

SEARCH
DETNEWS.COM

[GO](#)



Monday, January 28, 2002

[Return to Metro](#)

The Detroit News

[E-mail this story](#)

[Comment on this story](#)

[Previous story](#) [Next story](#)



The Cost of Segregation || Part III: Where We're Headed

SITE INDEX

- [Homepage](#)
- [Search](#)
- [CyberSurveys](#)
- [News Talk](#)
- [Autos Talk](#)
- [Sports Talk](#)
- [Lions Talk](#)
- [Pistons Talk](#)
- [Wings Talk](#)
- [Tiger Talk](#)
- [Tech Talk](#)
- [Horoscope](#)
- [Hot Sites](#)
- [Lottery](#)
- [Recommendations](#)
- [Weather](#)
- [Staff](#)

NEWS

- [Autos](#)
- [Insider](#)
- [Auto Show](#)
- [Consumer](#)
- [Joyrides](#)
- [Business](#)
- [Careers](#)
- [Census](#)
- [Columnists](#)
- [Commuting](#)
- [Detroit History](#)
- [Editorials](#)
- [Health](#)
- [Metro / State](#)
- [Livingston](#)
- [Macomb](#)
- [Oakland](#)
- [Wayne](#)
- [On Detroit](#)
- [Nation / World](#)
- [Obituaries](#)
- [Death Notices](#)
- [Politics / Govt.](#)
- [Real Estate](#)
- [Religion](#)
- [Schools](#)
- [Special Reports](#)
- [Technology](#)

SPORTS

- [Sports Home](#)
- [Lions/NFL](#)
- [Red Wings/NHL](#)
- [Pistons/NBA](#)
- [Shock/WNBA](#)
- [Tigers/Baseball](#)
- [MSU](#)
- [U-M](#)
- [More Colleges](#)



Donna Terek / The Detroit News

Terry Williams and LaJoyce Mullins-Williams are all smiles as they move into their new home in Warren, a predominantly white suburb that saw its black population double in the last decade to more than 3,000.

Pioneers

Couple takes bold step into Warren

Experiences of blacks moving into previously all-white areas key to future

By Gordon Trowbridge / The Detroit News

WARREN -- When LaJoyce Mullins-Williams first walked into the home in northeast Warren, what she saw was the gorgeous wood floors, the big back deck, the wall she could knock out to open up a formal dining room.

- [Comment on this story](#)
- [Send this story to a friend](#)
- [Get Home Delivery](#)

What she didn't see was a neighborhood that, in 1990, had not a single black resident. And she didn't see a city with a history of sometimes tense race relations.

Mullins-Williams and her husband, Terry, are part of a growing wave that could help put a significant dent in Metro Detroit's persistent racial segregation.

The African-American couple, both young, successful engineers who

[more Colleges](#)
[Golf Guide](#)
[High Schools](#)
[Motor Sports](#)
[Outdoors](#)
[More Sports](#)
[Scoreboards](#)

ENTERTAINMENT

[Entertainment](#)
[▶Casino Guide](#)
[▶Movie Finder](#)
[▶TV Listings](#)
[Crossword](#)

HOMESTYLE

[Homestyle home](#)
[▶Decorating](#)
[▶Food](#)
[▶Gardening](#)
[▶Home Improvement](#)
[▶Home Life](#)
[▶Home Tech](#)
[▶Wine Report](#)

PHOTOS

[Sports](#)
[Red Wings](#)
[Lions](#)
[Autos](#)
[Joyrides](#)
[News](#)
[History](#)

Copyright 2002
The Detroit News.

Use of this site indicates your agreement to the [Terms of Service](#) (updated 08/09/2001).

graduated from traditionally black Tuskegee University, moved in August into a two-story home in Warren. The 2000 census found only 10 blacks in the neighborhood of about 3,300 residents. But more blacks are moving into previously all-white areas: More than 20,000 blacks now live in Metro Detroit neighborhoods that are more than 95 percent white, double the number in 1990.

Experts say the experiences of these families, literally pioneering territory previously foreign to blacks, will be a key factor in determining whether segregation declines in Metro Detroit. If they are met with open arms -- and if white residents don't begin to move out as more blacks move in -- historic patterns of division may begin to dissolve.

Arrival welcomed

After almost six months in their new home, count the couple as one small step toward integration.

Neighbors have welcomed them: In their first few days in Warren, neighbors had dropped off a flower as a housewarming gift; a man up the street had offered to help with any electrical work they needed. "It's been a very welcoming experience," Williams said.

Halloween was spent with the next-door neighbors, watching trick-or-treaters go by. Skeptical black friends have been reassured. The only problems so far had nothing to do with race: a broken pipe, a stubborn pumpkin patch that took a few hours to clear, and Terry's appendicitis the week they moved in.

Terry Williams, a lifelong Metro Detroit resident, knew his African-American friends would raise eyebrows at the idea of moving to Warren. The city is one of the whitest in America, and from housing controversies of the 1970s to discrimination complaints of recent years, has gained a reputation -- deserved or not -- as less than friendly to blacks.

He mentioned none of that to LaJoyce, who grew up in an integrated neighborhood in Cincinnati. "I didn't want to shed any of that darkness on her decision," he said.

But he was eager to move in too, once he saw the home: A large kitchen, and an expansive wooden deck to indulge her love of entertaining and his fondness for outdoor grilling.

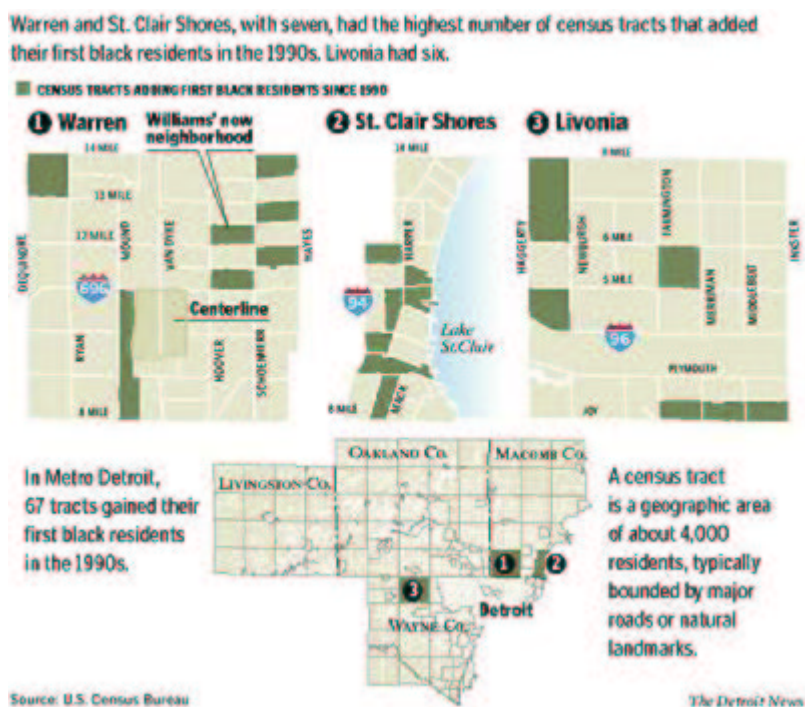
The house sits on a street typical of Warren's subdivisions: Tree-lined sidewalks and ranks of brick ranch homes. On summer weekends the air hums with the noise of a dozen lawn mowers; in winter, Christmas decorations are the rule.

LaJoyce smiles at the memory of one of Terry's friends, who visited for the first time this fall: "He said, 'LaJoyce, I was cutting you guys all up for living in Warren. But this is nice!'"

The couple proudly shows before-and-after photos recording the work they've done: Lots of paint, transformation of a small bedroom into a dining room, updates on the lower floor.

"Look at what I've found here," Terry said. "I've found a little gold mine here."

Black pioneers enter suburbs



Changing Warren

It's an experience few African-Americans had even attempted until the last decade.

Of Warren's 145,000 residents in 1990, just 1,047 were black. Several neighborhoods -- including the Williams' -- had no blacks at all.

It's something whites in the city seldom considered, said Brett Gielecki, a lifelong Warren resident who has lived for two years in a brick ranch a few blocks away from the Williams' new home.

"I know as long as I've lived here, Warren has had a reputation of being ... I don't want to say racist," he said.

But new black residents aren't a problem, he said. "Hey, if somebody can afford to move into this neighborhood, they must be doing pretty well."

Although Warren had the ninth highest percentage of whites of any major U.S. city, according to the U.S. Census, the city's black population more than tripled, to more than 3,600. Seven census tracts -- neighborhood-sized districts of 3,000 or 4,000 people -- had no blacks in 1990; all now do. The Greater Miller Memorial Church of God in Christ, a black congregation, moved to the city.

"Because of the image it's had in the past, there may be some perceptions about Warren that are outdated," said Chuck Busse, a city councilman. In addition to new black residents, the city has growing numbers of Asians and Arabs, he said.

For the Williams, the role of pioneer is neither something they sought, nor one they shrink from. It's just that other things are on their minds.

"The bottom line," said Terry Williams, "is that we've found something we can make for ourselves."

[▶ Comment on this story](#)

[▶ Previous story](#) [▶ Back to index](#) [▶ Next story](#)