

## Let America be America for All

*Keynote address by Dr. Nandinee K. Kutty at the 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual Fair Housing Event of the Fair Housing Center of West Michigan, April 22, 2009.*

The title of my keynote speech is, as many of you have guessed, from a poem by Langston Hughes titled "[Let America be America Again](#)": The poet wrote:

O, let America be America again--  
The land that never has been yet--  
And yet must be -- the land where every man is free.

Free to live in the neighborhood of his choice; free to obtain a good quality education, free to pursue the occupation of his choice, and free to be all that he can be.

That is the reason why we are assembled here today. And that is the purpose of the work that so many of you do—to create fair housing opportunities for all, to create integrated, inclusive neighborhoods, places that look like America, places that can once again become integrated by pushing back the artificially created segregation -- the segregation created through statute, mob violence, lynchings, intimidation, block busting, and steering at various times in our history since around 1890. The [artificial sundown towns](#) that were created, the systematic denial of credit (redlining), segregated public housing projects, and even the highway and freeway construction that divided up America on racial lines-- divided the minority areas from white neighborhoods within cities. You work to undo the artificially created residential segregation, and to transform neighborhoods into integrated and inclusive places, where all people can have equal and rich opportunities.

Anyone who has endured segregated living—in the ghetto or barrio or whatever name you want to call it, and anywhere in the world—whether it was in the shanties of South Africa or in our very own inner cities, or rural areas in the deep South, will testify to the evil of segregation. Segregation was artificially created—and this was no harmless social arrangement of people, it was an arrangement that denied people opportunities to good education, to good jobs, to living in the mainstream of America, to human dignity, to enjoying the peace and prosperity of America that was the envy of the world—and yet was denied to so many Americans on account of the evil arrangement of segregation.

In the words of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., "[segregation distorts the soul and damages the personality](#)." Indeed, it damages all, those segregated, those imposing the segregation, and those who are innocent bystanders—it damages and degrades every member of a society that faces this structural injustice.

Segregation within a rich multi-racial, multi-ethnic society such as ours is not only evil from the point of view of the deprivations it imposes on minorities who are segregated, but is a tragedy for the entire nation. Every American, whatever their color, is harmed by the existence of

segregation and by our current negligence in repairing this serious defect in our social structure.

I am going to talk today about the Value of Integration. Integration rewards us with rich experiences and outcomes, and the lack of integration—that is, segregation—is damaging to the fabric of our community.

According to [John Hope Franklin](#), the brilliant historian who passed away last month, the color line is the most tragic and persistent social problem our nation has ever faced. He described the color line as “the legacy for the 21st century.” It is our legacy and we intend to turn it around and replace it with a stronger, cohesive and rich national fabric.

For me, the most compelling rationale for integration is that the lack of well-integrated neighborhoods in sufficient numbers in our nation impinges on *the pursuit of happiness* on the part of individuals and families. And the pursuit of happiness is our *inalienable* right. It is not a right given us by our government or the U.S. Supreme Court. No. It is a right given us by ---- our **Creator**. And nothing, nothing can be allowed to come between us and our Creator-endowed rights to Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness. We can assert these rights meaningfully only when all Americans live in neighborhoods of opportunity and choice.

### **The Value of Integration**

I have organized 8 points to explain the value of Integration for America.

#### **1. Integration Lets America be America.**

An integrated society would be the natural outcome of America living up to her ideals.

We are a nation that believes in *e pluribus unum*—from many one.

An integrated society—including, of course, integrated residential neighborhoods, will break down the currently existing social tensions, and the mutual suspicions with which different race groups regard each other. Recent research suggests that sustained cross-cultural contact reduces prejudice and breaks down stereotypes<sup>1</sup>. When people have real-life examples of people of different races and ethnicities before them, they can see the individual differences within a racial or ethnic group, and can stop thinking in terms of stereotypes.

Sustained cross-cultural interactions in integrated neighborhoods help build trust, remove hostility and intimidation, and allow us to live truly as one Nation under God *indivisible*. President Obama has talked about the power of our values—that when we live by our values we become a stronger nation.

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<sup>1</sup> [James E. Rosenbaum](#), Professor at Northwestern University, in witness testimony before the National Commission on Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity. In the Gautreaux program, one African American child reported that after moving to an integrated neighborhood, she discovered that all whites did not look like TV actors. Adult women reported that after interactions with whites in their new integrated neighborhoods they would feel less intimidated in approaching whites in future contexts.

## **2. Integrated Neighborhoods Result in Opportunities for Lower Income and other Historically Disadvantaged Groups**

Compared to segregated minority neighborhoods and neighborhoods with concentrated poverty, integrated neighborhoods tend to offer better socio-economic opportunities for residents such as access to better quality schools, public libraries, recreational facilities, transportation, good jobs, medical care, safety, clean surroundings, and beneficial social networks. The book that I edited with Jim Carr—[\*Segregation: The Rising Costs for America\*](#)—has separate chapters devoted to explaining the connections between neighborhoods and education, employment, health, and social networks.

The reasons why integrated neighborhoods tend to be more advantaged than segregated minority neighborhoods are complex—and are in no small part related to the politics of race, both the cumulative effect of such politics over the decades, and also the current politics.

The Gautreaux Program in the 1980s demonstrated the beneficial effects for low-income, minority families, when they moved from neighborhoods of concentrated poverty and racial isolation to middle-class, racially integrated or white suburbs<sup>2</sup>. (This is the beautiful and courageous woman who began it all with her complaint in 1966). Research on this program shows that families who relocated to neighborhoods of advantage (in the suburbs) experienced significantly higher employment, lower school dropout rates, and higher college attendance rates<sup>3</sup>.

Access to integrated neighborhoods brings minority workers closer to where the jobs are.

Diverse and inclusive communities can provide resources for the economic success for families, including mainstream financial services, good schools, access to jobs, beneficial social networks, role models, and an experience of stability and peace.

## **3. Living in Integrated Neighborhoods of Opportunity Creates a Sense of Efficacy and Control**

One important finding from the Gautreaux Program was that families who relocated to neighborhoods of opportunity said they felt a greater sense of efficacy and control—they had the ability to *steer* their

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<sup>2</sup> Of the 7,100 families that were relocated under the program, over half relocated to white suburbs.

<sup>3</sup> "Residential Mobility, Neighborhoods and Poverty: Results from the Chicago Gautreaux Program and the Moving to Opportunity Experiment" Stephanie DeLuca, Johns Hopkins University and James E. Rosenbaum, Northwestern University, in [\*The Integration Debate: Competing Futures For American Cities\*](#), Edited by Chester Hartman and Gregory Squires, New York: Routledge, 2009 (forthcoming).

lives in a positive direction. The pursuit of happiness, our inalienable right, is possible only with efficacy and control. The term "Pursuit" implies efficacy and control.

"Self-efficacy" is a term coined several decades ago by Stanford University psychologist, Albert Bandura; and it means the ability to take actions that will make a difference in one's life.

That is the technical definition; but what says efficacy better than --- "Yes We Can" ?

Without efficacy, one cannot pursue something. So how can we make the right to pursuit of happiness meaningful for all Americans?

It is by ensuring that all Americans live in neighborhoods of opportunity and choice. When you work for integration, you are helping Americans assert their Creator-endowed right to the pursuit of happiness.

#### **4. Housing Integration Results in School Integration with Benefits for All Students**

When neighborhoods are well-integrated, there may be no need for additional efforts to bring about school integration. When neighborhoods become integrated, school integration is expected to follow.

Separate schools for children of different races have never been and never will be equal. That was the essence of the historic *Brown v. Board of Education* ((1954) U.S.) Supreme Court decision.

And yet, efforts to integrate schools have recently become more controversial. In this context, housing integration is all the more valuable.

When American children study together, that is a major step toward *letting America be America*. Quite often racial prejudices are learned at a young age from elders such as family members. But when a child has a first-hand experience of diversity, she is less likely to be susceptible to allowing the disease of racial prejudice to infect her mind.

School integration brings about a more cohesive society, teaches students tolerance and acceptance, and discourages racist attitudes from forming. Indeed, children can become agents of change and attitudinal transformation even among the elders in their own families who were not lucky enough to be personally exposed to a rich diversity.

And don't underestimate the importance of children in a family—you KNOW, they decide which breakfast cereal is consumed at home, when the family can take a vacation, and (as we recently found out) whom their parents should vote for. Children have a big say in these matters.

In a global economy, an exposure to multicultural education trains students to be sensitive to cultures, to distil the best from diverse cultures, and to be participants and leaders in the global system. A child who goes to school in a town in America might grow up and work as a manager at a factory or a bank overseas. His exposure to a multicultural setting and diversity in the school could be his strongest asset as he seeks to find his place in the global economy.

Some of the best schools in the nation place a high emphasis on diversity and teaching multiple languages to students, precisely to train them to work in the global economy.

## **5. Fair Housing for a Healthy Nation!**

You are going to find that fair housing is your apple a day and all the antioxidants combined.

There are many ways in which fair housing promotes good health.

First, integrated neighborhoods have better access to medical facilities—clinics, hospitals, and pharmacies, and to grocery stores with healthy foods. Also, there is better access to transportation that can take you to these facilities.

Second, the economic opportunities in integrated neighborhoods result in higher incomes and wealth-accumulation for families. This also results in better healthcare and better health.

Third, families are more likely to be exposed to a better neighborhood environment in integrated neighborhoods than in minority segregated neighborhoods. And neighborhood environment has a profound effect on the health of residents of the neighborhood.

In [my recent econometric analysis of children's health outcomes using the Making Connections data set for ten U.S. cities](#) (this is a data set collected on behalf of the Annie E. Casey Foundation—over the period 2002-2007—these are quite recent data) I find that for households in near poverty, neighborhood distress over a period of three years is significantly and negatively associated with the likelihood of 'very good or excellent health' of the child. Children who are exposed to more severe neighborhood distress are less likely to enjoy very good or excellent health. Children significantly feel the adverse effects on health of prolonged exposure to distressful conditions in the neighborhood, such as litter or trash on the street, abandoned or boarded-up buildings, criminal gangs, drug dealers, drug users or drunks, and prostitution.

### **Social Justice and Health**

Most importantly, social Justice is good for your health! Many studies show that social justice has beneficial effects on health. Racially and economically integrated communities are likely to experience more social justice, and hence are likely to enjoy better health.

At the national level, several studies (both in the US and abroad) indicate that people of all classes enjoy better health in more egalitarian societies. Experts agree that we will live a healthier, longer life if we are a part of a tightly cohesive, egalitarian society.

According to a leading public health researcher, Richard Wilkinson, the author of the book [\*Unhealthy Societies: The Afflictions of Inequality\*](#), societies that become more egalitarian see a dramatic increase in life expectancy—as happened in war-time Britain. The gap between the per capita GDP of the US and Costa Rica is enormous (about \$21,000), yet life expectancy is longer in Costa Rica—which is a more egalitarian society.

And societies that undergo a widening of income disparities experience a breakdown in community cohesion and are likely to see a sharp increase in deaths from coronary heart disease. According to Wilkinson, chronic stress arising from inequality and consciousness of one’s low status in society could be a physical pathway from economic inequality to poor health.

Indeed pioneering research by epidemiologist [Michael Marmot](#) suggests that social inequality is the cause of ill-health in advanced industrial nations. According to him, the psychological experience of inequality has a negative effect on health and longevity. In his book [\*The Status Syndrome: How Social Standing Affects Our Health and Longevity\*](#), he provides his conclusions based on 30 years of research conducted all over the world—that the degree of control we have over our lives (what I alluded to before as efficacy), and the opportunities for full social participation are crucial for health, well-being and longevity.

There is evidence in the United States that racial discrimination, whether encountered from real estate agents, landlords, employers, the police, or security guards at a store, has physiological effects—it raises blood pressure and releases stress hormones (PolicyLink; MacArthur Foundation).

The relevance of Wilkinson’s and Marmot’s research for housing and neighborhood policies in America is obvious. Our policies should allow residents ample opportunities for full social participation; we should also seek better community cohesion. And these can be achieved through integrated and inclusive communities. The relevance of these studies for broader economic policy is also obvious—we should strive to be a more egalitarian society and should certainly eliminate the unjust sources of inequity such as economic fraud and unjustifiably huge executive compensations.

Richard Wilkinson’s research also shows that it is *relative* deprivation, and not absolute income, that is a major determinant of health in developed countries. The U.S. income distribution has become more unequal in the past thirty years. This is in contrast with the thirty years after World War II when income disparities were narrowing, and the prosperity was more evenly shared. Since 1995, most of the productivity gains of the US economy have gone to the richest 10 percent of Americans.

We need to make work pay decently; we need to protect and enhance the real value of the national minimum wage, have effective safety nets, and increase the number of good jobs for American workers.

## **Mental Health**

Do you know that more than a quarter of Americans (more than 25%), experience mental problems in any given year, compared with fewer than 10 per cent in Japan, Germany, Sweden and Italy? (Roger Wilkinson and Kate Pickett, [The Spirit Level](#)).

Wilkinson has shown that in countries where income is more evenly distributed, citizens live longer; and there are lower rates of obesity, delinquency, depression, and teenage pregnancy than in richer countries where wealth is more concentrated.

Why does social justice matter so much for health? It is as if social injustice blocks the flow of life energy—a flow that is so essential for excellent health. According to the physician and New Age thinker, Dr. Deepak Chopra—author of [Ageless Body, Timeless Mind](#)--harsh, tense, conflicted behavior disturbs the flow of life energy. Disease is often linked to a disturbed or blocked flow of energy. Societies riddled with social injustice and unjust economic disparities tend to be harsh and tense—and this is true across all economic classes.

Wilkinson's research also found that crimes involving violence are most closely related to economic inequality. He argues that for members of a society, for young males in particular, the lack of a legitimate path to upward mobility such as education and jobs, and the daily experience of living at the bottom of the social ladder can cause rage leading to violence.

In a society where one out of three black males is likely to be in prison at least once in his lifetime, a society with the highest rate of incarceration (by far) among all modern industrial countries of the world, all members of the society are touched by the brutality and harshness inherent in these statistics. It is no wonder then that even when the U.S. spends the most per person on healthcare among all industrial nations, it has some of the worst health outcomes.

In America, [two-thirds of all ex-prisoners are rearrested within three years of being released](#). And with each entry into prison they become more brutal within a brutal prison system for which we all must take responsibility. This cycle of brutality must end; otherwise, it will make us a more conflicted society, and an insensitive society, with inevitable negative effects on the mental and physical health of our entire population.

### **The Rich are also affected**

We often think that economic inequality in a society is bad only for the lower classes—but it is bad for the affluent too. Based on thirty years of research, [Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett, in a new book, The Spirit Level](#), demonstrate that the super-rich in very unequal societies cannot entirely escape from the ill-effects of poor health among the masses. In addition, they become pill-popping, overmedicated sufferers of a host of psychosomatic illnesses that serve to make their physicians very rich. They may live longer than the lower classes, but they don't live happy, healthy lives. We see this in the lifestyles of the rich and famous—the dependence on psychiatrists and therapists, need for mood-stabilizers and drugs like Prozac, use of illegal drugs, alcoholism, serial visits to rehab spas, status anxiety, and the general

misery of surplus. So Richistan (the land of the Super-Rich) is not a happy place in unequal societies. These are the staples of Richistan—pills in a variety of colors.

Thus, we see that several studies confirm that social justice is important for the good health of all members of a society. It gives me a profound sense of honor to be in a room filled with fair housing advocates and practitioners in the real estate field—you touch the lives of real people every day through your work. Every time you are instrumental in obtaining justice for someone who came to you with a fair housing complaint, every time you treat your customers fairly, and make it possible for them to obtain housing of their choice, in neighborhoods of their choice, you are promoting social justice. Justice isn't something that is handed out only by judges and courts, although they are important too. Justice is also our experiences in daily living—how we are treated when we seek a home, a loan, when a renter claims his security deposit back, when a family seeks admission in a school for their child, when a homeowner buys insurance, and when a person seeks legal redress. All of that counts towards the presence or the lack of justice in our society. You have a profound impact on what our society is and can be—you can through your entire good work let America *be America*.

## **6. Segregation Cordons Off Spaces within the Nation Where Lower Standards, and Degraded Human Values are Tolerated**

### **Brutality and Segregation**

There is a direct link between segregation and the high incarceration rates for African Americans and other groups of color. Sheryll Cashin in her important book [\*The Failures of Integration: How Race and Class are Undermining the American Dream\*](#), writes (and I quote):

“Because it is easier to inflict harsh ‘get tough’ punishments on marginalized lower-income people in a stratified society, the hypersegregation of black urban communities enables the pursuit of policies that disproportionately impact their residents.” End quote.

These policies such as unequal sentencing for different types of drugs, racial profiling by law enforcement that results in more searches and detentions of African Americans, and lack of employment opportunities in low-income, segregated neighborhoods have led to very high incarceration rates for African Americans such that:

[Today African American men have a one in three chance of being imprisoned at some point in their lives. If these trends continue, by the year 2020, two out of three African American men between the ages of 18 and 24 will be in prison.](#) Latinos also face high rates of incarceration compared to whites.

As [Sheryll Cashin](#), [Douglas Massey](#), [Nancy Denton](#), and many others, and recently [David Simon](#) (the news reporter and creator of “[The Wire](#)” on HBO) have pointed out, it is only because we as a society can keep these problems out of sight of the mainstream—in hypersegregated pockets of spaces in our metro areas, and in prisons that the mainstream does not have to see—that the inhumanness and brutality are allowed to exist and escalate. Integrated neighborhoods will-- first, create better job

opportunities, role models, and a culture of legitimacy that will prevent criminal behaviors in the first place, and second, they will result in a more humane and accountable criminal justice system when the system operates in full view of all types of Americans in integrated neighborhoods.

### **Separate and Unequal**

Segregation makes it politically easy to pursue policies that differentially impact segregated minorities—like African Americans, Native Americans, and Latinos. These policies include:

- Disinvestments in minority-segregated neighborhoods such that it results in reduced funding and staffing for schools.
- Reduced public services in such neighborhoods, such as street cleaning.
- Cuts in funding for social programs that residents of such neighborhoods typically rely on.
- Closing down of hospitals, clinics, recreational centers, and other social institutions in these neighborhoods.
- Indifference to problems that disproportionately affect residents of minority-segregated areas (such as the HIV/AIDS epidemic and gun violence).
- Unequal sentencing laws for different types of drug offences.
- Racial profiling by law enforcement.
- Lack of mainstream financial services.

In the context of the current economic crisis we should be reminded that it is segregation that made redlining possible, and it is segregation that has made the recent reverse redlining possible, whereby minority communities were targeted for abusive mortgage lending practices. Segregation permits the existence of a dual financial system—one for segregated minority neighborhoods and one for the rest of the nation. It permits dual retail markets—we see high-priced and *lower quality* grocery stores in segregated neighborhoods. A study by the Brookings Institution, titled [\*From Poverty, Opportunity: Putting the Market to Work for Lower Income Families\*](#), highlights that residents of disadvantaged neighborhoods have to pay more for practically everything—including basics like bread and milk.

Segregation permits the existence of one sector where there are hardly any consumer protections, and where the usual assurances and securities of the national system do not apply. Liberty and justice cannot be obtained for all as long as we have residential segregation.

And, the problem with allowing lower standards in one sector is that, they percolate to other segments of the system too. There is a fundamental truth in Dr. King’s assertion that the quality of justice is *indivisible*—injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We have seen that market misbehavior in the subprime mortgage sector, which was initially mostly in minority communities, has now percolated to all sectors of the industry and has become a threat to our entire economic system.

## 7. Fair Housing for Better Human Capital Development

I shall focus here on two aspects of human capital—verbal ability and memory capacity.

### Verbal ability

Recent research—a longitudinal study-- that tracked a sample of African American children for up to seven years shows the effect of exposure to severely disadvantaged neighborhoods (often segregated minority neighborhoods) on the verbal ability of children. This is research by [Robert Sampson, Patrick Sharkey, and Steven Raudenbush](#), published last year in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*<sup>4</sup>. This study found that residing in a severely disadvantaged neighborhood impedes the development of academically relevant verbal ability in children; and that these effects linger even when the children leave such neighborhoods. The negative effect on verbal ability persists for several years, possibly a life time.

### Stress and Memory Capacity

Three years ago, Martha Farah (a researcher at the University of Pennsylvania) found through laboratory measurement that children from poor families had lower memory capacity—or working memory—than children from middle class families. Recently, research published only this month in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* by my colleagues at Cornell University, [Gary Evans and Michelle Schamberg](#) explores the details of this relationship between poverty and memory<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Robert J. Sampson, Patrick Sharkey, and Stephen W. Raudenbush, “Durable Effects of Concentrated Disadvantage on Verbal Ability among African American Children,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 105 (2008): 845-852. This study presents longitudinal evidence from a large-scale study of >2,000 African American children ages 6–12 living in Chicago, along with their caretakers, who were followed wherever they moved in the U.S. for up to 7 years. The results indicate that living in a severely disadvantaged neighborhood reduces the later verbal ability of black children on average by 4 points, a magnitude that rivals missing a year or more of schooling.

<sup>5</sup> Evans, Gary W. and Michelle A. Schamberg (2009) “Childhood Poverty, Chronic Stress, and Adult Working Memory,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 106 (16), pp. 6545-6549.

This study on young white adults (17-year olds) in New York State found that the relationship between poverty and memory capacity is mediated through stress faced in childhood. Chronic stress faced by children in early childhood (and poor children face more stress) appears to be the reason why children from poor families have reduced memory capacity compared to children from middle class families.

While this study did not explore the causes of stress among poor children, we know from other studies that those who live in concentrated poverty encounter a number of stresses from the neighborhood environment such as noise, crime, pollution, trash and litter on streets, and lack of safety. Segregation or racial isolation by itself is also a source of stress, as is a repeated experience of discrimination in society.

Experts like Michael Marmot have found that being at the bottom of the social hierarchy is a source of stress; children are socially sensitive, and aware of the low social status accorded to their families—even as parents might try to protect them from this knowledge.

Hence, exposure to less stressful neighborhood environments and greater economic equality, both, can be expected to lower stress in children, and improve their memory capacities later in life. Residential integration creates both these conditions, and thus has the potential to enhance human capital.

We already know about the importance of verbal ability and memory for a child to do well in school, to go on for higher education, to get a good job—especially in the service sector. Therefore, the ability to move out of severely disadvantaged neighborhoods to neighborhoods of opportunity is important for human capital development.

#### **8. Diverse Communities are Important for the Competitiveness of a Region in the National and Global Economy**

The presence of distressed neighborhoods in a metropolitan area is a drag on the local economy. It discourages new investment, raises the cost of social services, raises crime-related costs, and shrinks the tax base. If these neighborhoods are revived as stable, integrated neighborhoods of opportunity—neighborhoods of choice and connection-- the competitiveness of the regional economy will improve dramatically.

We see that when skilled, talented workers are drawn to a region, the tax base expands, and the international competitiveness of goods and services produced in the region is strengthened. Residential integration, by improving the quality of education and nurturing the values of tolerance and diversity, is expected to bring talent to a region. Both residential and school integration can help overcome the digital divide on racial lines.

[Richard Florida](#) has written about the importance of the Creative Class for productivity and competitiveness. It is a class of people that is paid to do creative work, and includes scientists, engineers, artists, designers, musicians, and knowledge-based professionals; and it makes up nearly a third of the workforce.

He also writes about the characteristics of a region that attract members of the creative class. These characteristics are NOT exclusionary zoning, they are not intolerance or bigotry. In fact, they are just the opposite—inclusivity, tolerance, and nurturing of diversity. According to Richard Florida the creative class is nurtured in tolerant, inclusive, and diverse communities.

Florida writes about the 3 Ts of Economic Development—Technology, Talent and Tolerance. Integrated neighborhoods foster all three.

Let me read an interesting paragraph from Richard Florida’s book ([\*The Rise of the Creative Class\*](#)). He writes:

“In traveling to cities for my speaking engagements, I have come up with a handy metric to distinguish between those cities that are a part of the Creative Age and those that are not. If city leaders tell me to wear whatever I want ..... and encourage me to talk about the role of diversity and gays, I am confident their city will be able to attract the Creative Class and prosper in this emerging era. If on the other hand, they ask me to “please wear a business suit and tie” .... and ask me to “play down the stuff about bohemians and gays,” I can be reasonably sure they will have a hard time making it.” End quote.

To this I will add—if a city is not actively promoting diversity, is not actually *courting* diversity – courting members of all race and ethnic groups—African Americans, Native Americans, Latinos, whites, Asian Americans and others, persons with disabilities, immigrants, gays and lesbians, a diverse range of entrepreneurs and artists, it is not going to make it. These regions will see a loss of population, a decline in investment, a decline in tax base, and residential and commercial vacancies. Cities and regions will have to be diverse, inclusive, and truly modern in their value system if they are to be competitive in this modern era.

We see that areas around the country with a reputation for racial bigotry or other forms of bigotry have become areas in decline; they are losing population, seeing steep declines in home values, and losing jobs as well. A reputation for bigotry discourages minorities – even those not *directly* targeted by the bigotry; and it turns off a majority of whites too!

Unless their policies change drastically, places like that are not going to attract the creative class. State and local governments are going to have to respond to the values and preferences of the “Yes We Can” majority.

Michigan can turn around too by pursuing dynamic policies to attract talent and enterprise—and it can do so by promoting inclusivity, tolerance and diversity.

Residential integration lets us honor and value all of our human resources; and we can’t afford to waste any in these intensely competitive times. We can’t allow so many of our students to languish in classrooms where learning is not possible because children fear for their safety, are too hungry to learn, or teachers have stopped caring. We can’t allow our youth to fall prey to petty crime and then embark on a long journey of incarceration, release, and re-entry into prison because the neighborhoods they live

in provide no opportunities for legal work for them. We cannot allow the accident of location to prevent any American from being all that he can be.

The share of non-whites in the U.S. workforce is growing. Currently 34 percent of the workforce is non-white. And by 2039, the majority of the workforce (those between the ages of 18 and 64 years) will be non-white. Improving the educational quality for people of color from the earliest stages of education all the way to advanced education is going to be key to improving the productivity of U.S. labor. And, of course, where white students face educational quality deficits, as they do in poor white neighborhoods, we need to devote resources to improving their educational quality too.

And ideally, America will work best when children of all colors study alongside each other, because they are America's children with a common thirst for knowledge and a common desire to succeed—a common allegiance to the Flag and a common faith in the innate goodness and grace of America.

For the remainder of this speech I shall talk about a new idea I have to

### **Promote Integration, Smart Growth and Environmental Values, Synergistically—**

**I am calling this [Fair, Green, Smart](#)**

Dr. King said: “We must use time creatively, in the knowledge that the time is always ripe to do right.”

I see that the time is ripe today for forming coalitions, and taking a creative and whole approach to human advancement in housing and its surroundings—to have housing planned on the principles of fairness, preservation of our environment, and wisely using resources to create affordable and sustainable living spaces.

Let me quote from the Final Report of the [National Commission on Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity](#):

“No single agency or approach can change the face of our communities. We must develop and support a new collaborative spirit to bring muscle to the strategies we envision. .... [The new approach] will seek to involve constituencies at the local level that can bring new ideas and new energy to revitalize and empower our communities to [promote residential integration](#).”

In the spirit of this call from the National Commission, I propose a new coalition between the civil rights movement, the environmental movement, and the smart growth movement to work in the field of housing and community development.

It was exactly a year ago—on Earth Day 2008—that I wrote an op-ed in which I proposed the Fair Green Smart standard, and that article is in your conference packets. On Earth Day 2009, I have the honor of speaking about it to this distinguished audience.

The Fair Green Smart standard combines high standards for fair housing, with standards for green technology, and principles of smart growth or development, including housing affordability.

Now how many people here have heard of the [LEED Rating System](#)?

It stands for The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System™

Now, I am proposing a new standard of Fair, Green, Smart that could initially build on LEED, since LEED is already well-known and widely used.

Imagine a LEED + Fair for a building or development that meets standards of green technology and fair housing.

A LEED + Fair + Fair for a building or development that meets standards of green technology, fair housing, and fair labor standards.

A LEED + Fair + Smart -- for a building or development that meets standards of green technology, fair housing, and adheres to principles of smart growth (such as intensive/efficient development of land (anti-sprawl), walkability, mixed-use, and affordable).

LEED rates performance in five key areas of human and environmental health:

sustainable site development

water savings,

energy efficiency

materials selection

indoor environmental quality.

Now imagine a “Fair” rating that covers:

Marketing and outreach efforts to protected groups

Racial/Ethnic Mix of actual clientele

Results of periodic fair housing audits

Consider a “Smart” rating that covers:

Degree of mixed-income housing

Affordability index

Walkability and other user-friendly amenities

Access to mass transit

Mixed-use development—friendly uses like grocery stores, banks, small business retail.

Intensity of land-use

Noise abatement

What are the Applications of a Fair Green Smart Rating?

For obtaining building and development permits from local governments—expedited permits.

To attract customers—residents of homes and residential developments

To attract investors—Socially Responsible Investment (SRI) community.

To obtain funding—from foundation, federal government, etc.

These trends are already underway. Americans support green technology and the greening of our entire economy. Surveys reveal a much greater racial tolerance among Americans and an across the board rejection of bigotry. Surveys also show that Americans want more integration than is currently there<sup>6</sup>. And homebuyer surveys reveal a shift in preferences, in favor of smaller houses, on smaller lots (one-sixth of an acre or smaller), and a greater acceptance of attached housing (like condos, townhouses, and apartments)<sup>7</sup>. The time is ripe to launch a Fair Green Smart standard for housing and for residential developments.

This idea is still in a conceptual development stage.

I know there are planners here, possibly development consultants, and of course, there are fair housing advocates. What do you think?

I would like to get some feedback; and here is my contact information—you can send me an e-mail to discuss these ideas further – and perhaps we can start giving concrete shape to these ideas.

The next time anyone says: “that is a green building; or it is LEED Platinum or LEED Gold,” you should ask: “**And is it also Fair?**”

A former U.S. President famously said:

“There is nothing that is wrong with America that can’t be fixed by **what is right about America.**”

And it is my belief that the remaining scourge of residential segregation will be fixed with a new integrationist movement that builds synergistic coalitions with the environmental movement and the smart growth movement. And this America will *Be America.*

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<sup>6</sup> Surveys reported in Farley, Reynolds, Elaine L. Fielding, and Maria Krysan (1997) “The Residential Preferences of Blacks and Whites: A Four-Metropolis Analysis,” *Housing Policy Debate* 8 (4), pp. 763-800.

<sup>7</sup> Arthur C. Nelson, University of Utah.