

Goals for black America not met

By [Marisol Bello](#), USA TODAY
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Kyntrel Runnels, left, researches online as Ollye Shirley watches. School integration rose only four percent since 1968 and is one of the Commission's benchmarks that points toward unfinished work in achieving racial equality in the USA.

The USA has made great strides in the past four decades toward expanding a black middle class and producing black political leaders, including the first viable candidate for president. Yet blacks still lag behind whites significantly in income, education and other measures of well-being, a study out today concludes.

Forty years after the Kerner Commission warned of a country heading toward "two societies, one black, one white — separate and unequal," the Eisenhower Foundation, a private urban-policy institute, finds the country has failed to meet the goals laid out by the presidential commission.

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The report echoes findings by the National Urban League, which will release its annual State of Black America next week. It says the median household income for blacks in 2006, \$31,696, was 60% of whites' median household income.

The Kerner Commission, appointed by President Johnson to study civil disorders of the 1960s, pointed to problems of black America. It proposed solutions for chronic unemployment, segregation in housing and schools, and poverty. It was the first time a federal report identified racism as a problem.

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Former senator and commission member Fred Harris and some commission staff formed the Eisenhower Foundation to continue the panel's work.

"Forty years later, overall, we give America a D in meeting the goals" of the commission, says Alan Curtis, the Eisenhower Foundation's president.

The report finds:

- The poverty gap between blacks and whites has narrowed since 1968 as the percentage of blacks in poverty dropped from 35% to 24%. Still, blacks are three times as likely as whites — and Hispanics twice as likely — to live in extreme poverty.

- School integration has declined in the past two decades. Today, 27% of black students attend mostly white schools, up from 23% in 1968 but down from 37% during the 1980s.

Robert Rector, a senior policy fellow at the Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank, says the report fails to show the gains made by the poorest. He says federal statistics show the average poor family has two color TVs, a car, air conditioning and a washer and dryer.

Rector says the report ignores a major cause of poverty: single-parent homes. He says 70% of black children do not have a father in the home.