

# Thirty-Year Retrospective

## The Status of the Black Community in Miami-Dade County

Prepared by:

The Metropolitan Center  
Florida International University

Prepared for:

The Metro Miami Action Plan (MMAP)



The Metropolitan Center  
150 SE 2nd Avenue, Suite 500, Miami, FL 33131  
Office: 305.349.1442 Fax: 305.349.1271  
[metropolitan.fiu.edu](http://metropolitan.fiu.edu)

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Metro Miami Action Plan (MMAP) is an agency of Miami-Dade County government “committed to addressing the socio-economic disparity of Miami-Dade County’s Black community by advocating and coordinating initiatives and programs for the benefit of the community-at-large.” At the time of MMAP’s inception, it was a low point in race relations in Miami-Dade County and a great sense of distrust in the Black community existed, as a direct result of the McDuffie riots in the early 1980’s. In 1983 MMAP commissioned the first *Comprehensive Analysis* in order to “address and eradicate the disparities existing in the Black communities.” The report also made recommendations to overcome the disparities in economics, jobs, education, housing, and criminal justice. This baseline analysis was updated in 1993 and these baseline indices were revisited in 2006-2007 when MMAP retained the consulting services of the Metropolitan Center at Florida International University (FIU) to prepare and complete an *Assessment of the Black Community* with the goal to examine and update these indices in order to determine the existing disparities within Miami-Dade County’s Black communities.

Disparity, which we define as the occurrence of a large spread or significant difference between the group and overall population, was measured at the County level with a focus on four Commission Districts, 1, 2, 3, and 9, which have a significant concentration of Black population. The data collected for this study provides a “snapshot” of the local conditions based on an analysis of factors such as economic development, including employment, income and housing; education; criminal justice; and healthcare. All data points were compared to the goals and objectives as set-forth by MMAP to gauge progress over approximately 30 years. As a result, the study is intended to serve as an informational tool to allow for further progress to take place toward the goal of redressing racial disparity. As the 1983 report emphasized, “a community polarized along ethnic and economic lines cannot prosper.”

This latest version of the study reveals the persistence of the basic disparities between racial and ethnic communities that existed in Miami-Dade County in 1983. The Metropolitan Center used 16 indices from the original 1983 assessment. Thirty years later, the FIU Metropolitan Center report finds that: in seven (7) of these indicators of racial disparity, there has been improvement; in four (4) of these indicators, the situation has remained the same; and in five (5) the disparity has actually worsened. Miami-Dade County over the last thirty years has only made modest progress toward the goal of eradicating the economic and social disparity between the Black community and the Miami-Dade community-at-large.

A simple way to show this modest improvement in racial disparity is to create a matrix that compares the findings reported by MMAP in their previous 1983 and 1993 studies, and then update these indices with the best available data. This matrix will serve to show trends in racial disparity between Miami-Dade’s Black community and the other communities that comprise the County. The 2007 *Black Communities Assessment* uses the information in this matrix as a baseline and reports beyond these values to expand on prior efforts by MMAP. This report determines disparity based on demographic trends, economic opportunities and employment, access to housing, access to education, the disproportionate representation of Blacks in the criminal justice system, and access to public healthcare.

A major difference between the Metropolitan Center report and the previous disparity studies was the inclusion of a scientific public opinion poll of 600 Black residents in which attitudes toward racial disparity were gauged. The finding of this survey indicated an intense level of anxiety about the future of Miami-Dade’s Black community. Nearly 47% of those surveyed believed the future prospects for Black youths in the area are either poor or unsatisfactory. Respondents also felt that the Miami-Dade County Public Schools System has failed to serve the interests of Black students. However, most respondents believed the situation regarding discrimination and segregation has improved significantly.

Progress toward the eradication of disparity was made in the economic and educational areas. The Metropolitan Center research team found a slight improvement in the median family income of Blacks countywide. Since 1990, the gap between Blacks’ median family income and the rest of the County has narrowed, from 28.2% in 1989 to 21.5% in 2005. Impressively, the percentage of Black-owned businesses has increased over 600% since 1983. The other area where there has been significant progress has been in education. The dropout rate of Black students diminished from 8.9% in 1993 to 6.1% in 2005. Moreover, the number of dropout prevention programs skyrocketed from one (1) in 1983 to sixty-eight (68) today.

The modest progress in these areas is occurring at the same time that significant challenges remain in the areas of housing and criminal justice. The South Florida real estate boom has widened the housing affordability gap for housing for most Miami-Dade Blacks in relation to other racial and ethnic groups in the County. For example, in 2005, the high point of the South Florida real estate boom, the countywide affordability gap for all racial and ethnic groups was \$93,208, while the affordability gap for Blacks countywide was \$130,117. Given these grim numbers, it is not surprising that according to the March 2007 survey of 600 Black-Americans in Miami-Dade County, housing affordability has replaced education as the top priority for the community.

The other issue where little progress has been made is access to public healthcare. Miami-Dade County had one of the highest Black/White death rate ratios (>3.5) and the highest death-rates for Blacks in the nation. Since the 1993 report, Blacks in Miami-Dade County continue to hold the highest rates of infant mortality, and health problems related to hypertension, adult diabetes, obesity, and HIV. Sadly, the Metropolitan Center report also found that the number of Black female householder families with children living in poverty in 2000 (34.5%) continues to be disproportionate to White female householders. Moreover, while nearly 80% of non-Latin White households are married-couple families, only 40% of Black families are married-couples.

One of the most critical findings of this study is the indication that there is a Black "Brain Drain" occurring in Miami-Dade County. The March 2007 survey showed that many young Black professionals are leaving the County. Over 30% of survey respondents have plans to leave the County. Those young Blacks who have expressed their desire to leave are among the community's most talented and brightest. These include: 41% of Blacks earning between \$60,000-\$80,000; 39.2% of Blacks with college degrees; and 36.1% of Blacks describing themselves as upper-middle class. This evidence of young talented Blacks leaving Miami-Dade County is supported by some of the demographic figures. The flight of talented Black youth from Miami-Dade County will have a profound impact on the economic viability of all communities.

The 2007 report, whenever possible, showed trends comparing indices in 1983, 1983, and the latest available data. The Metropolitan Center's report employed several methods of gathering data to provide a comparative analysis of disparity between 1983 and the present. The Metropolitan Center began its conducted a demographic analysis utilizing countywide data, US Census figures, and additional data from the Agency for Workforce Innovation, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and various other resources that provide population data. The research team classified data by standard demographic variables including race, age, and gender. In addition, standard socio-economic variables such as educational attainment, income, and poverty levels were used to show disparity between predominantly Black communities from other race populations in Miami-Dade County.

### Summary Matrix: Thirty-Year Analysis

	TREND	1983	1993	PRESENT
<b>Housing</b>				
Availability of Affordable Housing	Worsened	Critical Shortage	Shortage exacerbated by Hurricane Andrew also causing homelessness	\$130,000 Housing Affordability Gap for Blacks countywide
<b>Economic Development and Employment</b>				
The median family income compared to overall County median	Slightly Improved	70%	60%	78%
Percent below the poverty level	Remained the same	28.8%	28.7%	28.6%
Level of Black unemployment compared to County workforce	Worsened	7.3%	12.5%	14.9%
Percent of businesses ownership	Improved	1.4%	1.5%	9.53%
Number of persons working for Black owned businesses	Improved	2,323 (.36% of labor force)	2,891 (.41% of labor force)	16,783 (1.98% of labor force)
<b>Education</b>				
Percent of disciplinary action	Improved	60%	52.8%	15.9%
Rate of school suspensions	Improve: <i>Indoor</i> Remains the same: <i>Outdoor</i>	50%	41% indoor 53% outdoor	37.2% indoor 51.4% outdoor
Enrollment in Advanced Courses	Improved	9% gifted	21% gifted 9.8% advanced	14.1% gifted 15.5% advanced
Drop out prevention programs	Improved	1	26	68
<b>Criminal Justice</b>				
Perceived treatment under the law	Remained the same	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unequal treatment</li> <li>• Denied right to jury of peers</li> <li>• Killers of Blacks don't worry about death penalty</li> <li>• Underrepresented within system</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unequal treatment</li> <li>• Denied right to jury of peers</li> <li>• Killers of Blacks don't worry about death penalty</li> <li>• Underrepresented within system</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unequal treatment</li> <li>• Denied right to jury of peers</li> <li>• Underrepresented within system</li> </ul>
Incarceration of Black youth	Worsened	Disproportionate number	42% of all arrests 62% of all incarcerations	51.7% of all arrests
Occurrence of homicide rates	Remained the Same	7-8 times higher than rates among whites	Significantly higher than rates among whites	Significantly higher than rates among whites
<b>Health and Human Services</b>				
Health Conditions	Worsened	N/A*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited access to primary healthcare</li> <li>• Highest rate of non urgent emergency room use &amp; primary care clinics</li> </ul>	Holds one of the highest Black/White death-rate ratios in the nation (>3.5)
Reports of overall conditions in the Black community	Worsened	N/A*	Holds highest rates of infant mortality, teenage births, violent trauma, tuberculosis, and newly reported AIDS cases	Holds highest rates of infant mortality, hypertension, adult diabetes, obesity, and HIV related cases & deaths

\* MMAP did not address the issue of Health and Human Services in its first report.

## KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Metropolitan Center's 2007 report has several important findings that point to the persistence of racial inequality and disparity for Miami-Dade County's Black communities. These findings present a challenge to the political and business leaders of our community, as they attempt to mitigate racial and ethnic tensions. In addition, some of the report's findings have severe implications for the economic prosperity of the entire Miami-Dade Community.

### Metropolitan Center's 2007 Report Key Findings:

1. Major disparities continue to exist between Miami-Dade's Black communities and other ethnic and racial groups that live in the County.
2. The Black "Brain Drain": talented Black professionals are leaving the County
3. An increasing number of Black children in Miami-Dade County are being raised by single mothers or by their grandparents.
4. Countywide participation of Blacks in the labor force has decreased in absolute terms since 1990.
5. Black unemployment increased from 4.9% in 1980 to 9.4% in 2005.
6. Black professionals are increasingly reliant on the public sector as for employment.
7. Blacks are dramatically underrepresented in the Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate sector, which are relatively high-paying.
8. Middle and working-class Black families have been disproportionately affected by the housing affordability crisis.
9. 28.6% of Blacks still live in poverty.
10. The Miami-Dade Public School system is a major source of employment for Black professionals
11. Blacks hold the highest dropout rate, at 8.8%
12. Blacks comprise the largest percentage and number of students in alternative education
13. Blacks in Miami-County suffer from higher rates of diabetes, infant mortality, (3) HIV/AIDS, (4) obesity, (5) injury and violence prevention, and (6) heart disease and stroke,
14. The number of Black-owned businesses continues to rise in Miami-Dade County:
  - In 1992, there were 10,387 Black-owned businesses. In 2002, there were 28,359.
15. Receipts from Black-owned businesses doubled from \$800 million to over \$1.6 billion from 1992 to 2002.
16. Median family income for Black households has increased from 1999 to 2005 by approximately 10%.

## Recommendations

The Metro Miami Action Plan (MMAP), through its programs and services, can take pride in the growth of Black-owned businesses. One of MMAP's original missions was to stimulate economic development within the Black community by assisting in the proliferation, development, and sustainability of Black-owned businesses. Nearly one-third of all MMAP activities have been dedicated to this mission. However, as the key findings illustrate, the Black community now faces new challenges.

MMAP is ideally situated among government agencies to assist in reversing the Black "Brain Drain." The challenge that Miami-Dade County's Black community faces today is to retain its professional middle-class. This should be a priority for MMAP as the flight of Black young professionals will have a direct impact on the future economic viability of Miami-Dade County at-large. The flight of Miami-Dade's Black professionals can be attributed to: Their perception that there are severe limitations to their economic advancement within Miami's private corporate sector; the lack of affordable professional housing, and low quality K-12 public education.

In the tradition of MMAP's first two reports, the research team makes the following recommendations:

1. Expand networking opportunities for Black entrepreneurs by promoting programs such as the South Dade's Small Business Capitalization Initiative, the Black Consumer Marketing Conference, and the Great Miami Chamber's Business Empowerment Network Series
2. Create 75 internships for Black college students in the fields of Business, Finance, and Real Estate- High-paying jobs in which Blacks are currently underrepresented.
3. Collaborate with local universities and Florida's traditional Black colleges to create scholarships in the fields of Business, Finance, and Real Estate.
4. Design a Mentor Program that pairs successful Black entrepreneurs with newly graduated Blacks
5. Expand current programs on Financial Literacy within Miami-Dade County Public Schools
6. Advocate for more public spending on education, especially K-12.
7. Develop a Black equivalent to Leadership Miami and Leadership Florida to create networking opportunities for young professionals.
8. Encourage and advocate large businesses to offer housing subsidies for their professional Black employees. For example, the programs the Baptist Hospital and University of Miami currently offer many of their middle-class employees.

This report shows that Miami-Dade County's Blacks are still plagued by poverty and disparity. If Miami-Dade government does not work to reverse the factors that have led to the "Brain Drain," poverty within the Black community will perpetuate. Thus, if out-migration of young Black professionals is not stemmed, Miami-Dade's Black communities will deteriorate into a haven of the Black underclass. This would further marginalize Miami-Dade's Blacks from the rest of the community.