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The booklet in conjunction with the "Minnesota, Nice or Not?" campaign can be ordered by calling the Minneapolis Foundation at (612) 672-3869.

Campaign aims to raise awareness about immigrants

■ Minneapolis Foundation targets cold welcome

LESLIE BROOKS SUZUKAMO STAFF WRITER

When Minnesotans think about the state's recent immigrants, are they warm and friendly "Minnesota Nice" — or ice?

That's a question the Minneapolis Foundation wants Minnesotans to ask themselves when it unveils a new public information campaign on Sunday called "Minnesota, Nice or Not?"

"We're trying to make people self-aware," said Emmett Carson, foundation president and chief executive officer. "We want to turn back the mirror on the reader. We want them to ask, 'Is this my behavior?'"

Part of the campaign involves newspaper ads and posters, one which shows a trio of smiling Somali women and says: "Maybe you're just not sure what to make of all these new Minnesotans bringing in all these strange new cultures and customs.

"But hey, have you ever really thought about lutefisk?"

Immigration has become a major issue

IMMIGRANTS CONTINUED ON 4B ▶

IMMIGRANTS

▼ CONTINUED FROM 1B

in Minnesota due to recent increases, especially of immigrants from Africa, Asia and the former Soviet Union, Carson said. The foundation decided to launch the campaign to improve the state's response to its changing demographics.

Two weeks ago, the United Way of the Minneapolis Area reported that immigration had increased by nearly 50 percent in the state over the past decade. Immigrant numbers reached 165,602 in 1996, according to estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau and the Minnesota Planning Department.

Despite the jump, there are far fewer foreign-born residents in the Twin Cities compared with other metro areas around the country. Immigrants made up only 3.5 percent of the population in Twin Cities in 1990, compared with 9.5 percent for U.S. metropolitan areas generally and double-digit percentages in richly multiethnic cities like Los Angeles, New York and Miami.

"New York and California long ago accepted that they are multicultural," Carson said. "Minnesota is changing, and that's frightening for some people. But we think it's an opportunity."

The campaign begins Sunday with a Minnesota, Nice or Not? full-page ad appearing in the Minneapolis-based Star Tribune. The ads will appear in Mpls/St. Paul magazine and Twin Cities Business Monthly and as posters in Twin Cities bus shelters throughout October.

The foundation also is offering 30,000

copies of a free booklet titled "Immigration in Minnesota," which features an essay by author and public radio host Garrison Keillor and information about the four largest groups of recent immigrants to Minnesota — Hmong, Mexicans, Russians and Somali. Minnesota is thought to have the nation's largest urban Hmong population and its largest concentration of Somali immigrants.

Ilene Her, executive director of the State Council on Asian Pacific Minnesotans and a trustee of the foundation, said that even though the Hmong have been in Minnesota for a quarter-century, she still finds widespread ignorance about Hmong culture and traditions.

"We are seen as a country that welcomes immigrants, but do we do that? Do we have a personal relationship with new arrivals — or do we let them struggle?" she said.

Amal Yusuf, executive director and founder of the Somalian Women's Association, said sometimes Americans assume newcomers know more than they do.

"I hope the campaign will help people to understand some of the barriers and background we face," Yusuf said. "I hope it will give Minnesotans a clearer picture of where we're coming from, what we're going through and what are issues are."

The Minneapolis Foundation produced the campaign with financial support from the Star Tribune, MSP Communications, the Ford Foundation, the Stewart Mott Foundation and the General Mills Foundation.

Leslie Brooks Suzukamo can be reached at lsuzukamo@ploneerpress.com or at (651) 228-5475.

44 million without health insurance

47% of low-wage Americans have no coverage

LOCAL ASSISTANCE

■ **MinnesotaCare:**
(651) 297-3862

■ **West Central Wisconsin Community Action Agency:** (800) 606-9227

TONY PUGH WASHINGTON BUREAU

WASHINGTON

Despite a humming economy and record low unemployment, the number of Americans without health insurance jumped to 44.3 million last year, leaving nearly half the nation's low-wage workers without coverage, new Census statistics show.

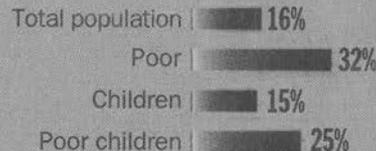
The figure — up 1 million from 1997 — is certain to fuel the renewed political debate on what can be done to help a

rising tide of Americans without medical coverage.

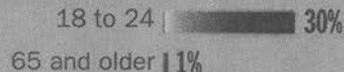
The estimated number without insurance grew by a total of 2.7 million people over the last two years, according to the Census report being released today. That continued a decade-long trend that has made the lack of health care one of the nation's most vexing social problems.

President Clinton recently ordered government officials to visit the 50 states to

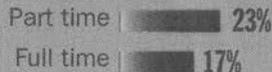
Those with no health insurance



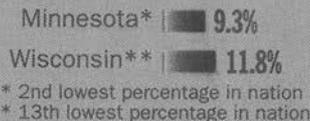
By age



By employment



Regionally



INSURANCE CONTINUED ON 5A ►

PIONEER PRESS

INSURANCE

▼ CONTINUED FROM 1A

ensure people aren't being improperly excluded from two federally sponsored health insurance programs.

Last month, Democratic presidential candidates Bill Bradley and Vice President Al Gore each outlined proposals to cover more people through federal initiatives. And House Republicans are pushing tax changes to help make health insurance more affordable for small-business owners and the self-employed.

Despite the renewed attention and expansive job market, health insurance is increasingly unaffordable for the poor, with medical costs continuing to rise faster than inflation.

New medical technology, the rising cost of prescription medication and the increasing longevity of older people who require more care have all combined to increase insurance premiums and to price many employers out of the medical insurance market, according to Richard Coorsh, a spokesman for the Health Insurance Association of America, a trade group representing the nation's leading health insurance carriers.

While most Americans — 70 percent — were covered by private insurance plans typically offered by their employer, many companies have scaled back or eliminated coverage. As a result, a

startling 47.5 percent of poor full-time workers — many of whom are moving from welfare to work — were uninsured in 1998.

"That is stunning," said Alan Weil, a senior fellow at the Urban Institute here who has studied health insurance trends. "Welfare reform is supposed to send the message that people should work and work should pay, but this figure is inconsistent with that message. We should all be concerned."

"The children of many of these workers are being thrown off Medicaid improperly," said Ron Pollack, executive director for Families USA, a nonprofit health-care advocacy group. "It's imperative that all candidates for public office come up with specific proposals to address this problem."

Age, education and income play key roles in determining which Americans have health care protection. The young, those with less education and lower incomes were far less likely to have coverage than older people and those with better educations and higher earnings.

Hispanics, the fastest-growing segment of the nation's population, were far more likely than any other racial or ethnic group to be uninsured. About 11 million people, or 35 percent, of all Hispanics were thought to be uninsured last year, compared to 7.8 million, or 22 percent, of blacks. About 21 percent of Asians and Pacific Islanders (2.3 million people) and 12 percent (22.8 million) of non-Hispanic whites were also uninsured.

About 15 percent, or 11.1 million, of children under age 18 were uninsured in 1998. But 25.2 percent, or 3.4 million, of poor children went without coverage. The study also estimates that 30 per-

cent of Hispanic children were uninsured in 1998, compared to 19.7 percent for black children, 16.8 percent for Asian and Pacific youths and 10.6 percent for non-Hispanic white children.

StarTribune 10-04-99

Number in the nation lacking health coverage increased last year

By David Westphal

Star Tribune

Washington Bureau Chief

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The number of Americans without health insurance rose last year by about 1 million, deepening the challenge of providing affordable health care for a nation that increasingly lacks basic coverage.

The Census Bureau, in a report issued today, found that 44.3 million people had no health insurance during all of 1998. That represents 16.3 percent of the populace.

CENSUS continues on A10

CENSUS from A1

Minnesota is among the states with the lowest uninsured rates

The number of uninsured has grown steadily over the past decade. In 1997, 16.1 percent lacked coverage. In 1996, the percentage was 15.6 percent.

Minnesota remained among the states with the lowest uninsured rates, at 9.3 percent (or 102,000 people). That's down from 10.2 percent two years ago.

California accounted for about one-third of the increase, its uninsured population growing to 7.4 million. Texas had the next-largest uninsured total, at 4.9 million.

Despite a rosy economy that has lifted incomes and lowered poverty in recent years, Americans have gone in the opposite direction on health coverage. Between 1987 and 1998, according to the Census Bureau, the number of uninsured has soared by 12 million people, an increase of more than a third.

The trend, fed by reductions in Medicaid and cuts in employer-sponsored health plans, has driven up health-care costs and brought calls for political health reform. Democratic presidential candidate Bill Bradley revived the issue last week when he proposed a form of universal health care for all Americans.

Medicaid covers fewer

Diane Rowland, executive vice president of the Kaiser Family Foundation, an independent health research group, said new data suggest that in the past two years there's been a slight increase in the percentage of Americans covered by employer-sponsored health plans. But changes in the 1996 welfare legislation have reduced Medicaid coverage, the government-sponsored health program for poor people.

"We're definitely seeing a decline in Medicaid, in part because people have gotten the mistaken impression they're no longer eligible," she said.

According to the Census Bu-

reau, there were more states with significant increases in the uninsured last year as states with significant declines.

Among the changes: The number of uninsured fell in Arkansas, Florida, Iowa, Massachusetts, Missouri, Nebraska, Ohio and Tennessee. Their ranks grew in Alabama, California, Illinois, Indiana, Maryland, Michigan, Montana, Nevada, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Utah, Wisconsin and Wyoming.

California has been responsible for a large portion of the national growth in the past two years; its uninsured population increased by more than 600,000 since 1996. And other states are seeing similar trends. In North Dakota, for example, the uninsured rate has leapt from 8.4 percent in 1994 to 14.2 percent in 1998.

The rates last year ranged from 9 percent in Nebraska to 24.5 percent in Texas.

The number of children without coverage remained roughly the same — 11 million.

The nation's uninsured were most likely to be found in low-income households, among minority groups and in the ranks of full-time workers, according to Census Bureau findings:

► One-fourth of those in households making less than \$25,000 a year were uninsured.

► More than one-third of Hispanic households lacked coverage.

► Roughly four in five of the uninsured were full-time workers or their dependents.

According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, the number of low-income families lacking health coverage is likely to grow, in part because of changes accompanying the welfare overhaul legislation. Under that measure, for example, new immigrants must wait five years before becoming eligible for Medicaid.

S+PPP

4A

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 2, 1999

C

NATIONAL BRIEFING

Race affects chances for success, study says

BOSTON

Race continues to play a powerful role in the chances for success in America, from job opportunities to education to housing, according to a five-year study of Boston, Atlanta, Detroit and Los Angeles. The Multi-City Study of Urban Inequality, released Friday, said racial stereotypes and attitudes heavily influence the labor market, with blacks landing at the bottom. The survey, sponsored by the Russell Sage Foundation and the Harvard University Multidisciplinary Program in Inequality and Social Policy, looked at 9,000 households and 3,500 employers in the four cities.

Churches' main question: Is satisfying Twins' needs just?

While the St. Paul Area Council of Churches has no position on the ballpark issue, the council does have priority issues that have strong membership support and that fit its mission to bring congregations together to build a life-giving, just, anti-racist community.

The council, for example, advocates more public funding to develop affordable housing. The council knows about this issue because member churches daily set up cots to house homeless parents with children who are part of the "overflow" when Ramsey County's 55-bed family shelter is full. Last year 2,230 bed nights were provided in churches. This is a new and unacceptable situation in our community. Changing it fits our mission. All children in our community deserve better. That would be life-giving, just and anti-racist.



TOM DUKE
GUEST COLUMNIST

STADIUM PITCH HIT OR MISS?



One in a series
leading up to
the Nov. 2 vote

Would public funding for housing for the Twins fit this mission? Certainly baseball can be life-giving, healthy entertainment. Would it be just? This is much more complicated, but worth pursuing.

We would weigh public good against the burden of public taxation, against private wealth available and against other needs. Who should pay and who will benefit? Is this a private entertainment business that should be financed by the abundant private wealth in our community? Or is it a public good that the public should invest in, and perhaps own and control, or a combination of both?

We would also ask what is the highest and best use of our taxes, especially in a climate of high anti-tax fever. We would weigh the benefits of taxing for a stadium against taxing for investment in our future work force and citizenship, through affordable housing, improved schools and job training, for example.

In a just society, affordable housing would not be a privilege of some related to skin color and class, but instead available and accessible to all. We're not there yet.

If we as citizens, faith communities and public officials advocated for more public funding of affordable housing as much as, or even more than, for a stadium, perhaps we could feel good about also providing an affordable house for the Twins.

Duke (e-mail: tduke@spacc.com) is executive director of the St. Paul Area Council of Churches.

Ethnic harmony

A California town seems to find it

No state has suffered a more turbulent ethnic history than California, where Chinese were hanged by their hair braids, Mexicans and "Okies" exploited in the fields, and Japanese herded into internment camps. So it's good to hear about Walnut.

A tidy suburb in the San Gabriel valley, 25 miles east of downtown Los Angeles, Walnut has become a showcase for ethnic harmony, a place that reflects California's blended racial future. By 2001, California will become the first big state without a white majority. (Hawaii and New Mexico are the others.) More states will follow. Sometime after midcentury, the nation itself is expected to become a country in which Americans of Hispanic, Asian, African and other backgrounds outnumber those of solely European descent.

It's inspiring to know that in Walnut, at least, the "ethnic quilt" is already in place and working quite well. "If a multi-ethnic society is worked out in America, I would think it is worked out in places like Walnut," James Allen recently told the Los Angeles Times. Allen, a professor at California State University, Northridge, has studied the demographic evolution of Los Angeles County — and of Walnut.

Over two decades, the town went from nearly all white to two-thirds nonwhite while continuing to grow and continuing to attract additional white residents. In other words, it encountered no white flight — a remarkable departure from the usual pattern.

Now, as the Times reports, a visit to the high school party finds a Thai-American girl in a sequined gown slow-dancing with a tuxedoed black youth, and a number of white kids dancing hip-hop with Hispanic dates. Contrary to the custom at most schools, teens don't tend to withdraw into ethnic groups.

Meanwhile, all over town, white retirees dote over their grandchildren — who are what? Exotic blends originating in Vietnam, Mexico, Ireland and elsewhere. These children are, in other words, young Californians. And as they grow up they're stymied by the college-entrance forms or other papers asking for their "race."

Officially, Walnut is 36 percent Asian, 33 percent white, 24 percent Hispanic and 7 percent black. But those distinctions are much harder to make as time goes by.

Dale Maharidge points out in his book, "The Coming White Minority," that California has not gone gently into this future. The Proposition 13 tax revolt of 1979 and the parade of anti-immigrant, anti-affirmative-action initiatives since then are all symptoms of white fear, he says.

But what seems to hold Walnut together more than anything is its middle-class prosperity. Class distinctions tend not to break along ethnic lines, sociologists emphasize. In the wider nation, then, and in the coming century, Walnut should be taken as a lesson. A fair and flourishing economy can help erase ethnic rivalries and make *e pluribus unum* a delicious possibility.

INCOMES

CONTINUED FROM 1A

panic households had their third consecutive median income increase, going from \$27,043 to \$28,330 for a 4.8 percent increase. Blacks saw their median income remain virtually unchanged from the all-time high of about \$25,400 in 1997. Asians and Pacific Islanders continued to have the highest

median income of all racial groups at \$46,637.

President Clinton claimed the good news is proof that his economic and fiscal strategies are paying off.

"Over the last 6½ years, the results speak for themselves," Clinton said. "Since we launched our economic plan in 1993, median family income is the highest it has ever been."

And as income has increased, the proportion and number of peo-

ple living in poverty has fallen. Last year, 34.5 million people, or 12.7 percent, lived in poverty, compared to 13.3 percent, or 35.6 million people in 1997. That reduction was driven by a record-low poverty rate of 13.7 percent in the South.

For children, who make up about 26 percent of the population but comprise nearly 40 percent of the nation's poor, the news was equally encouraging.

The poverty rate and number of poor children both fell from 14.1 million people or 19.9 percent in 1997 to 13.5 million people, or 18.9 percent last year. It marks the first time since 1980 that the child poverty rate has fallen a statistically significant level below 20 percent.

Child advocates acknowledged the improvement but took a different perspective on the numbers. The Children's Defense Fund pointed out that only 3.2 million of the nation's 13.5 million poor children lived in families headed by a full-time wage earner.

"This data shows that families are struggling with low wages," said group president Marian Wright Edelman. "While families are playing by the rules and holding down a job, they are not making enough to lift themselves out of poverty."

The report also showed that contrary to the worries of some politicians and advocacy groups, the income gap between the rich and poor has held steady for the past four years — a fact Clinton

An even rosier picture

For the fourth year in a row, poverty rates in the U.S. are down and median income is up. Household income is now at an all-time high.

By race, ethnic group

Poverty rates by racial, ethnic group:

Race	'97	'98
White*	8.6%	8.2%
Hispanic**	27.1%	25.6%
Black	26.5%	26.1%
Asian, Pacific	14.0%	12.5%

By race, ethnic group

Median income by racial, ethnic group:

Race	'97	'98
White*	\$41,200	\$42,440
Hispanic**	\$27,000	\$28,330
Black	\$25,440	\$25,350
Asian, Pacific	\$45,950	\$46,640

Children living in poverty: Not so rosy

The poverty rate for children dropped to 18.9%, falling below 20% for the first time since 1980, but children still remain the most vulnerable group. Rates, 1998:

Children under age 6 living with single mothers: 54.8%



Children under age 6 in married-couple families: 10.1%



Source: Census Bureau

*Non-Hispanic **Can be of any race

KNIGHT RIDDER TRIBUNE

noted in Thursday's White House briefing.

"In the 1980s, most working families saw their incomes stagnate, with the worst performance at the bottom of the economic scale," Clinton said. "In the last five years, finally we have stemmed the tide of rising inequality."

But the divide remains wide and deep. Households with incomes in

the top 20 percent earned 49.2 percent of the national income, with those in the top 5 percent taking home 21.4 percent of the national total. Meanwhile, homes in the lowest 20 percent earned only 3.6 percent of the national income.

The earnings gap between men and women also remained virtually unchanged, with women earning about 73 cents for every dollar earned by a man. The biggest gap

is faced by women with professional degrees, who earn only 61 cents for every dollar earned by men with similar education.

Martha Burk, a legislative co-chair for the National Committee on Pay Equity, said the finding validates claims of a "glass ceiling" faced by women in high-skilled professions.

"It just shows that the Good Old Boys' Club is alive and well, no matter what anybody tells you," Burk said.

Contrary to the worries of some politicians and advocacy groups, the income gap between the rich and poor has held steady for the past four years.

The information in the Census Bureau's annual report was taken from a sample of 50,000 households nationwide. And, despite pockets of dissent, most experts agreed that the report painted a fairly rosy picture of the nation's economic well being.

"The economy of the last eight years has been vigorous and robust, and if anyone deserves credit, it's the folks further down on Constitution Avenue (the Federal Reserve Board) who are responsible for our monetary policy," said Henry Aaron, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution. "We've also had a lot of good luck," he added.

Household income rose to \$38,900, report shows

Percent of families below poverty level shows improvement

WASHINGTON BUREAU

Here are some statistical highlights from the new Census Bureau report on household income and poverty:

- Average household income rose 3.5 percent from 1997 to \$38,900 in 1998.

- The proportion of the population living below the poverty level — \$16,660 for a family of four — dropped from 13.3 percent in 1997 to 12.7 percent in 1998.

- The poverty rate for children dropped from 19.9 percent to 18.9 percent in 1998.

- There were no significant changes in how income is divided among the rich and the poor. Some 21.4 percent of all household income goes to the top 5 percent of American households. The lowest 20 percent share 3.6 percent.

- The median household income increased between 1996 and 1998 in Minnesota, Alabama, Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Missouri, New Mexico, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Utah, Vermont, Washington and Wyoming. It decreased in Alaska and stayed the same in all other states.

- The poverty rate decreased between 1996 and 1998 in New Mexico and Virginia and increased in North Dakota. It remained the same in all other states.

- Among the racial groups, non-Hispanic white households and Hispanics showed growth in average household income between 1997 and 1998. The non-Hispanic White household income increased by 3 percent to \$42,439. Hispanic household income increased 4.8 percent to \$28,300.

- Families of Hispanic origin had a significant decline in their poverty rate: 22.7 percent were poor in 1998, down from 24.7 in 1997.

- Despite the drop in child poverty, some groups remain particularly vulnerable. Children under 6 in families with a female householder and no husband present had a poverty rate of 54.8 percent, more than five times the rate for children under 6 in married-couple families.

- The West had the highest regional average household income in 1998 — \$41,000. The average income for both the Northeast and Midwest was \$40,600. In the South it was \$35,800.

- The West had the highest poverty rate in 1998, 14 percent, followed by the South with 13.7 percent, the Northeast with 12.3 percent and the Midwest at 10.3 percent.

- The earnings of full-time year-round women workers averaged \$25,862, 73 percent of the \$35,345 earned by men.

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ple living in poverty has fallen. Last year, 34.5 million people, or 12.7 percent, lived in poverty, compared to 13.3 percent, or 35.6 million people in 1997. That reduction was driven by a record-low poverty rate of 13.7 percent in the South.

American incomes reflect rosy economic climate

TONY PUGH WASHINGTON BUREAU

WASHINGTON
The nation's median household income climbed to an all-time high last year while the poverty rate for children dipped to an 18-year low, the Census Bureau reported Thursday.

The 1998 figures marked the fourth consecutive year of growth for overall household income as the strong economy,

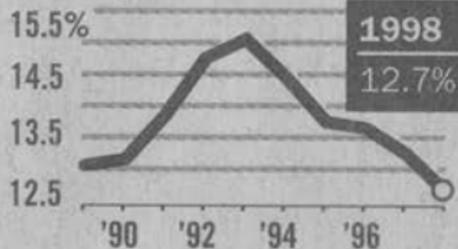
record unemployment and low inflation continued to shower benefits across all regions of the country and all segments of the population.

Non-Hispanic white households and Hispanics both showed strong growth in real median income. White household income jumped 3 percent from \$41,209 in 1997 to \$42,439 in 1998. His-

INCOMES CONTINUED ON 10A ▶

Poverty rate

Percent of population with income below the poverty level:



Source: Census Bureau

Income

For median households, in 1998 dollars:



KNIGHT RIDDER TRIBUNE

In democracy, only the people can be own cultural gatekeepers

CHARLES LEVENDOSKY
COMMENTATOR

Members of Congress can't even pass a law so that they aren't bought and paid for by special-interest groups. How are they going to stop a so-called "descent into decadence"?

Everyone wants to be a culture czar. Culture czars will tell the nation what is good art and what is bad art.

Bad art will be banned — from music, to films and photography, to paintings and sculpture, to literature, to dance, to television programming. And the nation had better be grateful.

In August, Sen. Sam Brownback, R-Kan., introduced a Senate resolution to create a seven-member Special Committee on American Culture to investigate "the cultural crisis facing America."

"What cultural crisis?" you might ask.

It shouldn't escape notice that Brownback is from the same state as the "science czars" of the Kansas Board of Education. If everyone in America voted to repeal gravity, we still wouldn't float off the face of the Earth — but the Kansas science czars don't seem to believe that.

According to Senate Resolution 172, the purpose of Brownback's committee of culture czars is: "1) to study the causes and reasons for social and cultural regression; 2) to make such findings of fact as are warranted and appropriate, including the impact that such negative cultural trends and developments have on the broader society, particularly in regards to child well-being; and 3) to explore means of cultural renewal."

Brownback has already been involved in Senate hearings regarding music and its supposed relationship to youth violence. The hearings attacked rock, rap, hip-hop and shock rock. Rap and hip-hop arose from ghettos. Rap is accused of

fomenting violence simply because it sometimes accurately describes life in urban ghettos — racism, police brutality, poverty and the effects of poverty. Instead of attempting to solve the social problems of poverty and racism, the music czars attacked rap. It's easier. It doesn't cost much. And one can conveniently turn one's back on the poor.

The "well-being of children" has become a code phrase for banning adult expression, artistic or otherwise. It shows up in the Senate resolution.

You can see the underlying intent: Art and cultural expression will be pushed toward what is appropriate for elementary-school children.

Congress tried this same tactic to limit expression on the Internet, but a unanimous U.S. Supreme Court told Congress that approach violates the First Amendment. Not even Congress — with its sound-bite politics — is above the Constitution, although it forgets that from time to time.

In the 1950s, Elvis Presley and rock 'n' roll were an anathema to adults. In the '40s it was the crooners with their blues love songs that were blamed on corrupting youth. Every young generation has its own musical expression, and, as predictable as sunrise, the parents of that generation are sure the new music will be the downfall of their children.

David Lowenthal, professor emeritus of political science at Boston College, recently claimed in an article published in *The Weekly Standard* that Hollywood is dishing out too much sex and violence. He continued: "Government, and government

alone, has a chance of blocking this descent into decadence. The choice is clear, either a rigorous censorship of the mass media — or an accelerating descent into barbarism and the destruction, sooner or later, of free society itself."

Lowenthal doesn't equate freedom of speech and expression with a free society. And clearly he doesn't think Americans have the good sense to choose what to watch or read for themselves. Lowenthal would give that power to Congress.

Members of Congress can't even pass a law to reform the laws regulating campaign contributions so that they aren't bought and paid for by wealthy special-interest groups. How are they going to stop this so-called "descent into decadence"?

The September issue of the *American Family Association Journal* calls the *American Library Association* a radical organization. What apparently is so radical about the ALA is that it insists that parents must be the guides of what their children read or pull up on library Internet computers. The ALA takes the position that it isn't a librarian's job to restrict what a child reads or sees.

The *American Family Association* wants librarians to be culture czars. It's refreshing that the *American Library Association* has vigorously refused to put librarians in that role.

In a nation with a proud free-speech heritage and a First Amendment legal tradition that resolutely supports it, the re-emergence of speech and culture czars is not surprising. Our nation has a long history of comstockery and puritan prudishness.

The culture czars never seem to trust the basic axiom of a democracy: The people can and must choose for themselves.

Levendosky (e-mail: levendos@trib.com) is editorial page editor of the Casper (Wyo.) *Star-Tribune*. Distributed by the New York Times News Service.

Illegal aliens strain Minnesota facilities

1,800 deported in '98 from state, Dakotas

ASHLEY H. GRANT ASSOCIATED PRESS

About 1,800 illegal aliens were deported last year from Minnesota, South Dakota and North Dakota, Immigration and Naturalization Service officials said Friday.

About 50 percent were picked up when they were charged for another crime. The remainder were arrested at work sites.

Curtis Aljets, INS director of the three-state St. Paul district, said a growing number of illegal aliens is straining resources such as court space, jail beds and police officers' time, particularly in Minnesota.

"By comparison to surrounding states, Minnesota is one of the weakest points in the Upper Midwest in deterring illegal immigration," Aljets told members of a

Minnesota House commerce committee at the state Capitol.

Aljets said his assertions were based on anecdotal evidence rather than hard numbers, adding that he thinks Minnesota has become a magnet for illegal aliens because of the availability of welfare, medical treatment and education.

"Minnesotans pride themselves on providing good services and schools as well as taking care of those who are less fortunate," he said. "These normally admirable and positive characteristics contribute to Minnesotans being vulnerable to the manipulation and fraud."

INS officials suggested that Minnesota join an INS verification program that it has repeatedly refused to join since 1986. Minnesota was one of two states in the 20-state northern INS region that received a waiver to keep from participating in the system.

Sally Fashant, a supervisor at the Department of Human Services, said the state proved at the

time that its own system was equal to or better than the INS system.

But lawmakers criticized the Department of Human Services for its "hands-off" policy on reporting possible aliens to the INS. A memo sent to agency employees in April directed them not to "initiate contact with the INS without the client's written permission."

"I just find that appalling," said Rep. Fran Bradley, R-Rochester.

The INS said the biggest barrier for Minnesota is that the state has no defined policy on immigration. That means each agency must decide on its own what to do when it runs across aliens.

Public Safety Commissioner Charlie Weaver said his agency was looking into ways to reduce the number of people getting drivers' licenses with fraudulent documents.

"We are not law enforcement officers though. . . . We don't want to turn into a place where people are afraid to go," he said.

Jorge Saavedra, the chief legal officer for Centro Legal Inc., a non-profit law office in St. Paul, cautioned lawmakers not to "go overboard" in setting new restrictions.

He wants to make sure any new procedures would target only illegal aliens and not inadvertently make life more difficult for legal immigrants.

The INS expects to have helped more than 8,100 immigrants become citizens in the fiscal year ending Sept. 30. That would surpass the region's old record of 6,400 naturalizations in 1997.

"Minnesota has a sense of fairness and balance," Saavedra said. "A lot of people are here because of this tolerance."

Aljets said that although the total number of deportations is expected to be about the same in 1999 as it was last year, the rate of crime is higher. Officials expect about 80 percent of those deported in the region to be arrested on another criminal charge.

ST PPP 9-27-99

Don't look to tribes for stadium financing

Indian tribes are governments. This is a fact often lost in discussions about whether the Indian tribes in Minnesota should be involved in the funding of sports stadiums.

Just as Gov. Jesse Ventura and Minnesota's legislators must determine whether it is a purpose of state government to fund the construction of sports stadiums and arenas, elected tribal leaders and tribal councils — if faced with the question — would need to determine whether it is a tribal government's purpose to assist the Twins owners and the city of St. Paul.

Tribal governmental authority is generally stated in each Indian tribe's constitution, bylaws and tribal laws. For the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community (SMSC), it is not a purpose of tribal government to finance or construct sports stadiums.

STADIUM PITCH HIT OR MISS?



One in a series
leading up to the
Nov. 2 vote

Like all tribes, the SMSC's governmental mission is to provide essential government services to its tribal members and to continue its move toward meaningful long term economic self-sufficiency. While the SMSC presently experiences self-sufficiency, there are still significant unmet needs throughout Indian country.

Over the last three years, the SMSC has provided more than \$35 million in economic development loans and grants to other Indian tribes in the Upper Midwest that are still struggling to improve their tribal economies. The SMSC has determined that its available financial resources are better spent in Indian country than on a project such as a sports stadium.

While some tribes look for viable economic development investments, the construction of a sports stadium does not appear to be a viable investment. If it were, Twins owner Carl Pohlad would have done it himself.

Simply put, whether the Minnesota Legislature, the city of St. Paul and the Minnesota Twins find a way to finance the construction of a stadium should not be an issue that involves the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community.



**WILLIAM
HARDACKER**

GUEST
COLUMNIST

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RACE AND ADMISSIONS AT U

9-14-99

No wrongdoing; it's helping better society

A report released last week would have you believe that the University of Minnesota is misbehaving by using race as one of several factors in deciding which students to admit. Hardly.

In its study of admissions in 1997 and 1998 at the University of Minnesota campuses in the Twin Cities, Duluth, Crookston and Morris, the Washington, D.C.-based Center for Equal Opportunity argues that some whites are being passed over to admit minorities with lower ACT test scores and class rankings.

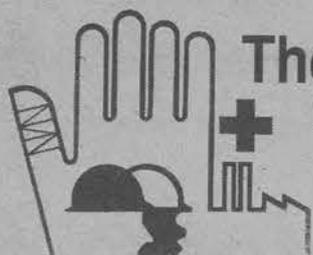
Well, duh. Were you surprised? This is not a case of skulduggery. It's a pattern that many universities in the country practice, as part of putting together a student body that responds to numerous societal concerns and needs. It is a practice many universities feel they have to use because of the broad failure of public elementary and secondary schools to close the achievement gap between white and minority students.

Even at that, on each campus of the University of Minnesota system, the overwhelming proportion of those enrolled is white (83.6 percent in the Twin Cities).

Linda Chavez, president of the Center for Equal Opportunity, acknowledges that the record in Minnesota is not nearly as disturbing as what she and her researchers have found elsewhere, especially in Michigan and Virginia. Still, she argues it is a disservice to society to put minorities into higher education settings where they are not prepared to succeed, are left to their own devices and thus are set up for failure.

Her concern is valid, but she doesn't produce convincing evidence of a problem. The report makes minimal effort to define and document a higher rate of failure for minorities in the University of Minnesota system. It notes that blacks and Hispanics, on average, take considerably longer to graduate than do whites (49.1 percent of whites graduate in six years, compared with 33.8 percent of blacks and 37 percent of Hispanics; the rate for Asians is 48.6 percent). But it offers no race-based data on grade point averages or measures of post-college success. Other explanations besides ability are possible for the six-year graduation rates.

Court decisions have been interpreted as allowing colleges and universities to use race as one factor among several in admission decisions — not the only factor. There is no evidence the University of Minnesota is circumventing those decisions. Unless courts rule that race cannot be considered at all in admission decisions, or until elementary and secondary schools bring minority achievement rates up to levels of whites, the University of Minnesota should not alter course as a result of the report. The university is helping to build an economically and socially integrated society.



The Nation's Health + Worker's Safety

By Phil E. Benjamin

No time to wait: Politicians must act now

Cover all uninsured

A public health activist recently asked me, "When will it end? When will 'they' change policy and begin to expand health insurance coverage to the uninsured?"

This question came in response to new figures that put the uninsured at 44 million or about 17 percent of the U.S. population. And then there are the 60 million people with limited health insurance. At least one million will be forced into the ranks of the uninsured each year and more will lose part of the benefits in their current plans.

Add it all up and it comes to a total of 104 million people (40 percent) with limited or no health insurance. That's a major crisis and growing disaster; there's no other name for it. A health system based on profit and the ability to pay excessive health insurance premiums guarantees a dramatic decline in health care, a decline that is partly hidden by the inadequate government statistics dealing with morbidity and mortality.

My answer to the question is a simple one: this crisis will end when we get together and stop it. Corporate America – and the Medical Industrial Complex – only cares about profits, not people's health. Only when labor combines with its natural allies and forces all politicians to propose health policies that will correct the crisis will it end.

Medicaid privatized

Rather than protect people, the opposite is still the rule in Congress and the White House. There is still a mad dash to privatize Medicaid, the nation's health program for poor people. They are giving this crucial program over to the for-profit insurance companies or so-called not-for-profit companies, who behave the same as profiteers. This means these companies will dump the very sick and only keep the Medicaid recipients that will not cost them money.

This is the same process already taking place for Medicare, the nation's program for seniors and disabled. That is the Medicare/HMO fiasco.

The people's cry of "Hands off Medicare and Medicaid" is resounding in the ears of all politicians and bureaucrats. But, they aren't listening. Combining this clarion call with the demand for health care for the uninsured can make the year 2000 election the one that will truly help the people.

Mass movement needed

A recent article in the *New England Journal of Medicine* pointed out that in the 1996 presidential election, for the first time since World War II, the Democratic nominee did not propose universal national health insurance. Based on this and the silence of the two current Democratic candidates for President, Al Gore and Bill Bradley, many, if not all, professional election pundits are predicting that universal national health will not be an issue in the year 2000 elections. Of course, George W. Bush, the Republican candidate, is perfectly content with the profiteering health system. Left out again will be the 104 million under- or uninsured and the millions of others threatened with coverage cutoffs.

Industry threatens people's health

Sliding out from under their rock, the American Association of Health Plans has increased its bellicose attacks on the Clinton administration, warning them to loosen government regulation of Medicare and giving profiteering plans even more of a clear path. They show absolutely no regard for the quality of or access to health care. They are beholden to just one standard – profits for the stockholders. They truly have no shame.

The combined forces of labor and the people's health movement can drive those profit leeches back under their rock and allow the politicians to do the right thing.

People's health demands:

- Hands off Medicare and Medicaid
- Cover everyone with significant health benefits
- Take profits out of health care

How can newspaper laud discrimination?

In response to a recent study by the Center for Equal Opportunity that presented strong evidence the University

ROGER CLEGG
GUEST COLUMNIST

of Minnesota is granting preferences to minority applicants, the Pioneer Press Editorial Board applauded the university's discrimination ("No wrongdoing; it's helping better society," Sept. 14).

Having conceded the accuracy of our study's conclusion that discrimination is occurring, and having further acknowledged our study's finding that minority graduation rates are generally lower than whites' (evidence, surely, that admission standards have been lowered), the Pioneer Press offered a curious series of responses.

First, the editorial claimed lots of other state schools discriminate, too, and that it's no big secret. But the fact that "everyone else does it" is no excuse, as parents have been telling children for centuries. The only reason this kind of discrimination is becoming generally known is because of studies like ours and lawsuits brought against places like the university.

Second, the Pioneer Press argued that most people admitted to the university are still white. But that is cold comfort to the white students who didn't get in because they have the wrong skin color, even though they had better qualifications than many minorities who were admitted.

Third, the editorial faulted our study for not looking at the grades earned by the minorities who were discriminatorily admitted, speculating that they might have done pretty well (not counting, of course, the large numbers who didn't graduate). That would be an interesting datum, to be sure, and the university can collect it much more easily than we can — and should do so. A recent book defending preferences at selective schools around the country found that the average rank of black students was at the 23rd percentile, versus the 53rd percentile for whites.

But even if there is less of a gap in Minnesota, it will not justify the university's discrimination. The white students who were turned away might have done as well or better.

Put the shoe on the other foot: Segregation would not have been justified at Ole Miss even if it produced figures showing that good grades were earned by the whites who were admitted over better-qualified blacks.

Fourth, the Pioneer Press asserted that the university's discrimination is legal. The Supreme Court has not resolved this issue definitively, but the court's recent decisions and several lower-court decisions indicate that, to the contrary, the university is violating the law. In any event, just because something is legal doesn't mean it's fair or right.

Finally, the editorial said the university's discrimination should continue until minority achievement rates equal those of whites. We agree that minority achievement rates should be improved, but it is wrong to use quotas to hold some children hostage until this comes about.

The recent experience in California has shown that serious educational reforms are unlikely to take place until preferences are no longer used to paper over problems at the K-12 level.

America has made enormous progress in race relations over the past generation. For that progress to continue, the single most important ingredient is mutual respect. But building that respect is impossible unless everyone is held to the same standard. When a university announces that it will hold members of some groups to a lower standard because of their skin color or where their ancestors came from, it inevitably breeds resentment and stigmatization, compromises the intellectual mission of the school and breaks the law.

Most important, it is unfair to those who are discriminated against and sets a terrible precedent — that it is all right to treat people differently because of race or ethnicity so long as the intellectuals think there is a good reason for it.

The University of Minnesota should stop discriminating.

Clegg is general counsel of the Center for Equal Opportunity, a Washington, D.C.-based research and educational organization. Reach him at (202) 639-0803.

INCOME from A1

Minnesota's median household income reached record \$45,576

Median household income after inflation grew \$1,300, or 3.5 percent, to \$38,885.

President Clinton hailed the reports. "The best news is that these gains finally are being shared with all groups in America, from the wealthiest to the poorest," he said.

But others said the data, while mostly favorable, still contained unsettling trends.

For example, child poverty fell at the sharpest pace in more than two decades, reaching 18.9 percent, but, J. Lawrence Aber, director of the National Center for Children in Poverty, said: "We must underscore that today's child poverty rate remains 35 percent higher than the low of 14 percent that was achieved in 1969."

Other studies show that the United States continues to have one of the highest child poverty rates among the world's developed countries, Aber said.

In Minnesota

Minnesota was one of 16 states to show significant increases in median income when two-year averages, for 1996-97 and 1997-98, were compared. The state posted a 6.2 percent rise.

State demographer Tom Gillaspay said the increase was noteworthy because Minnesota already has one of the highest median household incomes in the nation. For it to increase at nearly double the national rate was a surprise, he said.

The state's booming economy and low unemployment clearly contributed to the growth, said Pat Meagher, a staff economist for the Minnesota Department of Finance. Wage increases also were critical, he said. He cited a U.S. Department of Commerce report indicating that total wages grew by 8.7 percent in Minnesota in 1998, compared with 6.7 percent in the nation.

"It's not that [wage increases in] the U.S. grew a little slower than Minnesota; they grew significantly slower," said Meagher.

But the rising tide isn't lifting all boats, according to the Census Bureau. The lack of improvement in Minnesota's poverty rate from 1996-97 to 1997-98 is one example.

Gillaspay said that wages for lower-skilled jobs haven't increased significantly and that they're often not high enough to move a household out of poverty.

Sustained expansion

On the national level, the growing household incomes and shrinking poverty are a product of what is likely to become, early next year, the most durable economic expansion in U.S. history. The cycle began in March 1991, and it has taken all of the gains since then to restore Americans to their economic standing of 1989, when household incomes reached the previous all-time high.

In recent years, the economic expansion has been marked by improvements among both rich and poor, and among different races and ethnic groups.

Last year, for example, Hispanic households led the way, with nearly 5 percent growth in median household income and a drop of 1.5 percentage points in the poverty rate.

There was no statistically significant change in incomes or poverty rates for either blacks or Asian Americans. However, Daniel Weinberg of the Census Bureau noted that among blacks, household income remained at a record high last year (\$25,351) and poverty didn't budge from a record low (26.1 percent).

Clinton economic adviser Gene Sperling said blacks' household income has risen by 21 percent since 1993, compared with 12.1 percent for all households.

In Minnesota, however, Yusef Mgeni, president of the Urban Coalition, took a less sanguine view of the data, particularly the

U.S. poverty and income data

Poverty rates	1997	1998
Number in poverty	35.6 million	34.5 million
Poverty rate	13.3%	12.7%
Asian/Pacific islander	14%	12.5%
Black	26.5%	26.1%
Hispanic*	27.1%	25.6%
White	11%	10.5%
Children	19.9%	18.9%

States with lowest poverty rates	1997-98**	States with highest poverty rates	1997-98**
Maryland	7.8%	New Mexico	20.8%
Wisconsin	8.5%	Louisiana	17.7%
Colorado	8.7%	Arkansas	17.2%
New Jersey	8.9%	Mississippi	17.1%
Utah	8.9%	West Virginia	17.1%

Median income	1997	1998	Percent change
	\$37,581	\$38,885	+3.5
Asian/Pacific islander	45,954	46,637	+1.5
Black	25,440	25,351	-0.3
Hispanic*	27,043	28,330	+4.8
White	39,579	40,912	+3.4

Full-time, year-round workers	1996-97**	1997-98**	Percent change
Male	34,199	35,345	+3.4
Female	25,362	25,862	+2.0

States with highest median incomes	1997-98**	States with lowest median incomes	1997-98**
Alaska	49,717	Arkansas	27,117
New Jersey	49,297	West Virginia	27,310
Maryland	48,714	Mississippi	29,031
Washington	46,339	Montana	30,622
Connecticut	45,589	New Mexico	31,049

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

* Hispanic people can be of any race.

** These figures are averages of data for the two years.

Star Tribune graphic

gap between whites and minorities. The coalition is a public policy research and advocacy group for lower-income and minority communities.

"They're a sober reminder of the larger realities of the marketplace," said Mgeni. "White people are more likely to have securities, stocks, IRAs, pensions. They've got appreciable investments that have benefited in this economy. That also contributes to the increases in income or net worth."

The regional picture

Regionally, the Midwest led the way in growth in household income, with a 4.4 percent increase last year. Its median household income of \$40,609 brought it almost even with the West, which has the nation's highest median (\$40,983).

Among the 16 states showing statistically significant income increases, Washington had the largest year-to-year gain, an 11.2 percent rise from 1997. Alaska was the only state to have a statistically significant decline, at 4 percent.

Only three states showed statistically significant changes in poverty. The rate went down in New Mexico and Virginia and up in North Dakota.

Median income is the point at which half the households earn more and half earn less. The poverty threshold for 1998 was an income of \$16,660 for a family of four and \$13,003 for a family of three.

There was no relative change in wages paid to men and women. Women's median earnings were \$25,862, or 73 percent of men's earnings of \$35,345. That percentage has been slowly inching up in the 1990s after increasing rapidly in the 1980s.

The Census Bureau also said the gap between the wealthiest and poorest Americans remained essentially the same between 1997 and 1998, as it has since 1993.

Robert Greenstein, director of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, said the generally favorable numbers were an example of what can happen when the nation enjoys a long period of low unemployment. "Last year's 4.5 percent unemployment rate is the big story here," he said.

But he added that some disturbing trends lie beneath the rosy picture — particularly in the poverty numbers. Greenstein's analysis showed that the amount by which an average family fell below the poverty line had actually grown between 1995 and 1998. One cause, he said, might be the sharp decline, under welfare changes, in the percentage of poor children whose families receive cash benefits and food stamp assistance.

The annual income and poverty report is based on a survey of 50,000 households taken each month for the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

— *The Associated Press contributed to this report.*

Household income hits record high

By David Westphal
and Jean Hopfensperger
Star Tribune staff writers

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The nation's long economic expansion continued to pay Americans a handsome dividend last year, with household income hitting an all-time high, the Census Bureau reported Thursday.

At the same time, the robust economy pulled 1.1 million Americans out of poverty. The nation's poverty rate fell to 12.7 percent, down from 13.3 percent in 1997 and the lowest in 20 years, although 34.5 million people still lived below the poverty line.

Minnesota was among the pace-setters in median household income, which reached \$45,576 in the state. But its poverty rate rose slightly, from 9.7 to 10 percent.

Nationally, the income gains occurred at every earnings level and, for the first time since at least 1975, in every region.

INCOME continues on A12:

— *Some saw unsettling trends amid the mostly favorable data.*

How Minnesota compares

Median household income

U.S. (Up 3.5%)

'97 **\$37,581**

'98 **\$38,885**

Minnesota (Up 6.2%)

'96-'97 **\$42,906**

'97-'98 **\$45,576**

Nat'l rank: 6th highest

Poverty rates

U.S.

'97 **13.3%**

'98 **12.7%**

Minnesota

'96-'97 **9.7%**

'97-'98 **10.0%**

Nat'l rank: 14th lowest

Note: Minnesota poverty/income numbers are the averages of annual measures for 1996-97 and 1997-98.

Source: Census Bureau