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A Melting Pot? NYC Is Actually Third Most Segregated In US

(New York-WABC, April 24, 2002) — In tonight's Eyewitness News Extra: Segregation in New York City. We may have some of the toughest anti-discrimination laws in the country, but a new study says city officials don't enforce them. That's one reason why, according to the study, New York is among the most segregated cities in the country. [Diana Williams](#) reports.

[Watch Diana Williams' Report](#)

New Yorkers may think of the city as a melting pot, a mosaic of races and cultures living together. But is it really. Bensenhurst is mostly white, Brownsville is mostly black and Washington Heights is mostly Hispanic.

Professor John Logan says census data shows that New York City is not the beautiful mosaic many like to think it is. In fact, New York is the third most segregated city in the country.

John Logan, SUNY Albany: "I think we should face this squarely and acknowledge that this very liberal city also has an underside that's not so pleasant."

Logan uses a computer model to illustrate segregation. His is able to distinguish the growth of each population over the past nine decades. His models show that while the number of black residents has grown, they remain largely concentrated in the same areas. Logan says housing discrimination is one major reason for that.

Logan: "We have passed the laws, but we have not begun to enforce them."

Critics say the City Human Rights Commission has not aggressively pursued all types of discrimination. A recent report by the city Bar Association says the commission is "under funded and understaffed" and "only engages in the most minimal efforts" to find discrimination.

Craig Gurian, Civil Rights Attorney: "It's been an absolute disaster."




Craig Gurian, the author of that report, says the message is clear.

Gurian: "For discriminators, their lawyers and the like, the current situation is great because they don't have very much to worry about."

According to the commissions own numbers, since 1991, more than 83 percent of its enforcement budget was cut, creating a backlog of 4,500 cases. Many complaints are over five years old.

Gurian: "Law enforcement was important, except for anti-discrimination law enforcement."

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But not everyone agrees. Author Heather MacDonald says if anything, the commission is not needed.

Heather MacDonald, Manhattan Institute: "The notion that there is not sufficient enforcement apparatus is ludicrous. There is... every level of government is committed to the notion that discrimination remains a problem and we're going to root it out."

MacDonald says focusing on discrimination distracts minorities from issues like jobs and education, and that there are better ways to spend tax dollars.

MacDonald: "Beating the bushes to try to find discrimination suits that are not being brought to the attention of government is a gross waste of resources."

But others argue that without true diversity there is no real opportunity.

Gurian: "Can we agree at the core of things that people should be treated fairly. And how the city answers that question says a lot about who we are."

An Eyewitness News/Survey USA poll shows three out of four New York City residents believe the city is either somewhat or very segregated.

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