



FOCUS[®]

MAGAZINE

OVERVIEW OF THE AFRICAN AMERICAN FORUM ON RACE & REGIONALISM

by Deohn Ferris

A broadening coalition is emerging nationwide to address tensions posed by the process of public policy decision making on metropolitan regional growth and economic development. This decision-making process often perpetuates economic and social inequalities and forecloses opportunities for people of color and people with low incomes. Environmentalists, health professionals, planners, developers, and community advocates are coalescing to develop a new sustainable metropolitan growth and equitable development agenda.

— Continued on page 3

BUILDING COMMUNITIES OF OPPORTUNITY THROUGH EQUITABLE INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT

by Angela Glover Blackwell

Hurricane Katrina brought the concept of public infrastructure to the forefront of national consciousness, as the public quickly realized that it was not simply wind and rain that wreaked havoc on New Orleans, but rather planning and public works failure in the form of breached levees that flooded the city. A combination of population growth, the aging of existing systems, and changing requirements for economic development has left the United States with critical infrastructure challenges in the coming decades.

— Continued on page 18

IN THIS ISSUE...

- 1 **Overview of the African American Forum on Race & Regionalism**
- 1 **Building Communities of Opportunity through Equitable Infrastructure Investment**
- 2 **From the President's Desk**
- 4 **Achieving Social and Racial Justice through Equitable Regional Development**
An Interview with Carl Anthony, Ford Foundation Senior Fellow
- 6 **Privileged Places:**
Race, Opportunity, and Uneven Development in Urban America
- 8 **Left Behind by Transportation Apartheid Before and After Disasters Strike**
- 10 **Reasonable Regionalism**
- 16 **The Business of Color:**
Strengthening the Regional Economy
- 20 **Joint Center Updates**

IN TREND LETTER...

- 12 **Economic Report**
Doing Good and Doing Well:
Making the Business Case for Regional Equity and Racial Inclusion
- 14 **Health Report**
Why "Place Matters" in the State of the Union

NEWS NOTE:

AS FOCUS WENT TO PRESS, DIFFERENT VERSIONS OF THE FAIR MINIMUM WAGE ACT OF 2007, A BILL OF CONSIDERABLE INTEREST TO AFRICAN AMERICANS, HAD PASSED IN THE U.S. HOUSE AND U.S. SENATE. BOTH BILLS WOULD RAISE THE FEDERAL MINIMUM WAGE FROM ITS CURRENT LEVEL OF \$5.15/HOUR TO \$7.25 BY 2009. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE HOUSE AND SENATE VERSIONS WILL HAVE TO BE RESOLVED BEFORE THE BILL IS SENT TO THE PRESIDENT. FOR THE JOINT CENTER'S DETAILED ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF THE MINIMUM WAGE LEGISLATION ON AFRICAN AMERICANS, GO TO OUR WEBSITE AT: WWW.JOINTCENTER.ORG.

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

In August 1967, less than a year before his death, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., marked the tenth anniversary of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference by focusing on the theme “*where do we go from here?*”

Such an occasion would have been an appropriate time to highlight the tremendous progress of the recent civil rights struggle, during which African Americans had achieved so much. But Dr. King chose instead to direct our attention to all that remained to be done to alleviate the poverty that was ravaging the black community—the lack of jobs, the lack of decent educational facilities, the lack of economic opportunity, the lack of hope. A national legacy of racism and discrimination could not be eliminated with the simple stroke of a pen. The real struggle, he said, was still in front of us.

Thirty-seven years after the founding of the Joint Center, it is indeed tempting to measure our organization by its successes and its progress. To be sure, the Joint Center's leadership and innovation, as well as its research and technical advice and support, have helped generations of African American leaders blaze trails and break through barriers. The growth in the number of black elected officials in America—from fewer than 1,500 in 1969 to nearly 10,000 today—speaks volumes about the quality and importance of its work. Our cutting-edge research on issues of concern to the black community, from voting rights to economic advancement, has created a legacy that will long endure.

Can we afford to be satisfied with that? Or should we be asking, as Dr. King did, *where do we go from here?*

The challenges are all around us. The fact is that African Americans and other people of color continue to be underrepresented in government and in public policy discussions on matters that affect them the most. Hurricane Katrina tragically exposed the deep, persistent poverty, with its roots in racial discrimination, that afflicts not only the Gulf Coast region but also many other communities across this nation.

I believe that in the middle of every problem there lies opportunity. In that sense, the Joint Center's role in advancing the social and economic conditions of African Americans and other people of color is as critical today as it ever has been. We will keep our eyes firmly fixed on the struggle for equality of opportunity—in access to education, jobs, health care, and the other means by which people create a better life for themselves and their children.

The challenge is complicated by the ongoing transformation in our technology, our culture, and our politics. It is vital that we stay attuned to what is going on and respond creatively to the changing landscape, all the while staying firmly grounded in the values that gave us our birth and nurtured us through our years of development. Our partnership with the African American Forum on Race & Regionalism is one example of our response to developing policy challenges in the context of an evolving landscape. Through this collaboration, we are supporting black elected officials nationwide in the effort to ensure that all communities benefit equally from regional growth in a changing and competitive global economy—a topic that is covered in-depth in this edition of *FOCUS*.

The Joint Center has always been about political empowerment—providing African Americans and other people of color with the information, evidence, and support they need to translate the gains of the civil rights era into opportunity for the future. We have a legacy firmly rooted in issues of economic advancement. Our mandate spans the breadth of national and local policy. The policy solutions to today's problems will require consistency and credibility, independence and flexibility. These are our strengths. We have much to offer. At the same time, we must ensure that the Joint Center re-tools for the information age, improving our ability to act quickly and authoritatively, so that we can continue to fill that critical niche as the reliable source of data and analysis that our leaders need to continue to break through barriers.

It's a daunting challenge, and we have a great deal of work ahead of us. But we will succeed because we will remain faithful to the aims of Eddie Williams, president of the Joint Center from 1972 to 2004, “to be both a center for intellectual discovery and a wellspring of practical political knowledge.”

In the spirit of the magazine that he named and founded, we will *FOCUS* on the task before us.

Ralph B. Everett
President and CEO
Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies



JOINT CENTER FOR POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC STUDIES

FOCUS[®]

MAGAZINE

Volume 35, Issue 2

General Editor & Copy Editor Susanna C. Dilliplane
Design Editor Marco A. White
TrendLetter Researcher Alfred N. Baltimore

President & Chief Executive Officer
Ralph B. Everett
Vice President & Chief Financial Officer
Brenda Watkins Noel
Vice President, Governance and Economic Analysis
Margaret C. Simms
Vice President, Health, Women and Families
Gail C. Christopher
Vice President, Corporate Relations & Strategic Planning
Christine Naylor
Acting Vice President, Communications
Michael R. Wenger

Board of Governors

Elliott S. Hall, Dykema Gossett, Chair
Norma Ketay Asnes, Ketay Asnes Productions, Vice Chair
Joyce London Alexander, District Court of Massachusetts
Larry D. Bailey, LDB Consulting, Treasurer
Andrew F. Brimmer, Brimmer & Company, Inc.
Sanford Cloud, Jr., The Cloud Company, LLC
John W. Franklin, National Museum of African American History and Culture
Roderick D. Gillum, General Motors Corporation
William F. McSweeney
Cynthia G. Marshall, President, AT&T North Carolina
Thelma Wyatt Cummings Moore, Superior Court of Fulton County, Atlanta Judicial Circuit
Charles E. Phillips, Oracle Corporation
Dianne M. Pinderhughes, University of Notre Dame
Jacquelyn C. Shropshire, Momentum Unlimited
Rodney E. Slater, Patton Boggs
Susan L. Taylor, Essence Magazine
Reginald Weaver, National Education Association
Paul R. Webber 3rd, D.C. Superior Court

Members Emeriti: William B. Boyd, James D. Wolfensohn,
Kenneth B. Clark (1914 - 2005)
President Emeritus: Eddie N. Williams

Secretary of the Corporation Alice M. Thompson

FOCUS is published by the Office of Communications and Policy at the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies (JCPES). FOCUS welcomes submissions. E-mail articles to focuseditor@jointcenter.org. Copyright 2007. Opinions expressed in FOCUS are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the staff or governing board of the Joint Center.

Subscriptions: Price U.S. \$15.00 per year. To subscribe, please send a check or money order to: Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies and mail to FOCUS Subscriptions, Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, 1090 Vermont Avenue, Suite 1100, NW, Washington, DC. To purchase back issues or to obtain reprint permissions, contact the Joint Center's Office of Communications at 202-789-3500.

Selected back issues of FOCUS are also available online at the Joint Center's website: www.jointcenter.org. An index to the preceding year's articles is published in the December or January issue.

Printed in the United States of America.

1090 VERMONT AVENUE, NW • SUITE 1100
WASHINGTON, DC 20005

TELEPHONE (202) 789-3500
FACSIMILE (202) 789-6390
E-mail: focuseditor@jointcenter.org

www.jointcenter.org

OVERVIEW OF THE AFRICAN AMERICAN

by Deohn Ferris
(continued from front cover)

FORUM ON RACE & REGIONALISM

For African Americans, the central challenge is creating sustainable metropolitan communities through sound decisions that respect the linkages between community health and economic prosperity, civil rights, environmental quality, accessible transportation, and equitable land use and development. The Ford Foundation's Community and Resource Development Program initiated the African American Forum on Race & Regionalism to strengthen African American voices in policy dialogues, development planning, and projects in regions around the nation and to demonstrate how regional equity strategies can be deployed to overcome these barriers to opportunity for communities of color and low-income communities.

Despite the negative consequences of sprawl in African American communities, the voices and views of African Americans on sustainability, land use, and equity largely are not factored into decisions by policymakers and other decision makers. African American activists and scholars are helping to re-define the current growth and development paradigm in terms relevant to the revitalization of black metropolitan communities that have suffered from sprawl-driven inequities, long-term public and private sector disinvestments, and environmental degradation.

Spearheaded by Carl Anthony, while he served as program officer at the Ford Foundation, the project is guided by three co-chairs and directed by its secretariat, the Sustainable Community Development Group, Inc., a not-for-profit corporation whose mission is to advance metropolitan sustainability, smart growth, and environmental justice. The three co-chairs are dynamic leaders in the field: Robert Bullard, director of the Environmental Justice Resource Center at Clark Atlanta University; John A. Powell, director of the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity at Ohio State University; and Angela Glover Blackwell, founder and CEO of PolicyLink.

The principal objective of the African American Forum on Race & Regionalism is to enhance the focus on equitable development by ensuring that the history and contributions of African Americans are recognized and integrated, that anti-sprawl solutions are crafted and implemented in

African American communities in ways that are responsive to their needs, and that problem-solving approaches protect civil rights and the environment.

The Forum incorporates a breadth of perspectives critical to forging effective approaches and tactics. It provides a place for interdisciplinary dialogue. We concentrate on ensuring that the voices and views of African Americans are joined with other stakeholders and that everyone shares the benefits and opportunities of investments and community development.

The African American Forum on Race & Regionalism works in partnership with organizations whose mission is social justice and the advancement of opportunity for all Americans, especially the disenfranchised.

The African American Forum on Race & Regionalism was initiated to strengthen African American voices in policy dialogues, development planning, and projects in regions around the nation and to demonstrate how regional equity strategies can be deployed to overcome barriers to opportunity for communities of color and low-income communities.

Through partnerships, we target educating groups and constituencies whose influence can create positive change. Our website is a means through which African Americans and other stakeholders can collaborate and strategize.

Partnerships and coalitions are vital to this work, and the Forum capitalizes on them. In 2004, the Forum teamed with the Detroit Chapter of the NAACP, the largest chapter in the nation, to convene a workshop at the NAACP annual convention. Last year, we teamed with MOSES (Metropolitan Organizing Strategy Enabling Strength) and the Detroit Council of Baptist Pastors, a powerful group of African American ministers, to convene equitable development workshops with congregants, elected officials, and representatives of key governmental agencies.

Our project with the Presidents' Council in Cleveland, Ohio is a groundbreaking research and public policy initiative. It is designed to proactively place the views of African Americans and data collected about their communities into public and private sector decision-making processes regarding growth in the region. The Presidents'

Council is comprised of community leaders in the Cleveland region, including business owners, elected officials, academicians, educators, housing experts, and civil rights advocates. The Forum's study and policy recommendations incorporate socio-historical, economic, housing, employment, transportation, minority business development, environmental, and education factors that affect the African American community and the potential for equity-based decisions in the region.

Presently, we are working with the nation's leading black think tank, the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, to engage and inform black elected officials across the nation about metropolitan sustainability and the inequalities that arise from the

interrelationship of race, land use, the environment, urban disinvestments, and sprawl. This work includes the convening of a national briefing on these issues to engage and inform black elected officials, as well as collaboration on this special issue of *FOCUS Magazine*, through which the Forum will reach thousands of influential readers, both African Americans and other stakeholders.

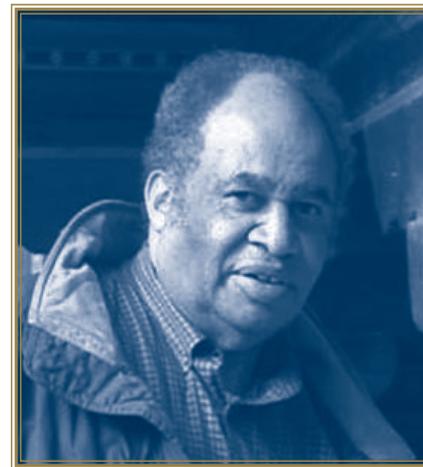
Forging strategic alliances and working in multicultural coalitions are critical pathways to progress. The future of African Americans is linked with other communities. We have valuable insights and experiences to share, as we continue working to ensure access in our communities to the fundamental economic and social opportunities—such as high quality education, a healthy environment, jobs, affordable housing, transportation, and voting rights—that can help make quality of life a reality for everyone. □

Deohn Ferris is president of the Sustainable Community Development Group, Inc. For more information on the African American Forum on Race & Regionalism, go to <http://www.aafrr.org> or email info@gerinc.com.

ACHIEVING SOCIAL AND RACIAL JUSTICE THROUGH EQUITABLE REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

An Interview with Carl Anthony, Ford Foundation Senior Fellow

Carl Anthony is the Ford Foundation Senior Fellow at U.C. Berkeley, Department of Geography. Prior to serving in this role, he was acting director of the Foundation's Community and Resource Unit and was responsible for its Sustainable Metropolitan Communities Initiative. The Sustainable Metropolitan Communities Initiative of the Ford Foundation seeks to influence patterns of metropolitan development to conserve natural resources and reduce concentrated poverty. The initiative advances social equity as a key component of the "smart growth" metropolitan agenda, supports metropolitan organizing, enables advocates from disadvantaged communities to participate in and lead the debate, promotes mixed-income neighborhoods throughout metropolitan regions, and supports policies, incentives, models, and demonstration projects that meet these objectives.



Focus: *Mr. Anthony, what is the origin of the Ford Foundation's interest in the topic of regional equity and smart growth?*

Mr. Anthony: It goes back to a long commitment that the Ford Foundation has had. During the 1960s, the Foundation made a very substantial investment in community development corporations. This grew out of an effort in Brooklyn that was led in part by Senator (Robert) Kennedy and former president of the Ford Foundation, Frank Thomas. They created the Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation, one of the first community development corporations in the nation.

This tradition has continued many years under the leadership of Foundation president, Susan Berresford. For example, the Foundation has been very much involved in supporting the environmental justice movement. As the public began to respond to environmental issues framed by established environmental groups like the Sierra Club, most people were unaware that the negative impacts of society's environmental policies and practices were being felt most sharply by vulnerable populations like communities of color. To build public awareness, grantees of the Ford Foundation were able to highlight the disproportionate siting of hazardous waste facilities in communities of color. They showed that the associated health impacts of environmental toxins were the consequences of inequitable patterns of metropolitan development.

A similar dynamic—ignoring issues of racial justice—is happening with efforts to achieve "smart growth." The movement

for regional equity embraces "smart growth." But we challenge everyone to see that if you don't address fairness in new development, it's not smart. To be effective, racial justice must be built into projects at the neighborhood, city, and metropolitan regional scales. We call this process equitable development.

Focus: *Can you define the concept of regional equity?*

Mr. Anthony: The concept of regional equity is a fairly simple idea: there needs to be fairness in the distribution and benefits of regional development for individuals, neighborhoods, and municipalities, particularly whenever such development receives public subsidies of any kind. What we saw in the 1970s was, as African Americans began to move into some elements of political power in our cities, the white population packed up and left and took opportunities and public subsidies with them. Public investment in suburban development left a big hole within the neighborhoods where people of color live. So the idea of regional equity is fairness in the distribution of public subsidies, fairness in the building of neighborhoods, and access to opportunity for every community throughout the metropolitan region.

Focus: *In your view, what are the key issues that affect regional equity?*

Mr. Anthony: One of the big issues is widespread concentration of poverty. People who are growing up in neighborhoods where over 40 percent of the population is

below the poverty line face huge challenges in terms of their capacity to enjoy the fruits of our whole economy. As long as you have neighborhoods that are predominantly poor people, then you have problems with public services, a tax base, problems that have to do with the segregation of schools. So, in a sense, one of the challenges is to re-envision the whole metropolitan region in ways that promote social and racial justice.

Focus: *Some issues are regional, while others are under local authority. How do you address local issues within a regional agenda?*

Mr. Anthony: One of the new tools emerging to deal with that is organizing networks. For example, the Ford Foundation has been working with the Gamaliel Foundation, an organizing network with affiliates in 21 states. They have an initiative called the African American Leadership Commission, which is a program driven by the ministers in African American congregations in these 21 states. The basic idea is to build new organizational and political power that can engage communities of color as well as their suburban counterparts.

An example of Gamaliel organizing is a group in Detroit called MOSES, which stands for Metropolitan Organizing Strategy Enabling Strength. They have built safe zones around the churches in the neighborhoods that have huge problems with crime. They have redirected public investment in transportation from a program that was focused on expanding the highways—promoting more

abandonment of Detroit—to a program that focuses on fix-it-first repair of the places where infrastructure already exists. They have implemented a reverse commute program that enables people to connect to employment opportunities throughout the metropolitan region.

Focus: *The demographic diversity of the population is increasing dramatically. To what degree does it affect efforts to achieve regional equity?*

Mr. Anthony: We need to map out a strategy that is fair in terms of civil rights and opportunities for immigrants. But we also need to invest in the African American population that has lived under oppressive conditions in North America for many generations. In fact, the new multiracial immigration from non-European countries is itself a consequence of such investment, a direct result of the success of the civil rights movement led by African Americans 30 years ago. By thinking about our regions in holistic ways, and by building a political base and political power at the metropolitan regional level, we have a chance to invent new solutions in the 21st century that benefit everybody.

Focus: *The Joint Center's primary constituency is black elected officials at every level of government. What would you say to them about what they need to do at the state and municipal level?*

Mr. Anthony: African American elected officials must consolidate their community base and continue to advance a bipartisan approach to the most progressive vision for the whole society. This means learning from their constituents about new realities they face and helping their communities adapt to the 21st century environment and economy. There's a new book, called *Double Trouble*, written by Professor J. Phillip Thompson about Mayor David Dinkins' experiences as an African American mayor of a major urban place. Thompson argues that African American elected officials get caught in a double bind because once they move into that role, they have to speak to—and tend to—their middle-class white constituencies. Then they lose their political base because they are not able to address the needs of their primary constituency—the African American core.

One of the most important strategies for resolving this conflict is mobilizing and educating African American constituencies to address the major shifts in our communities. For example, there is the huge class gap between middle-class and poorer African Americans. Both of these constituencies need to be brought into alignment around a common agenda. How can the gains of the African American middle class be used to promote a more equitable society? We think the metropolitan regional agenda is one that can do that, so everyone can have access to opportunity.

African American elected officials from these marginalized places, whether they are urban, suburban, or rural, should think about what it would mean to build a national network of African American elected officials to address many of the problems that they face.

Focus: *Many black elected officials have jurisdictions that lack capacity or regional reach—for example, rural jurisdictions that are fairly isolated or small suburban jurisdictions. What would you say to them about how to work within a regional context when their political power is limited to one of these disadvantaged areas?*

Mr. Anthony: That argues for building a national network around this kind of agenda. African American elected officials from these marginalized places, whether they are urban, suburban, or rural, should think about what it would mean to build a national network of African American elected officials to address many of the problems that they face. One of the groups that we work with has been looking at rural jurisdictions that are not able to get sewage and lighting and paving to African Americans who live in unincorporated

areas because the more urbanized areas are dominated by a white middle class that is not paying much attention to, or is even working against, the interests of the rural populations. The opportunity that we have as African Americans to build a national conversation among our elected officials in these kinds of rural places is really important.

Focus: *What would success look like for this effort five, ten, or twenty years from now? What is your vision for success down the road?*

Mr. Anthony: One measure of success would be African Americans beginning to think and act more systematically in ways that provide leadership for the whole society while also addressing issues our communities face. This is where the metropolitan approach makes sense. We can begin to build the kind of success that we're talking about if we ask, how can we help make our metropolitan regions more competitive, more environmentally sustainable, while making them more inclusive? And then within that context, how can we create opportunities for housing and jobs and education for our neighborhoods that have been places of concentrated poverty?

A really important example of this is work that the African American Forum on Race & Regionalism has undertaken in collaboration with the mayor of Cleveland, Ohio, and the Presidents' Council, which is a leadership council of African American business people and other leaders in Cleveland. Working closely with the mayor, this initiative has created a proactive agenda for the region surrounding Cleveland that benefits the African American people who live in Cleveland. One part of the agenda is the creation of a cabinet-level authority within the mayor's office, which would be the office of regional development, where the mayor, instead of reacting negatively to regional activity that's being undertaken by populations in the smaller suburban jurisdictions, would begin to move into a position of leadership in the region so that the needs of the African American community are really met. That is an excellent example of laying the groundwork for success five years from now.

Focus: *Thank you very much.*

PRIVILEGED PLACES: RACE, OPPORTUNITY, AND UNEVEN DEVELOPMENT IN URBAN AMERICA



By Gregory D. Squires and
Charis E. Kubrin

When 10-year-old Lafayette Rivers described his hopes in Alex Kotlowitz's award-winning book, *There Are No Children Here*, he began, "If I grow up, I'd like to be a bus driver." Rivers lived in a West Side Chicago public housing complex. Children growing up in more privileged neighborhoods often ponder what they will do when they grow up, not *if* they will grow up. The fact that place and race exert such a profound impact on one's future, or whether there even will be a future, violates accepted notions of equal opportunity and fair play. The costs are not borne by the Lafayette Rivers of the world alone. They are inflicted upon every community whose security and well-being are threatened.

Real estate mantra tells us that three factors determine the market value of a home: location, location, and location. The same could be said about the factors that determine the good life and people's access to it in metropolitan America. Place matters. Access to decent housing, safe neighborhoods, good schools, useful contacts, and other benefits is largely influenced by the community in which one is born, raised, and resides. Individual initiative, intelligence, experience, and all the elements of human capital are obviously important. But understanding the opportunity structure in the United States today requires complementing what we know about individual characteristics with what we are learning about place. With that knowledge, new alliances can be built to support (or advocate for) creative policies that change the role of place into a positive force for equal opportunity.

Race and Uneven Development

Dominant features of metropolitan development in the post-World War II years are sprawl, concentrated poverty, and segregation—three critical underpinnings of the uneven development of place and privilege.

While there is no universal agreement on a definition of sprawl, there is at least a rough consensus that it is a pattern of

development associated with outward expansion, low-density housing and commercial development, fragmentation of planning among multiple municipalities with large fiscal disparities among them, auto-dependent transport, and segregated land use patterns.

Racial disparities between cities and suburbs, and racial segregation in general, persist in metropolitan areas. Cities are disproportionately non-white, with over 52 percent of blacks and 21 percent of whites residing in central-city neighborhoods; suburbs are disproportionately white, where 57 percent of whites and just 36 percent of blacks reside. Segregation persists between blacks and whites, while Hispanic/white and Asian/white segregation has increased in recent years. The typical white resident of a metropolitan area resides in a neighborhood that is 80 percent white, seven percent black, eight percent Hispanic, and four percent Asian. A typical black person lives in a neighborhood that is 33 percent white, 51 percent black, 11 percent Hispanic, and three percent Asian. And a typical Hispanic resident lives in a community that is 36 percent white, 11 percent black, 45 percent Hispanic, and six percent Asian. Racial segregation, in conjunction with concentration of poverty and growing economic inequality, results in increasing isolation of poor minority households.

Spatial and Racial Inequality

Sprawl, concentrated poverty, and racial segregation tend to concentrate a host of problems and privileges in different neighborhoods and among different racial groups. These "concentration effects" shape opportunities and lifestyles throughout the life cycle and across generations. Research has demonstrated links between neighborhood characteristics (like poverty and inequality) and teenage pregnancy, high school dropout rates, and delinquent behavior. Infant mortality rates, quality of schools, employment opportunities, life expectancy, and more are affected by where one is born, lives, works, and plays.

Spatial and racial inequalities are directly associated with access to factors associated

with the good life—health, education, and employment. Access to clean air and water, exposure to lead paint, high rates of stress and obesity, poor diet, social isolation, and proximity to hospitals and other medical facilities all vary by neighborhood and contribute to long-established disparities in health. For example, the affluent and predominantly white D.C. suburb of Bethesda, Maryland, has one pediatrician for every 400 children, while the poor and predominantly black neighborhoods in the District's southeast side have one pediatrician for every 3,700 children.

If education is to be "the great equalizer of the conditions of men—the balance wheel of the social machinery," as the Massachusetts educator Horace Mann anticipated over 150 years ago, that day has yet to arrive. After two decades of progress in desegregating the nation's schools, it appears that progress may have come to a halt or perhaps may even have been reversed. In 2000, 40 percent of black students attended schools that were 90-100 percent black, compared with 32 percent of black students who attended such schools in 1988. The share of Hispanic students attending schools that were 90-100 percent minority grew from 23 percent during the late 1960s to 37 percent in 2000. Continuing disparities result in fewer educational resources, less qualified teachers and higher teacher turnover and, ultimately, lower educational achievement in low-income and minority communities.

If there is one single factor that is most critical for determining access to the good life, it might be employment. Lower-income residents generally reside in or near central cities, while job growth has been greater in outlying suburban communities. Those most in need of employment, therefore, find it not only more difficult to learn about available jobs, but also more expensive to get to those jobs. As of 2000, no racial group was more physically isolated from jobs than blacks.

A depressing feature of these developments is that many of these racial differences reflect policy decisions that, if not designed expressly to create disparate outcomes, have contributed to them nonetheless. On a

positive note, if policy helped create these problems, it can help ameliorate them.

Policy Matters

It has been argued that individuals or households make voluntary choices, based on their financial capacity, in selecting their communities. But many urban scholars have noted the role of public policies and institutionalized private practices (such as tax policy, transport patterns, and land use planning) that serve as barriers to individual choice in housing markets and as contributors to spatial inequality in metropolitan areas.

Most households select their neighborhoods on the basis of the services, jobs, cultural facilities, and other amenities that are available within the constraints of their budgets. Yet such decision making is framed and limited by a range of structural constraints. Policies and practices often have, by design, exclusionary implications that limit opportunities, particularly for low-income households and people of color. Individuals exercise choice, but those decisions do not reflect what is normally understood as voluntary choice.

The federal government's underwriting rules for Federal Housing Administration and other federal mortgage insurance products and enforcement of racially restrictive covenants by the courts, along with overt redlining practices by mortgage lenders and racial steering by real estate agents, virtually guaranteed the patterns of racial segregation that were commonplace by the 1950s. Concentration of public housing in central-city high-rise complexes reinforced the patterns of economic and racial segregation that persist today. Exclusionary zoning ordinances of most suburban municipalities that created minimum lot size and maximum density requirements for housing developments (often prohibiting construction of multifamily housing) complemented federal policy.

Government policy has also encouraged the flight of businesses and jobs from cities to surrounding suburban communities and beyond. Financial incentives including infrastructure investments, tax abatements, and depreciation allowances favoring new equipment over reinvestment in existing facilities all have contributed to the deindustrialization and disinvestment of urban communities.

Place, Privilege, and Policy

One of the more unfortunate debates in recent years has centered on whether universal or race-specific remedies are more appropriate for addressing the issues of race and urban poverty. The primary attraction of the universal approaches, according to its proponents, is pragmatism. By recognizing the many common interests of poor and working class households of any color, it is argued, the most significant barriers confronting these groups can be addressed with policy initiatives and other actions that do not ignite the hostility often associated with race-based proposals.

Many constituencies that traditionally find themselves at odds with each other can find common ground on a range of policies designed to combat sprawl, concentrated poverty, and segregation. Coalitions that cut across interest groups and racial groups are essential.

In response, it is argued that while the quality of life for racial minorities has improved over the years, such approaches simply do not recognize the extent to which race and racism continue to shape the opportunity structure in the United States. Colorblindness is often a euphemism for what amounts to a retreat on race and the preservation of white privilege in its many forms.

In reality, both approaches are required if the underlying patterns of privilege are to be altered.

Uncommon Allies

Many constituencies that traditionally find themselves at odds with each other can

find common ground on a range of policies designed to combat sprawl, concentrated poverty, and segregation. Identifying and nurturing such political coalitions is perhaps the key political challenge. Coalitions that cut across interest groups and racial groups are essential.

Many suburban employers are unable to find the workers they need, in part because of the high cost of housing in their local communities. Often there are local developers who would like to build affordable housing and lenders who are willing to finance it, but local zoning prohibits such construction. These interests could join with anti-poverty groups and affordable housing advocates to challenge the traditional exclusionary suburban zoning ordinances.

Similarly, school choice and fair housing groups—two groups that rarely ally—might recognize that severing the link between the neighborhood in which a family lives and the school that children must attend may well reduce homebuyers' concerns with neighborhood racial composition. This would reduce one barrier to both housing and school desegregation, while giving students more schooling options.

In many cities, developers, lenders, community development corporations, environmental groups, local governments, and others are coming together to sponsor transit-oriented development. Such developments create new jobs for working families in locations that are accessible by public transportation, reducing traffic congestion, infrastructure costs, and other disamenities.

This list is hardly meant to be exhaustive. The point is simply to show that there are some creative political alliances that can exercise a positive impact on some longstanding, and seemingly intractable, problems. If policy is largely responsible for getting us where we are today, then policy can help us pursue a different path toward severing the links among race, place, and privilege tomorrow. □

Gregory D. Squires is a professor of sociology and chair of the Department of Sociology at The George Washington University. Charis E. Kubrin is an associate professor of sociology at The George Washington University and is coeditor of Crime and Society. This article is based on their book, Privileged Places: Race, Residence, and the Structure of Opportunity, recently published by Lynne Rienner, and is adapted from a longer article in the Fall 2006 issue of Shelterforce magazine, available at shelterforce.org.

TRANSPORTATION APARTHEID

LEFT BEHIND BY TRANSPORTATION APARTHEID BEFORE AND AFTER DISASTERS STRIKE

By Robert D. Bullard

Transportation serves as a key component in addressing poverty, unemployment, and equal opportunity goals by ensuring access to education, health care, and other public services. Transportation equity is consistent with the goals of the larger civil rights movement and the emerging regional equity movement.

American society is largely divided between individuals with cars and those without cars. The private automobile is still the most dominant travel mode of every segment of the American population, including the poor and people of color. Clearly, private automobiles provide enormous employment access advantages to their owners. Having a car can also mean the difference between being trapped and escaping natural and man-made disasters.

According to the 2001 National Household Travel Survey (NHTS), which was released in 2003, 87.6 percent of whites, 83.1 percent of Asians and Hispanics, and 78.9 percent of blacks rely on private cars to get around. Nationally, only seven percent of white households do not own a car, compared to 24 percent of African American households, 17 percent of Latino households, and 13 percent of Asian American households.

Dismantling Transportation Apartheid

For more than a century, African Americans have struggled to end apartheid on buses, trains, and highways. This form of

racial discrimination was codified in 1896 by *Plessy v. Ferguson*, a U.S. Supreme Court decision that upheld Louisiana's segregated "white" and "colored" seating on railroad cars, ushering in the infamous doctrine of "separate but equal."

The modern civil rights movement has its roots in transportation. In 1955, more than a half a century after *Plessy vs. Ferguson* relegated blacks to the back of the bus, Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat at the front of a Montgomery city bus to a white man. In so doing, Parks ignited the modern civil rights movement. Parks, who passed away in 2005, would have had a difficult time sitting on the front or back of a Montgomery bus in 2000, since the city dismantled its public bus system—which served mostly blacks and poor people. The transit cuts were made at the same time that federal tax dollars boosted the construction of the region's extensive suburban highways.

Over time, sprawl-driven development has aided and abetted many black neighborhoods in becoming "opportunity-poor" disaster areas. In 2000, no other group in the U.S. was more physically isolated from jobs than blacks.

Many of the nation's regional transportation systems are "regional" in name only—with a good number of "separate and unequal" urban and suburban transit systems built along race and class lines. The ten-county Atlanta metropolitan area typifies a region struggling to get its roadway and transit balancing act together. The Metropolitan Atlanta Regional Transit Authority (MARTA) serves just two counties, Fulton and DeKalb Counties, and the city of Atlanta.

Race has literally stopped regional transit in its tracks. The outlying suburban counties of Cobb, Gwinnett, and Clayton opted out of MARTA and created their own "separate" bus systems. For many white suburbanites, MARTA is jokingly referred to as "Moving Africans Rapidly Through Atlanta" and they want no part of it. (Indeed, a recent rider survey revealed that 78 percent of MARTA's rail and bus riders are African American and other people of color.) MARTA is the nation's eighth-largest transit system and the only one in the country that does not receive any state earmarked funds. In contrast, the Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority (MBTA), the nation's oldest and sixth-largest transit system, gets 20 percent of the state's five cent sales tax, or about \$680 million a year.

In Louisiana, New Orleans and Jefferson Parish also run separate bus systems. Passengers on the New Orleans Rapid Transit Authority (NORTA) and Jefferson Transit are forced to switch buses at the parish line. Even Hurricane Katrina floodwaters did not wash away the stubborn cultural divide that separates New Orleans from its suburbs.

In November 2006, New Orleans and Jefferson Parish councils met to try to end the longtime regional transportation roadblock and bring the fractured city and suburban bus system in sync. The two jurisdictions had a chance to combine forces a year after Katrina, when Jefferson Parish awarded a three-year contract for management of its bus system. NORTA made a bid for the job, but Jefferson Parish chose a private Illinois company that offered a better deal.

Left Behind by Suburban Sprawl

As jobs and opportunity flee to the distant suburbs, where public transit is inadequate or nonexistent, persons without cars are literally left by the side of the road. Suburban sprawl is widening the economic gap between the "haves" and "have-nots." Over time, sprawl-driven development has aided and abetted many black neighborhoods in becoming "opportunity-poor" disaster areas. In 2000, no other group in the U.S.

was more physically isolated from jobs than blacks. More than 50 percent of blacks would have to relocate to achieve an even distribution of blacks relative to jobs; the comparable figures for whites are 20 to 24 percentage points lower.

Suburbs now contain the majority of office space in many of the country's top metropolitan office markets. In 1979, 74 percent of office space was found in central cities and only 26 percent was found in suburbs. By 1999, the central city share of office space decreased to 58 percent, while the suburban share grew to 42 percent.

Detroit leads the nation in suburban "office sprawl." In 2000, the suburban share of the metropolitan office space stood at 69.5 percent in Detroit, 65.8 percent in Atlanta, 57.7 percent in Washington, D.C., 57.4 percent in Miami, and 55.2 percent in Philadelphia. Getting to many job-rich suburbs without a car is next to impossible.

Stranded by Natural and Man-Made Disasters

Cars are also an essential part of emergency evacuation plans. Disaster evacuation plans across the nation assume that people own cars. Nearly 11 million households in the U.S. lack vehicles, or more than 28 million Americans who would have difficulty evacuating their area in the event of an emergency.

In 1997, to encourage better disaster planning, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) launched Project Impact, a pilot program that provided funding for communities to, among other things, assess their vulnerable populations and make arrangements to get people without transportation to safety. The program reached 250 communities and proved quite effective. However, the Bush administration ended the program in 2001, and funds once earmarked for disaster preparation were shifted away.

Hurricane Katrina demonstrated to the world the race and class disparities of who can escape a disaster by car. On August 28, 2005, Mayor Ray Nagin ordered New Orleans' first-ever mandatory evacuation since the city was founded in 1718. Emergency plans were particularly

insufficient with regard to evacuation for the car-less and "special needs" populations—individuals who cannot simply jump into their cars and drive away. At least 100,000 New Orleans residents—and more than one-third of New Orleans' African American residents—did not have cars to evacuate in case of a major storm. Over 15 percent of the city's residents relied on public transportation as their primary mode of travel.

According to a report published by United for a Fair Economy, *Stalling the Dream: Cars, Race and Hurricane Evacuation*, New Orleans

Katrina exposed a major weakness in mass evacuation plans, shining the national spotlight on the heightened vulnerability of people without cars—a population that faces transportation challenges in everyday life—and the need for comprehensive regional compacts to address mobility needs of all residents before and after disasters.

had only one-quarter the number of buses that would have been needed to evacuate all car-less residents. The evacuation plan for Katrina worked relatively well for people with cars, but failed to serve people who depend on public transit. This problem is not unique to New Orleans.

Having regional transportation plans and emergency evacuation compacts in place before disasters strike makes good sense. Regional compacts are agreements negotiated among public, private, and civic interests to address tough challenges that cut across regions and cannot be addressed by any single jurisdiction *successfully*. Regional compacts have been negotiated in some

places to address transportation and related air and water quality challenges, as well as growth and related environmental and equity challenges. Such compacts should also be used to address flaws in evacuation planning. Unfortunately, instead of cooperating, many suburbs actually compete with their central cities for transportation, housing, and development dollars—thereby increasing regional fragmentation.

After more than eighty percent of New Orleans flooded after the levee breach, most of the city's 500 transit and school buses were without drivers. About 190 NORTA buses were lost to flooding, and most of the NORTA employees were dispersed across the country and many were made homeless. Sixteen months after the storm, less than half of all New Orleans bus and streetcar routes were back up and running and only 17 percent of the buses were in use.

Conclusion

Clearly, private car ownership increases mobility (and, in turn, employment opportunities) in normal times as well as in times of disaster. Boosting African American car ownership rates would thus narrow inter-racial employment gaps, as well as enhance their ability to evacuate during natural and man-made disasters.

Katrina exposed a major weakness in mass evacuation plans, shining the national spotlight on the heightened vulnerability of people without cars—a population that faces transportation challenges in everyday life—and the need for comprehensive regional compacts to address mobility needs of all residents before and after disasters. Such regional decision making on critical transportation issues can help give all communities the resources to assure vulnerable residents equal access to jobs, education, health care, and other public services during normal times, as well as equal opportunity to evacuate with the rest of the population when disaster strikes. □

Robert D. Bullard (rbullard@cau.edu) is the director of the Environmental Justice Resource Center at Clark Atlanta University. For more information on transportation equity and disaster response, go to www.ejrc.cau.edu.

REASONABLE REGIONALISM

By John A. Powell
and
Reverend Otis Moss Jr.

Business leaders, local government officials, and concerned community groups have begun to discuss “regionalism” as a means of working together to respond to a global economy that threatens to leave entire regions and their people behind. Different takes on regionalism emerge from these conversations. Advocates for an efficiency-based regionalism focus on the benefits of local municipal cooperation and cost savings. For example, people recognize that it does not make sense to raise revenue for three separate fire departments when one efficient, well-equipped department could do a much better job at a significantly lower cost. Regional efficiency is important, but this approach is at best neutral toward social fairness and equity.

“Reasonable regionalism” goes beyond efficiency and fiscal prudence to include equity, justice, excellence, and the celebration and appreciation of ethnicity and diversity. When extreme inequity is built into our regional structures and policies, there is likely to be a misuse of limited municipal resources and, more importantly, a waste of human potential. The failure to support and grow our most important resource in a global economy—each other—is both morally and economically unreasonable. This lack of investment not only harms the disfavored, who likely reside in the urban and suburban core, but diminishes the vitality and sustainability of the entire region. For example, the disparities in educational attainment that exist in many metropolitan regions disadvantage the area’s competitiveness in the global skill-based economy, where educated labor is one of the primary indicators of an economically healthy region. Therefore, a reasonable regionalism that stresses an equitable investment in all our children, workers, and neighborhoods could have transformative social and economic impacts.

This approach requires leadership from the local to the national level. These leaders should initiate and support policies that enhance a regional agenda through a commitment to social justice. The faith community, which can be either a uniting

or a divisive force in the regionalism debate, should play a significant role in providing moral energy, conscience, and vision to help create a regionalism that is just, humane, and fair. Other members of the private sector, working with those in government, can also provide strong leadership in pursuing a regional approach that benefits all communities. For example, the “Communities of Opportunity” framework, developed by the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, is a model that reflects reasonable regionalism’s basic tenets of intentional inclusion, diversity, equity, and equal access. The Kirwan Institute recently released a report, entitled *Communities of Opportunity: A Framework for a More Equitable and Sustainable Future for All*, that summarizes its exemplary work using this model. Excerpts of this report follow:

The “Communities of Opportunity” model advocates for a fair investment in all of a region’s people and neighborhoods—to improve the life outcomes of all citizens, and to improve the health of the entire region. The Communities of Opportunity framework is inherently spatial. It recognizes that inequality has a geographic footprint, and that maps can visually track the history and presence of discriminatory and exclusionary policies that spatially segregate people. Schools, doctors, jobs and the like are unequally geographically distributed across a region, often clustered in areas of “high” and “low” opportunity neighborhoods. To address the need for equitable opportunity and improved living conditions for all residents, we need to assess the geographic differences in resources and opportunities across a region to make informed, affirmative interventions into failures and gaps in “free market” opportunities. In order to direct investment into under-resourced and struggling areas, and in order to proactively connect people to jobs, stable housing, and good schools for their children, we need to be able to quantitatively model opportunities throughout our regions. Our “Communities of Opportunity” model utilizes state-of-the-art geographic information systems (GIS)

and extensive data sets to inform regional development by analyzing the distribution of opportunity in our metropolitan areas. This “opportunity mapping” has already been completed for many metropolitan areas and used by advocates to further fair housing and community development goals...

Bringing Opportunities Back into Neglected Neighborhoods

The Communities of Opportunity model advocates for targeted strategic interventions in low-opportunity areas to redevelop critical opportunity structures for urban residents. Some of the strategies to bring opportunity back to urban communities include:

- Supporting anchor institutions, such as public universities, museums, and hospitals, in existing urban neighborhoods
- Supporting equitable investment in public infrastructure for urban neighborhoods
- Leveraging public investment to attract private investment to areas of low growth
- Developing high-performing magnet schools to attract a diverse urban constituency
- Aggressively targeting the redevelopment of vacant property and brownfield areas
- Supporting homeownership and mixed income housing initiatives
- Supporting wealth creation and asset building for residents in low-opportunity areas
- Utilizing community benefits agreements to ensure that existing residents have fair access to emerging opportunities

The model is adaptable to the current reshaping of our urban areas. Gentrification can threaten access to opportunity for low-income families who are displaced or excluded from new opportunities. The Communities of Opportunity model encourages the preservation of affordable housing in revitalizing areas, similar to the goal of including inclusionary housing in high-opportunity suburban communities. The model avoids locating additional subsidized housing in declining inner suburbs; it identifies these areas for targeted redevelopment as well.

Affirmatively Connecting People to Opportunity through Housing Mobility

Housing, in particular its location, is the primary mechanism for accessing opportunity in our society. Where you live is more important than what you live in. Housing location determines the quality of local public services, such as schools, the degree of access to employment and transportation, and the degree of public safety. Often this underlying reality is made evident in housing values, so where you live also determines how much wealth you can build through homeownership.

One of the core goals of the Communities of Opportunity model is to affirmatively connect low-income families to opportunity through a structured choice program based on both housing mobility and revitalization. Currently, most affordable housing in our metropolitan regions is disconnected from opportunity. Federal housing programs and exclusionary land use policies have worked to concentrate affordable housing in segregated, opportunity-poor communities. This is most evident in subsidized housing policies. Historically, subsidized housing was deliberately placed in racially segregated communities. Contemporary subsidized housing policies have continued this trend, locating the majority of new units in impoverished and segregated central city neighborhoods...

More equitable housing policies have been shown to effectively connect more low-income families to areas of opportunity. For example, inclusionary zoning mandates the inclusion of affordable housing in large housing developments. Hundreds of inclusionary zoning programs are in place throughout the nation, with Montgomery County, MD as the most prominent example. These mandates counteract the unnatural barriers placed on the market for affordable housing by exclusionary housing policies such as large-lot zoning. In addition to inclusionary zoning, other housing policies can help counteract exclusion in the housing market, including: regional fair share housing policies, equitable use of housing trust fund developments, educating realtors on racial steering, enforcing fair housing laws (to stop predatory lending and realtor discrimination), and targeted use of subsidized housing resources to areas of opportunity...

Communities of Opportunity in Action

The Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity has worked with many constituencies who are using the Communities of Opportunity framework to promote social justice, emphasize interconnectedness, and create healthier metropolitan regions. The following are some examples of recent initiatives...

Vacant Property in Detroit: Bringing Opportunity Back to Detroit's Inner City

Abandoned properties and vacant land are significant impediments to opportunity for neighborhoods. Vacant properties reduce property values in surrounding areas, depress property tax revenues, and create significant public safety hazards. In response, a land bank can be established to expedite the reclamation and redevelopment of land. A land bank generally involves public acquisition of abandoned property; the land is then transferred to a nonprofit third party for redevelopment. Land banks attempt to unlock the potential value of abandoned properties and sites, with the goal of returning them to productive use. The Kirwan Institute has collaborated with local regional equity advocates to create a land bank for Wayne County, Michigan, the home county of the City of Detroit. The Institute also worked with a coalition to support land bank legislation for the State of Michigan, which passed in December of 2003. The coalition included M.O.S.E.S. (a faith-based social justice organization), Community Legal Resources, the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), the University of Michigan's Urban and Regional Planning program, and other local advocates...

Opportunity Mapping and Housing Advocacy: Columbus, OH

The Kirwan Institute provided a county-wide housing report for Building Responsibility, Equity, and Dignity (B.R.E.A.D.), a faith-based organization working for justice and inclusion in Columbus, Ohio. The report comprehensively analyzed housing needs in Franklin County (the Columbus metropolitan area). Researchers found that the current housing supply did not provide

adequate affordable housing for extremely low- and very low-income households. The report used the Communities of Opportunity framework in analyzing the distribution of affordable housing, demonstrating that the current distribution of affordable housing was not adequately connected to critical opportunity structures in the region, and that significant racial disparities existed with respect to cost and housing quality burdens...

Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program: Race, Poverty, and Opportunity

The LIHTC Program, an indirect federal subsidy, is the largest program to finance the development of affordable rental housing for low-income households. Unfortunately, these housing units are generally located in economically depressed and racially segregated neighborhoods. The geographic concentration and the lack of access to suburban development and related job opportunities provide little relief to low-income families trying to improve their financial well-being. Working in collaboration with the Poverty and Race Research Action Council and the Lawyers Committee, the Institute has assisted in analyzing the impact of recent LIHTC developments on racial and economic segregation. The Institute and its partners utilize this analysis to educate local stakeholders and state housing finance agencies in order to reform LIHTC policy to promote more development in areas of high opportunity, rather than in racially and economically segregated areas of low opportunity. As an example, the Kirwan Institute provided technical assistance and data analysis for the Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA) in modifying their LIHTC scoring criteria to be more inclusive of "opportunity-based housing" principles. Other LIHTC education and advocacy projects have occurred in Maryland, North Carolina, and Illinois. □

John A. Powell is executive director of the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity at the Ohio State University. Reverend Otis Moss Jr. is pastor at the Olivet Institutional Baptist Church in Cleveland, Ohio. To read the full Communities of Opportunity report, go to http://www.kirwaninstitute.org/publications/ki_pub_docs/Comm_of_Opportunity_Jan_2007.pdf.

ECONOMIC REPORT

Doing Good and Doing Well: Making the Business Case for Regional Equity and Racial Inclusion

By Manuel Pastor

In recent years, analysts and activists have begun to focus on regional strategies as one way to address the issues of concentrated poverty and racial exclusion that have long concerned African American urban communities. The logic of the new proponents of “regional equity” has many nuances, but the general argument runs as follows: (1) the relative isolation of minority communities due to suburbanization and the exodus of employment has contributed to economic distress; (2) previous approaches focused on community development have made only modest progress against the headwinds of white flight and biased federal policy; and (3) any new strategy must seek to steer private investment back to urban areas, connect residents to employment wherever it might exist in the metropolitan region, and open up suburban communities to more minority and lower-income residents.

The regional equity perspective provides a new narrative and a new approach to our urban problems, linking community development with larger economic and policy dynamics. Partly because of this, it also allows for the creation of coalitions of unusual allies, such as labor unions, churches, and minority communities—groups that have often experienced historical divisions and tensions. And perhaps the most unexpected of the constituencies to recently engage in regional equity is one not often moved by pleas with regard to social and racial justice: business leaders.

Why Business?

To understand the business interest—and how to further fortify it—it is important to first understand that the U.S. economy has become more regional. This may be surprising in light of globalization: many believe that the ability of firms to move anywhere on the planet makes geography less and less a consideration. But if that were so, then technology companies would be evenly spread throughout the Midwest rather than crowding into the high-price

territory of Silicon Valley, and movies would be made in Kansas rather than Hollywood. In fact, regions are becoming increasingly characterized by specialized business and economic clusters.

This has made the metropolitan region more important. Recent analyses have suggested that heterogeneity in regional economic performance, measured by the degree of variation between regional growth rates, has risen in the last several decades. And business has clearly noticed: in the last half-decade, a variety of regional business collaboratives have emerged seeking to promote the health of their own region, including groups like Joint Venture: Silicon Valley Network, Chicago Metro 2020, and the St. Louis Regional Chamber and Growth Association.

Perhaps the most unexpected of the constituencies to recently engage in regional equity is one not often moved by pleas with regard to social and racial justice: business leaders.

A significant number of these efforts have begun to pay attention not only to economic competitiveness issues *per se*, but also to quality of life and issues of distribution. The reason is not simply *noblesse oblige*; it is hard to attract or retain businesses or the most skilled talent if environmental conditions are poor or social tension is high. Indeed, it seems that regions with higher levels of inequality tend to underinvest in education, experience more conflict about growth strategies, and find it difficult to build the “social capital” that is

a fundamental part of a modern networked economy.

The numbers help make the case. Early efforts to link economic success with the relief of urban poverty or improvements in city-suburb income gaps tended to be plagued by simplistic statistical methods and questions of causality (does a fairer distribution of benefits pump up economic growth, or is it the other way around?). But a newer set of studies has tried to control for these issues and demonstrate the compatibility of growth and a more equal distribution of income. A recent study by Federal Reserve economists based in Cleveland examined 120 comparable metropolitan areas throughout the U.S. and found that high levels of racial inclusion and income equality correlate strongly and positively with economic growth, even after taking into account other factors (such as workforce skills and industrial base) that affect regional efficiency.

Is business getting the message? Numerous efforts suggest that some in the business community are. In 1999, for example, Joint Venture: Silicon Valley Network (JV: SVN), the paradigmatic regionalist business organization, spun off an organization, Silicon Valley Civic Action Network, that included representatives from community groups as well as business leaders, and has begun to track measures of poverty, inequality, and disparities in education and health insurance in its annual index of indicators. The nearby Bay Area Council sponsored a study identifying the most impoverished neighborhoods in the San Francisco region and then launched a Community Capital Investment Initiative that is self-described as “a regional effort to attract private investment into the poorest neighborhoods in the Bay Area to tackle poverty with market-based solutions and, simultaneously, to promote smart growth.”

The movement is not limited to the supposedly liberal environs of northern California. The national-level Alliance for Regional Stewardship, formed in 2000 with a membership largely drawn from business and civic leadership groups,

adopted a framework that stressed social inclusion as well as economic innovation and collaborative governance, and promoted this framework among members covering twenty-seven states and the District of Columbia. In a study of business-civic organizations, including many in the Alliance for Regional Stewardship, authors from the consulting firm FutureWorks suggested that: “A new agenda has emerged for metropolitan regions ... where business leaders see clearly the link between how well their firms compete in global markets and how well their region promotes sustainable growth and economic opportunity for its citizens.”

Uncertain Allies, Uncertain Promise?

Of course, realizing that equity is important is one thing; making it a part of one's agenda is another. Looking at 45 regional business-civic organizations in 29 different regions, the FutureWorks authors found that forty percent had strategies for reducing socioeconomic disparities at a regional level, including efforts to improve economic conditions in poorer neighborhoods and reduce differences between urban and suburban school districts. Yet only one-third of the organizations ranked social equity as a “very important” concern, and only six percent ranked their organizations as “very effective” on moving social equity strategies, while another twenty-nine percent ranked their organization as “effective.”

While some portion of the ineffectiveness on equity issues may be due to the intractability of many social problems—concentrated poverty, for example, represents the intersections of industrial change, residential segregation, and myriad other factors—experience shows that businesses still tend to resist higher wage requirements, first source hiring strategies (to ensure that less advantaged residents get a crack at employment), and affordable housing mandates. Business reluctance partly reflects the perception that these policies would make their operations less efficient and partly reflects the interference that the policies represent with the ideology of the “free market.”

Hitching a community's star to the regionalist wagon also carries numerous

risks, including the possible dilution of political voice. In Louisville, Kentucky, for example, the African American community was largely opposed to a city-county merger supported by business leaders partly because the incorporation of mostly white suburbs was likely to reduce the proportion of African Americans from nearly a third of the population—sizeable enough to ally with others to form a legislative majority—to a 15 percent figure that has subsequently allowed for more conservative policies from the new metropolitan government. The dilution of voice possible at a regional scale can be worrisome, requiring new skills and capacities, both in land use planning and coalition building.

times and work with the growing business collaboratives in metropolitan areas. And it would continually make the case that equity and inclusion are consistent with our economic health, that doing good and doing well can go hand in hand.

It is not an easy road. Debates over the degree of market intervention needed to achieve equity are likely to strain business-community alliances. Just as important is the need to have an honest discussion about race. While racial exclusion and segregation have been central to metropolitan dynamics, there is often a tendency to downplay race in the spirit of building a rather shallow “common ground.” But if we really were “all in it together,” the current patterns of

There is an opportunity to blend the goals of business and community leaders in ways that will elevate regional equity and promote growth in African American, Latino, and other disenfranchised communities.

Still, the regional opening is not to be eschewed. At least some parts of the regional equity agenda are consistent with the competitiveness thrust of regional business leaders. A recent Brookings Institution study shows that redirecting infrastructure investments from America's suburbs to its central cities could reduce national road-building costs by nearly 12 percent and water and sewer spending by six percent over a twenty-five year period, and save four percent on annual spending for infrastructure operations and service. Such an approach would not only save money; it could create numerous opportunities both for community development and minority-owned business enterprises that are disproportionately located in central cities.

Looking Forward

There is, then, an opportunity to blend the goals of business and community leaders in ways that will elevate regional equity and promote growth in African American, Latino, and other disenfranchised communities. Such an approach would both build on the emerging realization that regions are the central economic unit of our

disparity would not have emerged—and if the worrisome dilution of community voice is to be avoided, regional equity must be a way to lift up, not submerge, issues of race.

This gives African American, Latino, and other minority leaders a special role in the struggle for regional equity—keeping the conversation and action focused on equity, not just regions. But it is also imperative for such leaders to pick up the regional mantle itself. The risks are several and the road is uncertain, but the geography of the economy has changed. We must change our struggle for racial inclusion and social justice—and be prepared to work with surprising new allies along the way. □

Manuel Pastor (mpastor@ucsc.edu) is a professor of Latin American and Latino Studies and co-director of the Center for Justice, Tolerance and Community at the University of California, Santa Cruz. For more information on: the Federal Reserves study, <http://www.clevelandfed.org/Research/Workpaper/2006/wp06-05.pdf>; the Alliance for Regional Stewardship, <http://www.regionalstewardship.org/index.html>; FutureWorks' study, http://www.futureworks-web.com/srd/civic_business.html; the Brookings analysis of the infrastructure saving from more compact development, http://www.brookings.edu/metro/publications/200403_smartgrowth.htm.

HEALTH REPORT

WHY “PLACE MATTERS” IN THE STATE OF THE UNION

By Gail C. Christopher

In his State of the Union address on January 23, 2007, President Bush made a regrettable omission: he failed to make any reference to the continued plight of residents in New Orleans and the Gulf Coast region who are still struggling with post-Katrina reconstruction, as well as persistent racial and ethnic disparities in quality of life. Their ongoing needs are acute and the national response, particularly to the public health needs of these devastated communities, is woefully inadequate as of January 2007. Every system in New Orleans—education, housing, transportation, public health, energy, communication, and justice—is still crippled.

The kinds of interventions that are needed to solve such long-term problems require leadership from all levels of government. While leadership at the federal level is clearly needed, robust, compassionate, and competent leadership may also come from collaborations between individuals in the private sector and those in state and local government.

The Joint Center Health Policy Institute (HPI) is working to do just that with its national *Place Matters* initiative, which seeks to reduce health disparities by helping local leaders address their complex underlying causes. While researchers have determined that altering social determinants can affect individual well-being and modify health patterns and risks for illness, systematic translation and application of this research and theory into policy and practice has been limited, particularly within local communities.

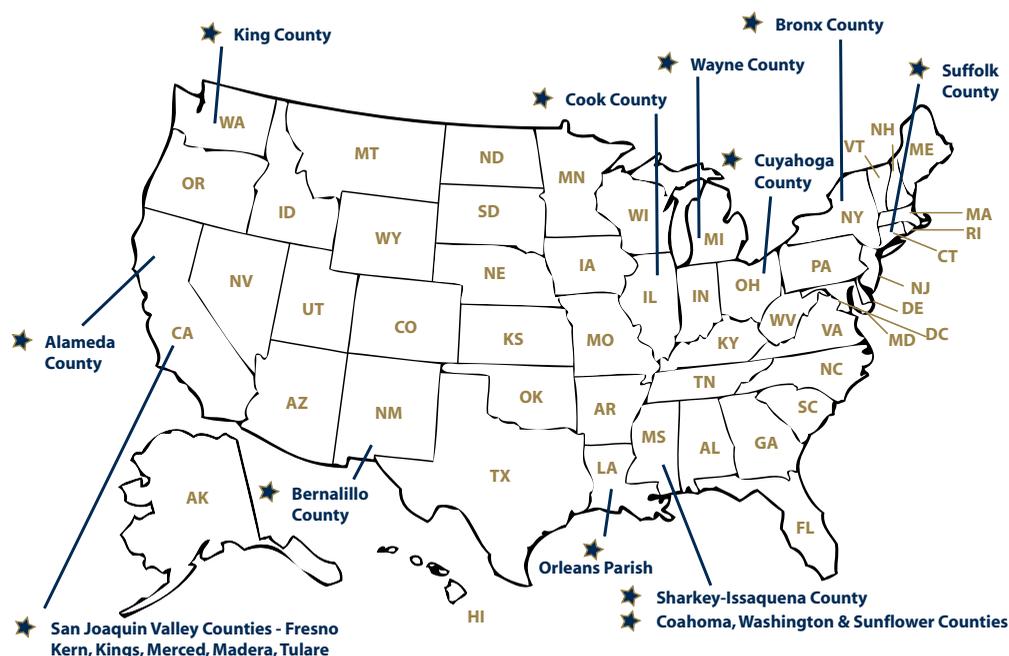
HPI is working with leadership teams from 22 counties in 13 states to design and implement creative approaches to reduce racial and ethnic health disparities. These teams are made up of leaders from different sectors in local regions and communities; they include educators, public health workers, community activists, faith-based organization leaders, as well as public sector representatives. Members of the teams participate in Design Laboratories where learning, information sharing, and group planning occurs.

HPI Perspectives on the Social Determinants of Health

Social determinants of health refer to conditions of society that reflect *root causes* of community and individual health and well-being. Such causes include but are not limited to quality and affordability of housing, level of employment and job security, standard of living, availability of mass transportation, quality of education, forms of clean economic development, racism, poverty, distribution of goods and services, chronic stress, and workplace conditions.

Many public/community health practitioners struggle with the notion that their programs should address social issues. Many public health leaders question the idea of their departments taking on deep-rooted injustices related to racial and class discrimination, socioeconomic disadvantage, poor housing stock, and myriad other social forces that drive population health status.

COUNTIES ENGAGED IN THE JOINT CENTER HEALTH POLICY INSTITUTE’S *PLACE MATTERS* INITIATIVE



Public health practitioners are busy focusing on their mission to provide everyday public health services, such as preventing the spread of West Nile Virus, inspecting restaurants, running family planning programs, providing immunizations, and conducting communicable disease surveillance.

These concerns are understandable. Indeed, public health agencies simply cannot address these issues alone, nor should one agency attempt to do so. But the need to address persistent population health challenges nonetheless exists, and it will take systematic efforts that include participation at the local level to address these challenges.

Progress through *Place Matters*

HPI's *Place Matters* initiative responds to this urgent need. It recognizes that social determinants of health theory must be translated into practice. And the response from local leadership teams has been extraordinary.

In different cities around the country, the *Place Matters* leadership teams have gathered together for three-day retreats during the last year and made collective and individual progress toward unraveling the complex maze of how social determinants can and do contribute to health disparities.

Their approaches vary significantly. One team has decided to tackle racism head on, while another is creating a business rationale to support their decision to ensure primary care medical homes (homes that provide access to regular and sustained primary medical care) for everyone. Members of another group have joined forces to design a regional approach to improving

transportation options for migrant farm workers, while yet another team has decided to address the difficult issues surrounding building decisions and ordinances that contribute to either unhealthy or health-promoting "built environments." The teams are still formulating and refining their strategies. Even at this early stage, however, it is clear that their collective and individual creativity, coupled with this real chance for creating a supported community of practice, is leading to new and exciting approaches to addressing health disparities.

THE JOINT CENTER
HEALTH POLICY
INSTITUTE'S *PLACE
MATTERS* INITIATIVE
SEEKS TO REDUCE
HEALTH DISPARITIES BY
HELPING LOCAL LEADERS
ADDRESS THEIR COMPLEX
UNDERLYING CAUSES.

Partnering to Achieve Change

The Joint Center Health Policy Institute is partnering with several national organizations to implement *Place Matters*. Key partners include the National Association of Counties, the International City/County Management Association, and the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO). With the help of these and other state and

local public officials, administrators, and community leaders, as well as the Joint Center's DataBank, data from 149 counties across the country are being assessed and will be used to guide the *Place Matters* Design Lab teams.

For example, the pioneering work of the Connecticut Association of Directors of Health, Inc. (CADH), in partnership with NACCHO, on the Social Determinants of Health Equity Index (SDHEI) is helping to inform the data components of the *Place Matters* initiative. The SDHEI provides a portrait of social, economic, and environmental conditions related to inequities in health. This represents a groundbreaking tool in that it has the capacity to locate, quantify, and measure social determinants that lead to health disparities between different population groups. For instance, employment, housing availability, and poverty rates are correlated with issues such as infant mortality, morbidity associated with chronic disease, and premature or excess deaths. While this tool is still in the final stages of development, its assumptions and components are guiding the *Place Matters* work.

The Joint Center is particularly pleased that New Orleans (Orleans Parish) is among the first group of counties participating in *Place Matters*. This city and parish embody the race and class divisions that contribute to needless human suffering. The post-Katrina and Rita devastation revealed longstanding social and economic inequalities that are too often associated with health disparities. Through their participation in *Place Matters*, New Orleans' public health, education, and community leaders have the support of a larger community of peers as they struggle to recover and achieve a better quality of life for residents. While these first steps toward reducing racial and ethnic health disparities are not a replacement for committed leadership at the federal level, they provide encouragement for the many communities who struggle with such disparities and whose well-being represents an important part of the state of the union. □

Gail C. Christopher (gchristopher@jointcenter.org) is vice president for health, women and families at the Joint Center and director of the Joint Center Health Policy Institute.

PLACE MATTERS PARTNERS

- W. K. KELLOGG FOUNDATION
- ATLANTA NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP
- THE CALIFORNIA ENDOWMENT
- THE CENTER FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF HEALTH
- CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION OF DIRECTORS OF HEALTH
- HENRY J. KAISER FAMILY FOUNDATION
- INTERNATIONAL CITY/COUNTY MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION
- NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES
- NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COUNTY AND CITY HEALTH OFFICIALS (NACCHO)
- NATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF BLACK COUNTY OFFICIALS
- POLICYLINK
- THE PRAXIS PROJECT

The Business of Color: Strengthening the Regional Economy

By Roger A. Clay, Jr.

There is growing consensus that a region's economic development is tied to the economic well-being of all of the region's cities and neighborhoods. Policymakers are increasingly recognizing that maldistribution of resources and opportunities and an ill-prepared workforce are barriers to a thriving, competitive regional economy.

Inequality affects not only neighborhoods, cities, and regions, but also the United States economy as a whole. The significance of this is highlighted by a recent World Economic Forum report. Its annual survey of over 11,000 business leaders in 125 countries revealed that the U.S. fell from first place in 2005 to sixth place in 2006 in the economic Global Competitiveness Index. For the U.S. to remain a leader in the global economy, its metropolitan regions must strengthen and maintain their competitiveness.

As this article discusses, businesses owned by people of color, often called minority business enterprises (MBEs), are an important facet of a region's competitiveness due to their impact in terms of jobs, diversity, tax revenue, and the services and goods they provide to communities of color. Likewise, the development and support of MBEs is a key component of efforts to redistribute resources and wealth.

Not only are MBEs important to regions but they also have great growth potential. For example, while the business ownership rate among blacks is less than half the national average, the number of black businesses is increasing at a much faster rate—a 45 percent increase between 1997 and 2002—than the overall 10 percent business growth rate. Significantly, total sales revenue for black-owned businesses also increased at a faster pace than total sales of white-owned businesses.

A new strategy in regional economic development is to combine efforts to develop and strengthen MBEs with a regional industry analysis. A study of MBEs and the regional economy can identify

strengths and areas of growth potential by industry sector, local area strategies, and emerging opportunities for MBEs. This research-based strategy can be combined with best-practice finance mechanisms, small business development services, networking, and policy initiatives to make MBEs a vital regional asset.

MBE Development - Critical Link in Regional Economies

There are multiple reasons why MBEs are an important factor in strengthening the regional economy and enhancing regional equity.

First, MBEs have more direct knowledge of the market demands of communities of color, which allows them to provide these communities with better access to a targeted range of goods and services. MBEs, especially in services and retail, are more likely to serve a customer base of communities of color than are corporate- or white-owned businesses. MBEs are poised to help meet the market demand of the growing non-white populations. This growing demand is demonstrated by the fact that the non-white population is now a majority of the population—and therefore consumers—in California, Hawaii, New Mexico, and Texas, and is expected to be a majority nationwide by 2050.

Second, MBEs are a source of jobs. Among MBEs with employees, four of every six have an employee base that is at least half persons of color, compared to only one of six white-owned firms. This is an important fact since the unemployment rate of non-white workers is often twice that of whites—exacerbating the concentration of poverty.

Third, MBEs can help link the larger economy to communities of color. MBEs, including franchises and distributorships, serve as a gateway for other businesses to tap into the non-white consumer market. MBEs also attract tourist and local visitor dollars to communities of color through the creation of ethnic and cultural destinations, with dining, entertainment, cultural, and recreational components.

Fourth, MBEs are a source of income and wealth. The revenue from business ownership is the primary source of household income for many MBE owners. MBEs are also an important means for the transfer of inter-generational wealth.

Fifth, MBEs are a source of tax and fee revenue, especially important for those cities

or local governments struggling to maintain their tax base. This may include revenue generated by business license fees, user fees, sales tax, property tax, and local income tax.

Sixth, owners of MBEs usually live in and are involved in communities of color, and are a source of referral, capital, and leadership. They are an economic and social bridge to the larger community, and their businesses can be a channel to bring in resources and help reverse the trend of disinvestment in many impoverished neighborhoods.

Finally, regions and corporations that have diverse suppliers (MBEs) and workforces have a competitive advantage in the global economy, especially when dealing with Asia, Africa, and Latin America. As suppliers to large corporations and public agencies, MBEs strengthen the global competitiveness of those firms and agencies, and, by extension, of the regions where those firms are located.

Challenges

Despite their potential, MBEs face significant challenges, including:

- limited access to capital and debt financing;
- limited personal or family assets to utilize for business start-up;
- inadequate business development support;
- lack of effective networking opportunities;
- more public safety problems and debilitated public infrastructure;
- higher rates of taxation because of a lower tax base in many cities where MBEs are located;
- a hostile legal environment due to attacks on affirmative action;
- discriminatory private or public business practices in certain regions or industries; and
- lack of crucial knowledge of regional economic trends.

In order for the United States to remain a competitive leader in the world market, it is essential that we address these challenges and ensure that our regional economies are

more inclusive and equitable. A stronger MBE community and a more diverse business sector will strengthen regional economies.

Recommendations

There are many effective strategies for the growth and promotion of MBEs, including public and private financing options, small business development services and networking opportunities, support of trade associations and chambers of commerce, supplier diversification, and public policies to affirmatively utilize MBEs or local small businesses. However, one approach that will enhance all of these strategies is to utilize the same type of sector or cluster analysis that has been used effectively in economic and workforce development efforts as a framework for MBE development strategies.

MBE Industry Sector Analysis

An industry sector analysis identifies the industries that hold the most promise for MBEs to succeed. Based on interviews with key stakeholders and data analysis of the sales, credit rating, location, and industry concentration of local MBEs, compared to MBEs nationally, this kind of analysis identifies: strengths of MBEs within a region by industry sector; growing industry sectors; geographic growth trends; planned public and private investments; industries that link into regional corporate supply chains; and industries with the most potential to provide good jobs.

The National Economic Development and Law Center (NEDLC) and the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity have conducted this type of sector analysis for the City of Cleveland and Cuyahoga County in order to help the Cleveland Foundation reformulate its strategic plan to support the growth of MBEs and the regional economy. Among many findings, the study of the Cleveland area determined that small- and medium-sized MBEs had a more difficult time accessing capital and securing effective business networking opportunities compared to similar size white-owned businesses, even though they had credit ratings that were, on average, equal.

The type of recommendations that MBE industry analysis can provide include:

- Identifying the core strengths by industry sector of the MBE community. These are the sectors best suited for strategies to

help grow mid-sized MBEs into large-size firms. In Cleveland, this included the construction, wholesale trade, and professional services sectors.

- Identifying emerging opportunities by industry sector in each region. These are the sectors best suited for strategies to help grow new or small MBEs into mid-sized firms. In Cleveland, this included the financial services, health services, and local transportation and trucking sectors.
- Identifying location-specific growth trends among MBEs by industry sector to help financial institutions, community foundations, local governments, or community-based organizations more effectively target neighborhood or local area efforts to support MBEs.

Other Strategies for MBE Development

In addition to industry sector analysis, there are a number of other strategies that promote the growth and development of MBEs, as well as regional equity and economic growth:

- Increasing resources for targeted small business development, both to any small business that locates in distressed inner cities or inner suburbs and to any MBE wherever it locates within the region. Small business development support includes:
 - networking opportunities, such as business matchmaker events, luncheons, or trade fairs;
 - contract “look-aheads,” workshops, and seminars;
 - individualized and customized business assistance; and
 - mentor-protégé programs.
- Providing MBEs with facilitated access to diverse sources of financial resources, including capital from mainstream banks, credit unions, community development financial institutions, angel investors, and public agencies.
- Diversifying the suppliers to a region’s businesses, public agencies, and nonprofit organizations by:
 - linking private and public supplier diversification efforts;

- encouraging both the private and public sector to set goals for diverse supplier contracts and highlighting those that go beyond their goals;
 - creating transparent public contracting processes; and
 - assisting MBEs in becoming certified by private or public agencies.
- Creating a fiscal and tax environment that allows MBEs to compete on equal footing by sharing tax revenue or public costs across a region.
 - Ensuring equitable distribution of a region’s public resources and infrastructure so that MBEs and businesses located in distressed municipalities or neighborhoods benefit from the same quality of infrastructure as wealthier suburbs. This includes adequate and high quality streets and highways; public transit, rail, and airports; fire protection and public safety; hospitals and health care system; and workforce, job training, and education systems.

Conclusion

MBEs cannot address their challenges alone. An inclusive regional economy in which MBEs are full participants will require multiple, but coordinated, actions by the private, philanthropic, and public sectors. Policies and programs will have to be comprehensive and linked to other systems, including education, workforce development, and financial systems. The key to success will be leaders who understand that promoting and supporting the development and strengthening of MBEs not only helps the owners of those businesses and their communities, but is essential to regional economic competitiveness and ultimately this country’s economic well-being. We all benefit. □

Roger A. Clay, Jr. (roger@nedlc.org) is the president of the National Economic Development & Law Center. For more information on the World Economic Forum 2006 index, go to <http://www.weforum.org/en/initiatives/gcp/Global%20Competitiveness%20Report/index.htm>; on the NEDLC/Kirwan Institute Cleveland study, go to http://www.nedlc.org/Registration/cleveland_registration.htm.

BUILDING COMMUNITIES OF OPPORTUNITY THROUGH EQUITABLE INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT

by Angela Glover Blackwell
(continued from front cover)

According to the American Society of Civil Engineers, 27 percent of the nation's 590,750 bridges are "structurally deficient or functionally obsolete"; the Environmental Protection Agency estimated in 2002 that an investment of \$161 billion will be necessary to upgrade drinking water treatment systems; and a 1999 U.S. Department of Education study estimated that \$127 billion would be required to restore schools to "overall good condition." States and localities are also under pressure: two-thirds of municipal officials polled by the National League of Cities cited infrastructure as a "major" or "moderate" problem in their communities; 65 percent of officials from larger cities (populations of 100,000 or greater) classified infrastructure as a major concern.

Fortunately, infrastructure is moving into the public policy spotlight, as government officials, planners, researchers, and advocates contemplate the parallels between Hurricane Katrina and New Orleans' infrastructure failures and their own communities. In November 2006, California voters approved bond measures for \$42.7 billion of infrastructure investment—the largest public works package in the state's history. New York City launched PLANYC, a comprehensive and interactive planning process to upgrade already aging infrastructure (some of the city's energy, water, and subway systems are close to a century old) for the estimated million additional residents that the city will serve by the year 2030.

Funding increases and master plans are essential first steps, but the promise of infrastructure investment can only be realized when fairness and equity are central to the resource allocation process. Inadequate infrastructure investment in urban and older suburban communities, as well as rural communities, is both a cause and an effect of the entrenched regional disparities created by decades of racially inequitable policymaking. Disinvestment in low-income communities begets further

disinvestment, a flight of people and resources to ever more distant suburbs, and ultimately, economic isolation for those who remain. Without a comprehensive and inclusive plan to reinvest in these neighborhoods, public and private money gravitates toward already resource-rich areas, further reinforcing inequity. A decision to spend transportation funds on a park-and-ride suburban commuter rail, for example, can come at the expense of transit service in lower-income communities of color, where car-less residents need ways to connect to jobs dispersed throughout the region. Nonexistent, aging, or poorly maintained infrastructure in inner city or older suburban neighborhoods can mean that residents lack access to parks and recreation opportunities, or that children attend overcrowded or dilapidated schools where conditions compromise learning—and even health, since the presence of mold, mildew, and vermin can exacerbate asthma.

Infrastructure and Regional Equity

Infrastructure is the skeletal support of strong, vibrant communities and regions, and it requires effective, transparent government policies to guide its planning, spending, building, and maintenance. Decisions about infrastructure are intertwined with persistent disparities of race and class and raise questions about who benefits, who pays, and who decides. How can infrastructure decisions and spending be equitable so that low-income communities and communities of color are assured the same protections and services as everyone else? How can America's cities, towns, and communities build the foundation for a competitive and inclusive economy?

PolicyLink and other advocates believe that in addition to strengthening our public works and disaster preparedness systems, the right kind of infrastructure investment can and should be a means to promote regional equity. PolicyLink offers seven

principles to guide infrastructure decision making to ensure that everyone—especially people of color and others in low-income communities—benefits equally from infrastructure investments. Advocates who work on individual areas of concern, such as water, transportation, school facilities, or parks, may find common ground in these principles, which are drawn from their experiences.

Principle 1: Infrastructure decisions have widespread impacts on housing, development, investment patterns, and quality of life, and the outcomes of those decisions must be fair and beneficial to all.

Principle 2: Infrastructure plans should not have to compete with health, education, and human service needs but should be recognized as equally critical governmental and societal responsibilities that produce equitable results.

Principle 3: Budget priorities within infrastructure areas (for example, repairing levees versus restoring wetlands to ensure storm protection; more buses versus new rail systems to improve transportation options; building hospitals versus community clinics to address community health needs) should be thoroughly assessed using an equity lens.

Principle 4: Services and opportunities created by infrastructure decisions should be available and accessible to everyone in all types of communities.

Principle 5: Employment and economic benefits associated with building and maintaining infrastructure should be shared throughout the region.

Principle 6: The means for collecting revenues to support infrastructure improvements should be determined and applied in ways that are fair and not disproportionately burdensome to those with lower incomes.

Principle 7: Infrastructure decision making should be transparent and include mechanisms for everyone to contribute to the planning and policymaking process.

Working toward Infrastructure Equity

In the wake of Hurricane Katrina and the massive, unprecedented recovery effort underway in the Gulf Coast, community revitalization, antipoverty, and regionalism advocates are encouraged by the infrastructure equity movement's growing momentum. They point to several examples where coalition building, inclusive planning, and policy advocacy have resulted in infrastructure improvements for previously underserved communities.

The Cornfield in Los Angeles, a 32-acre open space, was slated for warehouse development before a historic alliance of over 35 community, civil rights, environmental justice, religious, business, and civic organizations came together to block the deal. The Center for Law in the Public Interest (CLUPI) helped lead the effort to convince the state to purchase the site for a public park. Centered in a predominantly Latino community where 30 percent of the residents live below the poverty line, a fully integrated park and recreation site at the Cornfield will improve the quality of life for residents locally and across the region. CLUPI has continued to work with the city and county of Los Angeles to guide the conceptual design of the Cornfield to ensure that development brings about open space for exercise, recreation, and tourism, in addition to creating job opportunities, economic revitalization, and an increase in local property values.

In greater Detroit—a region fraught with race and income segregation—a groundbreaking multiracial, urban-suburban coalition of faith-based leaders, public officials, and community members has sought to raise awareness of regional infrastructure investment and challenge the decision-making process for allocating transit funds. In too many metropolitan areas, transportation infrastructure resources are disproportionately channeled to suburban and exurban highway or commuter rail projects at the expense of public

transportation in more densely populated central city areas. The faith-based coalition MOSES (Metropolitan Organizing Strategy Enabling Strength) spearheaded a lawsuit to reform the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) voting system. The region's metropolitan planning organization (MPO), which is responsible for critical transportation investment decisions, allocates three executive committee votes to the city of Detroit (which has a predominantly African American population of over 900,000), but four votes each to suburban Monroe and Livingston counties (which are overwhelmingly white and have less than a quarter of Detroit's population). While the lawsuit was ultimately dismissed, MOSES and partners are continuing their work to ensure that new transportation initiatives, especially ones backed by tax dollars, promote more balanced growth patterns and afford equal voice to urban core and inner-ring suburban communities.

Government officials, planners, engineers, and community advocates are also expanding their understanding of “infrastructure” beyond built projects like bridges, roads, or sewer systems to include telecommunications and technology infrastructure. Broadband access has emerged as a key infrastructure equity issue, as the increasing ubiquity and sophistication of Internet content and use demand high-speed connections. While low-income communities and communities of color that were historically on the wrong side of the digital divide have recently made encouraging gains in broadband use and access, many low-income urban and suburban residents still fight to afford the higher cost of high-speed connections. Some rural areas face an even greater obstacle: complete lack of access to high-speed Internet due to public policies and business decisions that discourage investment in areas that are perceived as unprofitable. These disparities in access to high-speed Internet prevent underserved residents from taking advantage of technology to enhance their civic engagement, education, or business activities.

Even in many low-income urban communities, it is easy to take for granted the clear, clean municipal water that appears with a simple turn of the faucet. Yet water access is perhaps the most elemental front

in the struggle for infrastructure equity. The Rural Community Assistance Project estimates that, despite great advances over the past 50 years, more than 1.1 million urban and 600,000 rural residents in the United States are still without complete plumbing facilities. As RCAP's analysis indicates, part of this disparity can be attributed to the geographic isolation of some extremely rural areas—but in other cases, urban, suburban, and small town residents are isolated from efficient water delivery systems by race, poverty, and politics.

The city of Zanesville, Ohio and the surrounding area offer an illustration of the subtle intersection of race and “municipal underbounding” (exclusionary incorporation practices) that often leaves low-income communities of color not only on the cartographic outskirts of small cities, but cut off from water, sanitation, and other essential services. In 2004, the *New York Times* reported on the long-awaited extension of municipal water service to homes in a small hollow next to Zanesville. The predominantly black, American Indian, and mixed-race residents had been told by local officials that hills, insufficient water pressure, and expense prevented connection to the city's water system; the residents were forced to rely instead on cisterns and polluted wells. (City officials also claimed the surrounding county should have been responsible for water service.) Yet all of the predominantly white homeowners several hundred feet up the hill had enjoyed municipal water service for years. The Ohio Civil Rights Commission ruled in favor of the hollow residents, finding that denial of water service had been based on race.

Whether physical or virtual, as cutting-edge as broadband or as basic as clean water, infrastructure is the foundation that supports opportunity. With fair, inclusive planning and resource allocation, infrastructure can literally build equitable communities and regions where all residents have the opportunity to participate and prosper. □

Angela Glover Blackwell is founder and CEO of PolicyLink. For more information on PolicyLink and the organization's work to promote equitable infrastructure investment, go to <http://www.policylink.org/EquitablePublicInvestment/default.html>.

JOINT CENTER UPDATES

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Raising the Minimum Wage: The Impact of the Fair Minimum Wage Act of 2007 and State Minimum Wage Increases on U.S. Workers, by Race and Ethnicity, Joint Center DataBank

Retirement Prospects and Perils: Public Opinion on Social Security and Wealth, by Race, 1997-2005, by Wilhelmina A. Leigh and Danielle Huff

2007 JOINT CENTER ANNUAL DINNER

TUESDAY, APRIL 17

Frederick W. Smith
Chairman, President and CEO
FedEx Corporation
National Dinner Chairman

The Honorable Charles Rangel

2007 Joint Center Great
American Award Recipient

Omni Shoreham Hotel
2500 Calvert Street, NW
Washington, D.C.

Contact: Glynda Featherstone
(202) 789-6393 or toll free: 1-866-558-2734
email: dinner@jointcenter.org

For further information, see the Joint Center's website at:
www.jointcenter.org

This issue of FOCUS was made possible by a grant from the Sustainable Community Development Group, Inc. The Joint Center gratefully acknowledges the support and encouragement we received from this organization and its president, Deoohn Ferris, as well as the African American Forum on Race & Regionalism (AAFRR) and the Ford Foundation, which initiated the AAFRR.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

JOINT CENTER

March 23-27, 2007
American Society for Public Administration 2007 Annual Conference: "Monumental Possibilities: Capitalizing on Collaboration." Session: "Social Equity, Health, and Health Care: What? Why? and How?" Gail C. Christopher, panelist
Omni Shoreham Hotel, Washington, D.C.

March 31, 2007
Medicare/Medicaid Conference
Domestic Health Issues and Medicare/Medicaid and the Uninsured;
Gail C. Christopher, speaker
John Hopkins School of Medicine, Baltimore, MD

April 13-14, 2007
3rd Annual Black Policy Conference: "Speaking Truth to Power: Informing the Black Policy Agenda." Session: "Eliminating Black Health Care Disparities"; Wilhelmina A. Leigh, panelist
John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA

April 17, 2007
2007 Joint Center Annual Dinner, Washington, D.C.

NATIONAL POLICY ALLIANCE MEMBERS

National Caucus of Black School Board Members
NSBA 67th Annual Conference & Exposition, San Francisco, CA
April 14-17, 2007 Details: <http://www.nsba.org/conference/>

National Conference of Black Mayors (NCBM)
2007 NCBM Annual Conference, Baton Rouge, LA
May 2-6, 2007 Web site: <http://www.ncbm.org/index.html>

National Organization of Black County Officials (NOBCO)
Economic Development Conference, Charlotte, NC
May 17-20, 2007

FOR AN UPDATED LIST OF JOINT CENTER EVENTS AND PUBLICATIONS, AS WELL AS ORDERING INFORMATION FOR JOINT CENTER PRODUCTS, PLEASE GO TO WWW.JOINTCENTER.ORG OR CALL 202-789-3500.



Joint Center for Political
and Economic Studies
1090 Vermont Ave., NW, Suite 1100
Washington, DC 20005-4928
202-789-3500

ADDRESS
SERVICE
REQUESTED

Postmaster:
Form 3547 requested



IMPORTANT!

NOTICE TO READERS: Please send address or title changes to FOCUS, Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies. YOU MUST ATTACH THE MAILING LABEL FROM THE BACK COVER when writing about service or change of address. Thank you.

NON-PROFIT
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT No. 6958
Washington, D.C.