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CRUNCHING THE NUMBERS: LV mixes and matches

Blacks more integrated in white neighborhoods

By [MICHAEL WEISSENSTEIN](#)
[REVIEW-JOURNAL](#)

Lillian Sherman and Jesus Marin both left Los Angeles County last year for better lives in Las Vegas.

Sherman and her husband retired to a far northwest Las Vegas street shared by six other black families, many whites and a sprinkling of Asians, Hispanics and Pacific Islanders.

Marin, 24, moved his wife and two children to the heart of Clark County's new barrio, a North Las Vegas neighborhood that new census figures show to be 85 percent Hispanic. Families on his street talk to each other in Spanish, barbecue together on weekends and take each other's children to local parks.

"I'm used to living in Mexican neighborhoods," Marin said. "There's a lot of togetherness."

The very different composition of Sherman's and Marin's new neighborhoods shows how divergent demographic trends have changed the way blacks and Hispanics live in Las Vegas.

Black Las Vegas are more integrated with whites than are the black residents of any metropolitan area in 20 states studied in an analysis released Friday of new census data.

Las Vegas was one of the very few urban areas in which



Jesus Marin on Friday discusses why he moved to a largely Hispanic neighborhood in North Las Vegas. An analysis of census figures shows the Las Vegas Valley's Hispanic community has become increasingly segregated from the white majority, but blacks have become more integrated. Photo by [K.M. Cannon](#).

[Census 2000 in Nevada](#)

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blacks became more integrated with the white majority during the 1990s, the study of the newly released data by the Lewis Mumford Center for Comparative Urban and Regional Research shows.

Hispanic residents of the Las Vegas metropolitan area, on the other hand, have become increasingly segregated from the white, non-Hispanic majority since the 1990 census, when they were the fifth most-integrated large, urban Hispanic population in the country. Las Vegas' Hispanics have dropped to the eighth most-integrated out of the 31 urban Hispanic populations larger than 50,000 people that were studied in the analysis released Friday.

Differences in economic class and migration patterns might account for the widening gap between the integration of blacks and Hispanics with Las Vegas' white majority, said Hal Rothman, a professor of history at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

Flush with returns on aggressive investments, Lillian Sherman and her husband, Freddie, both retired early from the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, where he was a sergeant and she was a corrections officer. They moved last year to a 6,000-square-foot house with a home theater in a gated community near Centennial Parkway.

Racial and ethnic minorities make up a growing proportion of their neighborhood, where only 65 percent of residents are non-Hispanic whites, new census figures show.

"We were able to actually purchase our dream home," Lillian Sherman, 44, said Friday. "It has everything we want in it."

The Shermans' experience is far from uncommon in modern-day Las Vegas, a city once known as the Mississippi of the West, Rothman said.

"If you're a middle-class black person, you do better here than almost any other place," he said. "The rigidity of 100 years of (segregated) communities just isn't as strong here."

Slightly more than 43 percent of the 124,885 black Las Vegans have arrived in the past 10 years, census figures show. Almost 73 percent of the area's 302,143 Hispanic residents have come here since 1990.

New arrivals' relatively low incomes, along with their affinities for those who share their language and culture, might be drawing them to older, central city areas that have affordable

housing and already are heavily Hispanic, experts said.

The Mumford Center study used a statistical tool known as the dissimilarity index, a complex but widely used measure of whether any two racial or ethnic groups are evenly or unevenly distributed in neighborhoods across an urban area.

Simply put, the dissimilarity index measures what percentage of members of a minority group would have to move in order to be evenly distributed alongside members of the majority.

A high dissimilarity index figure indicates a high degree of residential segregation. A low figure indicates a relatively low degree of segregation.

Blacks and whites in the Las Vegas metropolitan area, which encompasses Clark and Nye counties and Arizona's Mohave County, had a dissimilarity index of 42.17. Only the Virginia suburbs of Washington, D.C., had a lower index in the Albany, N.Y.-based Mumford Center's study of 115 metropolitan areas in 20 states. The national average hovered around 70.

The index for the Washington, D.C., area, which includes the Virginia suburbs, is expected to rise above Las Vegas', indicating more segregation, when census data for central city D.C. neighborhoods is released in coming weeks and included in the analysis, said sociology professor John Logan, who conducted the study.

The Mumford Center, at the University at Albany, examined metropolitan areas in Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Texas, Vermont, Virginia and Wisconsin. Data for other states will be released by the U.S. Census Bureau and included in the study in coming weeks.

Unlike in other cities in the study, the index of dissimilarity between blacks and whites in Las Vegas has decreased since 1990, when it stood at 49.71.

"It's unusually low and that leaves something to explain," Logan said. "How could black/white residential patterns be so integrated in Las Vegas, and how could it have gone down when in the rest of the country it's very high and it has stayed absolutely stuck at the level it was in 1990? I think the answer is related to the recent establishment of Las Vegas and its rapid growth."

Most black Las Vegans lived on the city's west side when William Bailey moved here in 1955.

Today, Bailey, who is black, has moved to a waterfront house in The Lakes. His black friends live throughout the valley, far from historically black West Las Vegas.

"Most of the new housing was in other areas, so if you wanted to buy a new house, you had to go into another area," Bailey said Friday. "They'll be in Summerlin, they'll be in Henderson, they'll be in North Las Vegas. ... They had an opportunity to move into a diverse neighborhood, so they moved in."

Review-Journal writer Michael Squires contributed to this report.

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