



BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL PEOPLE  
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## **A PROPOSAL TO END THE BLACK GHETTO AS WE KNOW IT\***

By Alexander Polikoff

In a recent syndicated column David Broder observed that the capacity of affluent white Americans to put aside lasting concern about those isolated by poverty and race from mainstream society is “almost limitless.” Perhaps, however, Katrina brought not one but two sea-changes – from President Bush on down we now hear talk of concentrated poverty. Perhaps, for a time at least, isolation by poverty or race is back on the American agenda. David Brooks called it “Katrina’s silver lining.”

Good discussion must usually precede intelligent action. What precisely, in this instance, should the discussion of isolation by poverty or race be about? One answer begins by noting that much of what was flooded in New Orleans was a black ghetto. Like New Orleans, many of our largest cities have black ghettos, many larger than the one in New Orleans. For millions of black Americans these are places of isolation by race and poverty – places of hopelessness that breed despairing lives. In the lives of millions of white Americans too, black ghettos play an insidious, corrosive role. If we are now to engage in dialogue about isolation by race and poverty, maybe we should include discussion of the black ghetto and what, if anything, can be done about it.

### **Poison in the National Groundwater**

Some 170 years ago Alexis de Toqueville observed that racial inequality was the “most formidable evil” facing America. He prophesied that we would not successfully combat that evil, and that our failure to do so would eventually bring America to disaster. I’m going to take advantage of the discussion opportunity Katrina has created to examine how Toqueville’s prophecy looks today, and suggest how we might avoid the fate he prophesied for America.

Inner city poverty and disorder, writes Jason DeParle of the *New York Times*, lacerate a larger civic fabric. Most damaging of all, he continues, is the effect urban poverty has on race relations – it is like a poison in the national groundwater that is producing a thousand deformed fruits. I’m going to examine two of the thousand.

### **Deformed Fruit Number One.**

The first is nothing less than the break-up of the coalition that birthed the New Deal and the Civil Rights Movement, a political sea-change that began during World War II, gained strength over the next two decades, then led to Richard Nixon’s election in 1968, followed in 1980 by the triumph of Ronald Reagan and the final dissolution of the New Deal coalition with its reigning creed of consensus liberalism.

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\*Adapted from *Waiting for Gautreaux: A Story of Segregation, Housing, and the Black Ghetto*, Northwestern University Press, forthcoming (January 2006).

Powered by the trauma of the Great Depression, America was becoming a nation concerned with social justice. New Deal measures were driven by social justice ideals. In 1944 FDR called on Congress to enact a “second” Bill of Rights, this one to be devoted to social and economic, rather than civil and political, “rights.” He even vetoed a revenue bill because it failed to tax “unreasonable” wartime profits and provided relief “not for the needy but for the greedy.” To be sure, the veto was overridden. Yet Truman’s Fair Deal strove to continue the momentum of the New Deal. Johnson’s Great Society was to be great precisely because it elevated social and economic justice to explicit national policy. Though far from having carried the day, social justice was clearly “in play” in the American psyche for the three decades from the onset of the New Deal through the cresting of the Civil Rights Movement in 1965.

In November 1968 that psyche underwent fundamental change. From a nation concerned with fairness we became under Richard Nixon a nation that slammed the doors on school and housing desegregation. After a brief interlude of “trusting” Jimmy Carter, our changed character re-emerged with traits deepened and intensified. Under Reagan we became a thoroughly uncaring nation, obsessed with the “free” market and with crafting rules to foster still more personal acquisition by the most favored. The animating visions of the New Deal, the Fair Deal and the Great Society – “Government by organized money is just as dangerous as Government by organized mob,” FDR once said – had become as irrelevant as ancient relics.

There is no single explanation for America’s character change. But a major factor was disaffection by the blue-collar workers and white ethnics who had been core elements of the New Deal coalition. Disaffection over what? The answer is the one concern that, for them, trumped all others – fear of blacks from ghettos trying to “invade” their neighborhoods.

Focused on Detroit, a study by Professor Thomas Sugrue illustrates what happened at the local level. Detroit had long been a New Deal bastion. For years, blue-collar whites and white ethnics had voted overwhelmingly for Roosevelt. But in Detroit, as elsewhere, blacks were seeking housing outside the ghetto. In Detroit, as elsewhere, whites were pushing back. For the 20 years and more following World War II, the push-out and push-back was the predominant issue in local Detroit politics.

Democrats were seen as the party trying to improve the condition of black Americans, from Truman’s order to desegregate the military to the espousal of civil rights by Johnson and Humphrey. Inevitably, that meant identification with the black struggle for housing outside the ghetto. Inevitably, in turn, that meant disaffection on the part of blue-collar workers and white ethnics in Detroit, all interested – *above all* – in protecting their neighborhoods from blacks seen as invaders. By 1972 George Wallace would sweep every predominantly white ward in Detroit.

At the national level, the political sea-change began with Southerners attacking the civil rights movement by deliberately coupling blacks and law-breakers. Even before Johnson’s 1964 victory over Barry Goldwater, Theodore H. White wrote a prescient analysis for *Life Magazine* about white resistance to integration. Backlash, he wrote, is “as invisible, yet as real, as air pollution.” Division over race was an obvious peril for the Democrats. The Republicans had to choose between designing a program of social harmony or becoming “the white man’s party.” The issue, White said, would outlast the election. If the need for constructive answers were ignored – here he echoed Toqueville’s language exactly – “disaster lies ahead.”

Instead of answering with a program for social harmony, Republicans exploited the race issue. Angling for the 1968 Republican nomination, Nixon was soon playing the law and order theme regularly and loudly. A 1966 issue of *U.S. News and World Report* featured a Nixon article, "If Mob Rule Takes Hold in the U.S.," that blamed crime and violence on civil rights leaders. Not "more money for a war on poverty," Nixon argued, but more money for "more convictions."

The racial subtext of Nixon's anti-crime message was clear. Kevin Phillips, whose position papers were the blueprint for Nixon's strategy, argued frankly that a long-term political realignment in America was possible on the basis of race. He suggested – as one study put it – "coded anti-Black campaign rhetoric." Nixon understood. "That subliminal appeal to the anti-black voter was always present in Nixon's statements and speeches," wrote Nixon aide John Ehrlichman.

In his retrospective on the 1968 election, White observed that the shrinkage of Democratic votes could not be attributed solely to the "primordial" issue of race. But race was explicit in Nixon's "Southern strategy" for bringing the historically Democratic South into the Republican column, was "subliminal" in the crime and welfare debates, and overall was a key factor in Nixon's win over Humphrey.

In his 1980 campaign, Reagan's speeches on crime and welfare were a virtual rerun of Nixon's themes of 12 years earlier. Although other issues, such as the economy and the Iranian hostage crisis, were also involved, Reagan not only played the crime issue with its racial subtext exactly as had Nixon, but stood as had Nixon with the now-emerged Republican majority that had replaced the race-sundered New Deal coalition. It was a majority built on the "ruination" of the Great Society, says Patrick Buchanan, and "Nixon was its architect."

In their thoughtful book, *The Politics of Inequality: Crime and Punishment in America*, professors Katherine Beckett and Theodore Sasson succinctly sum up Buchanan's "ruination" point: Race had eclipsed class as the "organizing principle of American politics."

### **Deformed Fruit Number Two**

My second example of a deformed fruit is the War on Drugs, targeted on black ghettos. Since Reagan took office we have built over 1,000 new jails and prisons, many crowded beyond capacity. Crowded with whom? The answer is blacks from ghettos. By 1990 nearly one of every four young black males in the United States was under the control of the criminal justice system, more in major cities (over 40 percent in Washington, over 50 percent in Baltimore). In his book *Malign Neglect*, Professor Michael Tonry observes that the rising levels of black incarceration were the foreseeable effect of deliberate policies: "Anyone with knowledge of drug-trafficking patterns and of police arrest policies and incentives could have foreseen that the enemy troops in the War on Drugs would consist largely of young, inner-city minority males."

Part and parcel of our mass incarceration policy are "three strikes" laws that mandate long prison terms for third convictions. California has meted out a 25-year sentence for the "third strike" theft of a slice of pizza, another for pilfering some chocolate chip cookies. Thirteen-year-olds have been given mandatory, life-without-parole sentences. *Time Magazine* asks, "Should we make 11-year olds eligible for life behind bars? Nine-year olds? Seven-year olds?"

Heartless sentencing may not be the worst of it. Like prohibition, the War on Drugs is directly responsible for the black market and for the crime it breeds, fueling some of the very ills that are among the root causes of crime and diverting money from education and social initiatives. Between 1980 and 1995 the proportion of California's budget devoted to prisons grew from 2 percent to 9.7 percent, while the higher education proportion dropped below prisons, from over 12 to 9.5 percent.

In short, driven by a color-coded fear of black – particularly ghetto – crime, as a nation we are doggedly pursuing a mass incarceration policy that is both mindless and destructive of traditional American values. It is mindless because at enormous cost we insist on pursuing a policy (imprisoning people at 14 times the rate in Japan, eight times the rate in France, six times the rate in Canada) that is having no demonstrable effect on drug availability, drug crime rates, or crime rates generally. It is destructive of values because it has driven us to extremities that no fair-minded person can defend. “The United States is transforming itself,” writes Brent Staples of *The New York Times*, “into a nation of ex-convicts.”

### **Canary in our Coal Mine?**

These deformed fruits cannot of course be blamed solely on black ghettos. Ending black ghettos wouldn't end anti-black attitudes any more than ending Jewish ghettos ended anti-Semitism. But it is not easy to find anything in American society that matches the black ghetto for its poisoning effect on attitudes, values, and conduct.

Other deformed fruits may be growing on the vine. Sixty years ago Gunnar Myrdal, in his monumental study of race relations, *An American Dilemma*, wrote, “White prejudice and discrimination keep the Negro low in standards of living, health, education, manners and morals. This, in its turn, gives support to white prejudice.”

Forty years later sociologist Elijah Anderson's studies of a black ghetto and an adjacent non-ghetto neighborhood led him to conclude that the “vicious circle” described by Myrdal was alive and well. Anderson found that whites in the adjacent neighborhood relied on race as their key to avoiding danger. “The public awareness is color-coded,” he wrote. “White skin denotes civility, law-abidingness, and trustworthiness, while black skin is strongly associated with poverty, crime, incivility, and distrust.”

In American society at large most whites act like those Anderson studied – their public awareness is also color-coded, and they therefore steer clear of poor blacks and keep them in their ghettos. Predictable ghetto behavior then intensifies whites' sense of danger, validates their color-coding, and drives their conduct.

Ghettoization is growing in spite of many reasons to have expected the contrary – including the emergence of a sizable black middle class, the unparalleled good times of the 1990s, and our 1968 law making housing discrimination illegal. From 1970 to 2000 the number of urban census tracts with a 40 percent or more poverty population – a common definition of a severely distressed neighborhood – more than doubled, and the black population of those tracts increased 12 percent to over 2.8 million people. Because the 2000 figures were a snapshot taken in April 2000, just as the good times were ending, in population at least our black ghettos have undoubtedly grown even more since 2000.

In addition, today's ghettos are far worse places than they were in 1970, shortly after the urban riots of the preceding decade. Without going into details, the ensuing 35 years have seen the departure of low-skill jobs for the suburbs and overseas, the arrival of crack cocaine, and the war on drugs. One consequence may be seen in a simple arithmetic

comparison. In 1980 there were over three times as many black men in college and university as in prison and jail, 463,000 as against 143,000. Twenty years later the number of black men in college and university was actually fewer than the number behind bars, 603,000 compared with 791,000.

What, we may ask, lies in store for black Americans who are poor and trapped in ghettos? What will the college/university and prison/jail numbers look like 20 years from now, and 20 after that? And what will America look like then? Disaster may not come in the form of riots and race wars, as Carl Rowan predicts in his book, *The Coming Race War in America*. But it will be disaster no less if American values are sufficiently deformed. What is happening to America's black poor today can be seen as the canary in our coal mine, a warning about Toqueville's "most formidable evil threatening the future of the United States."

### **What to Do About It?**

So what can we do about it? One answer is the Gautreaux lawsuit's housing mobility program writ large – high quality pre- and post-move family counseling, coupled with housing search assistance and unit identification, to enable inner-city families to move with housing vouchers into middle-class neighborhoods far from the ghetto. I will lay out the elements of what I believe would be a workable program, and then respond to some of the multiple objections that will probably flood the reader's mind.

Suppose 50,000 housing choice vouchers were made available annually, were earmarked for use by black families living in urban ghettos, and could be used only in non-ghetto locations — say, census tracts with less than 10 percent poverty that are not minority impacted. Suppose that the vouchers were allocated to our 125 largest metropolitan areas. Suppose also that to avoid "threatening" any receiving community, no more than a specified number of families (an arbitrary number — say, ten, or a small fraction of occupied housing units) could move into any city, town or village in a year.

If an average of 40 municipalities in each metropolitan area served as "receiving communities," the result would be — using ten as the hypothetical annual move-in ceiling — that 50,000 families each year, or 500,000 in a decade, would move "in Gautreaux fashion." Notably, *the 500,000 moves would equal almost half the black families living in metropolitan ghetto tracts.*

The hypothetical is of course merely intended to show that a national Gautreaux program could operate at a meaningful scale; it is not a real-life working model. Metropolitan areas vary in size — in 2000, the 35 largest of the 331 metropolitan areas contained over half the metropolitan ghetto tracts. An actual program would be tailored to these variations, operating at greater scale in big ghetto areas and at lesser scale (or not at all) in metropolitan areas with small black ghettos.

Nor can we assume that half of all black families in metropolitan ghettos would choose to participate in a mobility program. But neither would it require the departure of half the black households to change radically the black ghetto as we know it. With enough participants, radical change would be inevitable. Whatever the time frame, we would at last be treating a disease that has festered untreated in the body politic for over a century.

## Four Questions

The hypothetical raises four questions. Would 50,000 vouchers a year be feasible? Could such an enlarged mobility program be administered responsibly? Would enough families volunteer to participate? Could 50,000 private homes and apartments be found each year for the program? The answers are necessarily speculative because mobility on such a scale has never been tried.

The 50,000 annual vouchers could be provided without issuing any new vouchers at all. Currently, some 2.1 million vouchers are in circulation. The annual “turnover rate” is about 11 percent, meaning that for various reasons (for example, a family’s income rises above the eligibility ceiling), over 200,000 vouchers are turned back to housing authorities each year for reissuance to other families. A congressional enactment could direct 50,000 of these turnover vouchers to the hypothetical program.

The cost of assisting mobility moves must be included in the calculus. But at an average of \$4,000 per family — a reasonable, even generous, figure based on the Gautreaux experience — we are talking about \$200 million a year, \$2 billion over ten years (excluding inflation). To put that figure in perspective and address the question of whether we could “afford” it, consider that for the single 2004 fiscal year the Bush administration proposed a military budget of some \$400 billion, which (excluding inflation) would amount to \$4,000 billion over ten years.

It is true that almost any program can be viewed as affordable by comparison with our military budget. But we aren’t talking about “any” program. We are talking about a program to end the successor to slavery and Jim Crow that is perpetuating a caste structure in the United States and threatening incalculable harm to American society. Achieving that, for a negligible fraction — .0005 — of our military budget, would be our best bargain since the Louisiana Purchase.

What about administration? Under a consent decree in a housing desegregation case, the Dallas Housing Authority in a little over two years assisted some 2,200 families, most of them black, to move to “non-impacted” areas. Dallas was a case of direct administration by a housing authority. The Gautreaux Program was administered by a nonprofit organization. Moving to Opportunity, HUD’s five-city Gautreaux-like demonstration program (using poverty, however, not race, as the location criterion), involves partnerships between housing authorities and nonprofits. These varied and largely positive experiences suggest that we could handle the administrative challenge of a nationwide Gautreaux-type program.

Would enough families volunteer to participate? We will not know until we try, but the Gautreaux experience suggests that they may. An average of 400 families moving each year in each participating metropolitan area would be required to reach the hypothetical goal (a smaller average number if more metropolitan areas were used). The 400-per-year number was surpassed more than once by the Gautreaux Program even though the number of entering families was artificially limited not by lack of demand or market factors but by the funding and staff that could be extracted from HUD in the Gautreaux consent decree bargaining process.

Finally, could 50,000 homes and apartments be found each year? The Gautreaux Program was able to place families in over 100 cities, towns and villages in the Chicago area, while my hypothetical assumes an average of only 40. The Census Bureau counts 331 metropolitan areas in the country, while the hypothetical assumes that the mobility program would operate in only 125. Each assumption is conservative with respect to unit supply.

Most importantly, the potential supply of units is not a fixed sum. More fine-tuning of fair market rents (increasing them in low vacancy times and places, reducing them where they exceed market rents), and more creativity about responding to landlord concerns (for example, paying rent for the several weeks it sometimes takes a housing authority to “clear” a family for an apartment being held off the market), can make a big difference. The mobility program enactment should also direct HUD to approve whatever rents were demonstrated to be reasonable – based on community comparables – for program families. If the 50,000 annual goal were made a bureaucratic imperative, and if local administrators were given the right tools, it is possible — indeed, likely — that the goal would be achieved.

### **A Legal Question**

A different kind of question is prompted by the notion of setting aside 50,000 vouchers each year for black families. How can one justify denying poor whites, poor Latinos and poor Asians, many also living in high-poverty neighborhoods, an opportunity to participate in the mobility program? Would it even be legal?

A dual justification can be offered. The first is that the proposal is designed to help the nation confront its “most formidable evil,” an evil that results in significant degree from fears and conduct generated by confining black Americans, not others, to ghettos. The second is that the country is responsible for the confinement of blacks to ghettos in a manner and degree that is not the case with other groups. This is obviously so for poor whites, who already live mostly among the non-poor. Latinos and Asians, for all of the discrimination they have suffered, do not have slavery or Jim Crow in their histories. Nor have they been confined among their own to a comparable degree. Devoting 50,000 vouchers exclusively to blacks in ghettos can thus be justified both by the purpose of the proposal and by the unique history and current situation of blacks in ghettos.

As for legality, no one can be certain in a time when 5-4 Supreme Court decisions are routine. But when in 1988 Congress authorized compensation to Japanese citizens who had been herded into World War II detention camps, no serious legal question was even raised. Though the analogy is obviously imperfect, housing vouchers as “compensation” for confining blacks in ghettos is not a bad rationale. It is unlikely that even today’s Supreme Court would upset an express congressional determination to make partial amends in this way for a history of slavery, Jim Crow and ghettoization. (Even so, one can imagine that for reasons of policy or politics Congress would choose to offer the mobility program to all residents of metropolitan ghettos. That would require a reworking of the numbers, and possibly prioritizing poverty families, but would not affect the basic structure or feasibility of the proposed program.)

### **What About the Objections?**

Even if a national Gautreaux-type program were doable and legal, objections remain to be addressed. One is that the program would be harmful to the moving families, severing them from family, friends and institutional support systems, and subjecting them to hostility and racial discrimination. An answer is to ask who are “we” to withhold a purely voluntary opportunity from “them” on the ground that we know better than they what is in their interest. Moreover, studies of the Gautreaux Program show that mobility works well for many participating families – indeed, particularly for children, the results have sometimes been startlingly positive.

A variation on this argument is that dismantling the ghetto will undermine black institutions, political power and ghetto communities that have values deserving of preservation. As for black institutional and political strength, Italians, Irish, Jews and others have survived far more mobility than black Americans are likely to experience; it is absurd to contend that the strong, resilient black American culture has anything to fear from a Gautreaux-type program. As for values in ghetto communities, it is plain to any objective observer that the bad far outweighs the good.

A further variation on the bad-for-them argument is that non-movers will be worse off once some of the ablest and most motivated among ghetto residents leave. Even if true, this would not be a sufficient reason to reject the approach. Should we not have passed the Fair Housing Act because the departure of better-off ghetto residents may have left those who remained worse off? Moreover, the likelihood that de-concentration will foster redevelopment means that even many of those who choose to remain will be benefited over time.

Others reject the Gautreaux approach in favor of preferred alternatives. A major one is community redevelopment. With a nonprofit community development corporation generally leading the way, the idea is to attack all of a depressed community's needs comprehensively and simultaneously — not just housing, but commercial development, job creation, school improvement, health facilities, public and social services, credit supply, crime and drug control.

But cautions are in order. First, community redevelopment does not generally focus on ghettos, for few black ghettos boast the key instrument — a strong community development corporation. Second, even in the neighborhoods in which most such revitalization has been attempted, the record is distinctly mixed. Revitalization is a difficult, multi-faceted, long-term undertaking. Numerous studies make it clear that even after decades of stupendously hard work and much achievement, jobs may still be scarce, neighborhood schools still problematic, poverty still widespread, crime and drugs still unvanquished.

The reason has to do with over five decades of metropolitan development patterns which David Rusk examines in his 1999 book, *Inside Game Outside Game*. The “inside game” is being played in many large cities and — increasingly — in many older, inner-ring suburbs as well. Relative to their metropolitan regions, these “inside” places face declining employment, middle-class populations, buying power, relative incomes and tax bases, along with increasing, disproportionately poor minority populations. The “outside game” reverses these patterns, with most of the suburbs, particularly the newer, farther-out ones, garnering a steadily growing share of the region's jobs, as well as middle-class families with their incomes, buying power and tax-paying capacities, while housing a disproportionately low fraction of the region's poor.

*Inside Game Outside Game* analyzes the powerful social and economic forces that generate these metropolitan development patterns, and the institutional — including governmental — arrangements that foster them. The result is what Rusk calls the “tragic dilemma” of community redevelopment programs. “It is like helping a crowd of people run up a down escalator.” No matter how fast they run, the escalator comes back down faster. Some run so hard — some programs function so well — that a few succeed in getting to the top, but most are carried back down.

To be sure, no effort to improve housing and services for poor families should be gainsaid. Some revitalization efforts may actually prevent marginal neighborhoods from becoming ghettos. Yet there is a danger that the appeal of community redevelopment will lead to plans that leave ghettos intact by focusing exclusively on improving conditions within

them for their impoverished populations. We should not be about the business of fostering self-contained ghetto communities apart from the mainstream. We should instead be trying to bring the ghetto poor into the mainstream. The critical point is that only by enabling the poor to live among the non-poor will significant long-term improvements be made possible in the life circumstances of most impoverished families trapped in ghettos.

Experience demonstrates that community redevelopment can best be achieved through a mixed-income approach that attracts higher-income families to (formerly) poverty neighborhoods, thereby creating an incentive for private profit and investment. Like housing mobility, mixed-income development also brings with it the crucial benefit of enabling the poor to live among the non-poor. Community redevelopment should thus be seen not as an opposing or alternate strategy, but as a follow-on, mixed-income complement to housing mobility.

### **What About the Politics?**

A final objection is that my entire proposal is an indulgent fantasy. Don't we clearly lack the political stomach for facilitating the movement of large numbers of black families from inner-city ghettos to white neighborhoods? What on earth makes me think that a nation that has treated blacks the way America has through most of its history — the way it still treats the black poor — would give a moment's consideration to the course I am proposing? This very black ghetto issue was instrumental in shifting the political alignment of the entire country just a few decades ago, changing American character in the bargain. We remain today the uncaring nation we then became. Indeed, as this is being written, the Bush administration is proposing to cut back radically on housing vouchers. A Gautreaux-type program would certainly be portrayed as liberal social engineering. Should it ever be seriously considered, wouldn't some modern-day George Wallace whip up the country's hardly dormant Negrophobia, perhaps especially easy to do at a time when working- and even middle-class Americans are having a hard time?

Maybe. Still, history is full of close calls and surprises. England might have succumbed to the Nazis if Roosevelt had not dreamed up lend-lease and persuaded a reluctant America First Congress to go along. Truman beat Dewey. Nixon went to China. The Soviet Union collapsed. In one decade, the Civil Rights Movement ended generations of seemingly impregnable Jim Crow. In a single fair housing enactment, Congress stripped historically sacred private property rights from American landowners. Even with respect to black Americans, history tells us that we can sometimes manage to take forward steps. Leadership is key, but we will not have a Bush in the White House forever.

It is ghetto fear — anxiety about inundation and anti-social conduct — that explains a good deal (though not all) of white attitudes toward blacks in general, and white rejection of in-moving blacks in particular. If the black ghetto were replaced, over time those fears and anxieties would be ameliorated. Gautreaux teaches that the threshold fear of “them” can be overcome by effective pre- and post-move counseling; by certification from a credible agency that the moving families will be good tenants; and, most importantly, by keeping the numbers down. No more than a handful of families a year entering any receiving community makes for a different ball game.

## We Confront Two Courses

America confronts two courses. The first is to continue to co-exist with black ghettos. The second is to dismantle and transform them. The prospect along the first course, as Tocqueville prophesied, is that the evil of racial inequality will not be solved. So long as black ghettos exist, threatening inundation should there be a break in any neighborhood's dike, most white Americans will fear the entry of blacks, any blacks, into their communities. So long as that is the case, America's "most formidable evil" will continue to afflict the nation.

The other part of Tocqueville's prophecy — that it would result in disaster — is less certain. Yet so long as we continue to tolerate the black ghetto, the prospect is for continuation of the two unequal societies described by the Kerner Report, and continued fear of blacks by white Americans. As long as that fear persists, whites will continue to treat black Americans as the feared Other. They are likely to continue to act fearfully and repressively, possibly to incarcerate still more black Americans in still more prisons. In that event, the Toqueville prophecy of disaster may indeed become the American reality.

The alternative is to dismantle our highest-poverty black ghettos (replacing them wherever possible with mixed-income communities), thereby to lessen the fear and the fearful conduct they generate. Nothing can bring that about overnight, and any approach will be fraught with difficulty and uncertainty. But a national Gautreaux mobility program is a sensible way to begin a task that we postpone at our peril.