



Health

As part of the ongoing collaborative efforts of the Chicago Freedom Movement 40th Anniversary Steering Committee and Loyola University Chicago's Center for Urban Research and Learning (CURL), we are pleased to be able to provide the following research brief.

This document, 1 of 5 summary documents prepared by CURL researchers, provides a snapshot of current and historical data on key social indicators - education, health, employment & income, crime and criminal justice system, and housing. In addition, we are providing a summary document that combines all of these issue areas into one brief report entitled "*Segregation in Chicago 2006.*"

As you may know, these same issues were addressed forty years earlier in the Chicago Freedom Movement, led by Martin Luther King and Al Raby.

List of Health Demands of 1966 Chicago Freedom Movement

1. Massive testing of Chicago youth for dangerous exposure to lead.
2. Acknowledgement of the dangers of exposure to lead and recognition of the crippling effects of lead poisoning.
3. Legislation to eliminate lead paint and other sources of lead poisoning.
4. A saturation program of increased garbage collection, street cleaning and building inspection service in the slum areas.

As can be seen in most recent studies, the modest gains of that time have not been enough. In particular, research from three recent studies show the current and continuing racial and economic segregation by neighborhood in metropolitan Chicago.

The reports are:

Separate, Unequal: Race, Place, Policy, and the State of African American Chicago. Paul Street, Chicago Urban League, 2005.

The Segregation of Opportunities. John Lukehart, Leadership Council for Metropolitan Open Communities, 2005.

Minding the Gap: An Assessment of Racial Disparity in Metropolitan Chicago. The Human Relations Foundation/Jane Addams Policy Initiative in collaboration with the Center for Urban Research and Learning, Loyola University Chicago, 2003.

Just as this movement calls for the mobilization of communities, we must also utilize and mobilize knowledge. In doing so, the movement possesses the supporting data for a renewed challenge to racial segregation.

All research briefs can be found at www.cfm40.org



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Health and Health Care Issues at and Around the Chicago Freedom Movement

Air Pollution+

- In the 1960s, Chicago averaged more than six thousand citizen air pollution complaints per year.
- In 1967 the U.S. Public Health Service determined that only New York City's air was more polluted than Chicago's.
- The Loop, the Calumet Region, and northern Lake County, Indiana, were the most polluted districts in the metropolitan area.

The Lead Epidemic+

- The prevalence and effects of lead poisoning were greatly underestimated prior to the 1960s.
- Lead paint, at the time common in older and low income housing, was the most common source of lead poisoning. Most often it entered the body through ingestion or inhalation.
- Children are more likely to ingest or inhale lead from paint dust because of their close proximity to the ground and frequent hand-to-mouth behavior.
- Long-term, low level effects of lead poisoning can result in problems with speech, learning, attention, behavior, and mental processing, and chronic high levels of lead exposure can lead to anemia, visible tooth damage, changes in kidney function, and nervous system damage resulting in seizures, comas, and death.
- Lead paint disproportionately affected urban children who frequently lived amidst rundown conditions with chipped and peeling paint.
- In 1970, the Surgeon General officially recognized lead poisoning as a potential health problem for the first time.
- The Lead Paint Poisoning Prevention Act of 1971 prohibited the use of lead-based paint in federal buildings and housing units and in the manufacturing of cooking utensils, toys, and furniture.

Housing Concerns

- Many issues related to the quality of housing and the resources offered by the surrounding community negatively impact the health of the African American in Chicago
- As of 1970 17% of black households in Chicago are considered overcrowded, an improvement from 27% percent in 1960 but still dramatically higher than that of the white population (7% in 1970, 8% in 1960).*
- In 1970, Chicago's African American population included more than twice as many single-parent families (35%) as the non-African American population (17%).*
- Disproportionately African American neighborhoods tend to have the least access to health care facilities, pharmacies, and recreational space. Furthermore those resources available to them were often of inferior quality. °
- These neighborhoods are also most likely to be underserved by municipal services such as trash collection and other custodial services.°

+The Electronic Encyclopedia of Chicago. Chicago Historical Society, 2005.

* Chicago's Black Population: Selected Statistics. Barbara Enwell. City of Chicago Department of Development and Planning, 1975.

° Negroes in cities. Karl and Alma Taeuber, Aldine Publishing Co: Chicago. 1965

Health in Chicago Today

Disparities in healthcare are growing in the Chicago region due largely to the lack of access to medical care, screenings, and education, all of which are more difficult for people of color to access. Economic and social factors have combined to leave minority communities prone to greater risk of illness, ailment, and disease and without the care to manage these problems.

- African Americans are the least likely to have their own doctor and seek medical care from a doctors office and are more likely to use health centers and hospital emergency rooms. *
- The rates of uninsured, elderly African Americans and Latinos are above the national average of 20%.*
- Compared to the general population, African American neighborhoods have disproportionately less access to healthcare including hospitals, clinics, health professionals, and reputable pharmacies. +
- Throughout the region “persons of color are less likely to be employed in places where the employer provides health insurance.” *

General Health

- Chicago has the highest asthma death rate for African Americans in the country. In Chicago, African Americans are nearly five times more likely to die from asthma as Caucasians. *
- African American males account for more incidences of cancer than all other ethnic and racial groups. As of 1997, the mortality rate for African American women with breast cancer was almost double that of Caucasians. +
- African Americans account for only 15.1% of the population of Chicago but account for 50% of AIDS positive individuals. *
- It is believed that mental health problems are distributed evenly across racial and ethnic groups (Surgeon General, DSMV IV-R) minority groups, however, have less access to mental health screening and services. The treatment they do receive is often of poorer quality than that received by Caucasians. +
- In 1997 26.9% of African American births and 16.9% of Latino births – compared to 5.4% of Caucasian births – were to teenage mothers. *
- Between 1994 and 1996, 9 out of every 10 children who died accidentally were minority children. *
- The 15 Chicago community areas with the most unlicensed caregivers are all communities of color. +

The Obesity Epidemic

- The rate of obesity and morbid obesity is rising across virtually all racial and ethnic groups, but it is rising most rapidly in African American and low income neighborhoods. +
- The obesity problem is largely the result of the lack of access to resources needed to live a healthy lifestyle. Due to the lack of full service grocery stores, there is an over reliance on corner stores which are less likely to have fresh fruit and vegetables and instead offer processed, salty, and fatty foods. +
- There is also a lack of resources that promote active lifestyles including gyms, playgrounds, and organized youth sports. This, in turn, leads to problems connected to obesity, unhealthy diet, and sedentary lifestyles such as heart disease and obesity. +∞

Now it's Your Turn

If you're looking for more information or would like to be part of the solution, below are some groups doing work in this field. Please contact them to find out how you can get involved in making Chicago a more prosperous, egalitarian, and peaceful city. For more great organizations that could use your time and energy, view the complete list of Chicago Freedom Movement Friends and Allies at www.cfm40.org

AIDS Foundation of Chicago

We collaborate with community organizations to develop and improve HIV/AIDS services; fund and coordinate prevention, care, and advocacy projects; and champion effective, compassionate HIV/AIDS policy.

www.aidschicago.org

312.922.2322

Alternatives, Inc.

Alternatives, Inc. is dedicated to assisting individuals with special needs reach their highest level of independence and integration into the community by providing residential opportunities coupled with comprehensive support services.

www.alternativesinc.org

908.685.1444

Howard Brown Health Center

Howard Brown is the Midwest's premier lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) health care organization, and leads the region in addressing the comprehensive health care needs of people in the LGBT community.

www.howardbrown.org

773.388.1600

The Rainbow Push Coalition

The Rainbow Push Coalition's AIDS Initiative seeks to combat the ever expanding AIDS epidemic through a multipart strategy embracing lobbying, public awareness, community building, and research.

www.rainbowpush.org

773.373.3366

TASC (Treatment Alternatives for Safe Communities)

TASC is a not-for-profit organization that provides behavioral health recovery management services for individuals with substance abuse and mental health disorders.

www.tasc-il.org

312.787.0208

West Side Health Authority

The Health Promotions Department at the Westside Health Authority is to use the capacity and knowledge of Austin residents to assist them in choosing a healthier lifestyle.

www.healthauthority.org

773.378-1878

*This report was prepared by the Center for Urban Research and Learning
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More information on Loyola CURL can be found at www.luc.edu/curl

