



Editorial: Another race gap?

The Milwaukee Department of Public Works says that race is not a factor in fixing potholes. A Journal Sentinel investigation points to a definite need to check that out.

From the Journal Sentinel

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Hitting a jaw-jarring pothole is enough to make anyone grip the steering wheel and mouth a bad word or two. But what if you called to report that pothole, and, weeks later, the hole is still there?

A Journal Sentinel investigation Sunday found that it took the Milwaukee Department of Public Works longer to fix potholes in minority neighborhoods www.jsonline.com/789264. According to the article, it took the city about 11 days to fill potholes in heavily minority areas and seven days in mostly white areas. Some minority areas of the city waited months to get potholes repaired.

We know that DPW is not staffed with people who'd say, "You know, I don't like minorities, so I'm going to get to their potholes later." However, all factors being equal, disparate treatment that accords one group more favorable services over another is one working definition of institutional racism.

DPW has some explaining to do, and we applaud Common Council efforts to see if institutional racism is what is at work here. There can be no excuse for

unequal service.

The Journal Sentinel investigation was not surprising to many minorities who already believe if they live in poorer areas of the city that their issues are not viewed in the same light as those living in more well-to-do districts.

Potholes are not the most serious issues facing poverty-stricken communities, but a street or alley marked with huge holes and cracks can cause hundreds of dollars in damage to the vehicles of people who can least afford to make the repairs.

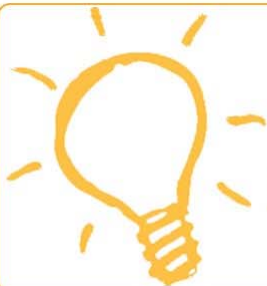
From the article, it appears that certain alderman were able to get their constituents' potholes fixed faster than others. Getting potholes fixed shouldn't be a matter of whose alderman has more juice. And it shouldn't be a case of which neighborhood has the squeakiest wheels. If these are factors, these, too, could be cases of institutional racism.

DPW says race is not a factor in determining when potholes are fixed, and, according to the department's numbers, officials may be able to justify that defense. However, given what many minorities already believe and given the investigation's findings, DPW's claim should be put to the test.

Do you believe an area's racial composition affects how quickly its potholes are patched? To be considered for publication as a letter to the editor, e-mail your opinion to the [Journal Sentinel editorial department](#)

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