

Long Island News

Study: LI Still Among Most Segregated Regions in US

By Rashed Mian on February 24th, 2011

A study has found that Long Island has gotten slightly worse over the past decade in its standing as one of the most segregated metropolitan regions in the United States, according to researchers at Brown-Florida State University.

Researchers used a dissimilarity index that measures the integration of the 50 largest minority communities on a scale from 0 to 100, with any number 60 or higher considered very segregated. The study found that the segregation between whites and blacks on Long Island is 74.1, according to tract estimates from 2005 to 2009 from the Census Bureau American Community Survey. That number is up from 73.6 in 2000.

“Black, Hispanics and Asians, each are a pretty significant presence now in what used to be white suburbia,” said Brown University Professor John Logan, who formerly taught at Stony Brook University and published the study in December with Brian Stults of Florida State University.

Minorities make up 28 percent of the population on Long Island, but minority groups, especially blacks, are not moving into white neighborhoods, the study found.

“They’ll tend to live separately, and they’ll tend to live in the communities that are least likely to provide really good schools,” Logan said. “[They will live] where the crime rates are higher, where there’s more vacant housing.”

Although taxes on Long Island are some of the highest in the country, it’s not the cost of living that leads to segregation, Logan said.

“It’s not the ability to pay, although that contributes a little bit to it,” he said. “Mostly it’s not economic, it’s other things.”

Douglas Mayers, president of the Freeport/Roosevelt chapter of the NAACP, said the main problem is the economy and employment.

“Blacks [are] not being hired in a lot of facets here on Long Island,” Mayers said of both local business and government employers. “I blame the black elected officials that we have here across the Island.” He believes they’re not doing enough to help African-Americans get jobs.

Logan said there is a historic pattern of opposition to minority groups entering new communities. Some communities have developed a reputation as to whether they’re friendly or not, and that’s something minorities take into account when looking for a place to live, he said.

“If Puerto Ricans want to live in Brentwood, okay, but not in Port Jefferson,” Logan said. “Or if blacks have moved into Hempstead village, that’s okay, but not next door.”

Logan said there are hints of subconscious racism, but it’s mostly not outspoken.

“On the whole it’s more a response that these people speak a different language, and there’s something new and different and I don’t trust them, and I don’t like it,” he said.

Mayers doesn’t think that African-Americans have to move into white neighborhoods in order to live in a good community.

“I could make my neighborhood just as good as the white neighborhood,” Mayers said. “I don’t need to live in a white neighborhood, and we shouldn’t be pushing to live in a white neighborhood.”