



## Segregation In America: 'Dragging On And On'

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Heard on Morning Edition

February 18, 2011 - STEVE INSKEEP, host:

We've been visiting cities in transition this week. Look into the demographics of a city and you see fascinating trends and how they change. In Washington, D.C. black people are moving to the suburbs as white people move to the city. Young people are moving to Portland, Oregon, even though there aren't many jobs there. Immigrants in Phoenix, Arizona have an easier time finding work than native born people do. Finally, this morning, we look at segregation, how often racial and ethnic groups share neighborhoods.

John Logan, a demographer at Brown University says we're becoming a more integrated nation, but at a very slow pace.

Mr. JOHN LOGAN (Demographer, Brown University): Certainly there's been a change since 1960. I think that's probably the point where there was the highest level of black/white segregation in most American cities, and that's been changing. On the other hand, change has gotten to be very slow. Every decade since then it seems that the pace of change has diminished.

INSKEEP: Let me make sure I understand what you're saying: things are still improving, but not as quickly. It's almost like one of these economic booms where things are still growing, but slower and slower and slower, and it makes you worry.

Mr. LOGAN: That's right, black/white segregation is a phenomenon that is dragging on and on and on.

INSKEEP: What is dragging things?

Mr. LOGAN: One important factor is that, I'd say, a significant part of the white population that is unwilling to live in neighborhoods where minorities are 40, 50, 60 percent of the population, that is uncomfortable with being a minority in their neighborhood. And so we have a continuation of a process of white flight from neighborhoods that minorities, not just African Americans but also Hispanics and Asians, move into.

At the same time there is a counter trend. There's another substantial share of the white population that is perfectly willing to live in diverse neighborhoods, although the proviso seems

to be not in a white-black neighborhood, but a neighborhood that has already been integrated with the arrival of Asians and Hispanics. And people get a comfort level about diversity, and then when African Americans join the mix, it seems to be easier to be accepted.

INSKEEP: When you use the term white flight, I feel like you're talking about some other time. That seems so 40, 50, 60 years ago, that a white family would say, oh my gosh, a black family moved in down the block. I better sell the house - whatever price I can get. I've got to get out of here. That seems like a historic story. Are you saying that it's still happening today?

Mr. LOGAN: I don't think there's the outright hysteria comment in the 1960s and 1970s. What is happening is there's not much pioneering by whites into minority neighborhoods at all.

INSKEEP: I want to challenge you on that, because I think I live in a neighborhood that could be described this way. It's happened over a period of decades; it's in central Washington, D.C.; it was a historic black neighborhood and white people have moved in in substantial numbers over time.

Mr. LOGAN: Yes, that's right. It can happen. And it might even happen that this is an area that can remain racially integrated over a long time. However, I do research that looks at thousands of neighborhoods, and between 1980 and 2000, I found - out of, say, a total of 5,000 census tracts in the country - only a handful 20 or 30 that were predominantly minority, and in which whites established a significant presence.

INSKEEP: How does the picture change when we move beyond questions of black and white, Hispanics, Asians and others?

Mr. LOGAN: Both Hispanics and Asians have increased very rapidly in number in metropolitan areas and they have established ethnic neighborhoods. Hispanics now, on average, live in neighborhoods that are more than 50 percent Hispanic.

INSKEEP: Could it be that the perfusion of diversity in this country, the larger number of immigrant groups that have become larger over time, contributes to this slowing down of integration that you see in your statistics, 'cause you've just got lots of immigrant groups who, as immigrant groups historically have, will concentrated in certain neighborhoods for a while.

Mr. LOGAN: Well, that is a factor. And we find, in fact, when we measure the level of segregation of Hispanics and Asians, there's really been no change since 1980. So the continuing immigration is feeding into ethnic neighborhoods. But at the same time, there are a lot of people moving out of those neighborhoods.

INSKEEP: Let's say that the country continues changing at the rate that it is changing now, which is becoming more integrated, as you said, but not as quickly as people would like. What would America look like in another generation - 20, 30 years?

Mr. LOGAN: Well, 20, 30 years it, really, will be not very different. If we take the current rate of change and extend it over 50 years, blacks then would be as segregated as Hispanics are

today. And Hispanics are not exactly fully integrated into the society. Now that's 50 years from now. That's my grandchildren's lifetime that we're talking about, and that seems very, very slow.

INSKEEP: John Logan, a demographer for Brown University concludes our series on cities in transition.

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