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# Chicago clinging to color lines

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**BY MARK SKERTIC AND BILL DEDMAN STAFF REPORTERS**

Chicago remains one of the nation's most racially segregated cities.

Despite fair housing laws and civil rights marches, blacks live in their neighborhoods, and whites in theirs.

But segregation in Chicago is receding, if slowly, according to a Sun-Times analysis of the new figures from the 2000 census.

More than four out of 10 Chicagoans live on blocks that are more than 90 percent of one race. A decade ago, it was five out of 10.

While the city is more diverse, with a rising Hispanic population, the races are still largely segregated. Now nearly 1.3 million people--most of them black--live in one-race areas of the city.

Chicago's standing on the roster of segregation has improved little in a decade. In the 1990 census, Chicago was the third most segregated metro area in the United States, behind Gary, Ind., and Detroit. Not all of the 2000 figures

## Black population most segregated

Blacks are much more segregated than other races in Chicago.

For blacks to be evenly distributed throughout the city, most blacks would have to move. The segregation index shows what percentage of each race would have to move to be spread evenly.

In Chicago, 86 percent of blacks would have to move to less-black areas for their share of the population in each neighborhood to mirror their share of the entire city. Only 69 percent of Hispanics would have to move.

	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>
Blacks vs. rest	88	86
Whites vs. rest	72	67
Hispanics vs. rest	69	69
Asian Pacific	69	66
Native American	79	79

Most of the 2000 figures are in, but so far for 2000, Gary, Ind., still is the most segregated. Next, essentially tied, are Chicago, New York, Milwaukee and Newark, N.J. Detroit and others will receive their numbers later this month.

"We're so used to the stock market going up and down, of those big numbers shifting on a daily basis," said David Perry of UIC's Great Cities Institute. "These are important numbers because they can't be moved very much in a decade."

Most of the nation remains heavily segregated. This index shows the segregation for blacks vs. whites in metro areas. The higher the number, the more segregated.

	2000	1990
Gary-Hammond	87	90
Chicago	83	86
New York	83	82
Milwaukee	82	83
Kankakee	75	76
Philadelphia	75	78
Indianapolis	74	75
New Orleans	74	70
Peoria	74	71
St. Louis	72	79
Rockford	65	73
Decatur	60	59
Las Vegas	42	50

\* **Stories on Pages 8-10A**

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SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, analysis by Lewis Mumford Center, SUNY-Albany, Albany, N.Y.

## Chicago still trying to

**BY SCOTT FORNEK AND SABRINA WALTERS STAFF REPORTERS**

When Aurie Pennick was growing up in Englewood around 1960, the dividing line was a viaduct near 58th and Peoria.

She and the other African-American kids in her South Side neighborhood would sneak through to get a peek at the white kids who lived on the other side.

"During the summertime, we would run back and forth and chase them and let them chase us," she said. "I don't remember anyone ever catching anyone."

A few years later, in Dominic Pacyga's all-white neighborhood more than a mile west, the line was at Ashland Avenue. He found that out when he ventured east of it one day, selling raffle tickets for his high school.

"As I turned the corner, suddenly all the people on the block were

black, and the kids on the block started chasing me," said Pacyga, 52, a history professor at Columbia College. "I was on my bicycle . . . so I turned around and got the hell out of there. And black people that came west of that line sometimes got even worse treatment."

The color line. The great divide. It shifted, but for decades it was a fact of life.

And in some ways, little has changed.

The first Census 2000 numbers show that in Chicago, while the city is more diverse, with a rising Hispanic population, African Americans remain largely segregated in all-black blocks.

Consider how much movement would have to take place for African Americans to be fully integrated across the city. Eight out of 10 blacks would have to get up and move to an area with fewer blacks.

Whites and Hispanics also are segregated, but much less than blacks; two out of three white or Hispanic residents would have to move to be evenly spread.

"There is the good news that the region is far more diverse as it relates to some communities of color," said Pennick, 53, head of the Leadership Council for Metropolitan Open Communities, a fair housing organization. "But for African Americans, the information is not as bright."

In the 1990 census, the number of Chicagoans living on blocks that were at least 90 percent black was 1,359,585, or 49 percent. In 2000, that number is still huge but lower: 1,262,420, or 44 percent.

The Sun-Times found the decline has been faster at the far reaches of segregation: The number of people living on blocks that are 99 percent of one race has declined by a third.

Black political activist Timuel Black sees little change from the days when African Americans were forced to live in a narrow strip of the South Side called the Black Belt.

"It's just expanded physically, geographically, but anyone who drives east to west, or north to south, would drive for miles and miles and would not see anyone but African Americans," unless they were working there, said Black, 82, a professor emeritus at City Colleges. "From my childhood to the present, there has been little breakdown of racial segregation."

**Islands of integration** Chicago's racially mixed neighborhoods are

clearly the exception.

Hyde Park is one. Beverly, on Chicago's Southwest Side, is another, becoming steadily more integrated over the last two decades. Beverly is now about 63 percent white and 32 percent black. It was about 75 percent white a decade ago, but it has managed to avoid white flight.

"It takes a combination of hard work and having open-minded, committed people who see a good thing and know it can be preserved," said Willie Winters, executive director of the Beverly Area Planning Association.

People won't live in an area where they don't feel safe, where properties deteriorate, or the schools aren't strong, Winters said.

But sometimes that is not enough.

The South Side's Chatham neighborhood is the picture of middle-class prosperity. Its residents include doctors, lawyers and college professors. The magnet school is top-notch. Real estate agents estimate average home values at \$175,000. Some reach \$1 million.

Yet, the neighborhood of about 40,000 remains 98 percent black.

"We've been sending black folks to all the other communities. Send some white folks out here," said Dempsey Travis, a historian and longtime Chatham developer. "It certainly has nothing to do with economics and education because people who live here make \$200,000 a year, and some are multimillionaires. It's not culture or money; it's plain racism."

And in some ways, it's history.

Racial isolation is an unfortunate part of Chicago's past, as it is with New York and other big cities, said John Logan, director of the Lewis Mumford Center for Comparative Urban and Regional Research at the University of Albany.

That's not the case with some newer cities, places that have boomed and lack a history of racial polarization.

"Look at Las Vegas--the level of segregation there is very low, and it's dropping," Logan said. "In Chicago, there are generations of ideas behind what it means to be a black neighborhood, a white neighborhood--and people's ideas about the neighborhoods are very well-developed."

**A legacy of separation** Chicago has had black residents since the

beginning. It was founded by an African American, Jean Baptiste Point du Sable, a French-speaking trader, in 1779.

But racial segregation did not become a hallmark of the city until the early 20th century, when the black population boomed during the Great Migration from the South.

The influx ignited racial fears and competition for jobs and housing, with political and business leaders fanning the flames. And residents began drawing lines in their heads--imaginary ones, sure, but enforced by a fist or a two-by-four.

In 1919, Eugene Williams crossed one and lost his life. The black 17-year-old was swimming in Lake Michigan when he drifted past the invisible boundary, at about 27th Street, dividing white and black swimming areas.

A mob of white bathers threw stones, and Williams drowned. It set off one of the worst race riots in the city's history. When it was over, 38 were dead, 537 wounded and more than 1,000 homeless.

"And the race riot really sets the pattern for Chicago," said Pacyga, co-author of *Chicago: City of Neighborhoods*.

White real estate agents introduced restrictive housing covenants that ensured homes would be sold to people of the same race. The color line became as sharp as a knife. Violence was most frequent on the Northwest and Southwest sides.

But the black community kept growing, forcing the lines to move. First it was Wentworth. Then it was the New York Central RR tracks a little farther west. Then Halsted, then Ashland, then Western.

And edging it over were unscrupulous real estate agents who engaged in block busting and panic peddling, making a quick buck off racism and fear. Southwest Side community activist Mary Ceil McManus remembers in the early 1970s when 1,200 homes in about 12 blocks between 63rd and 67th streets just east of Western sold in four years, going from white to black.

"More than 60 real estate firms, all in the little half square area, pushing it," she said. "And we were told they hired black people to walk down the block and frighten people."

McManus was one of the rare white residents promoting diversity back then.

"We knew from talking to people the racial prejudice that was around,"

said McManus, 79, a West Lawn resident and board member of the Southwest Community Congress. "Around 1960, there began to spring up little civic organizations. Their whole purpose was, quote, 'to keep them out.' "

### **Barriers carved in stone**

The hostile white residents got plenty of help from political leaders. When a viaduct or set of railroad tracks was not handy to serve as a border, the city often came up with an alternative. The path of the Dan Ryan Expy. was changed to make it a barrier between white and black areas.

"We had 20 years where the city in fact cooperated in the organized resistance," said Don Rose, a white political consultant with long ties to the civil rights movement. "Redirection of the expressway, through zoning--all kinds of mechanisms, which is the kind of thing that fuels the episodes of small group hostility."

Housing advocate Pennick said African Americans still face discrimination designed to prevent them from moving in, such as landlords refusing to show them apartments. Latinos face problems after they move in, designed more to limit their numbers. It could be limits on the number of children that can live in an apartment, or a zoning change forcing them to remove an extra bedroom. The zoning battles are just as frequent in the suburbs with growing Hispanic populations.

"The color line has varying degrees," Pennick said. "The darker the hue, the more pronounced the discrimination."

But sometimes, the segregation is self-imposed.

### **A black enclave**

Lucille Brown moved into Chatham in 1965, about 10 years after white residents rapidly fled. She stands as an example of the proud people in the neighborhood, black and solidly middle-class.

"It's the choice of the people who live here to keep up their property and to look after each other," she said. "People here are just good citizens."

Brown is living in one of the city's most segregated neighborhoods.

"Don't we have some whites here?" a puzzled Brown asked.

The reality is that many middle-class blacks in Chatham say they want

to live among people of their same race and economic status, even if it means remaining segregated. In some ways, the tactic used by Chatham residents to create such a neighborhood was similar to methods whites had used against them for years.

Black Chatham residents created a monopoly on housing. Generations of families held on to homes, only selling to buyers from their own circles.

"Yes, we held on to homes because at times people didn't have a choice of where they could live," said Andre Coleman, 43, a former Chatham resident whose grandparents still live there. "If you get a nice home, you keep it. That was the thought."

That attitude still persists today.

"Where is there to go?" Coleman asked. "There are still only some places where you feel welcome."

Nine miles from the Loop, Chatham is surrounded by inner-city woes.

"It's not without problems," said Joyce Franklin, a black woman who runs a barber shop. But she says it's not enough to make her leave. "There's no perfect place, and no safe neighborhoods. This one may be safer, nicer, though."

### **A line into the future?**

How much progress has been made across Chicago is an open question.

"The long history of the black-white segregation continues," said Clarence Wood, chairman of the Chicago Commission on Human Relations. "Blacks are still the minority that is most often not welcome."

One problem is the mistaken belief that racism has been conquered, Wood said. Barriers that keep blacks segregated today are just more subtle than before.

"I think we've got to develop a strategic plan of inclusion," he said. "The mayor of Chicago and all the suburban areas should come together and develop a plan for inclusion."

McManus, who has been working toward racial harmony for nearly 40 years on the Southwest Side, said African Americans still are informally steered to black neighborhoods. But she believes the color line is largely a thing of the past, as is the violence.

"I think the difference is the racism is inside people, and they don't really recognize it," she said. "But I know we have come a long way. It is no longer popular to say, 'I'm white, and I want to live only in a white neighborhood, and people should live in a neighborhood of their own people.' It is not politically correct. That is a tremendous stride."

But Black, who is working on a book about three generations of African Americans growing up in the 20th century, titled *Bridges of Memory*, said African Americans still consider some areas unsafe. He points to the 1997 beating of Lenard Clark near Armour Square Park by a gang of white thugs when the 13-year-old rode his bicycle into a park considered white turf.

"So the threat is still with us," Black said. "The color line is very much a reality, unfortunately. As W.E.B. Du Bois said in his book of 1904, 'the problem of the twentieth century is the color line.' And unfortunately, in the 21st century it remains true."

Despite the persistent segregation in most of the city, Pacyga sees hope in the integration of the South Loop, Near West Side and Near South Side.

"I think the future of all of this is a slow erosion of the segregation," he said. "It's a line that edges and moved back and forth for different areas. In the last 20 years, that line is less real. There is much more give and take."

And as for Chicago's reputation for segregation, Pacyga points to Texas, where white supremacists killed James Byrd Jr., a 32-year-old black man, by dragging him from the bumper of a pickup truck in 1998.

"This is a national problem," Pacyga said. "This is an American problem. It is not just Chicago." **Contributing:** *Mark Skertic, Bill Dedman*



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