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The Portland Observer Black History Month

Opinion articles do not necessarily represent the views of the Portland Observer. We welcome reader essays, photos and story ideas. Submit to news@portlandobserver.com.



Segregation is Still Alive and Well

Separate

regardless of their ethnic group, live to 'stick with our own', however, Anyone who lives in - or has in neighborhoods that are over- has its drawbacks.

visited - Milwaukee, New Jersey,

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communities foster divisions

BY JUDGE GREG MATHIS

In the 80s, America's neighborhoods became more diverse as whites, blacks and other ethnic groups began to live in close proximity to one

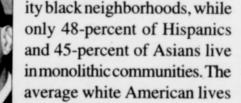
another. It was as if the ideals of the Civil Rights movement were finally coming to life.

Thirty or so years later, things have changed, and not for the better. As far as integration goes, this country has taken a step backward.

Analysis of the most recent Census data tells us that segregation is alive and well. In fact, most people,

whelmingly made up of people who look just like them. Blacks are the most segregated

minority group in this country; more than 60-percent live in major-



in a neighborhood that is 74-

percent white.

60s, though some of the deep seeded feelings and policies that created that system still affect us all today. Rather, many Americans tend to self-segregate.

over themselves to live in all white communities. Our natural tendency

rated; that division creates an unfamiliarity with the beliefs and culture of others. This lack of knowledge creates an environment where stereotypes and racial and ethnic bias thrive.

Additionally, segregated neighborhoods lead to separate, but wholly unequal, services. In communities where the majority of the residents are minorities, there is less This isn't the segregation of the funding available for schools. As a result, our children receive substandard instruction.

Indeed, middle class black children living in majority black neighborhoods are less prepared for col-It's not as if blacks are falling lege than lower income white children living in majority white communities.

When racial groups are sepa- Detroit, Chicago and New York will not be surprised that these cities lead the nation in segregation. The mayors of these metropolitan areas should form a task force and work together, along with the federal government, to address the divisions that segregation creates.

> From purposefully creating diverse, mixed-income neighborhoods to developing a school finance system that equally funds each child, there are numerous steps cities can take to lessen the negative impacts of racial segregation.

Judge Greg Mathis is a longtime advocate for equal justice. His life story of a street youth who rose from jail to judge has provided hope to millions.



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