

The New Suburbanization

By William Frey

Moving to the suburbs used to imply a local move to a more bucolic and safe middle-class neighborhood. It meant jumping from New York City to Long Island, or from downtown L.A. to the San Fernando Valley. The 2000 census, however, showed a new kind of *national* "suburbanization," as large numbers of

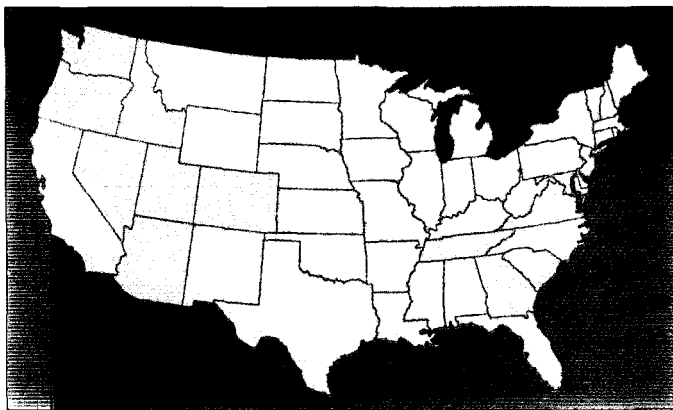
they're doing so has peaked. After the 1990 census, California, Texas, and Florida earned 14 new Congressional seats; following the 2000 census they gained only five. Moreover, the new residents that California, Texas, and Florida are attracting are of a very different type than the middle-class, native-born families and retirees heading to the 13 states of our "new suburbia."

The broadly suburb-like character of these 13 states is attracting whites and blacks who want to leave the pricey, con-

U.S. population growth has shifted, for the first time in generations, toward smaller communities, non-urban areas, and less densely populated states.

middle-class people chose to escape to whole new states.

While Americans are moving less than they used to (see Joel Kotkin's story opening this collection), there are still millions of household relocations in this country. And people who do move now tend to go to very specific places. In particular, there are 13 fast-growing states that might be called America's Suburbs. They are Arizona, Colorado, Utah, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, Washington, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee, Virginia, and Delaware. Located primarily in the Southeast and West, their collective population grew by 24 percent over the 1990s (versus 13 percent for the nation as a whole). And, most critically, these particular states grew mostly through the migration of successful native-born whites and blacks from other states. Domestic migrants outnumbered foreign-born immigrants by five to one in these states during the 1990s. Fully 79 percent of our nation's white population growth took place in these 13 states.



The new suburbanites who relocated ranged from young Gen-Xers just forming families to the well-off newly retired. Married couples with children are declining nationally, but they are growing in this area. (Nevada's 25 percent jump in the number of such traditional families led the nation.)

The old fast-growing sunbelt destinations of California, Texas, and Florida are conspicuously *not* part of the "new suburbia." Because they contain some of the nation's largest urban immigrant gateways, those three states are still growing, but the rate at which

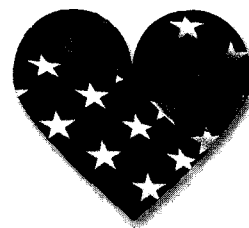
gested, commuting metropolises of California and the Northeast for more peaceful, conservative, family-friendly and senior-friendly communities. The fastest growth within the new suburbia is occurring in non-urban areas and small cities. In their exodus from more cosmopolitan, liberal urban areas on the coasts, the participants in this new suburban flight are sharpening the differences—cultural, political, and demographic—between various U.S. states and regions.

This new regionally based definition of Suburban America points to the increasing separation of its residents from Melting Pot America. While it is true that the country is becoming more racially and ethnically mixed, the diversity is not spread evenly across the nation. The six states that received the most immigrants during the '90s (California, New York, Texas, Florida, Illinois, and New Jersey) plus three other states that, for their own historical reasons, have large ethnic minorities (New Mexico, Hawaii, and Alaska) are home to 74 percent of the nation's combined Hispanic and Asian populations, 70 percent of the U.S. foreign-born population, and 76 percent of all Americans who speak Spanish at home.

While these nine "melting pot" states are growing (at about half the rate of the "new suburban" states), their growth is dominated by immigrant minorities. As a group, these states have shown a *loss* of white residents over the 1990s, and they now house only 37 percent of the nation's native-born population. During the 1990s, the greater Los Angeles region lost over 800,000 whites; the greater New York area lost over 600,000. Similar losses of whites were observed in metro areas like Miami, Chicago, and San Diego. These white losses reflect mostly young people, married couples, parents, and new retirees heading to the 13 new suburban states—where they seem to be seeking new lives rooted in more old-fashioned values.

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To conclude in our next issue.



America's Strong Heart

Excerpted from a recent speech by poet and TAE contributing writer Frederick Turner. (His full text will be published in the American Arts Quarterly.)

American society has a surface layer of fashionable, transient, amoral, inhuman modernism that conceals a great enduring American heartland beneath.

This contradiction between American appearance and American reality is dangerous—both to ourselves and to our enemies. It is dangerous to us because foreigners acquainted only with our Hollywood narcissism, TV sex, artistic trash, and academic twaddle can easily mistake us as morally flabby and unable to defend ourselves: ripe pickings for the samurai or *mujahedin* of a more determined culture.

It is dangerous to our enemies too, and to those who play with the idea of becoming such, to believe we are a paper tiger. Ours is the nation that defeated the most powerful nation on earth to get its independence, that fought the battle of Gettysburg with *itself* over matters of principle, the nation that smashed the Japanese Imperial Navy at Midway, and that outlasted the cruelest and most well-armed empire in the world in the Cold War. A nation slow to anger, but hazardous when roused and deadly patient when necessary; the only way to escape its just wrath is to seek its forgiveness—which is, admittedly, always immediate and generous.

American military prowess comes not from a militaristic society. It comes from a depth of culture and a density of history, from a constant striving for goodness. Most of us hardly appreciate our cultural

riches and deep historical legacy, because we live in the middle of it, and because it has been denigrated by intellectuals and academics—using our tradition of freedom to attack the tradition itself.

The mistake that enemies always make about America is to believe that its surface of apparent relativism, hedonism, and cheap academic fashion goes all the way down. They do not bother to read deeper. They do not recognize the extraordinary anomaly of America—that unlike almost all the other technologically advanced and wealthy nations of the world, it has become not less but *more* religious.

Most critics, foreign and domestic, ignore the America that exists quietly between our coasts. And not just the geographical heartland of small-town America has this deep strength. New York City surprised everybody in September with its courage, resilience, spirit of fraternity, and spontaneous patriotism and faith in God. Our heartland is everywhere: in the firehouses of Manhattan, in the business people who meet the payroll, in the honest reporters of the press.

We Americans have a kind of absolutism of our own, one more durable and resilient than the brittle absolutisms of the Arab nationalist or communist or tribal fundamentalist. It is an evolving absolutism, which continually revises itself in the light of what it learns elsewhere in the world. It happily incorporates into its own genome any scrap of truth to be found in another tradition. It is not afraid to judge what is good or bad, subject always to its own habit of self-criticism and empirical testing. Even the vitality of our religious

institutions is linked to competition and the fact that we do not have an established church. Free markets are as beneficial to religion as they are to business. We have an evolutionary and competitive ecology of creeds, wherein the truth can be tested and refined through the experience of three hundred million free consciences.

American elites must stop their snide sniping from the sidelines and take more responsibility for our nation. Sometimes, especially when attacked, we must count our cultural blessings. We are in bad faith if we accept America's comforts without giving tribute to her spirit, and hope to her future. Before American intellectuals act with self-contempt, let them think of potentially malicious foreign audiences, only too ready to despise America. Let them think of our own young people, who need ideals and splendid examples on which to model their lives.

American students today are often led to admire societies in far corners of the world, and to contrast them with the shallow and materialistic America of malls and pop culture. The pity is that they have never been taught to give the same attention to America's own grand legacies. Let us not compare the best of some other culture with the worst of our own; and let us ask ourselves whether that other culture could so generously or so efficiently absorb into itself our values, as we can theirs. Let us learn our nation's history, and be as generous in interpreting the high motives of our founders and heroes as we are perceptive in recognizing their human flaws.

