

# Briefs

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Linking research and practice to change lives, neighborhoods, and communities

The J. McDonald Williams Institute, research arm of the Foundation for Community Empowerment, is dedicated to conducting non-partisan outcomes research and public policy evaluation related to comprehensive community revitalization of low-income urban areas.

## Frazier: Dallas' Lower Ninth Ward?

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*CNN graphically showed that the residents of the Lower Ninth Ward in New Orleans did not have access to the many resources needed to live a whole life and were in fact lacking the basic essentials to survive. Some people think this is just a New Orleans problem. There are some areas in the city of Dallas, however, such as the Frazier area just south of Fair Park, that have higher levels of disparity than those seen in New Orleans' Lower Ninth Ward.*

**F**ollowing the devastation of Hurricane Katrina, the desolate conditions of the Lower Ninth Ward in New Orleans were exposed for the world to see. Many viewers were stunned to discover that numerous residents in the New Orleans area, particularly the Lower Ninth Ward, lacked the means to evacuate the city. News stations displayed graphic footage of people on the streets pleading for food and water, while others were rescued from rooftops. Worldwide, people questioned how such abject poverty could exist in the United States—one of the richest nations on earth. Yet, the internationally broadcasted proof was undeniable. The situation could no longer be ignored.

Though the hurricane and resulting coverage were sudden, the overall state of disadvantage witnessed in the Lower Ninth Ward did not appear overnight—these circumstances have persisted for years, even decades, but have never before received national attention. Particularly upsetting is the realization that similar conditions exist in numerous cities across the U.S., lacking only a natural catastrophe to bring these conditions into the public eye.

## COMPARING DALLAS' FRAZIER AREA TO THE LOWER NINTH WARD

The deplorable circumstances in the Lower Ninth Ward exposed by the coverage of Hurricane Katrina have been incomprehensible to most. Though the extent of human, social, and economic loss has remained largely unquantifiable following the storm, the conditions in the Lower Ninth Ward prior to the hurricane were actually comparable to those faced by many poor communities nationwide. For example, there has been a greater rate of joblessness, fewer high school graduates, and a greater percentage of families living below the poverty level in the Frazier area of Dallas than in the Lower Ninth Ward prior to Hurricane Katrina.

### Racial and Ethnic Diversity

The Lower Ninth Ward was similar to the Frazier area in that they both have had less racial and ethnic diversity than their respective cities, and larger proportions of African American residents. While New Orleans has always been known as a predominately African American city<sup>1</sup>, this was particularly true in the Lower Ninth Ward, where 98.4% of the population was African American compared to 66.6% for the city of New Orleans.

Although the population of the Frazier area has been more diverse than that of the Lower Ninth Ward<sup>2</sup>, compared to the city of Dallas, the disparity in the number of African American residents has been even more prominent. Frazier has more than three times the number of African American

inhabitants than the city of Dallas as a whole, 71.8% to 23.8% respectively.

### Disturbing Disparities

The greater proportion of African American citizens has not been the only difference between these two communities and their larger cities. Both have also had higher numbers of single-parent families, lower levels of education, increased joblessness, and a greater concentration of poverty (Census 2000; Federal Poverty Guidelines 2000). Researchers such as Massey (1993) and others have noted how racial segregation is often a result of economic and housing segregation.

Although these characteristics may be interrelated, looking at them individually emphasizes the tremendous discrepancies

between these distressed communities and their surrounding areas.

### Single-Parent Households

In Frazier, the percentage of single-parent households has been almost twice the percentage for Dallas as a whole, and slightly higher than for the Lower Ninth Ward<sup>3</sup>, with more than 80% of households led by single females.

Regardless of the issues surrounding two-parent versus one-parent households, the elevated rate of poverty in female-headed households cannot be ignored. In the Frazier area, households headed by single females are seven times more likely to live in conditions of poverty than households headed by single males, and more than three times as likely as households headed by married couples. The percentage

By the Numbers: Frazier and New Orleans' Lower Ninth Ward						
	Lower Ninth Ward	New Orleans	Disparities	Frazier Area	Dallas	Disparities
Black	97.97%	66.38%	31.59%	65.17%	21.26%	43.91%
Hispanic	0.53%	3.16%	-2.63%	32.30%	35.70%	-3.40%
Female	53.56%	53.03%	0.52%	52.03%	49.55%	2.49%
Below high school education	39.98%	25.39%	14.59%	58.52%	25.81%	32.71%
Families below poverty line	32.77%	24.23%	8.55%	33.25%	12.53%	20.71%
Families: Female-headed, below poverty line	23.94%	17.82%	6.12%	20.28%	5.87%	14.41%
Joblessness	58.60%	47.65%	10.96%	61.46%	36.73%	24.73%

of single female-headed households in Frazier is much higher than single female-headed households in the Lower Ninth Ward.<sup>4</sup>

### Homeownership Rates

Related to socioeconomic status, homeownership rates in Frazier are 13% less than for the city of Dallas. Interestingly, however, rates of homeownership were 10% higher in the Lower Ninth Ward than for the city of New Orleans.

### Joblessness

Frazier and the Lower Ninth Ward have both been characterized by high rates of joblessness. Although these rates have been similar (62.6% and 58.6 % respectively), the major difference can be seen when compared to city rates. There is a 24% difference in the prevalence of joblessness between Frazier and the city of Dallas, but only an 11% difference between the Lower Ninth Ward and the city of New Orleans. Obviously, increased rates of joblessness can lead to a greater concentration of poverty, disruptions of the family structure, and low rates of social capital in a community.

### Educational Attainment

Perhaps most alarming has been the disparity in educational attainment between Frazier and the city of Dallas. Almost 60% of residents in Frazier lack a high school education, compared with 28% for the city of Dallas. While there was also a disparity in educational achievement between the Lower Ninth Ward and the city of New Orleans<sup>5</sup>, the gap was significantly smaller than Frazier's. Higher rates of educational attainment are correlated with increased social mobility, job opportunities, and home ownership rates.

### CONCLUSION

While not taking lightly the distressed conditions in the Lower Ninth Ward, the public must recognize that there are many similarly blighted communities closer to home. Frazier has a larger percentage of families below the poverty line,

more than 30% less high school graduates, a much lower owner-occupied housing ratio, and higher rates of joblessness than the Lower Ninth Ward. The city of Dallas may have some communities that face similar problems as the poor of New Orleans did. The difference may be that the poor of New Orleans are no longer hidden.

Waiting for a natural disaster to strike to address the issues facing these citizens is counter-productive to the overall health of a city. Plans to revitalize and empower communities such as Frazier merit immediate attention from the political leadership, business community, and citizens of Dallas.

### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The city of New Orleans was 26.7% White, 66.6% African American, 3.1% Hispanic, and 3.6% other races (Census 2000, Summary File 3). The city of Dallas is 38.7% White, 23.8% African American, 33.0% Hispanic, and 4.5% other races.

<sup>2</sup> The population of Frazier is 71.8% African American, 25.4% Hispanic, 1.9% White, and 1.0% other races, while the Lower Ninth Ward was 98.4% African American, 0.5% Hispanic, 0.3% White, and 0.7% other races (Census 2000, Summary File 3).

<sup>3</sup> Comparable rates between the Lower Ninth Ward and the City of New Orleans.

<sup>4</sup> Rates of single-mother, single-father, and married-couple families below poverty are virtually the same between the Lower Ninth Ward and the City of New Orleans.

<sup>5</sup> Twenty-five percent of the residents of New Orleans lacked a high school education compared to 40 percent in the Lower Ninth Ward.

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Analyze Dallas seeks to become a catalyst toward real progress and change in the city of Dallas and is based on the philosophy that measurement is followed by impact.



Detailed sub-city level data is presented for Dallas across eight categories: Civic Health, Crime, Economy, Education, Environment, Health, Housing, and Transportation.

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Analyze Dallas seeks to democratize information by making it widely available to all citizens and making it understandable to non-researchers and non-statisticians.

FCE, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, was founded in 1995 by J. McDonald "Don" Williams, Chairman Emeritus of the Trammell Crow Company. FCE is a catalyst for the revitalization of low-income neighborhoods in Dallas through the empowerment of individuals, community- and faith-based organizations, and entire communities. FCE seeks to build bridges of opportunity, and to foster relationships where investments of money, time, people, and resources should be made.



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