

DR. GREGORY: Former Senator Harris, staff of the Eisenhower Foundation, fellow panelists and, most of all, the audience that has been so attentive here and thought this important enough to come out, I would like to direct my comments to trends in the Detroit area, to racism here, and to some recommended priorities for the Kerner Commission to hopefully get on the national scene for discussion.

Permit me to begin with a personal note. I grew up and lived in the neighborhood of the Detroit civil uprising in 1967 and went to schools there. My parents still lived there until three years after the rebellion. My father had a tailoring, cleaning and pressing business a few blocks south of the starting point of the uprising on Twelfth Street, now called Rosa Parks Blvd. His store was looted and burned. My parents never recovered. Very disappointed by the loss of their major asset, with very little in retirement assets and previously in relatively good health, both my father and my mother died about 3 years after parts of Detroit went up in flames.

Scope

In the limited time assigned to me, I shall answer two questions, comment briefly on trends, race and racism, urban sprawl and segregation, and offer a few high priority recommendations. I shall try to minimize any duplication of the statements of the prior panelists' testimony today in Detroit.

Direct Answers to Explicit Questions

Yes, it is still true that the nation is moving toward two societies, one black and one white, separate and unequal, but with a modification. Within each so called race are class distinctions. The African American middle-class in large part has left concentrations of the disadvantaged and has disbursed to other selected central city or inner-ring areas or to the outer suburbs. Many others are in the process of moving out. Interestingly, too, there are more poor in the Detroit suburbs than there are in the city of Detroit now, but they tend to be concentrated in a few areas.

Yes. The 1968 Kerner Commission's conclusion that racism is deeply embedded in American society is still true but takes a more subtle form now. Racism is often not obvious, for it is institutionalized in the normal and routine behavior of entities in the metropolitan area. Racism is still as American as apple pie in the Detroit area. The existing huge disparities and segregation by race could not exist without it, both through the continuing legacies of the past, as well as current behavior.

Trends, Race and Racism

"Are we so different," an exhibit appearing at Detroit's Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History a few months ago, highlighted how the concept of race has been created artificially and historically. Christians in the sixteenth century had a huge conflict between their religious belief that all men are created in the image of god and their wish to profit through slave labor which permitted zero wages. The conflict was

resolved by the creation of the concept that darker skinned people were inferior. As described by W. E. B. Dubois, in his characterization of views of some whites, blacks were considered somewhere between men and cattle, and perhaps, one may add, closer to cattle.

Anthropologists trace all mankind to Africa, from which all of the current world populations descended. This has been found not to be inconsistent with current scientific advances in DNA analysis. Despite the absence of scientific evidence to justify racial differences physically, the discriminatory contrivance of race, as a concept to enable subjugation, has become embedded psychologically and culturally in the behavior by both African Americans and whites, as both sometimes act as though the concept of race is physically accurate.

concerning housing patterns, although it is not clear yet from census data, it is possible that many of the black out migrants in different areas of the suburbs are generally in neighborhoods where there are other African Americans, constituting what may develop into a small minority enclaves when whites begin flee. Residential integration has been defined as the period of time between the entrance of the first black person in a white neighborhood and the movement out of all but the last few white persons. the period of transition may be now taking somewhat longer than before the 1960s. Hence, a difference from 1967-8 is that there are now clusters of African Americans in several areas in the outer Detroit metropolis from which whites have not yet fled, perhaps due to black population inflows not yet reaching a tipping point. it is possible that some areas may remain diversified.

Re-gentrification is taking place in the central city, made up largely of young white persons and families without school-age children. the group that will be squeezed out as property taxes rise and are passed on in rents, becoming unaffordable, is the urban underclass. they obtain little assistance to uplift themselves to overcome the huge barriers to upward mobility. This neglect is by both middle class African Americans and whites.

Another change from 1967-8, as noted by Myron Orfield of the Institute of Research on Poverty at the University of Minnesota, is the development of several business clusters around the central city, but well away from it. Upscale residential and commercial communities develop around these business areas. Zoning requirements specifying large lots, low population densities and other features are techniques to institutionalize racial or class separation. this tends to keep out low income persons. it also helps to keep the poor concentrated in a few areas of the metropolis where the taxable capacity tends to be very low, as often is the quality and quantity of public and private services. Assessed values per student and other tax bases for middle and higher income whites, who are largely in these low density, restricted outer areas, can be multiples of those in poor areas, enabling much better financing for public services and a much higher quality of life.

Racism now is much more subtle than in 1967-8. Since groups find it a topic that is uncomfortable to discuss across racial lines, solutions are hard to reach. Complicating

such potential discussion is that racism is a two-sided coin. One side is the impact on African Americans in denying them respect, equality of opportunity, and resources such as adequate public and private services. The other side of the racism coin, that is often the subject of great denial, is *white privilege*. Former Texas Governor Ann Richards used to say that white men reach third base and think they hit a triple. Consider the case of the white person born into a line of descendants of slave holders who made vast sums using black involuntary free labor and passed such on to succeeding generations at compound interest. This is only one form of continuing white privilege. Neither side of the coin, black suppression or white privilege, can exist without the other. Hence both must be resolved simultaneously. Representative John Conyers has long sought, unsuccessfully, legislation for an entity to study this issue and make recommendations to the congress.

Urban Sprawl and Segregation

The resulting urban sprawl from migration patterns has the following effects. It raises the cost of public services throughout the metropolitan area by increasing the need for duplicative schools, police and fire stations, hospital facilities, utilities and other infrastructure such as roads, while facilities in the older areas still have to be maintained, but are underutilized. It also makes access to outer area jobs for those in poor areas through rapid transit very expensive because of the low population density. One measure of the huge sprawl in the Detroit area is that the growth in urban land area utilized by housing has far surpassed the growth in the metropolitan Detroit population in the last 40 years and may be continuing to do so.

A discouraging result of the sprawl, combined with inter-area distrust, is the difficulty of citizens in the various local governments collaborating with each other for reducing costs by sharing public services and tax bases. Performing some public functions that have large service areas on a regional basis would be cost saving; such services should however remain sensitive to the perspectives of persons within local areas of the region.

Nowhere is the institutionalization of racism so devastatingly apparent as when the variable *place* is introduced into the analysis of racial disparities. The location at which one is born determines the proportion of babies with low birth weight or exposed to lead poisoning, the quality of public services, the ability to get a good education, the amount of assets one is likely to inherit if one remains there, the jobs one is likely to have available, the availability of competitive commercial establishments to enable one to maximize the effectiveness of one's purchasing power, the availability of affordable housing and low cost transportation, the avoidance of crime, substance abuse and abusers, and so on. Seen in this light, residential segregation is a scourge on many African Americans and the poor as well as a source of great privilege for many white Americans for which all pay a high cost. Who knows what ghetto youngster, if provided the resources to rise to his or her potential, could discover the cure for cancer or a cheap and effective locally produced fuel substitute, thereby saving the auto industry.

It is neither a surprise nor a source of pride that Detroit is the most segregated metropolitan area in the U.S. Even more devastating is that there is no public effort in the

Detroit metropolitan or the State of Michigan to address widely and meaningfully involuntary segregation and sprawl.

An outsider viewing the metropolitan area would think that any major area-wide strategy to transform the Detroit region for a better future would discourage urban sprawl and encourage desegregation as major objectives. Yet, *One D*, a major and much publicized strategy for transforming metropolitan Detroit that is greatly supported by Detroit's white power structure, does not have these as a goal. Indeed, the only strategies relating to race in this area-wide plan are under the rubric of "*race relations*." This can be a vacuous and cosmetic term, unless it is defined well with performance measured by significant reductions accountably in racial disparities.

Effective regional strategies must also include combating racism, involuntary segregation and urban sprawl. They should also reduce significantly the underclass which now appears to be largely stuck at the bottom. These are persons not having a reasonable chance for a good life without often super-human personal effort to avoid numerous high barriers.

Other High Priority Recommendations

The Kerner Commission should recommend in its new report in 2008, reducing the disparities in imprisonment, sentencing, and promoting the case for more training and readjustment programs in prisons and after release to aid the incarcerated to adjust better. More extensive prisoner re-entry programs are urgent if costly recidivism, in both human and dollar terms, is to be avoided. Excessive prison expenditures reduce the funds that would otherwise be available for other greatly needed public services.

A related matter of great concern is the tendency in many states to privatize prisons. the impact of such prisons on recidivism is an issue. The motivation is for profits, rather than the successful re-entry of the prisoner to their communities and later good behavior. Also, the profitability of prisons as an industry leads to such entrepreneurs campaigning for longer sentences, more three strikes legislation, mandatory sentencing, tighter and less humane parole standards, and other measures that would increase incarceration and therefore profits. Private prison entrepreneurship has a built-in conflict with social responsibility and good outcomes for prisoners and society.

The pressures of living in low income areas, where there is much stress just to survive, lead to a disproportionate number of the developmentally disabled and the mentally ill and an inability to pay for such services. Programs aimed at these populations have been cut severely in recent years, as have most other social programs. At fault in large part is the crowding out due to the costs of the Iraq war, as well as the severe economic challenges in Michigan caused by globalization and the loss of auto market share, assisted by crippling polarization of legislators at the state level.

Numerous studies have shown that the distribution of income and wealth in the United States has worsened from a previously high level in the last three decades. The quality of

life achievable by a new born child is therefore an accident of the family into which one is born. Tax laws promoting this expanding inequality should be reversed and new laws enacted to create more of an equal chance for a child at birth. Legislation should consider a more progressive tax structure, closing loopholes benefiting the well-to-do and above all, an estate tax exempting those with estates below \$5.0 million, and with progressive rates on the nonexempt estates, ranging from about 45 to 75 percent. this exemption is large enough to remove all but a small number of wealthy estates from the tax.

The no child left behind program needs redesign, fewer tests and greater resources. substantial reductions in racial and other disparities would be achieved if this program were to achieve its aims and had better financing and supportive assistance for local districts without adequate resources. It must be observed that educating children in disadvantaged areas with many poor, one parent families can cost more per child than children from well-to-do areas with mostly intact families. Similarly, head start programs reach relatively few children and have been demonstrated to have an extraordinary high yield per dollar spent. they impact children at a critical stage when their brains are developing most rapidly.

Not to be understated is the need for increased regulations to deter exploitation of consumers impacted by sub-prime lending and other consumer exploitation. A fund should be developed to assist home owners, who are about to lose their homes because of the resetting of adjustable rates on their home mortgages to outlandish levels, to refinance their homes in a way not to benefit the exploitative lenders who enticed them into these unwise contracts. The costs for doing this should be borne by the exploitative lenders.

I leave to panelists here and in other cities recommendations for racial gap narrowing through economic policies spanning employment, work force development, minority business development, international trade policy and adjustment to globalism, health care, social security, fiscal and monetary policy. Also worthy of analysis are regulatory policies, particularly relating to communications, excessive greed, and electoral systems including fair voting standards. Perhaps, God willing, I shall be able to discuss these at the fiftieth anniversary of the original Kerner Commission Report.

Finally, I hope that the updated Kerner Commission Report will help launch a national discussion of these and other issues in a way that will lead America to approximate accomplishing Martin L. King's dream. Public policy decision makers seem to have their heads in the sand on these issues.

I thank the Kerner commission for coming to Detroit to begin the several urban panel hearings in this city.