential learning opportunities, programs using the arts in service to humankind, and facilitated dialogue in the pursuit of innovative solutions are hallmarks of the organization.



The foundation has hosted 28 humanitarians, Nobel Laureates and world leaders and has created and shared curriculum about each with over 740,000 students. Echo connects local students with the world and the world with students in our region. Recent projects have focused on Dr. Paul Farmer & Partners In Health; Africa expert and activist, John Prendergast, Rwandan Bishop John Rucyahana; Science Nobel Laureates, Günter Blobel, Edmond Fischer, Christiane Nüsslein-Volhard, Douglas Osheroff, Robert Richardson; founder of Doctors

without Borders, Bernard Kouchner; Earth Institute Director, Jeffrey Sachs; Nobel Laureate in Literature, Wole Soyinka; human rights advocate Kerry Kennedy; Chinese dissident Harry Wu; and others. For more information and printable copies of past curriculum, visit

[www.echofoundation.org](http://www.echofoundation.org)

# FIVE INITIATIVES

The Echo Foundation mission: “...to promote justice and inspire hope through education, service and the development of leadership for a more humane world” is realized through the implementation of five initiatives:

## **I. Voices Against Indifference:**



A curriculum-based educational program, VAI connects high school students with global humanitarians who exemplify the power of the individual to make a difference. Each year, VAI addresses critical issues facing humanity from the perspectives of our participating humanitarians with the underlying goals of shifting attitudes, fostering global awareness and promoting personal responsibility among youth. Simultaneously, VAI builds bridges across cultural divides by bringing students from all

corners of the region together for dialogue. An extension of this initiative is Echo’s Annual Award Dinner, at which the guest humanitarian is the keynote speaker and a local hero is honored with the *Echo Award Against Indifference*.

## **II. Footsteps Global Initiative:**

Travel and hands-on experiences have the capacity to transform students in a way that transcends classroom learning; only by “doing” can young people fully appreciate the challenges that face them as future leaders. This leadership initiative for regional high school students promotes awareness and global citizenship through travel and service. Competitively selected Ambassadors of the initiative participate in yearlong programming that combines intensive study, volunteerism and travel to locations of great humanitarian interest. Past initiatives have taken students to Europe to travel *In The Footsteps of Elie Wiesel*, to Rwanda to work in partnership with Partners In Health, and to Lexington, NC to further literacy in underserved schools.



## **III. Living Together in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century:**



*Living Together in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* is a curriculum-based, education outreach project for 2<sup>nd</sup> grade students originated by Nobel Peace Laureate, Elie Wiesel, with involvement by child activist, Jonathan Kozol, and created by Charlotte-Mecklenburg teachers. *Living Together* teaches problem solving strategies, conflict resolution and respect for others. The underlying mission of the project is to simultaneously begin to build compassion for people of all races, cultures and backgrounds, and to teach life skills in young children that will prepare them to live in our society harmoniously. *Living Together* has been mandated as an integral

part of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg elementary school curriculum.



**IV. Books Beyond Borders:** *Books Beyond Borders* encourages international understanding and action on behalf of others by helping Charlotte students furnish libraries for children around the world. To date, libraries have been created at Ningyuan Middle School in China, the Beit Tzipora Centers for Ethiopian Children in Israel, Lexington City Schools in North Carolina, and The Echo Children’s Library at Nkondo #1 Primary School in Rwanda.



**V. Forum for Hope:** Designed to promote social responsibility among regional business, faith, and education institutions from the top down, the *Forum for Hope* is an opportunity for community leaders to connect with global humanitarians. Participants explore effective means by which they can leverage their stature to create a culture of equality, dignity and mutual respect. Previous forums have included Nobel Peace Laureate Elie Wiesel, Partners In Health Founder Dr. Paul Farmer, Doctors Without Borders Founder Dr. Bernard Kouchner, and Columbia Earth Institute Director Jeffrey Sachs.



## *Footsteps Student Ambassadors Response*

*“The Echo Foundation has allowed me to connect with people and build bridges between my reality and those outside of my realm. I have met many people and experiences through the Echo Foundation which have and will keep allowing me to interact with my community, be it from volunteering or carrying out projects like the one I have mentioned earlier and actually having the potential to make a difference.”*

- **Jana Ivkovic**

Cuba Footsteps Ambassador, Student Intern for Samantha Power Curriculum  
Providence High School

*“The Echo Foundation not only gave me my first experience in bridging diverse groups and being a leader, but it also gave me the inspiration and the belief in myself that I needed to do it.”*

- **Katie Chamblee**

Echo Young Hero of Hope  
J.D. Yale Law  
Myers Park High School

*“The Echo Foundation started this change of social awareness within me. Mrs. Ansaldo always said, “What can one person do?” and that phrase has stuck with me ever since. I’ve become more aware of how privileged I am to be where I am today. I realized I may never be able to the big things by myself, but little acts of kindness are more than doable, they are required of me. The Echo Foundation taught me there are so many injustices in the world. Traveling to Bosnia allowed me to see how hatred turned neighbors upon neighbors. I don’t want our communities in America to lean upon hatred in crisis. I have faith that our communities can lean upon understanding and mercy with strong leadership and outreach from an active community.”*

- **Rachel Haigh**

Bosnia Footsteps Ambassador  
Auburn University, Chemical Engineering  
Providence High School

*“I would like to thank The Echo Foundation for giving me the opportunity to discover my passion and beginning my journey. I am forever grateful, and it is probably not much a stretch to say that I wouldn't be where I am today without the influence of The Echo Foundation, and I wish you all well!”*

- **Sarah Urbanowicz**

Rwanda Footsteps Ambassador  
Tulane University  
Myers Park High School

*“Being a student ambassador...I realized that... involvement in any volunteer initiative requires dedication, passion for what I’m doing, and following through to see the results of my work.”*

- **Michael Ding**  
UC Berkeley  
Myers Park High School

*“...I am compelled to speak my mind and to move forward with action and absolutely no indifference, for I have learned that my voice does matter, that one person can change the world.”*

- **Justine Treadwell**  
Diplomat, U.S. Department of State  
Tufts University  
Charlotte Latin School

*“I never thought that in high school I would be able to participate in something that would truly change students’ lives, and traveling to Lexington (as an Echo student ambassador) was very revealing and allowed me to understand and appreciate the opportunity to attend a good school.”*

- **Miriam Bahrami**  
UNC Chapel Hill  
Myers Park High School

*“Studying and traveling to Bosnia helped me realize that every new person you meet is a treasure that can only be uncovered if you take the time to meet them and dig below the surface.”*

- **Matt Janson**  
Bosnia Footsteps Ambassador  
Cornell University  
Providence High School

*“Being a student ambassador means that you need to be committed, aware of the world around you, organized, and ready to learn.”*

- **Elise Palmer**  
Cuba Footsteps Ambassador, Student Intern for *Charlotte: A Tale of Two Cities* Curriculum  
East Mecklenburg High School

*“ I hope to apply the lessons that are gained from my studies of, and travel to Cuba, in my future service for my own community.”*

- **Neelu Gupta**  
Cuba Footsteps Ambassador  
UNC Chapel Hill  
Providence High School

