



Written by [Thomas Sowell](#) on March 29, 2011

Voting With Their Feet

The latest published data from the 2010 census show how people are moving from place to place within the United States. In general, people are voting with their feet against places where the liberal, welfare-state policies favored by the intelligentsia are most deeply entrenched.

When you break it down by race and ethnicity, it is all too painfully clear what is happening. Both whites and blacks are leaving California, the poster state for the liberal, welfare-state and nanny-state philosophy.



Whites are also fleeing the big northeastern liberal, welfare states like Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, as well as the same kinds of states in the midwest, such as Michigan, Ohio and Illinois.

Although California has long been a prime destination of Asian immigrants and the homes of their descendants, the 2010 census shows a striking increase in the Asian American population of Nevada, more so than any other state. Nevada is adjacent to California but has no income tax nor the hostile climate for business that California maintains.

The movement of the black population — especially educated young blacks — is the most striking of all. In the past, the massive movements of millions of blacks out of the South in the early 20th century was one of the epic migrations of a people — comparable in size with the millions of the Irish who fled the famine in Ireland in the 1840s or the millions of Jews who fled persecution in Eastern Europe in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

In more recent decades, blacks have been moving back to the South, however. While the overall black population of the northeastern and midwestern states has not declined in the past ten years, except in Michigan and Illinois, the net increase of the black population nationwide has increasingly been in the South. About half of the national growth of the black population took place in the South in the 1970s, two-thirds in the 1990s and three-quarters in the past 10 years.

While the mass migrations of blacks out of the South in the early 20th century was to places where there were already established black communities, such as New York, Chicago and Philadelphia, much of the current movement of blacks is away from existing concentrations of black populations.

Blacks are moving to suburbs, and even to cities like Minneapolis. Overall, the racial residential segregation patterns are declining in the great majority of the largest major metropolitan areas.

Among blacks who moved, the proportions who were in their prime — from 20 to 40 years of age — were greater than in the black population at large, and college degrees were more common among them than in the black population at large. In short, with blacks, as with other racial or ethnic groups, those with better prospects are leaving the states that are repelling their most productive citizens in general with liberal policies.



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Detroit is perhaps the most striking example of a once thriving city ruined by years of liberal social policies. Before the ghetto riot of 1967, Detroit's black population had the highest rate of home-ownership of any black urban population in the country, and their unemployment rate was just 3.4 percent.

It was not despair that fueled the riot. It was the riot which marked the beginning of the decline of Detroit to its current state of despair. Detroit's population today is only half of what it once was, and its most productive people have been the ones who fled.

Treating businesses and affluent people as prey, rather than assets, often pays off politically in the short run — and elections are held in the short run. Killing the goose that lays the golden egg is a viable political strategy.

As whites were the first to start leaving Detroit, its then mayor Coleman Young saw this only as an exodus of people who were likely to vote against him, enhancing his re-election prospects.

But what was good for Mayor Young was disastrous for Detroit.

There is a lesson here somewhere, but it is very doubtful if either the intelligentsia or the politicians will learn it.

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