The
Jefferson
Essays

FACING RACIAL DISPARITIES

Is Erie the Worst City in America for African-Americans?

By

Margaret Smith, Ph.D.
and Suzanne McDevitt, Ph.D.

WINTER 2018-19

ESSAY VIII

Editor
Pat Cuneo, B.A.

Editorial Board

Tiffanie Page Collazo, M.A.
Pat Cuneo, B.A.
Paul Gambill, M.A.
Baher Ghosheh, Ph.D.
Johnny Johnson, M.Ed.
Ben Speggen, M.A.

Previous Jefferson Essays

- "Is Erie A Safe City? Perception, Reality, Recommendations."
  By Kyle Kasinec, B.A.

- "Erie's Advanced Industries." By R. James Wertz, Ph.D., and
  Perry Wood, M.S.

- "The Case for Connecting Presque Isle to Erie's East Side –
  A Historic Opportunity." By Michael Fuhrman, M.S.A.

- Erie's Public Schools: History, Challenges, Future."
  By R. James Wertz, Ph.D.

- "Erie's Mayoral Race (2017): Analyzing Voter Turnout and Primary
  Election results." By Pat Cuneo, B.A.

- "Time to Act: The Case for Heritage Tourism and Rebuilding Erie's
  Three Historic Forts (2018)." By Michael Fuhrman, M.S.A.

- The Lurking Threat: Harmful Algae Blooms Pose Local, Global Hazard
  (2018)." By Judith Lynch, Ph.D.

*Copies of the new essay are available at
The Jefferson, 3207 State Street, Erie, Pa. 16508, and online at www.jeserie.org

JEFFERSON
EDUCATIONAL SOCIETY

Facing Racial Disparities
Is Erie the Worst City in America for African-Americans?

By

Margaret Smith, Ph.D.
and Suzanne McDevitt, Ph.D.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Welcome

Dear Reader:

In the following pages you will find the Jefferson Educational Society's new essay titled "Facing Racial Disparities: Is Erie the Worst City in America for African-Americans?" The essay is the result of research, writing, and analysis by its authors, Edinboro University of Pennsylvania Professors Margaret Smith, Ph.D., and Suzanne McDevitt, Ph.D., as well as the guidance and support of several others, including the Jefferson Essays Editorial Board.

This latest essay, the Jefferson's eighth, explores a critical issue facing the Erie region and particularly the City of Erie: While there is no question that Erie has sharp racial disparities, we sought to assess them and determine the accuracy of the 24/7 Wall St. Report's conclusion that Erie was the "worst city for Black Americans" in 2017. Further, the essay includes proposed recommendations to address disparities, regardless of Erie's ranking in the 24/7 Wall St. report of 2017, followed by Erie not being included in 24/7 Wall St.'s Top 15 list, which was released in late 2018.

The Jefferson Essays are published in hopes of sparking open, constructive dialogue in the spirit of community progress. We hope readers agree that our essays, written by local scholars under the review of the editorial board, should be read, not as the last word on any topic, but as the starting point of an important conversation.

Finally, we hope you receive this essay with our compliments and acknowledgment that you have been identified as a person interested in civic issues discussed often at the Jefferson. If you are not already a Jefferson member, we hope you will consider joining. In addition to Jefferson member support, our essays are made possible by the Jefferson and grant support to the Jefferson Alliance for Community Progress from the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority's Multi-Municipal Collaborative Grant. If you wish to support our essay publication efforts with a membership or donation, please call 814.459.8000 or visit www.JESErie.org.

We welcome your comments, criticisms, suggestions, and support on our latest essay and look forward to seeing you at our Winter and Spring term events.

Yours in friendship,

F. Ferati

Ferki Ferati, Ed.D.
Jefferson President

Foreword

Racial disparities in Erie are real, entrenched, and overstated by 24/7 Wall St., LLC, a Delaware corporation that runs a financial news and opinion company with content delivered over the internet. Regardless of exaggeration, what does Erie do now about these deep-seated racial disparities?

That may be an appropriate summary of this new Jefferson Essay, which was commissioned in early 2018 to address a bombshell report by 24/7 Wall St., LLC naming Erie as the worst city in America for African-Americans. Such news evoked a sense of knowing agreement from some, shock from others, and soul-searching by many people and organizations in Erie and elsewhere. Ultimately, it brought a realization by most in the region that much needs to be done to face the racial disparities and racism that have dogged Erie for decades and now threaten its future.

First, however, this essay, in meticulous detail, questions the conclusions about Erie in 24/7 Wall St.'s Top 10 report of late 2017. That Erie was not included in the organization's expanded Top 15 report a year later, released in late 2018, is equally confounding.

While given the top negative ranking in one year and no ranking whatsoever in the next does not alter the basic premise that severe racial disparities exist in Erie, data shows that Erie's ranking in 2017 as the worst city for African-Americans was based at least in part on inaccurate numbers. Among their many findings, study authors Margaret Smith and Suzanne McDevitt show that the 2017 report for Erie was based on Erie County numbers and demographics, not the City of Erie's. In addition, 24/7 Wall St.'s own reports cite data used in both the 2017 and 2018 rankings as sourced to the same 2016 U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey on median household income, poverty, adult high school and bachelor's degree attainment, homeownership, and unemployment rates. Yet they produced, in some cases, far different results. Erie's black unemployment, for example, is overstated at 24.6 percent in the 2017 report, compared to a Census-based figure cited by the City of Erie and *Erie Times-News* – 17.2 percent. Similarly, black residents living at or below the national poverty line was cited as 47 percent by 24/7 Wall St., when it is 20 points lower than that – 27 percent, according to Census-based figures cited by the City of Erie and Erie Times-News. That erroneous statistic of 47 percent was cited in the report's most critical description of Erie: "No major metropolitan area has greater racial inequalities across major social and economic outcome measures than Erie," it reads. "An astounding 47 percent (in black poverty) is … twice the already alarming national poverty rate for black Americans of 23.9 percent, and more than four times the white poverty rate in Erie of 11.9 percent." An examination of data, then, supports the conclusion that black poverty and black unemployment in Erie were more in line with national rates in 2017 and well below numbers cited by 24/7 Wall St.

Erie was not the only one of 10 cities ranked in the 2017 report that did not make the Top 15 list in 2018. Others dropped were Trenton, N.J., Syracuse, N.Y.,

and Bridgeport-Stamford, Conn. New to the list are Cedar Falls-Waterloo, Iowa, ranked first; Elmira, N.Y. (6); Decatur, Ill. (7); Kankakee, Ill. (9); Fresno, Calif. (10); Danville, Ill. (13); Rochester, N.Y. (14); and Chicago, Ill. (15). Repeating were Milwaukee, Wis.; Racine, Wis.; Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minn.; Peoria, Ill.; Niles-Benton Harbor, Mich.; Springfield, Ill.; and Trenton, N.J. In all, six Illinois cities made the Top 15 list in 2018.

Asked to explain what factors caused Erie to fall from No. 1 in 2017 to no rating in 2018, Douglas A. McIntyre, Editor-in-Chief and Chief Executive of 24/7 Wall St., LLC, said in an interview in January 2019 that he could not speak directly to Erie's case but defended his organization's conclusions.

"You have to realize two things," McIntyre said. "Some of the demographics change and naturally alter the outcomes. The second thing, more importantly, is that when you look at the top 25 cities, that group is pretty tight. There is not a lot of difference between No. 3 and No. 15. One or two factors might lower their ranking."

He said he could not be more specific about any possible changes regarding Erie's demographics from one year to another or the same 2016 census report cited as the basis for both the 2017 and 2018 lists.

Asked if he realized that Erie County figures, not Erie city figures, were cited in demographics upon which Erie city's rating was based in the 2017 report, McIntyre said, "I don't have the answer to that."

In the following pages of this essay, Smith and McDevitt address this and other issues. Though much work lies ahead in seeking solutions for Erie's racial problems, the work of these two professors from Edinboro University of Pennsylvania clarifies Erie's true measurements for racial disparity. Ironically, the flawed 24/7 Wall St. report of 2017 has done Erie a great favor, in that it has reinvigorated efforts to address entrenched racial disparities.

A new City of Erie initiative, a collaboration with The People's Supper organization, for example, is taking a number of racial issues head-on. As YourErie.com's Jill McCormick reported in early December 2018, the City of Erie beginning in January 2019 began hosting a series of suppers designed to bring the community together.

The Mayor's Office reached out to the group – made up of The Dinner Party, Hollaback!, and Faith Matters Network – as a result of Erie's criticism in the 24/7 Wall St. report. Individual dinners, with each addressing different racial issues, will continue until the end in June when a celebration dinner is held. Organizers will then present the city with ideas that can challenge Erie to create racial equity.

Efforts to face these challenges, while daunting, have clearly been infused with a new sense of urgency and energy in the spirit of finding solutions.

Pat Cuneo
Jefferson Publications Coordinator

Is Erie the Worst City in America for African-Americans?

**By Margaret Smith, Ph.D.
and Suzanne McDevitt, Ph.D.**

Introduction

What follows is an analysis of the internet research organization 24/7 Wall St., LLC, its products, and the study it generated on racial disparity in Erie in 2017. A study such as this, including an analysis of the statistical factors listed in the report, cannot confirm or deny the conclusions of the original project. We do not have access, as we note in the report, to the algorithm 24/7 Wall St. used or to the psychology that developed the study. Nor can we address the complicated emotions that are stirred in a community that is presented with such a study. There is no question there are systemic inequities in the City of Erie and Erie County that need to be engaged. As Lyndon Johnson said of poverty in Austin, Texas in the 1930s, "I am unwilling to close my eyes to needless suffering and deprivation which is not only a curse to the people immediately concerned but a blight on the whole community" (Mayor's Taskforce, 2017).

Herein, we present more information to illuminate the 24/7 Wall St. report and the situation in Erie. When more information is gathered, more nuances are revealed. Simple conclusions are rarely possible when examining complicated economic and social dynamics over time. Therefore, our recommendations focus on remedies rather than the conclusions offered in the 24/7 Wall St. study. We offer it in the spirit of more examination, not in that of simple conclusions, in the hope of contributing to a process to reduce those inequities.

We begin by discussing institutional racism. We follow with a general discussion of the 24/7 Wall St. methods and typical reports. We then discuss the factors included in the *Worst Cities for Black Americans* report on Erie, followed by an analysis of important factors by ZIP code. Finally, we compare Erie with two other regional cities that have also suffered industrial declines: Youngstown, Ohio and Allentown, Pa. In conclusion, we suggest some recommendations to remedy some of the persistent problems suffered by Erie and other such cities.

Institutional Racism (Impact of Racism in Communities)

Often, racism is seen as an individual problem, such as racial profiling. Less well understood is the impact of racism in communities. The concept of institutional racism, developed in the 1970s by Carmichael & Hamilton (1992) contrasts the individual phenomena – the use of race in a negative sense in an interaction

with another particular person with the impact of racism as demonstrated by, for example, segregation in housing, neglect in equal opportunities, and poorly resourced schools in neighborhoods with a majority of African-American or Latino residents. "It is institutional racism that keeps black people locked in [low income neighborhoods]," Carmichael and Hamilton argue. "The society either pretends it does not know of this situation or is in fact incapable of doing anything meaningful about it."

In a 1999 United Kingdom Parliamentary report on the racially motivated killing of Stephen Lawrence, who was killed while waiting at a bus stop, institutional racism was defined as "the collective failure of an organization to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes, and behavior which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness, and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people."

Institutional racism has been documented in a number of fields and countries, in health (Yearby, 2018), in drug laws (Chambers, 2011), in mental health treatment (Wade, 1993), in child welfare (Harris, M., Lee, M. & Courtney, M. (2014), and in juvenile justice both in the United States and Israel (Kovner, B., Shaloub-Kevorkian, N., 2018). From the Reconciliation Commissions in South Africa (Norris, 2017) to the treatment of the Romani in the Czech Republic (Cashman, L., 2017) and mental health treatment and child protection in the UK (Hancock, C., 1999), it is a widely understood and examined phenomenon.

From the perspective of sociologists studying unintentional and indirect forms of institutional racism, consequences are the most important indicator of discrimination. If the results or consequences of a policy or practice are unequal along racial lines, then indirect institutional racism is thought to exist. As sociologist Jerome Skolnick avers, "A society in which most of the good jobs are held by one race, and the dirty jobs are held by people of another color, is a society in which racism is institutionalized no matter what the beliefs of its members are" (Delgado, H., 2014).

It is the lack of jobs and inadequate incomes and assets that continues systemic inequalities. The unemployment rates of African-Americans lag those of whites and, in Erie, as seen in this essay, labor force participation has declined and should be an area of serious examination and intervention. Poorly resourced schools produce children ill prepared for higher education and that continues a negative cycle.

This essay focuses on the 24/7 Wall St. report, though many other indicators could be assessed and included. For example, a recent taskforce convened by the mayor of Austin, Texas (2017) to consider institutional racism and systemic

inequalities examined five areas: Schools and Juvenile Justice, Law Enforcement, Criminal and Civil Justice, Mental Health, and Substance Abuse, and it challenges the community with a range of recommendations.

The 24/7 Wall St. Report

Awareness of racial disparities, while long known, hit the City of Erie almost as a slap in the face when, early in November 2017, 24/7 Wall St., a financial news and opinion outlet whose content appears in such Internet sites as *Yahoo! Finance, MarketWatch, Time.com, USAToday*, and *The Huffington Post* published an article titled *The Worst Cities for Black Americans*. The article designated Erie as the "worst city" for Black Americans. This analysis garnered a lot of mainstream media attention in various outlets such as *USA Today* and eventually in the *New York Times*. In an article about the McBride Viaduct, the *Times* (Kimmelman, 2018) reiterated 24/7 Wall St.'s claim. The Erie media critiqued the report, quoting local leaders of the African- American community and analyzing the statistics reported by 24/7 Wall St. Gary Horton, president of the Erie chapter of the NAACP, told the *Erie Times-News* that the article had created a "firestorm" of conversation within Erie's black community. "A lot of us have known for years there's a lack of opportunity here for people of color." Others, while noting Erie's weaknesses, rejected the concept of Erie as the worst. Then-City Councilman Curtis Jones Jr. told the *Times-News* that "I believe that there is institutionalized racism that is still active in our system. That there are barriers set up that a person of color has to overcome here that other groups might not. I'm not naïve to that. Is that article the reality?" (Kevin Flowers, *Erie Times-News*, 2017).

The *Times-News* questioned 24/7 Wall St.'s statistics noting that the population of Erie City is 7 percent African-American, while that is actually Erie County's African-American population. Statistics located by the *Times-News* differed from those cited by 24/7 Wall St. Douglas McIntyre, 24/7's Editor-in-Chief reconciled the differences by stating that they use five-year averages, although 24/7 Wall St. does not state that in the methodology that accompanies the report, and the underlying data and formulas are not included in the report. Who is 24/7 Wall St.? What exactly did it analyze? What metrics did it use to come up with this controversial finding? What can we learn from comparisons of Erie with similar size cities in the region? And what key issues exist that Erie could work on to improve life for African Americans and the entire community?

24/7 Wall St., LLC

24/7 Wall St., LLC, according to its website, is a "Delaware based corporation which runs a financial news and opinion company with content delivered over the Internet." It publishes more than 30 articles per day and has readers "throughout North America, Asia, the Middle East and Africa (24/7 Wall St.com)." It also sells advertising on its website. It appears to write primarily on business topics and publishes as streaming media, though its articles range from summaries of Federal Reserve reports to *"Have 20K in your IRA/401K – See how to buy crypto for your IRA/401K"* (24/7 Wall St.com 2017)*.

The website lists stories under five headings: Business, Technology, Investing, Economy, and Special Report. Many reports seem to first appear as the face page to Internet Explorer and or another browser, i.e., the first thing consumers see when they log onto a browser. To say their reports are eclectic may be an understatement. Under the heading Economy, reports include *10 Most Affordable US College Towns for New Grads, What Millennials are willing to spend on their pets, and Billionaires growing faster than population.* Though 24/7 Wall St. seems to position itself as a generator of business content, it regularly issues other types of reports such as *50 best horror films of all Time, Places where people pay the most for food, Most Popular Ice Cream Shop in Every State, 30 most Beloved Billboard Music Award Nominees* and so on.

Table One Key Indicators – 24/7 Wall St. and *Erie Times-News*, City of Erie		
	24/7 Wall St.	*Erie Times-News*
African-American population	7.1 %	16.3%
Black Median Income	43.2% of white income	47% of white income
Black Unemployment	24.6%	17.2%
Black Poverty rate	47%	27%
Black Unemployment	24.6%	17.2%
Black Poverty rate	47%	27%

24/7 Wall St. Special Reports

Under the category Special Reports, articles appear such as *The 10 Worst States for Women: Ranking Gender Inequality in America, The States with the Best (and Worst) Early Education, American Cities Losing the Most Jobs this Year,* and *American Cities Adding the Most Jobs this Year*. The Worst Cities for Black Americans was issued under this heading. Methodology for these reports varies. *The Gender Inequality report*, done year to year since 2015, relied on methodology derived from a Center for American Progress report. For both the *Worst Cities for Black Americans* and a similar study titled *50 Worst Cities to live in* 24/7 Wall St. created indexes. They provide a methodology that lists the factors used to develop the index but not the underlying formulas.

In practical terms, although 24/7 reports the construction of complex indexes, the indexes themselves are only represented by the number that the city appears in the list. (Most reports are issued in a 1-X rating list – with 1 being the best (or the worst) depending on the title.) What their reports typically list are four statistics with a brief accompanying explanatory paragraph and the stated methodology. While it may appear (and may be) complicated, the underlying algorithm or formula is missing. For example, although Douglas McIntyre stated to the *Erie Times-News* that 24/7 uses five-year averages, the methodology section of the report does not state this.

The most revealing aspect of the *Worst Cities for Black Americans* article is the phrase "creating the index … ensured that cities were ranked on the differences between black and white residents and not on absolute levels of socioeconomic development." Though it excluded areas with less than 5 percent black population, it also seems to have excluded areas with sizeable African-American populations. Areas with sizeable black populations may, indeed, tend to have less income disparities than areas with small proportional African-American populations (Perry, 2017). Of the *Worst Cities for Black Americans*, only three have black populations of more than 11.8 percent; Trenton has the highest percentage at 20.1 percent; the others are Milwaukee, with 16.6 percent and Niles-Benton Harbor, Mich., with 15.2 percent. The title "*Worst Cities*" is itself a misnomer since 24/7 Wall St. appears to have used statistics from counties and Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas (SMSAs) as its unit of analysis.

Seven months after *The Worst Cities for Black Americans* was issued, 24/7 Wall St. published a report called *50 Worst Cities to Live In*. In this analysis, the top two "worst" cities are Detroit and Flint, Mich. Interestingly, only two of the cities named in *Worst Cities for Black Americans* appear on the 50 Worst Cities list; Trenton, number 7 in *Worst Cities for Black Americans* and 31 in 50 Worst; and Milwaukee, number 3 in *Worst Cities for Black Americans* and 11 in *50 Worst Cities*. Erie does

not appear in that study at all, although Cleveland, Buffalo, and Youngstown, Ohio (discussed in more detail below) all do.

In addition, *50 Worst Cities* does not include demographic information in its index, though the two cities that are included in both lists have the highest African-American populations in the *Worst Cities for Black Americans* article. Detroit, named as worst American city, has an African-American population that is 79.7 percent. However, as Andre Perry (2017) notes, a majority African-American population is not necessarily an impediment to prosperity as his study of 124 small (less than 100,000 population) majority Black American cities reveals.

Incarceration in Worst Cities for Black Americans and 50 Worst Cities

One other difference between the two analyses is noteworthy. Both use criminal activity as one factor in their index. However, *Worst Cities for Black Americans* used data from The Sentencing Project, a nonprofit that advocates for criminal justice reform, while *50 Worst Cities* used the FBI's Uniform Crime Report. The Sentencing Project analyzes data only by state, not city, while the FBI Uniform Crime report provides more specific data by jurisdiction. By excluding race from the 50 Worst Cities report and using detailed information on criminal activity rather than statewide trends, 24/7 Wall St. provides a clever but not entirely credible analysis. While all such projects are a product of what is included and what is left out supposedly, sophisticated analyses can be illuminated by a close examination of their data. In these studies that is not possible since that data is not available.

Table Two Incarceration in State of Pennsylvania					
Source	Jurisdiction	Year	Incarceration Per 100,000	Incarceration by race	
				White	Black
The Sentencing Project	State of Pennsylvania	2016	383	204	1,810

Source: The Sentencing Project. Sentencingproject.org

The Sentencing Project lists Pennsylvania as 24th of the 50 states in its incarceration rates. Of its neighbors, it is higher than New York at 40th and lower than Ohio at 15th. Its incarceration rate in 2016 for African-Americans was high at 8.9 for every white incarceration. The Sentencing Projects data includes county jails and state prisons, and may include Pennsylvania residents in federal prisons. Some additional detail is available from the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections reports.

The Pennsylvania Department of Corrections provides admissions and release data per county per year. For the year 2016, the State Correctional Institutions admitted 20,501 individuals (16.01 per 10,000). Of those, 10,641 (51.9%) were white, 7,727 (37.3%) were black, and 2, 033 (9.9%) were Hispanic. The SCI system released 19,824 the same year. Of these 9,682 were white (48.8%), 7,944 were African-American (40.0%) and 2,103(10.6%) were Hispanic. More detail, by sample counties is provided below.

Table Three					
Admissions and Releases from State Correctional Institutions and Ratios, 2016					
Sample Counties					
County	Population	Admissions Total Numbers and Ratio per 10,000		Releases Total Numbers and Ratio per 10,000	
Philadelphia	1,567,442	3541	22.59	3,776	24.09
Allegheny	1,230,459	1286	10.45	1,440	11.70
Lehigh	360,685	656	18.49	643	17.83
Erie	**278,045**	**494**	**17.77**	**527**	**18.95**
Crawford	86,484	165	19.08	138	15.96
Warren	40,396	96	23.76	108	26.74
Lackawanna	211,917	699	32.98	704	33.22
Venango	53,119	145	27.30	128	24.10
Lycoming	116,048	450	38.78	360	31.02
Jefferson	44,430	233	52.44	184	41.41

Source: PA Department of Corrections

The counties in the table were chosen at random. Erie County had one of the lowest ratios of admissions, lower than Philadelphia and many counties with smaller populations. Though this is not a thorough analysis, it may be that the reality of sentencing in Pennsylvania at least to state correctional institutions is more complicated than represented by 24/7 Wall St.

While 24/7 Wall St. seems to be treated, at least at times, in the mainstream media as the equivalent of a major policy analysis organization such as the Brookings Institution, under examination it appears to be largely somewhat more sophisticated clickbait, using catchy titles intended more to drive page views that include extensive advertising than for serious analysis.

Factors Included in Worst Cities for Black Americans

The 24/7 Wall St. report on *Worst Cities for Black Americans* included, in addition to incarceration rates from the Sentencing Project, as mentioned above, proportion of the population that is black, black median income, white and black unemployment, and population living under the poverty line. The 24/7 Wall St. report used statistics for Erie County, not the City of Erie. The basic statistics for the City of Erie are reported in Table One above. These factors are further discussed below.

Unemployment and Labor Force Participation in Erie

The Erie County statistics are included since 24/7 Wall St. used county data (while referring to the city). They also give more nuance to the data – as we will discuss later, the surrounding communities do have impact on access to employment and other important factors of community health and quality of life.

Table Four Labor Force Participation and Unemployment Rates White and Black Residents of Erie City and County, 2007-2016							
Year	Labor Force Participation				Unemployment Rate			
	Erie City		Erie County		Erie City		Erie County	
	White	Black	White	Black	White	Black	White	Black
2016	59.9	54.0	61.5	53.0	6.4	31.0	4.2	24.6
2015	60.7	65.0	61.3	60.3	6.7	7.3	6.3	7.6
2014	58.1	64.3	60.9	58.9	7.8	13.9	6.4	13.2
2013	61.2	57.1	62.3	54.3	8.2	18.4	6.5	15.3
2012	60.8	56.9	63.1	55.3	8.5	17.5	8.2	19.8
2011	63.5	61.6	64.7	58.4	10.5	24.3	9.5	20.6
2010	61.4	61.1	61.4	54.9	11.4	18.1	8.9	16.2
2009	64.0	49.3	64.0	42.9	9.1	24.6	8.8	22.4
2008	64.6	Not reported	63	46.2	7.8	Not reported	6.4	18.7
2007	60.3	51.4	62.4	45.3	5.2	22.8	4.9	22.1

Source: U.S. Census

These statistics, particularly the unemployment rates, must be seen in context. The overall U.S. unemployment rate for 2016 was 4.9 percent. For Black Americans the rate was 8.4 percent. In 2015, the U.S. rate was 5.3 percent and

the rate for Black Americans was 9.6 percent. The overall rate for Pennsylvania at the same time was 10.5 percent. Nationally, the unemployment rate for African-Americans often approaches double that of white wage earners. Although the unemployment rate for black residents of the City of Erie reached 31.0 percent in 2016 (the county rate of 24.6 was the one reported in the *Worst Cities for Black Americans* article) the year before, in 2015, it was 7.3 percent. The average unemployment rate for black residents of Erie from 2007 through 2016 was 19.7 percent. For white residents it was 8.2 percent. The high rate for African-Americans is of serious concern, not to mention a personal tragedy for those seeking work in vain but is it disproportionately worse than other cities?

Labor force participation is low and black labor force participation does not approach that of whites. This is a serious and persistent problem. Nationally, "black men with less education are particularly disconnected from the labor market" (Wilson & Jones, 2018). Black men without a college education who did not work at all in a given year began climbing in the 1990s and currently about 25.3 percent of those with a high school diploma and 50 percent of those without are what the Economic Policy Institute terms "nonearners." This makes the low educational attainment discussed in the sections below even more urgent to address. It is clear that the African-American residents of Erie face serious disparities.

Median Income

24/7 Wall St. reported median income as a factor in its designation of Erie as "the worst city" for African-Americans. On closer analysis, the statistics reveal a more nuanced reality. Median Income for the United States, Pennsylvania, Erie County, and the City of Erie by major racial groups appears in the Table Five.

The 24/7 Wall St. article stated median income for African-Americans in Erie City as 43.2 percent of white income. An average of five years of median income from 2012-2016, using Census Data, shows that Black median income is 60.9 percent of white Erie City income and 46.6 percent of white Erie County income. However, white Erie County median income is only 85 percent of white U.S. median income and 84 percent of Pennsylvania white median income. Thus, while median income for African-Americans is very low, income overall for Erie County is not close to state and national medians. Erie County's African-American residents are not doing well. White residents are doing better but not as well as other residents of Pennsylvania. Erie County, after repeated company layoffs, is going through a difficult time. As in other Rust Belt cities, Erie is trying to chart its course through this situation.

Year	United States $		Pennsylvania $		Erie County $		Erie City $	
	White	Black	White	Black	White	Black	White	Black
2016	59,083	36,561	58,461	33,645	49598	24,073	38173	23,423
2015	57,407	35,695	56,927	32,493	48,290	24,473	37,111	23,610
2014	56,900	35,600	56,327	32 606	47,855	23,825	36,160	22,653
2013	56,300	35,415	55,538	32,406	47,087	22561	36,133	21,108
2012	56,203	35,664	55, 073	32,496	47,219	23,348	36,072	22,131
Avg	57179	35787	56,447	32,729	48,010	23,656	36,730	22,385
		% of White 62.6	% of White US 98.7	**% of White 58.0% PA** **% of White US 57.2**	% of PA White 85 % of US White 84	% of White Erie County 49.2 % of White US 41.4 % of White PA 42 % of White US	% of White Erie County 76 % of PA 65 **% of US 64.2**	**% of White Erie City 60.9** **% of White Erie County 46.6** **% of White PA 39.7** **% of White US 39.1** **% of Black US 62.6%**

Source: American Community Survey

Poverty in Erie

Poverty rates in the City of Erie and Erie County have been high for several decades.

Table Six Poverty Rates, City of Erie and Erie County 1989 – 2016				
Year	City of Erie %	Erie County %	PA %	US %
1989		12.9	11.1	13.1
1999		12.0	11.0	12.4
2006	26.1			
2008	24.2	14.5		
2009	24.2	15.1	12.1	13.5
2010	30.2.	17.4	13.4	15.1
2011	28	16.4	13.8	15.0
2012	25.7	15.8	13.9	15.0
2013	29.2	18.3	13.7	14.5
2014	25.1	16.3	13.6	14.7
2015	26.9	17.5	13.2	13.5
2016	27.3	15.9	12.9	14.0

Source: American Community Survey, 1 year est. for the specific year, results edited from chart compiled by United Way of Erie County

Table Seven Poverty Rates in the City of Erie by Race/Nationality			
Year	White %	Black %	Hispanic %
2010	25.0	45.5	44.2
2011	22.0	44.7	49.0
2012	17.0	45.3	n/a
2013	25.6	38.5	n/a
2014	21.5	28.7	55
2015	22.9	38.0	n/a
2016	22.3	52	52.2

Poverty in general is a serious problem in both the City of Erie and Erie County. In no year is the poverty rate lower in Erie than in the state and the nation. Even when Pennsylvania is doing better than the nation as a whole, both the City of Erie and Erie County lag. The issue is even more serious when we look at the disparities by major categories of race and nationality.

Black, Hispanic Jobless Rates Almost 20 Percent Higher Than Whites

There are stark differences in the poverty rate between racial groups. White poverty in Erie only once over the seven years of data declines into the teens, at 17 percent in 2012, even though the poverty level in both the state and federal level are typically in that region. Poverty for Black and Hispanic residents of Erie is almost always 20 points higher than for white residents of Erie, though it should be noted that there is wide variation in the data. From 2013 to 2014, the poverty rate decreased by 10 percent only to rise again to nearly the same levels as 2013 in 2015. Black poverty then increases another 14 percent by 2016. It must be noted that these statistics are based on sampling and with smaller populations the margins of error (not reported here) can be sizeable. Therefore, although the general trend may be reliable, the absolute numbers may not. These trends present serious challenges to policymakers as well as the residents who experience them.

Erie's ZIP Codes

An examination of the City of Erie by selected ZIP codes provides an analysis of the status of African-Americans within communities. The following ZIP codes were explored: 16501, 16502, 16303, 16504, 16505, 16507, and 16508. Statistics reported include population, unemployment rate, estimated median income, housing values, education attainment, and renters.

Population and Ethnicity by ZIP Code

Erie is a city composed of unique neighborhoods. The city is divided into east and west neighborhoods by State Street, while the northern part of the city hub is flanked by the bayfront, which extends both in the east and western part of the city, with an extension up to 12th Street on the east side and to Interstate 79 on the west side with a ZIP of 16507. However, ZIP codes 16503 and 16504 are on the east side of the city, commonly identified as lower and upper east side, respectively. ZIP code 16502 hosts Little Italy and borders West 26th Street. Pittsburgh Avenue is the west boundary for the city. Gannon University, one of two universities within the city limits, is in the lower west side off the downtown in ZIP code 16501, while Mercyhurst University is in the southeastern part of the city in ZIP code 16504. The universities contribute to the vibrancy of the city with art, education, and social programming. The Frontier neighborhood is identified by ZIP code 16505, and Glenwood Hills is in ZIP code 16508.

Table Eight Population by ZIP Code							
Population	16501	16502	16503	16504	16505	16507	16508
2017	1,777	16,218	15,043	16,027	17,620	8,999	16,236
2016	2,180	16,176	16,808	15,976	16,650	10,250	16,998
2010	2,044	16,664	16,850	17,322	17,168	11,088	16,050
White	1,534	12,131	7,404	14,026	16,271	7,023	14,232
African American	332/ 18.7%	2,167/ 13.3%	5,905/ 39.3%	1,868/ 11.7%	181/ 1.0%	2,521/ 28.0%	692/ 4.3%
Hispanic	98/ 5.5%	1,321/ 8.1%	2,099/ 13.9%	795/ 5%	351/ 1.9%	882/ 9%	604/ 3.7%

Data retrieved from www.unitedstateszipcodes.org

There is some African-American representation in every ZIP code, but not in proportion to the percentage in the community overall. About 16.7 percent of the population in Erie is African-American. African-Americans are underrepresented in the neighborhoods of Frontier (1 percent of population) and Glenwood Heights (4.3 percent) and most significantly overrepresented in ZIP codes 16503 and 16507. The Hispanic population is similarly distributed. According to 2017 U.S. Census estimates, 7.2 percent of the population of Erie is Hispanic. Hispanics are overrepresented, similar to African-Americans, in ZIP codes 16503 and 16507, and underrepresented in the rest of the city, except for ZIP code 16502.

Data reveals that the most concentrated African-American population is in the eastern part of the city. To a lesser degree, there are African-Americans residing along the bayfront, and the west side of the city. African-Americans have the smallest presence in the Frontier community. Though the City of Erie is geographically diverse, the communities are segregated by ethnicity as well as income, which has an impact on the social and economic outcomes of any ethnic group.

ZIP code 16503 or the lower east side of Erie has the highest unemployment rate followed by downtown Erie and the bayfront areas. Likewise, the lower west side of downtown has the lowest estimated median income (ZIP code 16501) followed by the lower east side area and the area around the bayfront. Downtown Erie, the bayfront, and east side have the highest rate of residents below the poverty level as well as the highest number of residents below 50 percent of the poverty level. What is distinctive about the ZIP codes is the geographical characteristics. The bayfront and downtown Erie include many nonresidential areas, but the lower east side is primarily residential. Significant rates of renters indicate characteristics of the housing patterns in those areas as well. However, the east side is primarily residential with the third highest rate of renters in the ZIP code. That status

Table Nine Economics and Housing							
	16501	16502	16503	16504	16505	16507	16508
Unemployment rate	7.9%	7.2%	13.3%	5.6%	3.2%	9.7%	4.2%
Residents income below poverty level	62.3%	27.0%	39.9%	14.3%	10.1%	37.9%	14.9%
Residents income below 50% of poverty	45.4%	18%	21.9%	10.2%	5.9%	21.3%	7.3%
Estimated median income	$11,072	$31,722	$23,879	$42,464	$55,421	$29,523	$46,495
Estimated Home value		$79,580	$52,277	$96,007	$156,719	$64,042	$103,221
Gross Rent	$401.00	$675.00	$682.00	$818.00	$765	$706	$715.00
Renters	99%	64%	66%	33%	29%	72%	31%

Data retrieved www.city-data.com/zips

may indeed account for the higher unemployment rate, lower median income, and housing value, which is consistent with higher renter rate. The major public housing communities are also located in this neighborhood. When ethnicity is introduced, the data reveals that, outside of ZIP code 16503, the next concentration of African-American population is in ZIP code 16507, which likely reflects the eastern side of the bayfront. The data consistently indicates that African-Americans in the lower east side appear to have higher exposure to factors that imply social and economic challenges.

Table 10 2016 Educational Data by ZIP Codes							
Residents	16501	16502	16503	16504	16505	16507	16508
% of H.S. Education attainment by age 25	66.3	87.7	72.3	92.1	92.9	84.5	93.3
% of BA Undergraduate	15.5	20.7	7.5	23.8	40.8	15.7	29.7
% of Graduate	6.0	5.2	2.7	5.9	17.7	6.2	8.7

U.S. Census Bureau 2016 American Fact Finder

Table 11 2016 Education Data by Ethnicity and ZIP Codes percent rounded								
	16501	16502	16503	16504	16505	16506	16507	16508
	HS/BA+	HS/ BA+	HS/ BA+	HS/ BA+	HS/BA+	HS/BA+	HS/BA+	HS/BA+
White	71/16	90/20.	75/7.0	93/25	92.5/40	96/42	90/17	93/28
Black	58/13	79/17	74/7.3	93/10	83/41	100/23	75/10	88/31
Hispanic	29/0	71/6.0	58/10	83/14	83/16	82/16	64/2.1	94/14

U.S. Census Bureau 2016 American Fact Finder

The data reflects that educational attainment of high school is consistently achieved at about 70 percent for each of the ZIP codes but lower in the downtown area, lower east side, and the bayfront. Consistently reflected in ZIP code 16503 is the lower rates for undergraduate and advanced degrees. Thus one could surmise that the median income for the residents in ZIP codes where advanced degrees are limited would influence other factors such as home ownership, percentage of renters and transportation. The Frontier neighborhood tends to have the most significant percent of their residents with both undergraduate and graduate degrees, which links to higher median income, lower unemployment rates, less percentage of renters in the area, and fewer residents living at or below the poverty line. Conversely, the lower east side has lower rates of undergraduate and graduate degrees, which link to lower median income, a higher unemployment rate, a greater presence of renters in the area, as well as a significant presence of individuals living at or below 50 percent of the poverty level.

The data indicates that African-Americans on the lower east side are completing high school but are not acquiring bachelors and advance degrees at the same level as African-Americans in ZIP codes 16505 and 16508.

Another Way of Looking at the Problem

A different way of looking at the problems posed by the 24/7 Wall St. report involves looking at Erie in conjunction with similar-sized cities in the same region. In the next section we contrast Erie with Youngstown, Ohio and Allentown, Pa. to get a better idea of challenges Erie faces and which factors help in mitigating industrial disinvestment.

By comparing demographics and diversity, economic factors including median household income, housing status, poverty, and ethnicity, as well as employment by occupations in Allentown and Youngstown, one can gain more insight about problems facing Erie. Each of the three cities has encountered similar challenges with changing economies, population loss, and rebuilding its city. Erie,

Youngstown, and Allentown have similar origins and parallels that provide insight into how older industrial cities respond to changing economic times.

Taken together, the three cities constitute a continuum, with Youngstown struggling, Erie in the middle, and Allentown emerging from industrial decline. We begin with profiles of the three cities and their surrounding counties.

Allentown, Pa.

The City of Allentown is the third largest city in Pennsylvania and is in the eastern central part of the state. It is the county seat for Lehigh County (Allentown, Pa. Data USA). It was founded as Northhampton Town in 1762 by Chief Justice William Allen as a rural community on the Lehigh River (Allentown.gov; Play, Allentown City History). With the building of the Lehigh Canal, Northhampton Town was poised to enter the manufacturing of anthracite coal, which was to become a useful domestic fuel. The rise of the railroad on the Lehigh River soon resulted in the demise of canal traffic and also linked the town with Philadelphia. In 1832, the name was officially changed to Allentown (Allentown.gov, Allentown City History). Industrialization began in 1861 and continued through the late 20th century with iron and railroad industries, breweries, brick making, food processing, steel and wire manufacturing, silk industry, and automotive (Allentown Pa Bicentennial-Lehigh County Sesquicentennial 1962 Commemorative Book). By 1926, Allentown had a rich retailing market with three large retail stores and a thriving downtown with arts and entertainment. The town was linked to both Philadelphia and New York.

Beginning in the 1970s, Allentown began to experience demographic changes and economic decline. Those two factors contributed to Allentown's struggle for decades to rebuild its economy and reclaim its residents. John Tierney (2014) depicted the plight of Allentown as having experienced the flight of former residents to the suburbs, the rise and growth of shopping malls, which contributed to the decline of the downtown business as well as the demise of nearby employers such as Bethlehem Steel and Mack Trucks. He also concluded that, as white flight took place from Allentown to the suburbs, Hispanics from New York moved into the city. Likewise, the great migration of African-Americans from the South from 1910 through 1970 resulted in an increase in the population (Encyclopedia Britannica/Great African Migration, 2018). Historical analysis of Allentown provides the reflection of how the city has rebounded from the challenges it faced over the last 15 years.

Allentown has benefited from the Neighborhood Improvement Zone (NIZ) program authorized by the state of Pennsylvania (Allentownpa.gov/Work/ Neighborhood Improvement Zone). This program diverts "all non-property tax state and local taxes generated within a designated 130-acre zone to fund development within that zone."

Those funds, routed to developers, have resulted in new buildings that can be rented at below market rates, thereby drawing tenants and businesses that would otherwise be more difficult to attract. This has helped to resuscitate Allentown's downtown.

In recent years, Allentown's Hispanic population has grown. Of the three cities, it is the only one that has expanded, primarily, as noted by The Atlantic, by the movement of Latinos from New York and New Jersey.

Erie, Pa.

The City of Erie is the fourth largest city in Pennsylvania, located on the south bank of Lake Erie. It derives its name from the first nations of Erie, or Eriez, the Native Americans who occupied both the land and the lake (Erie, Pa./Data USA; Erie, Pa. United States History). The town plan was laid out in 1795 by Andrew Ellicott, who had earlier assisted Pierre L'Enfant in the drafting of the plan for Washington, D.C. The town was surveyed in the summer of that year despite "jungle and swamp, forests, streams, deep ravines, wild beasts and Indians," according to the first History of Erie County. The City of Erie is the county seat for Erie County and the largest city in northwestern Pennsylvania. The economy of Erie was initially related to its location on the lake in areas such as shipbuilding, fishing, and a railroad hub. The building of the Erie Canal in New York, connecting Albany and Buffalo, was enhanced by the development of the steamboat, which expanded Erie's economy. Manufacturing later attracted many European immigrants to industrial jobs and expanded the diversity of the city. Migration of African-Americans from the South primarily from 1910 to 1940 saw the most significant increase in the city's African-American population as workers sought manufacturing jobs. The growth slowed from 1940 through 1970. In 1960, Erie reached its largest historic population (138,440), including 6,656 African-American residents, or 4.8 percent of the population. In 2017, there were 97,369 residents of Erie, including 15,968 African-Americans, or 16.4 percent of the population (Data USA; Erie, Pa).

Manufacturing in Erie began to decline in the 1970s as it did in much of the Great Lakes region and industrial Northeast. A suburban mall and plazas also supplanted Erie's downtown as the retail center, and white flight to Millcreek Township and surrounding boroughs and townships contributed to Erie's population decline. Blighted areas arose in the city and racial segregation emerged as a dynamic in the city.

In the 1970s, 25 percent of Erie jobs were in manufacturing, compared to 15.8 percent today. Erie contained four of the nation's top plastics companies. In the early 2010s, the largest employers were GE Transportation, a division of General Electric, and Erie Insurance (Martin, 2018) but in the last half decade GE Transportation has undergone corporate change and relocated jobs from the Erie

community to a manufacturing plant in Fort Worth, Texas. Remaining jobs in manufacturing have been affected by automation and thus the number of workers to produce the same level of output has been reduced.

Youngstown, Ohio

Youngstown was founded in 1797 by John Young with incorporation in 1802 (Ohio History Central, Youngstown Ohio). Coal was discovered in the early 19th century, and a branch of the Pennsylvania and Ohio Canal facilitated the development of shipping and the establishment of the coal and later steel industries (Ohio History Central, Coal Mining). Later, the railroad came to Youngstown in the 1850s and these transportation networks established Youngstown as an industrial center. The first steel plant was built in the late 19th century and, through the mid-20th century, Youngstown thrived on steel and foundries (Ohio History Central, Coal Mills). But it never diversified economically, which made it especially vulnerable when the steel mills closed in the late 1970s. The population fell from 168,330 in 1950 to its current 64,404, a loss of more than 100,000 (53.8 percent since 1970), which is by far the lowest of the three cities (Hampton Institute, America's fastest shrinking city: The story of Youngstown, Ohio).

In 2005, the city developed the "Youngstown 2010 Plan" and proposed accepting the population loss and focusing on preservation of what remained (Youngstown, 2010 Plan, Youngstown, Mahoning County, Case Studies: Comprehensive Planning). This was widely hailed as a model city planning strategy and noted as an example other cities facing deindustrialization could follow (Berton & Hamilton, 2016). More recently with the expansion in the natural gas industry, Youngstown is again seeing investment (Sowers, 2015).

City	Population	Change from 2017	White %	Black %	Hispanic %	Unemployment Rate	Labor Force Participation
Table 12 **Youngstown, Erie and Allentown, 2018**							
Youngstown, OH	64,604	-3.5	49.1	43.7	10.7	6.2	50.3
Erie, PA	97,364	-4.3	74.3	16.4	7.2	5.0	59.6
Allentown, PA	121,283	+2.7	58.8	14.0	49.0	6.6	62.7

Source: American Community Survey

Table 13 Median Income, Labor Force Participation, Poverty Rate, High School and College Graduation and Disability, 2016						
	Median Income $	Labor Force Participation %	Poverty Rate %	High School Education %	Graduated College %	Disabilities %
Youngstown, OH	24,448	50.3	38	83	12	16.6
Erie, PA	35,205	59.6	26.4	82.1	21	14.6
Allentown, PA	37,256	62.7	26.7	78	15.4	15.9

Source: American Community Survey

Since poverty was one of the factors reported in the 24/7 Wall St. report, a detailed analysis of poverty by race in Erie is included in Table Six; the comparable statistics for Youngstown and Allentown are included below in Table 14.

Table 14 Poverty by Race, Youngstown, Oh, Allentown, PA, 2010 to 2016								
Year	Youngstown, OH				Allentown, PA			
	Total	White	Black	Hispanic	Total	White	Black	Hispanic
2010	31.8	22.3	41.1	na	27.0	21.4	32.0	42.7
2011	33.2	28.6	37.0	55.6	29.5	25.2	39.6	45.5
2012	38.9	32.6	42.8	71.7	23.4	16.7	29.7	33.4
2013	40.2	32.0	47.0	50.7	29.2	19.4	40.3	40.6
2014	40.7	29.1	53.4	45.0	27.0	19.5	36.0	36.0
2015	35.7	24.3	43.8	48.6	24.8	24.8	24.2	33.6
2016	35.2	26.9	45.4	52.4	30.0	29.4	28.4	35.3

Source: American Community Survey, 1 yr est for the specified year

While all three cities have high poverty rates, Youngstown and Allentown present an interesting contrast to Erie. Erie is the whitest city with 74.3 percent of the population; Allentown's white population is 58.5 percent and Youngstown's 49.1 percent. Youngstown's African-American population is 43.7 percent of the city, and the Hispanic population is 10.7 percent. Allentown's African-American population is 14 percent, and the Hispanic population 49 percent. The poverty rates of whites and blacks in Allentown have reached levels such that in 2015 the black poverty rate was 0.6 percent lower than the white rate, though Hispanic poverty continues to be very high. In Erie, black poverty is often close to 20 points

higher than white poverty, and Hispanic poverty is typically even higher. The same patterns seem present in Youngstown. All three cities have low median incomes and both Youngstown and Erie have lower than average labor force participation rates. Educational attainment is discussed with reference to race below, but all three cities have lower than average graduation rates (nationally, 88 percent of all Americans have completed high school and 33 percent have completed an undergraduate degree (Ryan & Bauman, 2016). Low educational attainment is often a precursor to low lifetime income and is something that should be taken seriously and addressed aggressively.

Understanding Trends

Together, these three cities illustrate many trends that are common in former industrial areas: declining overall populations, growing populations of African-Americans and Hispanics, low median incomes, high unemployment rates, declining labor participation rates, high poverty rates, and ongoing economic development agendas.

Both Youngstown and Allentown have significant populations of African-Americans and Hispanics while Erie is significantly more white. Allentown has the highest labor force participation of the three and is the only one whose labor force participation is at national levels. Allentown also has the highest median income, though it is still only 65 percent of the national median while Erie's is 61.6 percent of the national median.

Educational Attainment

One additional set of tables illustrates key human capacity variables in the redevelopment of any city suffering from declining economic prospects. They are labor force participation, unemployment and educational attainments. These tables illustrate by race some of the important factors, especially educational attainment.

Table 15
Unemployment, Labor Force Participation, and Educational Attainment by Race
Erie City, Erie County

	Labor Force Participation		Unemployment		Educational Attainment			
	Erie City	Erie County	Erie City	Erie County	Erie City		Erie County	
					High School	College degree or greater	High School	College degree or greater
White	59.9	61.5	6.4	4.2	89.7	23.4	92.3	27.8
Black	54	53	31	24.6	80	12.8	80.2	13.8
Hispanic	N							

Table 16
Unemployment, Labor Force Participation, and Educational Attainment by Race
Youngstown, OH and Mahoning County, OH

	Labor Force Participation		Unemployment		Educational Attainment			
					Youngstown OH		Mahoning County	
	Youngstown OH	Mahoning County	Youngstown OH	Mahoning County	High School	College degree or greater	High School	College degree or greater
White	50.7	58.8	8.6	6.3	88.1	15.6	92.1	25.3
Black	50.8	57.3	23.5	20.6	80.1	7.9	82.1	9.0
Hispanic	N	56.6	N	8.1	64.9	7.7	69.0	10.0

Table 17
Unemployment, Labor Force Participation, and Educational Attainment by Race
Allentown, PA and Leigh County, PA

	Labor Force Participation		Unemployment		Educational Attainment			
					Allentown PA		Leigh County	
	Allentown PA	Leigh County	Allentown PA	Leigh County	High School	College degree or greater	High School	College degree or greater
White	61.5	64.8	10.1	5.6	86.0	22.0	90	30.4
Black	61.5	66.2	11.5	12.6	82.9	10.1	84.8	16
Hispanic	68.4	70.2	10.	7.9	62.4	7.6	71.8	11.4

Source: American Community Survey

In all three cities, high school graduation is in the mid to high 80 percent range for whites. For black residents, the rates are a few points lower but none is lower than 80 percent. High school graduation rates for Hispanics in Youngstown and Allentown (Erie's rates for Hispanics are not available) are in the mid-60 percentile. The national rate for college graduation or higher is 33 percent. No segment of the population in any of the three cities has attained that level of higher education, which, again, is commonly held to be the gateway to better jobs and higher incomes.

Political Culture

Political culture may not make the difference in economic development when there is a scarce natural resource but most investment seems to be made in stable communities. Many news articles mention Youngstown's troubled civic culture and point to it as a factor in a lack of investment, though less so in recent years. Youngstown's perceived organized crime connections and high crime rate, exemplified by its colorful and controversial sheriff, Congressional representative and later convicted felon James Traficant, continues to haunt the city, though at lower levels than previously (Tavernier, 2010; Sowers, 2015). The city's fealty to the idea of supporting a strong man more recently appears to have led to the support of President Donald Trump, who also carried Erie County, though not the City of Erie. This is at odds with the projected emphasis that Youngstown has a reformer mayor and a nationally celebrated city planning process.

 Both Erie and Allentown appear to have cohesive city cultures, certainly as viewed through the lens of the national media (Fallows, 2016; Tierney, 2014). Journalists note the advocacy from both Republican and Democratic legislators in developing opportunities for Allentown. African-Americans in Erie are an important part of the political process, for example on City Council, but judging from the controversy that arose over the razing of the McBride Viaduct (Kimmelman, 2018), African-Americans are not well integrated into other public sectors, such as the police and fire department or city administration, some African-American leaders complained.

Population Density

A complicating factor for Erie is the lack of extensive development outside the city. Once beyond Millcreek, there is not much besides smaller communities, such as Corry, Harborcreek, Edinboro, North East, Fairview, Girard, and Albion. This is in contrast with both Youngstown and Allentown. Each of those cities are within a more overall developed environment. One distinctive factor that is characteristic of Erie in contrast to Youngstown and Allentown is the population density of the surrounding county. Youngstown sits in Mahoning County, with Trumbull County directly to the north, which is just as populous and contains substantial industrial development. Allentown touts on its website its proximity

to Philadelphia (62 miles) and New York (91 miles). Even closer is the city of Bethlehem, next door. Youngstown touts its proximity to Cleveland (60.6 miles) and Pittsburgh (67 miles). While both Allentown and Youngstown are close to other developed areas, Erie sits in a largely rural area. This reduces employment opportunities.

Table 18 Population Density, Erie City and County, Youngstown, and Mahoning County, and Allentown and Lehigh County	
Jurisdiction	Population Per square mile
Youngstown Mahoning County	1972.7 580.2
Erie City Erie County	5334.4 351.1
Allentown Lehigh County	6727 1,012.5

Transportation Networks

Erie is well served with north-south transportation (Interstate 79), east-west transportation (Interstate 90), and eastern transportation (Interstate 86), with close distances to Buffalo (92 miles), Cleveland (100 miles), and Pittsburgh (128 miles), but no major metropolitan areas in between, limiting an easy daily commute. Youngstown on the other hand, has much shorter commutes to Cleveland (68 miles), Akron-Canton (50 miles) and the western edge of the Pittsburgh suburbs (56 miles to the Pittsburgh International Airport). Allentown, as mentioned, is six miles from Bethlehem, 17 from Easton, and 62 from Philadelphia.

Economic Summary

Erie undoubtedly faces challenges, but in many ways it is faring as well or better than other older industrial cities, such as those discussed here. Replacing major industrial employers is never easy. But directly addressing the issue of the declining economy may make for better outcomes. In addition, it may benefit from what has been learned from the experiences of other cities where disinvestment came earlier. The wolf came late to Erie but efforts to rebuild the city need to be mindful of the human capacity it is losing when its young people do not complete high school and beyond and the human suffering attendant on not being able to find work.

Long-Term Recommendations

- Higher incomes result in more spending. Consider raising the median income by raising wages at the bottom end.
- Consider raising the minimum wage to state level.
- Though many Erie residents did not support the Trump candidacy, the infrastructure program that was widely discussed during the campaign could go a long way to increasing jobs, reducing unemployment, and helping to increase labor force participation.
- Advocate for state-based infrastructure funds.
- Target higher high school graduation rates by 5 percentage points by 2025 and 10 percent by 2030 – education is the gateway to a reasonable working life and income as an adult. While economic development is uncertain, an effort needs to be made to increase the high school graduation rate to national levels and support children in going to college. Higher college graduation rates will link residents to better jobs and higher incomes.

Short-Term Recommendations

- Ban the Box: Encourage employers to allow those who have felony records to proceed through the initial phases of the job search without revealing their prior criminal history.
- Points for city residency when applying for city jobs: Award points as is done for veterans on job applications. This will increase employment at least in local government jobs.
- Train education professionals to recognize and avoid implicit bias and hold schools accountable by tracking student outcomes by race and ethnicity.
- Strengthen and expand community schools: These can be a key tool in helping each child succeed and thrive in the school system.
- Undertake a process to better understand the barriers to graduating from high school and develop programming to compensate for those barriers. Engage both the Erie School District and the charter schools in that dialogue. Develop methods to track each child through his or her school years and actively review sample cases to better learn how to remove barriers to success.
- Develop a process to link African-American and Hispanic youth with information, exposure, and support for jobs they can see themselves working in.
- Undertake a process to better understand and remove barriers for adults who are unable to find work.
- Reinforce the importance of education as a tool in workforce development.

Source References

Note: Unless stated otherwise all statistics are from the American Community Survey (census.gov) for the respective year.

24/7wallst.com. 2018. "Have 20K in your IRA/401K—See how to buy crypto for your IRA/401K." June 7, 2018. https://247wallst.com/.

Allentownpa.gov. 2018. "Neighborhood Improvement Zone." May 17, 2018. https://allentownpa.gov/neighborhood-improvement-zone r 5/17/2018.

Allentownpa.gov. 2018. "History of Allentown." https://www.allentownpa.gov/Play/History.

Bates, S. P. 1884. *History of Erie County, Pennsylvania*. Chicago: Warner, Beers & Co. https://archive.org/details/cu31924096783489.

Berton, C. & Hamilton, N. 2016. Preservation in middle neighborhoods: promising results in Ohio. *Community Development Investment Review*. Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco. https://www.frbsf.org/community-development/files/preservation-middle-neighborhoods-promising-results-in-ohio.pdf.

Britannica Encyclopedia. 2018. "Great African Migration." June 17, 2018. https://www.brittanica.com/event/Great-Migration 6/17/2018.

Burnette, C. P., & Cruz, P. 2017. "Mayor's Taskforce on Institutional Racism and Systemic Inequities, Final Report." *City of Austin, TX*, April 6, 2017. https://cityofaustin.github.io/institutional-racism/.

Carmichael, S. & Hamilton, C. 1992. *Black Power: Politics of Liberation*, Vintage: New York.

Cashman, L. 2017. "New label, no progress: institutional racism and the persistent segregation of Romani students in the Czech Republic." *Race, Ethnicity & Education 20*(5): 595-620.

Chambers, C. L. 2011. *Drug laws and institutional racism: the story told by the Congressional record*. El Paso, TX: LFB Scholarly Pub.

City of Youngstown. 2005. "Case Studies: Comprehensive Planning: Youngstown 2010 Plan." 2018. https://balancedgrowth.ohio.gov/Portals/0/BLLUP/Case%20Studies%202013/Youngstown%202010_sm.pdf.

City-Data.com. 2018. "Erie: History." www.city-data.com/us-cities/The-Northeast/
        Erie-History.html.

Data USA. 2018. "Allentown, PA." https://datausa.io/profile/geo/allentown-pa
        5/16/2018.

Data USA. 2018. "Erie, PA." https://datausa.io/profile/geo/erie-a 5/16/2018.

Delgado, H. 2014. *Institutional racism*. Amenia, NY: Salem Press Encyclopedia.

Gov.UK. 1999. *The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry: Report of an Inquiry by Sir William
        Macpherson of Cluny*. 2018. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/
        the-stephen-lawrence-inquiry.

The Great Migration. n.d. "Historical Overview." https://greatmigrationphl.org/
        node/24.

Fallows, J. 2016. "Erie and America: The challenges of Rust Belt America are real,
        and well known. What's less familiar is the response some mid-size cities
        are making." *The Atlantic*, August 25, 2016. https://www.theatlantic.com/
        national/archive/2016/08/erie-and-america/497060/.

Flowers K. 2017. "NAACP plans news conference Monday to address issues
        referenced in article." *Erie Times News*, November 11, 2017.

Hancock, C. 1999. "It is time institutional racism, chaotic inner city mental health
        services and child cruelty were all brought out into the open." *Nursing
        Standard* 13(30): 26.

Harris, M.S., Lee, M.N.O., and Courtney, M.E. 2014. *Racial Disproportionality in Child
        Welfare*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Hoerr, J. 1988. *And the Wolf Finally Came*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.

Hampton Institute. 2018. "America's fastest shrinking city; The story of Youngstown,
        Ohio." https://www.hamptoninstitute.org/Youngstown.html.

Kimmelman, M. 2018. "In Erie, one city block is a trek of disrespect." *New York
        Times*, March 12, 2018. https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/12/us/erie-
        mcbride-viaduct.html.

Kovner, B., & Shalhoub-Kevorkian, N. 2018. "Child Arrest, settler colonialism,
        and the Israeli juvenile system: A case study of occupied East
        Jerusalem." *British Journal of Criminology* 58(3): 709-729.

Martin, J. 2018. "Erie manufacturing employment lowest since 2010." *Goerie.com*. www.goerie.com/new/2018013/erie-manufacturing-employment-lowest since 2010. 9/9/2018.

Norris, Z. 2017. "Repairing harm from racial injustice: An analysis of the Justice Reinvestment Initiative and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission." *Denver Law Review* 94(3): 515 - 535.

Ohio History Central. 2018. "Youngstown, Ohio." *Ohio History Central*. 2018. http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org/w/Youngstown,_Ohio.

PBS. 2017. "Erie longs for it manufacturing past, but what is its future." *PBS.org*. June 15, 2018. www.pbs.org/newshours/show/erie-longs-for-manufacturing-what's-future.

Perry, A. 2017. "Black incomes outpace the national average in 124 majority-black cities: So where's the investment?" *Brookings Institute*. 2018. https://www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2017/11/15/black-incomes-outpace-the-national-average-in-124-majority-black-cities-so-wheres-the-investment/.

Perry, A. 2017. "Recognizing majority black cities when their existence is being questioned." *Brookings Institute*. 2018. https://www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2017/10/04/recognizing-majority-black-cities-when-their-existence-is-being-questioned/.

Ryan, C.L & Bauman, K. 2016. "Educational Attainment in the United States: 2015." *U.S. Census Bureau*. 2018. https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2016/demo/p20-578.pdf 28.

Stevens, S. 1955. "A century of industry in Pennsylvania." *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies* 22(1): 49 – 68.

Sowers, S. 2015. "Youngstown, Ohio, reinvents itself." *New York Times*, May 26, 2015. https://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/27/realestate/commercial/youngstown-ohio-reinvents-its-downtown.html.

Tavernise, S. 2010. "Trying to overcome the blight of vacancies." *New York Times*, December 19, 2010. https://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/20/us/20youngstown.html.

Tierney, J. 2014. "Breathing Life into Allentown: Pennsylvania Comes to the Rescue." *The Atlantic*, September 15, 2014. https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2014/09/breathing-life-into-allentown-pennsylvania-comes-to-the-rescue/379742/.

United States History. 2018. "Erie, Pennsylvania."
        https://u-s-history.com/pages/h2119.html.

Wade, J.C. 1993. "Institutional racism: An analysis from the mental health system."
        American Journal of Orthopsychiatry 63(4): 536 – 544.

Wilson, V. & Jones, J. 2018. "Working harder or finding it harder to work:
        Demographic trends in annual work hours show an increasingly fractured
        workforce." *Economic Policy Institute*. 2018. https://www.epi.org/publication/
        trends-in-work-hours-and-labor-market-disconnection/.

Wolfe, O. 1962. *Allentown Pennsylvania Bicentennial-Lehigh County Sesquicentennial
        1962 Commemorative Book*. Allentown, PA: Allentown Bicentennial
        Committee.

Yearby, R. 2018. "The Impact of structural racism in employment and wages on
        minority women's health." *Human Rights* 43(4): 21 – 25.

JEFFERSON
EDUCATIONAL SOCIETY

3207 STATE STREET
ERIE, PENNSYLVANIA 16508-2821

814-459-8000
www.jeserie.org