

# Race disparities persist

WASHINGTON (AP) - Decades after the Civil Rights Movement, racial disparities in income, education and homeownership persist and, by some measurements, are growing.

White households had incomes that were two-thirds higher than Blacks and 40 percent higher than Hispanics last year, according to data released Tuesday by the Census Bureau.

White adults were also more likely than Black and Hispanic adults to have college degrees and to own their own homes. Whites were less likely to live in poverty.

"Race is so associated with class in the United States that it may not be direct discrimination, but it still matters indirectly," said Dalton Conley, a sociology professor at New York University and the author of "Being Black, Living in the Red."

"It doesn't mean it's any less powerful just because it's indirect," he said.

Homeownership grew among White middle-class families after World War II when access to credit and government programs made buying houses affordable. Black families were largely left out because of discrimination, and the effects are still being felt today, said Lance Freeman, assistant professor of urban planning

at Columbia University and author of "There Goes the 'Hood.'"

Homeownership creates wealth, which enables families to live in good neighborhoods with good schools. It also helps families finance college, which leads to better-paying jobs, perpetuating the cycle, Freeman said.

"If your parents own their own home they can leave it to you when they pass on or they can use the equity to help you with a down payment on yours," Freeman said.

Three-fourths of White households owned their homes in 2005, compared with 46 percent of Black households and 48 percent of Hispanic households. Homeownership is near an all-time high in the United States, but racial gaps have increased in the past 25 years.

Black families have also been hurt by the decline of manufacturing jobs — the same jobs that helped propel many White families into the middle class after World War II, said Hilary Shelton, director of the NAACP's Washington office.

Among Hispanics, education, income and homeownership gaps are exacerbated by recent Latin American immigrants. Hispanic immigrants have, on average, lower incomes and education levels than people

born in the United States. About 40 percent of U.S. Hispanics are immigrants.

Asian-Americans, on average, have higher incomes and education levels than Whites. However, they have higher poverty rates and lower homeownership rates.

The Census Bureau released 2005 racial data on incomes, education levels, homeownership rates and poverty rates Tuesday.

The data are from the American Community Survey, the bureau's new annual survey of 3 million households nationwide.

The Associated Press compared the figures with census data from 1980, 1990 and 2000.

Among the findings:

-Black adults have narrowed the gap with White adults in earning high school diplomas, but the gap has widened for college degrees. Thirty percent of White adults had at least a bachelor's degree in 2005, while 17 percent of Black adults and 12 percent of Hispanic adults had degrees.

-Forty-nine percent of Asian-Americans had at least a bachelor's degree in 2005.

-The median income for White households was \$50,622 last year. It was \$30,939 for Black households, \$36,278 for Hispanic households and \$60,367 for Asian households.

-Median income for Black households has stayed about 60 percent of the income for White households since 1980. In dollar terms, the gap has grown from \$18,123 to \$19,683.

-Hispanic households made about 76 percent as much as White households in 1980. In 2005, it was 72 percent.

-The gap in poverty rates has narrowed since 1980, but it remains substantial. The poverty rate for White residents was 8.3 percent on 2005. It was 24.9 percent for Black residents, 21.8 percent for Hispanic residents and 11.1 percent for Asian residents.

Thomas Shapiro, professor of law and social policy at Brandeis University, said the "easiest answer" to narrowing racial gaps is to promote homeownership, which would help minority families accumulate wealth.

"The wealth gap is not just a story of merit and achievement, it's also a story of the historical legacy of race in the United States," said Shapiro, author of "The Hidden Cost of Being African-American."

# Condemnation for death rule

By Melde Rutledge  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

GREENSBORO (NNPA) - The front of the old Guilford County Courthouse on West Market Street was the scene of a press conference where area Black leaders deplored the execution of a mentally ill African-American man scheduled on Dec. 1.

Demonstrators argue that the mentally ill Guy LeGrande had an unjust trial, and they are pleading for North Carolina Gov. Mike Easley to commute LeGrande's sentence to life in prison without parole.

"The Kangaroo trial, the conviction and death sentence given to LaGrande are replete with racial bias and make us nothing less than unwilling parties to a legalized lynching scheduled for December 1," said N. Carnell Robinson, chair of the N.C. Black Leadership Caucus. The caucus is made up of a statewide group of community activists, public officials, clergy and others who campaign for the equity of Black North Carolinians.

Robinson said that only the Grand Dragon of the Ku Klux Klan would refer to LeGrande's sentencing as a show of justice.

The N.C. Black Leadership Caucus has previously called for a moratorium against the death penalty in North Carolina.

A formal letter was sent to the governor last week to request clemency for LeGrande. He is currently held in Central Prison, located in Raleigh.

"We besiege Governor Easley to grant clemency because the LeGrande conviction is reprehensible and marks not only our system of justice, but our humanity and our moral integrity," Carnell added.

An all-White jury sentenced LeGrande to death in 1996 in Stanly County, N.C. for the shooting death of  
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# Gangs

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poverty and the fights, it makes us take a look at ourselves and see all is not good."

Others compare the films to snuff films that exploit real violence for entertainment. UCLA professor Jorja Leap, who serves as Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa's gang policy advisor, said her students buy the gang documentaries for the same reason they purchase the "Bum Fight" DVDs featuring homeless men fighting: pure titillation.

"I don't think people need to see it graphically for them to see how much of a problem it is," Leap said. "What's next? Rape? Pedophilia?"

Alonso, the gang researcher, said some of the DVDs he sells do have educational value, but those aren't the titles that are moving the fastest. The most popular are DVDs that feature dog fights, fights between women and gang rumbles.

"I can't extract any values from any of those," said Alonso, who said he wouldn't restock the titles once he sold out. Federal prosecutors plan to use footage from one of the rawest films — the 2005 documentary "Hood 2 Hood" — in their case against Jonathan Leon Toliver, an alleged member of a Vegas gang charged in a 2004 shooting.

In the video, a man authorities believe to be Toliver brandishes a semiautomatic handgun and warns: "They come around here, this

is what they gonna get."

To some degree, gang filmmakers have embraced the controversy surrounding their products — the same selling point that helped gangsta rap find mainstream success. The cover of "Rep Yo' Set" shows a man holding an assault-style rifle in the air. Like the record industry, these documentary filmmakers intend to plant seeds of gangster authenticity in the urban street market to entice a larger White, suburban customer base.

"I went to the hoods and shook hands and met people, went into the barbershops and beauty shops, went to the schools, went to the malls, went to the record stores in the communities," Lewis said about his campaign to widen his audience.


"I even caught people leaving church on Sundays." Michael "Murdock" Halcromb, 34, a member of the Piru Street Bloods who helped direct a music video featured in "Concrete Hell," said he is bemused by the interest in the violence around him. Standing in a cul-de-sac where his cousin and friends were shot a few days before, Halcromb said he expects his neighborhood's stories to reach a mainstream audience eventually.

"They need to hear our stories," he said. "I guess they're fascinated by it. Like it's some fascinating fairy tale. But this sh\*\* is real. If you look around, you can see some bullet holes and bloodstains."

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