

Census shows Peoria becoming more diverse

By **John Sharp (jsharp@pjstar.com)**
of the **Journal Star**

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PEORIA — When Gary Terrell moved to Peoria in 2007 from San Antonio, Texas, he couldn't help but notice a Korean church and advertisements for Hispanic businesses.

It was a considerable difference from the last time Terrell was in Peoria in 1978.

"It was a change from when we knew that one Hispanic family in school to seeing them everywhere in the community," said Terrell, director of operations with the state's Black Chamber of Commerce. "It was surprising to see that we have this large influx of ethnic groups. What a culture shock."

The numbers verify this change: The number of Asian and Hispanic families in Peoria increased nearly 100 percent in the past 10 years, while the city's black population continues to grow.

The city's Hispanic community grew from 2,839 in 2000 to 5,628 in 2010; the Asian community saw an increase from 2,629 in 2000 to 5,240 in 2010; and the number of blacks went from 27,992 in 2000 to 30,991 in 2010.

At the same time, the number of whites living in the city is going down. According to 2010 figures from the U.S. Census Bureau, released Tuesday, the white population in Peoria dropped from 78,254 in 2000 to 71,740 in 2010, or 8 percent.

The county also saw a drop in its white population, from 145,602 in 2000 down to 138,800 in 2010. The county's black population rose from 29,532 in 2000 to 33,030 in 2010. Also experiencing significant increases were the county's Asian population (3,041 in 2000 to 5,856 in 2010) and Hispanics (3,827 in 2000 to 7,102 in 2010).

Outside the city and county, though, racial diversity remains lacking. Tazewell and Woodford counties both are more than 95 percent white while black, Hispanic and Asian populations saw only modest growth.

The Rev. Embra R. Patterson Jr., pastor of Kingdom Temple Church of God and Christ in South Peoria, said the changes really don't reflect what some critics might call a "white flight" of white residents toward the suburbs and outlying counties, but more of a situation where perceptions of the city need to be altered through positive economic growth.

"I'm not going to refer to it as white flight, but two things are important," Patterson Jr. said. "Most of us like to be around nice areas. There are (also) the social things we enjoy. We also like to be around nice things."

Patterson Jr., Terrell and others say job opportunities through Caterpillar Inc., the construction trades during the Upgrade 74 project and the hospitals helped boost the city's diversity within the past 10 years. OSF Saint Francis Medical Center, for example, has seen a 22 percent growth in Hispanics employed at the hospital and a 19 percent increase in Asians since 2005.

"One of the reasons (Peoria) is a melting pot is the international presence of Caterpillar (and) because it's geographically located in the heart of the country in the middle of the Midwest with close proximity to Chicago, St. Louis, Indianapolis, and Des Moines as well as Kansas City," Patterson Jr. said. "It's in a good location."

At-large City Councilman Ryan Spain, chairman of the city's committee aimed at getting a complete census count of Peoria residents, agreed.

"The international flavor that we have available in our community has become pretty important in Peoria," Spain said. "I think you can credit Caterpillar for most of that."

A more diverse Peoria means new demands. At Friendship House and the Boys and Girls Club of Greater Peoria, officials have had to hire Spanish-speaking instructors within the past 10 years to keep up with a Hispanic influx.

"Ten years ago, (the Boys and Girls Club) had someone who spoke Spanish, but that was by chance," said Lesley Matuszak, executive director of the East Bluff-based organization. "Now, I'm actively seeking people who speak Spanish."

Peoria is becoming an attractive place for Asian families as well. Kathy Chen, owner of the six-month-old Asia Grill at Junction City, said one of the reasons her family moved to Peoria two years ago was to be closer to family and to open a business. The family used to live in New York.

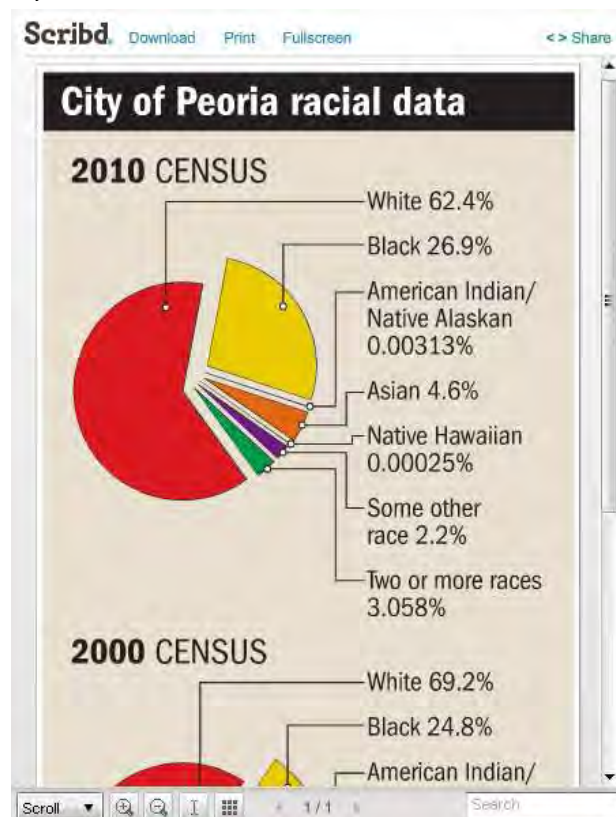
"The people are very friendly," Chen said. "We love it here."

Local governments also are focusing on this increasing population.

Robert Johnson, a black representative of the Peoria Park Board, said the park district is looking for ways to get the city's Hispanic community involved in more recreational activities, like soccer.

Challenges in the growing minority community in Peoria will continue to focus on jobs, officials said. At-large City Councilman Eric Turner, one of two black representatives on the council, said "If we can get the economy back and the jobs back, I think long-term, it would be a tremendous city for a very diverse population."

City of Peoria racial data



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Comments (18)

bigblock

14 hours ago

Report Abuse

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Report Abuse

I guess this means more whites are leaving so the diverse minorities can shoot/stab it out. go figure, deiversity another name for ghettos and the ruination of cities.

Independent

13 hours ago

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Report Abuse

Yep, a lot of ethnocentric pandering Hispanic, Spanish language speaking pandering going on out there.

So much for all that melting pot garbage.

But it is really capsulized in the requirement in so many areas for Spanish language ballots when it is an absolute requirement for one to be able to pass an English test to become a citizen.

I don't care if one wants to speak the language of theri ancestors in their own private homes, but I resent it when it becomes a political ploy.

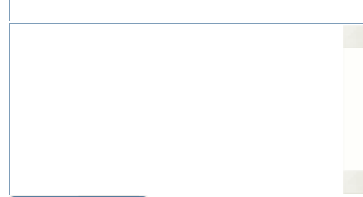
Increasingly we are becoming a fragmented, Balkanized nation and beleive me it will not lead to greater harmony in the long run- only more division.

motor_oil

13 hours ago

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Report Abuse

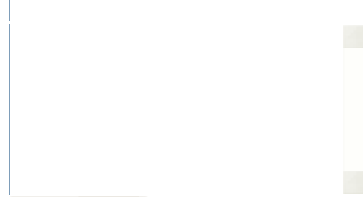
Peoria will be a junk hole before too long. Oh oh oh, im moving in the country with my trucks, guns, and women. YEEEHAWWWWW

Uncle Tom

13 hours ago

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@Bigblockhead,

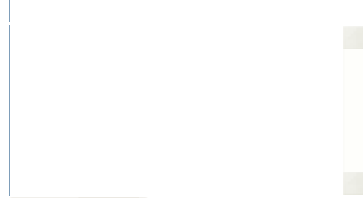
Get a grip brother! You can always move across the river where there's less flavor.

SD

11 hours ago

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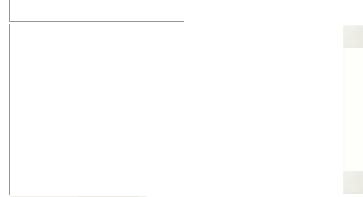
Diversity among citizens is great. But diversity that includes non citizens and then being forced to print our everyday things in their language in this country is another. Being forced to pay for their housing, upkeep, medical, schooling and other things is completely different. They brought nothing here but are charging us for everything and then sending our money to their home country. This is wrong, very very wrong. Diversity and learning other cultures is good in a lot of ways but not when we have to pay for it to the tune of our own going without.

harry

11 hours ago

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Report Abuse

I don't have a problem with immigrants because I want to move else where.

ad

3 hours ago

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Report Abuse

Independent.....we are dual language country. A portion of born citizens speak Spanish as their birth language, the language of their portion of the country. Just like a portion of Canada is French. Many of the Hispanics you people love to hate are born citizens from Puerto Rico. Their language is Spanish and they are just as much a citizen as you are. Maybe it should be a requirement that all of us learn Spanish since it's our other language. Most other countries teach their language in schools as well as English. In this country we don't even teach both languages of our own citizens. Another reason our kids come out of school unable to compete with other countries.

conky1

2 hours ago

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As a Canadian, I take exception to the ridiculous comparison of puerto ricans and french Canadians. I doubt you've ever been to Quebec ad. They both may be rude and smell funny, but you have to look at the crime rate. I'll personally stay on the non-diverse side of the river where I don't have to worry about being shot - Or worse--taxed to death.

kcdad

2 hours ago

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Report Abuse

Nothing like an article on diversity to bring out the white sheets and torches...

kcdad

2 hours ago

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Report Abuse

'being forced to print our everyday things in their language in this country is another.'

The last thing you would want to do is communicate to someone who doesn't understand English as well as they do their won language...

Have you ever been anywhere other than The United States?

ford350

2 hours ago

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Report Abuse

We have to learn their language but they dont have to learn owers. Thats a bunch of bull If we moved to the country where they come from we would have to learn their language. I say this if you live in America then you learn the language or get out. If you want to speak it in your own home thats fine but out in public and or

schools no . And as for the blacks growing more in population whats new just more on welfare for us to support .

ad

2 hours ago

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conky1.....you may have your opinions about your country but the fact still remains, you are a dual language country just as we are. The people in Quebec are just as much Canadian as Puerto Ricans are US citizens. Your personal opinion doesn't change fact. I'll bet if the French Canadians smell funny to you, you smell funny to them. It's all it what you are used to.

It's not just the whites who flee the inner city, and it's not just about race. All races able to get out of the crime migrate to a safer environment. They are able to do that because they took advantage of the education offered and subscribe to the base standards of morals, conduct and speech. Without those abilities people of all races will be stuck in less than desirable positions. If that is racism then I'm guilty.

peorian clowns

2 hours ago

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White sheets and torches are a peoria, pekin, EP tradition, Unfortunately that will never change but pardon the pun (their lilly white reputation) seems to always take a hit when it comes to other crimes. Maybe now when it comes to gun violence places like peoria, bloomington have them beat, but they can always hang their hat on domestic violence, meth labs, sexual violence, etc... you know the stuff that gets hidden or not reported on. Its the cowards that comment like that that are afraid to do anything to better themselves or their communities but love to comment with idiotic statements, So stay wherever you are and hide in your little hole, do your drugs, and fraternise with your sister or cousins, id really hate to see you do anything really illegal ! CLOWNS

dpdc

2 hours ago

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Report Abuse

Regarding the pie chart, why aren't Hispanics shown as a separate group? Just curious.

G Soros

33 minutes ago

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Report Abuse

Pie? no one told me there was going to be pie !

dpdc

22 minutes ago

Report Abuse

You must be logged in to report abuse.

[Report Abuse](#)

Okay, maybe it's a cake chart!
kcdad
10 minutes ago
Report Abuse
You must be logged in to report abuse.

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'We have to learn their language but they dont have to learn owers. Thats a bunch of bull'

Yes, that's exactly what it is... They still struggle to learn our language... in fact a lot more than we struggle to learn theirs ... you obviously have never been outside of the United States.
kcdad
8 minutes ago
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'why aren't Hispanics shown as a separate group?'

Because 'Hispanics' isn't a race.
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