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## Dade's black middle class coming north

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Miami-Dade County faces a "brain drain" of middle-class blacks who are fleeing because they're anxious over job prospects, poor schools and a lack of affordable housing, according to a new study being released today.

Florida International University political science professor Dario Moreno, the study's author, said the exodus bodes ill for Miami-Dade's economy.

``Miami-Dade is losing middle-class African Americans. I was shocked that the numbers were so bad."''

The study, the third since 1983 to look at the conditions in black Miami, polled 604 black Miami-Dade residents and measured the progress of 16 demographic categories in which the black community has lagged behind whites and Hispanics.

In the poll, more than 30 percent of respondents said they planned to leave Miami-Dade County. Of those, about 40 percent earned between \$60,000 and \$80,000 and held a college degree. Among their top choices for a move: Broward County, Tampa and Atlanta, Moreno said.

The latest Census data available affirmed the same trend. About one in four blacks leaving Miami-Dade are black, while just one in 14 new Miami-Dade residents is black.

The study, conducted by FIU's Metropolitan Center, showed mixed results over the last 25 years to close the gap on social and economic disparities between blacks and the rest of the community.

Among the bright spots: the number of black-owned businesses increased and the number of blacks who reported problems with discrimination and segregation dropped since 1983.

The study's findings troubled Milton Vickers, executive director of Metro Miami Action Plan, the quasi-government agency that commissioned the report.

"I would have thought that would have improved over the years. The economy overall has been extremely strong in Miami-Dade County," Vickers said. ``Strength in the economy for some is not strength for all."''

Of the 16 categories measured in the report, seven showed modest improvement, four were unchanged and five worsened.

### HOUSING CRITICAL

Concerns over affordable housing have surpassed education as the community's most critical issue, the report noted. Also, the percentage of blacks who live below the poverty level remained unchanged, while unemployment leaped to 14.9 percent, up from 7.3 percent in 1983, Moreno said.

Blacks expressed having "very little trust" in government. However, city and county governments fare better than state and federal -- an indication that blacks continue to look to local government for jobs, an outgrowth of the civil rights era when government provided better job opportunities to blacks versus the

private sector.

## **OVERLY DEPENDENT?**

Moreno described the trend of black professionals looking to the public sector for jobs as ``worrisome."

"People make money in the private sector. Racial equality means that people are represented in all the sectors," he said.

But many blacks in Miami-Dade don't see local businesses as a vehicle to upward mobility. Escalating housing costs and the poor performance of some public schools are among "the drivers of the exodus," Moreno said.

Immigrants from Haiti and the English-speaking Caribbean are replacing many of the blacks leaving for other cities, Moreno said, but those new immigrants tend to have lower education levels as a group and less earning power.

The study is being released today during a community workshop billed by MMAP as a "call to action" for the black community.

"This shows how far we've come, but how far we haven't come and where we got to go," Vickers said. "Overall, I'd give Dade County a C-minus," he said.

He added that he was struck by the level of pessimism over the future of black youth. In the poll, 46 percent of respondents said that the prospects for black youth were poor or unsatisfactory.

The 107-page study offers an assessment of black communities primarily through the prism of the four majority black county commission districts. The first analysis produced in 1983 was commissioned in order to "address and eradicate the disparities existing in black communities." An update was produced 10 years later.

Vickers and Moreno both said the study is a road map to measure progress -- or lack thereof -- made by the black community compared with Hispanics and Anglos since 1980.

"Miami-Dade County over the last 30 years has only made modest progress toward the goal of eradicating the economic and social disparity between the black community and the Miami Dade community-at-large," the report concluded.

MMAP was created by the county in 1983 in response to the May 1980 riots that were triggered by the acquittal of four white Miami-Dade police officers in the beating death of black insurance agent Arthur Lee McDuffie. The goal of the agency was to seek ways to cure social and economic ills blamed for past uprisings.