

# LOSING GROUND

A disturbing yet compelling portrait of a state where black and Latino residents are falling further and further behind their white counterparts.

That state is Colorado.

A special report from the I-News Network  
at Rocky Mountain PBS



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Community leaders, politicians and researchers offer their views on racial and ethnic disparities in Colorado. *Click on a name to go directly to that interview.* All interviews have been edited and abridged for context and length.

**Ray Aguilera** Former president of the Pueblo City Council

**Alan Berube** Brookings Institution's Metropolitan Policy Program, research director

**Hank Brown** Former U.S. senator from Colorado

**Sal Carpio** Former Denver city councilman, community leader

**Amitabh Chandra** Professor of public policy at Harvard

**Jim Chavez** Executive director of the Latin American Educational Foundation

**Dr. Carolyn Chen** Medical doctor and director of the Pecos Street clinic of Clinica Family Health Services

**Josh Downey** Political director of Service Employees International Union Local 105

**Barry Fagin** Senior fellow with the Independence Institute

**John Fleck** President of the Denver Area Labor Federation

**Corrine Fowler** Economic justice director for the Colorado Progressive Coalition

**Les Franklin** Longtime black community activist and founder of the Shaka Franklin Foundation

**Marianne Franklin** President and executive director of the Shaka Franklin Foundation and daughter of the late civil rights activist James Ward

**Rabbi Hillel Goldberg** Executive editor of the Intermountain Jewish News

**Rudy Gonzales** Executive director of Servicios de la Raza, and son of the late civil rights activist Corky Gonzales

**Michael Hancock** Mayor of Denver

**Quincy Hines** Regional director of BarberShop Talk, a mentorship organization for males

**Dr. Ashish Jha** Professor of health policy and management at the Harvard School of Public Health

**Grant Jones** Founder and executive director of the Center for African American Health in Denver

**Christelyn D. Karazin** Founder and organizer of the advocacy group No Wedding No Womb!

**The Rev. Leon Kelly** Anti-gang activist in Denver

**William King** Retired black studies professor at the University of Colorado

**Jaekyung Lee** Professor at the University at Buffalo

**Rita Lewis** President of Denver Branch of the NAACP

**Paul Lopez** Denver city councilman

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**Dr. Levester Lyons** President of the Aurora Branch of the NAACP

**Christine Marquez-Hudson** Director of the Mi Casa Resource Center & co-chair of the Denver Latino Commission

**Ramona Martinez** Former Denver city councilwoman

**Ron Montoya** Denver businessman and community leader

**Eric Nelson** Vice president of the Aurora NAACP and vice president of the NAACP state conference of Colorado, Wyoming, Utah and Montana

**Gary Orfield** Professor in the School of Law at University of California, Los Angeles and co-director of the Civil Rights Project

**Debbie Ortega** Denver city councilwoman

**Jonathan Rothwell** Senior research associate and associate fellow at the Brookings Institution's Metropolitan Policy Program

**Isabel V. Sawhill** Senior fellow at the Brookings Institution in Washington, D.C., and co-author of a number of papers on economic disparities

**Dr. Mark Schuster** Professor of pediatrics at Harvard Medical School

**Abel Tapia** Former state senator from Pueblo

**Landri Taylor** President and CEO of Denver Urban League

**Dr. Amal Trivedi** Medical doctor who practices in several states, a researcher who has been published in the New England Journal of Medicine and a faculty member at Brown University

**Dick Wadhams** Political consultant and former chairman of the Colorado Republican Party

**Soul Watson** Syndicated writer and radio personality with national show on progressive issues that airs on Free Speech TV

**Wellington Webb** Former Denver mayor

**Theo Wilson** District executive with BarberShop Talk, a mentorship organization for males

**Maria Young** Head of CPLAN, a small Colorado company that provides services and training to professional immigrants, with clients from more than 20 countries

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Find ways to join – or even lead – a conversation about these topics that are so important to our state.

## About *Losing Ground*

*Losing Ground* is the culmination of 18 months of investigative reporting done by a veteran team of award-winning journalists at the I-News Network, the public service journalism arm of Rocky Mountain PBS.



**Laura Frank, founder and executive director**, is a Denver native whose work has been recognized in both broadcast and print, including a Top 10 Pulitzer finalist and an Emmy award for public television documentary production. Her research-based reporting has helped change laws and lives.

**Burt Hubbard, editorial director**, is well-known in the journalism world for his data analysis skills. He is enshrined in the Scripps Howard Editorial Hall of Fame and has twice been a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize.

**Joe Mahoney, multimedia director**, is a two-time Pulitzer-winning photographer, Emmy-winning documentary producer and journalism trainer. He began his career at The Associated Press and worked as a Rocky Mountain News photographer for a decade.

**Jim Trotter, program director**, has edited Pulitzer Prize-winning articles and an Emmy-winning documentary. He's been a metro newspaper columnist and a public affairs TV show editorial director. He was senior editor for enterprise at the Rocky Mountain News, then oversaw enterprise reporting in 13 western states for The Associated Press.

**Kevin Vaughan, senior reporter**, is known for his narrative storytelling skills. He has been a Pulitzer Prize finalist and reported many of Colorado's most important news stories during two decades as a reporter at four Colorado newspapers: The Fort Morgan Times, The Coloradoan in Fort Collins, the Rocky Mountain News and The Denver Post.

**Ann Carnahan Espinola, contributing reporter**, was part of a Rocky Mountain News team whose coverage of a fatal wildfire was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize. She has won numerous awards and was the first Rocky Mountain News reporter to be inducted into the Scripps Howard Editorial Hall of Fame.

This report was made possible in part with support from The Colorado Health Foundation and The French American Foundation. I-News used the Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) unweighted from the Minnesota Population Center at the University of Minnesota to do parts of the Census data analysis.

Share *Losing Ground*



**COLORADO HAS A RICH HISTORY WHEN IT COMES TO CIVIL RIGHTS.** Major civil rights efforts for women, African Americans, Native Americans, Latinos and people with disabilities have occurred here.

After the civil rights movements of the 1960s, Colorado was one of the more equitable places in the nation for minorities. That began to change, however, in the 1980s and 1990s. To understand where Colorado is headed in the future, it's important to understand both the past and the present.

I-News has analyzed decades of records and conducted dozens of interviews to bring this story to the public.

The story you read here is the reality in Colorado today. But the state's residents don't have to resign themselves to a future of every-widening disparities. There are steps that can be taken – individually and as a matter of public policy – that experts agree can begin to turn the trend in the other direction. It won't be easy and it won't be quick, but it can be done.



**Laura Frank**

I-News executive director &  
vice president of news, Rocky Mountain PBS

# Part One: Colorado's Minorities

By BURT HUBBARD and ANN CARNAHAN ESPINOLA

I-News Network

..... “I was actually shocked. You would think we as a nation would have overcome a lot of things since then. It’s like, ‘Wow! We’re spinning our wheels going in reverse.’ ” .....

— Eric Nelson, vice president of the Aurora NAACP, after reviewing the I-News analysis



**Angel Castro's son, Aaron, 3, watches television at their Englewood apartment. The little boy has already lived in 10 different shelters, hotel rooms and apartments. JOE MAHONEY/I-NEWS**

**BY SOME OF THE MOST IMPORTANT MEASURES OF SOCIAL PROGRESS,** black and Latino residents of Colorado have lost ground compared to white residents in the decades since the civil rights movement.

Minority gains made during the 1960s and 1970s have eroded with time, an I-News Network analysis of six decades of demographic data from the U.S. Census Bureau found. In other categories, the gaps between whites and minorities have steadily widened since 1960.

The analysis focused on family income, poverty rates, high school and college graduation and home ownership (*see graphic, page 11*). Health data and justice records examined also revealed disparities.



Similar racial and ethnic inequities appear nationwide. But one glaring fact about Colorado is that it went from a state that was by most measures more equitable than the national average in the first decades covered by the analysis to one that is less so now.

According to most experts, racial and ethnic inequality will pose a significant future handicap for a state in which minorities are a rising population.

“I was actually shocked,” said Eric Nelson, vice president of the Aurora NAACP, after examining the data analysis. “You would think we as a nation would have overcome a lot of things since then. It’s like, ‘Wow! We’re spinning our wheels going in reverse.’”

There are important caveats, of course, including the decades-long rise of professional classes among both blacks and Latinos and striking examples of individual wealth and achievement. Minorities have made gains in a number of categories, as well, but even in those have not kept pace.

By the broad gauge of the Census measure, recent decades have not been kind to aspirations of equality by the state’s minority residents. Almost 50 years after Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his generation-defining “I have a dream” speech, income and education gaps have remained stubbornly high:

- In 1970, for example, black families earned 73 percent of white family incomes and Latino families earned 72 percent. By 2010, those numbers had fallen to about 60 percent and 50 percent, respectively.
- Almost 60 percent of Latino households were owner-occupied in 1970; now it’s just beneath 50 percent. Most experts attribute an immigration influx with pulling down Latino numbers.
- The gaps among adults with college degrees have steadily widened since 1960, with the percent of whites with college degrees three times higher than the Latino rate and double the black rate. Those disparities are the nation’s worst for both Latinos and blacks.

Among more positive trends, 86 percent of black adults had graduated from high school in 2010, up from 31 percent in 1960. Latinos have also improved high school graduation rates through the decades, but still lagged badly at 65 percent, compared to 95 percent for whites, in 2010.



For other minority groups in Colorado, their numbers were too small to statistically compare, particularly during the early decades of the analysis.

**POVERTY, INCOME AND EDUCATION GAPS IN THE STATE** parallel other important disparities outlined in many studies that show blacks and Latinos lagging behind whites in one critical measure of health after another.

The U.S. Census Bureau only began tracking data about health insurance in recent years and does not collect other information about overall health. But data compiled by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment over the past 15 years shows that the state's ethnic minorities do not fare as well as white residents when it comes to disease and death.

**“We’re sicker than most and dying sooner than we should.”**

—Grant Jones, founder and executive director of the Center for African American Health in Denver

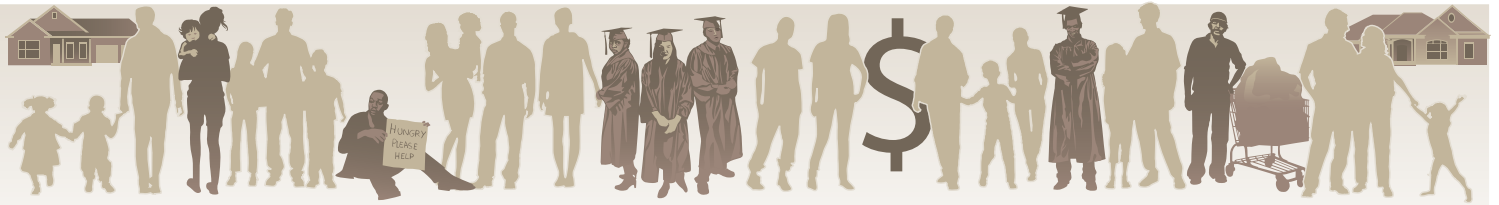
Blacks and Latinos, for example, experience significantly higher rates of infant mortality and deaths from diseases such as diabetes than whites in Colorado.

“The general statement that I make is, we’re sicker than most and dying sooner than we should,” said Grant Jones, founder and executive director of the Center for African American Health in Denver.

The implications of inequality for the future are enormous: The number of minority babies being born nationally recently eclipsed that of whites, and, in Colorado, 46 percent of children under one year of age in 2011 were minorities, the Census Bureau reported.

That holds economic consequences in the future for all Colorado residents.

Latinos are the largest minority group, comprising 21 percent of the population in 2011, compared to 4 percent for blacks and 70 percent for whites.



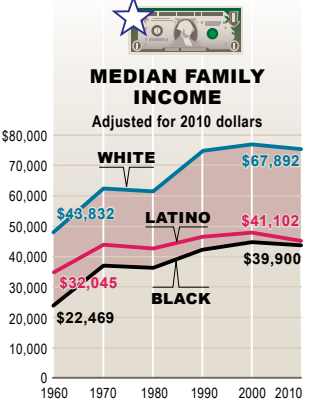
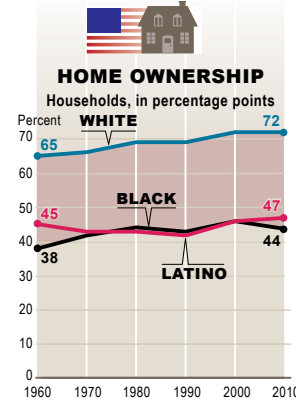
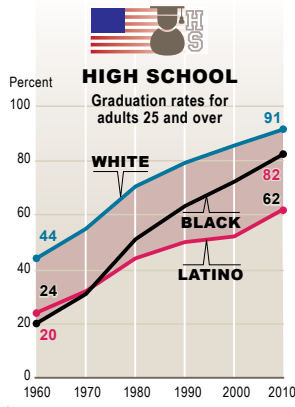
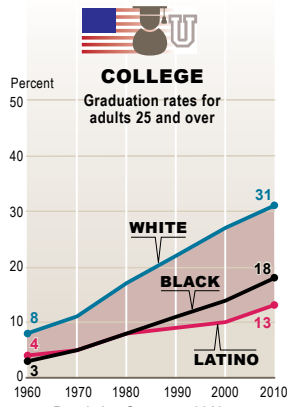
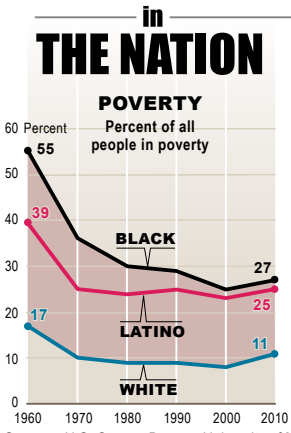
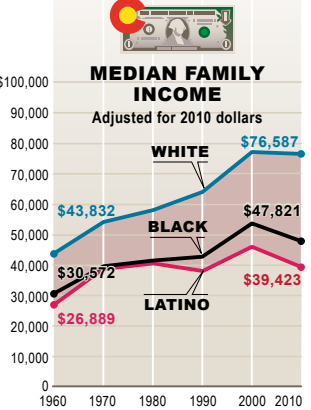
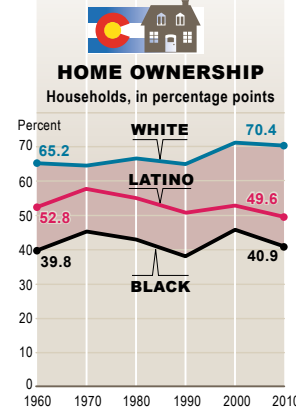
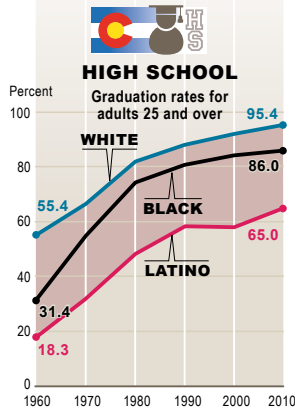
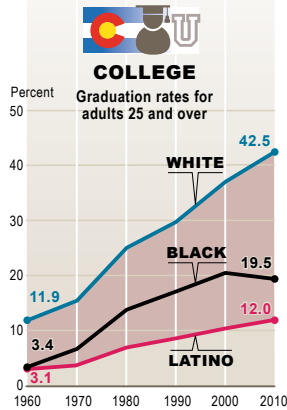
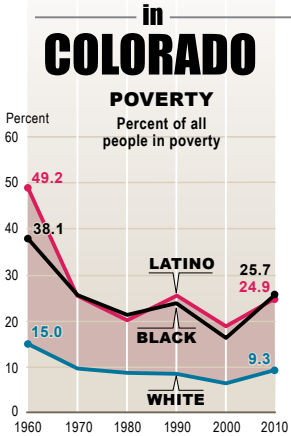
# LOSING GROUND

Latino and black residents of Colorado are falling further behind the state's white residents in some of the most important measures of social progress. An I-News Network analysis of six decades of U.S. Census data shows that the gaps between the three communities narrowed somewhat during the years surrounding the civil rights movement, but have widened in the decades since.

In 1970, for example, black families could expect to earn about 73 percent of what white families earned, while Latino families earned about 71 percent. By 2010, those figures had fallen to about 60 percent and about 50 percent, respectively. The I-News analysis also looked at poverty rates, high school and college graduation, and home ownership. Health data and justice figures examined also

showed disparities.

There are important caveats, of course, but by the broad gauge of the Census measure, recent decades have not been kind to aspirations of equality by Colorado's minority residents.



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, University of Minnesota Population Center, and I-News research

[Click to see a larger version of this graphic.](#)

MICHAEL HALL/I-NEWS

I-News explored the social phenomena behind the numbers with community activists and politicians, researchers from liberal and conservative think tanks, educators, church leaders and people in the street. The reasons given for the gaps were myriad and complex. They are rooted in history and intergenerational in nature.



**Political leaders join marchers along Colfax Avenue for a parade on Martin Luther King Day in Denver on Jan. 15, 1990. Colorado went from a state that was by most measures more equitable than the national average in the first decades covered by I-News' analysis to one that is less so now.** PHOTO COURTESY THE DENVER PUBLIC LIBRARY

Among those cited:

- The civil rights era policies that provided a boost to minorities in the 1960s and '70s, such as affirmative action, have been diminished or dismantled.

“For all intents and purpose, affirmative action has been wiped out,” said former Denver Mayor Wellington Webb. “There is no longer a desire to assure that minorities are being placed in jobs.”

Affirmative action programs, first envisioned by President John F. Kennedy in 1961 and strengthened and expanded by President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1965, have been narrowed or eliminated by U.S. Supreme Court decisions and, in individual states, by legislative action or by voters.

- Many thousands of Colorado’s good paying, blue collar manufacturing jobs — think of Pueblo’s CF&I Steel or Denver’s Gates Rubber Co. or Montbello’s Samsonite Corp. — have disappeared, hurting minority families disproportionately.

“CF&I Steel once had 13,000 employees,” said former State Sen. Abel Tapia of Pueblo. “That used to be a path towards middle class prosperity. Pueblo took a really, really big hit in the ‘80s when the steel company downsized. In a community of 100,000 when you are talking 13,000 jobs, that was a big hit.”

- Support for K-12 education has diminished. The cost of attending college has skyrocketed.

“We seem to be leading the way in the country on how not to fund education,” said Jim Chavez, executive director of the Latin American Educational Foundation.

- The percentage of single-parent families and the number of births to single mothers has soared among black households, exacerbating the gaps, and immigration and teen-age births in the Latino population have also led to widening disparities, experts said.

**“There’s nothing that impacts those issues – issues of economics, their education, their quality of life – more than the economic challenges faced by single mothers.”**

— Denver Mayor  
Michael Hancock

“You have a majority of children, particularly in the African American community, growing up in single-parent households,” said Denver Mayor Michael Hancock, who is black.

“There’s nothing that impacts those issues — issues of economics, their education, their quality of life — more than the economic challenges faced by single mothers.”

**APART FROM THE CENSUS NUMBERS,** the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that in Colorado 45 percent of black infants, 35 percent of Hispanic infants and 18 percent of white infants are born to single mothers.

That corresponds to a dramatic surge in the past five decades of children raised in single-parent homes, but the rate is particularly striking among blacks — 50 percent of black families in Colorado were headed by a single parent in 2010 compared to 25 percent of white families. Among Latino families with



young children, 35 percent were headed by a single parent, according to the I-News analysis.

In a stark way, that boils down to ongoing economic disparity and impacts general prosperity, said Alan Berube, senior fellow and research director for Brookings Institution's Metropolitan Policy Program.

"In part, it's about how many adults you have and the income generating power these different households have," he said.

"From an economic standpoint, one plus one equals two," said Christelyn D. Karazin, an Internet activist striving to reduce the birthrate to single mothers. "Even if two people are working at McDonalds, that's two McDonalds salaries right there."

Census data shows that single motherhood is a greater indicator of poverty than race. Children living in a female-headed household in Colorado are four times more likely to grow up in poverty, the I-News analysis showed, than children in married-couple households.

"If you wanted to announce a systemic assault on the African American community, that's how you would do it," said Barry Fagin, a senior fellow with the Independence Institute, of the rate of births to single mothers.

In addition, the incarceration of a highly disproportionate number of minority males is a significant factor in numerous problems, including the single-parent family, said Denver Mayor Hancock, among others.

"There is one area where I think that many members of the African American community would agree that the drug war is basically a war on black men," said Fagin.

**"Right now, today, I can almost predict where you're going to be, based on your mother's educational level and your family income. And until we correct that, our democracy is in jeopardy."**

— Former Denver school board member Nate Easley, in an interview with Colorado Public Radio

**REGARDLESS OF WHICH WAY THE CAUSAL ARROW RUNS**, poverty and education are intertwined across the range of societal distress. Several experts said the state’s pullback in funding education over the past two decades has narrowed the path for escaping poverty.

Between 1992 and 2010, according to Census data, Colorado plunged from 24th to 40th on overall state spending per student for K-12 education. When compared to per capita personal income, Colorado ranked 45th among the states on K-12 spending.

Public school funding, very much dependent upon property taxes, is “inherently unequal” from district to district, said Corrine Fowler of the Colorado Progressive Coalition. And even within the same district, schools in affluent neighborhoods have the ability to fundraise in ways that schools in poor neighborhoods do not.

“Right now, today, I can almost predict where you’re going to be, based on your mother’s educational level and your family income,” Former Denver school board member Nate Easley said in an interview with Colorado Public Radio. “And until we correct that, our democracy is in jeopardy.”

Said Fowler, “Education should be the great equalizer. It should not be that just because your parents have more money or you come from a more affluent background that you should then get better educational opportunities. That is completely unjust.”

A separate report by the State Higher Education Executive Association found only New Hampshire and Vermont spent less per full-time college student than Colorado’s \$3,316.

“Almost every one of those (disparity) trends, the underlying cause or factor is education,” said Chavez of the Latin American Educational Foundation. “We’ve seen the financial resources the state spent to help families with students go down dramatically the last 10 years.”

Said former Denver City Councilman Sal Carpio, who also served as head of the city’s housing authority, “The biggest single factor is all the effects of poverty. It’s like a funnel ... a few trickle out. The funnel has gotten bigger. It still trickles, but there’s just more people in there that can’t get out.”

## **THE WIDENING GAPS IN COLORADO ARE RELATED TO NATIONAL POLITICAL SWINGS**



through the decades, both liberals and conservatives agree, but they disagree substantially on just how that has worked.

The civil rights era begat President Johnson's war on poverty, a host of society-altering civil rights laws, financial support to the poor and many other programs aimed at leveling the playing field.

Some said the opposite happened.

"What we've done in America is design a system that rewards people for not working and locks them into poverty," said former Colorado U.S. Sen. Hank Brown. "It's a tragedy of the first order because the vast majority of people who are in poverty don't want to be on welfare. They want jobs."

Gary Orfield, co-director of the Civil Rights Project at the University of California, Los Angeles, said the historical narrative is complex, but has much to do with the nation's changing political will and policies.

"Almost all of the efforts in the sense of positive impetus were abandoned by or shortly before the Reagan era," he said. "We had a narrowing of the income gap for a long time in part because we taxed higher income people pretty heavily and we had an increasingly generous set of social policies for disadvantaged people. We did just the exact opposite in the Reagan tax cuts and the Bush tax cuts. And there were simultaneous cuts in programs and services and dramatic reversals on civil rights policies.

"It just isn't any kind of big surprise," Orfield said. "It is quite clear there was an intentionality both about the narrowing of the gap and the growing of the gap."

The widening gaps, in most appraisals, do not bode well for Colorado's future.

The Brookings Institution's Berube noted that more and more of Colorado's under-18, school-aged population is brown and black, growing up in households that are economically disadvan-

**VIDEO**

Community leaders say the causes of ethnic and racial inequality in Colorado are complex, often intertwined, and rooted in the impact of poverty, government policy and family disadvantage through decades.



taged, “which all the research shows places a negative strain on their educational potential.”

Racial inequality poses a threat to the future economic viability of the state, Berube said, if in 20 years disadvantaged minorities are the majority of the workforce.

“You still have on balance an aging white population and a young minority population. There are only so many white people you can pull from the rest of the country to help adjust for that imbalance and the challenge it is bringing,” he said.

For others interviewed by I-News, the inequities are a moral as well as an economic issue. If left unchallenged in the coming decades, they threaten Colorado’s future. ■



**A crowd gathers at the City and County Building in Denver after the assassination of civil rights leader Martin Luther King in 1968.** PHOTO COURTESY THE DENVER PUBLIC LIBRARY



## Part Two: Family Disintegration

By ANN CARNAHAN ESPINOLA

I-News Network

..... “I try to be the best mom I can. I want to give my kids .....  
a chance at a healthy lifestyle. I want them to go to  
school, get good grades, be able to go to college and  
have a good future.”

—Single mother Angel Castro

**LEFT: Angel Castro, 28, a single mother with two children, talks to a bus dispatcher to plan her day's trips to the store and a doctor's appointment as her 17-month-old daughter, Alexis watches at their Englewood apartment. Single parenthood is a bigger indicator of poverty than race, according to six decades of U.S. Census data analyzed by I-News Network. JOE MAHONEY/I-NEWS**



*I-News intern Leia Larsen contributed to this report.*

**ANGEL CASTRO'S DAYS TEETER BETWEEN DETERMINATION AND DESPERATION.** She is 28, impoverished, scarred from a chaotic childhood and adolescence, raising two young children alone.

She lives in a subsidized apartment in Englewood, scrambles to arrange child care that she can afford, and races to catch the bus to a part-time job that paid her \$452 for one recent month.

To know the circumstances of Castro's life is to understand something of the odds against her. Still, as she attends to her dark-haired, bright-eyed Aaron, 3, and Alexis, 17 months, she speaks with a voice that musters hope.

"I try to be the best mom I can," she says. "I want to give my kids a chance at a healthy lifestyle. I want them to go to school, get good grades, be able to go to college and have a good future."

**IN ANALYZING THE WIDENING GAPS BETWEEN MINORITY GROUPS AND WHITES** in Colorado on key measures of social progress, there are harsh realities behind the numbers. One is that among homes with children living in poverty, 68 percent are headed by just one parent, typically the mother.

Single parenthood is a bigger indicator of poverty than race, according to six decades of U.S. Census data analyzed by I-News Network. Combined as it often is with curtailed educational and employment opportunities, the rise of the single-parent family is a major factor in the widening disparities between blacks, Latinos and white state residents since the decades surrounding the civil rights movement.

The I-News analysis covered family income, poverty rates, high school and college graduation, and home ownership as reported by the U.S. Census Bureau from 1960 to 2010. Health data and justice reports were also examined.

While the rate of single parenthood has increased among all races, its surge has been particularly dramatic among blacks. In Colorado, more than 50 percent of black households with young chil-

dren are headed by a single parent compared to 25 percent of white households. Among Latino households in the state with young children, 35 percent are headed by a single parent, according to the I-News analysis.

Those figures dovetail with the growing trend of births to single women. Nationally, 29 percent of white babies are born to unwed mothers, according to the federal Centers for Disease Prevention and Control, while 53 percent of Hispanic babies and 73 percent of black babies are born to single mothers.

“When you talk with some of the older experienced folks of the civil rights movement, the one thing that we continue to come back to is the challenged family structure — African-Americans and Latinos — in the sense that back in the 60s the family structure was much more solid,” said Denver Mayor Michael Hancock. “There were more men in the house. There were less single women trying to raise children on their own.

“The family structure has disintegrated in a sense. That challenge is real.”

While many single parents raise thriving, productive children, the growing trend of fatherless homes has enormous implications for future generations. Children raised in female-headed homes in Colorado are four times more likely to live in poverty than those from married-couple homes, according to the I-News analysis. Other studies show they are less likely to go to college or even graduate high school.

“We’ve got a problem in the community, and every indicator that you can attribute to fatherless or broken homes, every negative thing – high dropout rates, incarceration, premature death related to violence—all those things, there’s a connection with kids being born to fractured families,” said Christelyn D. Karazin, founder of the “No Wedding, No Womb!” online initiative that seeks to address the out-of-wedlock birthrate among African Americans.

Regina Huerter, co-founder of the Gang Rescue And Support Project in Denver, which primarily serves Latino youths, theorized that the widening divide between the races stems from a “mutually reinforcing” convergence of births to unwed mothers, growing minority male incarceration rates and the demise of minority neighborhoods.

All of these things weakened the fabric of family life and changed the norms that defined commu-

nities just five decades ago, said Huerter. At some point, she said, it became socially acceptable for unmarried women to have babies.

“When did that happen? What was the date? My mother would have killed me if I’d gotten pregnant,” said Huerter, who is 52.

Huerter, Hancock and others linked the absence of fathers in the home, in part, to the rising number of black and Latino males in prisons, often for drug crimes.

**“The combination of the war on crack and mandatory sentencing saw a huge sweep of black males into prison and further degeneration of the black family,”**

— Theo Wilson,  
BarberShop Talk

In 2010, about one in every 20 black men were incarcerated in Colorado state prisons compared to one out of every 50 Latino males and one of every 150 white males, according to an I-News analysis of government figures.

The state’s black and Latino incarceration rates are higher than the national averages, where disparities also exist, according to an analysis of Bureau of Justice reports. Nationally, one of every 33 black males and one of every 83 Latino males was behind bars in 2010. Colorado’s rate for white males was equivalent to the national figure, one in 150.

“The combination of the war on crack and mandatory sentencing saw a huge sweep of black males into prison and further degeneration of the black family,” said Theo Wilson, a district director for BarberShop Talk, a mentorship organization for men.

The Rev. Leon Kelly, who has worked with thousands of Denver’s at-risk inner city kids, believes intergenerational abandonment lies at the heart of the single-parenthood phenomenon.

“When you have some of these heads of household that are women, sometimes they feel like, ‘This is the norm. This is what I was raised with,’ ” Kelly said. “They’re so used to people coming in and out of their life. With their kids, their babies, it’s something that nobody can take away. Their kids are going to be there.”



**Quincy Hines makes a point at a meeting of “Barbershop Talk” at the New Montbello Barbershop. The group gathers twice a week to address issues affecting African-American men. JOE MAHONEY/I-NEWS**

Kelly said 80 percent of the youths he counsels live in female-headed households.

“A lot of them never had men on a consistent basis in the home to show them what they should be doing as far as being the head of the household,” Kelly said. “A lot of them join gangs because at least they’re able to find a sense of identity, a sense of acceptance. Now he’s not just a fatherless child.”

**ANGEL CASTRO’S 3-YEAR-OLD SON, AARON,** has already lived in 10 different shelters, hotel rooms and apartments. By the time Alexis was born in August of 2011, Castro had landed her Englewood apartment through the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless, which pays all but \$54 of her monthly rent.



With no financial support from the fathers of her children, Castro scrapes money together any way she can. She makes burritos to sell on city buses. She raids dumpsters for metal and aluminum, cleans houses, and has evicted deadbeat renters, trained dogs and sold her plasma.

Castro's mother endured struggles of her own. She was just 16 when she gave birth to Angel, the first of her six children by three different men. Castro said her father has eight children by five different women.

Throughout her childhood, Castro lived in countless foster homes and group homes. By the time she was 12, she was living with her 22-year-old boyfriend at his house in Aurora. As a teenager, she was involved in an assault that landed her in prison.

As for the men who fathered her children, she says, "I overlooked a lot of red flags. I was searching for that bond with both of my children's fathers, and having that family I always wanted."

**BOTH CONSERVATIVES AND LIBERALS CITE THE IMPACT OF WELFARE PROGRAMS** on families as a major factor in the growing divide between the races, though for different reasons. Some said cutbacks in government support disproportionately hurt minorities, while others said the system encourages dependence on government and keeps minorities and the poor from improving their future.

Former U.S. Sen. Hank Brown said the welfare system rewards behavior that leads to poverty.

"Most states operate in a way so that the more children you have out of wedlock, the more money you get," Brown said. "If you chart it, I know this is painful to hear, but if you look at the statistics on births to unmarried women, it correlates directly with the start" of welfare payments. "Then, of course, once you start the cycle, it's hard to get off."

But former Denver Mayor Wellington Webb said welfare reform that passed under President Clinton catapulted "a lot of people who were receiving government assistance off into a kind of a never-never land, which also then increased the number of disadvantaged that previously had been receiving assistance."





**Angel Castro, a single mother, feeds her 17-month old daughter, Alexis, dinner, while her son, Aaron, 3, watches TV after his bath. Castro scrapes money together any way she can to provide for her children. In addition to part-time work, she makes burritos to sell on city buses, raids dumpsters for metal, cleans houses and has sold her plasma. JOE MAHONEY/I-NEWS**

This Gordian knot can be untangled, according to Isabel V. Sawhill and Ron Haskins, senior fellows at the Brookings Institution, the Washington, D.C. think tank. Their 2009 book called *Creating an Opportunity Society* advocates increased educational opportunities for children from pre-school on, encouraging and supporting work among adults, and reducing the number of out-of-wedlock births while increasing the number of children raised by their married parents.

In an interview with I-News, Sawhill said the huge increase in single parenthood factors into the disparities between the races, particularly between blacks and whites.

“It’s one of the reasons why that gap has not narrowed, especially since the 1970s,” she said.

Sawhill and Haskins have also used Census data and simple modeling to simulate what would



happen to poverty rates under different assumptions about work, marriage, education and family size among the poor. They found that the poverty rate could be reduced by about 70 percent if the poor completed high school, married, had no more than two children and worked fulltime.

The researchers also ran a model in which they doubled the amount of welfare benefits received by poor families.

“The result is revealing,” they wrote. “Even a doubling of current benefit levels does less to reduce poverty than any of the simulations of behavior change ... Work, marriage, education, and family size are all more powerful determinants of the incidence of poverty than the amount of cash assistance received from the government.”

Sawhill told I-News that inequities will only end through a combination of personal responsibility and good government policy, including assistance for those who work. “We think it isn’t one or the other,” she said. “It’s both.”

**WHEN DENVER’S MAYOR TALKS ABOUT THE STRUGGLES OF SINGLE PARENTS,** he does so through the prism of his own childhood.

The youngest of 10 children, Hancock was raised by a single mother after the divorce of his parents when he was 6. His father had a drinking problem and popped in and out of his life. His mother kept her brood together, hopscotching from rundown hotel rooms to apartments that sometimes lacked heat and electricity.

One of Hancock’s sisters was murdered by her boyfriend; a brother died of AIDS. One sibling was an alcoholic, another addicted to drugs. Two brothers served time in prison. But somehow,

**“The difference between those who are able to ascend to their dream of whatever they want to be in life, to those who don’t, really is about the decisions we make and really the desire and decision to focus on getting there.”**

—Denver Mayor  
Michael Hancock

Hancock graduated high school and college, became the youngest CEO of an Urban League chapter anywhere in the country, and was elected mayor of the nation's 26th largest city.

How did he rise above?

“My answer is really pretty simple,” he said. “I found faith at a very early age and exercised it a great deal growing up. Two, I had the benefit of being the youngest of 10 where I watched a lot of the trials and tribulations of older siblings, learning the pitfalls to avoid.

“Thirdly, I had a great deal of adults who entered my life, who gave me a sense of encouragement that I could be successful if I focused, who also kept me directed.”

When prodded, he offered this advice to disadvantaged children:

“Your circumstances today don't have to define where you go or who you become tomorrow. My story is not unlike many stories of other successful people, whether in business or in politics. The difference between those who are able to ascend to their dream of whatever they want to be in life, to those who don't, really is about the decisions we make and really the desire and decision to focus on getting there. The reality is, they control their destiny.”

**FOR NOW, ANGEL CASTRO'S DAYS REVOLVE** around trying to figure out how to feed and clothe Aaron and Alexis. She threw a small party a few months ago for Alexis's first birthday and was relieved when she got gifts of diapers and wipes rather than toys.

She used to count herself lucky to have a neighbor who watched her children for \$20 a week so that she could work. But Castro had to give up her position after her sitter got a better paying job.

Castro is frustrated by the endless rules and paperwork of a welfare system she believes is “built to set you up for failure.” She said she has only four hours per day of government-supported child care, which means she can't work fulltime.

She sometimes thinks the only solution is to put Aaron and Alexis in foster care and hope for a better fate for them than she experienced.

“I've had a whole chaotic life, feeling hurt and angry with my whole situation,” Castro said. “I don't want my kids feeling like I felt growing up.” ■

## Part Three: Changing Economy

By BURT HUBBARD

I-News Network

..... “People up north used to say they’d hate to be in Pueblo .....  
because you got that big ugly steel mill. Well, the people  
that raised a family didn’t think it was big and ugly.  
They thought it was great and then it went away.”

—Former state senator and Pueblo native Abel Tapia



Parts of the EVRAZ Pueblo steel mill are reflected in the window of a building near the former Colorado Fuel and Iron plant on the southern end of Pueblo. JOE MAHONEY/I-NEWS

**IN THE 1960S, THE GIANT CF&I STEEL PLANT** on the southern end of Pueblo was the economic driving engine and racial equalizer for Colorado’s southernmost major city.

Former Pueblo City Council President Ray Aguilera, in his early 20s during the mill’s last heyday as a large-scale employer, recalls wives dropping their husbands – Latinos, Italians, Slovenians – at the tunnel entrance leading under the roadway to the 7,000 lucrative jobs on the other side. The work often did not require college degrees or even high school diplomas.

“Why would anybody want to go college when you can go out to the mill and make (today’s equivalent of) \$60,000, \$70,000 a year,” Aguilera said.

The towering steel mill stacks and their billowing clouds of smoke were symbols of a unique prosperity, one in which the smelter was a melting pot in more ways than one.

When the city’s soldiers, sailors and Marines returned from War World II, they all expected a fair shake from Pueblo’s major employer. Soon, the mill’s segregated showers for whites and Latinos

disappeared.

“So in 1945, things began to change even in the mill, CF&I,” Aguilera said. “(Latinos) began to get good jobs. This was the beginning of the transformation of Pueblo, this convergence.

“I thought Pueblo was Shangri-la. It was a period of prosperity for all these guys that worked in the mill.”

CF&I churned 24-7, with workers from each of the three shifts piling into Gus’s or another neighborhood bar for a shot and a beer before heading home.

High wages and generous overtime led to Latino families buying homes, sometimes even cabins and boats for family vacations, said former state Sen. Abel Tapia, a Pueblo native.

One in five Pueblo workers held manufacturing jobs in 1970, according to Census data.

Two-thirds of Pueblo County’s Latino households owned their own homes in 1970, according to an I-News analysis of six decades of U.S. Census data. Latino families, on average, earned more than 80 percent of the countywide average that same year.

“It was a life to go for,” Tapia said. “Then all of a sudden, it kind of went away.”

**BY 1982, MANUFACTURING OPERATIONS IN PUEBLO** and across the United States were hit by stiff international competition that led to drastic cutbacks and factory closures. CF&I went from 13,000 jobs statewide, including all of its subsidiaries, to eventually 1,300 at its bottom in the 1990s.

Pueblo certainly wasn’t the only steel town in the U.S. to be rocked by change. But when the Colorado Fuel & Iron plant drastically downsized, Pueblo became emblematic in Colorado of the state’s economy pivoting away from heavy manufacturing.

For a large segment of the state’s minority population, it was as if the pathway to the middle class had disappeared.

An I-News analysis of Census Data from 1960-2010 tracked important measures of social progress — family income, poverty rates, high school and college graduation, and home ownership — among Colorado’s whites, blacks and Latinos. The study found widening disparities in more recent decades.

Progress made by minorities in the 1960s and 1970s faded in most every measure. And the story of CF&I and Pueblo is emblematic of one reason why: The state’s economic landscape shifted precipitously away from blue-collar manufacturing.

“It was terrible,” Aguilera said. “The thought of losing all those jobs and closing this plant was absolutely a nightmare, the way the community felt.”

Said Tapia, who himself was laid off by C&FI where he had worked as a college-educated engineer, “We’re about 50 percent Hispanic here. It hit us very hard.”

**THE DOWNTURN IN MANUFACTURING HURT MINORITY WORKERS** disproportionately in Colorado and across the U.S. It is one of the reasons cited by researchers for the widening gaps with white workers on key economic and educational measures.

I-News found that Colorado was a more equitable state than the national average in the first of the decennial studies covered by the analysis, but that the state’s disparities were greater than the national average in more recent decades.

“In a way, Colorado was by virtue of its older economy a more equal place than the rest of the United States,” said Alan Berube, research director for the Brookings Institution’s Metropolitan Policy Program. “But it’s just picked up in droves these elements of the national economy and it’s now more like a caricature of the United States in terms of the imbalance between the high end and the low end — where the high end is disproportionately employing highly educated whites and the low is probably employing disproportionately, less educated Latinos and African Americans.”

I-News found that manufacturing jobs in Colorado fell from 14 percent of all jobs in the state in 1970 to 7.5 percent of all jobs in 2010

The analysis also found Latino workers in Colorado were heavily impacted. In 1970, one in four

“I thought Pueblo was Shangri-la. It was a period of prosperity for all these guys that worked in the mill.”

—Former Pueblo city council president Ray Aguilera







For decades, the massive CF&I steel plant in Pueblo was a major source of good paying jobs that didn't require a college education. When hard times hit the mill in the 1980s and thousands of jobs were lost, minority workers were disproportionately impacted. It was as if the pathway to the middle class had suddenly disappeared.

JOE MAHONEY/I-NEWS



Latino workers in Colorado had a manufacturing job. Today, it is less than one in 10. The lost manufacturing jobs have not been replaced by similar paying jobs accessible to those without college degrees.

The Gates Rubber Co., which employed 5,500 workers in the 1950s and 1960s, closed its Denver manufacturing facility in 1991. Samsonite, the luggage manufacturer, had 4,000 workers at its peak in the 1960s and 1970s at its Montbello facility. When it closed in 2001 it was down to 340 employees.

IBM changed from a manufacturing operation in Boulder County to a white-collar data center.

Colorado's changing employment profile saw a rise in retail, tourism and health care jobs as the number of manufacturing jobs fell. CF&I, Gates and Samsonite have been replaced by companies such as Lockheed Martin, Western Union and Level 3.

**THE CHANGING ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT** also took its toll on federal government jobs, another major source of employment for minority workers during the civil rights era as a result of affirmative action policies.

Those jobs have also dwindled in scope over the past four decades.

Former Denver Mayor Wellington Webb said all presidential administrations since Reagan have emphasized shrinking the size of the federal government.

“Frankly, that trend continued under Bush, under Clinton, under Bush and under Obama,” Webb said. “Each one is proud of talking about how they’ve shrunk the size of federal government.”

With the shrinking came less focus on affirmative action, Webb said.

The intent and thrust of affirmative action, as envisioned by President John F. Kennedy in an executive order in 1961 and strengthened and expanded by President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1965, has clearly been diminished with passing decades.

The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that affirmative action for minorities is unfair if it leads to reverse discrimination against the majority. Some states, including California, voted to ban affirmative action programs. However, Colorado voters rejected such a ban in 2008.

Colorado has one of the largest federal workforces among the states. In total federal payroll, it ranks No. 8. Yet, federal jobs fell from 6 percent of all jobs in the state to 3 percent between 1970 and 2010. For black workers, the jobs dropped even more dramatically — from 15 percent of all jobs held by African Americans in the state to 6 percent.

The percent of the Latino work force in federal jobs in Colorado has gone up and down between 1970 and 2010.

It is another example of the changing job profile of Colorado that has had a major impact on the Latino and black work force.

In 1970, one in four black workers either was employed in manufacturing or by the federal government. By 2010, that had dropped to one in eight.

Among Latino workers, more than one in three held manufacturing or federal government jobs in 1970. That had fallen to fewer than one in four by 2010.

**AS THE MANUFACTURING JOBS DWINDLED IN PUEBLO**, the gaps between the county's Latino and white residents widened.

Tapia and Aguilera said decades of not needing college or even high school degrees to get good paying manufacturing jobs came home to roost when the steel mill jobs disappeared.

Generations grew up thinking a college education was not necessary, Aguilera said.

“A lot of it was their dad didn't graduate, so they weren't graduating,” Tapia said.

Many fathers wanted their daughters to stay home and raise families, rather than go to college, added Aguilera.

Consequently, the city has had to deal with a devastating high school drop-out rate.

In 1994, a letter to the editor from a high school senior at Central High published in the Pueblo

Chieftain brought the problem home. She wrote that she had 390 classmates in her freshman year and now two weeks from graduation only 187 remained.

“We were the ones stunned,” Aguilera recalled. “We had no idea. What happened to all of those kids?”

Teenage pregnancies in Pueblo rose to among the highest rates in Colorado, almost double the state rate.

“We have babies raising babies,” Aguilera said. The predominately Latino part of the city had the highest rate in Colorado of grandparents raising grandchildren.

As the decades went by, Latino median family incomes fell to 65 percent of white incomes. Home ownership rates fell to 58 percent and poverty hit more than one out of every four Latinos in the county.

“People up north used to say they’d hate to be in Pueblo because you got that big ugly steel mill,” said Tapia. “Well, the people that raised a family didn’t think it was big and ugly. They thought it was great and then it went away.”

“That is so scary,” said Ray Kogovsek, former congressman from Pueblo. “Right now the system isn’t working.” ■

**RIGHT: A worker guides a stream of molten steel at the Colorado Fuel and Iron mill in southern Pueblo in 1952. The mill and similar manufacturing concerns were an engine of economic advancement and racial equalizer for many Colorado minorities in the 1950s and 1960s.**

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE DENVER PUBLIC LIBRARY





# Part Four: Health Disparities

By KEVIN VAUGHAN

I-News Network

..... “These disparities are real. Anybody who says, ‘Well, these disparities don’t exist,’ is living in denial.” .....

—Amitabh Chandra, director of health policy research at  
the Harvard Kennedy School of Government



Lucero Barrios, right, plays with her daughter, Monserrat, seven months old, at their Arvada home. As a young Latina mother, Barrios is squarely in the demographic of a group of people affected by a shocking reality in Colorado: The infant mortality rate for Hispanics and African Americans is significantly higher than it is for whites. JOE MAHONEY/I-NEWS

**LUCERO BARRIOS IS LATINO AND A NEW MOTHER** — circumstances that place her squarely in a group of people affected by a shocking reality in Colorado: A Hispanic baby born in this state is 63 percent more likely than a white baby to die in the first year of life.

And Latinos aren't alone — the disparity is even more stark for Colorado's African Americans, who experience an infant mortality rate three times that of Caucasians.

The infant mortality gap is just one measurement by which the state's largest groups of ethnic and racial minorities trail whites, and it is an anomaly unto itself. Colorado's infant mortal-

ity rate is lower than the national average for whites and significantly higher than the national average for Latinos and blacks. And an I-News examination of more than a decade of health data found those disparities are widening.

Barrios' daughter, Monserrat, is healthy — a big brown-eyed baby whose favorite book features animals that make sounds when her mother pushes a button on the page.

“It was something I never thought would happen to me at a young age,” Barrios said of becoming a mother at age 20.

When it did, she took steps that may have prevented her from becoming a statistic. She made an appointment at Clinica Family Health Services, which serves predominantly the working poor. She showed up for pre-natal examinations with Dr. Carolyn Chen. She didn't drink or use drugs. And after her baby was born, she brought Monserrat to the Clinica office in Westminster for scheduled checkups.

A deeper examination of the numbers shows that the infant mortality rate for Hispanics has climbed in recent years at the same time that it was steadily falling for whites, according to data compiled by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment.

Health disparities between racial and ethnic minorities and white Americans are nothing new — hundreds of studies over the past 20 years consistently found that African Americans and Latinos trail Caucasians in a host of measures, from life expectancy to the odds of death from cancer or kidney ailments. In Colorado, blacks are more likely to suffer from asthma, diabetes, high blood pressure, prostate cancer and obesity than whites. And Hispanics are more likely to die from flu or pneumonia, cervical cancer, diabetes and liver disease than whites.

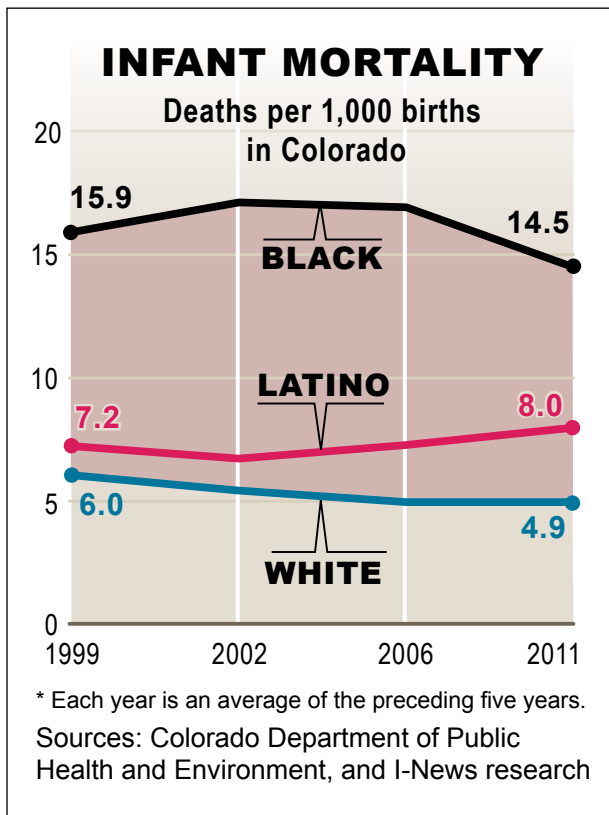
**“(Infant mortality) rates have improved for both groups, but they’re still sharply unequal, deeply unequal, and we can do better as a society.”**

—Dr. Amal Trivedi, physician and Brown University faculty member



“These disparities are real,” said Amitabh Chandra, director of health policy research at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government. “Anybody who says, ‘Well, these disparities don’t exist,’ is living in denial.”

But there may be no more telling statistic about racial and ethnic health disparities in the state than the rate of infant mortality — the death of a baby in the first year of life. It is a number often cited to separate developed nations from developing ones, and it is studied extensively because it is seen by many experts as a key measure of overall health.



MICHAEL HALL/I-NEWS

In the United States, infant mortality has been on a steady decline since 1958. Even so, black babies die at a rate much higher than white babies, according to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In 2011, the rate at which black babies died before reaching their first birthday was a little more than twice that of white babies — 11 deaths for every 1,000 births for African Americans compared to 5 deaths for every 1,000 births for Caucasians.

“I find that deeply concerning,” said Dr. Amal Trivedi, a practicing physician and faculty member at Brown University in Providence, R.I., whose research has been published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*. “You know, the rates have improved for both groups, but they’re still sharply unequal, deeply unequal, and we can do better as a society.”

The numbers are starkly worse in Colorado, where African American babies experience 14.5 deaths for each 1,000 births, according to an average of data from 2007 through 2011 calculated by the state health department. That figure would place black Coloradans between the overall infant mortality rates of China and Colombia, according to a World Bank compilation of health data.

The latest state numbers are scheduled to be published next spring but were provided in advance to I-News by the health department.

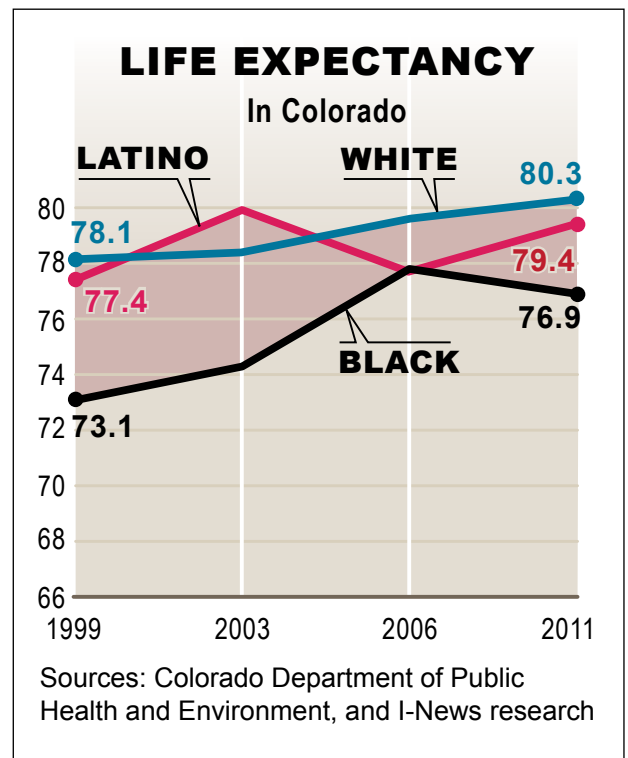
Since the state’s first health disparity report in 2001, the infant mortality rate for whites has fallen 18 percent while for blacks it has fallen about 9 percent. And for Hispanics the rate has actually climbed over the past dozen years — from 7 deaths per thousand births in the 2001 study to 8 deaths per thousand in the most current numbers.

The data for the upcoming state report also showed other disparities:

Whites, on average, now live nearly a year longer than Hispanics in Colorado — and 3.4 years longer than African Americans. In 2011, the life expectancy for a Caucasian in Colorado was 80.3 years, compared to 79.4 for a Latino and 76.9 for an African American.

Blacks and Latinos are both significantly more likely to die from diabetes than whites. For example, in the most recent data whites experienced a diabetes death rate of 13.9 per 100,000 residents while it was 35.5 for blacks and 36.4 for Hispanics.

Blacks experience significantly higher death rates from heart disease and stroke than whites. The death rate from heart disease among blacks is 171 per 100,000 residents, compared to 138.3 for whites. And the death rate from stroke for blacks is 48.2 per 100,000 residents, compared to 35.2 for whites. And even though blacks have seen dramatic improvement in both numbers since the first health disparities report, they have not matched the improvements seen by whites.



MICHAEL HALL/I-NEWS

Only in recent years has the U.S. Census Bureau begun to measure health indicators in its data. That limited data, available from the Census American Community Survey, measures health insurance, showing a disparity between blacks and Latinos and whites that lays the foundation for dramatic differences in overall health. In Colorado, slightly more than 11 percent of whites reported having no health insurance, while 28 percent of African Americans and more than 31 percent of Latinos were without insurance.

**THE PROBLEM OF HEALTH DISPARITIES** is as complicated as a giant ball of rubber bands, each strand representing a different piece of the puzzle involving everyone from individuals to doctors to health-care administrators and insurance companies to federal and state governments.

**“When you’re talking about life expectancy, and you’re talking about people’s health, the social determinants of health are far more important than the health-care determinants of health.”**

—Amitabh Chandra, director of health policy research at the Harvard Kennedy School

To be sure, access to healthcare is one issue – and numerous experts interviewed by I-News believe the Affordable Care Act will mean that access to health insurance, a doctor and preventive care will dramatically improve for many. But there’s another critical component — a catchall that experts refer to as the “social determinants” of health.

Some of those determinants are obvious — poverty and lack of education can both play important, negative roles in a person’s health. But the list is much deeper. Where you live. Whether you buckle your seat belt. What you eat and drink. How much you exercise. Even which school you attend.

“Now my own view is ... that healthcare and health insurance are important,” said Chandra, the Harvard health policy researcher. “But when you’re talking about life expectancy, and you’re talking about people’s health, the social determinants of health are far more important than the healthcare determinants of health.”

Waving a magic health insurance wand, he said, would solve only part of the problem.

“Giving people health insurance — how does that affect their walking and working out and eating better foods?” Chandra asked. “I don’t know — it doesn’t, it really doesn’t.”

Dr. Mark Schuster, chief of the division of general pediatrics and vice chair for health policy in the department of medicine at Boston Children’s Hospital, was the lead author of a study that looked at health disparities through the eyes of 5,119 randomly selected fifth-graders attending public schools in and around Birmingham, Ala., Houston and Los Angeles. The study found significant racial and ethnic disparities — many of them tied to poverty — in factors that determine a person’s health.

For example, black and Latino children were much less likely than white children to wear seat belts or bike helmets and reported significantly lower levels of physical activity.

“When I think of health, I don’t just think of healthcare. I think of any factors that affect health,” Schuster said.

As a physician, Schuster regularly talks about the importance of seat belts and bike helmets with his patients. But he can’t make them comply.

“If everyone had access to healthcare and to well visits and to preventive care, I would hope that there would be some improvement to these kinds of indicators,” Schuster said. “But I don’t want to suggest the pediatrician is the major player in whether kids wear seat belts, whether they wear bike helmets.”

And even talking about some of the factors that play into a community’s relative health can be controversial.

Christelyn D. Karazin founded a group called “No Wedding No Womb!” after becoming concerned about the explosion in births of black babies to unmarried women — a number that now stands at 73 percent nationally. She attributes that statistic, which she fell into when she had her first child out of wedlock, to a confluence of social changes and the unintended consequences of government programs — the sexual revolution, for example, and welfare programs that she believes encouraged women to have babies and penalized them by cutting their ben-

efits if they married.

And she believes that births to single mothers is another of those strands in the rubber band ball — that having a baby, staying healthy, and getting good pre-natal care is difficult enough in ideal circumstances and doubly hard for young, single women of color who are in or just above poverty.

She believes that changing the dynamic in the African American community — achieving a change where more children are born into two-parent households, thereby having a better shot at growing up away from poverty — is a critical component of closing the gaps in a number of areas, including health, that is being ignored.

**“It’s like, when is it going to be taken seriously? When we’re at a 90 percent out-of-wedlock rate? At a 100 percent out-of-wedlock rate?”**

—Christelyn D. Karazin,  
founder of “No Wedding No Womb!”

“It’s like, when is it going to be taken seriously?” she asked. “When we’re at a 90 percent out-of-wedlock rate? At a 100 percent out-of-wedlock rate?”

In Denver, Grant Jones has dedicated the past 14 years of his life to trying to improve health in his community. He is the founder and executive director of the Center for African American Health, an organization that sponsors classes on things like diabetes management and screenings for things like prostate cancer.

Jones said he finds himself frustrated by men who won’t get screened, or who send their wives in their place to a diabetes class. But in the same breath, he also recognizes how much of health is tied to decisions made by individuals — and how daunting it can be to get people to take small steps that can help them live healthier lives.

He knows this because he is Exhibit A.

Jones belongs to a fitness club, and as a 65-year-old with high blood pressure, he knows he should work out several times a week. But often he goes only once or twice, because there’s always work to do or a meeting to attend. When he thinks about that, he imagines someone



**Grant Jones, executive director and founder of The Center for African American Health in Denver, said, “The general statement that I make is, we’re sicker than most and dying sooner than we should.”** JOE MAHONEY/ I-NEWS

else using the I-have-a-meeting excuse, and how he’d probably respond, “Is that meeting more important than your health?”

“I tell people that, but I don’t do it,” he said.

**FOR LUCERO BARRIOS, BEING 21 AND A MOM** means college is on hold. She is single, although Monserrat’s father is involved in the little girl’s life and attends many of her doctor’s appointments. Still, Barrios lives at home and relies on her mother, step-father and older sister to care for Monserrat while she works part-time as a bank teller.

Sitting in a conference room at Clinica, she talked about her hope of returning to college one

day, maybe to study finance or another subject that would help her establish a career in banking. And she marveled at the little girl in the pink warmup suit, laughing as she shared the message on Monserrat's shirt: I woke up on the wrong side of the crib today.

She talked about her daughter's ability to wave "hello" and "goodbye," about how quiet she becomes with a book she likes, about her love for frogs.

"Maybe she'll be a vet, or a marine biologist or something," Dr. Chen said.

"I hope," Lucero answered.

**AMID THE TROUBLING NUMBERS, THERE ARE SOME INDICATIONS** that things are changing, although the signals are mixed.

In 1999, for example, the average black Coloradan could expect to live 73.7 years — which was more than five years less than the average white Coloradan, who could expect to live 78.8 years. By 2011, the gap had closed considerably. Hispanics, meanwhile, were stuck — experiencing a life expectancy that actually slipped in comparison to whites over the past decade. And the life expectancy for blacks in 2011 was down nearly a year from the 77.8 years calculated in 2006.

Daunting challenges remain — for individuals, for communities, for society, for the health care system.

"There have been a lot of studies," said Dr. Ashish Jha, a health policy professor at the Harvard University School of Public Health who has done extensive research on the quality and costs of healthcare and how it affects minorities and the poor. "We don't need another study that says we have a problem. Now we need more information that says here's how we begin to do something about it." ■



# ..... Losing Ground: TheVoices .....

Community leaders, politicians and academics offer their views on racial and ethnic disparities in Colorado and what might be done to address them. All interviews have been edited and abridged for context and length.



*Click on a name to go directly to that interview.*

[Ray Aguilera](#) Former president of the Pueblo City Council

[Alan Berube](#) Brookings Institution's Metropolitan Policy Program, research director

[Hank Brown](#) Former U.S. senator from Colorado

[Sal Carpio](#) Former Denver city councilman, community leader

[Amitabh Chandra](#) Professor of public policy at Harvard

[Jim Chavez](#) Executive director of the Latin American Educational Foundation

[Dr. Carolyn Chen](#) Medical doctor and director of the Pecos Street clinic of Clinica Family Health Services

[Josh Downey](#) Political director of Service Employees International Union Local 105

[Barry Fagin](#) Senior fellow with the Independence Institute

[John Fleck](#) President of the Denver Area Labor Federation

[Corrine Fowler](#) Economic justice director for the Colorado Progressive Coalition

[Les Franklin](#) Longtime black community activist and founder of the Shaka Franklin Foundation

[Marianne Franklin](#) President and executive director of the Shaka Franklin Foundation and daughter of the late civil rights activist James Ward

[Rabbi Hillel Goldberg](#) Executive editor of the Intermountain Jewish News

[Rudy Gonzales](#) Executive director of Servicios de la Raza, and son of the late civil rights activist Corky Gonzales

[Michael Hancock](#) Mayor of Denver

[Quincy Hines](#) Regional director of BarberShop Talk, a mentorship organization for males

[Dr. Ashish Jha](#) Professor of health policy and management at the Harvard School of Public Health

[Grant Jones](#) Founder and executive director of the Center for African American Health in Denver

[Christelyn D. Karazin](#) Founder and organizer of the advocacy group No Wedding No Womb!

[The Rev. Leon Kelly](#) Anti-gang activist in Denver

[William King](#) Retired black studies professor at the University of Colorado

[Jaekyung Lee](#) Professor at the University at Buffalo

[Rita Lewis](#) President of Denver Branch of the NAACP

[Paul Lopez](#) Denver city councilman

[Dr. Levester Lyons](#) President of the Aurora Branch of the NAACP

[Christine Marquez-Hudson](#) Director of the Mi Casa Resource Center & co-chair of the Denver Latino Commission

**Ramona Martinez** Former Denver city councilwoman

**Ron Montoya** Denver businessman and community leader

**Eric Nelson** Vice president of the Aurora NAACP and vice president of the NAACP state conference of Colorado, Wyoming, Utah and Montana

**Gary Orfield** Professor in the School of Law at University of California, Los Angeles and co-director of the Civil Rights Project

**Debbie Ortega** Denver city councilwoman

**Jonathan Rothwell** Senior research associate and associate fellow at the Brookings Institution's Metropolitan Policy Program

**Isabel V. Sawhill** Senior fellow at the Brookings Institution in Washington, D.C., and co-author of a number of papers on economic disparities

**Dr. Mark Schuster** Professor of pediatrics at Harvard Medical School

**Abel Tapia** Former state senator from Pueblo

**Landri Taylor** President and CEO of Denver Urban League

**Dr. Amal Trivedi** Medical doctor who practices in several states, a researcher who has been published in the New England Journal of Medicine and a faculty member at Brown University

**Dick Wadhams** Political consultant and former chairman of the Colorado Republican Party

**Soul Watson** Syndicated writer and radio personality with national show on progressive issues that airs on Free Speech TV

**Wellington Webb** Former Denver mayor

**Theo Wilson** District executive with BarberShop Talk, a mentorship organization for males

**Maria Young** Head of CPLAN, a small Colorado company that provides services and training to professional immigrants, with clients from more than 20 countries

## Ray Aguilera

Longtime Pueblo resident and former president of the Pueblo City Council



**M**exicans were treated generally very poorly in Pueblo. They accepted the hardest, the toughest, the lowest paying jobs in the city and at the CF&I. It wasn't until the end of World War II that all those guys who fought in the war came back and said, "Hey, I should be able to go to that dance hall and dance. You can't keep me away because I'm a Mexican anymore because I went to the war and fought. I have certain rights because of the fact that I went to the war." So in 1945, things began to change even in the mill, CF&I. They began to get good jobs. This was the beginning of the transformation of Pueblo, this convergence.

For a long time, people from other parts of Colorado had this perception that the mafia ran Pueblo and that there were way too many Mexicans. In those days, the mill ran three shifts. If you got off at 7, you would come in here (Gus's) have a beer and a shooter, and then go home. Then when they got off at 3, they would come in, and when they got off at 11.

By the 1960s, I thought Pueblo was Shangra-la. It was a period of prosperity, all of these guys who worked in the mill, their kids were going to college and getting good jobs. The '60s were a high point. Everybody worked. There were 6,000-7,000 working at the mill. There were a couple of thousand people working at the Pueblo Ordinance Depot. The depot downsized to nothing after that and all those people lost their jobs. CF&I began to wane because of the way they manufactured their steel. Everything changed.

By the time of the 1960s the attitude toward the Latino community was improving. Before, it was hostile. Then there was a big difference. The Mexicans produced these beautiful girls. They are breathtaking. Our young men were good looking. So there were lots of intermarriages. That was really the beginning of how things changed. Like right now, 60 percent of all the kids in our school district are Hispanic. So that just goes to show you the difference in how things are.

When the mill was going strong, it was based on labor. The white kids went away to school and they ended up in Colorado Springs and Denver when they graduated. For others, the mill provided lots of jobs and lots of opportunities.

**“We have the highest illegitimate birth rate in the state of Colorado. We produce in the neighborhood of 300 to 400 illegitimate kids every year. We have babies raising babies.”**

And why would somebody want to go to college when you can go out to the mill and make \$60,000, \$70,000 a year?

Now, the mill will not hire you if you don't have a high school diploma. And actually they are being very selective in who they hire. They have much more sophisticated plant and it's all run on computers.

But by the mid-60s, CF&I was in decline. I thought it was a result of poor negotiations. CF&I was willing to give workers anything they wanted, they gave them some ridiculous things. For the unions it was windfall. Whatever they asked for they got. But that was actually the decline. Then we went through a series of owners that owned CF&I. This Crane Co. came in here and bought the plant. They began to sell all their assets. At one time, CF&I was the biggest owner of all assets – iron, coal, water. They owned everything. Crane came in here (buying the company in 1969 and spinning it off in 1985 as a separate company) and sold everything at ridiculous prices to get rid of it and justify them owning the steel mill.

It was terrible. The thought of losing all those jobs and closing this plant, it was absolutely a nightmare the way the community felt. Eventually, a Russian company, Evraz, came in here and bought them. They invested in the plant and brought this new process for making steel, making them very profitable.

They make all the steel now in one building. Last year, the Canadians ordered this huge shipment of rails from the Chinese. Soon after they got the rails, they noticed they were cracking and brittle. So the Canadians told the Chinese they were not going to take any more rails. They wouldn't last long enough. They gave the full order here. It was almost like a one year order of rails. The quality of the steel they are making is the best in the world.

See the smokestacks? The city finally stopped them from tearing them all down. When you talked about Pueblo, that was the face of Pueblo. That's what everyone remembers when those smokestacks would be bellowing the smoke.

I know for a long time, Pueblo was the brunt of a lot of jokes. In terms of quality of living, though, Pueblo is hard to beat. This year, it was September before we had our first murder in town. Do we have gangs here? Yeah, we do. Do have drugs here? Yes, we do.

Knowing to ask the right question is always the issue. So for years, we chased down this idea of the school dropout rate. They would always give us this very precise number that the dropout rate was only 3.7 percent. But that wasn't the real question that we should have been asking. We should have been asking about the persistence rate. How many kids start as freshman and how many kids graduate? Then about 1994, this little girl, an Anglo girl, wrote this letter to the editor and she said, "I want to know what happened to all my classmates. When I started here in Central four years ago, there were 390 kids in my freshman class. In two weeks I'm going to graduate and there are 187 kids in my graduating class."

We were the ones that were stunned. What happened to all those kids? Where did they disappear to? What we were missing were the number of kids that had simply dropped out, that we had no idea.

Probably for a lot of kids, high school had no relevance. The Hispanic families liked their kids like everyone else, but they didn't put that idea in the kids' minds that education was an important component of life. A lot of Hispanic fathers, in fact, didn't want their daughters to go to college. They wanted them to stay home and be homemakers. They wanted them to be mothers.

We thought maybe scholarships would be the answer. So we raised over \$2 million and have given over 2,000 scholarships. That hasn't been the final solution. It's about trying to place values on what an education represents to people. We have to convince the families that their kids have to go to school and have to be successful. Truthfully, Hispanic kids start school two or three years behind. Anglo children when they start in the 1st grade they usually have a vocabulary of about 5,000 words. Hispanic and poor black kids generally start with vocabularies of about 2,500 words. From the first day, they enter school they are entering at a disadvantage. When white kids start in the 1st grade, they know their colors, they know their ABCs, they can spell their name. They have all of these abilities on the first day. Hispanic kids don't have those abilities. So what we are trying to do is find a way get our kids – Hispanic poor and black kids – caught up by the 3rd grade, which is the critical year. Everybody is talking about holding kids back in the 3rd grade if they can't read at grade level. I'm fully in favor of that if it gives them the ability to get caught up so they are able to graduate from high school and go to college and be successful like all of the other kids.

The two main hospitals in Pueblo give about \$120 million worth of indigent care. That in a nutshell gives you a birds' eye view of the poverty here in Pueblo.

When I was on the city council, I was convinced that we have this economic development tool and that we wouldn't allow employers to come to Pueblo unless they paid a minimum of \$10 an hour. You know what? That was the last time we brought anybody in here. The jobs we have gotten here haven't been good quality, high paying jobs that most other communities have.

Another statistic that I wanted to tell you, the 81001 zip code has the largest number of grandchildren being raised by grandparents of any zip code in the United States. There have literally been hundreds and hundreds of kids that are being raised by grandparents. We have the highest illegitimate birth rate in the state of Colorado. We produce in the neighborhood of 300 to 400 illegitimate kids every year. We have babies raising babies. So what happens is a 15-, 16-year old girl gets pregnant. And what's the first thing that happens? It is difficult to raise that child. So they go by grandma's house and say will you babysit for the kids for a day? And they don't come back.

I have a daughter and I know what I had to do to raise her. I was a single parent. When I got ready to send her to school, Sunset Park had the best grades of all of the grade schools. So I went and asked who is the best

1st grade teacher? And they told me, and so she became Andrea's 1st and 2nd grade teacher. And then in the 3rd grade, I went to see who the best math teacher was and they told me, so I put her in there. When they get ready to go to junior high, they give a test in the 6th grade, and if your kids do good on that test they can take pre-algebra. And that is a gatekeeper for college, that one single year. If your kids do good, they can take pre-algebra, then algebra and then geometry. I made sure my kid took all of those hard classes.

There's a woman in town, head of the United Way, and she teaches in Rocky Ford. Andrea and I were asked if we would go to that school and talk to the kids. And both, Andrea and I, were stunned by the girls in the 4th, 5th, 6th grade classes and how articulate they were and how smart. I truly felt if somebody took them aside and ran them through this gear-up program they honestly and truly wouldn't get pregnant. You have to have programs to work with girls.



## Alan Berube

Senior fellow and research director for the Brookings Institution's Metropolitan Policy Program



**M**y sense is the Latino population in Colorado was much smaller 30 years ago than it is today, that the vast majority of the growth has occurred over the last 30 years. And that much of that growth is among Mexican immigrants, many of whom come to the United States to work in low-skill jobs. They are working construction in fast growing areas of the country like Colorado and the Intermountain West. So you have an influx on the Latino end of workers who may be less educated than their predecessors, whatever Latinos were there in 1980. Essentially you are looking at a somewhat different population today than you were in 1980. With whites and blacks, it's a little tougher to say why that might be the case. I do know that the Colorado economy in 1980 was much more based on the extraction industry than it is today. That a lot of the growth in the state economically has accrued to highly skilled people in industries like finance, telecommunications, energy. Mining is energy, but so is the green economy and a lot of the research jobs that are coming along with that. The state has attracted in from other parts of the country a fairly skilled population. You've got brain gain going on from the Midwest and the Northeast, people who are attracted to these high skill industries and to the quality of life they find in Colorado.

So much of that growth has benefited highly-skilled, high earning populations and there really hasn't been attendant growth in jobs that are accessible to people at lower skill levels and wages that go along with those

jobs. I guess I think both about the composition of the populations and the broader changes in the Colorado economy. In a way, Colorado was by virtue of its older economy a more equal place than the rest of the United States. But it's just picked up in droves these elements of the national economy and it's now more like a caricature of the United States in terms of the imbalance between the high end and the low end – where the high end is disproportionately employing highly educated whites and the low is probably employing disproportionately, less educated Latinos and African Americans.

There are definitely demographic features of minority households particularly black households that have changed relative to white households over the past three decades – particularly the rise of the one parent household among African Americans where you max out at one earner. And the two parent household among whites where more often than not you have two earners in those households. In part it's about how many adults you have and the income generating power these different households have.

**“In a way, the racial inequality is posing a real threat to the future economic viability of the state if that under-18 population in 20 years is really the bulk of your workforce.”**

You can see it show up in the educational challenges that a state like Colorado is facing. You've got maybe a little less so than other parts of the country, but you still have on balance an aging white population and a young minority population. There are only so many white people you can pull from the rest of the country to help adjust for that imbalance and the challenge it is bringing. So more and more of your under-18 population, school-aged population, is brown and black. And they are growing up in households

that are more economically disadvantaged which all the research shows places a negative strain on their educational potential.

In a way the racial inequality is posing a real threat to the future economic viability of the state if that under 18-population in 20 years is really the bulk of your workforce.

The high school graduation rate over time mirrors a national trend where whites were way ahead of blacks and Latinos on that 20, 30 years ago. Whites being at 90 percent. Their rate hasn't had as far to come as blacks and Latinos. But blacks and Latinos certainly have made progress there. But the changes in the economy generally are making post secondary education the real dividing line between economic success and stagnation.

I would be surprised if there are any major regions of the country that are bucking this trend. If you recognize certain things about Colorado that make it stand out as having gone from a more equal place than average to a less equal place than average, some places the inequalities haven't grown to the extent they have grown in

Colorado, but they are probably growing everywhere.

You are looking at income inequality, but of course that is highly correlated with wealth inequality. I think we've seen from the downturn, given its prolonged length especially and the fact that it was rooted in the housing market, the knockout effects of living from paycheck to paycheck, not having an emergency stockpile of savings from which you can reside. It's hard to ride out a recession that has been prolonged as this one, but certainly families that have been earning more for a long period of time are much better prepared to weather this.

The other thing economic statistics from the recession remind us of is that financial capital is one thing you need to ride out a recession, but human capital is probably more important. And that workers with bachelor degrees have unemployment rates throughout the course of the recession that have been one-half to one-third of those experienced by those people with only a high school education.

It's certainly true that the safety net today is much more work-based than it was 40 years ago when it was really AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children). Access to traditional welfare, the level of benefits available, those have declined sharply. In the context of a recession, it leaves a lot of people who can't find work because they aren't a lot of jobs kind of hung out to dry.



## Hank Brown

Former U.S. senator from Colorado



There are two factors, but one is a statistical phenomenon: The federal government does not count non-cash benefits. And so for example, food stamps, although they contribute substantially to low-income people's income, aren't counted. Section 8 housing is not counted. Medicaid is not counted and so on. The fact that the comparisons show a drop doesn't mean they have less disposable income. It means they have less earned income.

The second factor is of major importance and is really why much of this is occurring. There was a study put out by the Brookings Institution here a few years ago which pointed out there were three keys toward staying out of poverty. It was almost a complete correlation. If you got a job, if you did not have children out of wedlock and if you at some point in your life got married, you avoided poverty. The phenomenon that you're seeing is a huge explosion of children born out of wedlock



particularly in the big cities. It correlates exactly to the start of AFDC (Aid for Families with Dependent Children) where we begin making cash payments to people who had children out of wedlock. Most states operate that in a way so that the more children you have out of wedlock, the more money you get. If you chart it, I know this is painful to hear, but if you look at the statistics on it, it correlates exactly with the start of AFDC payments.

What we've done in America is design a system that rewards people for not working and locks them into poverty. It's a tragedy of the first order because the vast majority of people who are in poverty don't want to be on welfare. They want jobs.

It's a critical element for the child to have a father identified and at least know who he is and have the father feel some responsibility for the child. That makes a huge difference in raising a child.

**“What we've done in America is design a system that rewards people for not working and locks them into poverty. It's a tragedy of the first order ...”**

The challenge here is how to help people. The vast majority of people caught in the welfare trap don't want to be there. I think you redesign the programs so they help people build job skills and they help people build self-confidence, rather than demeaning them. That means they do something for their check. It means that they get training or they take a job, at least a part time job. You have them do something productive for their check, rather than simply cash the check.

I think you're right when you think about the civil rights programs. They opened up a lot of jobs and you had some very positive forces at work during that period. And it wasn't just the legislation. I think you had a change in the heart of America.

Obviously those of us in the West and from the North, we weren't aware of how much others changed during that period.

Affirmative action obviously was a factor. I think even more was the change in the culture in America, where people became more aware of it. My mother was an attorney, put herself through law school and when she went to get a job, she was the first woman lawyer that Standard Oil ever hired. When she went to work at Standard Oil in 1951 I believe she was paid the same as the stenographer and half as much as the male attorneys. Now, she was grateful for the job and she was the first woman attorney they ever hired, but that was the way people thought then.

It is different now, of course. I don't mean it's perfect now; it's not. But what changed along with affirmative action was the way people thought. The market changed. As women performed in a wide variety of areas, or

other minorities, they proved themselves. They became in demand.

The expression is a dead man walking. First of all there's no question that interest rates have to go back up at some point, have to normalize at some point. And this isn't going back to interest rates like Jimmy Carter had, or at the start of the Reagan administration. This is just normalizing them at two and a half percent higher. There's no question that the interest cost has to go up, and up dramatically. There's no way when it begins to go that we can make the payments. So we're in for a huge adjustment and the adjustment will impact the availability of jobs and it will impact the availability of government benefits.

I think it will make us all poorer.

The extent of the gap in Colorado reflects the nature of our employers. The federal government, higher educational institutions and high tech industry from medical research to defense contractors require an unusually high proportion of well educated workers. The tourism industry and seasonal agricultural workers on the other hand do not require the highly educated workers. Thus Colorado with a proportionately high share of tourism workers and large portion of high tech industry has a larger gap than other states.



## Sal Carpio

**Denver's community leader who served 12 years on City Council and was executive director of the Denver Housing Authority**



**W**hy the gaps have worsened is a very difficult question. I think maybe two things. The populations have grown quite a bit since 1960. The percentage of people that are in poverty may have remained the same, but the numbers would be greater because the populations have grown so fast. The other things are all those factors – poverty, graduation rates, racism – have really become institutionalized. I think that has contributed a lot to it. It's hard to attack when it's part of the system. Then for those minority group members who are working to alleviate this, some of them are holding political office or have become successful themselves, they were able to get through the system. It's like a funnel upside down. Or even right side up, a few trickle out. The funnel just has gotten bigger. It still trickles, but there's just more people in there that can't get out.

The biggest single factor is all the effects of poverty. You can get an entry level job. You can be working – a lot of people are – and still be at a poverty level. As poor young Hispanics interact with more active Hispanics, more active people, generally, their level also rises. They're able to overcome their problems better. But as

long as they're locked into a poverty situation, it just repeats itself.

Institutional racism allows people to continue to practice it without feeling bad about it, because they don't believe they're being racist. I'll give you a good example. Look at this immigrant issue now. Those youngsters are mostly illegal aliens. They're mostly Hispanics. They are going to be successful in life if they have the same

“I would think instead of trying to impede progress for these children that we'd embrace something like using the Dream Act. You would try to facilitate more people in this country having access to the benefits of education instead of trying to restrict it.”

opportunities for education that the people they went to school with have. But they're not being offered scholarships even if they are high achievers. They obviously want to go to college and feel they are capable of succeeding in college but they're being denied access because their parents are not American citizens.

Some Democrats but primarily Republicans can honestly say, “I'm not a racist. I'm not talking race. I'm talking about illegal people.” They don't feel bad about it. It isn't like saying, “You're a Mexican. You can't go to school.” The result is the same and maybe even worse because that's what the law says. You're not supposed to have these benefits if you're illegal.

The birth rate now is over 50 percent minority in the United States, which tells you this country will be largely

minority in the not-too-distant future. Everybody sees that. I would think instead of trying to impede progress for these children that we'd embrace something like using the Dream Act. You would try to facilitate more people in this country having access to the benefits of education instead of trying to restrict it.

I don't think there's any simple solution. I think it's going to take a change of attitudes. It probably will take generations. But I do think education holds the key. I don't know who they are – more enlightened people, less political people. Everything's broken down. Even the Denver School Board is so fractured because everybody thinks that their solution is the perfect one, and we still have all these major problems.



## Amitabh Chandra

Professor of public policy at Harvard and director of health policy research at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government

Now my own view is that healthcare and health insurance are important. But when you're talking about life expectancy, and you're talking about people's health, the social determinants of health are far more important than the healthcare determinants of health. Unfortunately, a lot of the literature has zoomed in on the healthcare determinants of health, and they've noted that when you're looking at the healthcare disparities – not health disparities, healthcare disparities – how often do you get a flu shot, do African-American patients get preventive care as often as white patients do, and there is a disparity there, too. And there is a thinking in the literature, gee, if we could only shut down the disparities in healthcare and insurance then we could shut down the disparities in health. And I think that's an astonishingly naive position to have, because healthcare is one of the many, many determinants of health. The role of neighborhoods. The role of socio-economic status. The role of behaviors. Behaviors like the diet I have, the compliance and adherence I have with prescription drugs. These things are far more important than the cause and effect of healthcare on health, for the very simple reason that health care comes in in the end.

So what does that mean? It doesn't mean that disparities don't exist. But what we should really be focusing on are disparities in socio economic status, and where those originate from. And I think they originate very early in life. I think schooling and child enrichment programs for minority students in minority neighborhoods – that's what we should be interested in.

Something like racial disparities in early mortality – like premature mortality, dying before the age of 65. It should not happen. In America, no one should die before the age of 65. It should not happen. When I see that happen, it jars me in a way that no other fact on disparities jars me. You know what I mean? It's a weird thing to say, but suppose you told me there was a seven-year difference in life expectancy – that African Americans lived to 90 and majority groups lived to 97, I would say that is astonishing. That is an astonishing disparity. But on the other hand I would also drop back and say, wow, everybody at least got to live to be 90. But when a group of people dies before 65, it just gets to me. It's a wakeup call.

Childhood obesity, children wearing safety belts, that's what we should be thinking about. Juvenile diabetes – early evolution of the racial test-score gap in kindergarten. Those are the things that really bother me. We know that reading begets reading, skill begets skill in school. I think about myself. If you fall behind reading in kindergarten, 1st grade, that gap is just going to grow and compound itself by the time you're in 2nd grade. It's

“Without giving you my world view, the permanence of these disparities are principally things like differences in behaviors, differences in neighborhoods, differences in early childhood circumstances and schooling, and then differences in healthcare and health insurance.”

going to become even larger by the time you're in 3rd grade. And it's very hard to come back in at the level of college, and say, well, we're going to do affirmative action, we're going to have all this financial aid for minority students – it's too late. It's too, too late.

I think the childhood component is important. But the one thing that we can give people is we can give them the promise of later opportunity. In the absence of later opportunity, in the absence of people knowing that there's opportunities waiting for them, and the world is fair and will reward people with good ideas – in the absence of knowing that, it is going to be very hard for us to get a lot of these kids to wear their safety belts, or to make the conscious investments we need to make. Because if all they see is a very bleak future waiting for them, then why would make they those investments? It's actually rational not to.

Think about the world as a very uncertain place. So I'm 40 years old, but I just thought random things are going to happen to me at 40, 41, 42, that I could be laid off, that I could be hit by a bus, that I could get cancer, or have a heart attack or stroke, be thrown in jail, detained by the police – these things would happen regardless of whether I'm a good person and did the right things: Work hard or not, why would I invest in any of the good behaviors? You might as well take up smoking.



## Jim Chavez

Executive director of the Latin American Educational Foundation



In almost every one of these trends, the underlying cause or factor is education. The state is seeing the effects of a multi-decade combination of educational issues. One is our tuition rates have gone up, far more than a family's ability to earn income that would keep up. We've seen the financial resources the state would put in to help families with their students go down dramatically, especially in the last 10 years.

Those are two compounding factors that have been dramatic. I think we're also seeing an outcome here – terrible graduation rates, the dropout rate. Even for students graduating from high school, the quality of their education, I think, is being diluted.

They either can't compete to earn a sustainable income, or they can't compete as successfully as they hope even if they do get to college.

I think the ultimate implication is that we actually cost ourselves more as a state. There are plenty of statistics that will substantiate that. We as a people are going to end up paying far more money for social services. We'll pay more for the corrections systems because this state has not made the investment in education at all

levels.

It's a tremendous economic penalty we're going to pay that's going to burden us for decades. We're running a very serious risk of seeing the major companies that we do have here move away to other states where there

“Our kids aren't failing because they didn't get out of college and they aren't failing because they didn't get out of high school. They really ran into massive obstacles as early as the 6th, 7th grade.”

is a different level of education commitment and investment, or to other countries. We're not the only state doing this, but we seem to be leading the way in the country on how not to fund education.

Over the last decade our tuition rates have gone up three to four times what the general inflation rate has been. Ten years is a heck of a lot of time to cause a lot of damage. It starts with household income or a lesser ability to earn good quality income. That is immediately going to impact sales tax revenues and the ability to purchase homes. You can't go to the stores and buy new lawnmowers, new furniture. We have allowed ourselves a process where we have completely clogged and bogged down that economic engine. It really goes back to education.

We oftentimes focus on the high school graduation rate or the college graduation rate, but you can back that up to the youngest development ages. Our kids aren't failing because they didn't get out of college and they aren't failing because they didn't get out of high school. They really ran into massive obstacles as early as the 6th, 7th grade. I really think it has to go back to those earliest ages. This is an 18-year problem, and it's really the first six to eight years of that continuum that is the issue here.

There are a couple of good things going on. Denver residents put in place this pre-school program and the sales tax. That is showing significant returns on investment, but you are talking about a 3-year-old or a 5-year-old. Assuming we continue to do good things, we have 15 to 20 more years before that proves itself out.



## Dr. Carolyn Chen

Medical doctor and director of the Pecos clinic for Clinica Family Health Services

There are a lot of people that definitely have risky health conditions. Our population is largely Latina pregnant patients, so when you're talking about health disparities in people who are pregnant, if they have a

health disparity they are more likely than not to also be obese, or to suffer from other chronic conditions like depression or anything else. But obesity clearly is an epidemic, and it's affecting everybody, and included in that is fertile women of child-bearing age, and then they get gestational diabetes, and with gestational diabetes you really have to be on top of what you're doing or else there are a lot of health risks that you can have.

So we're talking about a population at higher risk already for a bad outcome, and then you stack on top of that obesity for whatever reasons people individually or you or I want to believe in.

Ok, so maybe you had a really bad outcome, and your baby – I have a patient like this – was born at 10 pounds because of uncontrolled gestational diabetes. I kid you not – it was crazy. And they're trying their best, but maybe they have five kids at home, maybe their faith, in my patient population, doesn't allow them to use various forms of birth control, which we could have a whole 'nother discussion about. So they have five kids and uncontrolled gestational diabetes and then their kid pops out, 10 pounds, and has a lot of problems, but dad's working two jobs and they're trying their best with their diet. And this person, actually in lieu of knowing what to do with her diet, just got a little bit frustrated with, OK, you can eat lentils and whole grains and fruits, but not these fruits, you know, and eat like a bunny for these nine months. Well, OK, it's not easy for me to buy those vegetables if I live in an impoverished area of town where they're not readily available or they're rotten, or I buy them out of a can, or no matter what, face the fact and say, I'm going to try the best and I'm going to be a great mother for this child, but my kids are eating tortillas or tamales or hot dogs, or whatever. What person is going to say, I'm never going to have a bite of that, when it's on the same dining room table that I'm eating at?

When you have a person like that, it's like, gosh, where do you even begin? Well, we have a registered dietician, who is herself Latina, who can say, you know what, when you're cooking those beans, why don't you try to use low-fat canola oil instead of lard – and just try it. Maybe it doesn't taste that good. Or, you know – hot dogs, boil them, don't grill them. All kinds of different ways where you can do just little modifications and it's the same information that they need to get. But here I am, wealthy by nature of me being a family doc, Asian, second generation immigrant, trying to tell some Latino family who — I've worked here for six years — a lot of them know me, but they know that I'm not them. And I can't really understand what their life is like – sit there in front of them and be like, you should eat more carrots and salad instead of your beans and tortillas because you're diabetic. I might as well have just told them, you know, that if it were the equivalent of me, you can never eat a bowl of white rice again. I'm just not listening to that.

And so maybe it comes better from somebody else. And if that's what they need, then that's fine. And we should keep them at the center of what's going to be better for a patient instead of trying to figure out what's

“We're putting a lot of specialty care services higher on the reimbursement scale than primary care preventive services.”

better for the health system.

We're putting a lot of specialty care services higher on the reimbursement scale than primary care preventive services. It's like if somebody gets there and is obese and has really bad gestational diabetes and they need insulin, then their health insurance or Medicaid or whomever will authorize the payment of X number of dollars to the highest-degree specialist they can get ... and that compensation would be markedly different than, let's say, a nurse midwife, who would come out and do home visits, or even group visits with somebody, in an arena where they could have met with that person and prevented that problem, would have saved all of us a lot of money, including that patient.



## Josh Downey

Political director of Service Employees International Union Local 105



For us at SEIU, we certainly recognize that during this recession there was a key hit to Hispanics and African Americans. One of things that we attributed it to and have really focused on is the reality that the fastest-growing jobs in this country are service industry jobs, which tend to be low-wage jobs, and then the fastest-growing job markets tend to be in the South, which frankly are predominantly anti-union. And so, because so many of the fastest-growing industries are predominantly low-wage and then predominantly in areas that are anti-union, we're finding that more and more workers don't have a voice on the job.

One of the things at SEIU that we have focused on for the past 10 to 15 years is our South/Southwest region – 14 states in the South that are primarily right-to-work states, or as we call it, “the right to work for less.” Colorado, we're slightly different. We're not a complete right-to-work state, but you know there are challenges when it comes to workers standing up and having a voice and saying, “No, our work is worth more than minimum wage. We should have health care, or we should have the right to a dignified retirement.” But unfortunately, in so many of these areas, in so many of these states, that's not the case.

Janitorial is primarily Latino and immigrant. Security is primarily African American. SEIU has 2.1 million members across the country. Here in Colorado we have about 6,000 members. (Service sector jobs) are the fastest-growing jobs, so they are jobs that people can actually get. And then they tend to be low-wage jobs, so, unfortunately, it's easier for minorities to get into those jobs. Take janitorial, for example. Before we started to organize the janitorial industry, before we launched our Justice for Janitors campaign 20 years ago, jani-



tors around the country were making as little as \$4. Obviously it was not considered a dignified job, let alone a profession. And so that was part of the reason why we focused in on helping to organize those janitors, to make sure that we were actually working to professionalize the industry.

We've certainly made strides. Here in Denver, for example, our average janitor is making about \$11.17, which is about three and a half dollars higher than the Colorado minimum wage, which is good for sure, but it's still a low-wage job. I would like to think the gaps are going to start narrowing again, largely because of the fight for a fair economy that I think really kicked off this last year. We call it the fight for the fair economy. Occupy calls it the fight for the 99 percent, but ultimately it boils down to the same thing. Frankly, there's too many people at the top, the one percent, that are making money hand over fist at the expense of our workers. And I think the workers in general are starting to recognize there has been a divide and conquer mentality for far too long and that rich CEOs and big corporations have gotten away with pitting workers against their fellow workers, saying no you don't deserve a pay raise or no you don't deserve a pension.

“...most of the studies we've seen at the union point to the fact that as the decline in union goes, so too goes the decline in the middle class...”

And I think that while it's only just begun, there are some tremendous seeds of hope around workers actually starting to stand together, whether you're Latino, or white or black, actually coming together and saying you know what, we're all in the same boat and if your ship is sinking, my ship is sinking, too. I think that the wealth gap between workers and CEOs is extravagant, outrageous, and I think that workers are starting to come together to bridge that gap and as we bridge that gap we'll also start to bridge the gap among the races.

It's not just wealth. It also comes down to respect and dignity on the job. So many workers are in low-wage work where their employers basically run roughshod all over them, where their employers don't give them the opportunity to advance into management, or advance into the next economic (level). Then you're going to continue to see that wealth gap grow and grow. In fact, most of the studies we've seen at the union point to the fact that as the decline in union goes, so too goes the decline in the middle class. In our high water mark of about 35 percent union across the country, in the '50s, the middle class was really at our peak, really thriving. But then today, as we're in one of our low-water marks, at just 12 percent union density across the country, we also see the gap between middle class and wealth has taken off dramatically.



## Barry Fagin

Senior fellow with the Independence Institute



One thing people ought to consider (as to why the gaps are wider now) is the rise of the modern welfare state. It was really with Johnson's Great Society programs in the late '60s when things started. But the real significant factor that affects the lives of ethnic minorities has been dependence and increasing reliance on the state, and the welfare state, in particular. There isn't anything as dramatic in American public policy since the mid-'70s up to now as the expansion of entitlement programs and the specific targeting of racial and ethnic minorities for state help. We all want to believe that those things help. We all want to believe

that those are good things; that's why we support them. If you argue against them, or if you look at what they actually do, you're seen as blaming the victim. You're seen as not being compassionate. You're seen as being a racist, any number of things. It's very, very hard to challenge them.

There is no single thing that causes complex social phenomenon. They're always interrelated. They're also things like individual cultural differences within different minority groups but, in my opinion, the most significant factor by far is the emergence of the modern welfare state and excessive reliance on it. For example, we like to think the Civil Rights Act caused all the good things. But you need to do a little more careful thinking than that. It might just be that it was a continuation of an existing trend. For example, from 1940 to 1960, black poverty fell from 87 percent to 47 percent. (It was) trending before the Civil Rights Act happened. Similarly, the number of blacks in professional occupations doubled from 1954 to 1964, again before the Civil Rights Act was passed. So things were actually on the right trend. They were actually heading in the right direction before the Civil Rights Act passed.

Again, for example, in 1925, about 85 percent of black households were headed by two-parent families, a figure which remained relatively constant up through 1950. That's a wonderful statistic and that's important and it's completely different today. Today, the black illegitimacy rate is at an astonishing 70 percent. That's horrible. If you wanted to announce a systemic assault on the African American community, that's how you would do it. It's astonishing. That happened after the Civil Rights Act. So does that mean the Civil Rights Act caused

“The real significant factor that affects the lives of ethnic minorities has been dependence and increasing reliance on the state, and the welfare state, in particular.”

that? No, of course not. There are always unintended consequences to federal policy and we've got to look at those and think about that regardless of how it makes us feel. We have to look at what their actual effects are.

But an inescapable conclusion it seems to me is that blacks have been disproportionately targeted as specific beneficiaries of federal social policy. And to conclude that those policies can only have good effects and to conclude that the bad effects must be because of discrimination and what we need is still more aggressive welfare policies, it seems to me to be gross intellectual error and intellectual myopia.

We need to cut entitlement spending. That's really, really important. And not just for the poor. I believe for the middle class and the rich, too. I'm at least consistent in that view. And there needs to be a real cut not a reduced rate in the growth of these programs.

Along with that we need to cut taxes. We need to cut taxes in order to give people more of their own money and to get the economy moving again. And to get the jobs that these people need.

There also needs to be more of a conversation among everyone, but particularly those who claim to care about the underclass, about the role of individual responsibility, and the role of personal choices in people's behavior.



## John Fleck

President of the Denver Area Labor Federation

I can believe that the gaps are wider now. I was born in '58, so obviously I have little or no recollection of the economic struggles of anybody. But over the years, if you look where public education was going, eight-hour work days and child labor laws – all that came from unions. Public education was part of what the unions were fighting for in the early 1900s. If you look at public education now, charter schools and all this other stuff, it appears to me, once again this is my opinion, the rich want to educate their kids, the devil with the rest of us. Our opinion is an educated work force is how America will continue to be strong. If we're just educating a small percentage of the population, we're going to have a dumb population. We're not going to be able to do the great things America has done over the years.

College education is becoming unaffordable to the middle class. The public universities, tuitions are going through the roof, and that's just the middle class. You get down to people of color who have not maybe had the opportunities and it becomes even more dramatic.

Again, this is my opinion. This is not the official stance of the labor unions as a whole, but my opinion as a

union person. Civil rights gave some opportunities and actually part of it helped open up unions to different populations to other than white males.

I come from a construction trade, so I'll speak to my construction trade itself. The civil rights movement opened up opportunities for Hispanics, for the most part, in Colorado into my union. Today we have people of color, women who have ability to get into an apprenticeship, get into a construction career, into lifelong learning if they want it.

Basically, corporate greed (is at the root of widening gaps). Nobody's paying any taxes; we're sending jobs overseas, the tax base is eroding. The middle class is making less. There's less and less money from smaller and smaller numbers of us that pay taxes to have public education.

“I don't think we're in a death spiral in America, but I don't see things getting better until we start concentrating on the people of our country. ... I don't think we're investing in our citizens.”

White males are in charge of the money and control. People of color have fewer opportunities ... when it comes to home ownership and the whole Ponzi scheme that was real estate and getting these people into these sub-prime mortgages and our economy took a tank. They were targeting these people. If you're talking about home ownership, you need to talk about the foreclosure rate, too. There were people who were getting homes, and I hate to say this, but couldn't afford them. Here we are. We've got a foreclosure crisis that almost put us under. This trickle down that Reagan started in the early 80s hasn't trickled down. It's staying with the very wealthy. Productivity in America is at an all-time high and wages have been stagnant for the last 15 years.

When union density has gone down to this level, that means the checks and balances aren't there like they were. With civil rights, it opened up the unions so there should have been a good time for those folks. I would be surprised if it didn't, as union membership increased. In the '70s and maybe early '80s, the union membership rate of people of color increased and was helping out the bottom line a little bit would be my guess. Maybe it didn't narrow it to the point it needed to be, but I would assume that if people of color were able to get into a union (they would) have a better income career path.

I think when Reagan took away the union rights of the PATCO workers and made open season on us unions back in the '80s, there were fewer opportunities for them to join unions because unions were trying to survive.

I think in the short term the gaps will widen. I see capital sitting on the sideline. I don't see jobs being created

in this country. I think corporations are sitting on the sideline right now. I think there's plenty of money out there to build the infrastructure putting people to work. We're not quite to the soup lines yet and I think it's going to take the economy worsening until people start waking up and demanding certain things from their government, from the corporate citizen. I don't see it changing much. I don't think we're in a death spiral in America, but I don't see things getting better until we start concentrating on the people of our country. I don't think we're investing in our citizens. I don't see that changing. We still have people off-shoring jobs, not paying taxes, the whole thing.



## Corrine Fowler

Economic justice director for the Colorado Progressive Coalition



It's something I try to point out when I'm in any conversation about disparity. I think it's something pretty much lost on all of us that the funding mechanism and formula that we use to fund public schools in Colorado is very much dependent on property tax revenues, which is inherently unequal across every area. And so to use that as the base for funding creates inequities in itself. Then we've got the Gallagher Amendment which is ever shrinking the property tax revenues in these cities and counties. So unless you have a county that is willing to vote to raise their property taxes then you have a situation where schools are being funded disproportionately. So all those things interacting together are creating grave inequities. And then you have neighborhoods that are able to just go ahead and fundraise. You have individual schools in Denver that are located in much more affluent areas.

My son's school is an example of that. They are able to fundraise individually for their school. And you go to another Denver Public School just on the other side of town where the parents aren't able to contribute out of their own pockets and you have a very different situation.

And so, I would be very supportive of a statewide mill levy (for property taxes). We've had conversations with legislators about referring a statewide mill to the people and creating a balance of property tax revenue statewide that would begin to equalize funding. The Gallagher Amendment has just created such a regressive situation in our property tax revenue. In Colorado, the Gallagher Amendment, coupled with TABOR (Taxpayers Bill of Rights), has reality created funding disparity for school districts.

Education should be the great equalizer. It should be the one place in our society where everyone has the same opportunity. If we give every single child the same tools to succeed through education, and then they go

on to make personal decisions, and then they have their own personal responsibility about what they chose to do later in life, that's one thing. But if we aren't starting our kids off on equal ground to begin with, then we are holding them down all the way through. It should not be that just because your parents have more money or you come from a more affluent background that you should then get better educational opportunities. That is completely unjust.

Early childhood education is definitely where we need to begin, that all 4-year-olds should be attending pre-school. School readiness is definitely an issue and many of these kids are showing up to kindergarten and they're unable to hold a pencil, and they haven't been read to, don't know their alphabet, those kinds of things. I'm definitely an advocate for pre-school and ensuring programs like Head Start and the Denver Pre-K program which provides pre-school to all 4-year-old Denver residents, those kinds of things must be funded. We must continue to ensure every child has pre-school and is school ready.

Yes, there is some parental responsibility and I'm not going to take that out of the equation. As parents, we need to be doing those things for our children. But at end of day, all parents are not, and that's not the child's fault. We need to remove the consequence and not make this child the victim and ensure our children are having all the tools they need to succeed. The parents should have responsibility in this, but we know all of them don't. All of them are not providing, and all are not able. A lot of these parents are working two and three jobs. Not to make excuses, but if they didn't have to work three jobs for a living wage, maybe they would have time to read to their children after school.

In the 1960s, we had all the programs. When many of the programs became available, such as Had Start and Pell grants, the funding was provided through the war on poverty. The first time we had access to health care for low-income people, so we had Medicaid, and we had Medicare, and we had Head Start, and we had all these things that started to provide opportunities for the lowest income people. So that all ramped up and our federal taxes and our state taxes were much more progressive and there was a much more equal distribution of the tax responsibility and we saw a very prosperous time and we saw a lot of gains all across in every income level and all races were having economic gains. And then we saw, right at the '80s, when the war on government began, and the conservative attack on our government and all the programs have been cut and the tax code has been turned upside down and everything that has happened since about 1982, and you can just see the direct connection. Even the financial deregulation and the loss of wealth that has occurred in our communities because of foreclosure and because of the predatory lending that was allowed, you can take

“When are we going to start sharing the responsibility for our communities, and say, ‘OK, I’m willing to pay more in taxes so our kids can have a future?’”

a map of policy and put it right on top of all those graphs and see exactly the attack on our communities that has occurred since 1980.

It's cut, cut, cut and there goes the graduation rate. It's not all about how much money we spend on education. But when kids don't have textbooks to take home? They're sharing. These kids at West High School across the street here, they don't have books to take home. They have to leave them at school. If you can't study and do your homework at home, what kind of outcomes are you going to have? They don't have enough books to give one to every child. The books stay in the classroom. They have to leave it there for the next class to use, so they can't go home and study. That's pathetic.

We have some schools out in the mountain counties, we heard from Crested Butte that they don't have enough money for heat in the winter. So these kids are sitting there in their coats and gloves. That's pathetic. When are we going to start sharing the responsibility for our communities, and say, "OK I'm willing to pay more in taxes so our kids can have a future"?

I am optimistic about the recent awareness that I see in the public discourse. The fact that a lot of people seem to be more aware than they were even five years ago about the policies that have created our current economic crisis on a broader scale. And, so I hope that we're waking up and we're ready to be more civically engaged and take more responsibility for the common good again, practice some of those values that we all had I believe that have been lost a little bit. I feel like our values are starting to unify a little bit more, so I'm optimistic. We advocate for a graduated income tax, state income tax, and if you look at the recent findings from the Denver University study they did on our state budget, and all of our financial issues we're facing – they identified the graduated income tax as the solution. They looked at all of our budgetary shortfalls, our projected outlooks, all through 2024, and their finding was a graduated income tax would fill all of our revenue shortfalls and it would also leave us with money. In our mind then it is a more equal distribution of responsibility. We do hope to see more people willing to say that publicly, that the wealthiest people in our state are not paying their fair share.

An Institute on Taxation report shows our lowest income people in Colorado are paying twice as much in taxes as a percentage of their incomes than the highest income earners. The lowest income are paying nine percent, the wealthiest are paying about 4.2 percent. The report is called "Who Pays?" It's a 50-state report; there's a whole section on Colorado. It shows you right there how unequal our tax distribution is and it also illustrates property tax inequity – it shows how all across the board our taxes are just out of whack.



## Les Franklin

Longtime black community activist in Denver and the founder of the Shaka Franklin Foundation, which works to prevent youth suicide



One of the key reasons is that most of the civil rights “godfathers and godmothers” have either died or are so old they can no longer advocate for minorities.

The godfathers were watching over the community. Those godfathers don’t exist anymore, people like Hiawatha Davis, Bill Roberts, Alvin Caldwell, Arie Taylor, Rev. Wendell Liggins, Daddy Bruce Randolph, Ike Moore, Lauren

Watson, Rachel Noel, King Trimble and countless others.

They were warriors, always fighting to better the lives of blacks through legislation, protest and fundraising. Very few minorities from the current generation have stepped up to fill their void. Those who benefited economically from the godfathers’ efforts are busy with their careers and reaping the fruits of their predecessors’ labors. They’re looking out for themselves. They don’t care what’s going on in the community. They don’t have the same passion about it.

“Those who benefited economically from the godfathers’ efforts are busy with their careers and reaping the fruits of their predecessors’ labors. They’re looking out for themselves.”



## Marianne Franklin

President and executive director of the Shaka Franklin Foundation and the daughter of the late civil rights activist James Ward

I decided when I was still in high school that I never wanted to be a teacher, social worker, counselor or fight for any community cause. I saw how hard my father worked to make a positive difference, to open up opportunities for youth and those less fortunate.

It was a constant struggle. My father was always at meetings at night and on the weekends. There were always people at our house talking to him about what needed to be done or how to help this person or that



person who was facing something adverse. He was always on the telephone. He worked late meeting with parents and teachers. He was always writing down, creating new programs for kids to learn.

I missed my father and wanted him in my life more. Even though he and my mother never missed anything that my sister and I were involved in, he was tired a lot of the time. Everyone knew him and everyone knew my sister and I. We were always under the microscope.

“My father was always at meetings at night and on the weekends. There were always people at our house talking to him about what needed to be done.”



## Rabbi Hillel Goldberg

Executive editor of the Intermountain Jewish News



Is the real story that the income for whites went up so much, rather than the bottom fell out for blacks and Hispanics?

To me there is also another issue and that is, taken as a whole, if the gaps between blacks and whites are much greater than the '60s, then another pertinent question is, “Is there a gap within the blacks?” There is no question that since the '60s there is a rise of a black middle class, an educated class. You see blacks in positions of academia, the medical profession and other places in society. So, I would need to see a more sophisticated picture.

I think you could say that whatever the gap may or may not be, poverty is the enemy of religion. It is not a religious ideal to live in poverty. It is not a religious ideal to struggle to put bread on the table. Any religious person should be concerned about poverty whether it's grown or whether it hasn't grown. Wealth is not a moral deficiency, not a religious deficiency, but neither is it a necessity. If there is a greater gap between the races on the scale of poverty and wealth, the religious imperative is to eliminate the poverty which is not necessarily the same thing as the acquisition of great wealth. Israel Salanter, a famous, well-known Jewish ethicist of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, said spiritual matters are more important than physical matters, but another person's physical needs are my spiritual obligations.

The focus is the eradication of poverty. Above that, let it go wherever it goes. There are always going to be some more wealthy, and some less. You're introducing some other considerations and that is, even if I'm right

about that, there shouldn't be discrepancy based on race.

My subjective, unscientific, unmeasured perception is poverty is not as widespread and astronomical wealth is greater. I see that as to say more of an overall rise. This does not contradict the view that there may be a greater gap.

I think people are generally doing better. That does not eliminate poverty, homelessness. It does not decrease in any way religious obligation to ameliorate poverty and homelessness.

“It is not a religious ideal to struggle to put bread on the table. Any religious person should be concerned about poverty, whether it's grown or whether it hasn't grown.”



## Rudy Gonzales

Executive director of *Servicios de la Raza*, a Denver service organization, and son of the late Denver civil rights activist, boxer and poet, Corky Gonzales

**M**y father was born in Denver in 1928. Mom was born in 1931 in Brighton. My maternal grandmother was born in San Luis, Colorado, in 1885. My mother's dad was born in Mexico in the 1880s. On my father's side, his mother was born in San Luis, dad's dad came from Chihuahua. They married in 1918, and settled in Denver. That's our European history. Our indigenous history, we go back 20,000 to 25,000 years. We've been here forever. This is our historic homeland. We're over 70 percent indigenous blood, whether that blood be Pueblo Apache, Navajo, that blood courses through our veins. I used to teach class in ethnic studies. I'd take a five-gallon can of red paint and I'd take an eye dropper and put in 25 generations – 25 drops – of white paint, and I'd put that in the red paint, and you mix it. And I'd tell the kids, “Now what color is that?” Well, it's still red. Exactly. So we are an indigenous people. We don't come across the Atlantic or Pacific to be here.

Hispanic, Chicano, Latino, whatever we call ourselves. My father stated it so eloquently in his poem, “I Am Joaquin: ‘We are the same people.’”

My father grew up on the east side of Denver, in Curtis Park and Five Points. That was overwhelmingly Mexican at that point. In '30s, east Denver was the cheapest place to live. My dad was a self-made man. He literally fought his way out of abject poverty. He fought his way out of the barrio. He became Denver's No. 1 sports draw. He opened a lot of the venues, like the Denver Coliseum, like Bears Stadium, the precursor to Mile High. After his boxing career ended, he bought many properties throughout Denver, including many apartment buildings. He did quite well financially.

When I was born we lived at 34th and Vine, second house in. Then we moved to 23<sup>rd</sup> and Leyden, sometime around 1963 or 1964. We were the second family of color in Park Hill. The other family was black. We were the first Chicano family there. I don't use 'Hispanic' because it denies our indigenous heritage and our part and parcel to this hemisphere. Hispanic means Spanish and we're not a Spanish people. Spanish is European. Then my dad started the "Crusade for Justice," a Hispanic activist group.

He was his own man. The first time he took a job was with the mayor, Tom Currigan. He was fired for leading demonstrations. He even said in the paper, "I'm still a man of my people." He started the crusade in earnest. The Crusade for Justice headquarters was at 16th and Downing. That was the epicenter of our universe as a family. We were five blocks from the crusade. It wasn't just an organization, it was a family. We'd be there in the morning – my dad founded Escuela in 1970 (Escuela Tlatelolco is a Denver charter school now run by Rudy's sister, Nita Gonzales). We'd be there in the morning at school, and we wouldn't be home until 10 or 11 at night with meetings, practice. We danced, we started a theater group, art, we sang, we played guitar. It was just an incredible childhood. My four older sisters got more of the family life. When I came along, I'm the oldest of the second four, we got more of the familia life, the movement life, because the crusade was going full swing at the time.

I often think that my father would have been a very rich man if he had not started the Crusade for Justice. He

**“Our indigenous history, we go back 20,000 to 25,000 years. We’ve been here forever. This is our historic homeland. We’re over 70 percent indigenous blood, whether that blood be Pueblo Apache, Navajo, that blood courses through our veins.”**

retired from boxing in 1955. He opened a sports bar, probably Denver's first sports bar, called Corky's Corner. He became a bail bondsman and then he also became a surety bonds salesman. ... He was very popular. People trusted him. Huge charisma. Huge magnetic personality. He was Denver's golden boy. But he gave all his business up, he gave everything else up, and he started the Crusade for Justice. He committed his life, and our lives as a family, not to poverty, although he came from abject poverty to probably lower middle class, to a vulnerable level.

I fought against doing what I'm doing now. I thought I wanted the material life. I thought that's where it's at. You're conditioned that way in this country. You're conditioned through the media. You're conditioned through peers to be the consumer and to seek materialism. His teachings and his raising, and the way he raised us, his mentorship and his coaching

and his parenting brought me back home. I'm immensely happy doing what I'm doing and it's what I was meant to do, to be of service to others, giving back to the community. To fight the good fight. I'm a fighter. I'm

going to fight against injustice.

That these gaps are wider now than they were during the civil rights movement, it's pretty depressing.



## Michael Hancock

Mayor of Denver



There are lots of points of speculation as to why the gaps exist. When you talk with some of the older experienced folks of the civil rights movement, the one thing that we continue to come back to is the challenged family structure, African-Americans and Latinos, in the sense that back in the '60s the family structure was much more solid. There were more men in the house. There were less single women trying to raise children on their own. You have a majority of children, particularly in the African American community, growing up in single-parent households. The family structure has disintegrated in a sense. I think that's one of the main variables you can point to when you start addressing the gains that have been lost. There's nothing that impacts their education, their quality of life, more than the economic challenges that are faced by single mothers or single head of households.

There's no real one answer to this. There are a lot of reasons why and a lot of challenges that face the family structure. Certainly the employment situation that has hampered African American and Latino males, in particular, for a long time, created the problem. Quite frankly, many would argue the end of Jim Crow and the creation of the justice system where men of color have been unjustly targeted. And that argument has been made over and over again, that it went from Jim Crow to more the justice system, and we have seen over and over again where young men of color have been wrongly accused, unjustly accused, disproportionately sentenced to longer terms for similar crimes. So it's clear you have to look at the unemployment rate. You have to look at the justice system and the overrepresentation of men of color in the justice system and the advent or introduction of drugs and particularly things like crack cocaine into communities of color that have just absolutely devastated many communities.

What we do know is that we still have a vast majority of kids of color growing up in single-headed households. So, that is a challenge. We can only begin to turn the dial by doing some of the things that we're really focused on, which include education, and really focusing on the achievement gap and working with other non-profit and community organizations to present positive role models as well as mentors in the community.

But that is why I have been more focused on the achievement gap through our Education Compact and through some of the things we're doing with before- and after-school programming to really give these young people opportunities to be introduced to positive men and women in their community. But also to make sure they have safe haven and greater support systems. So those things are going to exist. Can we turn the dial? We can. But we're going to have to be willing to talk about the problems and the root of the problems as opposed to just focusing on some of the symptoms that result from them.

We know if we focus on our young people, making sure they're ready to learn when they enter kindergarten, they're more likely to read at grade level in 3rd grade and they're more likely to graduate. If they graduate, they're more likely to go on to college or to a career that's more sustainable. Unfortunately, we've got to go

“You have a majority of children, particularly in the African American community, growing up in single-parent households. I think that's one of the main variables you can point to when you start addressing the gains that have been lost.”

back to those kinds of basics to begin to rebuild and to give young people the sense of opportunity by giving them the very best start.

The thing we're going to focus on is making sure that parents understand how to be engaged in the lives of their children and particularly in their education. The Education Compact we started since I've taken office is really focusing on making sure parents have the tools, whether it's a single mother, single father, or two-parent headed household, they have the tools to effectively manage and navigate their children through their educational careers.

There are many people, again some of the more experienced civil rights advocates, who will say pre-civil rights movement, or before desegregation, was more beneficial to African Americans because the family unit and community unit was stronger.

Though we never want to go back to those times, it's those kinds of values of staying together, and working together, and

making sure that children are the focal point of the family and that there's a strong family unit around the kids is the point these people are trying to make.

All of us as parents have to learn one thing and that is we have to stop focusing on the school being the answer and understand, as we've started to say around here, it's the other side of the school door where we can make the greatest impact for our children. And that is to make sure they're safe, make sure they have access to nutritional meals, make sure they have access to good health care, make sure they have good, strong after-school programs and support systems outside of the school.

Our hope always is that we'll close these gaps and see greater level of the playing field. The reality is that I think you're seeing more stakeholders show up. Let me give you an example. All across this country, mayors are saying no more are we going to abdicate our responsibility of education to just school districts and superintendents. We have a voice to lend to this and everything we talk about, whether it's safety in our neighborhoods, whether it's economic development, job attraction, if it's quality of life, everything lends itself to whether or not our schools are being effective. So mayors are starting to step up all over this country. I'm just so excited to hear mayors saying it's time for us to start weighing in and to play a role. As we all know, by 2030, the majority of people in this country will be people of color and we have an obligation to make sure they're educated and prepared and that this nation remains strong as a result of their leadership.



## Quincy Hines

**Regional director of BarberShop Talk, a mentorship organization for males**

**W**e talk about these issues within our society. My organization focuses on men only. We would consider ourselves a roundtable of wise men. We talk about disparities between all different races, then try to figure out ways to gain the interest of African Americans, in terms of getting involved with communities and voting and so on.

I expressed my frustration with the complacency I've noticed with our people. They feel as if they just don't have time or they can't get involved. I personally think it's fear.

When you look at the '60s and how many people were murdered due to their involvement with civil rights and, of course, the convergence of human rights, a lot of people went missing, or were found dead or were imprisoned for speaking out. And I think that history has proven folks have gotten a little afraid of speaking out. I think people have decided to keep their mouths shut.

I know within the African American community, during the civil rights movement, when we were trying to acquire freedoms and certain liberties, there was this thing called the Talented Tenth out of New York. You had 10 percent who were provided opportunities to attend school and educate themselves outside of their community. They were supposed to come back and teach the rest, the 90 percent, and unfortunately, they didn't. In terms of getting people involved in organizations and stuff like that. People just don't want to get involved and they just don't want to help other people. They don't want to reach back. Leadership, mentorship, a lot of those functions disappeared since the '60s.

I want to say that fear is a primary reason, but I do believe there are some second and third and fourth rea-

sons, like say, for instance, greed. I also think there is a lack of understanding about what's needed for success. We expect things on the fly. We expect things quickly, we expect results faster. Hard work is something that is hard to come by. Hard working individuals are something that's hard to come by. I think we as a culture have handed off moral values for selfish gains.

Rap doesn't denote anything any different. Some of their messages denote rise and come up: I worked hard to get to this point, and so should you. At the same time you don't see, you don't hear a whole lot of their messages talking about reaching back. They talk a lot about, "I drive nice cars. I have a crib would make your mama cry over." But they're not helping.

Some individuals are complacent with their positions in life. They might smoke a little weed, they do certain things, go to clubs. They're single. They're not looking to get married. They have other women around that they either have children with, or multiple women. They're comfortable with their position. Rather than progression, they decided that their stagnant situations are more comfortable than a higher education than progressing in their own personal lives, period.

**“I also think there is a lack of understanding about what's needed for success. We expect things on the fly. We expect things quickly, we expect results faster. Hard work is something that is hard to come by.”**

After the '60s, I don't know what happened. What was the turning point? What made it to the point that people decided to not even try anymore? That's something we're still trying to figure out. I know there's lack of education in terms of educating our children of our heritage, our culture, what we've come through. A lot of older, more wise and seasoned individuals have dried up with the stories. They don't share civil rights movement stories as often as they used to. You have a certain select that want to fight, but most people have decided just to leave it where it is.

BarberShop Talk is to bridge the gap, of all cultures of men, from 8 to 80. It's a structured forum. We pose questions. They're open-ended questions which promote discussion. We're going to ask hard questions. Sometimes these questions might hit you deep. We want to stir up the soul. We want to ask the hard questions. We want hard answers. We want you to talk about whatever is on your mind.

Numbers are what is going to change things. It's not going to be one Martin Luther King anymore, one Malcolm X, one race, one group of people. It's going to be everyone working together. When we have all these different disparities going on in our culture, we all live here on planet Earth. This is our home. We're not going anywhere. We can continue killing each other off, or we can aspire to be a better civilization. And until we

understand that concept the disparities are going to continue to grow no matter what we do.



## Dr. Ashish Jha

**Professor of health policy and management at the Harvard School of Public Health and has done extensive research on the role of public policy in the health-care delivery system**

**H**ealth disparities, a look at sort of population-level outcomes, obviously a lot of things go into it. Education. The sort of job opportunities. Communities and neighborhoods. All of those things affect sort of people's overall health. But another important contributor is healthcare – what the quality of healthcare is that you have access to and that you end up using. And so my interest – one of my interests – has been focusing on the providers that disproportionately care for minority and poor patients, and trying to better understand who they are, what their struggles are, how good they are, and, ultimately, with the goal of trying to figure out how do we get them to improve and get better.

And what we have found on a national level time and time again in a variety of different studies is that — and you could argue it's not totally surprising — that providers that disproportionately care for poor patients, and also those that disproportionately care for minorities, even when you take sort of socio-economics into account, tend to be lower quality, they tend to have worse outcomes. They tend to basically be, just, not as focused on quality of care as other institutions. And to me that has struck me as a place where there are some real things we can do to make care better.

One of the things we don't always know, we don't really understand very well, is why is it that minority patients tend to cluster in these institutions. It's not the sort of simple answer of, well, it's just about where they live. Because what we have seen from our study as well as others is that minority patients, for instance, will often bypass a hospital that's pretty good to go to a hospital that might even be farther away but not as good. So it's not an issue of everybody goes to the closest hospital and minority patients always end up at worse ones. And I think the reasons why people cluster at certain hospitals is there's historical reasons, you know, there are institutions that have a long history of caring for minority patients. I've talked to patients in the past who literally will say to me, you know, I always go to this medical center because that's where black patients go. And it's a very odd thing to hear from a patient, saying that's where patients like me go. My point is this stuff is complex, and there's a historical basis for this.

Personally, I would like to see a country that is sort of less segregated and more integrated, but also at the same time, to the extent that we have what we have, I think what we need to do is adopt a strategy that helps these institutions improve. And there's actually a lot we can do. I think some of the work we have done in the



past suggests that one place to focus is sort of leadership, and training of leadership in these organizations. A lot of minority-serving hospitals have senior leaders, board members, just not as experienced in quality, not giving quality as much of a priority. It seems to me that's where there's a lot of opportunity for improvement, and target real educational interventions, and accountability for these institutions. You don't get to provide lower quality care just because your patients are poor or minorities.

You know, what's interesting is if you look at the Affordable Care Act, there is, I think, both good news and

“These gaps took, in some cases, centuries to develop. I am sure if you go back to the 19th Century, the quality of care that minorities got was much worse than where it is now. So the gaps have been there a long time. It's not going to be fixed overnight. I think we just want to just be thoughtful about our policies to make sure they don't make things worse. And that it will take a long time.”

bad news for these institutions. I mean the good news is a lot of these institutions take care of a lot of uninsured patients, and it's obvious, to the extent that we have fewer uninsured patients, that is going to help. And the other part of the Affordable Care Act that I like is in general it tries to move the healthcare system towards greater accountability for quality and cost. The problem – the bad news – is a lot of the measures and metrics that the Affordable Care Act is focusing on are such that they're really going to disproportionately hurt these institutions. For instance, the biggest penalty for hospitals is around re-admissions. There are many reasons why patients are re-admitted. One is did you get good discharge coordination when you were leaving the hospital. But probably the single biggest reason why people get re-admitted has to do with their socio-economic status, what's going on at home, community resources. And this is why we see institutions that care for poor patients have dramatically higher readmission rates. And so what's going to happen, and we've seen this in a bunch of other parts of the ACA provisions as well, is that a lot of what's going to happen for the hospital side at least is serious penalties for institutions that take care of poor and minority patients. And so

the people who focus on the safety net are worried that the ACA, out of desire to build more accountability into the system, has set it up so they're basically going to end up punishing the safety net institutions.

The thing that makes me hopeful over the longer run is that until now – I keep using this word, but I'll say it again – there has been very little accountability. And what I mean by that, by the way, is, you know, right now you could go to a hospital, and as long as it's accredited and sort of meets some very basic level of standards, no one is going to really pay close attention to how good that care is. And what that means, and we see this

over and over again, is there are these huge variations in quality and cost, and there are hospitals where mortality rates are three times higher than you would expect them to be, and really no one is paying attention. I think the broader trend in the healthcare market is for more accountability, for more data, for more transparency. And as much as I do think if we don't do a good job of it there is a short term risk for safety net institutions, over the long run, I think this trend is helpful, because it means that everybody has a better chance of getting high quality care. It also means that for minority and poor patients who are often at risk for the low quality care, that they're going to have more opportunities to figure out where to go. So, in general, looking forward I'm pretty optimistic but I think there's going to be some bumps in the short run.

So, let me be very clear about what I think can be done in a decade: I think on the quality and making sure that the health care system has eliminated disparities – yes. Do I think social disparities and overall health disparities can be done? That's a much taller order, right, because then you're talking about schools, you're trying to fix communities and neighborhoods, and I have to tell you that my expertise on how you fix neighborhoods and schools is no greater than anybody else's. It's hard for me to know. I'm thinking more on the healthcare system, it can be done within a decade – if we make it a real priority.

These gaps took, in some cases, centuries to develop. I am sure if you go back to the 19th Century, the quality of care that minorities got was much worse than where it is now. So the gaps have been there a long time. It's not going to be fixed overnight. I think we just want to just be thoughtful about our policies to make sure they don't make things worse. And that it will take a long time. But my feeling is it doesn't have to take another century to fix it. It's probably a five- to ten-year process, but I want to see real movement every year going forward.



## Grant Jones

**Founder and executive director of the Center for African American Health in Denver**

**T**he debate about the Affordable Care Act was and is too simple. The conversation is dominated by institutions – what happens in hospitals and coverage and quality and access to care. They're not talking about organizations like mine – they're talking about hospitals.

There's no venture capital for this kind of effort – i.e., there's venture capital for clean energy, but not for programs and organizations that promote health through prevention and wellness efforts and projects aimed at chronic disease management. There is just this role that the community can play in both health literacy and in trying to treasure their health.

We held a voluntary blood pressure check. I saw men who didn't want to get checked and found it frustrating. But then I thought about myself. I have a membership to 24 Hour Fitness, and I should go several times

a week. But I'm busy, and I end up going only once or twice. I'll think about going and then realize I have a meeting at 5 o'clock and I won't go. And then I think, if someone told me that, I'd say, is that meeting more important than your health? I tell people that, but I don't do it.

I grew up in the 9th Ward in New Orleans. It's an area with very low income and a way of life that seems very different. Everything there seems like it's high risk, at least to an outsider. But someone growing up there would hear gunfire and not have fear. Some kid that's not in a gang is not afraid of the kid who lives down the street from him. They're in the same circumstance. But what he is afraid of is being seen as a sissy. In other words, a kid not in a gang is more afraid of being seen as not macho than of gang violence.

**“African Americans are twice as likely to have diabetes. We're No. 1 for heart disease – we have the highest death rate. Black women – not the highest rate of breast cancer, but the highest death rate. We have the shortest life expectancy.”**

The solution to these stigma, the solution to these community settings, is not in a hospital. If we can balance the communication and talk as much about what the community can do as what hospitals can do, we can have an effect.



## **Christelyn D. Karazin**

**Founder and organizer of the advocacy group No Wedding No Womb!, an online initiative to address the 72 percent out-of-wedlock birthrate in the African American community**



**N**o Wedding No Womb! really was born out of frustration in that I was looking around and, you know, every time the census came out and it was talking about a particular group of people, African Americans, and the out-of-wedlock rate is at 70 percent. So, that was baffling to me, and I don't say that from a position of superiority: I was one of those statistics. My first child was born out of wedlock, and she'd asked me one day, why didn't you and my dad get married. And, you know, I knew that that question was going to be asked of me, and I'm a firm believer that kids will hold you responsible, they'll question you. Good or bad, they're going to hold you

responsible for what you do and the decisions that you make. And I didn't want to give her some platitude, like, well even though things didn't work out between me and your father we love you and you were born out of love – just don't do what we did. I didn't want to do that because I felt like she deserved more than that and I felt like I really need to show her that I'm serious about this. I really want the next generation of young black girls to know that they are worthy of a partner. They are worthy to have fathers for their children and husbands, just like any other race of woman would expect.

If you look across the African American community, marriage rates mirror the out-of-wedlock rates – in reverse. We've got a problem in the community, and every indicator that you can attribute to fatherless or broken homes, every negative thing – high dropout rates, incarceration, premature death related to violence – all those things, there's a connection with kids being born to fractured families. And I felt like for so long black people, they just shout down anybody who comes along and says, hey, this is a problem. Nobody wants to hear it.

Well, I think that we've had now – there were several things that happened, probably, I point to the '60s because it seems to me that was the culmination of a lot of things. You had the war on poverty. You had the sexual revolution. And you had the civil rights movement. All of those things were a fairly tumultuous time of extreme sea change in people. At the time when Martin Luther King did his "I Have A Dream" speech, over 70 percent of black kids were living with both their parents. Their parents were married. After – here we are, 40, 50 years later, and it's the inverse. What I think contributed to it was one of those well-meaning things that was an unintended consequence with the war on poverty and the welfare system that was put into place – there was a clause in welfare, a recipient, in order to receive benefits, there could be no man in the house and the woman had to be unmarried. And what that did was encourage people not to marry, because especially with the decline in manufacturing, and job losses, it was more consistent for the government to be your husband than for an actual human being to be your husband, because you could count on that check. From a man's perspective, if he can't take care of your family and he can't get a job, you have this amplified frustration. And, so we saw, I think, the beginnings of a lot of dysfunction that happened, because the sexual revolution said, women we're free to control our bodies, and of course I perfectly – I totally – agree with that. But along came, you know, the women's liberation movement and the decline in manufacturing, and all of those things sort of became like a toxic soup that affected us as a group disproportionately.

“... every indicator that you can attribute to fatherless or broken homes, every negative thing – high dropout rates, incarceration, premature death related to violence – all those things, there's a connection with kids being born to fractured families.”

I think society doesn't even really know how bad the problem is. I've seen this for myself on the ground trying to raise money for No Wedding No Womb! I will go to businesses and say did you know that 80 percent of first children born to black mothers are born out of wedlock, and their mouths drop – their jaws drop to the floor. They have no idea that it's that high, because it's not reported. The media don't really report it because, like I said, I got my butt chewed out for doing what I did, for bringing awareness. People are so defensive about this. But it's not helping us to stay defensive, and you know I'm starting to see that change. I'm starting to see people – the conversation is starting to change, so I'm hopeful about that.

For black people, it's like you don't air the dirty laundry. But everybody knows. The data is out there. Some people said that, oh, you're a sellout, because you married a white man, because my husband is white. And so they use that as a cheap shot – your husband is white, and you're not really like us. You think you're better than us. You know, then we got resistance from oh, you're bashing single moms. Then we get children of single moms who would say, my mother raised me and I came out just fine. And while there's one great outcome, there's nine not-great outcomes. So 90 percent is not you. So I'm glad that you're the magic unicorn, but there are nine other people who I could talk to right now who aren't going to have that same experience. And so, I just think, people – the world doesn't revolve around you. Just because your experience was fine, does not mean that that is the norm. I find that people are very defensive. People don't hear that they've made the wrong decision.

No amount of money that we throw at government programs and after school programs and all the things in the past that we thought would help – it's going to take an attitudinal change in the community. The cue is going to have to come from the source. We have to collectively say, enough is enough, and there has to be enough of us to say enough is enough. Our leadership is going to have to grow some balls and say enough is enough, and not worry about people getting mad at them and not putting tithes in the collection plates at church. They're just going to have to stand up for what's right.



## The Rev. Leon Kelly

An anti-gang activist in Denver

Churches and schools were major parts of our foundation. We knew everybody who lived on our block. We had reverence for mom and dad and family. Now there's a lack of reverence. Moms have become surrogate dads for the kids. Twenty years ago, even gangsters had respect for the "hood" and their grandparents. Now the attitude is, "I don't care."



For decades, Curtis Park and Five Points were the undisputed heart of Denver's black community. But today, those neighborhoods have been replaced by upscale homes and condos owned by whites.

In east Denver, the predominantly black neighborhood bordered by Bruce Randolph Avenue and 26th Avenue to the north and south, and Downing Street and Colorado Boulevard to the west and east, has no major grocery stores, no shopping centers, no nothing. When we had those things it helped develop the glue that held the community together.

Blacks are feeling powerless. The lack of community breeds lack of success. If there's no strength in the community that leads to failure.

We kids had no say whether we wanted to go to church. Some of my peers would say, "I'm not going to make my kids go to church." Now we see the repercussions of those liberties.

Many of today's black youth don't know their cultural roots or even the relatively recent history of the Civil Rights movement. Prior to the 1960s, we as a people were trying to figure out who we were. We went from Niggers, to Negros, to Coloreds to Blacks, to African Americans. James Brown came along in the late 1960s and came up with, "Say it Loud: I'm Black and I'm Proud." We finally felt we had an identity.

A lot of our kids now are left to figure out who we are again.

**“Blacks are feeling powerless. The lack of community breeds lack of success. If there's no strength in the community that leads to failure.”**



## William King

Retired black studies professor at the University of Colorado



**T**his state is not hospitable to people of color. Read the announcements that are put out by the politicians. This is a white man's country. So what more do you need to know beyond that? If anything, if you look at other communities, where you see for example, in Florida, where you see a deliberate attempt to minimize the people of color on the election rolls.

As far as school completion is concerned, most people of color will tell you that whatever they are supposed to be learning in school has no real relevance for them for the simple reason that the curriculum is not designed with them in mind.

If you are talking about employment, if you are talking about incarceration statistics or any of those things, just look at them through the lens of white privilege and you will have most of the answers that you desire.

White people have known for quite some time now that they are, they have always been, the minority population on the planet. But yet at the same time they have acted in a manner that belies their numerical inferiority. So that when you start talking about the voyages of discovery in the 15th Century you are talking about people coming out of a sheltered environment and discovering they are not finding anyone at the end of their voyage that looks like them.

The issue still remains the one articulated by King about a week before he was assassinated, and the essence

“If you put in the Declaration of Independence what you are after is a society of equals and then you create an economic system that is predicated on exclusion and exploitation, there is no way democracy can survive under those conditions.”

of that comment was all we are saying to America is be true to what you put on paper. If you put in the Declaration of Independence what you are after is a society of equals and then you create an economic system that is predicated on exclusion and exploitation, there is no way Democracy can survive under those conditions.

How many people have you heard talk about integration? You cannot talk about integration until you have finished desegregating society and my grandchildren will have grandchildren before this society is desegregated. So don't talk about integration when you haven't finished desegregating yet.

The chief beneficiary of affirmative action has been white women. The struggle between white women and white men is basically a family squabble. It's because men don't

want to give up sufficient power to allow someone else to have a countervailing opinion.

Black people in Colorado are still an oddity even though they have been here since before the state was a territory. And there are some people that are (mad) at black folks going back to 1864 when the territorial legislature attempted to disenfranchise blacks who already had the franchise. The upshot of the whole thing was that Colorado was prevented from becoming a state for 10 years.

The federal government said to those interested in becoming a state that we have already granted the franchise to black folk in general so you cannot come along and ask for statehood if you have a proposition in your statehood documents that says Negroes do not have the right to vote.



## Jaekyung Lee

Professor at the University at Buffalo who has researched educational equity and achievement gaps



Overall, it's better to say the education achievement gap has narrowed substantially throughout the last five decades, but most of the gap narrowing occurred in the '60s and '70s, and in the early '90s the gap stopped narrowing further. Most recently there has been some narrowing of the gap, but I don't know if that will continue or if it's temporary.

Your state has a small black population. It has been stable. It has not changed demographically. For Hispanics, with immigrants the demographic composition would have changed over time.

I think it's a combination of multiple forces widening the gaps. One is the policy shift in education. The focus shifted from equity to excellence and so we have the Title One program and others focusing on the equity issues, but still the major emphasis is no longer on the bottom, poor performing students, it's more like high standards for everyone. But the question is who benefits from the high standards?

The second one is economic changes. I know since the '80s the income gap has widened so that might have an impact on education opportunities, particularly in terms of college access, financial aid, all of those things.

Then the third might be the cultural effects. It's controversial. Some people argue that particularly the black adolescents' behavior – in terms of problem behaviors – have worsened. But is that cultural or is that economics? I don't know.

The implications are a big issue. For example, the University of Michigan affirmative action case in 2003, then Justice (Sandra Day) O'Connor said that we still need affirmative action but that the black-white gap might be closed in 25 years from that time. But given the recent trend, the slowing down and even reversing, I don't think the gap will be closed in 25 years. That raises big questions about what we need to do in the meantime. I think more recently the concern has shifted from the racial gap to the income gap. But still I believe

**“I think the race gap and income gap are closely intertwined but the race gap needs special attention and policy intervention.”**



the racial gap remains a big issue in this country. I think the race gap and income gap are closely intertwined but the race gap needs special attention and policy intervention. No matter what we do for the income, I think race is still an issue.

Unfortunately, racial disparities have disappeared from media attention. I think investment in human capital is important, including programs like Head Start, that target low income people. But the participation is voluntary, so we simply encourage or even make the pre-school education universal so somehow everybody has to get the pre-school education. That's the time the (achievement) gaps seem to start, even before kids go to kindergarten. So I think intervention with consideration for some racial disparities would be a big help.



## Rita Lewis

President of Denver Branch of NAACP

**A** lot of African Americans are choosing to put their kids in private schools, including myself. Keep in mind a lot of African American students are expelled and disciplined and oftentimes arrested and taken away and then their parents have to figure out how are we going to deal with this? There is a big disparity in the way African American students are disciplined in public schools, and Latinos, compared to white students. African Americans are suspended far more than white students and Latinos are suspended more than white students.

I would like to see some positive stories about the gains that blacks have made. Are there more African American small business owners? Are there more African Americans going into the sciences?

I think the gaps are wider in certain areas. The poverty figures mirror the large unemployment rate for blacks. A lot of African Americans lost their homes due to the high unemployment rate.

In the '70s, we made significant strides. Life was good when Bill Clinton was in office. All in all, everybody was prospering regardless of race. When George Bush was in office, a lot of jobs were lost, a lot of jobs were outsourced, and that's a problem for everybody, regardless of their race.

There's a saying we have in the African American and black community that we're the last hired and first fired. That's how we feel. There's a Latino guy over there and he hasn't lost his job yet. There's a white guy over there and he hasn't been fired. But we're losing our job. We've always heard that from our parents and grandparents. When we lose our jobs and can't pay our bills, we lose our homes.

It's so hard for me to get people riled up and interested and engaged. Why? It's various factors. I think of my

own peers between 40 and 50. They have their careers. They don't want to mess that up. They have their homes. They have their cars. Their kids are in private school. Whatever. We've arrived. I think the biggest thing is, they don't want to lose what they've acquired. So many times we've had people say, "What does the NAACP do? Are you really relevant?" We have to question ourselves. Are we relevant in this day and age? And I say absolutely. We're absolutely relevant. There's still a need for civil rights. We just don't have the fire in our bellies. You don't see many African American activists really going out there, hitting the pavement and really protesting some of the atrocities that happen in this city. I don't know if we're quiet warriors now, or what's going on. Most people will say I don't want to get blackballed or I don't want to be stigmatized, or whatever. At some point, at the end of the day, if you think something's wrong, you need to speak up.

“I would like to see some positive stories about the gains that blacks have made. Are there more African American small business owners? Are there more African Americans going into the sciences?”



## Paul Lopez

Denver City Councilman



I think one of the factors that contribute to the widening gaps is a lack of representation of the Latino community at decision making tables. I think Latinos still face the same racism, discrimination and prejudice as we faced before and we are quite aware of that.

I think what we're seeing is the effects of laws and policies that contribute to these gaps in education, also in business, and in overall Latino life. But also the political climate has become increasingly anti-Latino. It's a huge mistake.

The repercussions to those attitudes and those policies that don't take such an important population seriously are that as we've seen in the Census numbers, one in four children under the age of 18 in Colorado is Latino. Within the next decade, they will become voters. And they will not forget how difficult their struggle has been, how unnecessarily difficult their struggle has been and who were the players that created that environment.

We don't have to wait 10 years to start seeing that trend. It's happening now. As we speak, Latino youth are turning into eligible voters, are turning 18 and registering to vote and becoming aware of the inequity they face. You look at the state legislature and the city council at all political levels, school boards. You are seeing more candidates coming from our community. You will continue to see more candidates and more folks across political lines becoming more involved. And being at the decision making table.

The impact of the gaps is a negative one. No matter what ethnicity you are or what demographic you come from, when we have dropout rates that are over 50 percent of the population that's a tragedy to society in general. We must increase access to education for all children because its tomorrow's workforce.

“The political climate has become increasingly anti-Latino. It's a huge mistake.”



## Dr. Levester Lyons

President of the Aurora Branch of the NAACP

These disparities didn't surprise me. I was appalled, but not surprised. Looking at my own personal situation, I'm doing better than my parents did, but considering the education gap and training that they had and what I have, I'm not doing that much better. My father had a 10th grade education. My mother graduated from high school.

I probably make pretty good money, but considering buying power, probably not that much better than what they did. My father was English, and he sometimes had to work two jobs. He was able to feed 13 kids and get us to school. I've got five children, three of them have degrees and two are still working on degrees. And I wasn't able to help them much more than my dad was able to help me. If it wasn't for grants and scholarships, they'd have had just as bad a time as I did. I was able to help them with books and sometimes with food and stuff, but I couldn't pay for any of their tuition. When you think about it, it kind of hits you right in the face. It's like “hmmm ...”

(Everyone) tells you early on to work hard, try your best, try to be the best at whatever you do. I have a PhD, my boss, who is white, has a master's degree, and that's not unusual when I look at some of my friends (who are minorities).

We could say it's racial, we could say it's a whole bunch of things. That's one of the things I'm going to start looking at more and more – do a survey: What kind of degree do you have? What kind of degrees does your

boss have? Is there a difference between the races? I'm going to retire in December or January, and I'm looking for something to do. So that's something I might put on my plate.

If you had asked my dad about whether the gaps would narrow, he would probably have said he would see it narrowing. Difference in education would have been the biggest influence. Right now I've got people working for me who've gone to school and have school loans. Some of the bills that pass when they talk about increasing the interest rates, from, what, 3 percent or 4 percent now to 6.8 percent. Some of them won't even be able to pay those off for 10, 15, 20, 30 years. I went to school, I was lucky, I was blessed. I had a lot of grants. I had the GI Bill. I'm thinking with increased (rates) it's going to make it even more difficult for people to advance and I think those gaps are going to continue to grow.

I'm angry. When we think about the American dream, work hard, get educated. Everybody talks about education, how with a college degree you're going to make a million dollars more than folks with a high school degree and how with a higher degree you're going to make even more money. But that doesn't seem to change – according to your statistics – much of anything. You can buy a house, you can buy a car. But you're going to end up paying for it for some time.

I was in a meeting last night. There was a young man, in his 40s, and he was talking about the organization he was working with and how hard it was to get people involved. That most people, and I'm talking about blacks, they don't see a problem until it's them that's getting fired, or them losing their house. Up until that time, they don't see a need for the same kind of passion for civil rights that there was in the '60s and '70s. They haven't lived it. They've been the recipients of it, but they haven't lived through it. One of the things I constantly talk about is voting. More young folks are saying voting's not that important. They don't understand that people died just trying to register to vote, not even being able to vote, just trying to be able to register. They don't understand that because they didn't see it, they didn't live it. Watching it on the TV in a documentary doesn't have the same impact.

The Trayvon Martin case got a lot of play. But that's one incident and it had to do with a number of other things. I talk about legislation; if you're not involved in legislation then people put together laws that will affect you. They only start noticing it when people start getting killed. That law's been on the books in Florida

“One of the things I constantly talk about is voting. More young folks are saying voting's not that important. They don't understand that people died just trying to register to vote, not even being able to vote, just trying to be able to register.”

for a while. Stand your ground. Trayvon probably wasn't the first person to get killed under that law. But it was at the right time, and there was a lot of emphasis on that. But again, we go back to voting rights. What's important now, those states that are trying to change ways that people can register to vote, with having IDs and different forms of information when you come to vote. Reminds me of the poll tax they had way back in the '20s and '30s. You had to take a test to be able to vote. And most of the time you couldn't pass the test because it was put together so you couldn't pass, and the folks who could (take) the test were usually the majority, not minority. That was all the way up through the '50s and '60s. The Voting Rights Act didn't come in until '64, '65. People who don't have IDs to vote are old people, poor people. The best way to keep them from voting is to make it difficult to vote.

I hope that reporting these gaps will become a wake-up call to get involved. People are not involved in what's going on around them.



## Christine Marquez-Hudson

Director of the Mi Casa Resource Center and co-chair of the Denver Latino Commission



**W**e've had an influx since 1996 of people not being able to go back over the border. That population tends to be poor.

In 1996, Congress passed the Illegal Immigration and Immigrant Reform Act, which increased penalties against those in this country illegally. Prior to that, Mexican citizens came back and forth into the United States based

on short-term economic needs. The lack of open borders makes it much more difficult to go back.

I think there will be a gradual closing of the gaps between whites and Hispanics. In recent years, I've seen more professionals in the Latino community, including more doctors, lawyers, teachers and business owners. The trend is for Latinos to enjoy more power and with power comes a lot of positive gains for the community."

**“In recent years, I’ve seen more professionals in the Latino community, including more doctors, lawyers, teachers and business owners.”**

Also, as the number of Latinos increases in this country, people in influential positions will pay more attention to the Latino community. Back in the 1960s and 1970s, when the number of blacks in this country far exceeded the number of Hispanics, blacks enjoyed significant social and economic gains. We haven't seen that in the Latino community to the same degree. But we're going to.



## Ramona Martinez

Former Denver City Councilwoman



I think a lot of it has to do with the effort we put in during the '70s and '60s with the civil rights movement because we wanted equal opportunity, equal rights. Then we came across affirmative action and we were able to enact affirmative action laws across the country and I believe those opened the doors to a lot of opportunity for a lot of minorities. Then the courts said, "No, you can't do that. You can't have those types of affirmative action laws." As a city that's what we worked on, Hiawatha Davis and I, for years got things passed, got things going. It opens up the door of opportunity for lots of minorities and when that happens minorities have access to better schools for the kids, access to a lot of different things for their children. Their incomes rise. Well, they get rid of affirmative action and what happens we go back to where we started from. Those kinds of opportunities aren't there anymore. And I think a lot of that has to do with the gap that is happening in both communities.

Civil rights gains have been reversed, absolutely. I see it a lot. I don't live in my old neighborhood anymore, but I go back there and I think of all of the money and the time and energy we spent trying to improve it. The housing market went to heck in that neighborhood. I think it was one of the highest foreclosure rates. When you go back and look at it, there were no programs in place to re-energize those communities. We used to have programs coming from the federal government where we hired people in the community to paint homes, to go fix homes, to bring in ownership programs for low income people. All of that's gone away. So you're not going to build the middle class. You're going to have lower income, and minorities are always going to be on the bottom.

And unfortunately this gap has even widened. In the last 10 years, all you have to do is look at the policies that came out of Washington, look at the programs that were cut. I used to work with the Piton Foundation. They did an incredible job showing how poverty was building into communities, and how we had to make sure that didn't happen, and how we had to strengthen those communities.

The implications are going to be huge because you may have a majority minority population coming in the city and county of Denver and its coming much faster than most people predicted. We're going to have a very, very tough economy here in Denver. The city and county of Denver is going to have a rough go.

Aurora is already majority minority and Denver is right behind it.

We're spending billions of dollars on roads they're blowing up in Afghanistan and our roads and our streets are going to heck. We've got to start focusing on our local communities.

There are things you can do. It's just common sense. But the money and programs aren't there and the focus is gone. It really stopped I think when we were at the point to get some legislation passed.

Affirmative action, I think, scared the heck out of folks who had the power, money and the resources. And after that it seemed like everything stopped.

“We’re spending billions of dollars on roads they’re blowing up in Afghanistan and our roads and our streets are going to heck. We’ve got to start focusing on our local communities.”



## Ron Montoya

Denver businessman and community leader



The numbers are not a surprise. But when you consider the demographic growth, particularly the Latino community growing so dramatically, those kinds of statistics are very disconcerting. Educationally, getting kids to finish high school and getting into college, percentage-wise, that's been a very difficult situation. Many of the kids have a basic issue with language skills. Some of the charter schools and some of the private, focused schools have been a lifesaver. Obviously, Denver Public Schools has tried to do the best possible job that they can do. But even kids from here are so far behind it just doesn't make a lot of sense.

I think it's economics, the inability of families to provide the time necessary to assist their children because they are so busy just trying to survive. They are having a tough time putting food on the table and paying

their rent, much less spending time with their kids trying to help them in school. For many, unfortunately, survival is the name of the game.

Colorado is a unique place. But I think for the most part we've got to improve the employment situation and

**“I think it’s economics, the inability of families to provide the time necessary to assist their children because they are so busy just trying to survive.”**

the under-employment situation. That’s really the issue. I suspect we are going to have some tough times still moving forward here until we get a major employment initiative going.

I’ll tell you, the last two or three years have been really tough in business. It’s probably the worst ever. You try to keep people employed. You don’t want to lose your good people. It’s a really hard situation.

There are some great programs around. I particularly like the programs that not only help the kids, but some of the adults who are needing educational opportunity, places like Centro San Juan Diego, that spend a lot of time focusing on the Spanish speaking community. It is a tremendous opportunity to get their GED, to get their ESL, to find ways to improve their lot. I work with Rose Community Foundation. We are responsible for the teacher incentive program.

There is a lot of emphasis on improving everyone’s lot, but there definitely needs to be more. There’s got to be more focus and more help. I’m very concerned about how things are going today.



## Eric Nelson

Vice president of the Aurora NAACP and vice president of the NAACP state conference of Colorado, Wyoming, Utah and Montana



I was actually shocked that the Census figures show the gaps between minorities and whites are wider now than before the civil rights movement. You would think we as a nation would have overcome a lot of things since then. It’s like, “Wow, we’re spinning our wheels going in reverse.”

There are many reasons for the widening gaps, including bad government policies, lack of individual responsibility and exploitation by people in business. Economic and political policies make the wealthy even wealthier. The poor need to be taught



sound financial principles – including how to save and invest their money – and how to apply that to their daily lives.

When I grew up, these things weren't taught in school, even how to manage a checkbook. We need to initiate (financial education) in the schools from grade level on up. It's not taught to the minority class at a young age. The wealthy duplicate themselves. It's taught to their kids. In the minority class, if you don't have it, how can you teach it? If you've never been taught ... you're stuck.

I expect the gaps to become even wider. Poverty is an unending cycle. It won't change until government practices change how politicians vote on particular bills, how they overlook people of low-income. It all boils down to influence and whose agenda we are trying to get through here.

Individual responsibility is also key to changing the cycle. What are you doing as a citizen? Are you getting out here helping the poor? Are you initiating programs? Who is trying to extend a hand? In order to change we need to get a village mentality. Without it, there is no way the lower class is ever going to rise, let alone get out of the situation.

I'm a member of Omega Psi Phi fraternity which was recognized recently by President Obama for its fatherhood initiative. We take these young men from various schools and institutions and provide mentorship. We follow up with them, make sure they're on track with their grades. If they need help, we provide guidance.

“There are many reasons for the widening gaps, including bad government policies, lack of individual responsibility and exploitation by people in business.”



## Gary Orfield

Professor in the School of Law at University of California, Los Angeles and co-director of the Civil Rights Project



If you look at what was happening in the civil rights era, we were bringing down racial barriers, we were creating accountability, affirmative action plans, desegregation plans, voting rights plans.

We were trying to change the society quite explicitly. Almost all of the efforts in the sense of positive impetus were abandoned by or shortly before the Reagan era. We

had a narrowing of the income gap for a long time in part because we taxed higher income people pretty heavily and we had an increasingly generous set of social policies for disadvantaged people. We did just the exact opposite in the Reagan tax cuts and the Bush tax cuts. And simultaneous cuts in programs and services and dramatic reversals on civil rights policies.

It just isn't any kind of big surprise. It is quite clear there was an intentionality both about the narrowing of the gap and the growing of the gap. There was a different theory. The basic theory of the Great Society period was that race and poverty were indistinguishable. They were totally blended together and you had to try to address them on all fronts in terms of income policy, in terms of job equality policy, in terms of getting access to education.

The theory of the conservative era was just get government out of the way and these problems will solve themselves or they are already solved because we have civil rights laws we don't have to worry about them anymore.

They are very dramatically different policy frameworks. Of course there are other trends in the world at large – globalization of the economy, for example – that make all things more complex in some ways, but these trends are pretty unambiguous.

There are a lot of data questions. What is your basis for the high school graduation rates? It's an optimistic number. Even the current high school graduation levels are way under what you are reporting for African Americans.

But other things are easy to explain. Why are gaps in the South dramatically better now than they were?

We changed the South. The South was an apartheid system. There were 17 states and Washington D. C. that had legal segregation up until 1954. And in fact they had it until the middle 1960s, because nothing was done to enforce desegregation in any aspect of life. So when the Civil Rights Act passed in 1964 you had a completely different and distinctive society there in which most black people lived. We had a system like South Africa in those places. We really did break it up quite dramatically from the middle of the 1960s to the early 1970s. It was a huge, huge social change that very few Americans understand.

After that the South became like the rest of the country and in some respects it became better. Two things happened. It was the only area where we really enforced civil rights vigorously. The other was it had stunning economic growth. You had those two things going on. The effects were very dramatic. In the middle of the 1960s, for example there were almost no black firemen in the U.S., very few policemen. The public would become the leading force in integration of employment. It changed dramatically.

There was no affirmative action in the private elite universities until sometime in the middle '60s. The civil

rights movement and the civil rights laws had a gigantic effect in that period.

But the idea that has been propagated by proponents of civil rights and kind of accepted by the white majority was, “We did it. We fixed it.” There were a lot of problems and Martin Luther King made a speech and we enacted some laws and it is OK now. If there is inequality, it is the fault of individuals not taking advantage of opportunities that they have been given.

That’s just not true. We didn’t do it. We did it more in the South than we did anyplace else. But we really never did it at all for Latinos. Lyndon Johnson’s first job was teaching Mexican kids in a poor community in

“To think that we can solve (education gaps) by just pressuring the teachers who serve the disadvantaged kids in an increasingly unequal society is something that people in the 1960s would never have believed. It doesn’t make a bit of sense.”

Texas. But it was still a relatively invisible and mostly southwestern population in the 1960s when the great social reforms took place. It did not really emerge as a force in this country until the 1980s and unhappily right during this period of conservative pull back on civil rights and social policy. Latinos were left on their own. That worked out OK in some ways as long as there were people with jobs with low education. We didn’t become hypersensitive about immigration issues and so forth.

All of those conditions have broken down now and the lack of having any sort of social policy and civil rights policy is beginning to really devastate those communities economically and socially. It’s not a self-curing problem. Latinos have become much more segregated than they were back then.

affirmative action to college and so forth.

In California in 1970, the average Latino kid was in a more than 50 percent white school. They are now in about an 80 percent non-white school. They are isolated by race and poverty in really serious ways. And nobody is doing a thing about it. We’re abandoning the modest policies we had, voluntary school integration,

They haven’t all gone by the wayside but in some places they have been reversed dramatically. California and Arizona are good examples of that, where affirmative action has been outlawed, where bilingual education has been outlawed by referenda. Almost all of the school desegregation orders have been shut down. The one in Denver was shut down in 1995.

The Supreme Court said in 1991 we have done enough, we’re shutting it all down. And now it’s almost all shut down in big cities.

All of these things worked together. The positive social and economic policies and the civil rights policies were simultaneously implemented in the 1960s and were abandoned in the 1980s. At the same time you had things like, beginning in the early 1980s, we see a cutback in state and federal support for higher education and a shift of the burden to individual students through tuition that rises every year faster than family income for 30 years. That becomes a completely different world of higher education after all of this happened.

The effect of Proposition 13 in California was devastating. Especially in the West, in the places that have the referendum, the tax systems were shot to hell. The whole West Coast – Washington, Oregon, California – all basically disestablished state funding of higher education. UCLA gets only about 7 percent of its budget from the state now. It's incredible. Of course there have been a lot of cutbacks on things that are offered to students. This idea that education was a public good was replaced by this idea that education was a private good that should be paid for by individuals.

The states adopted the Reagan agenda which was basically, "Don't worry about social conditions. If we do enough assessment, accountability and sanctions, market competition will solve the inequality problems."

And it totally failed. None of the racial gaps went away. At this point after 30 years of just saying we can do it by accountability and so forth, we have to notice that there are community conditions and family conditions out there that are decisively important for our kids. And to think that we can solve them by just pressuring the teachers who serve the disadvantaged kids in an increasingly unequal society is something that people in the 1960s would never have believed. Because it's silly. It doesn't make a bit of sense.

You've got two different things that are both important. Social class is related to everything. But race is, too. But even for people who are not poor, race matters a lot if you're black and also if you are Hispanic or if you are Indian. On average, most blacks and most Latinos are in schools that are almost three quarters poor as well as being segregated from whites and Asians.

If you're poor and you're white, you are living in a predominately middle class neighborhood with much better schools, for example. You have a much better chance of getting remarried if you're divorced. If you have an illegitimate child you have a much better chance that you will end up in a family. And a lot of that is related to the income levels of the men.



## Debbie Ortega

Denver City Councilwoman



Colorado used to have a strong manufacturing presence. And obviously, we've seen development activity ebb and flow. But I think the overall loss of good paying jobs is one factor. The need for affordable housing and clear policy that ensures that affordable housing is a key value for our community is really important.

I'm on the board of the Metro Denver Homeless Initiative. Families are the fastest growing segment, the last few years, of people who are homeless. The number one contributing factor is loss of jobs, lack of affordable housing. And so, if people can't remain in their housing, whether they were a homeowner or renter, because they

don't have the same income, that's a challenge. I believe that in the absence of public policy, you get nothing. And so it's critical that we have clear and strong public policy, particularly when we have developments asking for public financing tools to assist with their development. That's when we need to say, "Great, you want to use our tools, you want zoning density bonuses or density increase on your property, we need affordable housing."

To build out FasTracks, we have one shot to get it right, and make sure we're addressing this issue, not just in Denver but across the metro area as light rail is being built out. People who are most in need of public trans-

portation are those who should live at and near the light rail stops. A lot of the communities have gone through the process of creating changes to their zoning that makes it easier to do mixed-use development. But there's not clarity in policy.

That's one piece.

Obviously a lot of people in black and Hispanic communities were impacted by the subprime lending that contributed to many people losing their homes through foreclosure. A lot of folks were targeted by the subprime lending practices.

**"Families are the fastest growing segment, the last few years, of people who are homeless. The number one contributing factor is loss of jobs."**

I wanted to speak to a couple other issues I think are important. One obviously is the role that education plays in people being able to increase their earning ability and being able to purchase homes and all the things your demographic data covers. The cost of education keeps going up. The impact on policies around people who are undocumented has, I think, contributed to the numbers of Latinos that are not going to college and getting their degrees, even though I think a lot of the foreign-born people who come here are really dedicated and committed to getting quality education and higher education but they can't afford the costs.

They are not treated as in-state tuition eligible. The role of education is critical. There have been lots of new and different policies that have come down over the last eight to 10 years dealing with No Child Left Behind, and a lot of those programs have not been funded. I think that's another contributing factor.

The other one I wanted to mention is the important role that those programs that local governments have created that ensure the opportunity for small minority businesses to access work that local government is doing. At DIA, we had the goals program that is covered under the city's Minority and Small Business Enterprise ordinance. If you didn't have programs like that you would see fewer opportunities for minority businesses accessing the work that's being done. It's that policy that becomes critical in ensuring that those opportunities are spread across the board.

I don't know that you can say there's just one main factor for the widening gaps. Clearly education is the equalizer. But I don't know that you can say it's the only answer. I would say community activism has historically played an important role. Typically if that activism isn't present it's not always identified as an issue that should be addressed – diversity of your work force, your participation in lots of different things, contracting, people sitting on boards and commissions, what your work force looks like at the management level and across the board in your work force. If those things aren't constantly being looked at then there's not always a consciousness that it's an issue of concern. And it's often times minorities who identify those gaps and bring those to the forefront, and if they're not paying attention, often times those issues won't be looked at and addressed.

Those are many of the very things that the civil rights movement was all about. It was about equal access to education and jobs, and all the things that Martin Luther King, and Cesar Chavez and even Corky Gonzales here in the Denver community, and you can go on and on with names like Rich Castro and Sal Carpio and other folks who have tried to ensure greater equity and participation.

It did surprise me that the gaps are greater now. I looked at the data and it's concerning and I think it says we need to pay attention to it. As leaders, we cannot be afraid to raise the uncomfortable conversations.



## Jonathan Rothwell

Senior research associate and associate fellow at the Brookings Institution's Metropolitan Policy Program

I think one of the stronger influences in the education attainment gap is segregation, the general trend in black-white segregation over the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and into today.

The segregation trends for Latinos and immigrant Asians have not been good over the last couple of decades. That is something we should be concerned with. I have not looked closely at the 2010 data.

Whereas blacks are becoming slightly more integrated, the immigrant groups are becoming more segregated and they are kind of going towards each other. Even though the black level of segregation is so much higher, it's leftover largely from the legacy of purposeful segregation.

Something that we have been focused on is innovation and the competitiveness of American businesses, internationally. It stands to reason that with the trend towards increasing importance of education and the increasing importance of education in innovation, and the role innovation plays in generating new jobs and in generating companies that can compete internationally, that these gaps are a major drag on U.S. economic performance.

“It stands to reason that with the trend towards increasing importance of education and the increasing importance of education in innovation ... that these gaps are a major drag on U.S. economic performance.”



## Isabel V. Sawhill

Senior fellow at the Brookings Institution in Washington, D.C., and co-author of a number of papers on economic disparities

Single parenthood has certainly played a role. It's one of the reasons why that gap has not narrowed, especially since the 1970s.

In *Pathways to the Middle Class*, we show that your prospects of being what we call middle class by middle age are much higher if you're white than if you're African American, and also higher than if you're Hispanic, although our data on Hispanics are not great.

You see racial gaps in all of our indicators of what we call success at each life stage. We look at how many kids are school-ready by age 5, how many are reading and doing math proficiently at the end of elementary school, how many are graduating from high school with what kind of GPAs and without being convicted of a crime or having a baby as a teenager. Then we look at college graduation and finally at adult earnings and income.

I don't have any magic answers. One reason for the widening black/white gap, I think it is changes in family structure. There are a lot more single parent families now than there were in 1960, a lot more, and their incomes are only about a fourth or a fifth of what a typical married family has. You combine a major increase in the number of single-parent families, and they're mostly women. With the fact that they have a very high poverty rate and you are going to get a growing gap for that reason alone.

The Hispanic story might be somewhat more complicated because, assuming you're looking at all Hispanics, we know we've had a huge increase in immigration over this period. The immigrants are now coming from the less advantaged parts of the world. They're increasingly from Mexico, for example, and they have much lower levels of education than previous immigrant strains.

If you have less education your income isn't going to be as high. There's a very big correlation between education and income. The Hispanic story is not just, or even necessarily a story about, single parenting. It's more a story about education. I'm not saying you can use the same explanation for both.

For the African Americans, the growth of single-parent families is one reason. I think another reason is because African American men's employment has dropped, especially amongst those without a lot of education. Their employment rates are much lower than those amongst white men of the same age and that gap is widening for reasons that are a little hard to pin down. One might be higher incarceration. Remember that this has been a period when we had tough sentencing laws and a very high fraction of young African American men are in prison. That's another reason. Not that many are working and when they are working their wages have stagnated or fallen somewhat over this period. That's because they are typically less skilled, less educated, and it's hard for them to get anything other than low-paying jobs and there are fewer and fewer low-paying jobs, and fewer and fewer blue collar jobs that used to require just a strong back to earn a decent income, and those jobs have disappeared.

Work, marriage, education, and family size are all more powerful determinants of the incidence of poverty than the amount of cash assistance received from the government.

Sen. (Rick) Santorum during the primary season was citing our work to say if you just do three things: graduate high school, at least, work full time and marry before you have children, your chances of being poor are very, very small. That is quoting our work. It's controversial because it implies that the problem is totally a problem of lack of personal responsibility. If you just do the right things you won't be poor. We never

“There are a lot more single parent families now than there were in 1960, a lot more, and their incomes are only about a fourth or a fifth of what a typical married family has.”



really argued that. But they have used our data to argue that. We would argue and did in our book, and also in this most recent report, that you need both personal responsibility and good government policy to deal with these inequities. We think it isn't one or the other. It's both. We do tend to favor government policies that encourage personal responsibility. An example of that would be moving from a welfare system that really didn't reward work, and may have actually discouraged it, to a system in which people get subsidies from the government when they do work. That's the way the Earned Income Tax Credit and child care subsidies work. You only get them if you're employed. It doesn't mean there shouldn't be a basic safety net at the bottom, but we do favor moving from that system towards a more work-based system.



## Dr. Mark Schuster

**Professor of pediatrics at Harvard Medical School and Chief of General Pediatrics at Children's Hospital Boston and the lead author of a study that looked at health disparities through the eyes of 5,119 randomly selected fifth-graders**

The black and Latino children were reporting health experiences and behaviors that were not as healthful as white children. And it was a pretty broad set of health indicators, and what was also important was that when we looked at things like what school they attended, and their parents' education, and their parents' income, that those accounted for a lot of what was going on. Another way to put that is, it didn't matter what race or ethnicity you had if you were in certain schools. If your parents are more highly educated or you have a higher-income home, you were doing better. But, of course, white children are more likely to live in homes with families with higher education and higher income, so there are these substantial racial-ethnic differences across races and ethnicities.

We already know that there are a lot of disparities in adolescents for these issues we were looking at, but there hadn't been as much work on elementary school kids, on pre-adolescents. So I don't know I'd say it surprised me. It disappointed me, but it was something we were concerned about. It's why we did the study, that we were concerned that these disparities existed earlier. At the same time, it is, maybe, frustrating that there are such substantial disparities. And I think we as a society and we as healthcare people in healthcare and public health do need to think about how to address these disparities.

It is a standard part of pediatric practice to advise parents and the kids when they're old enough about the importance of seat belts and the importance of bike helmets, so we do view that as part of what we're doing in pediatrics with preventive care. But I do get that that's not what you think of when you're going to the hospital because you were in a car accident and were thrown from the car. But a lot of pediatrics is about preventing poor health. But I do get that these are preventive issues, and one might think that the Affordable

Care Act would directly affect them. If everyone had access to healthcare and to well visits and to preventive care, I would hope that there would be some improvement to these kinds of indicators. But I don't want to suggest the pediatrician is the major player in whether kids wear seat belts, whether they wear bike helmets. I think that we have a role to play, but we are not – you know, I don't think if someone were to do a study looking at the various factors that affect health behaviors that anyone would suggest that the pediatrician talking about this with the parent and child is the major factor. So, I do think that we need to reach out into communities and to try to support and encourage healthier behaviors in the communities and not just in the doctor's office.

When I think of health, I don't just think of healthcare. I think of any factors that affect health. That socio-economic status does affect health. Where you live – the neighborhood you live in – affects your health. It affects your health in terms of the environment – if there is lead in the paint in the homes and in the soil. If the air quality is better or worse. If there is a lot of violence – a lot of violent crime – not only might your child get shot, but also you might not let your child go outside to play because you're afraid your child is going to get harmed. So there's lots of ways in which where you live has an effect – whether there are grocery stores, and whether those grocery stores have fresh fruits and vegetables. So I do think that the factors that influence health go well beyond the healthcare system.

“I do think that the factors that influence health go well beyond the healthcare system.”

The health care system has an important role to play in disparities, particularly in treatment – whether people of one racial or ethnic group get lower quality treatment, or fewer appropriate medications, than another group. But in terms of overall health and the kind of indicators we were looking at, these were much more related to prevention or to health as kind of measured in the community.

I think it'll be really important to watch how health care reform plays out over the next few years, but it is encouraging to me as a pediatrician, and someone who studies child health, that more and more children will be covered, will have access to healthcare, or at least will have insurance. But I also think there is more awareness, and I hope there will be more attention to the health implications of the environment in which kids live, and the influence of schools on kids on health, and communities on health, and the important role of parents on influencing their children's health. So I hope that there will be even greater attention paid to those issues. The more we call attention to them, the more I hope that people will try to address them.



## Abel Tapia

Former state senator from Pueblo



CF&I Steel once had 13,000 employees. That used to be a path towards prosperity. A lot of young Latinos just went and got their high school diplomas because that was a path to getting a job at the mill. It was a life to go for.

That's how I grew up but I chose not to do that. I wanted to go to college. And I did and oddly enough I came back and worked for CF&I Steel for 10 years as an inspector/engineer. It was a good career.

But in the '80s, it went from 13,000 employees to 1,300. These were manufacturing jobs. A guy is a steel boiler maker. In another profession, he might be an auto repairman. But as a steelmaker you were making \$24 an hour. As a car repairman, you were making \$4 an hour.

Pueblo took a really, really big hit in the '80s when the steel company downsized. In a community of 100,000 when you are talking 13,000 jobs, that was a big hit. Everything was associated with those jobs. You could actually have a small firm like asphalt repair but if you worked for CF&I Steel as a contractor you could make a good living.

Then all of a sudden, it kind of went away. It took us here in Pueblo probably 20 years to recover from that. And the way we recovered, we got telecommunications jobs. They were \$10 an hour service representatives for US West, AT&T. We replaced a lot of mill jobs with those types of jobs. But those were fairly non-skilled, high school diploma type jobs. If you could speak Spanish that would be great. You probably got a bonus. A job is a job. It's great, but a steelworker making \$24 an hour and triple overtime compared to a telecommunications operator, it's day and night.

We're about 50 percent Hispanic here. It did hit us hard, it hit us very hard. We don't have the heavy industry kind of jobs that we once had with the mill. People up north used to say they'd hate to be in Pueblo because you got that big ugly steel mill. Well, the people that raised a family didn't think it was big and ugly. They thought it was great and then it went away.

“CF&I Steel once had 13,000 employees. That used to be a path towards prosperity. A lot of young Latinos just went and got their high school diplomas because that was a path to getting a job at the mill. It was a life to go for.”

Now, the steel company is about 1,500 employees. It's probably the third biggest employer in Pueblo.

The education gap continues. While I ran my engineering company, I also got on the school board for eight years. My whole mission was to encourage people to go to college. Now I've been gone 12 years from education and I'm getting back involved in it because I feel like we are almost hitting bottom. It's not acceptable. We have to move forward.

A lot of it is systemic. It wasn't that you needed an education to have a good career. Back then, you could.

Now, it's hard to get a high school education. The drop out rate from 9<sup>th</sup> grade to 12<sup>th</sup> grade is close to 50 percent. That's absolutely terrible, every other kid won't graduate. A lot of it is their dad didn't graduate, so they aren't graduating. Their mother didn't graduate so they aren't graduating. It needs to be changed, there has to be something to get them interested in making a better life for themselves.

I think the key is influence. We all look at who went before us. You say if they can do it, I can do it. When I was young there weren't too many doctors, lawyers, engineers. There were schoolteachers.

Now we have a lot of doctors, lawyers, engineers. Those lawyers, doctors and engineers have got to get into the communities and say, 'If I'm a doctor, you can be a doctor.'

The Youth and Family Academy in Pueblo is a charter school. They take dropout kids and try to get them an education. They graduated 36 kids last year. One was a girl who was 20. She has three kids. She's unmarried. But now she wants to go to college.



## Landri Taylor

President and CEO of Denver Urban League



The culture in the United States has changed and it has changed dramatically, I think, to where there wasn't a tremendous amount of what I would call strong drive in American families with their kids. And without that strong drive, kids actually believed they had a choice of whether to go to high school. It was an amazing revelation that kids could choose whether they could go to school or not. I have not seen anything like that. And if you continue to slice and dice it up, kids grew up not thinking that they had to have a job of any stature, that they could just work, lay off, work and lay off again. They simply did not have that thirst for wealth, that thirst for advancement, that thirst for material things.

That is my take about what has been going on through all of those years from the '80s to the '90s. And now we are in a position or place in time throughout America where we recognized the great damage that we did in this generation. We took it for granted. We didn't continue the drive through our kids and their kids about why education is number one. We may be number one in the United States, but the only way we got there and can stay there is through education, being smarter, being the innovator.

The pipeline is empty for home grown engineers, for home grown almost anything.

We have to reverse that and talk about it in a very honest way. We're having the same challenge in the black community, as in the Hispanic community, as in the Asian community, as the white community. So far the story has been really focused on minority youth, where the widest gaps exist. But trust me, Caucasian youth and families have the same difficulty. There is an opportunity for us all to take off the sun glasses and say this is an American problem. We can't leave anyone behind.

This whole revelation in my own mind and where I sit as CEO of the Urban League is that at one time I was really against charters and vouchers in public education. Now I am 100 percent for charters. I'm 200 percent for vouchers. I am at the point where we cannot afford to let parents stay shackled in any environment, suburban as well as urban, when it comes to kids' education. They have to have the freedom to take that piece and go anywhere they so choose. That education will respond to that by making it more competitive for kids to want to go to one school over another.

It's thrilling, it's exciting for me think about it if we can flip the coin, turn the corner and get in that direction. I see the mindset is starting to swing. Jobs follow great education. Great education doesn't follow jobs. Denver Public Schools, we're at a point, Denver Public Schools are getting it.

“There is an opportunity for us all to take off the sunglasses and say this is an American problem. We can't leave anyone behind.”



## Dr. Amal Trivedi

Medical doctor who practices in several states, a researcher who has been published in the New England Journal of Medicine and a faculty member at Brown University

I think the two takeaway points that I have from looking at the health disparities' literature is that first the causes of health disparities are multi-factorial. There are a lot of factors that account for racial disparities in various health conditions, and that they vary depending on what kind of health disparity you're talking about, whether you're talking about infant mortality or disparities from, say, heart disease or diabetes, vary between ethnic groups. So there is not one over-arching cause. There are lots of causes. Most of the studies that I have looked at found that social determinants of health play a big role. So social determinants are things that are actually outside the health care system. Things like income, education, the kind of neighborhoods that people live in, whether they are neighborhoods of deprivation, or neighborhoods of affluence, the kind of housing conditions that people live in. That these factors outside of the healthcare system actually have a big impact on disparities in health outcomes. And then the final piece is that healthcare plays a role – having basic access to preventive care to care for chronic conditions is important in reducing health disparities. Those are some of the big, sort of over-arching points. You know, it's a very complicated issue that has many causes.

There's been hundreds – perhaps thousands – of studies that have looked at disparities in health; and essentially every area where we have looked we have found significant racial and ethnic disparities in health. Racial and ethnic health disparities do exist, they have continued, and in some cases they've gotten worse. I think that's a very important message.

Take infant mortality. Infant mortality has improved for both white Americans and black Americans, but the gaps have persisted; the disparity has not narrowed – in fact, according to some studies, it's widened over time. It is possible for all groups to do better but for the gaps to remain if the outcomes are improving among whites at a faster rate or even at an equivalent rate. If whites improve at a faster rate; then you may see that although all groups are doing better that the gaps are getting worse.

I think that it should be concerning because it takes a tremendous toll on the lives of racial and ethnic minorities who comprise an increasing proportion of our society, and that it's – ideally what we'd like to see is good help for all groups, and we shouldn't see differences by race or ethnicity. We should see – it's in the interest of everyone to make sure that we've got good health outcomes for all members of our population, for all of our groups. And so that's why it should be tremendously concerning. It's a very important public health issue.

It's an economic issue, certainly, but it's also a moral issue. I mean, ideally what we'd like to see is that every member of society has a chance for living a healthy, productive life. And to the extent that we see certain racial and ethnic groups in our society have lower life expectancy or a higher chance of dying in the first year of their life, that's something that's deeply, deeply troubling, and we can do better. It's an issue that everybody should be concerned about.

I think, actually, the Affordable Care Act has the potential to address some of these disparities, because it

does a number of really important things. One is we know that racial and ethnic minorities are much less likely to have health insurance; and the preponderance of the literature is that you see suggests not having health insurance increases the chance of having a worse outcome. So, as part of the Affordable Care Act, if it's fully implemented, there will be a dramatic expansion in insurance, and that would mean that people who don't have insurance currently, and it's a group that is disproportionately racial and ethnic minorities, would have access to quality healthcare. So that's sort of one aspect. The other is that huge investments in prevention and racial and ethnic minorities disproportionately suffer from preventable illnesses. And so there are a lot of investments in improving preventive health, in terms of screenings for diseases that could be treated earlier, promoting smoking cessation. So those are things that could also impact dispari-

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ties. The other is just how our health care system is organized, which is that we have a very segregated healthcare system, where a small number of providers account for a large proportion of all patient visits made by racial and ethnic minorities. And racial and ethnic minorities are more likely to be seen in safety net settings that are traditionally under-funded, and as part of the Affordable Care Act, there is a large investment in community health centers and other safety net institutions, where many racial and ethnic minorities are seen. And to the extent that we can improve care in those traditionally under-resourced communities and clinics, we can potentially impact disparities in health outcomes. So those are a few of the investments in the Affordable Care Act.

The final piece is that the providers who are our health workforce don't reflect the diversity of the population; and by promoting opportunities for minorities to become physicians and other health

providers, that we will – we've found in other studies providers that are African American, Hispanic, are more likely to serve populations that are underserved and minorities. So by investing in diversity of our health professions workforce, that that might also be another lever to ameliorate our health disparities.

There are a number of factors that are outside the healthcare system that are critically important in addressing health disparities. These are social determinants. I'm a physician and I see patients with diabetes and heart disease very commonly; and I always recommend diet and exercise – you know, lifestyle modifications.

But boy, I'll tell you, if you live in a neighborhood where it's not safe to go out for a long walk, or you don't have any grocery stores that sell fresh fruits and vegetables, it's really difficult to do lifestyle modifications. So investing in healthy neighborhoods, and changing the built environment to promote healthier outcomes, that's going to be a huge step in trying to address health disparities and improve health outcomes for folks who live in under-resourced areas. That's something that's not – you know, that's not investing specifically in an aspect of the healthcare system, like a hospital or a clinic. But it's trying to improve communities to make sure that we promote healthier lifestyles. So that's, like I said, a social determinant that's not strictly about health insurance or the use of healthcare.

What I've been sort of impressed by is just the diversity within groups. It's hard to really come across one overarching cultural factor that explains the disparities. I'm sort of more struck by the diversity within certain groups that we lump together, I guess would be sort of my approach to it. And you know, I also practice in different areas of the country, and what may drive disparities, say, in California, might be very different than in another – somewhere in the northeast, or between rural and urban. I work at the VA, and so we see there are parts of the country where remoteness is actually a really important factor, of being far away from the nearest clinic. In urban areas, there might be a hospital or a clinic that's close by, but there may not be the coverage to actually use it. We live in a really diverse country and a very big country. So something that's unique to Colorado may not translate to other states. And so that's why it's important for each of the different areas to track disparities. And that would be sort of the ... additional point that I would like to make, which is just how important it is to measure locally. A lot of the studies that we have look at national disparities, but if you look within your own community, or say even as granular as your own patient practice, you might find that the disparities are a lot different than what's observed nationally. And so local measurement is really key. And you really can't improve anything that you don't measure. So we need that kind of granular detail to see are the things that we're doing locally, are they having an impact?

If you look nationally at infant mortality, the rates for African Americans are more than double that for whites. I find that deeply concerning. You know, the rates have improved for both groups, but they're still sharply unequal, deeply unequal, and we can do better as a society. So there's a moral case to be made that disparities are unacceptable, and that as a society we can make changes to make sure that everybody has a good opportunity to lead a healthy, productive life, and when we do that everyone benefits.





## Dick Wadhams

Political consultant and former chairman of the Colorado Republican Party

First thing that comes to my mind, I think this is one of the direct consequences of an educational system that is failing minority kids, not only the drop-out rate which is much higher in Colorado among Hispanics and African American kids than it is for Anglo kids. I think the mediocrity of the educational system in so many ways has failed those kids and I think that's been reflected in statistics. I'm sure there are many other factors, but boy, that's the one that comes to my mind. And I think that's why you're starting to see more and more Hispanic and African American leaders embrace the concept of education reform like charter schools and possibly even vouchers, which I know was rejected by voters 10 years ago or longer.

But I think that's why the education reform is becoming more of a topic in those two communities.

“The drop-out rates are very high and you drop out of school, you're confined to a life of poverty. That's the bottom line.”

I think Denver Public Schools, the way they're moving towards fundamental education reform, are headed in the right direction. They're a long ways from solving the problem but I think it's education reform across the board. I think it was George W. Bush, what was his phrase, “the soft bigotry of low expectations.” It's almost the writing off of these kids. I think that more than anything contributes to this problem.

The drop-out rates are very high and you drop out of school, you're confined to a life of poverty. That's the bottom line.

I think there are some other social problems that contribute to it. Daniel Patrick Moynihan argued back in the late 1970s that the illegitimacy rate among African Americans was going to adversely affect African Americans and I think it would be very hard to find anybody who would challenge that at this point. There has been a lot talked about and written about that problem. That probably goes back to the education system again though. I think there are a lot of social problems. I really think the education problem is the biggest one.

If education reforms would be enacted today, it would be slow progress, but you'd see it over time. This problem didn't happen overnight. I don't know that it's going to get any better in the short term, but I do think some of the things Denver Public Schools is doing is a step in the right direction. But it goes beyond just Denver Public Schools. You can find it in Jefferson County, or Cherry Creek, or in rural counties. It's the same thing. There's something wrong with this education system right now. I think it's failing kids across the board. I think it's even more pronounced among minority kids.

DPS has improved a lot of charter schools. They're tackling head-on failing schools. They're not tacitly sitting by now. I'll give some credit to Michael Bennet. A lot of this started under him before he got appointed to the Senate. I'm not crazy about him being a senator, but I'll give him credit about some of the things he started before he got appointed to the U.S. Senate. I really believe more choice is going to be a big part of the solution and holding schools accountable, holding teachers accountable. That's got to happen.

I know Colorado voters rejected vouchers before, but you know, I'll bet you right now among Hispanics and African Americans, that's going to be a lot more attractive than it might have been a few years ago.

Roy Romer, to his credit, started some education reforms towards the end of his governorship. Bill Owens picked them up. Unfortunately, I think Bill Ritter reversed some of the reforms. He pulled back on some of the testing to quantify kids' progress or lack of progress.

When you think how so many kids are being failed right now in the schools, it probably leads to these other discrepancies with home ownership, income, poverty, etc.



## Soul Watson

**Commentator at Free Speech TV, where he does a national show on progressive issues, and son of Lauren Watson, founder of the Denver chapter of the Black Panther part in the late 1960s**

I know that Colorado likes to pride itself on being a very progressive state, both politically and socially. But I think your numbers really give a much different picture, and a much needed picture, to the reality on the ground and how these particular issues really are begging to be addressed.

Those are numbers to you, but to me those are family members, those are friends, those are relatives, those are community members. Even within the progressive community here in Colorado, race is such a taboo conversation. Race is far behind what people would feel like is important to talk about, which would be the economy, or the environment, especially in Colorado, the environment, energy issues.

However, the numbers that you've come up with require that people stand up and take accountability.

African Americans only represent 10 percent of the city's population. So many politicians and organizations get away with not having to address it at all. There's nothing compelling them to do it. They don't feel like the inner cities are going to be burned up. They don't feel like there are going to be repercussions to ignoring this conversation.

One of the things I'll speak to you very candidly about (is) the concept of race and its use as a weapon in order to divide people. Many people are unwilling to let go of seeing themselves as minorities. Many of the organizations and their funding are based upon the fact that they are minority, that there are problems and that it is based upon race. But I see it very differently than that. As long as we're using the concepts and the ideas of an antiquated system, i.e. race, then many of these things are going to perpetuate themselves. Victims don't realize as long as they continue to define themselves the same way that their victimizers define them, the problem is going to persist.

It's important for us to understand that race is a social construct, not a scientific construct. There is no such thing as a white person, or a black person. These are people and what affects their lives is that other people

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see them as different people. And because you see them as different people you can treat them differently than you would treat yourselves. So the problem is the definitions we're using. When you say how should they describe themselves, they should describe themselves as Americans.

Racist policies are inside of the institutions of America itself. And until we start addressing that, until white people, and brown people and black people, and these people all say let's address this as Americans – nothing changes.

Policies are created in the mind. They can be policies based on fear, or they can be policies based upon truth. The truth which scientists have proven to us is that there no such thing as race. But that is not what our policies are based upon, and until our policies are based upon the reality that there is no such thing as race, and there's just different cultures and that's what makes America great, all cultures are

valued equally, then these statistics are going to continue to perpetuate themselves.

What conversations do we need to have in order to bring us together and unite us so that someone with pink skin has as much interest and as much concern for someone who has brown skin? Or whether a brown-skin child is being educated or not? Or whether a brown-skin child is eating as much as other children are? That's where the conversation has to come from. And be very clear, I'm not blaming this on quote-unquote white people. This is a conversation that really initially needs to start inside the brown community. But a lot of people, especially people who went through the '60s and '70s, have a vested interest, because now they have grants and positions and titles being opposed to the system. So if the system is changed, what happens

to these grants? What happens to their positions of power?

Someone described it to me this way: What do you think would happen if a cure for cancer was found tomorrow? How many millions and billions of dollars are tied up in non-profit organizations and things of this nature that actually feed off the fact that this disease exists? Racism is a disease and there are many organizations, both brown and white, that get fed off that system.

In the '60s and '70s you saw a plethora of African American studies, of Chicano studies, on campuses and inner cities throughout the country. People were being more educated, they were seeing themselves inside of the American dialogue, so the work of the '60s and '70s really made the power structure begin to have this conversation. But a lot of those people have gotten government jobs, a lot of those people have passed away, so the forces that we have slowly rolled back those gains that were made, and now you see those issues pop up again.

What we're talking about is a re-education of society on such a fundamental level that I understand that what I'm saying seems extremely revolutionary, but it's been done in this country before. FDR and the social programs that he implemented were conversations that really changed the direction of America. The conversations, I mean America has all of the resources to make this a reality. It just doesn't have the political will. There are too many people who have a vested interest in keeping those of us who have more in common than we have different separate.

If you look at the NAACP, if you look at the Urban League, these are organizations that are, this may sound harsh, they're crybabies by design. They were designed that way. And that's why about three or four years ago, you heard Obama strongly rebuke the NAACP because they were crying about that he hadn't come and talked to them, or he hadn't created some type of special something for (them) and he rebuked them for that, but that's why those organizations were made. They're founded upon being a victim. So they behaved with a brown president the same way they would have behaved with a pink president, except they probably cried a little louder with a brown president because they feel like this is someone who will really get into our victim story and Obama just had no listening for that.

Because I am an African American, I have seen what these social programs have made as far as generational dependence on the system and it has injured them in quite a few ways. So they see themselves as perpetual victims.

I would like to see higher taxes for the one percent and we have to be very clear as far as where these monies are going. The money should go to education. We have to start with the kids. I mean many of these (people) are not going to let go of these ideas. They're just not. It goes to the quote it's much easier to educate a child than to fix an adult. You have to focus on the next generation of children that are coming up.

I've been in countries where children are being educated out underneath a tree and the greater part of the class is extremely literate and go on to university level. So, I mean, we don't want them in dilapidated buildings but what I'm saying is what needs to be reinstated inside of the schools is a much better idea.



## Wellington Webb

Former mayor of Denver



I haven't looked at any data, but intuitively I would think that three or four things happened pretty simultaneously. One is Reagan's election in 1980 brought a difference in policy shrinking of government. The whole issue was to not feed the beast. If you look at the number of percentages of African Americans and Latinos who work in federal, state and local government, the numbers are higher proportionately than other folks, and if the government shrinks then that also means higher levels of unemployment in those particular government sectors and the public sector.

And frankly that trend continued under Bush, under Clinton, under Bush and under Obama. Each one is proud of talking about they've shrunk the size of the federal government, which is in direct correlation in terms of the number African Americans working, in the federal government, state and local.

I think another piece is the lack of manufacturing jobs, jobs leaving the country, going overseas.

A third big policy change was the whole issue around welfare. The welfare bill that was passed under Clinton meant a lot of people who were receiving government assistance found themselves off into a kind of a never-never land, which also then increased the numbers of disadvantaged, that previously had been receiving assistance.

I think that the other aspect is the education gap widening. This is partly an outgrowth that has been going on since the mid-'70s.

I think all of those policies had a distinct shift in terms of widening disparities between black and white. I think there'd be one other interesting statistic that you might want to look at, too, and that is the disparity among African Americans and Latinos themselves. There's a widening gap between those that are doing very, very well and a larger percentage of low-skill, unskilled workers that are barely making it and becoming part of the chronically unemployed.

Among African Americans, I believe that there's a widening gap between those who have money and those who don't and the middle class is the one that's shrinking. I believe that's accurate to say – the gains of the civil rights movement have been erased. For all intents and purposes, affirmative action has been wiped out. There is no longer a desire to assure that minorities are being placed into jobs. There's no emphasis on that and there's no enforcement mechanism to make that happen.

Using Denver as an example, I was a very big proponent of sharing opportunity. If there's a large construction project in the city, and if the contractor happened to be Hensel Phelps, Hensel Phelps normally would have an African American and a Latino as joint venture partners or subcontractors working with them. I'm just using them as one example. This would cut across the board for all of them. You would see a high preponderance of minorities working on those projects.

I think the issue for the future is going to be less about race and more about class. I think we're developing an entire underclass of individuals among both whites and minorities who are finding it very difficult to succeed in an American economy. And until we build back a type of manufacturing base without outsourcing so many jobs and level out the educational opportunity, this is going to be very difficult to correct.

“I think the issue for the future is going to be less about race and more about class. I think we're developing an entire underclass of individuals among both whites and minorities.”



## Theo Wilson

District executive with BarberShop Talk, a mentorship organization for men

We are trying to rebuild community relationships, especially in the black community so that we can have a functioning community and not just a place where people live. I'm not really surprised by the numbers showing these gaps. I'm actually happy that there are numbers that verify what I've been feeling all along. I feel the reverse of progress and I see it all the time.

First thing I see is in the way that our lives are meaningless in the eyes of law enforcement. That's a major way.

It's pretty intense out here. I see (racism) in the community where it's clear that the economic disparities

are in fact growing. It's clear that the kids are not participating in school because they don't feel like they're going to be belonging to society. And in the conviction records of brothers and what (they're) slowly doing to people who have a felony conviction and if you read between the lines what that really means. In Michelle Alexander's book called "The New Jim Crow," she said that police concentration in the black community is almost six times as high as it is in the white community, and the fact that there's no number to indicate that black people use more illicit drugs than anybody else. Matter of fact, if there's any number – there's more illicit drugs on the white side. Matter of fact, if there's any number – there's more illicit drugs on the white side. But the fact is these convictions, the simple possession convictions, brand you as a felon. Now if you've got six times the concentration of the police in the community, arresting six times as many people, and being branded a felon is what keeps you out of jobs, out of public housing, you can't even get into the projects for five years after you've been branded a felon. All this adds up. When you look at the numbers, it's clear as day that this is a targeted and covert effort to reduce the gains made by the black community.

I think I know what the root of the problem is. It's that there are two types of racism. There's interpersonal racism, which is calling someone the "N-word" to their face, just being mean-spirited to somebody because of their race. And we call that racism, but there's another kind of racism, and that's structural racism. Structural racism comes from having a 400-year head start. It's something that comes with the fact that if you take land from somebody, and you set up that land, and you profit from that land, and you pass that land down for generations, those people in those generations are going to have a humungous head start, financially and socially, simply because of what their ancestors were able to acquire. They still hold the power strings. That's why affirmative action is so important because it makes you take notice. It makes you take notice of what you're doing and the color of the people that you're hiring.

Why is it worse in 2012 than in 1960? The reason is because structural racism continues to advance. It never changed. It never stopped its growth. It never really did anything to change its nature. And why would it? Power never concedes without force. What happened, what you see is that spike in 1980 where things got a little bit better. I trace it back to the decade prior, in the '70s, there were so many government programs that were helping black Americans get college educations. Right after the civil rights bill was signed, all sorts of money was allocated and African Americans were going to college left and right. There was a great deal of public political will behind healing the wound that Jim Crow had left behind. People wanted to see and show progress. After awhile, I think it peaked in the early '90s, actually the late '90s where we saw the tide receding.

The black prison population doubled between 1992 and 2000 because of the quote-unquote war on drugs, where people were getting very, very heavy mandatory sentencing. And it was also the advent of the crack era. It was a combination of forces.

We're not saying that no one could overcome, and this is excuse making, and this is something that we're blaming white people for. People did overcome this. People did rise above, people did get out of the ghetto.

People did make good for themselves. But just like not everybody can run the 100 meters in less than 10 seconds, not everybody had the internal strength to overcome their environment. Some people can, but most people cannot. Not without a strong background, not without a strong family. The combination of the crack war and mandatory sentencing saw a huge sweep of black males into prison and further degeneration of the black family.

I don't see the social and political things in place to narrow these gaps. Let's just eliminate the African Americans from this conversation and look at white Americans. You'll see that the income gap from their wealthiest to their poorest, or even to the middle class, is ever widening. And when you look at the families that are in the 1 percent, ain't none of them black. There are no black 1 percent families, period.

“The combination of the crack war and mandatory sentencing saw a huge sweep of black males into prison and further degeneration of the black family.”



## Maria Young

Head of CPLAN, a Colorado company that provides services and training to professional migrants, with clients from more than 20 countries

I married an American and arrived to this country educated and continued my education here obtaining a master's degree and becoming a CPA. I have three close friends who also arrived here with an education (one from Mexico, one from Colombia and one from Venezuela). Our standard of living is comfortable, we own our homes in middle class neighborhoods with “good schools” and all our children (eight among us) graduated from high school and college (one is a doctor, one a nurse, one a physical therapist, two psychologists, one engineer, one accountant and one architect). What do we have in common? We are all Hispanic, educated and earn a good living. However, how are our children counted? White or Hispanic? Three of us are married to Americans and our children have an English last name.

As to the gaps, if we focus on economic status, not race, the numbers make more sense. In my opinion, low economic status is the major factor impacting the difference in education, home ownership, economic well-being. Poverty leads to residence in poor neighborhoods and segregation. Poor neighborhoods and segregation produce low performing schools.

Schools that are located in economically disadvantaged areas are highly segregated and produce miserable



results. However, once Hispanics attend “good schools,” the results change dramatically.

Now the question is: why are Hispanics disproportionately poor (25 percent versus 11 percent for whites)? There are many reasons but a major one is the uniqueness of Hispanic immigration. All other ethnicities arrived in waves and assimilated within one generation. Hispanics, on the other hand, kept or keep on coming, prolonging the ties to the old country. All immigrants, traditionally, have moved to the part of the country where their ancestors had established themselves.

Hispanic immigrants are no different. Therefore, the communities where the majority moves to keep the language and traditions of the old country make it easy not to be English proficient. Without English fluency, the only jobs available are low-skill, low paid, no-benefits kind of jobs.

Imagine the life of an undocumented individual. What kind of jobs can you get? How many jobs do you have to have to support your family? Would you have time to help your children with homework? Would you have the time to go to school and learn English?

I hear stories about teachers telling students not to worry with mathematics since they are not college material; about teachers laughing dismissively when one young man said he wanted to go to Notre Dame; about one high school principal saying that he did not worry about the undocumented because they could not go to college anyway!

Consider the practice of Denver Public Schools bringing dozens of teachers a year all the way from Spain to teach Mexican American kids with parents from rural areas. So, the message to me is: only the Spanish from Spain is “good” Spanish! Further, does anybody believe that a teacher from Spain will understand the plight of the immigrant, and more especially of the undocumented immigrant? Can that teacher relate to that child or to that parent? How about bringing teachers from Mexico and Central America? How about actively hiring Latin American teachers already here? ■

“I hear stories about teachers telling students not to worry with mathematics since they are not college material ... about one high school principal saying that he did not worry about the undocumented because they could not go to college anyway.”

# How to Use the I-News Engagement Tools

Dear fellow Coloradan,

With the following engagement tools, we invite you to participate in the I-News Network, a new way public media serves the public.

Our new report called *Losing Ground* uncovers important and startling facts about race, disparity, progress and the future of Colorado. What you learn from *Losing Ground* may inspire you to join – or even lead – a conversation about these topics that are so important to our state. Following this note, you will find tools that can help you do that:

- **Fact Sheet.** Major findings and talking points from the *Losing Ground* series.
- **Conversation Guide.** A sheet that suggests questions and offers tips to help you start or lead a conversation about *Losing Ground* and what its findings mean for Colorado.
- **Social Media.** A sheet of suggested tweets and posts you can use to start conversations on social media, such as Twitter or Facebook.
- **Q&A.** Simple questions and answers about *Losing Ground*.
- **Action Opportunities.** If you are inspired or concerned about what you learn from *Losing Ground*, this sheet can help you determine what you can do about it.

You can find more resources at [www.LosingGround.iNewsNetwork.org](http://www.LosingGround.iNewsNetwork.org), including a video, timeline of major civil rights events in Colorado and nationally, interactive graphics that show the growing disparities between whites and minorities, and copies of all these engagement tools.

If you have any questions or need more help, please contact Laura Frank at [LFrank@iNewsNetwork.org](mailto:LFrank@iNewsNetwork.org)

Thank you.



**Laura Frank**

I-News executive director & vice president of news, Rocky Mountain PBS

## Fact Sheet

**IN LOSING GROUND, I-NEWS JOURNALISTS SOUGHT TO ASCERTAIN** the relative well-being of Colorado's three major population groups: whites, Latinos and blacks. What we found is that Latino and black residents have lost ground compared to white residents. The research is based largely on six decades of U.S. Census Bureau data, 1960-2010. The three groups were more equitable in the first decades analyzed, and less so in more recent decades. The Census categories examined were family income, poverty, high school and college graduation and home ownership. Health data and justice records examined also showed disparities.

The findings are both counterintuitive and disturbing. Counterintuitive because one might easily assume that the many government policies, programs and laws originating in the civil rights movement era and aimed at leveling the playing field would have led to a narrowing of the gaps. The findings are disturbing, in the views of many experts and others, because of what they imply about the state's future. Racial and ethnic inequality doesn't bode well for a state in which minorities are the fastest growing population.

Among key findings:

- In 1970, black families in Colorado earned 73 percent of white family incomes and Latino families earned 71.5 percent. By 2010, those numbers had fallen to about 60 percent and 50 percent, respectively.
- Almost 60 percent of Latino households were owner-occupied in 1970; now it's just beneath 50 percent.
- The gaps among adults with college degrees have steadily widened since 1960, with the percentage of whites with college degrees three times higher than the Latino rate and double the black rate, the worst such disparities among the states.
- Blacks and Latino residents experience significantly higher rates of infant mortality and deaths from diseases such as diabetes.
- Minorities experience hugely disproportionate incarceration rates. In 2010, about one in every 20 black men were incarcerated in Colorado state prisons compared to one out of every 50 Latino males and one of every 150 white males, according to an I-News analysis of government figures.

*Losing Ground* offers more than 40 unique interviews in which academic experts, community leaders and politicians, and residents offer their views about why these gaps exist and what might be done about them.

# Losing Ground Discussion Guide

## TIPS FOR AN EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY DISCUSSION:

- 1. Set some guidelines.** For example, everyone has a chance to talk with a 3-minute time limit. No inappropriate language.
- 2. Have a sign-in sheet.** Collect email addresses and other contact information for follow-up conversations, note-sharing and action steps.
- 3. Assign an official note-taker or recorder.** This person captures the key thoughts, ideas and potential actions.
- 4. Assign an official time manager.** This person gives prompts to a speaker when the allotted time is about to expire.
- 5. End the meeting with an action plan.**
  - Agree on at least one goal (and no more than three).
  - Establish a timeline for each goal.
  - Share notes with attendees.
  - Share what you do with I-News. If you send I-News your contact information, we will keep you informed of developments related to Losing Ground. Contact Laura Frank at [LFrank@iNewsNetwork.org](mailto:LFrank@iNewsNetwork.org)

## SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR LEADING A DISCUSSION ABOUT LOSING GROUND:

1. What are the potential impacts for our community and/or state from the gaps between minority and white Coloradans when it comes to health, income, poverty, education and home ownership?
2. Minorities are the fastest growing population in Colorado. What are the potential impacts on the entire state if these disparities remain or grow?
3. Which disparities have the greatest impact? Why?
4. Experts point to complex and interwoven societal forces at work behind the growing disparity, including changes in the economy, family structure, incarceration rates and education. Which do you think have the greatest impact on disparity?
5. Are there public policies that might address some of the causes of disparity?
6. Are there other means besides public policy that could improve the disparities?

## Tweet Sheet

I-News at Rocky Mountain PBS is ready to help you with your social media efforts to get others engaged in the topics raised by Losing Ground. This special report examines growing disparities for African Americans and Latinos in Colorado, and what those mean for the entire state.

- You can use the Tweets below to spark conversations on Twitter. Or post them to your Facebook page. Want more? Go to our website to cut and paste even more suggested tweets: [iNewsNetwork.org/LosingGroundTweets](http://iNewsNetwork.org/LosingGroundTweets)
- Then add your own Tweets and Facebook posts inviting friends and followers to talk about what the growing disparity in Colorado means for the future and what can be done to turn the tide. And join the conversation with I-News: [@iNews](https://twitter.com/iNews) and [Facebook.com/iNewsNetwork](https://www.facebook.com/iNewsNetwork)

### SUGGESTED TWEETS:

#Colorado was among more equitable places for minorities. No longer. What happened?  
@iNews #LosingGround bit.ly/iNewsLosingGround

Think #Colorado is more equal 50 yrs after the #CivilRights movement? The surprising answer  
@iNews bit.ly/iNewsLosingGround #LosingGround

Surprising disparity trends in #Colorado @iNews  
What does this mean for the future?  
#LosingGround bit.ly/iNewsLosingGround

Which disparity gap is worse? Education, Health, Income?  
#LosingGround @iNews bit.ly/iNewsLosingGround

NAACP official "shocked" by @iNews findings on racial and ethnic disparities in Colorado  
#LosingGround bit.ly/iNewsLosingGround

Colorado's college degree gaps are the worst

in the nation. @iNews #LosingGround bit.ly/iNewsLosingGround

Expert: The poverty rate could be slashed by 70 percent if the poor did four things –@iNews #LosingGround bit.ly/iNewsLosingGround

Former Congressman Kogovsek looks at @iNews data: "Right now the system isn't working."  
#LosingGround bit.ly/iNewsLosingGround

Expert: "Anybody who says, 'Well, these disparities don't exist,' is living in denial." @iNews #LosingGround bit.ly/iNewsLosingGround

Colorado's infant mortality rate worse for blacks and Latinos than national average. @iNews #LosingGround bit.ly/iNewsLosingGround

"Social determinants of health far more important than healthcare determinants of health."  
@iNews #LosingGround bit.ly/iNewsLosingGround

## Losing Ground Q&A

### **Q. What is the premise of *Losing Ground*?**

A. *Losing Ground* is an analysis of six decades of data from the U.S. Census Bureau. That analysis provides a compelling portrait of the relative social progress of Colorado's three major population groups: whites, Latinos and blacks.

### **Q. What comparisons were used?**

A. The data analyzed included poverty rates for each group, family income, high school and college graduation rates and home ownership. Also, federal and state justice figures were examined, as was state health data. The analysis shows how each community fared over a long period of time.

### **Q. And?**

A. The analysis shows racial and ethnic inequities in the state to a surprising degree. Latinos and blacks have not kept pace with whites in most measures. Colorado was a more equal state than the national average in the first decades of the study, but is less equal now. Most gaps have actually widened.

### **Q. Can you give an example of not keeping pace? What does that mean?**

A. One example would be family income. In 1970, black families in Colorado earned 73 percent of what white families earned, and Latino families earned 72 percent. By 2010, those numbers had fallen to about 60 percent and 50 percent, respectively.

### **Q. Why have the gaps widened?**

A. The experts, community leaders and others interviewed by I-News identified a number of reasons. They are complex and often interrelated. The intergenerational cycle of poverty and inequities in education are often cited. More specifically, the civil rights era policies such as affirmative action that boosted minorities have been diminished or dismantled. Many thousands of Colorado's good paying manufacturing jobs have disappeared, hurting minority families disproportionately. The percentage of single-parent families and the number of births to single mothers has soared among black households, exacerbating the gaps, and immigration and teen-age births in the Latino population have also led to widening disparities, experts said. Support for K-12 education has diminished. The cost of attending college has skyrocketed.

### **Q. What does this mean to me?**

A. Racial and ethnic inequality holds meaning for all Coloradans. Most experts say such disparities don't bode well for a state in which minorities are the fastest growing population.

## Action Opportunities related to the Losing Ground report

Now that you know about the growing disparity between whites and minorities in Colorado, what will you do with that information? Let us know at [www.Facebook.com/iNews](http://www.Facebook.com/iNews)

### Here are just some of the possibilities you might consider:

- Lead a discussion at your home, place of worship, school, book club, service club or other organization.
- Host a community forum at your public library, community center or other public gathering space.
- Start a conversation on social media, such as Twitter or Facebook.

### Connect with an organization that addresses issues raised in Losing Ground.

#### POVERTY

Your local community foundation: <http://bit.ly/COCommunityFoundations>

Religious organizations, such as Catholic Charities: <http://www.ccdenver.org/> or Thrivent

Financial for Lutherans: <https://www.thrivent.com/>

#### EDUCATION

Colorado Legacy Foundation: <http://colegacy.org/>

Latin American Educational Foundation: <http://www.laef.org/>

Minority Enterprise & Education Development: <http://www.meedcolorado.org/>

#### HEALTH

Clinica Family Health Services: <http://www.clinica.org/index.php>

Center for African American Health: <http://www.caahealth.org/page.cfm>

Colorado Health Foundation: <http://www.coloradohealth.org/>

#### INCARCERATION

Open Door Youth Gang Alternatives: <http://opendooryouth.org/>

Criminal Justice Reform Coalition: <http://www.ccjrc.org/index.shtml>

#### RACE RELATIONS

BarberShop Talk: <http://barbershoptalk.org/>

Aurora NAACP: <http://www.auroracoloradonaacp.org/index.html>

Latino Community Foundation of Colorado: <http://www.rcfdenver.org/latinocfc/>

#### FAMILY

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Colorado: <http://www.biglittlecolorado.org/>

Florence Crittenton Services of Colorado: <http://www.flocritco.org/>

McDonnell Family Foundation: <http://www.mcdonnellfoundation.org/>

#### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Your local Chamber of Commerce: <http://bit.ly/COChambers>

Colorado Black Chamber of Commerce: <http://coloradoblackchamber.org/>

Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Metro Denver: <http://hispanicchamberdenver.org/>



**The I-News Network is the public-service journalism arm of Rocky Mountain PBS.**

I-News produces in-depth, research-based journalism that many newsrooms couldn't do alone. We collaborate with the most respected news outlets to deliver this journalism to millions of Coloradans.

Together with our media partners, we're filling a void in serious public-service journalism, bringing more in-depth news to the places you already look for your news: your newspaper, radio, television, computer and digital device.

We produce journalism that makes a difference. Here are some recent examples:

- More doctors now disclose payments from drug companies after I-News helped Colorado Public Radio report hidden funding, allowing patients to make better-informed decisions.
- Lawmakers changed tax law after I-News helped the Denver Post reveal that movie stars and developers got tax breaks meant for farmers and ranchers.
- Officials now do more to protect students after I-News helped its news media partners report that some schools withheld information about assaults on campus.
- A new law was passed to close legal loopholes after I-News uncovered dangerous and illegal treatment of hazardous electronic waste unknown even to state regulators.
- The Colorado State Board of Education toughened standards for online schools after I-News showed the schools get millions in tax money while half their students drop out.

*Losing Ground* is yet another example of how I-News reports on issues of statewide importance and local impact. Our specialty is turning complex information into compelling multimedia stories – so the public can make better-informed decisions.

You can join in, too. Share your insights, suggest a story or make a donation to sustain quality public-service journalism at [www.inewsnetwork.org](http://www.inewsnetwork.org).