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### Dallas, TX: The Staggering Wealth Gap

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Case Study:

Dallas, TX: The Staggering Wealth Gap

Macy Golman

Clark University

Capstone

School of Professional Studies

April 24, 2020

## Acknowledgements

There are a few people and experiences I would like to acknowledge in this capstone. The first being my internship at Equal Heart, where I served as an AmeriCorps member in the summer of 2019. It was this internship that inspired my interest in a city I have called home for my entire life- Dallas, TX. Equal Heart opened my eyes up to all of the inequalities and inequities in Dallas, and most importantly, the wealth gap. I have decided to dedicate myself and my career to closing the gap, something I would have never explored or pondered if it were not for my internship at Equal Heart.

I would like to thank my parents and my sister for putting up with me during this crazy time consumed by thoughts and questions about the Coronavirus. I would also like to thank my parents for the endless conversations about Dallas and the divide, that started during my summer experiences, that have continued to this day, and will no doubt continue in the future. I would also like to thank my sister for accompanying me to my summer internship, and for truly understanding how fortunate we are after seeing and playing with children who would likely not eat a full meal that day if it was not for Equal Heart.

Lastly, I would like to thank my advisor, Mary Piecewicz. Words cannot describe how grateful I am for you. Thank you for advocating for me and my desires to return home to be with my family, and for helping me map out my master's so I could stay home another semester with my family. I would hang up every phone call meeting with a smile on my face and bound into my parents' room to tell them how amazing you are, and how fortunate I feel to have an advisor as caring and endearing as you. There are truly not strong enough words to describe how thankful I am.

Thank you.

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## **Section 1: Method**

In the summer of 2019, I had the privilege of serving as an AmeriCorps member with an organization called Equal Heart. One of Equal Heart's main initiatives was to provide meals to children in underserved populations, to make sure that without school in session, these children would still be receiving food. Unfortunately, in many instances, without these meals, many of the children we served would likely not know when they would be eating their next fulfilling meal. There were certain pockets of Dallas that we would travel to everyday, places that were fifteen minutes maximum from my house, but places that felt like an entirely different planet. These areas included many different locations in West Dallas, and also pockets of Northeast Dallas. Seeing these impoverished neighborhoods, and then driving back to my neighborhood, I was shocked at how vast the differences were. I live in North Dallas, in a predominantly white neighborhood where there is an abundance of parks, grocery stores, shopping centers, and recreational centers. In the areas that we served, there were not as many resources, recreational areas, or healthy grocery or dining options.

At Equal Heart, there was also a mobile food pantry, that would receive fresh food and produce from places like the North Texas Food Bank. This food would then be packaged into boxes and delivered to many of the apartment homes that the child meal delivery service would go to. For the sake of receiving and maintaining federal grants, it was necessary that we took intake notes, to keep track of who we are providing food to, and how many boxes we were giving out. One day when I was with the mobile food pantry, I was tasked with intake. One of the questions we were supposed to ask was monthly income. There were few people who made barely \$2,000 a month. The majority of people that we served made less than that. I was

shocked at these numbers and couldn't imagine having to pay rent and try and put food on the table for a family.

Recognizing how truly blessed I am, I struggled with this reflection, wondering how I could help. I felt so silly every time I wanted to purchase another item of clothing at the mall, something I don't need, when I could be donating this money to people who might need it. Growing up, I was fortunate enough to attend private school, where many of my friends, in high school, owned very expensive designer purses, belts, or shoes. I saw these purchases, and knowing how much money many of these items costed, I thought about all of the mouths that could be fed with this money, which was instead spent on unnecessary purchases. This is something I thought about frequently this past summer, and how my experiences as an AmeriCorps member grounded me even further. I struggle with the fact that many people I know have what may seem like, unlimited resources, and could have the power to do so much good, but don't. Many people have never left this bubble that we live in, and I am thankful that I have had the opportunity to do so.

After a lot of discussion with my parents, they explained to me this concept of the North/South Divide, and the extremely vast wealth gap in Dallas. When I attended Clark, I felt very drawn to the community from the second I stepped on campus. I realized that this connection was because I could see the poverty every day. In Dallas, I do not see the poverty every day, and while it is only a fifteen-minute drive from my house, it is in an area I never travel to, or would ever have a reason to travel to. But after this summer, I felt a new connection to Dallas, similar to the connection I felt to Worcester and its community. I have decided to make one of my life's goals to try and solve this issue, and to bridge the gap. I wish

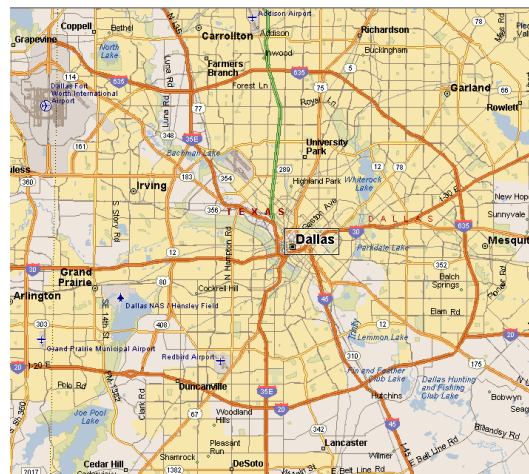
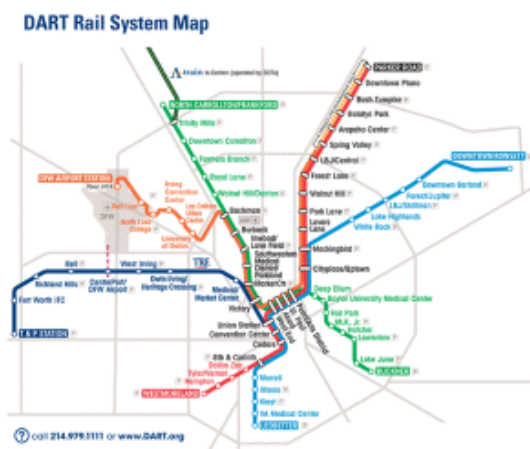
to make the Dallas community more connected, and to help those in need. I have chosen to complete a case study on the city of Dallas and the divide, so not only can I gain a better understanding of the underlying issues, but also so I can use the case study to inform other members of my community, in an effort to make a difference.

This case study was conducted mainly through reviewing and utilizing internet sources. Including: online newspaper articles, from newspapers like the Dallas Morning News and the Dallas Observer, maps and demographic information as well as documents published by Dallas City Hall. Many of these documents include hearings and updates from the Task Force on Poverty, and also studies and research completed by this task force. Many direct quotes from officials were collected through newspaper articles and videos of briefings and meetings. Unfortunately, the current circumstances with COVID-19 made it very difficult to get in touch with some of the elected officials.

## **Section 2: Literature review**

The city of Dallas, Texas was founded in the year of 1856, and boasts a large area of almost 400 square miles. Dallas is the largest city in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex, which also includes smaller cities, such as Fort Worth, Arlington, Plano, Garland, Irving, etc. The entire metroplex has a greater area of a little over 9,000 square miles. The metroplex has a population of 7.6 million, while Dallas has a population of 1.3 million, making it the ninth most-populous city in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). The metroplex became a prominent area because of the construction of major railroad lines that provided access to many important and resourceful industries, such as cotton, cattle, and the oil industry. In later years, the railroad

lines turned into major highways, and there are now four interstate highways that run through Dallas, and an interstate loop that runs around the city. Dallas also has the Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) System, which consists of a light rail and bus routes that travel throughout and around the city. The DART Rail itself is a source of a lot of discussion, because it is very inaccessible, and since it only travels around the city, it takes long amounts of time to get from place to place. While the construction of these highways helped Dallas develop itself as a strong industrial and financial center, the DART Rail's inaccessibility and impracticality because of long travel times, has led to a struggle for Dallasites to maintain jobs or access new jobs. Below is a map showing the major highways that run through and around Dallas, and also a map of the DART rail lines.



Similar to the Dart and the highways, the construction of the Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport helped Dallas put a name for themselves on the map. DFW Airport is an American Airlines hub and is one of the busiest and largest airports in the world, offering



almost 2000 flights in a day, helping serve 64 million passengers yearly (DFW International Airport). Including American Airlines, Dallas is home to many large corporations, including 9 Fortune 500 companies, including ExxonMobil and AT&T. The greater metroplex is home to 22 fortune 500 companies. Along with prominent businesses, there are 41 colleges and universities in the Metroplex, making Dallas a popular city for education.

While Dallas has a lot to brag about, it is also well known for tragic moments in history, like the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. While all Dallas-sites and visitors alike have visited the site where JFK was shot, Dallas has tried to revamp many different neighborhoods to show that Dallas has more to offer than just the site where the 35<sup>th</sup> President was shot and killed. Dallas is divided mostly by the terms “North, South, East, and West”, but there are also many neighborhoods within each division. Within the term “North,” there is North Dallas, Far North Dallas, Northeast Dallas, and Northwest Dallas. The majority of North Dallas is residential, but there are few prominent commercial zones such as Preston Center, the Design District, and specific areas of Lake Highlands. The majority of North Dallas is considered to be part of the wealthiest areas of Dallas, including the neighborhoods of Bluffview and Preston Hollow, where many celebrities live, such as Mark Cuban and the late Ross Perot, as well as Eagles lead guitarist, Don Henley. North Dallas and surrounding areas can be seen on the map on page 10.

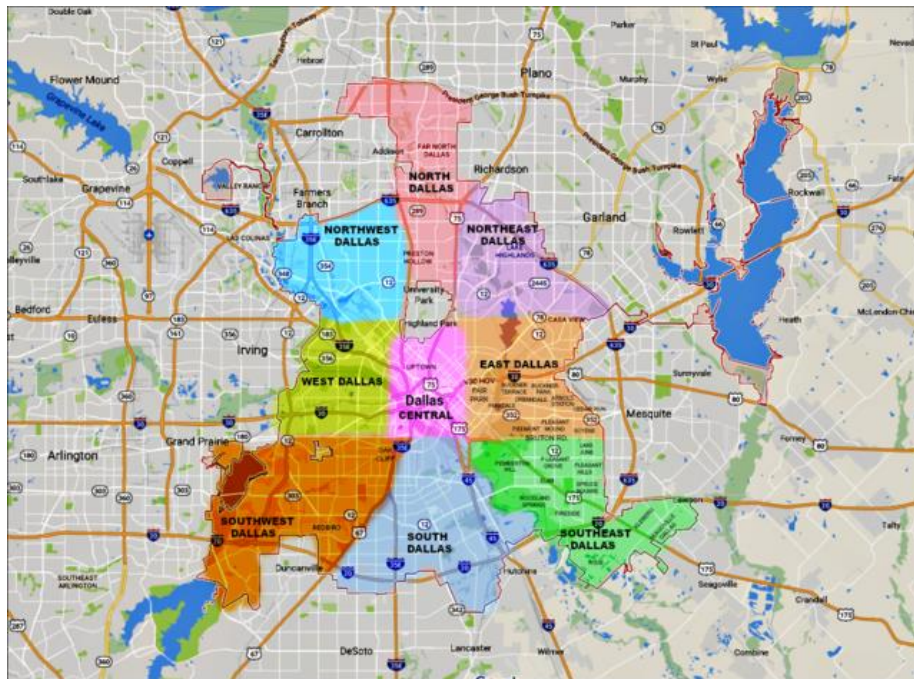
The next area is Downtown, also referred to as Central Dallas, which encompasses the neighborhoods: Baylor District, The Cedars, Civic Center District, Dallas Arts District, Design District, Main Street District, Reunion District, South Side, Uptown, Victory Park, etc. The majority of these areas are a mix of commercial and residential areas, with mostly apartment style housing. The Downtown area is a popular nightlife area, including more than just bars and

restaurants, but also opera houses, theaters, and many other different performing arts centers, as well as sports arenas. Downtown, also known as Central Dallas, is highlighted on the map on page 10.

Next is East Dallas, which includes prominent neighborhoods such as Little Forest Hills, Lower Greenville, Vickery Place, and White Rock Lake. Vickery place is one of Dallas's oldest and most historic neighborhoods, and White Rock Lake is one of Dallas's most popular areas for outdoor activity and is home to the Dallas Marathon path. Similar to East Dallas, there is also Old East Dallas, which includes Swiss Avenue, Belmont Park, and the newly renovated and very popular area consisting of restaurants and bars, Deep Ellum. East Dallas and surrounding areas are highlighted on the map on page 10.

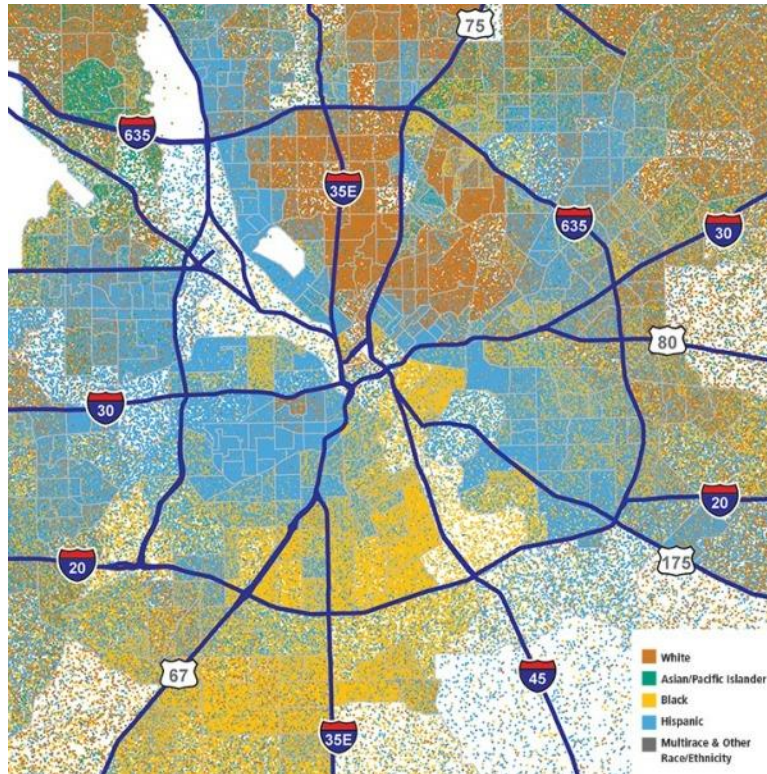
There is also South Dallas, which encompasses a large area, and includes Southeast Dallas, Far South Dallas, South Central Dallas, Old South Dallas, Oak Cliff, and Fair Park. Some of the more well-known neighborhoods in these parts of Southern Dallas include Pleasant Grove, Skyline Heights, Jubilee Park, Kessler Park, and Fair Park, where the largest state fair in the United States is held each year. Fair Park and Oak Cliff are the most well-known neighborhoods, both for their deep history and extreme amounts of poverty, with the exception of a few pockets in Oak Cliff. Oak Cliff is a well-recognized name after a scandal at Dallas Carter High, an Oak Cliff High school. Dallas Carter put Oak Cliff on the map after the high school football team won the state football championship in 1988, one of the greatest accomplishments in Texas, and then a few players went on a crime spree. This instance is a famous story that has produced many movies and specials on ESPN. South Dallas and surrounding areas are highlighted on the map on the following page.

Lastly, there is West Dallas, which is the home of Bachman Lake and Dallas’s second, smaller airport, Love Field, which is a Southwest Airlines hub. West Dallas is one of the most diverse areas of Dallas, with high Mexican immigrant populations, and a specific area that is known as “little Mexico.” Certain areas of West Dallas are extremely impoverished, with many people living below the poverty line, low graduation rates, and high unemployment rates. West Dallas is highlighted on the map below.



Before diving into poverty, unemployment, and the wealth gap, it is important to analyze the population of Dallas by race, and then recognize where on the map where each race is heavily populated amongst the neighborhoods. For a population breakdown, Dallas is 29% white, 24.3% Black or African American, and 41.7% Hispanic or Latino (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). The US Census Bureau estimates that there are 505,816 households, with an average of

2.57 people per household. 85.3% of households have a computer, but only 73.5% of households have an internet subscription. Out of people aged 25 years or older, 76.5% have a high school graduate, and only 32.3% of people have a bachelor's degree or higher (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). According to US News, the national high school graduation rate is 84.6%, and the rate for a bachelor's degree or higher is 62% (Kerr & Shin, 2020). It is clear to see that Dallas is far below both national rates. Another important fact for this case study is to recognize that the average travel time to work is 27 minutes, for workers sixteen and older. The median household income is \$51,000, and approximately 20.5% of the population is living in poverty (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). More striking, one in three children lives in poverty, which is the third highest rate of child poverty in the nation. Over the past fifteen years, the poverty rate in Dallas has increased by 42%, while the population has only increased 4.4% (CPAL). Over 27,300 residents who reside in poverty, are employed with full time positions (Simek, 2016). Below is a map that shows how Dallas is divided by race.



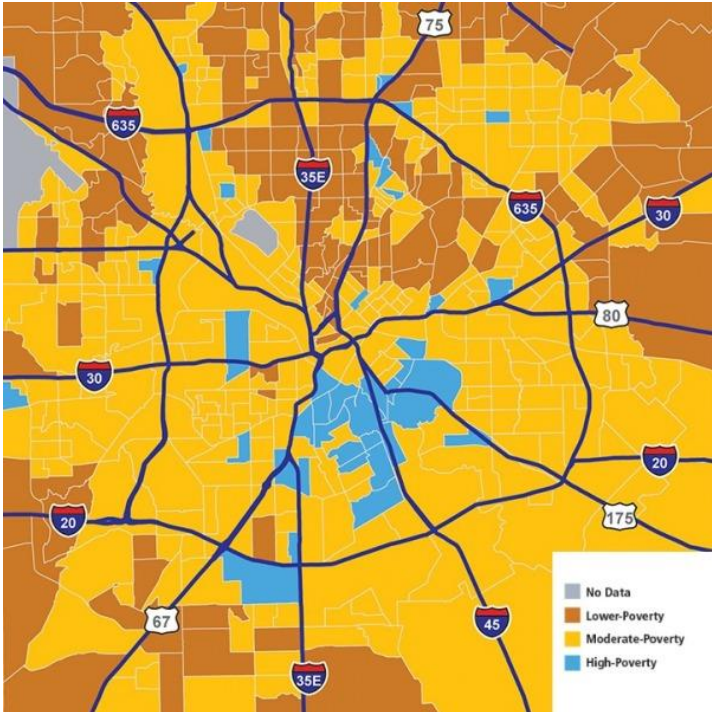
This map will surface again when information on the wealth gap is provided, because race plays one of the greatest roles in the ongoing and increasing wealth gap in Dallas.

### Section 3: Background info

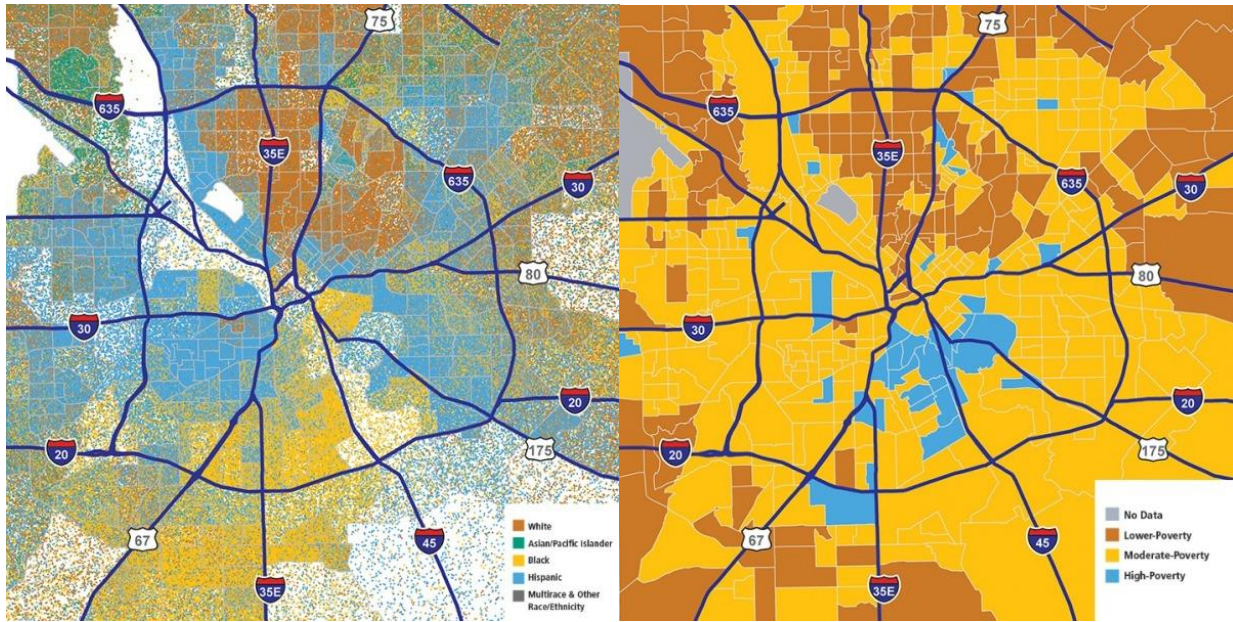
The main issue that this case study is focused on is the wealth gap in Dallas. To really understand how severe this issue is, it is important to examine statistics that reflect this gap. The most striking portrayal of wealth gap statistics available are the statistics that reveal the gap between the 90<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> percentile of an earner. In 2008, Dallasites in the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile (households that earn more than 90 percent of a population) made 10 times more than those in the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile (households with less income than 90 percent of a population), with incomes of \$150,400 and \$15,000, respectively. In 2017, the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile income grew to

\$182,100, while the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile income increased to \$18,000, meaning that top earners earned 10.1 times more than the lowest earner (Silver, 2019). It is clear that there is great disparity in the population of Dallas.

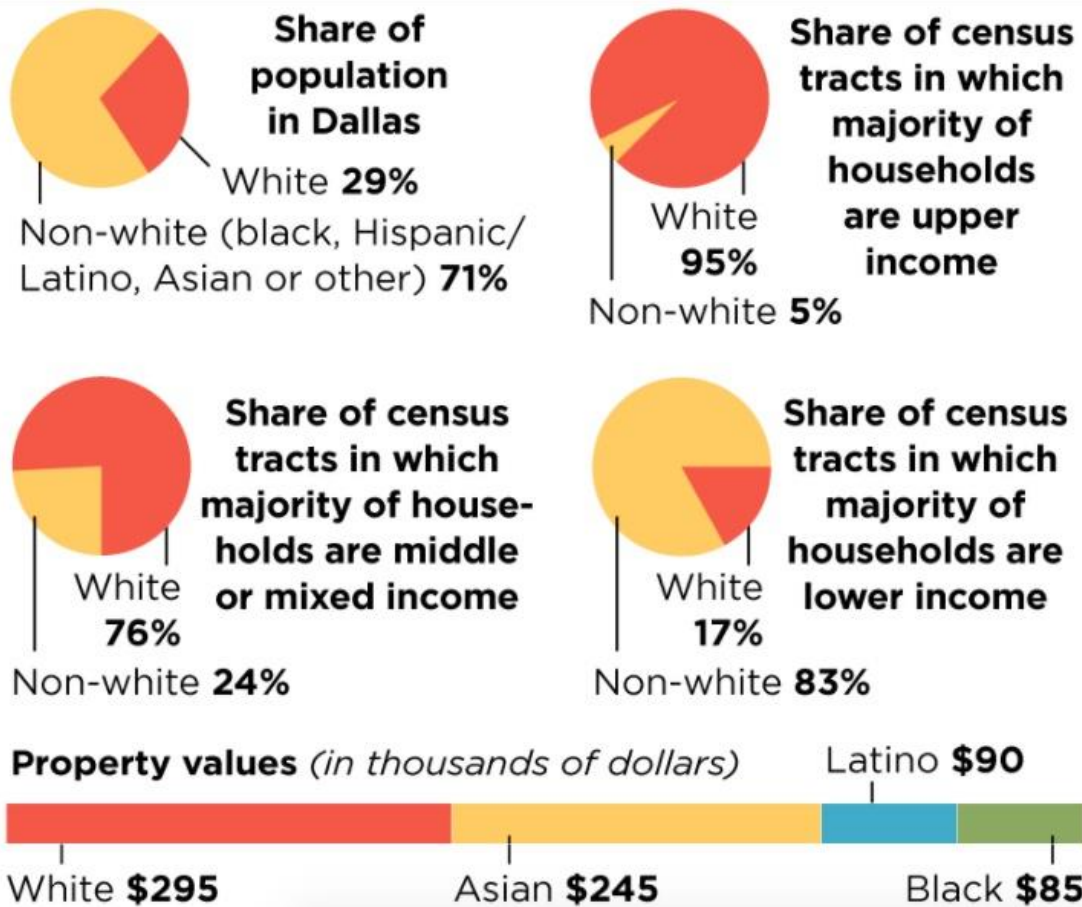
Below is a map of poverty in Dallas



Below is the map of race in Dallas, alongside of the map of poverty in Dallas.



Based on these maps, the greatest areas of poverty in Dallas are in South/Southeast Dallas where Black or African American people reside, and also pockets here and there in South Dallas, Southwest Dallas, and West Dallas of Hispanic poverty. It is important to note how a predominantly white North Dallas, is also the part of Dallas where there is the least amount of poverty. As mentioned previously, not only is it clear to see that Dallas is divided by race but race also has a direct relationship with poverty in Dallas. What is most interesting, but also not surprising given previously supplied information, is that while white residents make up a smaller percentage of Dallas' population, white households make up nearly all of the wealthy census tract neighborhoods. Below are graphs that clearly show the link between racial segregation and income is apparent.



As reflected in statistics, the underlying root cause of the wealth gap, is race. While race is one of the causes, many other causes exist that keep the wealth gap as wide as it is, which will be mentioned shortly.

Being in the South, it is not hard to believe that race plays a role in the divide. The divide truly started between the 1950s and the 1970s, when there were forces such as market and social pressures, that were caused by the double whammy of integration/court ordered busing. In turn, white flight to the suburbs was common, and also new highways facilitated rapid movement from the suburbs to the jobs in the city. These occurrences combined to start the process of separating jobs to the North and affordable housing to the South. On the map on page 18, the divide is apparent as jobs are North, while affordable housing is South.

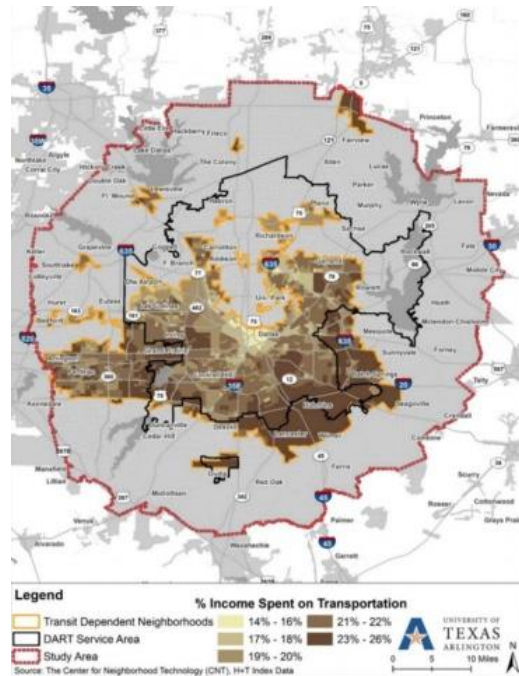


Furthermore, this trend was exacerbated by zoning codes prohibiting or limiting apartments, the primary form of affordable housing, in many of the suburbs. Because of the lack of jobs in these areas, new development in the Southern section led to disinvestment, a lower tax base and poorer quality schools, making conditions difficult to attain wealth (Heid, 2014). To make matters worse, many citizens who lived in the suburbs and more wealthy neighborhoods, had a “not in my backyard” attitude, which is still prevalent today. Mark Clayton, the councilman who represents the area surrounding White Rock Lake, has said that “the reality is that people don’t care. If it’s not in their neighborhood, they don’t care.” The “not in my backyard” sentiment is prevalent in nearly every middle and upper-middle income neighborhood in Dallas and takes a great deal of convincing to change these viewpoints. Segregation in Dallas has been referred to as “ground zero in the fight against poverty.” Poverty in Dallas is like a trap “sprung at birth,” with very little hope of escape (Goodman, 2018). Segregation, which has been reinforced by years of racist housing policies and other discriminatory actions, remains as the biggest barrier to economic mobility.

Another barrier to economic mobility is the lack of broadband internet access. Dallas lags behind other cities in broadband access, and within Dallas, connectivity is the worst in the areas that need it most. Broadband network is a tool for opportunity. So many different outlets depend on reliable internet, such as employment, education, transportation, healthcare, finances, etc. Especially for the unemployed, or people who are in need of a higher paying job, internet access is necessary, because 70% of job openings are posted online, and in today’s age, nearly 80% of jobs require digital skills. This gap is what is referred to as the “digital divide,”

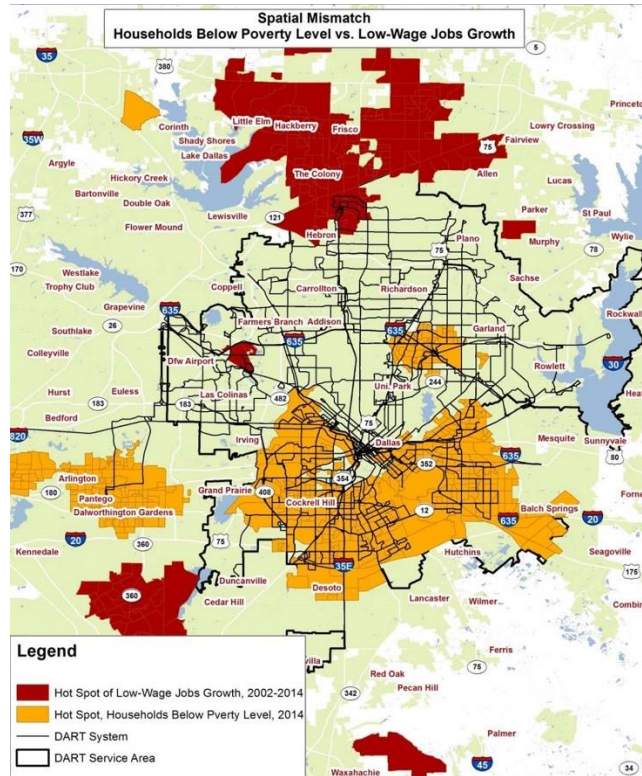
which is a structural barrier that needs to be reduced in order to close the income and wealth gaps (Dallas Morning News Editorial, 2019).

Another barrier to economic mobility is transportation in Dallas, referred to as transit inequality. The average transportation cost in the U.S. is 15% of household income. In Dallas, transportation costs range from 14% to 26%. More than 73% of Section 8 Multifamily Affordable Housing properties in Dallas are unaffordable with regard to transportation costs (Montoya, 2018). Below is a map that details percentages of income spent on transportation in correlation with DART routes.



When referring back to the map of poverty, it is the areas, specifically South and West Dallas, with the greatest amount of poverty, that are forced to pay the highest percentage of income on transportation.

Dallas is considered to be an automobile-dependent city, which makes it very difficult to get around for a family does not have a car. White households have the highest average number of vehicles available per person (1.01), compared to Hispanic (0.91), and black households (0.83). It is important to note how commute times differ. Black residents have the longest one-way commute time, (30.86), followed by Hispanic residents (30.29), and then followed by white residents (25.45) (Dallas City Hall, 2019). Commute time has been said to affect health outcomes, earning potential, and the amount of time an individual can dedicate to other needs. Lastly in regard to transportation, the frequency of public transit increases access to employment opportunities, particularly for public transit-dependent residents. As seen on the map below, many jobs that require less education have found a home in the Northern parts of Dallas, or even further than North Dallas. This predicament is a huge issue for the people living in South Dallas, as travel times well exceed an hour, oftentimes a two-hour roundtrip travel that takes a toll on people.



Race was a major root cause of the wealth gap in Dallas, an issue that is only further exacerbated by lack of accessibility and opportunity to try and attain wealth. Issues like lack of internet or accessibility to adequate and efficient transportation are barriers in economic mobility. Similarly, there is a lack of adequate health care and also an insufficient number of grocery stores and food options based on the population size in the highly impoverished areas (Lee, 2016). There are clearly areas that the city of Dallas can simply improve upon.

**Section 4: About the organization- what is Dallas already doing?**

The wealth gap is an issue that has been on the mind of many of Dallas’ elected leaders, with the majority of the responsibility of the conversations on the shoulders of Dallas’s current

mayor, Eric Johnson, and past mayor Mike Rawlings. In 2012, Mayor Rawlings created the task force on poverty to discuss key methods in reducing poverty. The Task Force on Poverty is still in effect as of 2020. From this task force, two major projects have resulted. The first project is the GrowSouth initiative, and the second project is the Child Poverty Action Lab. While GrowSouth expired in 2018, it is important to understand its goals and objectives, successes, and also where it fell short. GrowSouth is a “comprehensive strategy to build a foundation for sustainable growth and outline five key projects that the City of Dallas believe can jumpstart growth in key areas in the next three years” (Dallas GrowSouth). South Dallas, as seen on the map earlier, is a very high poverty-stricken area, and by introducing this project to South Dallas, the city hoped to revamp and revitalize this area creating more jobs, improve the economy, and help a large number of people out of poverty. South Dallas is recognized as the greatest single opportunity for growth in North Texas, because it comprises the greatest inventory of land available in Dallas. South Dallas accounts for roughly 54% of the city’s area. An interesting fact that clearly shows room for improvement in South Dallas is that 55% of Dallas citizens live North of the trinity river, and that part of the city provides 85% of the tax base. South Dallas is home to 45% of the population, yet only provides 15% of the tax base (Dallas GrowSouth). There is clearly a lot of room for improvement in South Dallas.

When the plan started in 2012, there were ten goals that focused on people, investments, and locations in order to drive economic growth. The focus areas were also divided into three categories, which were areas of South Dallas that were already on a clear path to successful growth, areas that had potential with strong anchors already in place, and lastly, two areas where major public investments were leading the way with the anticipation of

building private market demand in the near future (Dallas GrowSouth). In 2015, the program wasn't moving as quickly as Mayor Rawlings had hoped, so he created what is referred to as "accelerators," as an effort to move the program along further. These include the Mayor's GrowSouth Advisory Council, Neighbor Up, the High Impact Landlord Initiative, and the Single-Family Housing Initiative (Dallas GrowSouth). Through these accelerators, the program experienced an increase in the number of people who engaged in GrowSouth. Privately funded general managers were hired to work on economic development visions in targeted neighborhoods, and landlords cooperated to help send a message that they will no longer tolerate citizens living in poor conditions. Economically developing these neighborhoods is seen as an effort to improve to reduce blight and increase wealth. There is also a strategy in the works to help build 1,500 new homes in South Dallas that are more affordable to people who are making minimum wage or close to it (Dallas GrowSouth).

To show his progress, Mayor Rawlings promised to keep residents and business owners informed on the state of GrowSouth with an annual progress report. In 2018, the five-year data was presented. From 2012-2017, the focus areas added 14,221 residents. The population rose steadily over the previous five years. Residential investment also increased over two-and-a-half times since 2012 (Dallas GrowSouth, 2018). This increase was accompanied by a "healthy" increase in median home sales price. Interestingly, public school enrollment declined, but this decline is noted to be because many families chose private education, and the numbers of high school aged kids declined. Notably, there has was a significant decline in property crime per thousand residents, although violent crime rates have increased marginally (Dallas GrowSouth, 2018). This set of statistics were the most notable differences over the last five years. There

were also many other improvements, while none as grand as the previous mentioned, it is important to note that as far as residential investment in the community, there was a \$126.2 million increase over the five-year span. Also, there was a 7.2% increase in high school graduation rates (Dallas GrowSouth, 2018).

Within each of the focus areas, according to the 2018 annual progress report, there were significant improvements and additions to the communities, such as new hotels, new apartments, new homes, new industrial warehouses, updated schools, and even a plan to build a new mall. When Rawlings created GrowSouth, he made the project a for-profit organization, and asked the Dallas community for investors and donations. The project initially came up with \$36 million. Unfortunately, in the time that GrowSouth was active, only 50% of these funds were utilized (Grigsby, 2019). While GrowSouth had a lot of potential, and did in fact create a lot of progress, the task of developing a part of town, that “for decades was ignored only when it wasn’t being blatantly discriminated against” was too daunting (Grigsby, 2019). It was possible for investors to build and build and try and create economic growth in this area, but it wasn’t enough to put money in the pockets of those who needed it most.

On the other hand, Mayor Rawlings, in 2018, his last year in office, created the Child Poverty Action Lab (CPAL), which has been regarded as the “best plan yet” to help fight poverty. Mayor Rawlings wanted to start CPAL, because at a council briefing, he said that “poverty is generational, and that’s bad news because we can’t hit a switch and solve it. On the other hand, it’s good news, because I think we can address poverty in 20 years, in one generation, if you start to do the right things by young children and focus on those children who are living in poverty” (Goodman, 2018). The CPAL functions on a theory of change, which is

as follows: the right mix of systems and resources; must reach the right families and neighborhoods; to mitigate the lasting effects of poverty; and break the cycle for the next generation. The CPAL states that its North star is to reduce child poverty in Dallas county by 50% within a single generation. CPAL states that its role has five main points. The first is to build a shared understanding of the problem and ecosystem. Second, to design solutions for scale. Third, to identify winnable milestones for measurable impact. Fourth, rally demand and coordination for highest-potential solutions. Lastly, embrace course corrections. This format towards change was adopted based on the national best practice learnings from 15 of history's most important and massive social impact successes (Child Poverty Action Lab).

Poverty is not a simple fix, as it is multifaceted and complex. In order to combat the depth of poverty, CPAL has identified five priorities that are linked to child poverty that significantly impact prospects for economic mobility. Along with identifying priorities, CPAL has also laid out a goal for each priority. The first priority is basic needs, and the goal is to "increase utilization of means-tested benefit programs to at least 90% of eligible households." The second priority is family, and the goal is to "increase the number of children living in two-parent households by 25%." The third priority is safety, and the goal is to "reduce the incidence of adverse childhood experiences by 50%." The fourth priority is education, and the goal is to "double the number of postsecondary credentials granted by higher education institutions." The last priority is living-wage jobs, and the goal is to increase family income by 25% for the bottom quintile of families." CPAL provides data on each priority, hopeful outcome, strength of indicator, reach, achievability, children impact, adjusted impact, and have come to the



conclusion that if the CPAL is successful, it has the opportunity to reach 52,500 children (Child Poverty Action Lab).

CPAL has a unique collection of cross-agency leadership that meets quarterly, along with select advisory organizations and community members, to help align resources and create strategies that will lead to mass change. Some of these community members include T.C. Broadnax, the Dallas City Manager; Clay Jenkins, County Judge; Gary Thomas, President and Executive Director of DART; Michael Hinojosa, Superintendent of Dallas Independent School District, etc. (Child Action Poverty Lab). All of these figures play major roles in the Dallas community, and therefore prove to be beneficial to the end goal of reducing child poverty.

CPAL recognizes six “big bets,” which refers to initial strategies that can yield tangible results quickly. The six bets are to “improve service delivery of underutilized state and federal resources, eliminate barriers to reproductive health, expand housing options to enable neighborhood preference, align fragmented public investment to strengthen childcare and 0-3 services, reduce levels of parent and juvenile incarceration, and lastly, increase investment in trauma prevention and care” (Child Poverty Action Lab) All of these bets aim to enforce healthy behaviors and environments for children in order to set them up for financial and social success in their adult lives, and in hopes that they will beat poverty.

While Mayor Rawlings is no longer the current mayor, this program is still in progress under Mayor Johnson. There has been no published update, as the program is only a year into service. As mentioned previously, these two programs have stemmed from the task force on poverty. The task force on poverty was created by Mayor Rawlings, and is still a work in progress today, under Mayor Johnson. The task force is spearheaded by Councilman Tennell

Atkins, CitySquare president Larry James, and attorney Regina Montoya. Some of the main priorities of the task force is fighting for a higher minimum wage that will be at least high enough to be considered a living wage.

The Task Force on Poverty has been responsible for many different programs, such as an English-speaking program. This will help foreign residents learn English, which in turn will provide them with the skills and opportunities to find better jobs. 43.3% of the population in Dallas does not speak English, the majority being people who have emigrated from Mexico and other Spanish-speaking countries (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). Interestingly enough, 83% of people in poverty in Dallas are either Hispanic or Black (Manuel, 2019). Breaking down the language barrier for many of these foreign language speakers will aid in progressing their careers or opening up many doors. Other solutions and goals that the task force have accomplished are support for the city of Dallas in creating housing goals to guide a comprehensive housing policy, such as create and maintain available and affordable housing throughout Dallas; promote greater fair housing choices; and overcome patterns of segregation and concentrations of poverty through incentives and requirements (Montoya, 2018). The task force has also established a goal for DART to reduce home-to-work travel time to under one hour (Montoya, 2018). There has also been support for the city of Dallas to implement initiatives regarding equity and inclusion for all neighborhoods. The task force has played an instrumental role on increasing the focus on teen pregnancy reduction, and also an instrumental role in greater coordination with nonprofit community for enhanced delivery of services (Montoya, 2018). The previously listed successes are just a few that the task force is responsible for, and the task force notes that one of their greatest achievements is starting the

conversation on poverty in Dallas. As mentioned, reducing poverty is the strongest and most achievable goal that will help bridge Dallas together and lessen this divide.

## **Section 5: The solution**

While it is simple to say that the way to fix the wealth gap would be to lessen poverty, it is easier said than done. GrowSouth had potential, and because it was based on other successful models, the Child Poverty Action Lab will hopefully prove to achieve its goal of reducing child poverty in one generation. It is following best practice models, similar to what CPAL did, that will help Dallas close the gap. Out of many, there are a few standout programs that have been successful enough to consider implementing in Dallas, as there is clearly a lot of opportunity in Dallas for growth. As mentioned previously, one of the attributing factors to poverty and the wealth gap is the lack of adequate internet use. Without internet use, people cannot search for jobs, apply online, send emails, etc. Knowing this, in Boulder, Colorado, issued \$15 million in debt to construct a city-owned broadband network (Dallas Morning News Editorial, 2019). This network idea was met with high public support, because citizens would be able to purchase cheaper, and better internet service from the state, rather than paying high private costs. If internet access was cheaper in Dallas, more people would be able to afford it and have access to becoming more prosperous at home and in the workplace.

Another successful project is the Ujima project in Boston, Massachusetts. The Ujima project works to eradicate the challenges facing their communities, for example, gentrification, poverty, homelessness, lack of food access, unemployment, and lack of healthcare- all issues that the city of Dallas deals with also (Ujima Boston). The Ujima project aims to create a

community-controlled economy, led by Boston's working-class people of color. People in the working class include small business owners, community members, workers, grassroots activists, impact investors, and unions, faith, and civic organizations. The Ujima project plans to pull together funds, through different fundraisers or direct fundraising and donations. The coalition then votes on which business and real estate initiatives they will invest in, and what community standards they would like for them to uphold (Ujima Boston). An example of a community standard would include paying a living wage. Meetings will be conducted first neighborhood-wide, and then there will be a citywide assembly. Businesses who are included in the Good Business alliance will receive technical assistance and cooperative purchasing, and other joint ventures to strengthen operations and market share. There is also a Ujima project good business directory, that will highlight health business practices to gain customer support and loyalty.

Ujima also has a worker's services network, which will support Ujima business workers by providing human resources offerings, like an internal staffing agency and workplace mediation services to increase workplace satisfaction and workplace security. Ujima members will have access to an internal electronic currency that offers users rewards at certified Ujima businesses. There will also be a Ujima time bank, that allows neighbors to trade their skills and labors on an hour to hour basis. The time bank and electronic currency in turn incentivize purchasing and trade within Ujima network and grows local wealth by ensuring the circulation of resources within the Ujima communities (Ujima Boston).

Ujima will organize campaigns for the city, state, and large nonprofits to direct investment, subsidy, and procurement dollars to Ujima's network of certified good businesses

and developers, as well as divesting from extractive industries like prisons and fossil fuels and directing those dollars into Ujima's network instead. These returns will then be reinvested into the community and a new cycle will begin. Ujima Project has been very successful and has raised millions of dollars that have been invested in the participating community. A program similar to this would be beneficial in South Dallas or surrounding areas, because it will improve that specific local economy, and will likely gain attraction because it will be the citizens that live there that will be improving the economy, rather than outside help. Similar to how the Ujima project is specifically for people of color, having regulations in Dallas might also prove beneficial, as seen on the maps, it is mostly concentrations of Hispanics and African Americans, who tend to stick together. Due to this commonality, this project has the potential to gain widespread attention. The city of Dallas, and especially the impoverished areas, would benefit from a project that is more community-driven, with distributed ownership of both the investment process, and the benefits of member's labor as a result.

One last best practice model is the African American Financial Capability Initiative (AAFCI). The reason for selecting this best practice model is the emphasis on race, because it is clear that race plays a huge role in the wealth gap in Dallas. The AAFCI is a three-year-long program that operates in six cities across the U.S.- Seattle, Tacoma, Portland (Oregon), Minneapolis, St. Paul, and Des Moines. Created by Prosperity Now, AAFCI is a nonprofit that was established to help low-income people of color achieve financial security. In each of the cities, coalitions of local leaders and community members have engaged in conversation to identify key drivers of the racial wealth divide in each community. Then, programs to counterbalance those specific factors are implemented. For example, in Seattle, displacement

and gentrification was a significant issue for the local black population. The Central District, a neighborhood east of downtown, was 70% black in the 1960s, but today it is only 14% black, due to the real estate, and the fact that it is difficult for blacks to build wealth in the city (Anzilotti, 2019). In Seattle, the average black family wealth is \$37,696 compared to white families' \$125,824 (Anzilotti, 2019).

Recognizing this difference, the AAFCI worked with four black-led local organizations to create a community land trust in the Central District. This area has become a mixed-use building of affordable housing, black owned business, and office space. This success in Seattle is just one of many success stories resulting from help from the AAFCI (Anzilotti, 2019). Particular areas in Dallas would truly benefit from a program like the AAFCI. Many of the necessary conversations that the AAFCI is producing are already taking place in Dallas due to the programs that the mayor's have implemented. These best practice models are all different ways to close the wealth gap, specifically the racial wealth gap in Dallas, if it were possible to receive the necessary funding and support needed to get these programs off of the ground and running.

## **Section 6: Conclusion**

The city of Dallas has many great qualities, but also many challenges that are in desperate need of change. The greatest challenge the city of Dallas faces is bridging the divide between the North and the South and closing the racial wealth gap. A key strategy to closing the racial wealth gap is the continued attempt to eliminate all poverty. In order to do this, it is imperative to examine and remediate where the impoverished areas need the most help; such

as, lack of internet access, inadequate transportation, insufficient education, low graduation rates, and lastly, unequal economic growth opportunity. For a city with such a thriving economy, having some of the highest rates of child poverty in the nation should warrant alarm.

Clearly, the racial wealth gap has been a topic of discussion amongst Dallas's elected officials. Mayor Rawlings has been dedicated to solving the problem, and as Mayor Johnson settles into his term a bit more, he will continue to dive deep into not only understanding this problem, but also solving it. Mayor Rawlings's GrowSouth initiative demonstrated promise, but unfortunately fell short. It is his Child Poverty Action Lab and his Task Force on Poverty that have demonstrated real success. While preliminarily showing success, these programs are still a long way away from solving the issue.

This case study provided best practice models that the city of Dallas would benefit from implementing, due to the tailored approach around similar issues that Dallas has. Two of the mentioned best practice models focus on race, which Dallas has yet to embrace fully. Ujima and the AAFCI have had successes in the cities they have been implemented in, which have similar issues to Dallas. These programs provide an opportunity to remove economic barriers, a necessity to help Dallas out of poverty. Similarly, the Child Poverty Action Lab aims to cut poverty in half within this current generation of children. A lofty goal, but one that has promise, breaking the cycle of poverty and a long-term result of reducing the wealth gap.

Lastly, it is up to the people of Dallas to come together as a community and help each other out. No child should ever have to wonder where their next meal is coming from, or fear that when summer vacation rolls around, they might not eat even one meal a day. The racial

wealth gap is a very real and tragic issue in Dallas, but one that could be resolved with the right programs in place, and the right people advocating to close the gap.



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