



**PREPARED FOR THE
W.K. KELLOGG FOUNDATION**
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Michigan Roundtable for Diversity & Inclusion



STRUGGLES AND TRIUMPHS OF PEOPLES OF COLOR IN MICHIGAN

A Collection of Personal Essays



WORKING TO ACHIEVE RACIAL EQUITY

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation is strongly committed to putting racial inequities behind us by first putting them in front of us—a strategy we call America Healing. Through understanding, awareness and collaborative action, we know that we as a nation can overcome the disparities in education, health and economic security that confront so many children and families of color, by working together to create the conditions within communities that ensure equitable opportunities for all. America Healing is a long-term commitment, through which we partner with stakeholders at the national, state, local and tribal levels to support innovative solutions, positive ideas and constructive interventions that address the legacy and consequences of bias to improve outcomes for all children.

We believe that any successful movement to heal our nation’s racialized past must be in full partnership with the community, and include the voices and participation of all people. And within our home state of Michigan, we hope to inspire people to take action to change hearts, minds, laws and systems to forge a healthier pathway for our state.

The concept of a racialized history acknowledges that our nation, its regions and states, were formed during an era in which a dominant social paradigm and belief system was one of racial hierarchy. Physical characteristics such as skin tone or color were used to determine “value” and to distribute opportunity – such as access to housing, employment, education, health care and legal protection – as well as the rights and privileges of citizenship. Every county, city, tribe, state, indeed neighborhood in America has a unique racialized history which bestowed privilege and denied opportunity. This history is best understood through human and community stories of cooperation, resilience, triumph, pain and perseverance.

Based on this history, the following report, “Struggles and Triumphs of Peoples of Color in Michigan,” highlights common issues and barriers that people of color face today within Michigan. Armed with this knowledge, it is our hope that readers will take this opportunity to learn more about the racialized history and its consequences in our home state of Michigan, and engage in actions to move us to an equitable future for all our children.

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INTRODUCTION

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“If you seek a pleasant peninsula, look about you.”

Michigan’s state motto reflects what has drawn people to the state throughout time. The Ojibway were drawn from the east to Michigan’s abundant natural resources before Europeans ever touched these shores.

These same natural resources, and later industrial resources that grew out of these, drew others to Michigan after the French explored the state. Through past eras of farming, lumbering, mining and the continuing era of industry, Michigan drew peoples from many parts of the world and many walks of life in the hopes of greater opportunities.

However, not all found equal treatment in Michigan. A history of discriminatory policies and practices, some based on ethnicity or skin color, has cast a long shadow over the state—and the nation as well. African Americans who trickled north to escape slavery during the 19th century, and then poured north later during the Great Migration, faced discrimination upon settling in this state. Though different from the discrimination in the South, African Americans experienced difficulties getting loans, good farmland and good housing. This was also the experience of other groups of color. The Ojibway were swindled out of their lands through broken treaty agreements, tortured out of their culture in boarding schools and faced challenges in finding employment and housing in the cities in the 20th century. Latinos who came north initially as migrant farm workers were seen as expendable workers who could be sent back to South and Central America when they were no longer needed.

In more modern times, Asian Americans in Michigan have faced surprising rates of poverty and discrimination, as exemplified by the murder of Vincent Chin discussed later in this report. Arab Americans faced similar discrimination, especially after the Sept. 11, 2001, bombing of the World Trade Center.

Race is a social construct, not a biological one, and its legacy of inequality is real. It has also changed over time. In the early days of the United States, only those of British or German descent were considered “white.”

Today, our definition of who is “white” and who is “a person of color” is much broader. This report focuses on those people of color who still see significant disparities in treatment and outcomes. The report consists largely of accounts penned by authors representing different ethnic communities. Many also have doctoral degrees and experience in studying their communities. This report is also bolstered by books by authors of color speaking of their communities, and on Michigan’s history in general. The spirit of this report is drawn from two books, the first is Howard Zinn’s *A People’s History of the United States*, which reveals the often untold history of people who have faced discrimination and oppression in this country, and their efforts to survive and thrive. The second is Nell Irvin Painter’s *A History of White People*, which details the evolution of the concept of race, who has and has not been classified as “white” over time and the reasons and ramifications of this classification.

There are common issues that communities of color have faced in Michigan. Readers are invited to explore the bibliographies to learn more about specific communities and issues. Terms for the same peoples are sometimes used interchangeably by authors, underlying the continued difficulty in trying to find a universally acceptable term when discussing people from certain ethnic backgrounds.

2 AFRICAN AMERICAN SETTLERS OF MECOSTA, ISABELLA AND MONTCALM COUNTIES

Marvin Lett, President, Old Settlers Society of Isabella County

Drawn by the promise of “bounty land” in the mid-1800s, several families, mainly from southern Ohio and West Virginia, migrated to Michigan. They were mostly farmers, accustomed to hard work, and willing to face an uncertain future. Many were related by blood or marriage and of mixed heritage—black, white and Native American. And they were free, not slaves who had been freed or on the run.

Reaching what are now the counties of Mecosta, Isabella and Montcalm, they decided to stay, claim the land and work it. Known today as the “Old Settlers,” they are considered to be the first pioneers in Michigan (although Native Americans were already in the area). As the newcomers settled down, found desirable land and staked out claims, they sent word back to friends and relatives in Ohio.

As their numbers grew, they spread out in the area and soon began to encounter white people who had also settled in the region for the same reasons. Some of these whites were not friendly. Worse, some were hostile and envious of the success of the mixed heritage people, whom they saw as “blacks.”

Hoping to frighten the blacks into leaving, some whites formed secret underground groups similar to the Ku Klux Klan. Despite ugly incidents, the “Old Settlers” and their descendants stood their ground, and eventually the secret groups dissipated.

Inevitably—as often happens when groups of people who see themselves as “different” are living side by side—there was mingling and cooperation between blacks, whites and Native Americans. There was intermarriage as well. During World War II, many people from these rural counties went to work in Detroit and other industrialized urban areas in Michigan. The war effort helped even more to forge bonds between groups of people who once saw themselves as “different.”

Today, their descendants recognize that they have the same concerns, problems, worries, aches and pains—and opportunities as well. Perhaps more than their parents and grandparents understood, they realize that they can accomplish more when they combine their efforts.

This does not mean that everybody has gotten along, or that it was or has become perfect. However, by living and working in the proximity for more than 150 years, they realize that they share common concerns and in many cases, relatives and families as well. They sense that they are, in fact, a community—blacks, whites, Native Americans, Latinos and others, a uniquely American mixture of “different” people who are not so different after all.

AFRICAN AMERICANS IN SOUTHEAST MICHIGAN: A BRIEF HISTORY

De Witt S. Dykes, Jr., Associate Professor, History Department, Oakland University

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African Americans have been a part of Michigan's history since French fur traders and explorers first touched its shores. African Americans moved north seeking freedom and prosperity but found that they had to fight hard in Michigan and other northern states to be treated as equals.

THE EARLY YEARS: 1630s—1850s

African Americans began coming to Michigan as early as the early 17th century, with French and British fur traders and explorers, and settled in the Detroit area.¹ Michigan did flirt with slavery in its early days as a territory but slavery never reached the same level as it did in the South. Federal census records note a small increase from 24 slaves in 1810 to 32 in 1830. Large numbers of African Americans came to Michigan during the Antebellum Period, due to a strong Quaker community in Cass County, and with Quaker members extending across the state to Wayne County.² Michigan was prominent in the Underground Railroad, even though as a whole it helped less than one percent of slaves escape.

Detroit was a prominent stop along the route, with slaves moving from there into Canada or by boat to rugged Northern Michigan from the 1830s through the 1860s. It is estimated that fugitive slaves made up less than 5 percent of the total African American population in the pre-Civil War period. More African Americans were freed or quasi-freed African Americans who came north, many from Ohio and Indiana who came to escape overcrowding and racial hostilities.³

From the 1830s African American men and women worked to create and maintain "a racially autonomous institutional infrastructure of churches, schools, clubs, mutual benefit societies and businesses" to guarantee the survival of and to meet the needs of the African American Community.⁴ Churches were organized as Second Baptist Church of Detroit between 1836 and 1839; Bethel African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, Detroit about 1839; Brown Chapel AME Church, Ypsilanti, 1847; AME Church, Pontiac, 1861; Trinity AME, Lansing, 1866; Quinn Chapel AME in Flint, 1875; and many others in later years. For many years, churches served not only as places of religious worship but also as meeting places and community centers.

The total population of African Americans in Michigan in 1850 was 2,583 of which 587 (23.7 percent) lived in Detroit. About half of the



¹ Lewis Walker, Benjamin C. Wilson and Linwood B. Cousins. *African Americans in Michigan*. Discovering the Peoples of Michigan Series (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2001): 4.

² ____, *African Americans in Michigan*, 6.

³ ____, *African Americans in Michigan*, 10-12.

⁴ Darlene Clark Hine, *Black Women in the Middle West: The Michigan Experience* (Lansing: Michigan Historical Society, 1990): 1.

African Americans in the state, 1,292, lived in 14 pre-modern counties that approximate the current geographical area of Southeast Michigan.^{5,6}

An 1885 Michigan civil rights law had limited effect. It eliminated racial discrimination in opera houses and theaters by 1890 in Detroit but not in the rest of Michigan.⁷ In 1890, the *Ferguson v. Gies* court case barred restaurants from refusing service to African Americans, but many restaurants continued to discriminate against blacks until the 1950s.

DISCRIMINATION AND OPPRESSION

White Americans throughout the United States assumed that African Americans were inferior to whites and did not deserve equal access to jobs, opportunities or housing. Though whites accepted the end of slavery nationwide, they expected racial separation to continue in housing and public accommodations. Blacks received limited or no public education in separate schools; occupations were largely limited to unskilled physical labor or service work for men and domestic work for women. Whites preferred to keep the black population small. Blacks were viewed as unwanted labor competition and undesirable neighbors. There was frequent negative racial stereotyping in the media and in public discourse, derogatory names were considered appropriate and people were usually judged by race rather than by characteristics of the individual.

Random and unprovoked violence was frequently aimed at African Americans, who were then blamed for causing it. Race riots involving white assaults on blacks and black-owned or occupied property occurred in the mid-19th and 20th centuries. From the 1920s through the 1950s, blacks were harassed and prevented from buying homes or renting apartments in white neighborhoods (Alexander Turner, Ossian Sweet, Orsel McGhee, etc.). Whites used violence and threats of violence in an unsuccessful attempt to keep blacks from occupying the Sojourner Truth public housing project in 1942. Ku Klux Klan activity was an open threat to blacks, immigrants, Roman Catholics and others from the 1920s through the 1970s.

NAACP AND URBAN LEAGUE: WORKING FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN RIGHTS

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), started in New York in 1910, established a Detroit chapter in 1911. Using lawsuits, lobbying and protest activities, it played a major role in fighting racial discrimination in housing, employment, public accommodations and in attempts to improve police-community relations.^{8,9}

The Detroit Urban League (DUL) was started in 1916 as a response to increased migration of African Americans to Detroit and other northern cities. Employing a social work approach of persuasion and conciliation, the DUL played a vital role in assisting black newcomers with housing, job counseling and employment, and wholesome recreation.¹⁰

⁵John C. Dancy, "The Negro People of Michigan" (Michigan History 24, Spring 1940): 228.

⁶DeWitt S. Dykes, Jr., "Black Population: Growth, Distribution, and Public Office." Ethnic Groups in Michigan. James M. Anderson and Iva A. Smith, eds. (Detroit: Michigan Ethnic Heritage Studies Center, 1983. 42. *The counties included in this reference are Genesee 14, Jackson 64, Lapeer 6, Lenawee 91, Livingston 2, Macomb 27, Monroe, 54, Oakland 60, Saginaw 0, St. Clair 23, Tuscola, 23, Sarnilac, 0, Washtenaw, 231, and Wayne, 697. Changes in county boundaries were complete by 1891*

⁷David Katzman, *Before the Ghetto* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1973): 98.

⁸Richard W. Thomas, *Life for Us is What We Make It* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992): 228-270.

⁹Arthur L. Johnson, *Race and Remembrance* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2008): 39-81.

¹⁰Thomas, *Life for Us Is What We Make It*, 49-87.

Urban League branches were established in Pontiac, Flint, Saginaw and Lansing in the 1940s and eventually in other Michigan cities.

FEDERAL HOUSING ADMINISTRATION: SEPARATE AND UNEQUAL

When the use of violence to keep black residential areas segregated from white areas declined, restrictive covenants were widely employed from the 1930s through 1960s—with the acquiescence if not the “official” approval of the federal government’s housing agencies. Banks, mortgage companies, real estate companies and federal housing agencies widely discriminated against people of color who sought financing.¹¹ A case from Michigan, *Sipes v. McGhee*, was combined with other cases by the U.S. Supreme Court in the *Shelley v. Kramer* decision declaring restrictive covenants unenforceable.¹²

CIVIL UNREST: WHAT HAPPENS TO A DREAM DEFERRED

Race riots occurred in 1863, 1943 and 1967. In 1863, an African American, William Faulkner, was accused of sexually assaulting both a black girl and a white one. White mobs rampaged in black neighborhoods, killing two blacks and destroying about 30 homes and buildings. Several years later, Faulkner was released from jail when the two girls admitted they had lied.¹³

In 1943, rumors started on Belle Isle that blacks had injured defenseless whites and that whites had injured black women. Provoked by the rumors, blacks and whites began fighting each other. Law enforcement was one-sided against blacks, offering little protection and often shooting or injuring blacks and doing little to restrain whites attacking blacks. Thus, 29 of 35 persons killed were African American and over 85 percent of the 1,832 persons arrested for rioting were African American.¹⁴

In 1967, things were again tense between African Americans and whites. African Americans were particularly unhappy about an unemployment rate of nearly 16 percent, twice as high as their white neighbors. They also complained of poor police relations and substandard housing. In this year, there were 214 African Americans on the police force compared to 4,356 white officers.

It is believed that the riot started when Detroit police raided a private celebration of African American veterans who had returned from the Vietnam War. Regardless of the

UNIONS

The movement to organize “industry-wide” unions to include all employees of large scale manufacturers in the 1930s and 1940s was a major benefit to African Americans in Michigan. African American workers already employed in automobile manufacturing were able to keep their jobs, and others secured jobs and promotions due in part to unionization and in part to President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s issuing Executive Order 8802 banning racial discrimination in job training, hiring and promotion in factories with federal government contracts. The order also established a national Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC) to resolve complaints of racial discrimination. World War II brought full employment and recovery from the 1930s depression. After World War II, several states, including Michigan in 1955, established a state version of the federal FEPC. Michigan also established the Michigan Civil Rights Commission in the new Michigan Constitution of 1963, which prohibits discrimination based on race, color, religion or national origin. Over the years, the Commission’s authority has been extended to investigate discrimination in housing based on race, gender, age and other categories.

¹¹Ira Katznelson, *When Affirmative Action Was White* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2005): 25, 163, 215.

¹²Sidney Fine, *Expanding the Frontiers of Civil Rights* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2000): 117.

¹³John C. Schneider, “Detroit and the Problem of Disorder: The Riot of 1863” (*Michigan History*, Vol. 58, Spring 1974, No. 1): 13.

¹⁴Melvin Holli, ed., *Detroit* (New York: New Viewpoints, 1976): 192.

details, this interaction was once again enough to incite an uprising and over 400 fires were started in various neighborhoods. The next day, more than 8,000 National Guard troops were called out to restore order. In the aftermath, 43 people died—33 African Americans and 10 whites; 347 were injured, 2,700 businesses destroyed, 5,000 people left homeless, and there was a reported \$50 million in total damage. Later, many whites would create a myth that the 1967 riot created white flight from Detroit. While the riot may have driven some whites from the city, they had actually been leaving the city since the 1950s as industrial jobs dwindled.¹⁵

EDUCATION

Education for African Americans in Michigan was limited or non-existent before 1865. A few blacks attended separate schools in Detroit before an 1869 ruling of the Michigan Supreme Court in *Workman v. Board of Education* officially banned segregated schools in Detroit.¹⁶

Racial segregation in public schools developed again in the 20th century. Efforts to use pupil assignment and school busing programs resulted in court orders for Pontiac and Detroit schools to bus students outside of their segregated neighborhoods to achieve racial balance. Whites in Pontiac formed a “resistance to busing” organization named NAG (National Action Group). The night before the program was to begin, several buses were destroyed by dynamite, and members of the Ku Klux Klan were arrested and tried for the crime.¹⁷ Private schools primarily for white students proliferated, and white flight from Pontiac and Detroit and other cities with a substantial black population accelerated. In Lansing, efforts to desegregate schools through a voluntary busing plan were thwarted by the recall of the five school board members who voted for it.¹⁸

MODERN TIMES

Significant numbers of African Americans have joined the middle and upper classes of Southeast Michigan, with some moving into its wealthier suburbs such as Bloomfield Hills and Grosse Pointe. Many who have been able to leave Detroit and its inner ring suburbs have moved to the outer ring suburbs, joining their white neighbors for better jobs, educational opportunities and amenities. However, nearly one third are in poverty and still stuck in Detroit, its urban suburbs and other areas in Southeast Michigan that are what Jason Reece would call “low opportunity areas” where housing, education, jobs, transportation, health and engagement converge to lower the quality of life and limit one’s ability to succeed. These African Americans are trapped due to the history of oppression and discrimination. Even in these areas, some are seeking “a way out of no way” through the thousands of urban gardens that have sprung up in Detroit.

¹⁵ Rozenia Johnson, “Five Days in Detroit – The 1967 Uprising” We Don’t Want Them: Race & Housing in Metro Detroit 1900s-1968 (Detroit: Michigan Roundtable for Diversity and Inclusion).

¹⁶ Wilma Henrickson, *Detroit Perspectives* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991): 166-171.

¹⁷ Mills, Nicolaus, ed., *The Great School Bus Controversy* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1973): 279-284.

¹⁸ Harris, James A., “Time Dilutes Bitterness” (*Lansing State Journal*, March 9, 1981).

AFRICAN AMERICANS IN GREATER GRAND RAPIDS

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The African American struggle is less well known in the metropolitan Grand Rapids area than it is in Southeast Michigan, but it is still important as Michigan's next largest metropolitan region. African Americans faced similar challenges as they did in Southeast Michigan, although in a slightly different form.

BUILDING COMMUNITY: THE 1800S

African Americans trickled into the Grand Rapids area in the 1800s. A strong Quaker community in Cass County helped less than 1 percent of African Americans escape slavery via the Underground Railroad, and many more freed and semi-freed slaves came north from Ohio and Indiana to escape overcrowding and racial hostilities.¹⁹

Many of these early African Americans were of mixed race, and therefore lighter skinned. Later, as other southern-born and darker-skinned African Americans moved north, those with lighter skin had a higher social standing.²⁰ African Americans were also relegated to a lower social standing in general, along with all others in the Grand Rapids area who were not members of Calvinist Protestant churches. Being Protestant meant not only the possibility of community acceptance but also the ability to rise in status and power.²¹

Darker-skinned African Americans from the South brought ideas of cultural respectability and sought to work hard, advance their prosperity and blend in with their neighbors. They were stigmatized, however, by both white and fairer-skinned residents who were there before them. Thus, they were denied opportunities, remained poor and tended to be suspicious of whites.²² Nevertheless, African Americans and their white neighbors lived in relative harmony into the 1950s, as African American numbers overall were small up to this time.²³

STRUGGLING FOR EQUALITY: 1850S TO 1920S

As in other cities North and South, African Americans in Grand Rapids faced discrimination in employment. Even though Michigan formalized laws by 1855 forbidding discrimination on the basis of a person's race, creed or color in public accommodations, African Americans were still forced to sit in theatre balconies rather than main floors, use separate restaurant entrances and endure other public humiliations.²⁴

¹⁹Walker, *African Americans in Michigan*, 10-12.

²⁰Randal Maurice Jelks, *African Americans in the Furniture City: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Grand Rapids* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2006): xiii.

²¹___, *African Americans in the Furniture City*, xv.

²²___, *African Americans in the Furniture City*, xv.

²³___, *African Americans in the Furniture City*, xvi.

²⁴___, "Making Opportunity: The Struggle against Jim Crow in Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1890-1927" (*Michigan Historical Review*, Vol. 19, No. 2, Fall 1993): 24.

In the early 1900s, African Americans suffered from underemployment, a lack of affordable housing, segregation and a lack of political organization. In spite of this, African Americans aspired to middle-class status including stable family life, home ownership and the desire for education—all values that their Calvinist Protestant neighbors had as well.²⁵ Despite hard work and pleas in the name of common social values, African Americans often found their struggle for civil rights lonely and frustrating. In these early years, while the African American population was numerically small, they were still able to gather together and mobilize for community action. African Americans “protested, cajoled, complained and organized to achieve equity, but failed in any significant way to change their standing within the city.”²⁶

In 1910, the city of Grand Rapids changed its election process, including the partisan ward system. This weakened African Americans’ abilities to vote as a block even though their numbers had increased. This limited their ability to gain power in the area and motivated many to civil rights protests and interracial cooperation.²⁷ African Americans in Grand Rapids envied African Americans who lived in the nearby large cities of Detroit and Chicago, where their large populations and civil rights successes had allowed them to make political advances and create a richer civic life for themselves, compared to those in Grand Rapids.²⁸

African Americans went through the courts to bring suits against discrimination. Two cases deserve mention. One involved two African American students barred from Grand Rapids Medical College because they were black. The Michigan Supreme Court ruled that although the college received public funds, it was a private institution and could refuse blacks. This was consistent with other rulings throughout Michigan, where Jim Crow laws were disguised in arguments of free enterprise and freedom of association.²⁹ Another case was won by an African American dentist who had been denied a vacant orchestra seat in a theater and had to sit in the balcony. The NAACP aided his case and the favorable court ruling helped end segregation for all African Americans in seating in theaters and other public places in Grand Rapids.³⁰

African Americans who had grown up during World War I were ready to fight for African American rights again. They established the Grand Rapids Chapter of the NAACP in 1919. The 1920s showed a rise in an African American professional class, as it did in major cities throughout the Midwest. Many attended colleges and universities and returned as dentists, attorneys, pastors and physicians.³¹ This new professional class gave the new NAACP even more power and validity.

Internally, the NAACP in Grand Rapids struggled with two conflicting ideas—one was to self-segregate and attempt to create alternative but equal institutions for such activities as education and politics, the other to integrate as equals into Anglo-American institutions. The idea of separation led to the creation of the Independent Colored Club in 1890 as a breakaway from the Republican Party.³² The NAACP at times also struggled with membership because the majority of African Americans in Grand Rapids were low-wage

²⁵ ___, “Making Opportunity,” 25.

²⁶ Jelks, “Making Opportunity,” 26.

²⁷ ___, *African Americans in the Furniture City*, xv.

²⁸ ___, *African Americans in the Furniture City*, xvi.

²⁹ ___, “Making Opportunity,” 29.

³⁰ ___, “Making Opportunity,” 25, 29, 45-48.

³¹ ___, “Making Opportunity,” 33-34.

³² ___, “Making Opportunity,” 38.

workers. Protests and court cases were also difficult because rather than showing up in support, many low-wage African Americans stayed away in fear of losing their jobs.³³

1950s—PRESENT

In the 1930s and 1940s the National Urban League conducted studies and pointed to the devastating effects of racial discrimination. In 1947, the NAACP followed these studies and reported ghettos and segregated schools as well as exclusionary hiring.³⁴ The 1950s brought an increase in African Americans to Grand Rapids, and with that fears from city leaders that they would turn the city into a ghetto.³⁵ During the post-World War II period, Jelks reported “The G.I. Bills, the housing boom and the growing automobile market allowed whites in Grand Rapids to move to the fringes of the city and into the growing new suburbs, leaving the old core city to the newly amassing Afro-Southerners and other new immigrants.”³⁶

Today, African Americans continue to feel the effects of discriminatory treatment in Grand Rapids. Historic fears and distrust keep African American organizations and their allies from working together. As in other large metropolitan areas, most African Americans are clustered in the poorest areas of the city. African Americans and other people of color comprise more than 60 percent of the city jail population. More than a third of African Americans feel discriminated against, and African American infant mortality is nearly three times the rate of whites. In spite of these statistics, many organizations have been working for some time in Grand Rapids on African American issues in particular and issues of race, discrimination and inclusion in general. These include the Grand Rapids Area Center for Ecumenism (GRACE), The Woodrick Institute for Healing Racism, Community Relations Commission, People of Color Collaborative and Grand Rapids African American Health Initiative. The NAACP and Urban League also continue to be powerful forces advocating for African American equality.³⁷

RACE AND ARAB AMERICANS IN MICHIGAN

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Arab Americans can trace their heritage to any of the 22 countries of the Arab world. They may be Muslim, Christian, Jewish or nonpracticing; recent immigrants or fourth generation; professionals, doctors, laborers, students or entrepreneurs; political refugees, refugees of war or victims of torture; they may have light skin and hair or have darker features. These diverse experiences directly impact how individual Arab Americans self-identify, and affect the continually changing ways that they have been racialized and “othered” in U.S. popular culture and political discourses.

³³ ___, “Making Opportunity,” 44-45.

³⁴ Jelks, *African Americans in the Furniture City*, 126.

³⁵ ___, *African Americans in the Furniture City*, xvi.

³⁶ ___, *African Americans in the Furniture City*, 147.

³⁷ Michigan Roundtable for Diversity and Inclusion, “Racial Equity in Grand Rapids.” Detroit, Michigan Roundtable for Diversity and Inclusion (2009): 1.

ARAB AMERICAN STUDENTS IN DEARBORN

Arab American students in Dearborn have the unique opportunity to attend public schools that are almost completely Arab American. Fordson High School, built by Henry Ford in 1922, is now more than 95 percent Arab American. The football team, the Fordson Tractors, has received national attention (both positive and negative) for their dedication to football and their Muslim faith. When Ramadan occurs during the football season, as it has in recent years, team members practice at 4:00 a.m. to avoid the daylight fasting restrictions of Islam. A 2011 nationally released documentary, *Fordson: Faith, Fasting, Football*, chronicles this Arab American story.

At McCollough Unis Middle School, students have been learning about journalism and documenting their experiences as Arab Americans living in post-9/11 America. One journalism class, where 28 of the 29 students are Arab American, had their photographs and stories included in a 2011 exhibit at the Arab American National Museum. The exhibit, titled *The Heart of Arab America: A Middle School Perspective*, drew national attention and was the highlight of the Asian American Journalists Association's Living Textbook Project.

Significant numbers of immigrants from the Arab world have been settling in cities across the United States and Michigan for over 100 years. These early Arab immigrants (through the 1920s) were overwhelmingly Christians from Greater Syria (now the countries of Lebanon, Syria, Palestine and Jordan), but they also included small numbers of Muslims. Social changes, war and the hope for greater prosperity brought these immigrants from their native lands. In cities such as Detroit, Grand Rapids, Lansing and Flint, communities of Arabs developed near automotive factories (or furniture factories in Grand Rapids), where the majority of the male Arab immigrants worked. For example, according to a 1928 study of the Arab community in Lansing, 97 of the 131 immigrant males worked in one of two automotive factories in the city, and 28 men ran grocery stores and other businesses. The situation was quite similar in Grand Rapids, Flint and of course Metro Detroit, which today boasts the largest concentration of Arab Americans anywhere in the country.

Immigration of Arabs to Michigan slowed between 1924 and 1965 due to restrictive U.S. immigration policies that favored immigrants

from European nations. The post-1965 wave of immigrants from the Arab world, though, was vastly more diverse than the earlier wave of mostly Syrian Christians. The majority of immigrants in the last 40 years have come to Michigan from war zones or countries rife with civil unrest, such as Lebanon, the Palestinian Territories, Yemen and Iraq. Immigrants and refugees from these countries tend to be Muslim and less affluent than many established Arab Americans, although this later wave of immigrants also includes the "brain drain" of professionals from the Arab world.

Michigan has the second largest total population of Arab Americans in the nation. While the official census count of Arab Americans in Michigan is around 191,000, the actual number is closer to 500,000, with the majority living in Metro Detroit. Since Arab Americans are classified as "white," and because there is no Arab/Middle Eastern box on the U.S. census form, Arab Americans are difficult to enumerate.

RACIALIZATION AND SELF-IDENTIFICATION

While researchers and scholars typically categorize all peoples with Arab ancestry in Michigan as Arab American, the reality is that many people do not identify as Arab American themselves. For instance, there are large communities of Christians from the Arab world (Copts from Egypt, Maronites from Lebanon and Chaldeans from Iraq) who do not self-identify as Arab or Arab American for geo-political and socio-cultural reasons. Additionally, many people with Arab heritage choose to identify first with their sense of national identity (Palestinian, Yemeni, etc.) as opposed to a general Arab identity. Finally, 80 percent to 90 percent of Arab immigrants who are eligible apply for and attain U.S. citizenship so they may identify solely as American.

It is still possible, however, to speak of an Arab American community while recognizing that individuals may not self-identify with it. Peoples of Arab heritage, despite the national, religious, socio-economic, and immigration-status diversity, do share some common ground. In the United States, all Arabs (and people perceived to be Arab) are typically viewed by the general public as inherently “other” and potential threats to national security, especially in the wake of the 9/11 attacks. Due in large part to Hollywood movies and television, the vast internal diversity of Arab Americans is replaced by the stock image of the undifferentiated Arab (backwards, camel-riding, women-hating, potential terrorist). Further, U.S. foreign policy, for at least the last 40 years, has had a significant focus on the Arab world, and U.S. military interventions in Arab countries often have consequences for the Arab American community.

Arab American organizations have used this positionality to navigate the internal rifts in the community and foster a clear Arab American agenda. In Michigan, Dearborn-based ACCESS (the Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Service) and its one-of-a-kind Arab American National Museum (AANM), chapters of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC), as well as smaller organizations such as the Arab American Heritage Council (AAHC) in Flint, Michigan, have institutionalized the Arab American agenda through education, advocacy and direct human services to the Arab American community.

An important characteristic of Arab American identity is its trans-nationality. Almost all Arab Americans maintain some kind of tie to the Arab world, whether through kinship, Arabic language media or political activism. For the majority of Arab Christians, their religions began in the Arab world and their hierarchical leadership is still based there (i.e., Syria, Lebanon, Iraq or Egypt). Many Arab Americans in Michigan visit family in the Arab world, and a large number maintain homes there. The Yemeni community in the United States consistently remits large amounts of money to family back home. Arab Americans are attuned to political developments in the Arab world, especially the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and often hold rallies and events in support of their homelands.

THE 9/11 DIVIDE: REAL AND IMAGINED

The story of the post-9/11 Arab American community is one of contradictions. As hate crimes against Arab Americans skyrocketed in the months after 9/11 (with over 700 violent incidents in the first nine weeks), and as Arabs were vilified in national discourses, the community in Michigan did not become insular but instead grew tremendously. In Metro Detroit, more than a dozen new mosques and churches have been constructed since 9/11. The 30,000-square-foot Arab American National Museum (AANM) opened in Dearborn in 2005. Arab Americans now make up over 30 percent of the city of Dearborn, which is thriving economically and is one of few municipalities in Southeast Michigan to gain population between the 2000 and 2010 Census. Part of this population growth is due to the arrival of new immigrants and refugees from the Arab world. For example, since the U.S.-led invasion into Iraq in 2003, the Detroit area has become home to over 1,500 new Iraqi refugees annually, and more than 6,000 Yemenis have immigrated since 2002.

Since 2010, the AANM has been documenting the impacts of 9/11 on Arab and Muslim communities across Michigan. By documenting both the injustices against the community as well as the community’s resilience and creative responses to those injustices, the museum hopes to show that ultimately the Arab American community in Michigan is thriving.

While there are certainly disheartening stories of injustice and discrimination, such as vandalism and threats against Arab American places of worship across the state, the

overall story is one of resilience. Since 9/11, Grand Rapids and Flint Arab American communities have built new mosques and Islamic centers. While these religious centers are extremely diverse (for instance, the At-Tawheed mosque on the east side of Grand Rapids has members from 67 different countries), the Arab membership in each mosque is substantial and influential. In the small, rural town of Coldwater, the Yemeni community opened a community center in 2011. Arab student associations at colleges statewide hold annual cultural and educational events that, at Michigan State University and Grand Valley State University for example, reach thousands of college students annually. Churches and mosques, including the large congregation at St. Mary's Antiochian Orthodox Church in Livonia, have begun or revived annual Arab food festivals.

Even though Arabs have often been victims of stereotyping and discrimination in the United States, the negative attention on Arab Americans has actually lessened in the years following 9/11, due in large part to the educational initiatives by Arab American organizations and scholars. Despite the gains there remains a long road ahead, as most of the recent hate crimes and discrimination have focused on Muslims in general. The current wave of Islamophobia is deep-rooted and far-reaching. Even though, worldwide, Arabs only make up 15 percent of Muslims, in Michigan that percentage is probably closer to 50 percent. So Arab American communities continue to be potential victims of discrimination and hate speech. In East Lansing, after somebody placed a desecrated Quran on the steps of the mosque on September 11, 2010, the Lutheran church next door publicly pledged its solidarity with the Muslim community. Across Michigan, Arab Christian and Muslim communities will continue to educate the public, build bridges with diverse ethnic groups and faiths and fight discrimination on the local and national level.

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ASIAN AMERICANS IN MICHIGAN

Scott Kurashige, Ph.D., Asian/Pacific Islander Americans, University of Michigan

While Asian Americans contribute to the multicultural diversity of Michigan, “Asian American” is itself an umbrella category—an identity originally forged by political activists seeking to advance anti-racist politics and group empowerment during the 1960s and 1970s. It is a category made up of people whose ancestors or who themselves come from many places across Asia, are of diverse ethnic origins and speak dozens of different languages.

Asian Americans have provided a significant source of population growth for Michigan in recent decades. According to U.S. census data, the Asian population of the state grew from 103,501 in 1990 to 238,199 in 2010—an increase of 130 percent. Even as the state's total population fell during the past decade, its Asian population grew 35 percent to comprise 2.4 percent of all Michiganders in 2010. The cities with the largest numbers of Asians include Ann Arbor, Troy, Canton, Farmington Hills, Sterling Heights and Detroit.

Asian Americans are often an invisible minority in Michigan. Since they tend to cluster in particular areas, primarily Southeast Michigan, many state residents have infrequent contact with people of Asian ancestry or none at all. Furthermore, there is a dearth of research on the history or contemporary issues of Asians in Michigan, and few Michigan schools from K-12 through higher education exhibit competence when it comes to developing and implementing Asian American-themed curriculum. Nevertheless, Asians have made a lasting impact on Michigan and are likely to exert a

growing influence over the state's future.

Roughly two-thirds of the Asians in Michigan are immigrants, most coming in the aftermath of the 1965 Immigration Act. Before the passage of this law, American immigration policies were highly discriminatory. Congress specifically barred migration from China in 1882 and—through a series of measures over the next half-decade—it essentially denied all persons from Asia the opportunity to come to the United States. Furthermore, Asian immigrants by law were denied the right to become naturalized citizens. Although their children were citizens if born in America, discrimination against both citizen and non-citizen Asians was common in employment, housing and public accommodations before World War II.

The campaigns for Asian exclusion, often associated with violent racist attacks, generally emanated from the West Coast, where the migration of working-class Asians focused from the mid-19th to early 20th centuries. As a result, some of the pioneer Asian migrants were drawn to Michigan precisely because of its sparse Asian population. They felt that their smaller numbers might make it easier for them to assimilate or at least blend in. Pre-World War II migrants were a mix of entrepreneurs, students and especially workers, some following seasonal agricultural work but many drawn by the auto industry.

A handful of merchants worked to set up a Chinatown in Detroit during the early decades of the 20th century, eventually settling near the eastern edge of Corktown. However, the old Chinatown was bulldozed during the postwar era of urban renewal and freeway construction (the Lodge Freeway in this case). Subsequent efforts to re-establish a new Chinatown in the Lower Cass Corridor area met with mixed success. Some businesses and residents relocated there, but by this time Chinese Americans were joining the trend of Detroiters moving to the suburbs.

During World War II, the U.S. government forcibly removed all persons of Japanese ancestry from the West Coast and detained them in concentration camps. After the war, in an effort to re-integrate the so-called “loyal” Japanese Americans back into society, the government scattered members of the Nisei (American-born) generation throughout the Midwest and East Coast. Thousands came through Detroit, and some opted to settle permanently in the region.

However, the Japanese have been far outnumbered by post-1965 migrants from India, China, the Philippines, Korea and Southeast Asia. The 1965 Immigration Act abolished the racist “national origins” quotas designed to preserve America's so-called Anglo-Saxon stock. It also gave preference to migrants who were highly educated and in the skilled occupations of medicine, science and technology. Hence many Asians who have immigrated to Michigan in recent decades have been professionals sought out by the

THE KILLING OF VINCENT CHIN

Tragically, one of the few things many Asian Americans outside of Michigan know about our state is that Vincent Chin, a U.S. citizen not of Japanese ancestry, was killed here in June 1982. Chin was a 27-year-old Chinese American from Oak Park, who was partying at a club with his friends to celebrate his impending marriage. He got into an altercation with two white men, Michael Nitz and Ronald Ebens, whom witnesses heard say to Chin, “It's because of you motherfuckers that we're all out of work.” After Chin left the club, Nitz and Ebens stalked him and beat him to death with a baseball bat. The killing made local headlines, but the initial lenient sentence they received (manslaughter; three years' probation and a \$3,000 fine) propelled the case to national prominence.

Asian Americans formed the American Citizens for Justice and launched a campaign that led the U.S. government to prosecute the killers for civil rights violations. Ebens was found guilty, but his conviction was overturned on procedural grounds. Nitz and Ebens never served a day in prison.

The Vincent Chin case inspired a new generation of Asian Americans to break the image of passivity and take up activism in the cause of social justice. Today, American workers are once again reeling from the effects of outsourcing and economic polarization. As new threats—real and imagined—arise through the “war on terror” and heightened competition from Asia, the Vincent Chin story reminds us of the deadly consequences of xenophobia and the critical need for more education to promote multicultural awareness and diversity.

health care, biotech, education and automotive industries. When inaccurately measured only by the achievements of this professional class, Asian Americans are often portrayed as a “model minority”—a group whose success has matched or surpassed that of whites. It is important to note that the “model minority” image is a distortion first advanced by critics of the civil rights movement who sought to portray Asians as a symbol of “bootstrap” achievement in order to denigrate other communities of color.

The American intervention in Southeast Asia produced an unexpected wave of migration as refugees fled Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, especially during the late 1970s to the 1990s. Facing a difficult period of adjustment, refugee communities have tended to have above-average rates of poverty because they were unprepared for the dramatic life and work changes thrust upon them.

Today, the most prominent ethnic groups in order of population size in Michigan are Asian Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Korean, Vietnamese, Japanese, Pakistani and Bangladeshi Americans. Note that three of the largest eight groups come from South Asian nations that became independent following the post-World War II decolonization of British India. While some Indian and Pakistani professionals can be found in wealthier suburbs such as Bloomfield Hills, growing numbers of working-class South Asians can be found in working-class cities like Hamtramck, where a Bangladeshi community has emerged. While some South Asians have played a significant role in building Asian American organizations, in other cases South Asians and East Asians may not see themselves as belonging to one common racial group. Moreover, phenotype differences often lead non-Asian observers to separate the groups. Like some Filipinos, South Asians—by comparison with lighter-skinned East Asians—may appear “brown”-skinned to some observers and have been the most likely Asian American targets of hate crimes and racial profiling perpetrated in the aftermath of 9/11.

Significant diversity often exists within a seemingly unified ethnic group. For instance, ethnically Chinese persons in Michigan may be recent migrants or the descendants of immigrants who came to America over a century ago. They may have come to the United States from mainland China or from Taiwan, where they may have been members of the indigenous population or part of those who fled with the Nationalists following the 1949 Communist revolution in China. Furthermore, they may have been part of an earlier wave of migrants to Southeast Asia, who then came to America as Vietnam War refugees. And just as they may be documented or undocumented, they may also be highly educated doctors and engineers or low-wage service workers.

Finally, the population of Asian Americans in Michigan crosses racial boundaries in significant ways. Asian Americans are highly represented among those who identify as multiracial. Two of the most prominent people of Asian ancestry in Detroit are of biracial heritage. U.S. Congressperson Hansen Clarke states proudly that he is the son of an undocumented immigrant from what is now Bangladesh and an African American mother. His parents met during a period when some Asians and blacks were commonly segregated in Detroit. Former Detroit Chief of Police Ella Bully-Cummings, a daughter of an African American father and a Japanese mother, is representative of those whose family histories were shaped by the postwar expansion of the American footprint in Asia. Moreover, a significant number of Asian Americans are trans-racial and/or international adoptees, such as State Senator Hoon-yung Hopgood, a Korean-born adoptee raised in the Downriver area.

LATINOS IN MID AND WESTERN MICHIGAN

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My personal history in Michigan is that of a settled migrant farmworker whose family struggles to maintain its cultural and language heritage in a predominantly white agricultural community. Although my narrative may not be representative of all Michigan Latinos, it does serve as a metonym for Latino history in the state, offering historical evidence that many Latinos share. It illuminates the stories of other Michigan Latino communities, particularly when understanding interracial relations between Anglo and Latino communities.

In the late 1960s, my paternal grandparents left their home in West Texas and joined other migrant families to begin a life in *el norte* (the North). My grandmother said they moved because of increasing violence toward *Mexicanos* and the possibility for continuous employment. Their eldest son, my Tío (Uncle) José, was recruited by Pioneer Sugar Company and moved to Michigan with his wife's family in 1964. This meant work all year—toiling in the sugar beet fields from spring to late fall, followed by work in the processing factory in the winter. As a result, my family had steady employment with some job protection.

MIGRATION

Migration has been part of my family's story for many years, as is the case for many Latinos in Michigan. Latinos, primarily of Mexican descent, who currently make a home in the Midwest, began migrating to the area in the 1920s. Sugar company business owners organized caravans to bring Mexicans from Texas to Michigan to work in their fields during the summer months and then take them home after the work was complete in the fall. This seasonal recruiting occurred for a decade until these farmworkers began purchasing their own vehicles and bringing their families North with them. Unfortunately, the wages began to decline and the *Mexicana/os* found themselves lacking funds to return to their homes. Responding to the excess of workers, Continental Sugar recruited them for factory jobs during the winter months.³⁸

CURRENT ISSUES

Today, the discrimination that Mexican Americans face in predominantly white communities is not the overt violence suffered by older generations or what my parents experienced in Texas and Arkansas. Instead, racial discrimination is demonstrated in more subtle forms.

In the last seven years, discussions with Mexican Americans from Mid and Southwestern Michigan, ranging in ages 25-35 years of age, has revealed discrimination through the following examples.

- Schools place Mexican American students on vocational tracks or do not assist in aligning student schedules with college bound courses.
- There is an over-representation of Mexican American students in special education courses.
- Store employees follow Mexican Americans around or conversely do not offer assistance.
- Mexican Americans experience harassment from local law enforcement.
- There is a general sentiment in the community that Mexican Americans are violent, uneducated and a drain on social services.

Racism against Mexican Americans in rural areas still exists. Latinos experience discrimination in schools, from white community members and local law enforcement.

As Valdés noted nearly 20 years ago, Latino laborers continue to be a significant factor in Michigan's economy. Nevertheless, racial hostility still exists in the state. For example, in September 2011 Senator Roger Kahn introduced House Bill 4906 to make English Michigan's official language and Representative David Agema introduced House Bill 4305, which would require law enforcement to request immigration documents from anyone suspected of living in the United States illegally.

In response, many Mexican workers began settling in the area, working in the fields in the summer and factory in the fall.

World War II caused a shortage of skilled laborers in Michigan, so factory owners recruited workers from Europe as well as from other parts of the country and Mexico, bringing mass migrations of Mexicans to the region to fill existing labor needs. According to historian Dylan Miner, “Unlike European immigrant laborers, Mexican workers were not able to assimilate into Anglo North American society, because of their perceived racial difference.”³⁹

Once factories closed following the war, most workers, especially those from Mexico and Texas, did not have money to return to their former homes. This second wave of Spanish-speaking peoples contributed to the Midwest’s increase in the Latina/o population.

As with my family, many Latino migrants chose to settle in Midwestern states as a way of evading Texas’ racial persecution and achieving a better future for their children. Through oral history, many participants recounted the horrific instances when Mexican-American children were physically and mentally punished while in the Texas public school system.

Consequently, many families left Texas in hopes of finding schools that would benefit their children, and many settled into the rural villages of Michigan. These migration cycles linking Michigan Latinos directly with Texas and northern Mexico continued at least through the 1980s. Since then, Guatemalans have moved to Grand Rapids and Grand Traverse in large numbers, but most Latinas/os in those areas are those from the Texas-Michigan migrant stream.

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LATINOS IN SOUTHEAST MICHIGAN

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Race matters, to borrow from the 1994 title of a book penned by the acclaimed educator and social critic Cornel West. In one form or another, racial politics have shaped the encounter with and treatment of First Nation people, the plight of captive Africans who were subsequently imported to toil in the mines and plantations on this side of the Atlantic, and the fate of Asian contract workers who were also ferried across the ocean to fill countless other labor needs.

In Spanish America, a hierarchical order based on a color gradient that privileged people with European ancestry or “white” skin over their non-European, darker-hued brethren eventually led to the formation of a socioracial stratification system known as the “*sociedad de castas*” or caste society. But the “lower” castes refused to be looked down upon and often mixed with other “races” freely anyway.

Hispanics or Latinos in the United States comprise a heterogeneous population with a rich multicultural heritage that emerged in what used to be Spanish America from ancestors who originated in Europe, Africa, Indo-America and even Asia. Today,

³⁸ R.P. Rosenbaum, “Migration and Integration of Latinos into Rural Midwestern Communities: The Case of ‘Mexicans’ in Adrian, Michigan,” *JRSI Research Report No. 19* (1998). Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan: The Julian Samora Institute.

³⁹ Dylan Miner, “El renegado comunista: Diego Rivera, la Liga de Obreros y Campesinos and Mexican Repatriation in Detroit.” *Third Text*, Vol. 19, Issue 6, November 2005: 647-660.

Mexicans and Puerto Ricans comprise the two largest groups, followed by lesser numbers from the other 17 countries of Latin America where Spanish and Roman Catholicism are the dominant or official language and religion, respectively. Latinos native to North America in places like pre-U.S.-controlled Florida, Louisiana or the U.S. Southwest were seen as part of the divisive caste society, which helped determine their place or standing where they lived and worked.

MEXICANS: THE NORTHWARD JOURNEY

The experiences of Latinos in Michigan reveal important clues about the powerful role that race has played in the history of that ethnic group and the state in the recent past. The very first numerically significant migratory waves of Hispanics/Latinos to arrive in the Great Lakes region trekked in from Mexico and Texas, starting around 1900. No official count of this migration is known because of its transitory nature: many went back and forth between Mexico (or Texas) and the Midwest, and remained in one area for short periods of time as they followed the crops or railroads from state to state.

Conditions in Mexico under the dictatorship of President Porfirio Díaz (1876-1910) had become intolerable for the majority Amerindian and racially-mixed population. The Díaz government privatized vast territories, transferred communal lands to multinational corporations and displaced and impoverished the rural population. The ensuing Mexican Revolution (c. 1910-1920), the development of railroads in Mexico and the relative ease of crossing Mexico's northern frontier prior to the establishment of the U.S. Border Patrol in 1924 enabled many refugees and economic migrants to make their way to the United States, joining the previously established Mexican-Americans living in Texas, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona and California.

THE CONTEMPORARY SCENE: MARGINALIZATION AND RACIALIZATION OF LATINOS IN MICHIGAN

A cursory examination of the past and modern-day experiences of Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in the United States, in general and in Michigan, may be summarized as follows:

1. They share a history of prolonged colonialism under Spain, during which force or persuasion were used to obtain their subjugation as subordinate, racialized groups.
2. Large constituents of both groups—native residents of the Mexican Cession and of Puerto Rico—were incorporated into the United States through annexation or colonialism rather than by choice.
3. The earliest Latino migrants from Mexico and Puerto Rico to settle in Michigan worked in unskilled, back-breaking, poorly compensated jobs in agriculture, steel manufacturing and the automobile industry in the early 20th century.
4. Latinos who settled in Michigan cities often faced de jure or de facto discrimination, which forced them to live in the least desirable urban spaces burdened by severe infrastructural problems, inadequate social services, substandard housing and inferior schooling opportunities. Federal Housing Administration policies limited where Latinos and other people of color could live from the 1930s through 1960s, while it allowed Christians of European descent to live wherever they wished.
5. Members of both groups who were born in the U.S. or underwent naturalization in this country were, and in many ways continued to be, treated as second-class citizens.
6. Their disenfranchisement may be seen in the disproportionate number of Latino families below the poverty line and the large push-out/drop-out rate among Latino school-age youth, who must work in order to help support their families.
7. Despite some of these challenges, today's Michigan Latinos are a vibrant, integral component of Michigan's population, and in some places, such as Southwest Detroit, are at the forefront of its economic revival.
8. Mexicans continue to commemorate their colorful history and heritage through special holidays, ceremonies and rituals: *quinceañeras* (a 15-year old girl's coming of age), *posadas* (Christmas festivity), Day of the Dead, and *Cinco de Mayo*, Mexican Independence Day (September 16) and the César Chávez birthday. Puerto Ricans keep their culture alive through music (salsa, merengue, reggaetón), *parrandas* (Christmas party), unique cuisine that blends European, Native American and African food (e.g., *pasteles* and *mofongo*), dances such as the African-derived *bomba y plena*, and pastimes, including baseball and playing dominoes with family and friends.

COMING TO MICHIGAN

Although the newcomers found promising social and economic opportunities in the U.S. Southwest, most were relegated to dead-end occupations in the growing agribusiness sector, mainly as field hands and pickers of fruits and vegetables. Others found jobs in the railroad industry but were generally limited to the hardest trades with low wages.

Enganchistas or labor contractors working for Midwestern industrial and farming companies eventually lured many to the agricultural fields, steel foundries and automotive plants of Michigan. The presence of Mexicans here coincided with U.S. wartime needs (as in World War I), which also cut off the flow of workers from Europe. The enactment of national legislation that banned or curtailed legal immigration from Europe or Asia and the expansion of the sugar beet and automobile industries also affected the ebb and flow of Mexican labor migration in the Midwest.

In the 1930s, local, state and even federal xenophobic measures caused tens of thousands of Latinos to return to their countries of origin. Detroit community activist Elena Herrada, who has spearheaded recent efforts to educate Michiganders about these “exiles from the promised land,” has observed that the setback stripped Mexicans of properties they had accumulated through their hard work, putting them back socioeconomically by at least a decade. Those who somehow managed to return or who escaped the mass removal, she noted, had to start all over again and learned to repress or underplay their Mexican identity and Spanish language to avoid being singled out again. In essence, it could be argued that they were (or are) victims of some form of cultural extinction, a process whose effects resemble the experiences of Native Americans who were forcibly assimilated to mainstream U.S. (Anglo-dominated) culture through boarding schools.

PUERTO RICANS: COLONIAL SUBJECTS OF THE UNITED STATES

At first glance, the distance between Mexico, located in Mesoamerica, and Puerto Rico, centrally situated in the Caribbean, might lead some to believe that the two have little in common. Much to the contrary, both endured over 400 years of Spanish colonial rule, which set into motion a racialized legacy that persists to this day. In addition, both experienced the impact of U.S. political and economic control as the North American republic grew from a continental to a global power during the 19th century. Like the inhabitants of California, New Mexico, Colorado, Arizona and Texas who became U.S. citizens as a consequence of the Mexican-American War (1846-48), the people of Puerto Rico were also brought into the U.S. imperial orbit as a result of a similar expansionist drive in 1898. Puerto Ricans did not achieve U.S. citizenship until passage of the Jones Act in 1917.

Ethnocentric and racist notions about the supposed suitability of Puerto Ricans for performing menial, low-paying agricultural work factored in the U.S. agribusiness sector’s decision to recruit them for jobs in the Southwest and as far away as Hawaii. The contracted laborers entered the U.S. mainland through New Orleans, from which point they were transported overland to the Pacific coast. However, some of the recruits who disembarked in New Orleans refused to continue on their west-bound passage, perhaps due to sickness or upon learning of the awful working conditions that awaited them in Hawaii. Instead, they headed north, ultimately ending up in Detroit. Composed largely of individuals with strong African or black heritage (known as Afro-Boricua today), the migrants blended into the city’s black population where some of their descendants can be found today.

The Great Depression caused the collapse of Puerto Rico's economy, which had been tied to the large-scale production of sugar for exportation to the continental United States. In the late 1940s, officials launched Operation Bootstrap, a reconstruction initiative designed to industrialize the island. They also encouraged Puerto Ricans to relocate to the U.S. mainland with plans such as Operation Farmlift. This deal with sugar beet growers in Michigan brought some 5,000 Puerto Rican agricultural workers to Saginaw in 1950. However, in response to the growers' refusal to honor wage contracts and other employment terms, the workers walked off the fields. Some of the strikers travelled south and settled in Southwest Detroit.

THE ANISHINABEK OF MICHIGAN

Shannon Martin, Director, Ziibiwing Center of Anishinabe Culture and Lifeways

The name of our people, *Anishinabe*, means *first one lowered from above and placed on the Earth*. Today's Anishinabek (plural) are descendants of this original one. Before first contact with Europeans, the indigenous people of this continent had well-established communities with distinct languages, values, governance and spirituality. Agriculture, aquaculture, herbal medicinal practices and vast trade networks were successfully in place. We, the Anishinabek (original people) of the Great Lakes, have our own creation story, language and many traditions and ceremonies that are still practiced today. In Michigan, our tribal nations are identified as the Ojibway or Chippewa, Odawa or Ottawa and Odawatomi or Potawatomi—collectively we are known as the Three Fires Confederacy or Council of the Three Fires. We are tribal nations whose languages are similar, whose cultures are close and whose lands are often shared and whose governing bodies employed rules of procedure that were as well-known and respected as any that existed in European Parliaments.

THE OJIBWAY

The Ojibway or Chippewa is the second largest tribal group in the United States with bands in Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota and North Dakota as well as Ontario, Canada. In Michigan, the Chippewas occupied the eastern half of the Lower Peninsula and most of the Upper Peninsula. Besides using the abundance of resources from the Great Lakes, the Chippewa also extensively traveled the inland lakes and rivers. They were nomadic, moving their villages to follow fish and game, engaged in fur trading with the Europeans and had some involvement with European colonial conflicts.

THE OTTAWA

The Ottawa are found in the western half of the Lower Peninsula. They were seasonal wanderers of the land and navigators of the Great Lakes with their birch bark canoes. They gathered wild rice, netted fish, trapped small game and hunted moose, deer and elk. Their skill in crafts and willingness to trade brought them into contact with Europeans, but they managed to avoid major military entanglements with the French and English. They did, however, fight with the Iroquois or Hodeneshone in the early 1600s.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

While there is confusion about what the proper or politically correct term is for many people of color, there is particular uncertainty about people who are indigenous to the Americas. Many people debate whether “Native American,” “American Indian,” or simply “Indian” is proper. When people know their tribal heritage, most prefer to be known by that rather than “Native American” or “American Indian,” just as most people from other parts of the world would prefer to be known as being from a country, not a continent (Danish instead of European, for example). So it would be better to refer to the writer N. Scott Momaday as “a member of the Kiowa tribe” instead of “an American Indian.” If more than one tribe is represented, or a person does not know the tribal heritage, it is best to ask how he or she prefers to be known.

However there are complications. Many laws, legal names and U.S. government documents refer to people as “Indians” or as “Indian” within a larger name such as the “Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe.”

Even referring to a specific tribe in writing can be difficult due to matters of history and linguistics. Our earliest written records of encounters with indigenous people come from European explorers, mainly French, Spanish and English. They often misheard or mispronounced tribal names. In addition, Old World languages were in flux during the 17th and 18th centuries, and different explorers spelled the same words differently. Our name is spelled three different ways, all correct depending on dialect: “Ojibway,” “Ojibwa,” “Ojibwe.” It is commonly believed that European explorers misheard our name and came up with the more commonly known “Chippewa.”

THE POTAWATOMI

At the point of European contact in the early 1600s, the Potawatomi inhabited the southwest corner of what is now Michigan in the areas of the Kalamazoo and St. Joseph rivers and adjacent parts of Indiana. They moved there deliberately from the more northern regions to take advantage of the milder southern climate. Although they shared many traits with the Chippewa and the Ottawa, they lived a more sedentary lifestyle. By cultivating corn, beans and squash (known to many Native peoples as “the three sisters”), they ensured a stable food supply and achieved a level of political unity unusual for Great Lakes tribes at that time. They remained a strong tribe through the early 1800s but were forcibly relocated by the U.S. military following the Indian Removal Act of 1830. The result was an enormous loss of land and resources, as many Anishinabek were forced to move westward. The white man’s advanced weaponry, increasing population and ethnocentrism were key factors in this process.

EUROPEAN INFLUENCE

Since the time of colonization, the Anishinabek were indoctrinated to fit into a Eurocentric linear world, forgoing all the beautiful traditions and systems that were in place for generations before contact. The threat to the Anishinabek in particular and Native peoples in general came in many forms: wars, forced relocations, foreign diseases (such as smallpox, scarlet fever and tuberculosis), commoditized governmental foods, well-intentioned missionaries and American Indian boarding schools. These brought an unprecedented and extreme level of destruction to American Indian people and culture. It was not until the 1990 Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act that the U.S. government formally acknowledged that Native peoples’ religions and traditions were valuable.

TREATIES

“A treaty is a negotiated, written, legally binding, ratified agreement between two sovereign nations.”

Some treaties or promises were made with the Anishinabek beginning with the French and English, but most were made with the new American colonial government. Reportedly, tribal leaders were threatened, given presents and plied with liquor during treaty negotiations. The grim reality of the Treaty Era (1798-1842 in Michigan) was the forced removal of our people and a loss of the lands we loved. Treaty documents and the European idea of land ownership were new concepts for our people. Hungry for new lands and resources, the settlers used treaties to justify westward expansion, which eventually displaced the Anishinabek from their lands and radically disrupted our way of life.

The 1832 *Worcester v. Georgia* U.S. Supreme Court case is considered a landmark decision for American Indians. The decision recognized the inherent rights of the Cherokee Nation and subsequently gave power to all tribal nations of the U.S. to exercise sovereignty. The decision

established federal jurisdiction on Indian lands (reservations). Additionally, Act 1, Section 8 of the U.S. Constitution gives Congress the power “to regulate Commerce with foreign Nations, and among the several States, and with the Indian Tribes.” Act 1, Section 8 upholds tribal status of having a “Nation to Nation” relationship with the U.S. government. This is the legal basis for the Anishinabe sovereign status with the state and federal governments today.

CULTURAL LOSS/CULTURAL RESILIENCE

The Anishinabek knew that within their spirit something was wrong with these Eurocentric systems and values. This turned many Anishinabek lives into a mix of contradictions, historical trauma and inherited grief. Today, every tribal community in Michigan, reservation or urban, is witness to these effects—substance abuse, diabetes, heart disease, high suicide and mortality rates, as well as the breakdown of clan and family systems that result in child and elder abandonment and abuse.

Despite the cataclysmic changes to Anishinabe ways of living and knowing, the people continued to protect and transmit language, spirituality, core beliefs and principles. The Anishinabek have proven and continue to be resilient, courageous, innovative, generous and visionary. Many Anishinabek attribute the maintenance and stewardship of the culture to “blood memory,” an inherent connection they have to their spirituality, ancestors and all of creation. Blood memory can be described as the emotions felt when hearing the drum or Anishinabe language for the first time. Many Anishinabek use these emotions to understand heritage and connection to the ancestors. It is through blood memory that Anishinabe songs, ceremonies, dances, individual and collective responsibilities of clanship and wellness thrive and reawaken.

MODERN TIMES: SELF-DETERMINATION

For the tribes of Michigan, the past 200 years have been wrought with destruction; however, the past 40 years have brought pride and self-determination to the Anishinabek. Tribal sovereignty is an inherent right. It is not one that was given to the Anishinabek by the Americans; rather the Anishinabek reserved it for themselves in treaty negotiations. Connection to and continuity with the land defines tribal sovereignty. Many tribes in Michigan continue to assert their sovereignty by exercising hunting and fishing rights guaranteed in treaties with United States.

The 12 federally-recognized tribes of Michigan provide a variety of governmental services to their members and the reservation community, including police and fire protection, court system, health care, education, cultural programs, language revitalization, housing, elder and youth support and economic development. Tribal gaming started in Michigan in the 1980s and has helped many Anishinabek and the larger dominant community. Tribal unemployment, once as high as 75 percent, is far lower. Due to the success of many tribal gaming ventures, the tribes benefit, and so do the counties where the Anishinabek reside and the State of Michigan as a whole.

10 NATIVE PEOPLES OF SOUTHEAST MICHIGAN

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The word “Indian” includes people from over 600 tribes in the United States today, with the full North American continent known as the “Great Turtle Island” by many of them. These are peoples with different languages, different descent patterns, kinship systems, different environments, geography, spiritual beliefs and tribal governments. Using “Indian” for Native peoples of the Americas started when Christopher Columbus landed in the Bahamas in 1492. Thinking he had landed in the “East Indies” he called the inhabitants “Indians.” The name stuck as he ushered in European colonizers. Even today, “Indian” simplifies Native peoples into a single group. It is easier for bureaucrats to grasp—and it stereotypes people indigenous to the Americas.

PRE-CONTACT: PRE-1620

The idea that Michigan was a pristine, uninhabited “wilderness” waiting for Europeans to come along and build a great “civilization” is false. Archaeological records tell us that people lived here for thousands of years before anyone from Europe stepped foot on this land.

FUR TRADE ERA: 1620-1834

In 1615, French explorers and Catholic Jesuit priests mention Odawa Indians as well as Fox, Sauk, Kickapoo, Mascouten, Miami, Potawatomi and Chippewa as living in the region surrounding Southern Lake Huron and Western Lake Erie.

On June 14, 1671, French officials led by Simon-François Daumont de Saint-Lusson turned over three shovelfuls of soil and claimed the interior of North America for France. He attached the royal coat of arms to a cedar cross and declared that Michigan belonged not to the indigenous people, but to France! By 1701, the French attempted to limit the amount of trade goods coming into Michigan. The French also were attempting to resettle the Miamis, Wyandots and Ottawa at Detroit to provide a buffer between themselves and the Iroquois to the east. The following year, France declared war against England and fought much of it in Michigan. Outright warfare was occurring on the frontier by 1754. Known to the British and American colonists as The French and Indian War and to Europeans as the Seven Years’ War, it turned Michigan’s frontier into a war zone between 1756 and 1763. Great Lakes tribes from Sault Sainte Marie, Michilimackinaw, Green Bay and Detroit fought alongside the French in battle after battle against the British.

With the defeat of the French and the Treaty of Paris in 1763, the British were in control of the territory. Pontiac, chief of the Odawa, was furious when a British Indian agent told him that the Odawa, Chippewa and Potawatomi would “enjoy free trade and possession of their territories as long as they adhered to His Majesty’s wishes.” Pontiac responded by saying, “Englishmen, although you have conquered the French, you have not conquered us. We are not your slaves.”

For 150 years, furs were Detroit and Michigan’s most important business. In June 1701, the fur trade brought Antoine de la Mothe Cadillac with 100 Native paddlers in 25 large

Potawatomi-built birch bark canoes, from Lachine, near Montreal. Cadillac went north of Lake Erie to build a fort for the newly arriving French. This became the City of Detroit. Cadillac encouraged Native people to come to the fort to trade but prohibited them from the fort after dark under pain of arrest and jail time.

TREATY AND REMOVAL ERA: 1798-1842

White settlers' pressure for Indian land was unrelenting. By 1820, almost all Native land in southeastern Michigan had been lost. By 1840, all but a very few parcels of Indian land in the Lower Peninsula had been signed away by treaty, and the Native people had been removed to Kansas and Oklahoma. Some, if they were Christians, were allowed to stay in Michigan.

In 1827, the Superintendent of Indian Affairs reported that the government's "civilization" program for Michigan tribes was failing. The official reported that Natives continued to "catch fish, plant corn, dance, paint, hunt and get drunk, when they can get liquor, fight and often starve." Removal across the Mississippi to Indian Territory was the only answer until these Indians were ready and willing to "assimilate." The real motivation was to rid Michigan of its indigenous peoples and open the land to white settlers. Removal of the Michigan tribes began in the 1840s.

Several treaties signed by the United States and Michigan tribes between 1785 and 1795 prohibited whites from settling on Native land. These treaties were ignored as Native lands and territories were lost with each treaty signed. Native chiefs could neither read nor write and did not understand what

CURRENT SITUATION

Duty to Consult

The Supreme Court stated in *Morton v. Ruiz*, 415 US 199, 945 Ct 1055, "The overriding duty of our Federal Government to deal fairly with Indians wherever located has been recognized by this court on many occasions." That duty has failed to be exercised for Indians in the cities. Rights that accrue to Indian people based on our unique political status are all but ignored in urban areas. Yet 75 percent of Indian people live off reservation.

Urban Indian Centers

Indian Centers are on the front line in the preservation of Indian culture and the survival of Indian people as a distinct and unique founding population. There are Indian Centers in almost every major city in the United States. Most have no solid base of funding. Unlike some other groups, Native Americans have very few wealthy donors able to contribute to the survival of Indian Centers. Without Indian Centers there is no social structure to keep the Indian communities intact. Most hang by a thread.

Indian Tuition Waiver

In 2010, the Michigan Department of Civil Rights declared that only members of "federally recognized tribes" would continue to be eligible for Michigan's Indian Tuition Waiver. This program had provided a tuition reimbursement from the state to Michigan colleges and universities that waived the tuition for Natives whose tribe certified the student was a bona fide member. Because many Native students could not get certified for various reasons, they had to abandon college. Under the terms of the 1936 Comstock Agreement, Natives traded land to build Central Michigan University in exchange for free college tuition in any state institution. In 2011, however, a state representative proposed eliminating the tuition program.

Gambling

Misconceptions around gaming issues have added to the despair of Indian people. The mainstream media covers all issues related to gaming revenue, which leads everyone to believe that Native peoples are "rich." Information is never publicized on how gaming revenues are used to subsidize education, health care, tribal courts and social services. Most in the media are unaware of how the funds are actually used by the tribes. The "rich Indian" stereotype makes fund raising even more difficult.

Federal Agencies

Federal agencies responsible for addressing the needs in Indian country are underfunded. If the federal government honored its commitment to funding, conditions could be greatly relieved or remedied. The federal government has a binding trust obligation to provide services to American Indians, which is a legal entitlement, not just a moral social or economic one.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *A Quiet Crisis: Federal Funding and Unmet Needs in Indian Country*. Washington, D.C., 2004.

NATIVE AMERICAN TRIBES REPRESENTED IN METRO DETROIT	
TRIBE	ORIGIN
Apache	AZ/NM/OK
Cayuga	ON
Cherokee	NC/SC/GA
Chippewa	MI/MN/WI/ON
Choctaw	MS/AL/OK
Delaware	ON/OK/WI
Ho-Chunk	WI
Lakota	ND
Lumbee	NC
Menominee	WI
Mohawk	ON
Navajo	NM
Odawa	MI/MN/WI/ON
Onandaga	ON
Oneida	NY
Poncas	OH/NB/OK
Potawatomi	MI/MN/WI/ON
Sauk & Fox	MI/KS/NB/OK/IA
Seneca	ON
Stockbridge	WI
Tuscarora	ON
Wyandot	MI

they signed as they drew an “X” or a clan totem in place of a signature on the treaties. However, the very act of making a treaty acknowledged Native peoples as sovereign powers.

BOARDING SCHOOLS

There had been church-run boarding schools in Michigan prior to the 1879 opening of the first government-run Indian boarding school in Carlisle, Penn. The opening of Carlisle, with a policy of mandatory attendance for Native children, led to a U.S. policy of forced assimilation. The school’s motto was “Kill the Indian, but save the child.”

The boarding schools’ goals were assimilation of Indian children, conformity to white standards in dress, manners and hairstyles. The destruction of Native American identity began with the taking away of the basic core of identity, their names. Indian names were replaced with “good” Christian and biblical names. In addition, speaking Indian languages was prohibited in the schools.

In addition to Bureau of Indian Affairs schools, the U.S. government was paying \$3,000 a year to various Christian churches to operate the schools—a veritable gold mine for the churches. An estimated 75 percent of all Indian children attended these schools.

In 1885 the Otchippewa Boarding School, a privately funded Catholic school, was opened in the Upper Peninsula in Schoolcraft County. Most of the priests in the 19th century were from Europe. Of Michigan’s 78 Catholic priests, 74 had come from Europe. They had no knowledge of Indian culture and had an arrogance that comes with ignorance.⁴¹

Manual labor schools for Indians had been recommended as early as 1822 by Lewis Cass. In 1888, there were three such schools in the state. In 1889, a school opened in Harbor

Springs, and in 1893 the Industrial Indian School in Mount Pleasant opened with its own laundry, farms, hospital and power plant, all run with the unpaid labor of Indian children. Girls were put to work sewing, laundering and paper folding; boys did heavy farm labor and animal husbandry. The children often went to bed hungry and were subjected to physical, sexual and spiritual abuse of every kind at the boarding schools. The last boarding schools in Michigan closed in 1979, but their legacy is a culture conflict that continues to the present day.

TERMINATION AND RELOCATION ERA: 1940s – 1967

Urban relocation was part of the national policy of the 1950s. This was another attempt by the U.S. government to force assimilation of Native Americans. The 1952 Voluntary Relocation Program forced Indians into the cities. This program failed for one-third

⁴¹Everett Claspy, *The Potawatomi Indians of Southwest Michigan*. Dowagiac: Dowagiac Press (1966): 20.

of all Indians because they were insufficiently trained or educated to live in the cities. Racial discrimination that did not occur on Indian reservations was rampant in the cities, making it very difficult for Native peoples to survive in crowded urban slums.

Native peoples still have serious problems living in cities, but now there are Urban Indian Centers in major cities to help Indians make the transition to city living. Detroit in the 1950s became a relocation site for many Native people from Wisconsin. Some willingly came to the cities for jobs, since jobs on most reservations were non-existent.

Michigan's indigenous peoples, Chippewa, Odawa and Potawatomi moved to Metro Detroit from their home reservations to get jobs in the automotive industry. They would work in the city for several years and return to their home reservations for visits, powwows and other family events. Racial discrimination blocked assimilation of many Native people and many rejected the values and the materialism of mainstream urban culture.

SELF-DETERMINATION ERA: 1968—PRESENT

The 1970 residential patterns for Native Americans show the Southwest section of Detroit had the largest population of indigenous peoples. This is still the case today. In an area around Wayne State called the University District, Third Street was also home to many Native people and was "skid row" and home to many who were unemployed. The Native American population was primarily working class and lived with easy access to the factories, assembly plants, railroad yards and warehouses in various parts of Detroit.

Native peoples are employed in many different kinds of work today. Few are professionals such as doctors, lawyers, dentists, college professors and teachers. In 1971, less than 1 percent of Native men and women in Michigan had completed college. Only 17.2 percent of Native men and 16.9 percent of Native women completed high school in Michigan in 1971.

The Chippewa (Ojibwa), Odawa and Potawatomi have the most tribal members in Michigan. This is to be expected since these tribes have 12 reservations in Michigan. These "People of the Three Fires" along with the Wyandot are Michigan's indigenous peoples. Most Wyandot were removed to Kansas in 1845-1847, but a remnant group called the Wyandot of Anderdon with 1,000 members still lives in Metro Detroit, primarily in the area known as Downriver.

Native peoples in Michigan have the same grievances that all other indigenous peoples have. We did not create the nations or the states we live in. We had little or no say in the creation of the laws and policies that govern us. We had no say in how we were treated in the past and too small a voice in the area of human or collective rights for our people today. And we have no political representation in our capitals, state or federal.

THE NORTHERN MICHIGAN EXPERIENCE FOR PEOPLE OF COLOR

Matt Hoerauf, Community Development Manager,
Michigan Roundtable for Diversity and Inclusion

Northern Michigan was never as populous as Southern Michigan. Because there were fewer people of color in the region, there was less documentation of their experiences. The only people of color who held a majority for some time in Northern Michigan were the Ojibway. Racial conflicts or inequities in this region mirrored those throughout the United States, first along racial lines and later magnified through conflicts between labor and management. These conflicts were driven by ideas of race and culture that came from Europe and then changed over time in the United States.

THE FIRST INHABITANTS

The Ojibway were the first inhabitants of Northern Michigan who still live there. We can learn more about their culture, struggles and triumphs from two sections above, “The Anishinabek of Michigan” and “Native Peoples of Southeast Michigan.”

Archaeologists and the Ojibway agree that they were not the original inhabitants of this region. Ojibway oral traditions say that they came to Michigan from lands to the east. Prior to contact with Europeans, the Ojibway fed their families and helped their small village communities to thrive through hunting, trapping and fishing, planting the “three sisters”—corn, beans, and squash—and gathering and processing foods including maple sugar, berries, wild potatoes and wild rice. The Ojibway also used local woods and plants, including birch, cedar, basswood, bulrushes, cattails and spruce to make wigwams, canoes and other tools.⁴²

THE FUR TRADE ERA: 1620—1834

In the early 17th century, French explorers made contact with the Ojibway, and shortly thereafter they were engaged in the fur trade. The Ojibway found the French voyageurs who initially plied the fur trade culturally similar to them, and there was a good amount of intermarriage between French and Native American women. As with the rest of early colonizing in North America, initially many more men came over from Europe than women.

Some of the voyageurs also brought African Americans with them, often as slaves. However, just as the French operated their fur trade differently from the British, they had a different understanding of slavery. In the French system, African slaves worked in a more equal way with their masters and could be freed at any time. When freed, many of these former slaves remained a part of the eastern Upper Peninsula’s frontier community in the 17th and 18th centuries, with many settling in Michilimackinac near present day Mackinac City. Many made their living like their Ojibway neighbors and other early settlers to the area at this time, with a mix of trapping, hunting, fishing and farming.⁴³

⁴²Thomas Vennum, Jr., *Wild Rice and the Ojibway People*. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press (1988): 3-5.

⁴³Valerie Bradley-Holliday, *Northern Roots: African Descended Pioneers in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan*. Bloomington: Xlibris (2009): 16, 42-43.

Missionaries came to convert the Ojibway to Christianity and Anglo-American culture. While some, like Father Frederic Baraga, were well loved by the Ojibway and respected them in return, many of the missionaries saw Ojibway cultural ways as backward and their religion as devil worship.⁴⁴

From 1826 through 1842, government representatives negotiated with the Ojibway to cede nearly all their lands in Northern Michigan. Each treaty included lands other than those described, and arguments ensued for years afterward about which lands had been ceded. In spite of this, the Catholic and Methodist missionaries who served the Ojibway deeded the lands that they had purchased back to the Ojibway so that they would not have to move west as other tribes had. These lands became the present day Keweenaw Bay Reservation.⁴⁵

THE LUMBER ERA—EASTERN UPPER PENINSULA AND NORTHERN LOWER PENINSULA: 1840—1900

As more Europeans flooded into these areas to take advantage of the lumber and mining resources, perceptions of the helpful Ojibway changed, sometimes even among the same people. In 1840, Bela Hubbard visited families of mixed French Canadian and Ojibway heritage and found them to be “intelligent and highly educated” and “a mirth loving race.” Fifty years later, Hubbard argued that these same people had few virtues, were cruel and vindictive, loved war and revenge and found “the males itinerant, and the women drudges.”⁴⁶

From the mid-19th century and into the early 20th century, people of African descent also came to this region to escape from slavery and discrimination. They saw rugged Northern Michigan as a land of opportunity where they could live in peace, own property and gain prosperity. African Americans who came to the area became entertainers, saloon keepers, plasterers, cooks, servants, sailors and hat makers. Some became involved in the initial timber industry in Saginaw, and as they became skilled in the industry and the timber was cleared in Saginaw, they moved north to follow the timber boom.⁴⁷

THE MINING ERA—WESTERN UPPER PENINSULA, 1840—1930S

Mining was mainly concentrated in the Keweenaw Peninsula. In the 1840s, some Ojibway found work as packers, bringing mail from Green Bay, Wisconsin, to the Upper Peninsula

THE NEW DEAL: OJIBWAY AND AFRICAN AMERICANS

The New Deal helped change the lives of the Ojibway. For decades, the federal government had emphasized assimilation “into the white world” in the hope that the Ojibway would become more self-sufficient. The Ojibway, as with tribes throughout the U.S., were hurt by the loss of allotted lands through sale or lease and the effects of the Great Depression, and about 40 percent left the reservation in search of work. In 1934, the Ojibway of Keweenaw Peninsula benefitted, as did many tribes throughout the U.S., from a reversal of previous assimilation and allotment policies. The Wheeler-Howard Act provided funds to the Ojibway and other tribes to create tribal governments that would be empowered to negotiate with governments at all levels.⁵⁸

Another New Deal program, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), begun in 1933, offered young unmarried men manual labor jobs and a place to live. In Michigan, more than 1,000 people enrolled in the CCC, and African Americans made up 3.5 percent of that number. At first, whites and blacks were integrated, but discrimination and white hostility led to strict segregation of the CCC in all but a few camps. In 1935 African Americans were no longer allowed to enroll, even though the camps lasted until 1942.⁵⁹

⁴⁴Arthur Thurner, *Strangers and Sojourners: A History of Michigan's Keweenaw Peninsula*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press (1994): 54, 59-60

⁴⁵_____, 37-62.

⁴⁶_____, 41.

⁴⁷Bradley-Holliday, 16-23.

⁵⁸_____, 249-250.

⁵⁹Bradley-Holliday, 75-76.

communities that were forming around the mines. In the summer, some also worked as guides for boats.⁴⁸ Many Ojibway also took up American-style farming, and it was believed that the Catholic and Methodist missionaries had helped the Ojibway become more like their Anglo-American neighbors. In the 1860 Census, the Ojibway made up more than 10 percent of Houghton County's population. In spite of this, many people wanted the Ojibway to go away to take advantage of their lands. The 1862 *Michigan State Gazetteer* noted "...it would be of immense advantage to us ... if the negro [sic] and Indian could both be removed to some more genial clime."⁴⁹

African Americans were also drawn to these mining towns, working as hotel proprietors, cooks, barbers, homemakers, servants and musicians.⁵⁰

Along with people of color, Chinese, Greek, Syrian and other immigrants moved into this area as mining boomed. All faced discrimination as "foreign." Chinese were often singled out. In the 1900s, a local newspaper headlined noted "Local Chinks Velly Busy."⁵¹

The 1860s and 1870s also brought an influx of immigrants to the Keweenaw Peninsula to work in the mines. Laborers came from all over Great Britain, Europe, the Russian and Ottoman empires, China, Japan and Australia. In 1865, due to a labor shortage brought on by the Civil War, Norwegians and Swedes were also brought from their homelands to work in the mines.⁵²

Life in the Keweenaw Peninsula was unequal, as it was throughout the United States, based on racial concepts fostered by many European and American intellectuals. Thomas Jefferson, for example, defined a ruling and a serving class as the natural order of things. He cited the creators of the Magna Carta as "our Saxon Ancestors." Jefferson meant then that the ruling class in the U.S. descended from the English, who in turn descended from Germans and Scandinavians. In Jefferson's view, the English, Germans and Scandinavians were the ruling class, African Americans and Native Americans were at the bottom of society, and everyone else was somewhere in the middle—in short, a caste system.⁵³ This system played out in the form of fierce strikes at the mines from the turn of the century into the 1930s. The "managing class" mostly blamed the Finns (some of whom promoted unionism and socialism) and sought to exclude African Americans and Mediterraneans from being recruited as miners.^{54, 55} Over time, as many European immigrant families became Americanized, their descendants were accepted into the ruling class as "white people." But African Americans and Native Americans remained at the bottom.

MODERN TIMES: 1980S TO PRESENT

In the 1980s, the Keweenaw Bay Ojibway began a casino, as other tribes were doing at that time throughout the United States. They also regained some of their ancestral land, thanks to a 1989 U.S. District Court ruling that upheld a longstanding argument that their reservation was 60,000 acres bigger than its boundaries at that time.⁵⁶

⁴⁸ Thurner, 49.

⁴⁹ ___, 62-65.

⁵⁰ ___, 62-65, 139-140.

⁵¹ Larry Lankton, *Hollowed Ground: Copper Mining and Community Building on Lake Superior, 1840s – 1990s*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press (2010): 179.

⁵² Thurner, 66, 83-84, 113.

⁵³ Nell Irvin Painter, *The History of White People*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company (2010): 110-111.

⁵⁴ Thurner, 153-155.

⁵⁵ Lankton, 189-190.

⁵⁶ Thurner, 309.

Intermarriage and extramarital racial mixing had prevailed from the beginning in the Upper Peninsula, from the first French fur traders and explorers who made contact with the Ojibway in the 1600s to the present. Whites and blacks married, and Europeans married Ojibway. Some modern-day African Americans are fifth to seventh generation members of Upper Peninsula communities.⁵⁷

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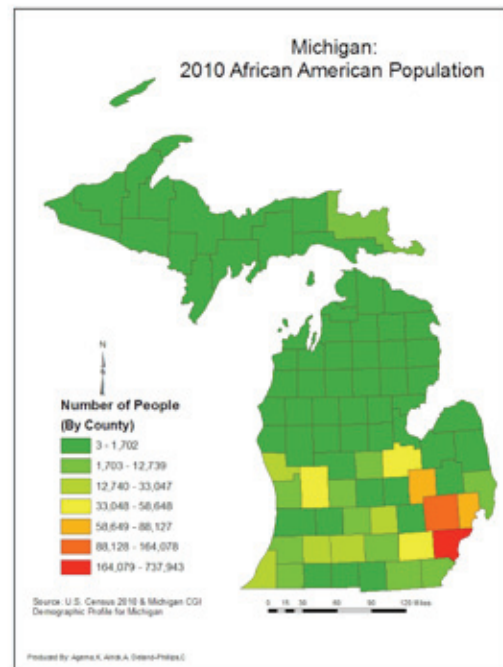
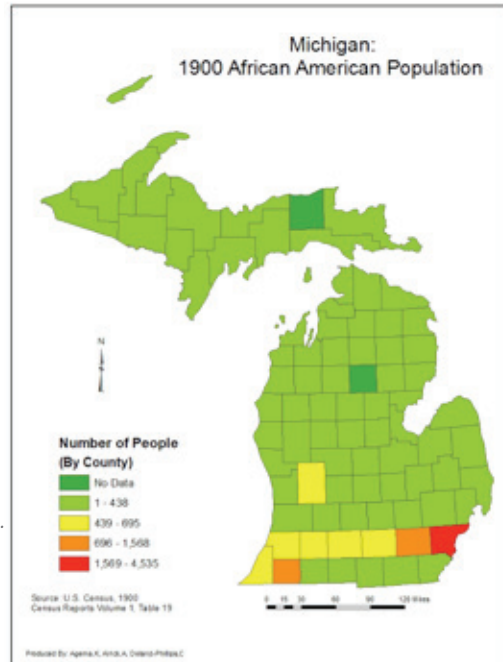
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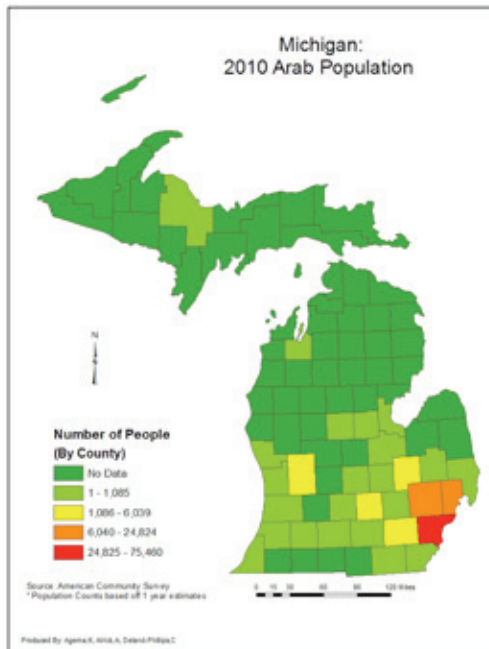
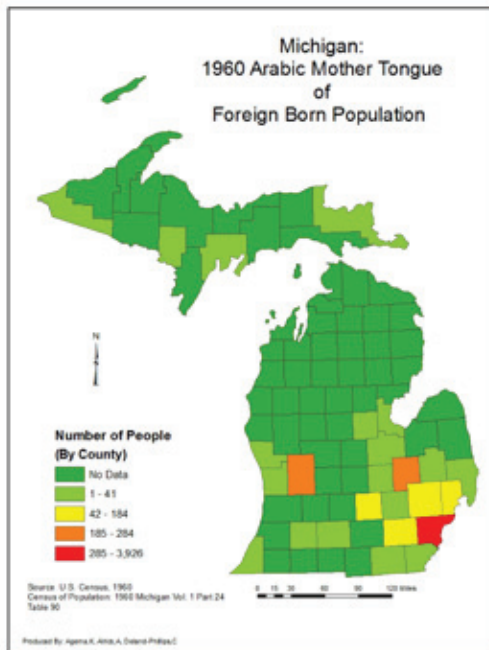
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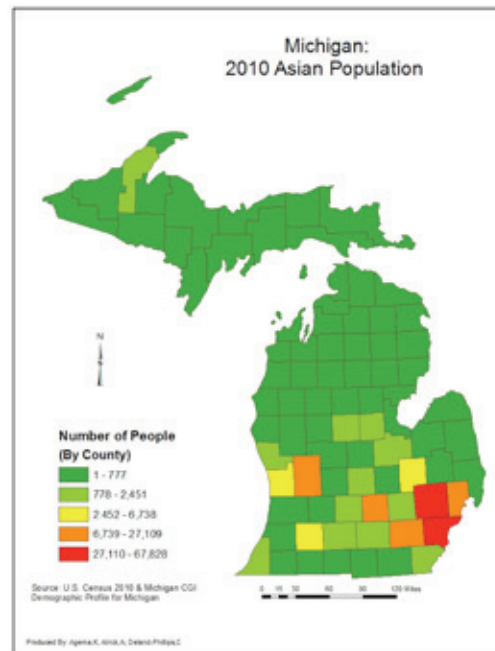
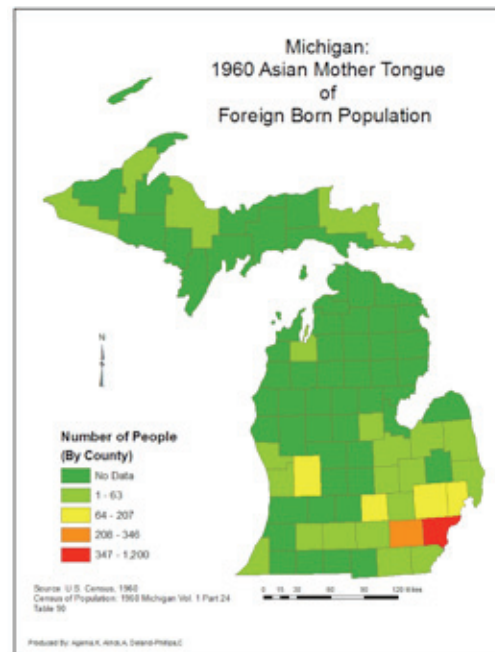
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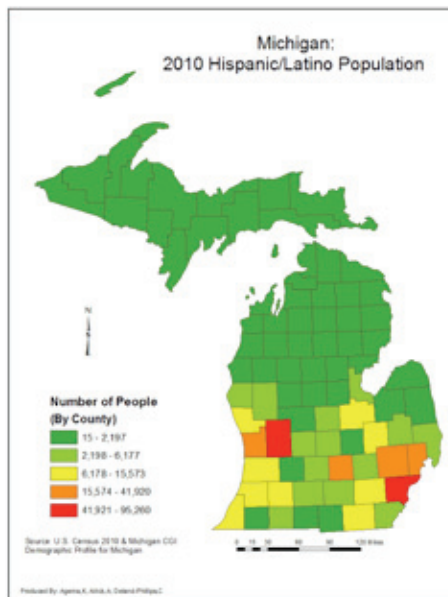
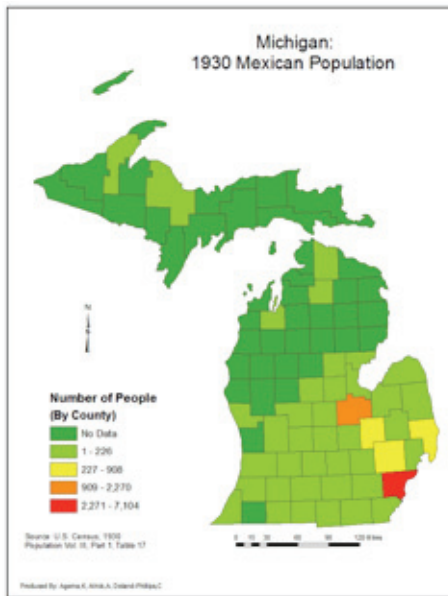
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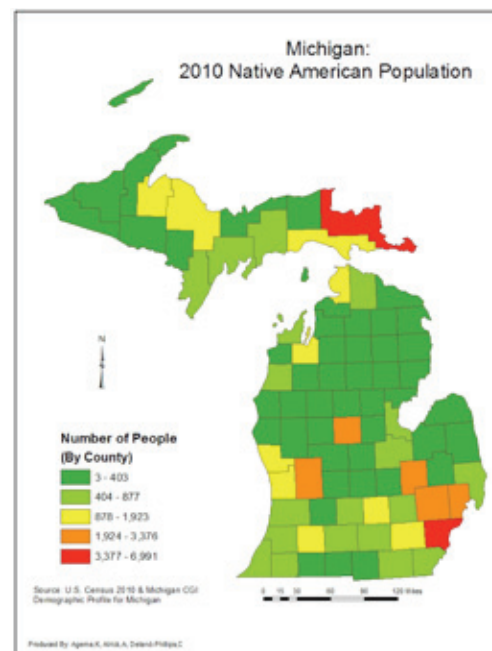
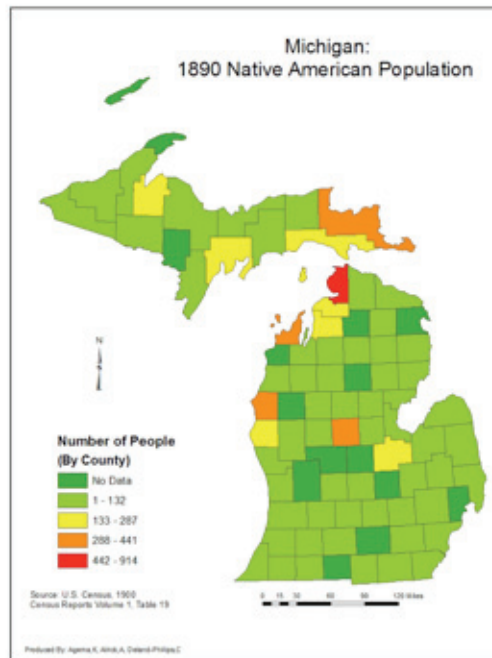
NOTES

In the 1890 census data for Native Americans and 1900 data for Asians and African Americans, if there were population counts for Isle Royal and Manitow Islands, they were absorbed into the counties of which the islands are a part. The Isle Royal numbers went into Keweenaw County and Manitow went into Leelanau County.

The 1900 census data for Asians are a combination of two tables. One is a population count of Chinese, the other of Japanese.

The 1960 data for the Arabic mother-tongue population was only given if there were more than a 1,000 foreigners living within the county.

The 2010 Arab data came from the American Community Survey, a one-year estimate that doesn't include all counties. We used this





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because in our research we discovered that the 2010 census combined the Arab population with Caucasian population.

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