

COMMENTS ON ALEX M. JOHNSON, JR.'S
DESTABILIZING RACE

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INTRODUCTION

Alex Johnson's thoughtful article concludes that to combat effectively the intractable problem of housing segregation in American society we must "destabilize" or "deconstruct" race—by which Johnson means that we must get rid of our practice of formally classifying persons on one side or the other of a black-white fault line.¹ Specifically, Johnson recommends that we add a multiracial box to the census form.² This, he believes, will set us on the path toward "eliminating race and racism in this society,"³ and thereby lead us to residential integration.

I agree with much that Johnson says, and I specifically agree with his recommendation. Unfortunately, I am not as optimistic as he about what will follow from embracing it. I will explain my pessimism—which leads me to add a recommendation of my own—but I must acknowledge that I have no crystal ball. I hope that he is right and that I am wrong. Certainly his recommendation concerning the census form will be easier to implement than mine concerning the black ghetto.

I. THE JOHNSON RECOMMENDATION

I will pass quickly over how Johnson gets to his recommendation because I am in basic accord. Johnson identifies four causes of housing segregation: private discrimination, government discrimination, white flight from cities, and poverty, the last being a product as well as a cause of segregation.⁴ When you put them all together they pack quite a wallop. Although minorities have progressed in other areas—voting rights, public facilities, transportation, and jury

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¹ Alex M. Johnson, Jr., *How Race and Poverty Intersect to Prevent Integration: Destabilizing Race as a Vehicle to Integrate Neighborhoods*, 143 U. PA. L. REV. 1595, 1650-55 (1995).

² See *id.* at 1650-51.

³ *Id.* at 1651.

⁴ See *id.* at 1609-15.

service, for example—housing segregation remains solidly in place, like a vise clamped on our collective lives from which we cannot shake loose. Indeed, as Johnson points out, the level of housing segregation may not be dropping at all; by some accounts it is actually rising.⁵ Studies point to plain old-fashioned racial discrimination, especially against blacks, as the principal cause.⁶

In this context, Johnson understandably lacks confidence that the two antidotes to housing discrimination he discusses will work any better in the future than they have in the past. He is surely right about one of them, reliance on the economic market. In the area of our lives so heavily freighted with emotional factors, exemplified by the home-as-castle metaphor, the NIMBY acronym, and the cliché about the largest investment we will ever make, and in which the theoretically free real estate market remains largely a creature of a real estate industry possessed by a race-conscious “gate-keeper” mentality, the argument is very nearly absurd that market mechanisms will by themselves erode housing discrimination.

As for antidiscrimination law, Johnson’s dismissiveness on the ground “[q]uite simply . . . that the model has not worked”⁷ is arguably less persuasive. True, it has not worked so far, but the reason may be that it has not yet really been tried. Putting some teeth into the fair housing law was, after all, an operation only very recently performed. Maybe it is too early to judge definitively whether the teeth will bite.

However, Johnson also advances another dismissive argument. To be effective, he reasons, antidiscrimination law must articulate a clear message that can be internalized and can affect behavior.⁸ But through the use of fixed racial categories the law sends a contrary message that “race matters,” which “inevitably leads to discriminatory behavior because . . . [racial] differences[] are recognized and valued.”⁹ Johnson is saying that the voting rights law, for example, which relies upon black-white classification to advantage blacks, will *inevitably* undermine the antidiscrimination precepts of the fair housing law and prevent its message from being internalized.

⁵ See *id.* at 1595.

⁶ See *id.* at 1611-14.

⁷ *Id.* at 1631.

⁸ See *id.*

⁹ *Id.* at 1632.

Well, maybe so. But is there something of a non sequitur here? *Why* must it follow from society's attempt to use a racial classification *remedially* that prohibitions against racial discrimination, vigorously enforced, can never be effective? If one were inclined to argue that Johnson is too pessimistic here, a bit of history might help.

Soon after the Civil War, we gutted the Fourteenth Amendment and began to lynch blacks by the hundreds each year, a practice that continued into the 1920s. When little more than fifty years ago we entered the life and death struggle of the Second World War, it was with completely segregated armed forces. Yet in the ensuing half-century those forces have been desegregated (and their leadership given over to a black Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff), and we have enacted an impressive array of antidiscrimination laws. Beyond this, blacks have become so much a part of our public awareness that—selecting only a few examples from among many that are available—the safety procedures video on United Airlines flights begins with a black pilot sitting in the cockpit, both big and small cities with nonblack majorities have elected blacks as their chief executives (Los Angeles, California, and Rockford, Illinois, to cite but two instances), and the CEO of the Ford Foundation, the country's largest foundation, is black.

Indeed, even in the housing arena we have strengthened our fair housing law, we are beginning to zero in on lender discrimination, until now almost totally insulated from fair housing enforcement, and some astoundingly high damage verdicts have been rendered in recent fair housing cases. In light of developments such as these, which have come to pass notwithstanding the law's fixed racial categories and mostly within the last third of the 130 years since the Civil War's end, one may ask whether our antidiscrimination glass is half full and filling, or half empty with the faucet turned off.

Yet, I am basically inclined to join Johnson in his pessimism. Yes, as Shelby Steele says, black Americans are infinitely freer today than ever before.¹⁰ But that is the case in our *public* lives, on trains, in public buildings, on juries, in the polling booth, and even in the workplace and in many schools. In our residential neighborhoods, however, extreme segregation persists.¹¹ There the anti-discrimination promise of the law has not been, and is not being,

¹⁰ See SHELBY STEELE, *THE CONTENT OF OUR CHARACTER: A NEW VISION OF RACE IN AMERICA* 174 (1990).

¹¹ See Johnson, *supra* note 1, at 1595.

transformed into integrated residential neighborhoods. And for reasons I will discuss, it seems to me unlikely that in this most difficult area the law alone can prevail. So I accept Johnson's view that more antidiscrimination law, including better enforcement of the fair housing law, will not get us to where we want to go. Thus I turn to his recommendation.

"[T]he only viable way to attack [racial] segregation is by attacking the stable classifications of race,"¹² Johnson says. Let us get rid of the "exclusivity" of the two marks of "white" and "black"—these should be "deconstructed and destroyed"—as a way to make our antidiscrimination law effective.¹³ That law will remain ineffective as a tool for combating housing discrimination so long as the law is based on "dichotomous and inconsistent premises," such as racial categorizations that recognize only black and white and nothing in between.¹⁴ We must "take into account the products of mixed unions," Johnson says.¹⁵ "The express adoption of multiracial categories . . . is for the long-term benefit of eliminating race and racism in this society."¹⁶

I think Johnson's multiracial box recommendation is sound for the reason, among others, of simple human compassion—we cannot go on having our government insist that the child of a mixed union label herself as black or white. And it is sound too for the reason that a multiracial box would be a step toward recognizing blacks as individuals and away from stereotyping. It is also probably inevitable. A recent *Newsweek* article tells us that "America is beginning to revise its two-way definition of race,"¹⁷ and that already one-third of African-Americans polled say blacks should not be considered a single race.¹⁸ Surely we are clever enough to figure out how not to dump our remedial laws in the process. For example, why could we not change the voting rights law to add a fraction of the multiracial figures to the black ones?

But can we really believe that a multiracial box on our census forms would lead to the elimination of racism and bring about residential integration? I am deeply skeptical. Years ago—it was in the late 1970s, I believe—something prompted me to take special

¹² *Id.* at 1658.

¹³ *Id.*

¹⁴ *Id.* at 1657.

¹⁵ *Id.* at 1650.

¹⁶ *Id.* at 1651.

¹⁷ Tom Morganthau, *What Color Is Black?*, NEWSWEEK, Feb. 13, 1995, at 63, 63.

¹⁸ *See id.* at 64.

note of reports appearing in the *New York Times* on a particular theme. At that time, according to the articles I began to clip, the Flemish and the Walloons were attacking each other in Belgium. Black-skinned Kenyans were throwing brown-skinned Kenyans out of their civil-service jobs. French-speaking and English-speaking Canadians were visiting violence upon one another. Australians had enacted stringent new "Oriental exclusion" laws. The Catholics and the Protestants in Northern Ireland were killing each other in their unremitting conflict, as were the Jews and the Arabs in the Middle East. There were others I have forgotten; I lost heart and stopped my clipping after less than a week.

Today, after continuing episodes of ethnic violence in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, who would have the courage to begin such clipping again? The world is a fearful place wherever groups who inhabit some piece of the globe together have different racial, religious, ethnic, or cultural heritages. Even in far-off, half-mythical Timbuktu, the majority blacks and the minority, light-skinned, nomadic Tuaregs are engaged in a vicious ethnic conflict that threatens the stability of Mali's democracy. And, as Rwanda makes clear, a uniform skin color throughout the inhabited territory affords no guarantee against slaughter.

The fact of the matter is that with respect to intergroup relations among heterogenous populations, the United States— notwithstanding its level of racism—may be one of the most hopeful spots on earth. How many discriminated-against black Americans—or Latinos, or Asians, or Native Americans, or other American nonwhites—would willingly change places with a Tutsi, or a Tamil, or an East Indian Muslim? This is not the place to discuss what we must do to preserve and foster the imperfect "*unum*" we have managed to attain in our *E Pluribus Unum* enterprise. The multiracial box may provide some help in moving our American experiment in heterogeneity into the residential arena. But today, ethnocentric winds are buffeting societies all across the globe. Separatist gusts have already blown across our shores in the form, among others, of a "vociferous and determined band of Afrocentric and ethnic ideologues [that] opposes integration."¹⁹ I believe we must look beyond the multiracial box in our quest for residential integration, and I turn to the terrain, beyond Johnson, to which I believe we must direct our attention.

¹⁹ Michael Meyers, *Civil Rights Astray*, FREEDOM REV., Nov.-Dec. 1994, at 5, 6.

II. BEYOND JOHNSON

Fifteen years ago, Justice Powell, writing for the Court in *Gladstone, Realtors v. Village of Bellwood*,²⁰ said that “[t]here can be no question about the importance’ to a community of ‘promoting stable, racially integrated housing.’”²¹ He emphasized that the adverse consequences of a racially changing neighborhood could be “profound,”²² and referred to school segregation, economic dislocation, and other harms flowing from segregation.²³ Yet our experience is that it is extremely difficult—some might say almost impossible—to foster long-term, stable residential integration. Most of our “integrated” communities have been but way-stations on the road from segregated white to segregated black.

Much has been written on why this is so. As some observers put it:

Given decades of history that the entry of blacks into a neighborhood signals its transition to an all-black neighborhood; given that many neighborhoods are still closed to blacks; given the natural tendency of minority families to seek housing in areas where they know they will be welcomed; given the wider range of choice open to whites—all these factors push newly integrated neighborhoods in the direction of becoming all-minority neighborhoods. When illegal racial steering is added, the resulting transition to a resegregated neighborhood becomes almost inevitable.²⁴

I am going to call this phenomenon the “resegregation syndrome,” and I contend that it is a distorting simplification to explain the conduct of white homeowners who fear this phenomenon simply in terms of white prejudice or racism.

When a black family chooses not to be the first “pioneer” in an all-white neighborhood, we do not attribute that decision to prejudice, although some black families are prejudiced. Instead, we acknowledge the serious risks of hostility and isolation that families who make such moves may encounter, and we accept a family’s choice not to run such risks as a sensible human decision made in

²⁰ 441 U.S. 91 (1979).

²¹ *Id.* at 111 (quoting *Linmark Assoc., Inc. v. Willingboro*, 431 U.S. 85, 94 (1977)) (alteration in original).

²² *Id.* at 110.

²³ *See id.* at 110-11 n.23-24.

²⁴ Alexander Polikoff, *What’s in a Name?—The Diversity of Racial Diversity Programs*, in U.S. COMM’N ON CIVIL RIGHTS, ISSUES IN HOUSING DISCRIMINATION 200, 202 (1985) (quoting KALE WILLIAMS ET AL., AFFIRMATIVE ACTION IN HOUSING—AN EMERGING PUBLIC ISSUE 4 (1980)).

regrettable circumstances. We know that both history and current events justify such decisions.

History and current events also evidence the persistence of the resegregation syndrome and the adverse consequences that frequently ensue. If we credit Justice Powell's description of such consequences, as we should, should we not similarly acknowledge that it may be a desire to avoid the risk of those consequences, and not prejudice (although some white families are prejudiced), that motivates many white families to leave or decline to enter what they perceive to be changing neighborhoods or to resist the entry of black families into white neighborhoods? Indeed, many black families move from changing neighborhoods for similar reasons. Just as black families understandably fear hostility in all-white neighborhoods, although most whites would not be hostile and hostility will not be encountered in all such neighborhoods, so white families understandably fear the resegregation syndrome and its consequences, although most blacks would not want resegregation and the full range of adverse consequences would not always flow from such resegregation.

The resegregation syndrome is composed in part of a perception of the inevitability of racial change. But it is also composed in part, as Justice Powell pointed out, of the perception of the consequences of that change, of what he called the "harms" that today have escalated in severity beyond those Justice Powell had in mind when he wrote his *Village of Bellwood* opinion sixteen years ago.²⁵ In drum-beat fashion, those harms are thrust upon us in the images we see each day on television and in our newspapers and magazines—images that lead us to associate black skin color, especially in young black men, with the awesomely bad circumstances of the American ghetto. "[H]ideous social disintegration," Roger Wilkins calls it, where murder is now the leading cause of death among black males from ages fifteen through twenty-four, and where law-abiding families "lead lives of sheer terror."²⁶ I believe that what we are talking about here is the fear that the resegregation syndrome will bring those black-associated life circumstances—those harms—to our own neighborhoods.

For the American ghetto is predominantly a black ghetto. David T. Ellwood offers a definition of a "ghetto poverty area" that is

²⁵ *Village of Bellwood*, 441 U.S. at 103 n.9.

²⁶ Roger Wilkins, *Free at Last?*, MOD. MATURITY, Apr.-May 1994, at 27, 27.

generally accepted: a neighborhood with a poverty rate of 40% or more in a medium- or large-sized city.²⁷ Using a "race-specific poverty rate," Paul Jargowsky determines that in 1990 about 11 million people lived in all metropolitan area ghetto tracts, nearly 6 million of whom were blacks (a 36% increase, by the way, since 1980).²⁸ Of the 5.5 million poor who lived in such tracts, almost 3 million, or 55%, were blacks.²⁹ That figure represented over 45% of all poor blacks living in metropolitan areas, meaning that nearly one out of two poor blacks in metropolitan areas lived in a ghetto neighborhood in 1990.³⁰

Although there were regional variations beneath the overall pattern, the fact is that ghetto poverty among blacks is extreme in most medium- or large-sized U.S. cities having substantial black populations.³¹ As *New Republic* Editor Mickey Kaus says, "[I]t's simply stupid to pretend that the underclass is not mainly black."³²

The contrast with white residential patterns is marked. As Ellwood points out, even though poor whites are far more numerous than poor blacks, "[p]oor whites rarely live in areas of concentrated poverty."³³ In 1990, twice as many whites as blacks lived in households with incomes below the poverty level, yet almost six times as many poor blacks as poor whites lived in metropolitan area

²⁷ DAVID T. ELLWOOD, *POOR SUPPORT: POVERTY IN THE AMERICAN FAMILY 193* (1988).

²⁸ Paul A. Jargowsky, *Ghetto Poverty Among Blacks in the 1980s*, 13 J. POL'Y ANALYSIS & MGMT. 288, 290 (1994). Using this approach, a ghetto census tract is a tract within which 40% or more of the residents of a single racial or ethnic group live in households with incomes below the poverty level. *See id.* at 293-94.

²⁹ *See id.* at 294. Jargowsky notes that there were 31.7 million people in the U.S. with incomes below poverty. *See id.* Of that number, 17.3%, or 5.5 million, lived in metropolitan area ghetto tracts. *See id.* Jargowsky also notes that there were 8.2 million blacks with incomes below poverty. *See id.* Of that number, 35.9%, or 3 million, lived in metropolitan area ghetto tracts. *See id.*

³⁰ *See id.* at 295 (noting that "[o]f the 6.6 million poor blacks living in metropolitan areas, nearly 3 million lived in ghettos"). According to John D. Kasarda, in 1990 in the nation's 100 largest cities, some 5.5 million people lived in extreme poverty or ghetto census tracts, a whopping 43% increase over 1980 and double the 1970 figure. Of the 5.5 million ghetto residents, 3.1 million were blacks, representing 57% of the total ghetto population and 24% of the total black population in the 100 largest central cities. *See* John D. Kasarda, *Inner-City Concentrated Poverty and Neighborhood Distress: 1970 to 1990*, 4 HOUSING POL'Y DEBATE 253, 263 (1993). Of the 2.7 million poor (that is, persons in households with incomes below the poverty level) who lived in extreme poverty tracts, 42% were blacks. *See id.* at 265, 267.

³¹ *See id.* at 258-62; *see also* Jargowsky, *supra* note 28, at 297-302 (noting geographic patterns of poverty).

³² MICKEY KAUS, *THE END OF EQUALITY* 106 (1992).

³³ ELLWOOD, *supra* note 27, at 201.

ghetto poverty tracts.³⁴ For all income levels, ghetto census tract residents were 11.8% white and 52.5% black.³⁵

What do all the figures mean? They mean that the growing poverty and disorder of the mean streets of the inner cities are *correctly*—in a statistical sense—associated by Americans with blacks, especially young black males, who predominantly inhabit those streets. If this analysis is sound, we are dealing in the housing context not only with racism in its racial-animus sense, but also with *fear*. Efforts to deal with the racism of the Virginians who elected Douglas Wilder their governor, but fear that the contagion of the Richmond ghetto may spread to their neighborhoods, are less likely to bring further progress than would a direct assault on the blackness of that ghetto. I believe that fear-of-the-black-ghetto disease is as fundamental a current cause of housing segregation as old-fashioned racism, and to cure that disease we will need stronger medicine than Johnson prescribes.

My discussion of that stronger medicine begins with an elaboration of two of Johnson's four causes of segregation, white flight from cities³⁶ and poverty.³⁷ Johnson's white flight focus is upon residential moves. But another kind of move—of jobs, both spatially and qualitatively—deserves at least equal emphasis.

John Kasarda describes the functional as well as the demographic transformation of older, larger U.S. cities.³⁸ "Functional transformation" refers to the cities' change from centers of production and distribution to centers of administration, information exchange, and higher-skill services—with the attendant loss of blue-collar and low-skill jobs.³⁹ "Demographic transformation" refers to the cities' population changes from predominantly white to heavily or predominantly minority.⁴⁰ According to Kasarda, both of these transformations, not just the second one, have brought us to the black ghetto of today.⁴¹

³⁴ See Jargowsky, *supra* note 28, at 293 (noting that while only 3% of the 17 million poor whites lived in ghetto tracts, 36% of the 8.2 million poor blacks lived in ghetto tracts).

³⁵ See *id.*

³⁶ See Johnson, *supra* note 1, at 1611.

³⁷ See *id.* at 1614-15.

³⁸ See John D. Kasarda, *Urban Change and Minority Opinions*, in *THE NEW URBAN REALITY* 33, 33 (Paul E. Peterson ed., 1985).

³⁹ *Id.*

⁴⁰ *Id.*

⁴¹ See *id.* at 33-34.

William Julius Wilson describes the same phenomena with even greater emphasis on functional transformation.⁴² As legal segregation ended in the 1950s and 1960s, Wilson tells us, working- and middle-class blacks fled inner-city ghettos (although frequently to communities which were or would soon become predominantly black), weakening institutions and stripping the ghetto of its mainstream role models.⁴³

Then, during the 1970s and 1980s, northern cities lost dramatically large numbers of blue-collar and low-skill jobs.⁴⁴ Simultaneously, these cities also experienced large increases in their populations of young blacks with no education beyond high school, the offspring of those who had migrated to northern cities during the 1950s and 1960s when inner-city jobs requiring only limited education and skills were far more plentiful.⁴⁵ As low-skill jobs dispersed to the suburbs or disappeared because of technological change, unemployed blacks were left in job-poor inner-city locations.⁴⁶

By 1980, Wilson says, the impact of these two developments was of "catastrophic proportions,"⁴⁷ leading to socially isolated communities characterized by high rates not only of joblessness but also of teenage pregnancies, out-of-wedlock births, single-parent families, welfare dependency, and serious crime. Thirty years ago most adults, across all income classes, were working, even in poor black neighborhoods.⁴⁸ Today these poor neighborhoods house few middle- or working-class families, and the great majority of their adults are unemployed.⁴⁹ Poor neighborhoods not organized around work, Wilson believes, constitute "the most fundamental and most significant change in the black community over the last several decades."⁵⁰

⁴² See WILLIAM J. WILSON, *THE TRULY DISADVANTAGED: THE INNER CITY, THE UNDERCLASS, AND PUBLIC POLICY* 39-46 (1987) (noting that family fragmentation among blacks, which resulted in intergenerational poverty transmission, child emotional and behavioral problems, and elevated high-school dropout rates, was a leading factor in the increase in the concentration of poor blacks in ghettos).

⁴³ See *id.* at 7-8.

⁴⁴ See *id.* at 39-46.

⁴⁵ See *id.*

⁴⁶ See *id.*

⁴⁷ *Id.* at 43.

⁴⁸ *The Poor Image of Black Men*, *NEW PERSP. Q.*, Summer 1991, at 26, 26 (interview with William Julius Wilson).

⁴⁹ See *id.*

⁵⁰ See *id.*

Thus, in this view—which I believe is sound—so-called white flight from cities is really part of a larger economic transformation. Moreover, that transformation has considerable significance for Johnson's discussion of his fourth causal factor, poverty.

Johnson observes that poverty is a product as well as a cause of segregation.⁵¹ No one has demonstrated this with more elegant simplicity than Professor Douglas S. Massey.⁵² Using a hypothetical city of 128,000 people distributed among sixteen equal-sized neighborhoods of 8000 persons each, Massey assumes a black population of 32,000, a white population of 96,000, a black poverty rate of 20%, and a white poverty rate of 10%.⁵³ A one-page chart then visually depicts this hypothetical city and its sixteen neighborhoods in four different conditions—no, low, high, and complete racial segregation.⁵⁴

Massey's chart turns out to be a surprisingly simple and wholly persuasive demonstration of the proposition that, given a black-white disparity in poverty rates, an increase in the rate of racial segregation leads to increases in the concentration of poverty for blacks and (not so coincidentally) decreases in the poverty concentration for whites.⁵⁵ From a starting point of equal rates of neighborhood poverty for both blacks and whites in the no-segregation city, the complete-segregation city has a black neighborhood poverty rate twice that for white neighborhoods.⁵⁶ A corollary proposition is that a simple increase in the rate of minority poverty leads to a dramatic rise in the concentration of poverty when it occurs within a racially segregated city.

Massey's hypothetical city is given real life context in Wilson's 1994 Ryerson Lecture at the University of Chicago.⁵⁷ Wilson describes how Chicago's Bronzeville, though racially segregated, was a reasonably well-working community as late as the 1950s, when low-skill jobs were still abundant in the inner city.⁵⁸ When the jobs

⁵¹ See Johnson, *supra* note 1, at 1614.

⁵² See Douglas S. Massey, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*, 96 AM. J. SOC. 329, 331-34 (1990).

⁵³ See *id.* at 331.

⁵⁴ See *id.* at 332.

⁵⁵ See *id.* at 333 (noting that "[w]hen racial segregation is imposed, therefore, some whites are better off, whereas all blacks are worse off").

⁵⁶ See *id.* at 332.

⁵⁷ William J. Wilson, *Crisis and Challenge: Race and the New Urban Poverty*, Presentation of the 1994 Nora and Edward Ryerson Lecture (Apr. 8, 1994), in CHICAGO REC., Dec. 8, 1994, at 2.

⁵⁸ See *id.* at 3.

moved to the suburbs, however, and housing discrimination (among other factors) prevented Bronzeville's black workers from following them, Bronzeville rapidly became an impoverished, severely distressed community.⁵⁹ "[E]conomic restructuring," Wilson says, "has broken the figurative back of the black working population."⁶⁰

It is plain, I think, that any analysis of how the intersection of race and poverty affects our residential patterns must pay considerable attention to the dramatic changes over the last several decades in the nature and location of jobs in our metropolitan areas and to the impact of those changes on racially segregated neighborhoods. If our concern is the transformation of the Bronzevilles of yesterday into today's black ghettos, it is not just white flight and poverty, but Kasarda's functional transformation of cities and the concentration of black poverty that has resulted, to which we must look for explanation.⁶¹

With this fleshing out of Johnson's white flight and poverty factors, and with the addition of fear of the black ghetto as an important causal factor underlying today's housing segregation, I turn to what I have termed the stronger medicine I think we need. It is not possible in these brief "discussant" remarks to write out the full prescription. It is a complex medicine, with a number of different ingredients. An important one, however, is work. As I have written elsewhere:

Providing work instead of welfare may be the most important step we can take in dealing with . . . the ghetto's most intractable problems, [such as] high-risk births to unwed teenagers, drug addiction and associated crime, and failing public schools. *Work*, and all that goes with it, is of the essence, at least in our time, of decent, civic society. People who work generally conduct themselves in ways that are supportive of a civilized societal mode. As compared with the unemployed, they have the habits and routines associated with work, they have less need to engage in crime, and they are better able to nurture their children. If too many of us are without work, the society comes apart—the larger society as in the Great Depression, or our ghetto societies of today. (When

⁵⁹ See *id.* at 4.

⁶⁰ *Id.* at 3.

⁶¹ See *supra* notes 39-42 and accompanying text (describing Kasarda's functional transformation). One may speculate whether if economic restructuring had been delayed for a generation or two so that the Bronzevilles of America had persisted as viable, working (albeit black-segregated) neighborhoods, our civil rights progress in other areas would eventually have begun to affect our housing practices.

small town or rural societies fail to provide work, their inhabitants leave, as ghost towns and largely depeopled rural hamlets attest.) Evidently people must have the inclination, habit and opportunity to work if society is to work.⁶²

From this focus on work, much follows. If, for example, we look only at the housing policy implications—putting aside the implications for schools, social services, economic development, and so forth—two approaches are immediately suggested. First, through a housing mobility program of rent subsidies, counseling, and housing search assistance, we should offer escape from the ghetto to the black families trapped there, thereby affording those families a chance to move out of their ghetto situations into communities (in Wilson's phrase) "organized around work."⁶³ This we have already done in Chicago's Gautreaux Program for over 4200 black families.⁶⁴ HUD is beginning to experiment with doing the same thing in a demonstration program just getting underway in New York, Boston, Baltimore, Chicago, and Los Angeles.⁶⁵

Second, for those who remain within ghetto areas, our housing policy can try to offer a different kind of chance. It can seek to change the situational norm of ghetto poverty areas through fostering mixed-income communities, which by their very nature also help the ghetto poor to see that they have some chance of "moving out of their situation."⁶⁶ It can do this by including working families in the housing components of community rebuilding programs, families whose daily, visible routines exemplify the work ethic and whose political power attracts better social, educational, and law enforcement services.

The significance of these housing policy prescriptions for Johnson's thesis is this: they are both ways of enabling black families to escape the black ghetto—the first literally, the second by turning the impoverished ghetto into a mixed-income community—thereby opening the door to the American mainstream of working

⁶² Alexander Polikoff, *Housing Policy and Urban Poverty*, in NEW BEGINNINGS PROJECT: A FIRST REPORT 87, 107-08 (Center for Housing Policy ed., 1994) (emphasis added).

⁶³ *The Poor Image of Black Men*, *supra* note 48, at 26.

⁶⁴ See Mary Davis, *The Gautreaux Assisted Housing Program*, in HOUSING MARKETS AND RESIDENTIAL MOBILITY 243, 251 (G. Thomas Kingsley & Margery A. Turner eds., 1993).

⁶⁵ See Polikoff, *supra* note 62, at 113 n.35.

⁶⁶ Jason DeParle & Peter Applebome, *Ideas to Aid Poor Abound, but Consensus Is Wanting*, N.Y. TIMES, Jan. 29, 1991, at A1, A12 (quoting William Julius Wilson).

families and communities for ghetto dwellers, and particularly for their children. Lessening the concentration of black poverty in our inner cities would directly address the stereotypical fear that is likely to continue to attach to the black poor so long as our ghettos remain holding pens mostly for them, while the white poor predominantly reside in nonpoor neighborhoods.

Vince Lane, chairman of the Chicago Housing Authority, who is trying hard to transform Chicago's public housing ghettos into viable communities, says that "today's problems cannot be described as racial" and "the core issues and the solutions are rooted in the socioeconomic structure."⁶⁷ Massey, on the other hand, argues that "[a]ttacking socioeconomic and cultural problems by themselves will not succeed in ameliorating poverty because they are ultimately caused and sustained by forces in the residential environment that produce racial segregation—namely prejudice and discrimination."⁶⁸

My own view is that we need not choose between Lane and Massey. Of course, we should support efforts to reduce racial prejudice in our society. Racism, especially in housing, persists at an unacceptably high level.⁶⁹ I believe however, that as Wilson puts it, "racial antagonisms are products of situations—demographic situations, social situations, economic situations, and political situations."⁷⁰ If we accept the fundamentally economic causes—the changed nature and location of jobs—of today's black ghetto, and if we accept my thesis that it is fear of the spread of that ghetto and its awesomely negative characteristics as much as racial animus that underlies much of today's housing discrimination, we will not rely solely on an end-racism cure. We are likely to conclude that more progress can be made in dealing with housing discrimination by a direct assault on those economic causes and that fear, including use of the housing mobility and mixed-income strategies, than can be made by counting on a further reduction in the level of our society's racism to bring about the changes we all desire.

⁶⁷ Vince Lane, *Combating Economic Segregation*, NETWORK BUILDER, Summer 1994, at 12.

⁶⁸ Douglas S. Massey, *Maintaining the Hypersegregated City*, NETWORK BUILDER, Summer 1994, at 13, 15.

⁶⁹ See Margery A. Turner & Ron Wienk, *The Persistence of Segregation in Urban Areas: Contributing Causes*, in HOUSING MARKETS AND RESIDENTIAL MOBILITY, *supra* note 64, at 193, 198-200.

⁷⁰ Wilson, *supra* note 57, at 4.

Juan Williams, national correspondent for the *Washington Post* and author of *Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years 1954-1965*, says that "[u]ntil the black ghetto is dismantled as a basic institution of American urban life, progress ameliorating racial inequality in other arenas will be slow, fitful, and incomplete."⁷¹ I would add that when we do that dismantling, we are likely to find that the level of housing discrimination drops significantly. In Johnson's terms, I am suggesting that in addition to "deconstructing" race we must "deconstruct" the black ghetto if we are to get where we want to go.

⁷¹ Juan Williams, *Integration Turns 40: The New Segregation*, MOD. MATURITY, Apr.-May 1994, at 24, 32 (quoting DOUGLAS S. MASSEY & NANCY A. DENTON, *AMERICAN APARTHEID: SEGREGATION AND THE MAKING OF THE UNDERCLASS* (1993)).

