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**THE GROWING NEGRO MIDDLE CLASS IN CHICAGO**

**A Research Report**  
**September 1, 1962**

Public discussions of unemployment, dependency, and juvenile delinquency among Negroes frequently overlook the presence of a continuously growing, numerically important, middle-income Negro population in Chicago.

The 1960 census figures point to a remarkable growth of a Negro middle class in the City of Chicago. All available information since 1960 indicates that such growth continues.

By using available 1960 census information we estimate that at least 35 to 40 per cent of Chicago's Negro families belong to the middle class; and at least 65 to 70 per cent of the city's white families. These standard indexes to middle income or middle class status were used: college education, occupational status, income, and home ownership,

The growth of this middle class comes at a significant hour in Chicago's history. The large migration of Negroes from the South, which reached its peak in the late 1940's and early 1950's, has now begun to taper off. As a result, the major source of Negro population growth in Chicago and its suburbs during the 1960's will be natural increase and not in-migration. These recent Negro migrants to the North--like other migrants--generally have been unskilled, rural, and, by northern urban standards, poorly educated. The growing middle class reflects the rise of a second and third generation among Negro Chicagoans, whose progress is worth noting in considering the future of the metropolitan area. It is with this group of Chicagoans that this report is concerned.

Non-Whites and Negroes in Chicago  
1950-1960

	<u>1950</u>	<u>1960</u>	<u>Percent Increase</u>
Negro Persons	492,000	813,000	65%
Non-White Persons	509,000	838,000	65%

Throughout this report non-white statistics for Chicago and the suburbs are used because for most of the middle class indicators used in this report specific census data for Negroes is not available. Since Negroes make up 97 per cent of the non-white census in Chicago, the non-white data can be used, for all practical purposes, to describe the Chicago Negro population.

Number and Proportion of White and Non-White Families  
in Chicago Earning \$6,000 or More Annually  
1950 and 1960

	<u>1950</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>1960</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Percent Increase</u>
Non-White Families	5,100	4.4	63,100	34.1	1137.%
White Families	190,000	20.9	468,000	64.5	146.%

The above table indicates that one out of every 25 of the city's non-white families had an income of \$6,000 or more in 1950. By 1960 this proportion had jumped to one out of three. Since the cost of living in Chicago went up approximately 25 per cent during the decade, the 1950 figures can be adjusted to take into account this change in dollar value. The closest approximation to a \$6,000 income in 1960, using available census data, is an annual income of \$5,000 or more in 1950. In that year the Census Bureau counted 10,200 or 8.9 per cent of Chicago's non-white families earning \$5,000 or more a year.

Median Family Annual Income of White and Non-White Families  
in Chicago 1950 and 1960

	<u>1950</u>	<u>1960</u>	<u>Percent Increase</u>
Non-Whites	\$2,500	\$4,700	88%
Whites	\$4,200	\$7,200	71%

As the above table indicates the income of non-white families grew at a faster rate than for white families. In the 1950-1960 decade the income gap between whites and non-whites in Chicago narrowed. The median income of non-whites was 60 per cent of the white median income in 1950. In 1960 the median family income of non-whites was 65 per cent of that of whites.

The 1960 income figures for both whites and non-whites are all the more impressive when we consider the following factors. First, between 1950 and 1960 an estimated 157,000 non-whites, most of them earning low incomes, came to Chicago from the South. Secondly, during this same decade many higher income whites moved into the suburbs. (Between 1950 and 1960, according to Professor Donald J. Bogue of the University of Chicago, nearly 30,000 non-whites migrated from Chicago to the suburbs and in the 1960's, he says, "there will be an even greater movement.")

In four Cook County suburbs with the large Negro populations, the median income for non-whites was: Evanston (\$5,675), Maywood (\$6,478), Chicago Heights (\$4,746), and Harvey (\$5,467).

Home Ownership Among Whites and Non-Whites  
Chicago and Cook County Outside Chicago, 1950 and 1960

	1950		1960		Percent Increase	
	White	Non-White	White	Non-White	W.	N.W.
Home Owners						
Chicago	314,000	15,900	360,000	36,700	14	130.1
Cook County Outside Chgo.	161,800	2,700	409,400	5,900	154	119
Median Value of Homes in Chicago	\$12,200	\$9,200	\$18,000	\$16,700	48	82
Percentage of home owners among white and non-white families						
Chicago	32%	11%	38%	16%		
Cook County Outside Chicago	67%	47%	79%	52%		

In 1960, 11,800 non-whites and 172,600 whites in Chicago owned homes valued at \$15,000 or more. If we take the twenty year period between 1940 and 1960, home ownership among non-whites rose 544 per cent. In 1940 there were 5,700 non-white home owners in Chicago.

Number and Proportion of Whites and Non-Whites 25 Years and Over  
With High School and College Education in Chicago  
1950 and 1960

	<u>1950</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>1960</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Percent Increase</u>
<u>Four Years of High School</u>					
Whites	447,700	22.7	371,900	21.7	-17%
Non-Whites	46,00	15.6	76,300	18.0	66%
<u>One or More Years of College</u>					
Whites	273,600	13.8	258,400	14.9	-5%
Non-Whites	26,100	8.8	46,600	10.8	79%
<u>Four or More Years of College</u>					
Whites	125,600	6.3	112,900	6.5	-9%
Non-Whites	8,900	3.0	15,200	3.5	70%

The proportion of non-whites 25 years and over with some college education did not rise sharply during the decade because of the influx of many adult Negroes from the South who had not finished high school. The white figures on education dropped during the decade because of a total decline in Chicago's white population of 399,000, chiefly because of suburban migration. Also a factor is the post war migration into the city of southern whites, many of whom have not completed high school.

Number of Non-Whites in Chicago with  
"Middle Class" Occupational Status  
1950 and 1960

	<u>1950</u>	<u>1960</u>	<u>Percent Increase</u>
Employed professional and technical, etc.	6,864	14,135	106%
Managers, officials, proprietors, etc.	4,650	5,241	13%
Clerical, etc.	18,713	37,250	99%
Sales Workers	4,721	5,727	21%
Craftsmen, Foremen, etc.	14,923	18,860	26%
TOTAL	49,871	81,213	63%

In 1950 about 26 per cent of the non-whites in the working force was in the five occupational groupings listed above; in 1960 the proportion rose to 29 per cent. What about whites? In 1950, 64 per cent of the whites in the

working force was in the five occupational classes listed above; in 1960, the proportion was 67.2 per cent.

To take another view of the Negro middle class in Chicago, it would be useful to take an area in the city which is predominantly made up of Negro middle-income families. For this purpose census tract 648, located in Chatham, was selected. This tract is bounded by 79th Street on the North, 87 Street on the South, South Parkway on the East, and State Street on the West. It contains 47 blocks almost entirely made up of single-family and two-family dwellings, except for retail sections along 79th Street at South Parkway.

In 1950 this tract had more than 5,000 residents all of whom were white. By 1960 this tract had 6,000 residents most of whom were Negro. The table below illustrates the income, education, and property characteristics of the residents of this area in 1950 and 1960. The proportion of persons 25 years and older with one or more years of college education rose from 23 per cent in 1950 to 28 per cent in 1960.

Selected Characteristics  
Census Tract 648 in Chatham, 1950 and 1960

	<u>1950</u>	<u>1960</u>
Population		
White	5,294	399
Non-White	0	5,978
Median Income		
For Families and Individuals	\$4,457	\$7,668
Persons 25 Yrs. and Older with One or More Years of College	785	1,181
Housing		
Number of Owners	712	1,102
Median Value	\$14,580	\$22,000
Number of Renters	844	854
Average Monthly Rent	\$59	\$110
Employment		
Professional, technical and kindred workers	368	452
Managers, Officials, and Proprietors including Farm	361	160
Clerical and kindred workers	499	907
Sales Workers	244	113
Craftsmen, Foremen, and kindred workers	344	174

There is a direct relationship between the growing Negro middle class and the future of the low income sector of the Negro population in Chicago. The Negro middle class sets the pace, shows what can be accomplished, and helps raise the vocational and education horizons of the latest arrivals to the city from the South.

What of the future? For European immigrants who came to the United States in the last one hundred years cities like northern Chicago were convenient step ladders into the middle class. Does the Negro find the same step ladder available to him?

The existence of racial discrimination against non-whites creates barriers which did not exist for most European immigrants and their children. Despite this, Negroes are finding the same step ladder available to them.