

BY WILLIAM H. FREY

Coming full circle,

blacks in America ended the 20th Century by returning to the region that they spent most of the century leaving. As such, the South retains its historically distinct racial profile as a region of whites and blacks, bucking the broader trend in the rest of America, where Latinos and Asians are a rapidly growing presence.

The 2000 Census shows that the South increased its attractiveness to blacks in the booming economy of the 1990s. Dixie's black population rose by 3.6 million – more than the other three regions combined. That figure represents about twice the number of blacks the South gained in the 1980s, and is well above the gain for the 1970s – the first decade in which blacks began returning to the South. Still, the 1990s are distinct because of the sheer magnitude of black Southern gains, and because it is the first decade in which each of the other major regions registered a net out-migration of blacks.

SOUTHERN STATES AND METRO AREAS DOMINATE

As recently as 1965-70, the South was losing migrants to the Northeast, Midwest and West, where the greatest black-gaining states were New York, California, Illinois, Michigan and New Jersey. Blacks now locate to many of the same metropolitan areas that attracted whites to the “New Sunbelt.” Among the 32 metro areas that are home to more than 200,000

blacks, Southern metros, led by Orlando and Atlanta, dominate the list. Like whites, blacks are attracted to the good economy, low-density living and warmer climate. In addition, they hold historic roots to the South, and recognize that the climate in race relations has much improved.

BLACK MOVEMENT IS SELECTIVE

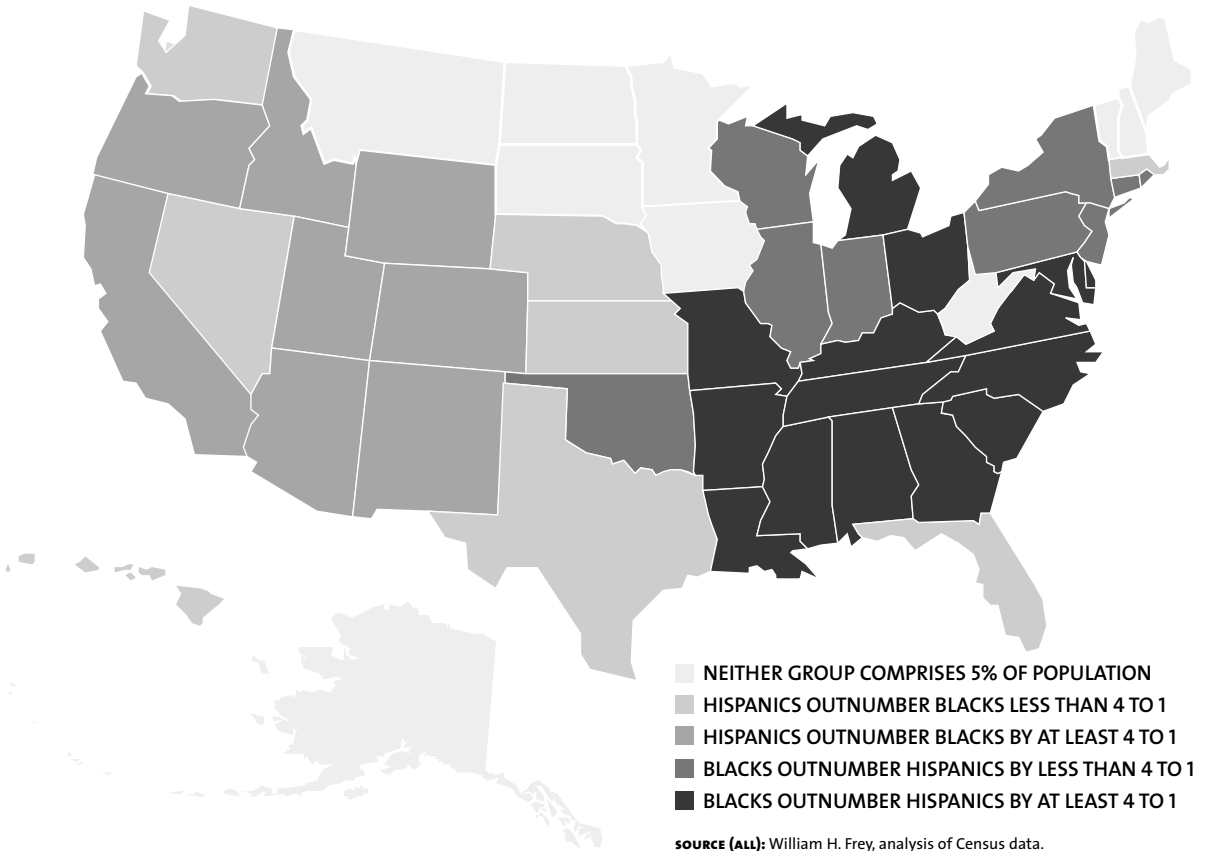
Although the South is attracting blacks on all rungs of the social ladder, about 19 percent of black in-migrants to the South are college graduates, compared with 13 percent of all black Southern residents. Among those who work, nearly three out of ten black in-migrants to the South are professionals and managers. The region's special attraction for them is the presence of a large black middle class in large metropolitan areas including Atlanta, Charlotte and Dallas, which creates opportunities for networking and upward mobility.

Most are heading for the suburbs. Four Southern blacks in ten now live in suburbs. Among the new in-migrants, however, 70 percent have chosen suburban residences. And many more are ending up in integrated neighborhoods, with Atlanta, Orlando, Jacksonville,

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BLACKS OUTNUMBER HISPANICS IN THE SOUTH

RELATIVE SIZES OF BLACK AND HISPANIC POPULATIONS IN STATES



Norfolk and Houston leading the trend.

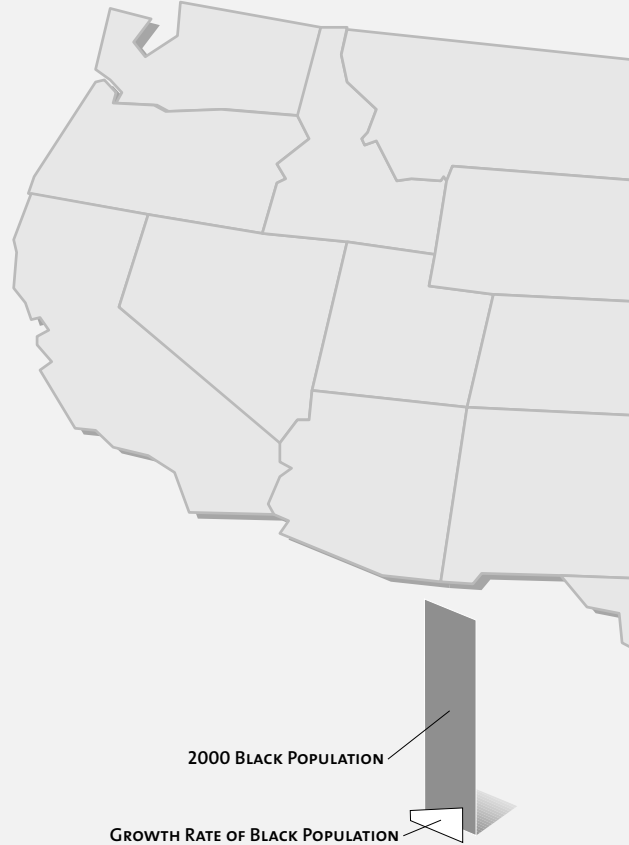
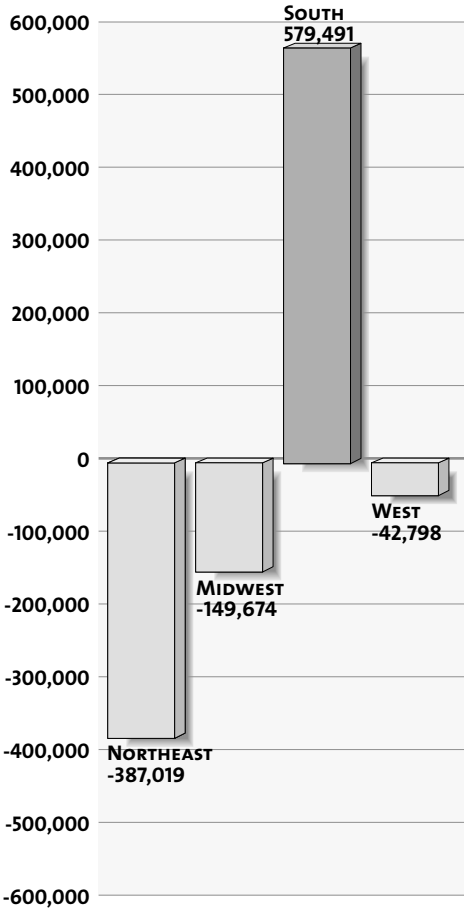
BLACKS AND HISPANICS IN THE SOUTH

Much has been made about the fact that, nationally, the Hispanic population now rivals that of blacks. Yet recent redistribution shifts tend to reinforce the South's historic racial profile as a primarily white-black region. The lion's share (71 percent) of the

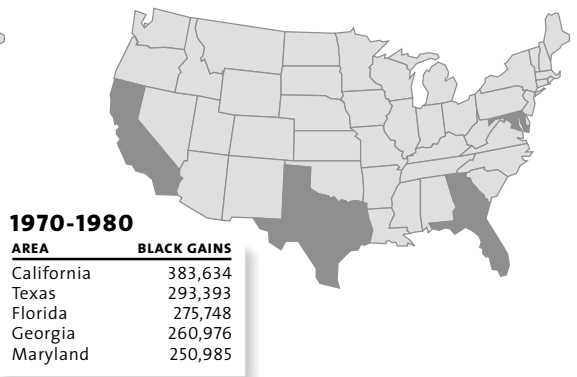
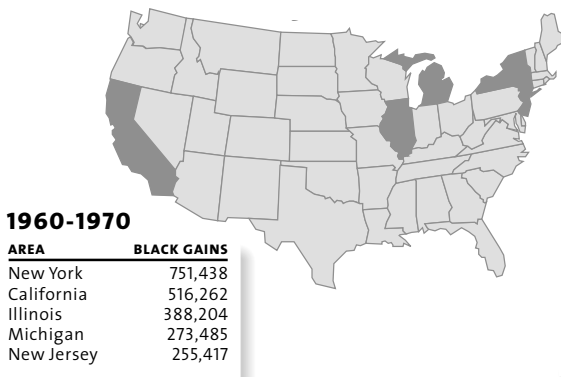
region's Hispanic population gains accrued to Texas and Florida. The rest of the South gained 2.4 million blacks during the 1990s, compared to just 1.4 million Hispanics. Even including Texas and Florida, the South's 2000 black population comprises 19 percent of its total, and whites 66 percent, whereas Hispanics account for only 12 percent. In short, the South continues to remain a largely white-black region. **M**

BLACKS RETURN TO THE SOUTH

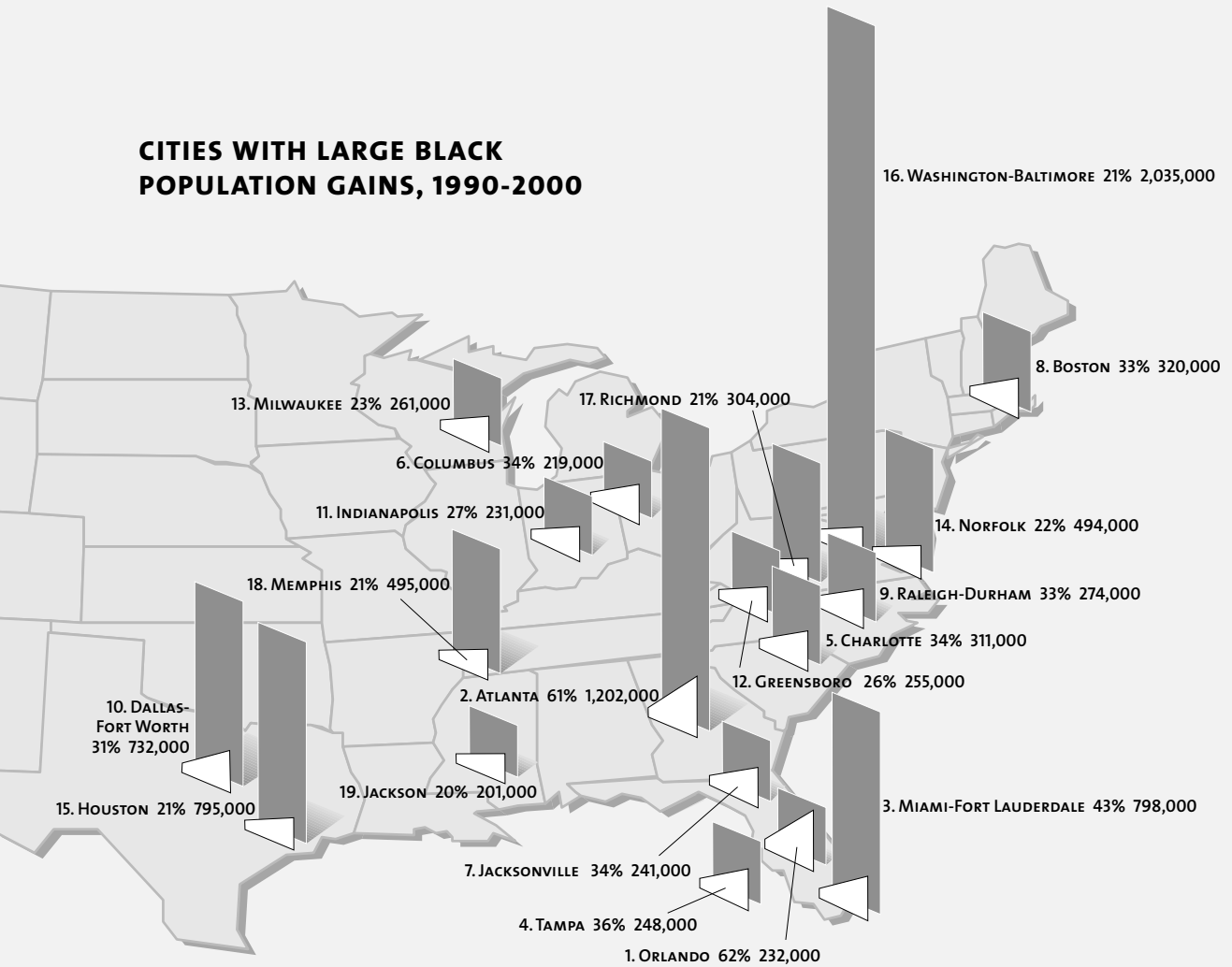
CHANGE IN BLACK POPULATION 1990-2000



STATES WITH LARGEST BLACK POPULATION GAINS



CITIES WITH LARGE BLACK POPULATION GAINS, 1990-2000



NOTE: Cities ranked by growth rate of black population.

