

## ON POINTS - Focus on southern Dallas

*Dallas Morning News, The (TX) - June 29, 2008*

- Edition: FIRST
- Section: POINTS
- Page: 3P
- Column: SUNDAY LETTERS

Dropout rate alarming

I celebrate the "Bridging Dallas' North-South Gap" series. Focusing light on the issues involved is needed. However, until Dallas ISD is seeing more than 41 percent of ninth-graders graduating with their class, there will be little progress anywhere in Dallas.

The 41 percent graduation rate was the average for the class of 2007 for all of Dallas. It is a remarkably low graduation rate throughout Dallas ISD, both north and south. It is the largest contributing factor to our having one of the highest crime rates in the nation, according to FBI numbers.

The good news is that Pinkston and Sunset high schools that serve areas in your "North-South Gap" series, West Dallas and North Oak Cliff, are seeing ample evidence that their graduation rates are moving above the rest of the city.

That progress will continue, but it must spread to all of Dallas.

Bill Betzen, Dallas

Colleges are bright spots

Re: "Study the reasons for disparity," by Timothy M. Bray, last Sunday Letters and "Bridging Dallas' North-South Gap," last Sunday Points.

I commend The Dallas Morning News on its commitment to this project and look forward to the upcoming features. One statistic impressed me: Only 13 percent of Dallas residents with a bachelor's degree live south of the Trinity.

Education is, indeed, one of the major keys to progress. Therefore, I was struck by the fact that one resource of the southern sector was not mentioned at all - our community colleges: Mountain View and Cedar Valley.

With this exception, almost all Dallas educational opportunities are in the northern sector of the city. As part of the Dallas County Community College District, Mountain View and Cedar Valley have a commitment to community involvement and actually are involved in the community in many ways.

Carol A. Stephenson, Mesquite

Southern Dallas active

From the time of redlining to the present, southern Dallas has been the city's locked closet, where all people and issues undesirable have been put permanently out of sight.

This has preserved southern Dallas' more southern flavor and has allowed a new culture that is not Anglo-dominated to grow and flourish across some parts of this city.

This new culture is one of the few great hopes for Dallas, Texas and the United States, as white Americans learn to adjust to being one of the cultures of this country, not the culture of this country.

There is much that is going on south of the Trinity that, if North Dallas would lower its nose, open its eyes, open its ears and observe, could help all of us to find our way toward a better life together.

While there is much we have to learn, there is also much we have to teach. We do not need a northern invasion - we need to learn to see ourselves as one city, with each half able to help the other. Let's stop being afraid of what we don't understand.

The Rev. Clay Allard, Oak Cliff Presbyterian Church, Dallas

This area is stereotyped

Re: "Start improvements at home," by Anna Garcia, Sunday Letters

Ms. Garcia in North Dallas wrote about people needing to care more about their houses. Even though some honest observations were made, and many could take more pride in themselves and the property they own or rent, the fact is you would be surprised to know how many of those houses needing repairs belong to owners living in North and East Dallas or even out of town, with a stereotyped idea of the southern half.

A lot of the houses belong to elderly people with no one to help them. And it doesn't help to have speculators come in and buy up the "ugly properties" with no intention of fixing them. A lot of the problem falls on past code enforcement, as well as inexperienced current staff.

Suppressed properties have also been highly sought after as halfway houses in the area, whereas they would be considered prime property for larger homes in most other places.

Then she talked about economic development in an area of crime. Crime exists almost at the same rate in all areas of Dallas. Even North Dallas has break-ins, but it hasn't kept development out.

When we're able to address teen pregnancy, family responsibility, child/parent responsibility, education responsibility and self-respect along with respect for others, Dallas as a whole will benefit.

We have helped to build Cedar Hill, Arlington, North Dallas, Mesquite and DeSoto. As you can see, making purchases to meet our needs means most of our sales tax goes outside the city limits.

Donna Lackey, Dallas

Only half a plan

Re: "Bridging Dallas' North-South Gap," last Sunday Points.

The plan for rejuvenation of Dallas' southern half is only half a plan. Most of the people who live in this depressed area are lower-income people who live in the area by necessity.

If the area is upgraded, the rents will increase, and if the incomes of the current residents are not increased accordingly, they will be forced to move to some other area that has not been rejuvenated. This new area will become economically depressed. If the plan is to rejuvenate the overall of Dallas, increasing the income of the people affected is required.

Gus Delaloye, Murphy

Why should I care?

Who cares if southern Dallas is poor and getting poorer? I'm sorry: Am I supposed to invest in poor neighborhoods where I'm going to lose money? That's why they are poor - they don't have money to spend. Give me a break; I will develop where I can make a profit.

It's called reality.

Chris Current, Dallas

• Caption: PHOTO(S): (Staff photo) A dog roams the streets and rummages in a trash pile near Fair Park.

• Record: 1181062447

• Copyright: Copyright 2008 The Dallas Morning News