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Section METRO

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Florida Attracts Affluent Blacks

ORLANDO METRO AREA TOPS NATION IN TREND

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ORLANDO — A love of teaching brought **Pamela McCauley-Bell** to Florida, but her drive to succeed made her financially comfortable here.

"This is a thriving area and, if you find an interesting niche, you can be successful," said **McCauley-Bell**, who owns Tech-Solutions Inc., a software engineering and research company working in the defense industry.

At 42, she favors Gucci glasses and drives a luxury car with the vanity plate "LOVMATH." She's a professor of engineering at the University of Central Florida and manages to find time to do some motivational speaking.

When she moved here from Oklahoma years ago, she joined a growing number of upper-income blacks in the Orlando metro area, the fastest-growing in the country for households with annual incomes of at least \$100,000.

The number of upper-income black households nearly quadrupled in Orlando; nearly tripled in Jacksonville and West Palm Beach; and doubled in Miami during the 1990s, according to a Tampa Tribune analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data.

The Tampa metro area isn't included in the rankings because the percentage of black households here — 8 percent — was too small to be included. If the threshold were ignored, the metro area would rank as the fifth-fastest-growing in the country.

Adjusted for inflation, \$75,000 in 1990, the base year for the analysis, is about the same as \$100,000 in 2000.

Since the last census, Florida's largest cities have continued to attract black professionals. The percentage of households earning more than \$100,000 annually increased in four of Florida's large metropolitan areas and remained stable in Orlando, according to the latest census measurement, the 2003 American Community Survey.



A healthy economy and a change in historic migration patterns are among the reasons Florida is becoming more attractive to upper-income blacks.

Migration In Reverse

Florida's largest cities, like many in the South, are benefiting from a reversal of the Great Migration of the early 20th century, when blacks fled the South in large numbers for jobs and the more tolerant racial climate of the industrialized Northeast and Midwest.

From 1995 to 2000, Florida was the third most popular destination for blacks from other parts of the country, trailing North Carolina and Georgia, according to a 2004 analysis of census data by the Brookings Institution, a Washington think tank.

Nationally, the number of black households with income of \$100,000 or more has grown rapidly, to 5.6 million in 2001 from 3.1 million in 1991, according to census data.

John Logan, professor of sociology and a demographer at Brown University in Rhode Island, said the robust Central Florida economy draws people.

Logan, who conducts urban studies, said whites and blacks in Central Florida have prospered over the same period. Using \$60,000 income as his measure of success, Logan said Orlando and Tampa blacks show substantial increases.

"In general, the growth of the black middle class shows old stereotypes are less and less true," he said.

Plentiful job opportunities and relatively low housing costs are among the practical reasons Florida is becoming more attractive to affluent blacks.

Diversity A Plus

Melvin Rogers, UCF's assistant dean of health and public affairs, points to Central Florida's ethnically diverse population.

"Look at who's moving: black physicians, black attorneys and other professionals," Rogers said. "That's what happens with new growth and populations. They found out it's not traditional Florida. It's multicultural. You are in a pocket where you feel very comfortable here with diversity."

Rogers also is chairman of the African-American Chamber of Commerce of Central Florida's executive board. He moved with Chrysler in 1986 to Central Florida. He built up a nest egg through his 401(k) retirement savings plan and left for academia in 1996.

Paul Wyche, who started the public relations firm Wyche & Associates in Casselberry, 10 minutes north of Orlando, was tired of South Dakota, Montana and Nebraska. He was Northwest Energy's corporate vice president for communications.

Wyche, 59, and his wife, Tammy, an environment affairs manager for Konica Minolta, had a vacation home in Orlando. He grew up in South Florida, and the couple have family across the South. After 35 years up north, it was time to return.

"I have lived everywhere," Wyche said. "Indeed, this is a better climate. You can come home."

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