

Blacks in Queens, N.Y. out-earn White peers

NEW YORK (AP) - Queens is the only large county in the nation where the median income of Black residents has surpassed that of White residents, a newspaper analysis found.

The picture is quite different across the river in Manhattan, where the gap between Whites and Blacks is wider than in any other large county in the country, according to a *New York Times* analysis of census data.

The report, published Sunday, examined Census

Bureau data from all U.S. counties with more than 65,000 residents.

In Manhattan, the annual median income of Whites was \$86,494 — greatly outpacing the \$28,116 reported by Blacks.

In Queens, home to about 2 million people, Black households reported a median income of \$51,836 — higher than the \$50,960 reported for non-Hispanic Whites. Asians in the borough reported a median income of nearly \$53,000,

while Hispanics reported incomes of about \$44,000.

Some residents pointed to the success of immigrants from the West Indies and elsewhere as one reason for the shift in the borough. The earnings of foreign-born Blacks outpaced the income of Blacks born in the United States.

An economist at New York University, Professor Edward Wolff, said the wealthiest Whites may have left the city for the suburbs, shifting the income balance.

City schools take security serious

PHILADELPHIA (AP) - At the Samuel H. Daroff Elementary school in West Philadelphia, students must pass a security officer who uses a metal detector wand to search for possible weapons. A network of cameras pans the grounds and beyond for any sign of trouble.

It's a typical scene in a city where schools have be-

come a refuge from drug-fueled gang shootings.

It's also a scene in sharp contrast with schools in suburbia, rural America and at the one-room Amish schoolhouse an hour west of Philadelphia where a gunman struck Monday.

The attack, which left five girls dead, was the latest school shooting far from an

urban center, illustrating for some experts that city schools have often succeeded in making themselves safer.

Last week in Bailey, Colo., a man held students as hostages in a classroom and then killed one of them and himself. Also last week, a principal was fatally shot by a student in rural Cazenovia, (See *Schools*, Page 13)

Farrakhan

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tics and African-American studies at Princeton University. "At the Million Man March, most of those people were not members of the Nation of Islam. They were supporters of Farrakhan and his brand of critique of American politics."

Farrakhan has haltingly tried to move the Nation toward traditional Islam, which considers the American movement heretical because of its view of Elijah Muhammad as a prophet — among other novel teachings. Orthodox Islam teaches that there has been no prophet after Muhammad in the seventh century.

He's also played down some of the group's more controversial beliefs. The Nation of Islam teaches that Whites are descended from the devil and that Blacks are the chosen people of Allah. Mamiya said leaders no longer preach that message, although it is still taught in some mosques.

For many Blacks, the Nation is known mainly for its local businesses and for social service programs, including health projects such as HIV/AIDS awareness and prostate cancer screening, and an extensive prison ministry. Male members of the Nation are called the Fruit of Islam or F.O.I., also provide security for housing projects, with some forming independent security firms. Michael Jackson used Nation bodyguards during his prosecution on child molestation charges.

Most of the Nation's income comes from member donations and sales of the movement newspaper the *Final Call*, although its circulation is not known, Mamiya said.

Membership is concentrated in Midwestern and Northeastern cities including Detroit, where the group has its roots, and Chicago, where Farrakhan keeps a home in the Kenwood neighborhood. The house is a well-known landmark, with its yellow stone exte-

rior, round-the-clock guards and Muslim crescents in the stained-glass windows.

But the Nation has also been trying to expand overseas, with mosques in the Caribbean, in the West African nation of Ghana, and in England and France, Mamiya said.

Analysts agree, however, that the movement continues to see its greatest growth in American prisons. Many members are offenders, ex-offenders or relatives of convicts. Upon release, ex-inmates who want to stay in the Nation may have to undergo boot camp training, including military marching, push-ups and running laps, as a way to instill discipline, Mamiya said.

"In the criminal justice system, African-Americans are overrepresented and this tends to breed a lot of resentment," said Jimmy Jones, a religion professor at Manhattanville College who has worked as a Muslim jail chaplain for 25 years. "An ideology that is essentially a raced-based ideology is very popular in that context."

Mamiya said two men could possibly succeed Farrakhan: Ishmael Muhammad, a son of Elijah Muhammad, who is assistant minister at Mosque Maryam; or Akbar Muhammad, a long-shot candidate who is based in Ghana and "is a kind of right-hand person to Farrakhan."

Ishmael Muhammad did not respond to a message left at the mosque.

To many, the movement may seem like an anachronism — more suited to a time when segregation was the law and any opportunities Blacks had, they had to create for themselves. But observers say the Nation will have an appeal as long as racism and poverty plague the community.

"As long as there's problems," said Ridgely Abdul Mu'min, who runs the Nation's Muhammad Farms in Georgia, "nothing's going to change."

Denny's accused of bias for firing disabled exec

BALTIMORE (AP) - The federal government sued Denny's restaurants last Thursday, alleging that a manager who had a leg amputated was wrongly fired because her superiors believed she posed a safety risk.

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission filed the class-action lawsuit accusing Denny's of discriminating against Paula Hart and other unnamed employees.

Hart, a manager at the Denny's in the Baltimore suburb of Fullerton, had a leg amputated in December 2002. She returned to work in April 2003, using a walker while recuperating from surgery and awaiting a prosthetic leg, the commission said.

Hart worked for a short time, then was told she posed a safety risk. She was fired after using up 26 weeks of medical leave provided by the company, said Ron Phillips, an EEOC lawyer.

The commission said Hart was not a safety risk, except to herself if she suffered a fall. Even if she was a safety risk, "there were very obvious reasonable accommodations under the law that would alleviate that risk," Phillips said.

The lawsuit seeks a court order requiring Denny's Inc. — a subsidiary of Spartanburg, S.C.-based Denny's Corp. — to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act by giving additional medical leave to eligible employees. It also seeks

lost wages and benefits, and other damages.

Denny's issued a statement last Thursday saying the lawsuit was "based on unfounded accusations of disability discrimination stemming from the individual instance of one former employee."

The statement said Hart did not indicate she "would be able to perform the essential functions of her job in a finite or reasonable amount of time."

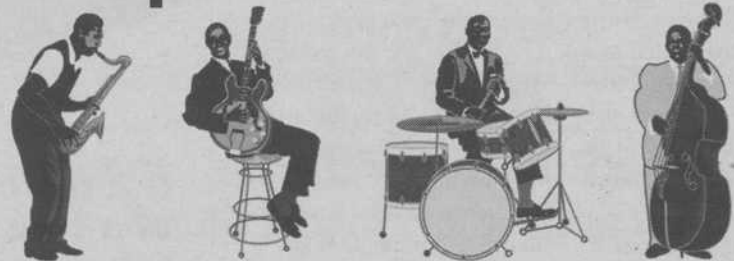
The statement continues: "Given the physical demands of working in our restaurants, including extensive moving about all parts of the operation with only intermittent breaks... Denny's was unable to provide an accommodation that would have allowed her to continue working in her position."

The statement also denied that Denny's discriminates against people with disabilities or denies them the opportunity to work. Denny's has nearly 1,600 restaurants in the United States and several foreign countries, with annual sales exceeding \$2 billion.

The restaurant chain has faced several discrimination lawsuits in the past. It settled a 1994 lawsuit for \$54.4 million that accused the chain of asking Black customers to prepay for meals. Since then, it has faced several more cases filed by Blacks and Hispanics. A lawsuit was filed last year alleging discrimination against men of Middle Eastern descent.

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