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NAACP blasts integration study

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Calling it a "whitewashing of racial disparities," several local academics and civil rights leaders gathered Tuesday to criticize a recent study that concluded Milwaukee's reputation as a bastion of "hypersegregation" was a myth.

Speaking at a news conference at NAACP headquarters, they said the study by the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee's Employment and Training Institute was an attempt to spur development and attract tourism and entertainment, rather than a realistic assessment of the community.

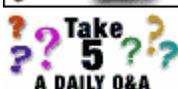
"Milwaukee is two cities," said Michael Rosen of Milwaukee Area Technical College, who is also president of the American Federation of Teachers, Local 212. "One is minority and poor, economically marginalized, socially isolated and spatially separated from the other Milwaukee that is predominantly white and relatively prosperous."

The UWM study criticized the traditional segregation index, which measures how many African-Americans would need to disperse in order to have census tracts with balanced minority populations. The UWM study provided a block-by-block analysis that ranked Milwaukee as the 43rd most integrated among the nation's 100 top metro areas.

"The fact that a few whites still remain in the northwest side neighborhoods where we have moved to in the last 10 and 20 years doesn't change our socioeconomic status one iota," said Jerry Ann Hamilton, president of the local National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

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John Pawasarat, director of the Employment and Training Institute, said the study was never intended to look at unemployment, education or social issues.

"It is a study that only talks about residential housing patterns and integration," he said.

Pawasarat said the assertions that the study was done as a promotional tool were incorrect.

"I'm incredibly disappointed that professionals we have worked with in the past, and who know us, would say something like that," he said.

A version of this story appeared in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel on Jan. 22, 2003.

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