

Census Bureau: Number of black married couples declining

Special to Sentinel-Voice
WASHINGTON — The proportion of black families headed by married couples continues to shrink.

The Census Bureau's latest statistical update shows the figure fell to 46 percent last year. It was 68 percent in 1970 and 50 percent in 1990.

The change is probably symptomatic of society in general, Census population expert Claudette Bennett said Wednesday. She noted that more and more Americans are getting divorced and separated

and increasing numbers of women are raising children as single mothers.

In 1997 some 47 percent of black families were maintained by a woman with no spouse present. That change in family makeup is felt in income, the report showed.

In 1996, African-American families had a real median income of \$26,522, just 59 percent of the \$44,756 median for white families. Even so, that was up from 56 percent in 1990, Bennett said.

Married couples did much

better. Median income for black married-couple families was \$41,960, more than 80 percent of whites' \$51,810.

About 54 percent of black married-couple families had two wage earners, compared to 51 percent of white families.

"In terms of educational attainment, we are continuing to make gains," added Bennett, noting that nearly 75 percent of blacks over age 25 have completed high school and more than 13 percent had at least a bachelor's degree.

While that falls short of the

86 percent of whites over 25 who have finished high school, it represents a sharp increase from past years.

And for people aged 25 to 29, the report said 86.2 percent of blacks were high school graduates, compared to 87.6 percent of whites.

Black women were outperforming men, with 14 percent holding bachelor's degrees or better, compared to 12.5 percent of black males.

Overall, the report said, there were 34,218,000 black Americans in 1997, making up

12.8 percent of the total U.S. population.

The black population was 53.3 percent female and 46.7 percent male, compared to 51 percent female and 49 percent male for whites.

Bennett said this is at least partly because black women vastly outnumber men in the age 65 and over group, a result of black males' shorter life spans.

Reflecting the trend for women to outlive men, the study found that the median age of black males was 26.9

compared to 30.0 for black women. Median means half are older than that age and half younger.

For non-Hispanic whites the comparable ages were 35.9 for men and 37.8 for women, indicating a somewhat older population overall.

The census update also reported that, as of 1996, the income of 2.2 million African-American families — 26 percent — was below the poverty level, compared to seven percent of non-Hispanic white families.

Successor

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Unemployment in the District is 8.1 percent, compared with 4.1 percent in Maryland and 3 percent in Virginia.

All the candidates agree the city needs to run a tighter ship to persuade Congress not only to restore local control but also to come up with the nearly \$3 billion in repairs and construction needed for roads, schools and other public facilities worn out after decades of neglect.

Gildenhorn, the restaurant owner, has lent \$400,000 to his long-shot campaign. He has injected some spice in the race by proposing that Washington allow legal brothels and has called for creation of a "hamburger college" where inner-city youths could learn the fast-food restaurant business.

Schwartz, the city council's lone Republican, took 42 percent of the vote against Barry in 1994. She promises to get potholes repaired, reduce traffic congestion and put police back on neighborhood beats.

She also is using return of home rule as a rallying cry, declaring: "It is the worst hypocrisy in the world that the citizens of the nation's capital are denied that democracy."

Doolittle



Helen Toler, left, enjoys some free food with friends during Monday's grand opening celebration of Doolittle Senior Center.

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of the Doolittle Center," said the Rev. Cleo Dawson, who gave the invocation Tuesday. "Blessings come from God, and certainly it's a blessing that we have this center, that we seniors will be able to come here and continue our activities with one another and get to know each other better."

Bombings

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makes less than \$300 a year.

That means American tourists are especially prized: They stay longer and spend more than other visitors.

Chicago lawyer Laurel Dineff was on safari in central Kenya with her family and 15 other people when the bombings happened.

At the Mt. Kenya Safari Club in the foothills of the snowcapped peak, they didn't hear about the advisory. If they had, Dineff said, they might have gone home. Now Dineff, who also owns a travel agency, is glad they didn't.

"We saw herds of just about everything: herds of elephants, herds of Cape buffalo. We saw leopards, we saw lions," she said. "We saw rhinos, black ones with babies. We saw hippos by the dozens. I'm so glad we didn't turn tail and run."

Kathleen Tyson, who is coming to Kenya next week with her family, said in a telephone interview from New York that she was worried, in part because of graphic footage of the carnage on television. But after talking to people who'd visited Kenya, she decided to go. She loved it.

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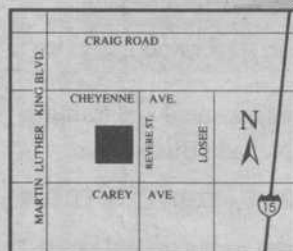
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