

EDITORIAL

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Big Growth Rate In U.S. Rural Areas In 1990s

By Jim Lobe WASHINGTON (IPS) — The population of most rural areas in the United States grew steadily during the past decade as a result of advances in transportation and technology and changes in the country's demographics, according to a new report released by Washington-based Population Reference Bureau (PRB). Rural areas gained almost four million additional residents between 1990 and mid-1998. That is an increase of more than seven percent. The United States has been a predominantly metropolitan nation since the early 20th century. And today, nearly 80 percent of the US popu-

lation — or 216 million people — live in cities or nearby suburbs, according to the report. Historically, metropolitan areas have attracted large numbers of rural dwellers and immigrants as manufacturing, business and service companies have replaced agriculture and mining as the main sources of employment. These same businesses initially set up plants in rural areas in the southern part of the country, where labor and other production costs were substantially less. A lot of industries that move to rural areas need the wage differential in order to stay in the U.S., Crime and environmental degradation

also made cities and many suburbs less attractive, according to the report. At the same time, improvements in transportation and road systems, as well as advances in communications technology made it possible for people to consider moving and working in rural areas. Critical to the new "deconcentration" trend were technological innovations, particularly in communications and transportation. New roads and airports — and the improvement of the existing transportation infrastructure — have made rural areas much more accessible to commuters, while new communications technologies, espe-

cially e-mail and the Internet have made it less necessary for people to work in an office five days a week. Rural areas have also attracted an increasing number of retirees who are seeking more relaxed lifestyles and lower tax rates, the report said. And, as more people moved to the country, new jobs such as plumbers, carpenters and home-care occupations, have been created. The policy implications of deconcentration are far-reaching. New plants and homes in rural areas are putting more farmland out of production. With people moving into rural areas, farmland gets fragmented and the

farms themselves are pressured to move further out, because the land becomes so valuable. The trend toward rural living also has its environmental effects. Septic sanitation systems in many rural counties are overburdened, while the influx of new residents created new pressures on the fragile ecosystem. In recreational and retirement places known for their water views of rivers and lakes, wetlands are usually nearby, and too much building can disrupt them. Recreational and retirement counties were the fastest growing of all rural counties, according to the report.

Jesse Ventura Can Dish It Out:

Jesse Ventura is a very honest man. He says what's on his mind and that is refreshing. Do I believe exactly what he believes? No. But that's hardly the issue. The real question in the whole furor over Ventura's interview with Playboy is whether or not the American people can handle honesty. I think they can. There's been a big controversy over his remarks about the Tailhook incident, and everywhere I go people ask me about it. Here's what I tell them. I do not think that men should act out in sexually hurtful ways. I am completely opposed to that. What Governor Ventura was saying is his comments is that he can understand how men who have been trained to carry out what you might call "less humanistic" activities find themselves carrying over those "less than humanistic" activities to social situations. Do I condone that? Absolutely not. Can I understand that? Do I see the point that Governor Ventura was trying to make? I do, indeed. But I have to add that, as a woman, I have been most offended by men who give the illusion or have a veneer of being politically correct, but do brutal and abusive things at the same

time. Were Governor Ventura's remarks controversial? Of course they were. He's a controversial man. The American people can handle controversial? Of course they were. He's a controversial man. The American people can handle controversy. We don't have to protect the American people or the Reform Party from controversy. The American people are grownups. They can listen to divergent ideas on all kinds of issues and make their own choices. They don't need to be babied. They can handle it. A big part of the media spin is that Ventura's remarks show that all the Reform Party does is attract nuts. It's that all the media likes to cover are people they can depict as nuts. We actually attract decent people all over this country that want to do something about political corruption, and Reform has succeeded sufficiently to attract all kinds of folks. We've elected a governor of an important state. We are the major minor party in the United States of America. We've only been in existence for two years, but we're in the competition for 2000. We're a third party movement with staying power.

"On our Way to Beautiful"

An Inspirational Commentary on Life, Culture and Politics By Yolanda Young If We'd All Just Listened To Our Mothers (NNPA) —

My good friend, Gus Johnson, listened to his mother and landed the career of a lifetime. He was supposed to be on his way to law school with the rest of the suckers at Howard University, but a conversation with his mother changed all that. The summer before his senior year, everything changed. According to Gus, "I was participating in the Boys Club's mentoring program. I spent a day with a lawyer, and at the end of the day, I knew I didn't want to be a lawyer." After confiding this to his mother, she offered some words of wisdom that have stayed with Gus to this day. "My mom said, 'Son, whatever you do, make sure it's something that you jump out the bed in the morning to do, and if you had to, you'd do it for free.' That was the defining moment of my life because it got me thinking in an entirely different way." Instead of filling his days with the horrors of law firm billable hours, Gus

gets to live out an extension of his childhood. As a sports commentator and play-by-play announcer for CBS Sports, Johnson's days are filled with the excitement and euphoria that could only come from watching NFL Football, March Madness, or the Olympics. Gus always loved sports. On his high school basketball team jersey, he wore hometown great Isiah Thomas' number 11. "My dad (Augustine Johnson) use to lay the floor at Cobo Hall for the Detroit Pistons. He was a facilities worker, so I got a chance to

when I was a kid to go down there." Gus counts the Olympics and meeting Bryant Gumbel as the biggest things to happen to him so far. "To see this collection of athletes that aren't getting paid, competing in these obscure sports in the Winter Olympics. To see the passion and love they have for what they're doing. Not only because it's their sport but also because they're representing their country. To see the drama that unfolds and to be apart of that and be the voice that broadcasts those stories was the highlight of not only my career, but my life."

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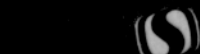


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