Blacks

The fact that the maps show a large area of concentrated Black settlement exists in 2010 confirms indirectly the fact that Los Angeles County is still quite highly segregated between Blacks and Whites. (Scroll down to see three maps.) As measured by the index of dissimilarity the county is the fourteenth most highly segregated of the fifty U.S. metropolitan areas with the largest number of Blacks. Although its latest D-score is .65, segregation has slowly but steadily diminished over the last half century. Our calculations of the same statistic for 1960 showed Los Angeles County at that time was the second most segregated metropolitan area in the country, with .90 as its index of dissimilarity. Only Chicago was slightly more segregated in 1960.

Change. The desegregation since 1960 was most directly the result of Blacks moving slowly but steadily out of their segregated ghettos in 1960 and into what had been mostly White suburban neighborhoods. The map shows the most recent two decades of this out-movement.

The clusters of red dots shows that the major sources of the diminished numbers in L.A. County are the old Black concentrations or ghettos that had been built up in the days of segregated housing. In that period, from roughly 1920 through the 1960s, White society generally did not permit Blacks to own or rent housing outside certain areas. Together with discrimination in the job market and typically low levels of educational attainment, even Blacks who owned houses in these areas often did not have the money to maintain the housing very well. This resulted in increasingly poor and crowded housing in the ghettos. The largest ghetto was then known as South Central, as it was focused along Central Avenue, though now it is often referred to as South Los Angeles. Other segregated ghettos can be spotted on the map as the larger clusters of red dots (neighborhoods of Black decline): Pasadena and Altadena, Pacoima in the east San Fernando Valley, and old formerly segregated neighborhoods in Monrovia, Long Beach, and San Bernardino.

When segregation was weakening during the late 1960s, some middle-class Blacks moved westward into the Baldwin Hills or Inglewood into homes vacated by Whites. That is why on the map the largest cluster of red dots also includes on its fringes these more upscale Black populations. A close look at the map in these cities shows intricate patterns of change: Black populations in some neighborhood increased since 1990, but in other neighborhoods Black numbers decreased.
An even larger shift of Blacks brought them into more distant places. This dispersal really took off in the 1980s and, as the map shows, continued during the last two decades. In most cases Blacks are living in apartments and single-family houses formerly occupied by Whites. Blacks in the San Fernando Valley, for example, have become widely distributed, though primarily in neighborhoods where housing costs are relatively low or average. In more distant places like Lancaster, Palmdale, Victorville, and Moreno Valley some Blacks were able to purchase new homes, priced low because those locations meant long commutes to jobs.

This change map demonstrates very powerfully the wide dispersal of Blacks in Southern California in the last half-century. The dispersal has been made possible by the increased educational attainment of Blacks and by reduced employment and housing discrimination. Also important has been the fact that there have been many families – mostly Mexican immigrants and their children -- eager to rent or buy less expensive homes, many of which were in Black areas and owned by Blacks. The income from such home sales helped make possible Black movement to outlying areas.

We can highlight the importance of this Black suburbanization beyond Los Angeles County. Between 1990 and 2010 the number of Blacks in the five-county area increased by 1 percent. That small average change hides the fact that Blacks in Los Angeles County decreased by 14 percent during this period.

**Percentage and income.** Part of the former ghetto of South Central can be easily seen in on the map of Black percentage. However, the area that appears as red on the map actually represents a westward shift of the old ghetto a half century ago. The oldest and poorest housing had been east of Interstate 110, such as in Watts. As most Black residents left that area, Mexicans and other Latinos arrived. For several decades there has been a slowly diminishing percentage of Blacks in that eastern section. The map of household income shows that Blacks still living in this area are among the poorest Blacks in the L.A. area.

During this entire period most Whites had been moving westward or southward, partly to find newer housing in the suburbs and partly to avoid living in mostly Black neighborhoods. That latter motivation is usually called “White flight”. The departure of Whites opened up housing in places to the west like Baldwin Hills, Inglewood, Hawthorne, and Compton. In this way, the Black enclave has been steadily moving westward and southward.
As the map shows, Blacks are no longer the majority in tracts east of Interstate 110 and from Watts northward because of the in-motion of Latinos. But there still is a large area, shown in red, in which Blacks comprise at least 45 percent of the total population. The western side of that red area represents mostly a middle-class Black population, living in Windsor Hills, View Park, Baldwin Hills, and Inglewood. Blacks have also developed a strong social, cultural, and commercial focus in nearby Leimert Park.

Some of the old Black residential concentrations may have disappeared, apparently the case with Pacoima and Monrovia, for example. However, ethnic enclaves typically contain shops, churches, and professional offices catering to an ethnic clientele, and it’s likely that many of these service and commercial functions remain. In general, across the United States, suburbanization has meant the residential dispersal of ethnic populations while many of their churches and social and service institutions remain in the old ethnic neighborhoods.

The fact that some Blacks are dispersed into some higher-income neighborhoods with Whites is evidence of the partial breaking down of residential segregation. For example, such places are found around the fringe of the San Fernando Valley: in parts of Chatsworth, Santa Clarita, Lake View Terrace, and in the still somewhat hippy mountain community of Topanga.

Ventura and Orange have few Black residents compared to the other counties, a fact that can be seen indirectly on the large number of tracts shaded gray on the map of median income. The fact that so many tracts in these two counties contain fewer than 100 Blacks is probably due at least in part to higher home prices in those tracts. The greater Black population along the coast around Oxnard represents in part families connected with the U.S. Navy bases at Port Hueneme and Pt. Mugu.

See maps below.
Five-county 2010 population of Non-Hispanic Blacks is 1,170,986 and change in that population between 1990 and 2010 is an increase of 11,973.
Census 2010 race data are from SF1. 1990 estimates of race population in 2010 tracts are based on the 1990 Fullcount table created by John R. Logan, Zengwang Xu, and Brian Stults. http://www.s4.brown.edu/us2010/Researcher/Bridging.htm
Five-county population of Non-Hispanic Black or African American of a single race only is 1,170,986. Bar length indicates proportion of all valid tracts included in a category. In most cases a category includes 2, 3, 5, 10, 30, 40, or 50 percent of the included tracts. The bar length of the excluded tracts is not related to its tract count.
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