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Cultural Copy: Visual Conversations on Indigenous Art and Cultural Appropriation

The Song Remains the Same

The Resistance of Racial Attitudes and Perceptions to Change over Time

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‘Cultural Copy’ Acknowledgements

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BorderZone Arts Inc., Common Ground, The Globalism Institute, RMIT University, Australia

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Curators: Tressa Berman, Marie Bouchard, Jennifer Herd

Curatorial Associates: Vivien Johnson, Matt McKinley, Fred Nahwooksy,

Exhibiting Artists: Richard Bell, Jennifer Herd, Kathleen Petyarre with Ray Beamish, Fiona Foley,
Gordon Syron, Vernon Ah Kee, Michael Eather and Michael Nelson Jagamarra, Jenny Fraser,
Frank LaPena, Arthur Amiotte, Anthony White, Colleen Cutschall, Nora Naranjo-Morse,
Greg Hill, Jaune Quick-to-See-Smith, Sam Toonoo, Roger Crait

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Abstract

In the late 1990s, as part of a comprehensive policy to address racial concerns locally, the Human Rights Commission from Jacksonville, Florida and the Northeast Florida Center for Community Initiatives entered into a collaborative effort to understand how race relations issues in the community impact economic and social growth. This paper will examine racial perceptions and attitudes of a randomly selected population of Whites, Blacks, and Other Minorities in a major metropolitan area over a period of five years.

Keywords: race relations, race relations attitudes

Introduction

There are two common themes reflected in the literature on racial perceptions and attitudes of the status of race relations: (1) racial perceptions of the status of race relations are extremely resistant to change and changes that do occur are generally not in the direction of improvements in the quality of race relations; and (2) a large gap exists between Black and White perceptions on the quality of racial relations.

It is generally found that racial perceptions are so deeply entrenched in the social and cultural fabric of our society that they defy alteration. In fact, these perceptions seem to sustain themselves with succeeding generations which allow them to extend their longevity and maintain a life of their own, in spite of evidence contradicting their validity. For example, it has been noted that in spite of compelling contemporary evidence of racial disparities, between 40 percent and 60 percent of Whites responding to a survey viewed the average Black in the U.S. as faring about as well, or better than, the average White (Blank, 2001; Morin, 2001).

The persistence of racial perceptions and attitudes over an extended period of time has been quantitatively documented in a number of recent studies. Research evidence also consistently demonstrates that racial perceptions of the quality of race relations by Whites and Blacks continue to be worlds apart with Whites perceiving equal treatment and opportunities for Minorities, and Blacks perceiving inequality in both treatment and

opportunities for improving the quality of their lives (Davis & Smith, 1994; Hochschild, 1995).

In a public opinion survey of race relations in South Carolina during the period from 1990 and 1996, considerable variation in attitudes between Blacks and Whites was recorded. Specifically, in both 1990 and 1996, Black respondents showed more pessimistic views of race relations in South Carolina than did Whites. In 1990, less than 25 percent (24.3 percent) of Blacks felt race relations were either excellent or good, compared to slightly more than half of Whites (51.1 percent). In 1996, the percentage of Blacks with a positive view of race relations dropped to 18.8 percent, while among Whites 33.7 percent felt race relations were either good or excellent (Link, Oldendick, & Anderson, 1997).

A recent Gallup poll summary of racial attitudes from 1962 to 2001 revealed a similar pattern of disparate and resilient racial perceptions. The responses from national samples showed that in a number of areas related to racial attitudes there were slight changes in some areas, but in most areas there was very little change. Furthermore, the Gallup poll surveys found that in response to the question of "whether Blacks and Whites received equal treatment," the gap in perceptions between Black and White respondents remained relatively consistent and only narrowed slightly in the past 30 years. In addition, Black and White perceptions of the availability of equal education and housing opportunities for Blacks in 2001 reflected a 36 percent point gap, which was almost identical to the disparity in perceptions recorded nearly 40 years earlier (Gallup poll, 2001).



Methods

In the late 1990s, as part of a comprehensive policy to address racial concerns locally, the Human Rights Commission in Jacksonville, Florida and the Northeast Florida Center for Community Initiatives (CCI) entered into a collaborative effort to understand how race relations issues in this community impact economic and social growth. This study examines the stability of racial perceptions and attitudes of a randomly selected population of Whites, Blacks, and Other Minorities in a major metropolitan area over a five year period of time.

The central focus for this paper is a public opinion survey conducted of residents in Jacksonville, Florida. The primary purpose of the survey was to assess the public's perceptions of race relations in Jacksonville, and to gauge perceptions about how race relations have or will change over time. The respondents for this study were English speaking adults living within Jacksonville (Duval County), who had local land line telephone service during the survey period. Cellular phone numbers were not included in the sample frame. The sample frame from which the phone numbers called were selected was purchased from Survey Sampling INC., in Connecticut, a nationally prominent survey sampling firm. A computer file containing active residential phone numbers was used to draw a sample for telephone interviews. As designed, the survey included an over-sample of Minorities. The 1998 to 2002 surveys each included approximately 600 respondents, while the 2003 survey included 1,014 telephone interviews. The results for these surveys were statistically significant at ± 3.5 percent for each year.¹

Findings

Demographic Profile Summary

While there were slight variations in the demographic profile over the various survey years, the overall demographic profiles were well within anticipated boundaries. As can be seen in Table 1, the survey demographics closely resembled the overall population of the city as reported in the 2000 Census. In all, more than two-thirds of respondents were White (66.5 percent to 68.2 percent) and approximately one-quarter of respondents were

Black (23.6 percent to 29 percent). Each year, the proportion of respondents who were Hispanic, Asian, or of another race were also similar. In addition, the age, sex, and other characteristics of the sample closely resembled the Jacksonville population.

¹ A Note on Language. Throughout this paper, the results of the public opinion survey are discussed, frequently citing differences by race of respondents. In the initial screening process for this survey, if respondents indicated they were Black, interviewers asked if they preferred to be referred to as "Black" or "African American." The responses to this item were almost equally divided between "Black," "African American," and "does not matter." To that end, for consistency purposes the term "Black" is used throughout this paper when referring to "Blacks" or "African Americans."

Table 1

Jacksonville Survey (1998-2003) and Duval County Census (2000) Demographic Characteristics.

Demographic Characteristics	Survey and Census Years					
	2003 Survey	2002 Survey	2000 Survey	1999 Survey	1998 Survey	2000 Census
Race	n=1,007	n=607	n=600	n=600	n=600	n=778,879
White	68.2%	67.4%	66.7%	66.7%	66.5%	65.8%
Black	23.6%	24.2%	26.3%	29.0%	26.8%	27.8%
Hispanic*	2.8%	3.0%	3.0%	1.8%	2.8%	4.1%
Asian	1.9%	1.5%	1.8%	0.8%	1.3%	2.7%
Other	3.5%	4.0%	2.2%	1.7%	2.5%	3.7%
Sex	n=1,014	n=609	n=600	n=600	n=600	n=778,879
Male	41.8%	37.6%	49.2%	45.8%	45.2%	48.5%
Female	58.2%	62.4%	50.8%	54.2%	54.8%	51.5%
Age	N=1,012	n=605	n=600	n=590	n=600	n=573,888
18 – 24	10.8%	11.4%	13.7%	15.4%	11.7%	13.0%
25 – 44	45.9%	43.0%	47.0%	47.0%	48.5%	44.0%
45-54	20.8%	23.0%	*****	*****	*****	*****
45 – 64	*****	*****	24.5%	23.7%	25.0%	28.7%
55+	22.5%	22.6%	*****	*****	*****	*****
65+	****	****	14.8%	13.9%	14.8%	14.2%

Source: Jacksonville Survey, 1998-2003; United States Census Bureau, 2000, www.census.gov.

* Hispanic refers to an ethnicity, and is not necessarily included in the Race category figures.

Rating: Quality of Race Relations in Jacksonville

Every survey year respondents were asked how important race relations is to their life. Each year the majority of respondents across all of the racial groups rated race relations in Jacksonville to be somewhat to very important. However, Blacks have generally reported race relations to be more important than Whites and Other Minorities. Although the proportion varied over the past five years, approximately eight out of ten Whites indicated they believed race relations was an important issue. Approximately 90 percent of Blacks and 85 percent of Other Minorities rated race relations as important. Results can be found in Table 2.

Although most respondents believed race relations was an important issue, sentiment was less clear

about the current state of affairs in the community. Less than half of all respondents believed race relations improved during the past five years. In addition, fewer Blacks and Other Minorities rated race relations better in 2003 than the previous year (see Table 3). Although White and Other Minority respondents were more optimistic in 2003 than they were in 1998, Blacks' perceptions have remained extremely constant.

In 2003 respondents were asked to rate current race relations in Jacksonville. As seen in Table 4, there was a marked disparity between the current perceptions of White respondents and those of Blacks and Other Minorities. While almost half of the Whites believed race relations at the present time to be good or very good, only about one out of five (21 percent) Blacks and one out of three (32 percent) Other Minorities felt accordingly.

Table 2

Percent of “somewhat important to very important” responses to how important is race relations by race (1998–2003).

Race Percentages and Gaps					
Survey Year	White	Black	B/W Gap	Other	O/W Gap
1998	84%	88%	4%	83%	1%
1999	80%	90%	10%	77%	3%
2000	79%	86%	7%	79%	0%
2002	77%	86%	9%	86%	9%
2003	84%	91%	7%	84%	0%

Source: Jacksonville Survey, 1998-2003.

Table 3

Percent of “better” responses to status of race relations over the past five years by race (1998–2003).

Race Percentages and Gaps					
Survey Year	White	Black	B/W Gap	Other	O/W Gap
1998	41%	40%	1%	38%	3%
1999	51%	40%	11%	50%	1%
2000	50%	41%	9%	30%	20%
2002	44%	43%	1%	49%	5%
2003	45%	40%	5%	43%	2%

Source: Jacksonville Survey, 1998-2003.

Table 4

Percent of “good to very good” responses to status of current race relations by race (2003).

Race Percentages and Gaps					
Survey Year	White	Black	B/W Gap	Other	O/W Gap
2003	49%	21%	28%	32%	17%

Source: Jacksonville Survey, 2003.

When asked about the future, Whites and Other Minorities had more favorable ratings than Blacks. Furthermore, Blacks were the only racial group that experienced a decline in optimism between the most recent surveys. More than 60 percent of Whites and 68 percent of Other Minorities reported positive feelings about the state of race relations in the next five years, while the level of optimism among Blacks decreased two percent in 2003 to only 55 percent. Results are presented in Table 5.

When asked how Jacksonville compared to other cities, important differences emerged again between the racial groups. Although a relatively small percentage of people across all racial categories rated Jacksonville as better, Black respondents were much more critical of the city than Whites or Other

Minorities (see Table 6). In fact, the percentage of Blacks rating Jacksonville better than other cities has remained relatively constant over the past five years at approximately 15 percent. The responses of Whites have also remained particularly stable since 1999 at about 30 percent, twice that of black respondents.

On the contrary, Other Minorities have experienced a fluctuation in their responses regarding Jacksonville’s race relations in comparison to other cities. In fact, Other Minority respondents saw a significant drop this past survey year in their confidence of Jacksonville’s race relations in comparison to other cities. Forty-one percent of Other Minorities in 2002 rated race relations favorably in Jacksonville compared to

other cities, while only 27 percent of Other Minorities reported this view in 2003.

Table 5

Percent of “better to much better” responses to status of race relations over the next five years by race (1998–2003).

Race Percentages and Gaps					
Survey Year	White	Black	B/W Gap	Other	O/W Gap
1998	63%	57%	6%	79%	16%
1999	67%	46%	21%	73%	6%
2000	69%	70%	1%	76%	7%
2002	56%	57%	1%	53%	3%
2003	61%	55%	6%	68%	7%

Source: Jacksonville Survey, 1998-2003.

Table 6

Percent of “better” responses to status of race relations in Jacksonville compared to other cities by race (1998–2003).

Race Percentages and Gaps					
Survey Year	White	Black	B/W Gap	Other	O/W Gap
1998	22%	11%	11%	18%	4%
1999	30%	16%	14%	39%	9%
2000	32%	15%	17%	36%	4%
2002	31%	14%	17%	41%	10%
2003	28%	16%	12%	27%	1%

Source: Jacksonville Survey, 1998-2003.

Rating: Perceptions of the Treatment of Minorities

In addition to questions concerning the overall state of race relations, the survey also included a series of questions asking respondents about how Minorities are treated. Overall, Whites and Blacks have differed dramatically in their perceptions of how Blacks are treated in Jacksonville compared to Whites. Whites and Other Minorities expressed much more optimism that everyone receives equal treatment, while most Blacks disagreed.

When asked about perceptions of equal treatment overall, White and Other Minority respondents were generally positive, with over 70 percent of Whites and two-thirds of non-Black Minorities suggesting Blacks were treated equally (see Table 7). Additionally, the proportion of these positive responses increased over the past five years. The vast majority of Blacks, however, believed they were not treated equally, with positive responses recorded from less than one-third of Black respondents in the 2003 survey year.

A similar response set was seen when respondents were asked about how Blacks were treated at work. Three out of four White respondents believed that Blacks were treated equally or better on the job.

Although varying across the survey period, the majority of non-Black Minorities also indicated that Blacks were treated the same or better on the job. In stark contrast, however, less than half of the Black respondents believed they were treated equally at work. Results are presented in Table 8.

This disparity in perceptions between Whites and Blacks was also evident when respondents were asked about how Blacks were treated in stores. As seen in Table 9, over two-thirds of White respondents, and over half of Other Minority respondents, believed that Blacks were treated the same as Whites in stores. In contrast, less than 45 percent of Black respondents believed they were treated equally.

When asked how Other Minorities were treated (compared to Whites) quite different perceptions were found. Overall, the vast majority of Whites believed that Other (non-Black) Minority group members were treated the same as Whites (see Table 10). The majority of Other Minority members also tended to agree that they were treated equally. Blacks, however, were less likely to believe Other Minority groups were treated equally. Only about half of the Black respondents over the past five years have indicated they believe Other Minorities were treated equally.

Table 7

Percent of “same or better” responses to how Blacks are treated overall compared to Whites by race (1998–2003).

Race Percentages and Gaps					
Survey Year	White	Black	B/W Gap	Other	O/W Gap
1998	68%	40%	28%	53%	15%
1999	68%	39%	29%	65%	7%
2000	69%	46%	23%	60%	9%
2002	73%	41%	32%	67%	6%
2003	73%	33%	40%	64%	9%

Source: Jacksonville Survey, 1998-2003.

Table 8

Percent of “same or better” responses to how Blacks are treated on the job compared to Whites (1998–2003).

Race Percentages and Gaps					
Survey Year	White	Black	B/W Gap	Other	O/W Gap
1998	74%	45%	29%	58%	16%
1999	75%	40%	35%	58%	17%
2000	78%	49%	29%	69%	9%
2002	78%	44%	34%	65%	13%
2003	78%	45%	33%	60%	18%

Source: Jacksonville Survey, 1998-2003.

Table 9

Percent of “same or better” responses to how Blacks are treated in stores compared to Whites (1998–2003).

Race Percentages and Gaps					
Survey Year	White	Black	B/W Gap	Other	O/W Gap
1998	64%	44%	20%	48%	16%
1999	60%	39%	21%	69%	9%
2000	70%	47%	23%	43%	27%
2002	62%	46%	16%	51%	11%
2003	68%	41%	27%	51%	17%

Source: Jacksonville Survey, 1998-2003.

Table 10

Percent of “same or better” responses to how Other Minorities are treated compared to Whites (1998–2003).

Race Percentages and Gaps					
Survey Year	White	Black	B/W Gap	Other	O/W Gap
1998	66%	58%	8%	48%	18%
1999	66%	47%	19%	69%	3%
2000	65%	56%	9%	62%	3%
2002	71%	53%	18%	67%	4%
2003	71%	45%	26%	56%	15%

Source: Jacksonville Survey, 1998-2003.

Rating: Perceptions of Police Involvement

Respondents were also asked a series of questions concerning how Blacks were treated by police and police-community relations. As with the questions concerning the overall treatment of Blacks, Whites and Blacks viewed police issues from dramatically different perspectives. In all, approximately two-thirds of Black respondents believed that police treated Blacks worse than Whites. In contrast, less than one-third of White respondents believed Blacks were treated worse, and only about 40 percent of Other Minority members believed Blacks were treated worse. These findings were consistent across

the five-year survey period. Results can be found in Table 11.

When asked about overall performance of the police, White respondents continued to view the performance of police officers in more positive terms than Blacks and Other Minorities. When asked about the quality of the police department’s ability to work with people to solve problems, over half of White respondents, as well as Other Minority group members (except in 2003), rated the police as good or excellent. Blacks were much more critical of the police, with only approximately one-third of respondents giving a good or excellent rating for police efforts at working with people (see Table 12).

Table 11

Percent of “worse” responses to how Blacks are treated by police compared to Whites by race (1998–2003).

Race Percentages and Gaps					
Survey Year	White	Black	B/W Gap	Other	O/W Gap
1998	24%	65%	41%	38%	14%
1999	29%	65%	36%	46%	27%
2000	28%	60%	32%	31%	3%
2002	29%	70%	41%	39%	10%
2003	32%	69%	37%	40%	8%

Source: Jacksonville Survey, 1998-2003.

Table 12

Percent of “good to excellent” responses to how well police work with people to solve problems by race (1998–2003).

Race Percentages and Gaps					
Survey Year	White	Black	B/W Gap	Other	O/W Gap
1999	59%	32%	27%	54%	5%
2000	59%	47%	12%	51%	8%
2002	51%	33%	18%	55%	4%
2003	55%	32%	23%	35%	20%

Source: Jacksonville Survey, 1998-2003.

When asked about more general police services, the majority of all respondents indicated that they were satisfied with police efforts, although Whites and Blacks continued to have a significant gap in their responses. As seen in Table 13, well over 80 percent of White respondents stated that they were satisfied with the overall police services offered in Jacksonville. In addition, nearly three-quarters of White respondents indicated that they felt the police department was providing services that the

neighborhood wanted (see Table 14). For most years, Other Minority group members responded as optimistically as Whites. Black responses to questions concerning police services were predominately positive, although not to the extent of Whites. Over 70 percent of Black respondents indicated that they were satisfied with police services overall, and over 60 percent agreed that the police were providing services that neighborhoods wanted.

Table 13

Percent of “somewhat satisfied to very satisfied” responses to satisfaction with police services by race (1998–2003).

	Race Percentages and Gaps				
Survey Year	White	Black	B/W Gap	Other	O/W Gap
1999	82%	70%	12%	92%	10%
2000	83%	72%	11%	88%	5%
2002	83%	74%	9%	80%	3%
2003	85%	71%	14%	77%	8%

Source: Jacksonville Survey, 1998-2003.

Table 14

Percent of “agree to strongly agree” responses to police providing services neighborhoods want by race (1998–2003).

	Race Percentages and Gaps				
Survey Year	White	Black	B/W Gap	Other	O/W Gap
1999	82%	62%	20%	76%	6%
2000	82%	70%	12%	77%	5%
2002	70%	61%	9%	75%	5%
2003	74%	62%	12%	62%	12%

Source: Jacksonville Survey, 1998-2003.

Rating: Perceptions of Employment, Housing, and Educational Opportunities

In addition to questions concerning the treatment of Blacks compared to Whites, the survey included a series of items assessing perceptions of opportunities. When asked about equal opportunities for all citizens, dramatic differences between Black and White perceptions continued, and in most cases the gaps between White and Black perceptions have increased. For example, throughout the past five survey years, approximately 80 percent of Whites believed that Blacks had equal opportunities for good jobs (see Table 15). Less than half of the Black respondents (except in 2000), on the other hand, believed that they had equal opportunity. By 2003, the proportion of Blacks believing they had equal employment opportunity dropped to below 40 percent. As seen in Table 16, Whites and Blacks also differed on perceptions of

housing opportunity. In all, three out of four White respondents indicated that they believed Blacks could live in any area of the city they chose. Less than 60 percent of Blacks, on the other hand, felt that they could live wherever they choose.

The perceptions of Other Minorities also illustrated a decline in optimism in most areas of equal opportunity. The largest decrease was observed in Other Minorities’ views of opportunities for Blacks getting good jobs. In 2002, three out of four agreed that Blacks had equal or better opportunity while only 59 percent had the same belief in 2003, a 16 percent decline. This drop was much more dramatic than the overall change (nine percent decrease) from 1998 to 2003. Little change was found regarding housing opportunities, with 69 percent of Other Minorities in 2002 that perceived equal opportunities for Blacks to live in any area they chose and 67 percent in 2003 shared that view.

Table 15

Percent of “same or better” responses to opportunities for Blacks getting good jobs compared to Whites by race (1998–2003).

	Race Percentages and Gaps				
Survey Year	White	Black	B/W Gap	Other	O/W Gap
1998	79%	44%	35%	68%	11%
1999	80%	39%	41%	77%	3%
2000	80%	54%	26%	79%	1%
2002	81%	42%	39%	75%	6%
2003	77%	39%	38%	59%	18%

Source: Jacksonville Survey, 1998-2003.

Table 16

Percent of “same or better” responses to opportunities for Blacks living in any area they choose compared to Whites by race (1998–2003).

	Race Percentages and Gaps				
Survey Year	White	Black	B/W Gap	Other	O/W Gap
1998	77%	59%	18%	68%	9%
1999	77%	60%	17%	54%	23%
2000	75%	57%	18%	74%	1%
2002	78%	61%	17%	69%	9%
2003	78%	57%	21%	67%	11%

Source: Jacksonville Survey, 1998-2003.

Similar differences emerged in perceptions of educational opportunities for Blacks compared to Whites. Indeed, Whites overwhelmingly believed that Black children had an equal opportunity for getting a good education in Jacksonville and that Black high school graduates were equal with regard to opportunities for going to college. Blacks, however, were significantly less likely to express this perspective. Overall, less than 60 percent of Black respondents believed Black children had an equal chance at getting a good education, and only about half believed their children had an equal chance of going to college. For both of these questions, Other Minority group members responded

similar to Whites. Results are presented in Tables 17 and 18.

There was some consensus, however, on the extent to which the public school system was faring. Overall, the majority of respondents believed that the Duval County School system was making progress toward a quality education for all students (see Table 19). Note, however, that fewer Blacks, Whites, and Other Minorities in the 2003 survey credited the Duval County School System with improving the quality of education than in 2002. Whites, however, continue to be somewhat more optimistic about the improvements than Black and Other Minority respondents.

Table 17

Percent of “same or better” responses to opportunities for Black children getting a good education compared to Whites by race (1998–2003).

Race Percentages and Gaps					
Survey Year	White	Black	B/W Gap	Other	O/W Gap
1998	79%	52%	27%	75%	4%
1999	79%	51%	28%	74%	5%
2000	79%	60%	19%	76%	3%
2002	79%	61%	18%	69%	10%
2003	77%	56%	21%	72%	5%

Source: Jacksonville Survey, 1998-2003.

Table 18

Percent of “same or better” responses to opportunities for Black high school graduates going to college compared to Whites by race (1998–2003).

Race Percentages and Gaps					
Survey Year	White	Black	B/W Gap	Other	O/W Gap
1998	75%	54%	21%	65%	10%
1999	78%	52%	26%	77%	1%
2000	75%	58%	17%	67%	8%
2002	76%	54%	22%	73%	6%
2003	74%	46%	28%	67%	7%

Source: Jacksonville Survey, 1998-2003.

Table 19

Percent of “agree to strongly agree” responses to Duval County school system making progress toward a quality education by race (1998–2003).

Race Percentages and Gaps					
Survey Year	White	Black	B/W Gap	Other	O/W Gap
1998	69%	60%	9%	61%	8%
1999	74%	66%	8%	60%	14%
2000	77%	71%	6%	76%	1%
2002	66%	60%	6%	57%	9%
2003	61%	52%	9%	54%	7%

Source: Jacksonville Survey, 1998-2003.

Conclusion

As can be seen in the discussion above, Blacks and Whites have very different perceptions concerning a wide range of quality of life issues. Indeed, these differences in perception suggest two quite divergent “realities” for the majority and minority populations of community. These findings were also confirmed in extensive qualitative interviews with community leaders in 1998 and 2004. In addition, these findings mirror a number of studies from other cities and the country in general.

What is striking about these findings is the resilience and strength of the differing opinions over time, particularly in light of efforts by the Jacksonville Human Rights Commission in response to the original 1998 survey. At that time, the Commission began several efforts at improving the dialogue between racial groups, including establishing a “Study Circles” program in 1999 (see <http://www.studycircles.org/> for a discussion of Study Circles) and a high profile Race Summit in 2003. As Jacksonville, Florida continues to grow, it is imperative that the city continues to address the issues of race relations and diversity. The need for

action will become even more important as the number and proportion of non-Black Minority

groups, particularly those of Hispanic and Asian origin, grows.

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