



HARVARD JOURNAL
OF
AFRICAN AMERICAN
PUBLIC POLICY



John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University

Politics & Progress:
A Presidential Platform for 2004

Featuring...

Congressman Jesse L. Jackson, Jr.

DeWayne Wickham, *USA Today* Columnist

Marc H. Morial, National Urban League President

William J. Bynum • Melanie Campbell

Julius E. Coles • Dr. Mary Hatwood Futrell

Dr. Inonge Mbikusita-Lewanika • Dr. John McKnight

Dr. William Rodgers • Dr. Diane Rowland

Jacqueline Thomas

Leslie Thornton • Kyshun Webster

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The *Harvard Journal of African American Public Policy* is an annual, nonpartisan scholarly review published by the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. Our mission is to educate and provide leadership that improves the quality of public policies affecting the African American community. In so doing, we hope to further the economic, social, and political empowerment of African Americans.

We are interested in manuscripts that emphasize the relationship between policy making and the political, social, and economic environments affecting African Americans in the United States.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

EDITORS' NOTE	11
POLITICAL PARTICIPATION	
Fighting for a "Right to Vote" Constitutional Amendment <i>Congressman Jesse L. Jackson, Jr. (D-IL)</i>	13
The New Southern Political Landscape, the Black Vote, and Election Reform: Which Will Be Key to Victory in 2004? <i>Melanie Campbell</i>	21
Remembering Roosevelt: Reflections on Race and the Republican Party <i>DeWayne Wickham</i>	27
ECONOMY	
Overcoming Poverty, Racism, and Inequality through Asset Accumulation <i>William J. Bynum</i>	33
The 1990's Economic Boom: Another Period of Missed Opportunity <i>Dr. William Rodgers</i>	39
FOREIGN POLICY	
Building Bridges across the Atlantic: An Interview with Zambian Ambassador Dr. Inonge Mbikusita-Lewanika <i>Oni K. Blair</i>	57
Africare and the HIV/AIDS Strategy for Africa <i>Julius E. Coles</i>	65
HEALTH CARE	
Health Challenges Facing the Nation <i>Dr. Diane Rowland</i>	71
Sentinel Disparity in Health Care: A Uniquely Unacceptable Phenomenon <i>Dr. John McKnight</i>	85
EDUCATION	
The Politics of Education <i>Leslie Thornton</i>	99
Anticipating Success: Removing the Barriers to Educational Equity and Equality <i>Dr. Mary Hatwood Futrell</i>	103
No Parent Left Behind: Evaluating Programs and Policies to Increase Parental Involvement <i>Kyshun Webster</i>	117
URBAN POLICY	
Urban Blues: The Candidates' Failure to Address the Plight of American Cities <i>Jacqueline Thomas</i>	127
Redefining Devolution <i>Marc H. Morial</i>	131

Editors' Note

Ashleigh Gilbert

Erica McKnight

On the eve of the 2004 presidential elections, African Americans have yet another opportunity to influence public debate. African American priorities and the national agenda seem inextricably linked as both strive to address the same issues—two and a half years of war, a sluggish economy, failing schools and inaccessible health care.

The *Harvard Journal of African American Public Policy* engages the nation's experts and leading practitioners in conversations concerning the most pressing themes of the national debate, including political participation, the economy, foreign policy, health care, education, and urban policy. Using lessons from the African American experience, Volume X, *Politics & Progress*, lays out innovative strategies to move the country in a new direction. This volume reflects the diversity of voices within our community, from public officials to community advocates. While their politics may differ, they share the common desire to make progress for African Americans in this election year.

The debacle of the 2000 elections teaches us that voting matters. Congressman Jesse Jackson, Jr., (D-IL) opens our conversation by stressing the importance of political participation and advocating for every citizen's individual right to vote in America—a right currently eclipsed by our nation's electoral process and proclivity for states' rights. Melanie Campbell of the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation offers her own reform policies and presents a new strategy to engage African American voters in the South. *USA Today* columnist DeWayne Wickham compares Bush's presidency to that of President Roosevelt to illustrate the growing racial divide among African Americans and the Republican Party.

The Black vote is driven largely by the creation of a national agenda that reflects a renewed commitment to inclusion and equal opportunity. Economics provide a useful indicator to measure opportunity. William J. Bynum, president and CEO of the Enterprise Corporation of the Delta and Hope Community Credit Union, illustrates historic inequities in economic well-being and offers clear strategies to build wealth among African Americans. Dr. William Rodgers, president of the National Economic Association, discusses implications of the nation's current economy and presents new strategies to increase economic growth among African Americans including commitment to affirmative action legislation in hiring, investments in education and training, and engagement in the policy-making process.

No conversation of the 2004 campaigns is complete without addressing American foreign policy. The enduring War on Terror is a perfect distraction for Americans as we shirk our development responsibilities not only in Afghanistan and Iraq, but also in the African Diaspora. An interview with the Zambian ambassador, Dr. Inonge Mbikusita-Lewanika, emphasizes the important role that African Americans play as investors and as advocates in the development of African nations and discusses the effects of black leadership on international diplomacy. Julius E.

Coles, president of Africare, addresses the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Africa and highlights the organization's efforts to reduce the spread of the disease.

The health care crisis is apparent in our everyday lives, as African Americans struggle to gain equal access to health care. Dr. Diane Rowland of the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation details the challenges facing the nation and assesses our system's provision of health care to American families. Dr. John McKnight, a practicing oncologist, offers reflections and policy recommendations from the field concerning disparities in health care.

Leslie Thornton of Patton Boggs, LLP, identifies education as the primary domestic priority for both major political parties. Her commentary opens our conversation about education with an important question: How *do* we fundamentally change public education in a way that is not intrusive and over-reaching, but actually turns education around in the short-term? Dr. Mary Hatwood Futrell, dean of the George Washington University Graduate School of Education and Human Development, encourages federal policies that create a new infrastructure absent of ability grouping and tracking; develop core curricula from kindergarten to eighth grade; ensure adequate support from teachers, parents, and mentors; and designate additional funds for programming and advocacy. Kyshun Webster, Ph.D. candidate at the University of Minnesota, argues that effective parental involvement can transform our educational system and presents clear strategies to illustrate what meaningful parental engagement might look like.

Finally, we consider the ways in which federal policies are implemented on the local level. Jacqueline Thomas of the *Indianapolis Star* makes the case for a national urban agenda and challenges presidential candidates to frame domestic policies to meet the needs of our nation's cities. Marc H. Morial, president and CEO of the National Urban League, argues that devolution of resources and responsibilities to non-profits and local institutions is the most efficient way to implement federal policies.

We hope to demonstrate that the recommendations offered in the following pages extend beyond the African American community and reflect the current priorities of the broader American public. Volume X, *Politics & Progress*, is designed to engage policy makers and voters in the political process and provoke solution-oriented thinking. We have a tremendous opportunity to influence the national political agenda. Let's get to work!

Fighting for a “Right to Vote” Constitutional Amendment

Congressman Jesse L. Jackson, Jr. (D-IL)

This position paper was presented by U.S. Representative Jackson (D-IL) at the Claim Democracy Conference on November 22, 2003, at American University in Washington, D.C. The conference was organized by the Center for Voting and Democracy. Jackson stresses the importance of political participation and advocates for every citizen’s individual right to vote in America—a claim currently eclipsed by our nation’s electoral process and proclivity for states’ rights. Finally, the paper proposes a constitutional amendment to secure an individual affirmative citizenship right to vote for every American.

Most Americans believe that the “legal right to vote” in our democracy is explicit, not just implicit, in our Constitution and laws. However, our Constitution only provides for non-discrimination in voting on the basis of race, sex, and age in the 15th, 19th, and 26th Amendments respectively.

The U.S. Constitution contains no explicit affirmative individual right to vote!

Even though the “vote of the people” is perceived as supreme in our democracy—because voting rights are protective of all other rights—the Supreme Court in *Bush v. Gore* constantly reminded lawyers that there is no explicit or fundamental right to suffrage in the Constitution: “The individual citizen has no federal constitutional right to vote for electors for the President of the United States.”¹

Chief Justice William Rehnquist and Associate Justice Antonin Scalia besieged Gore’s lawyer with inquiries premised on the assumption that there is no constitutional right of suffrage in the election of a president, and state legislatures have the legal power to choose presidential electors without recourse to a popular vote. As Jamin Raskin states, “In the eyes of the [Supreme] Court, democracy is rooted not

Congressman Jesse L. Jackson, Jr., (D-IL) is currently serving his fourth term in the United States Congress. Prior to his congressional service, Representative Jackson served as the national field director of the National Rainbow Coalition. In this role, he instituted a national non-partisan program that successfully registered millions of new voters and created a voter education program to teach citizens the importance of participating in the political process.

in the right of the American people to vote and govern but in a set of state-based institutional arrangements for selecting leaders.”²

While a voting rights constitutional amendment would be strictly non-partisan, the 2000 election is a splendid example of the undemocratic nature of our currently administered election systems—and there are literally thousands of them. Each state and the District of Columbia (51), counties (3,067), and thousands of municipalities administer their own election system under state law, with great flexibility on many issues in the variously administered voting jurisdictions. That’s the chaotic dynamic that was in play in Florida’s 67 counties.

In 2000, if every American had had an individual constitutional right to vote, every vote would have had to be counted. Under our current states’ rights arrangement, however, the state legislature and state law took legal precedence over the individual vote and the individual voter.

It is also important to point out that if candidate George Bush had lost in the Supreme Court in 2000, Florida’s Republican-controlled legislature was prepared to ignore the six million popular votes cast in Florida. Under state law, they were determined to elect, select, choose, and hand pick, if necessary, their own “Bush presidential electors” and send them to Congress for certification—even if it had turned out that Al Gore won the most popular votes in Florida.

Thus, in terms of the political consequences of our present arrangement, if all of the votes legally cast in 2000 had been counted, Al Gore, and not George Bush, would be president of the United States today.

The principled commitment ought to be to honest, fair, and efficient elections for everyone, for all time. However, after 2000, any Democrat who cannot support adding a voting rights amendment to the Constitution ought to be asked to explain why!

Thus, even if all votes had been counted and Al Gore had won Florida’s popular vote, and his electors had been sent to Congress, under our current Constitution the Florida legislature could have sent their slate of Bush electors to Congress. It would have been perfectly legal—and a “strict constructionist” or necessary constitutional interpretation—for Congress to have recognized the Bush electors.

Only a voting rights amendment can fix these flaws in our Constitution and administration of elections.

The 10th Amendment to the Constitution states, “The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the State, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.” Since the word “vote” appears in the Constitution only with respect to non-discrimination, the so-called right to vote is a “state right.” Only a constitutional amendment would give every American an individual affirmative citizenship right to vote.

Without the constitutional right to vote, Congress can pass voter legislation—and I support progressive electoral reform legislation—but it leaves the states’ rights system in place. Currently, Congress mostly uses financial and other incentives to entice the states to cooperate and comply with the law. It’s one reason there have been so many problems with the recently passed *Help America Vote Act*, and why many states still have not fully complied with the law.

Our states' rights voting system is structured to be separate and unequal. As we saw in the 2000 election, there are 50 states, 3,067 counties, tens of thousands of cities, and many different machines and methods of voting—all separate and unequal.

There's only one way to legally guarantee an equal right to vote to every individual American, and that is to add a voting rights amendment to the Constitution!

The lack of basic political rights for all Americans was made even clearer in *Alexander v. Mineta*, a case to gain political representation for the disenfranchised citizens in our nation's capitol, the District of Columbia. Ignoring the democratic ideal of voting, the court said, "The Equal Protection Clause does not protect the right of all citizens to vote, but rather the right of all *qualified* citizens to vote."³ As Raskins explains, "To be qualified, you must belong to a 'state' within the meaning of Article I and the Seventeenth Amendment and must be granted the right to vote by the state."⁴

I believe that voting is not only a democratic right, it is a human right. That human right is not in our Constitution! That's why I have proposed legislation to add a voting rights amendment to the U.S. Constitution based on the individual right of all Americans to vote. It was introduced in the U.S. House as House Joint Resolution 28. It reads as follows:

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled (two-thirds of each House concurring therein), that the following article is proposed as an amendment to the Constitution of the United States, which shall be valid to all intents and purposes as part of the Constitution when ratified by the legislatures of three-fourths of the several States:

SECTION 1. All citizens of the United States who are eighteen years of age or older shall have the right to vote in any public election held in the jurisdiction in which the citizen resides. The right to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States, any State, or any other public or private person or entity, except that the United States or any State may establish regulations narrowly tailored to produce efficient and honest elections.

SECTION 2. Each State shall administer public elections in the State in accordance with election performance standards established by the Congress. The Congress shall reconsider such election performance standards at least once every four years to determine if higher standards should be established to reflect improvements in methods and practices regarding the administration of elections.

SECTION 3. Each State shall provide any eligible voter the opportunity to register and vote on the day of any public election.

SECTION 4. Each State and the District constituting the seat of Government of the United States shall establish and abide by rules for appointing its respective number of Electors. Such rules shall provide for the appointment of Electors on the day designated by the Congress for holding an election for President and Vice President and shall ensure that each Elector votes for the candidate for President and Vice President who received a majority of the popular vote in the State or District.

SECTION 5. The Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

With this amendment in the Constitution, all of the votes in 2000—to the best of our human ability and using credible and standard criteria—would have had to have been counted. No unnecessary or arbitrary timeline cutoff would have been allowed with regard to counting votes. And the Florida legislature could not have even thought about ignoring the six million popular Florida votes in order to select presidential electors independent of the popular vote. Under this amendment, the popular vote could never be ignored, and an independent legislative selection of electors could never happen.

In light of the presidential fiasco in Florida in 2000, and during the South Carolina Democratic presidential candidate's debate on May 3, 2003, Rev. Al Sharpton asked Florida senator Bob Graham (D-FL) if he would support adding a voting rights amendment to the Constitution. In essence Graham said the following: "I haven't seen the legislation, but probably not. I believe states should remain in control of election procedures. And I'm against federalizing the election process."

Let's analyze his statement.

1. It means Senator Graham essentially supports the status quo when it comes to voting rights because, under current law, 2000 could happen again in Florida or elsewhere. The winner of the popular vote losing the presidential election has happened three previous times in our history—1824, 1876, and 1888. Most Americans are totally unaware that nationally, according to a joint study by the California Institute of Technology and Massachusetts Institute of Technology, somewhere between four and six million votes were not counted in 2000 because many states had similar problems to what occurred in Florida. Other states' election systems didn't get the same exposure as Florida's because the winner in other states was not in doubt. For example, Illinois was worse than Florida—it didn't count nearly two hundred thousand votes with similar problems to Florida's. But because Gore won Illinois with over three hundred thousand votes, the winner of the state's electoral votes was not in doubt. In Illinois and other states too, most of the problems—with voting and machines—were concentrated in the poor and minority communities.

Yet, as Raskin notes, "Amazingly, the government of the United States conducts and provides no official count of the vote for president."⁵ Can you imagine the United States recognizing a close and hotly contested third world "democratic" election where the citizens had no right to vote, as much as 6 percent of the total vote was not counted; where there were no official results provided by the government; and where that country's supreme court declared its personal and ideological friend the winner, even though the declared winner did not get the most popular votes?

2. It means Senator Graham supports states' rights when it comes to voting rights. But I would remind Senator Graham and others, slavery was not supported directly in the Constitution. The word "slavery" never appeared in the Constitution. Slavery was supported constitutionally because states had a right to provide legal cover to allow private citizens to own other human beings. That same states' rights system was at work in the 2000 election with respect to voting, and it continues today.

3. My resolution does not federalize voting any more than the First Amendment federalizes free speech or freedom of religion. The First Amendment's right to free speech and religion is an individual citizenship right applicable to every American—not a “federal” right—protected by the federal government and its courts. It's an individual right that can be upheld in a federal court of law. Likewise, a voting rights amendment would grant every American an individual citizenship right to vote that, because it would be a right for every American, would ultimately be validated by Congress, through legislation, and the Supreme Court, through interpretation.

4. In essence, then, in the South Carolina debate, Senator Graham chose states' rights over an individual right.

Attorney General John Ashcroft sent a letter to the National Rifle Association asserting that every American has an individual constitutional right to a gun. In it he wrote, “Let me state unequivocally my view that the text and the original intent of the Second Amendment clearly protect the right of individuals to keep and bear firearms.” Some agree and others disagree with that interpretation.

However, there can be no debate or disagreement about the right to vote. The Supreme Court made it absolutely clear in *Bush v. Gore*—there is no individual citizenship right to vote in the Constitution!

If Americans had a choice between the right to a gun and the right to vote, it would be nearly unanimous. Americans would choose the right to vote! If that is the priority of the American people, then we should have the wisdom and political will to codify it in the form of a constitutional amendment.

What are the advantages of fighting for human rights and constitutional amendments? Human rights and constitutional amendments are non-partisan (they're neither Democratic nor Republican), they're non-ideological (they're not liberal, moderate, or conservative), and they're non-programmatic (they don't require a particular means, approach, or program to realize them). We can experiment to find the best means of fulfilling such a constitutional right. Rights and constitutional amendments are also not a “special interest.” They're for all Americans!

August 6, 2003, was the 38th anniversary of the signing of the 1965 *Voting Rights Act*. But the *Voting Rights Act* is really misnamed and, to some extent, misleading. It's not actually a voting rights act. In fulfillment of the 15th Amendment to the Constitution, added in 1870, the 1965 *Voting Rights Act* was actually a non-discrimination in voting act.

To fulfill the democratic ideal, an affirmative voting rights constitutional amendment still lies in the future. Over one hundred nations explicitly guarantee their citizens the right to vote and to be represented at all levels of government. The United States is not among them.

If we pass a new voting rights amendment, the next civil rights movement will emerge fighting for congressional legislation that can advance even further the central democratic idea of universal voting—only partially enabled through the 1965 *Voting Rights Act*, *Motor Voter* and the *Help America Vote* legislation. With a voting rights amendment, a new civil rights movement would emerge to fight to fully

implement the amendment, while also using the federal courts to interpret voting rights more fully.

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1 *Bush v. Gore*, 531 U.S. 98, 104 (2000).

2 Raskin, Jamin B. *Overruling Democracy: The Supreme Court versus the American People*. New York: Routledge, 2003, 7.

3 *Alexander v. Daley*, 90 F. Supp. 2d 35, 66 (2000).

4 Raskin, 36.

5 Raskin, 66.

The New Southern Political Landscape, the Black Vote, and Election Reform: Which Will Be Key to Victory in 2004?

Melanie Campbell

Many political strategists have written off the South for the 2004 presidential election; they list 17 battleground states (only one of them Southern) with the perceived power to decide the ultimate outcome of the election in November. Others predict that African Americans and other minorities have the power if they turn out in large numbers. In 2000 our nation's greatest civics lesson revealed that whose votes are counted is even more significant to victory. This article explores these factors and reflects on whether our nation has put in the safeguards and reforms required to ensure that all eligible votes count and will be counted.

OVERVIEW

As we move into the beginning of what will be the most expensive presidential election of our times, I reflect on what impact it will have on our representative democracy. As the American electorate continues to disengage itself from participating in the political process—with a dismal average of 50 percent voter turnout as the norm in presidential elections and approximately 50 million people opting out of the process—will the United States continue to be touted as the “world’s leading democracy, now ranking 140th in voter turnout among democratically elected governments?”¹

In 2004, we face a new challenge as a nation. Do we have the will to collectively analyze and correct the problems with our electoral system? Can we restore citizen confidence and the belief that “my one vote does count and will be counted?” It will take the will of the people to demand of ourselves and our government to reform a system that has been neglected for decades.

Democracy is about people, voice, and opportunity, yet many immigrant U.S. citizens within the black community, other minority groups, and the disabled encounter persistent systemic barriers that function without regard to these communities’ existence or restrict access through language or culture. Successful civic

Ms. Campbell is the executive director and CEO of the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation, Inc. She was a resident fellow at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University’s Institute of Politics in spring 2003. She is a nationally recognized expert on black civic participation, youth leadership development, elections, election reform, voting rights, and the census.

engagement to improve one's quality of life is affected by access, equity, and participation. However, many residents of urban and rural communities are blocked from the full privileges and responsibilities of civil society by their marginalized status or past felony convictions.

According to the Sentencing Project and Human Rights Watch, 1.4 million African American men—more than one in eight—are currently or permanently banned from voting because they are either in prison or have been convicted of a felony. Further, disenfranchised black males account for 35 percent of all Americans now barred from voting due to felony convictions.²

Elections are about shaping the future; however, black youth aged 18 to 35, who represent nearly 50 percent of the black voting-age population, are underrepresented at the polls. The Joint Center on Political and Economic Studies (JCPES) 2000 Survey, focusing solely on the political participation of the African American youth voting-age population, warns of the challenge the black community faces with low black youth voter turnout patterns and its effects in “maintaining a healthy level of black participation in the political and electoral process.”³

THE IMPACT OF THE 2000 ELECTION

The 2000 election was a defining moment for our democracy when thousands of eligible voters were turned away from the polls or had their votes discarded. The election debacle exposed the kind of institutional and structural barriers to voter participation that many believed had been eradicated by the *Voting Rights Act* of 1965, the *National Voting Registration Act* of 1993, and the *Voting Accessibility for the Elderly and Handicapped Act*.

The 2000 election underscored the need to remain ever vigilant in protecting the right to vote and the importance of unfettered access to polling places. Millions of eligible voters—young people, seniors, immigrants—were disenfranchised and shut out of a system that discounted the importance of *counting every vote*. A study conducted by the CalTech/MIT Voting Technology Project found that the votes of between four million and six million Americans who went to the polls were not counted in the 2000 presidential election.⁴

According to the Center for Policy Alternatives (CPA), “African Americans and Latinos were much more likely to have their votes uncounted than whites.” CPA also reported that the *Statistical Analysis of Factors That Affected Voters in the 2000 Presidential Election* produced in October 2001 by the U.S. General Accounting Office stated that across the nation, “The more African Americans and Latinos in a jurisdiction, the more ballots were uncounted.”⁵

In the wake of the 2000 election irregularities and similar problems in the 2002 midterm election, our democracy is challenged to correct the problems in our electoral system to restore citizens' confidence that their votes count and will be counted. The *Help America Vote Act* of 2002 (*HAVA*) is a first step, but it remains an unfunded federal mandate.

Our nation now realizes that additional protections and safeguards—legislative, regulatory, and citizen-driven—must be put in place to ensure that voting rights are not violated. The effort must be both short-term and long-term. As *HAVA* is being

implemented at the federal and state levels, elections will continue to take place. Educating voters and protecting their rights at the polls must be a primary consideration with ongoing actions and strategies for correction. Alliances must be established across traditional lines of division—age, ideology, class, race, and ethnicity—to realize a civil society in which issues and policies can be debated and shaped by all citizens.

THE LANDSCAPE

The Pendulum Swings to the Grand Old Party in 2002

The results of the 2002 midterm election continued to tilt the balance of power toward one political party on both the federal (U.S. Congress) and state levels—the Republican Party. With the Republican Party already in control of the White House, the 2002 election resulted in the GOP gaining control of both chambers of the U.S. Congress, state governorships, and legislatures. Gubernatorial races fared well for the GOP—26 Republicans, 24 Democrats, zero independents. Furthermore, Republicans gained control of 21 state legislatures, with Democrats now controlling 18. Nine others were split between the two parties.

Simultaneously, the Democratic Party won several big state gubernatorial elections including Michigan, Pennsylvania, Arizona, Wisconsin, and Illinois. These wins resulted in a net gain of three governorships for the Democrats. Democratic incumbent governors lost their reelection bids primarily in the South (Georgia, South Carolina, and Alabama), reversing the balance of power between the two primary parties in that region.

But what do these numbers really mean? Moreover, does one party's control signal the end of real compromise on a host of areas including fiscal policy initiatives and one of the most potentially lethal and polarizing issues—judicial appointments? The 108th Congress consistently voted along partisan lines either for or against judicial nominations throughout 2003.

Some of the greatest ideological and public policy challenges were decided in the U. S. Supreme Court. Lest we forget, it was the Supreme Court that upheld slavery (*Scott v. Sanford*), and it was the Supreme Court that struck down segregation (*Brown v. Board of Education, Topeka*). And in 2000, it was the Supreme Court that decided on the outcome of the presidential election (*Bush v. Gore*).

For Black America, no matter the party in power, we must fight to preserve not only the economic and civil rights gains of the past three decades, but build upon them by engaging both parties. We must hold elected officials accountable to our interests, as many other communities do.

This political shift to the right is determining how domestic as well as foreign policy issues are being addressed. It is setting the agenda for the level of priority of such issues as affordable housing in inner cities, affirmative action in higher education and public contracts, religious freedoms and civil liberties, reduction of mandatory minimum sentences for non-violent offenses, racial profiling, Social Security privatization, livable wages, election reform, voting rights for ex-felons, quality health care, and public education.

Race Still Matters in American Politics

The reality that race still matters in American politics is revealed in part by mainstream media coverage of the 2002 election results. Headlines read, "Low Black Turnout Helped South GOP,"⁶ and "Disillusioned Blacks Hurt Democrats."⁷

DeWayne Wickham, a columnist for *USA Today*, wrote about the implications of the JCPES 2002 National Opinion Poll on Political Issues:

[The poll revealed] sharp differences between African Americans and Whites on a number of issues since the JCPES 2000 Opinion Poll was released...In 2000, 56 percent of African Americans and 57 percent of Whites believed the country was moving in the right direction. Today, 40.6 percent of Whites are not only comfortable with the current direction of the country—Whites believe global issues are more important than domestic issues currently. Conversely, in 2002 only 23.9 percent of Blacks agreed the country was headed in the right direction.⁸

Wickham predicts that if these stark differences hold, the nation will be sharply divided in the 2004 presidential elections.

THE 2004 ELECTION

As the nation prepares for the 2004 presidential election, there is growing concern that the two-year delay of the passage of *HAVA* and the mounting skepticism in minority communities about the security risks of computerized voting equipment will further alienate the U.S. electorate, which is becoming less and less engaged in the electoral process.

Furthermore, the continued skepticism may have an even more adverse effect on young people, who are already disengaged and disillusioned about the importance of voting and the integrity of the government. For the black community, there is a demographic imperative to reverse the decline in civic and voter participation among the 18- to 35-year-old black voting age population (BVAP). This age group encompasses over 40 percent of the BVAP. Therefore, in order for the black electorate to continue to have political influence, we must increase black youth participation in the political process. Black youth must be challenged to assume a larger role in providing leadership and new voices in the public policy debate. Only through these changes can we bring about a rebirth in the social justice movement. Young people, as in past generations, have the power and responsibility for improving the economic conditions and quality of life not only for their generation, but for those who will stand on their shoulders in the future. It is imperative that black youth take up the mantle of leadership to ensure their parents and grandparents, who laid the foundation and made the sacrifices, don't have to choose groceries over medicine in their retirement years.

The Power Is in the South

Many political strategists have written off the South for the 2004 presidential election. They list 17 battleground states with the perceived power to decide ultimately who will reside at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue in January 2005. Only one of those battleground states is in the South—Florida, the scene of the crime to many who

believe the 2000 election was stolen. Florida is listed as key to the outcome if the margin of victory is less than one-tenth of 1 percent.

Dr. Ronald Walters, noted scholar and University of Maryland political science professor, cautions against this strategy of simply focusing on battleground states because it would leave out a lot of black voters or miss targets of opportunity. Dr. Walters notes that "in several Southern states in 2000, the margin of victory for either George W. Bush or Al Gore was under 8 percent and within the range of black voter influence."⁹ For instance, in Arkansas the margin of victory was 6 percent. In Tennessee, the margin of victory was 4 percent, and in three other Southern states it was 8 percent.

Furthermore, with more than 54 percent of the black population residing in the South, it leaves many in the black community with the perception that this flawed strategy relegates the 2004 election into becoming an election for "*Whites only*."

CONCLUSION

The challenges of realizing a fully participatory democracy in the United States continue to become more complex. An informed and active electorate will require increased vigilance of the registration and election process and the expanded engagement of the electorate by building public awareness of the role, rights, and responsibilities of voters.

It is our responsibility to give voice to those who are susceptible to continuous disenfranchisement based on race, ethnic origin, or class. Furthermore, we must enhance America's democratic and economic viability by engaging and motivating black youth to become active participants in democracy.

At a time when global uncertainties abound and issues of democracy are being challenged everywhere, the demand in the United States to meet its own standards of democracy are greatly heightened. Ultimately, the test of democracy is the level of engagement by those typically at the margins. Within the black community, young people and immigrant groups are often the most marginalized from civil society.

For more than two centuries, African Americans have experienced promises and dreams deferred for full participation in American democracy. From the passage of the 14th Amendment in 1866 to the *Civil Rights Act* of 1964 and the *Voting Rights Act* of 1965, African Americans have struggled to exercise full citizenship and to participate in democracy. Historically, since gaining the right to vote, African Americans have been turned away from the polls or had their voting rights violated—making the events in the 2000 elections an all too familiar experience.

The 2000 election, which tossed out millions of American votes, was a glaring statement of the obvious: Too many eligible voters—young people, seniors, immigrants, disenfranchised and marginalized people—remain shut out of a system that should welcome and encourage their participation.

Our nation's political system, with all of its flaws, is the great equalizer for economic opportunity and social justice. It is the means for one to express her voice of discontent or approval; therefore, we must continue to work in bringing our communities from the margins to the center of debate around issues of democracy and

inclusion in the process. By providing leadership development opportunities for our youth and building new alliances and strategic partnerships across lines of race, ethnicity, class, and culture, the black community will continue its consistent and historical leadership role as a voice of conscience for justice, inclusion, and fairness for all.

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Remembering Roosevelt: Reflections on Race and the Republican Party

DeWayne Wickham

The author compares George W. Bush's presidency to Theodore Roosevelt's presidency to illustrate the growing racial divide among African Americans and the Republican Party.

Democrats, sensing that victory was within their reach, waged a spirited contest to select the party's presidential candidate. The Republican in the White House was jokingly called "His Accidency" because of the event that propelled him into the Oval Office. And discussion of America's role in a splintered world, the use of the country's natural resources, and the abuses of greedy corporate executives dominated the campaign.

The year was 1904, and Theodore Roosevelt, the "trust buster"—not George W. Bush, a patron of the corporate class—was the nation's chief executive. Roosevelt, who was elected vice president in 1900, moved into the Oval Office six months into his term when President William McKinley was assassinated.

On the eve of the 1904 election, the fracturing of Colombia, which brought about the creation of Panama and construction of the Panama Canal, was the dominant foreign policy issue. Domestically, Roosevelt championed his "Square Deal" policies, which reflected his affinity for the environment and labor unions and his distrust of big business.¹

Largely ignored by Roosevelt was the nation's race problem.

Back then, black voters were as closely aligned to the GOP as we are now to the Democratic Party. That loyalty was residual of the goodwill Republicans earned four decades earlier when Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation. Two years later, a Republican-dominated Congress passed the 13th amendment, which abolished slavery throughout the United States. In 1867 and 1868, radical Republicans pushed Reconstruction acts through Congress that gave Blacks a broad range of rights and protections.

But Reconstruction came to a screeching halt as white Southerners, determined to regain their oppressive control over Blacks, struck a deal with Northern

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Republicans in 1876. The outcome of the presidential election that year was stalled by a debate about counting of votes in three Southern states: South Carolina, Louisiana, and Florida. This crisis was resolved by the vote of a special election commission and a backroom deal between Northern Republicans and Southern Democrats. The compromise put Republican Rutherford B. Hayes in the White House and control of the South firmly in the hands of Whites who were determined to turn back the clock on the gains that had been made by Blacks.²

Theodore Roosevelt was the linear successor of those Republicans, not Lincoln. During his first term in the White House, 350 Blacks were lynched in the United States.³ Most lynchings, Roosevelt shamelessly and erroneously said, were in retaliation for the sexual assault of white women.⁴

His racism reflected the national mood. At the beginning of the 20th century, the last of the 22 Blacks to serve in Congress during the Reconstruction Era was chased from office. The "separate but equal" dictum of the Supreme Court's 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision was the law of the land, and Jim Crow laws enacted by Southern legislatures had effectively locked millions of Blacks into a state of neo-slavery. By the time the 1904 presidential campaign got under way, the political disenfranchisement of Blacks was nearly complete.

Against this backdrop, Black leaders such as William Monroe Trotter complained that the black vote was being taken for granted by Republicans, and in the *Souls of Black Folk* W.E.B. DuBois lamented "the problem of the 20th century is the problem of the color line."

Now a century later, the color line continues to be this nation's most intractable problem. America is in the throes of another presidential campaign in which the Republican incumbent has marginalized the interests of black voters. President Bush is the most recent beneficiary of the race-baiting "Southern strategy" that the GOP used to elect several presidents. But like Roosevelt, he has tried to cast himself as a friend of Blacks while promulgating policies and taking actions that are counter to our interests.

Ironically, the most glaring examples of this duality are linked to the only national holiday that honors the memory of a black icon. Last year, on the birthday of the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., Bush, who was hoisted into the Oval Office by a controversial Supreme Court decision, pandered to the far right wing of his party by announcing his opposition to two affirmative action programs at the University of Michigan. At the time, the admissions programs, one for the undergraduate school and the other for the law school, were under review by the Supreme Court. The programs were backed by every major black civil rights organization in the nation.

"At their core, the Michigan policies amount to a quota system that unfairly rewards or penalizes perspective [*sic*] students, based solely on their race," the president said during a brief televised address. "So, tomorrow my administration will file a brief with the court arguing that the University of Michigan's admissions policies, which award students a significant number of extra points based solely on their race and establishes [*sic*] numerical targets for incoming minority students, are unconstitutional."

Five days later, on the federal holiday that honors King, Bush took a short motorcade ride to the First Baptist Church of Glenarden, a black church in Prince Georges

County, Md., a majority-black county that abuts the District of Columbia. The president's visit to the church drew worldwide media attention and gave him a chance to court black voters with empty words, instead of meaningful deeds.

"It is fitting that we honor Martin Luther King in a church," Bush told the congregation. "Because . . . I believe, like you, that the power of his words, the clarity of his vision, the courage of his leadership occurred because he put his faith in the Almighty."

What Bush obviously doesn't believe are the words King wrote about affirmative action in his 1964 book, *Why We Can't Wait*. Instead, Bush probably had in mind that often-quoted passage from King's 1963 "I Have a Dream" speech, in which he said, "I have a dream that my four children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character."

That was King's dream. Conservatives, brandishing the speech to support their position, claim that King would share their opposition to affirmative action. But King actually supported programs to help Blacks overcome the debilitating effects of 246 years of slavery and the Jim Crow century that followed. A year after he gave that historic speech on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, he wrote about the debt that he believed this nation owes Blacks.

"Whenever the issue of compensatory or preferential treatment of the Negro is raised, some of our friends recoil in horror. The Negro should be granted equality, they agree; but he should ask nothing more," King said in *Why We Can't Wait*. "On the surface this appears reasonable, but it is not realistic. For it is obvious that if a man is entered at the starting line in a race three hundred years after another man, the first would have to perform some impossible feat in order to catch up with his fellow runner."⁵

It was no coincidence that Bush announced his opposition to the Michigan affirmative action programs on King's birthday last year. This year, as the competition among Democrats to challenge Bush heated up and criticism whittled away at his public approval ratings, the president again used the King holiday to rouse his political base.

On January 15, 2004, Bush, who was in Atlanta for a political fund raiser, was booed by hundreds of Blacks when he went to King's tomb to lay a wreath. It was a photo op meant to portray the president as a friend of black causes.

The next day, with Congress in recess, Bush used his executive authority to sidestep a filibuster by Democratic senators who were trying to stop the appointment of Charles Pickering to the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals. Black leaders condemned Pickering's elevation to the appeals court, which has more Blacks under its jurisdiction than any other appellate court. They said that Pickering, a federal district court judge in Mississippi, used his judicial perch to disparage "civil rights protections and plaintiffs." They also charged that the one-time head of the Mississippi Republican Party "criticized or sought to limit important remedies provided by the *Voting Rights Act*."⁶

Back in 1901, Roosevelt appeared to court the support of Blacks by inviting Booker T. Washington to dinner—making him the first Black to dine with a president in the White House.⁷ That action outraged many Southern congressmen, whose

support Roosevelt needed. To repair the damage, he made it clear that the women in his family did not sit at the table with Washington. When that didn't temper the criticism, Roosevelt arranged for Washington to make an appearance at the Gridiron Club dinner, where journalists and politicians have ribbed presidents since 1885. Washington was coaxed into playfully attempting to crash the lily-white affair as a Southerner protested his presence. Once inside the ballroom, Washington reportedly entertained Roosevelt and the other guests with what was described as "one of his inimitable coon songs."⁸

While Bush has done nothing so crass, his actions around the past two King holidays show that he also is capable of political cunning when it comes to race. In the 2000 presidential election, Bush got just 8 percent of the black vote.⁹ This year, despite his appointment of Colin Powell as secretary of state and Condoleezza Rice as national security adviser, he will not fare much better with black voters, many of whom have been devastated by the recession that occurred on Bush's watch. So far, Blacks have benefited little from the jobless recovery.

During the 2000 presidential campaign, Bush labeled himself a "compassionate conservative." But as the 2004 presidential contest shifts into gear, many Blacks find little that is compassionate about his conservatism. That judgment is likely to deepen this nation's racial and political divide in this election year.

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Overcoming Poverty, Racism, and Inequality through Asset Accumulation

William J. Bynum

The difference in the asset holdings of black and white Americans is startling. When people control assets, they have a sense of ownership, power, and hope for the future that profoundly affects the way they conduct their lives. Recommendations to overcome the racial divide include public education as well as specific program and policy recommendations. Some of the recommendations call for asset building for all Americans, with an emphasis on low-income and low-wealth Americans. Other recommendations remove specific institutional barriers to asset formation among black Americans.

“We believe that a focus on wealth reveals a crucial dimension of the seeming paradox of continued racial inequality in American society. Looking at wealth helps solve the riddle of seeming black progress alongside economic deterioration. Black wealth has grown, for example, at the same time that it has fallen further behind that of whites. Wealth reveals an array of insights into black and white inequality that challenge our conception of racial and social justice in America.”

—Melvin L. Oliver and Thomas M. Shapiro, Black Wealth/White Wealth¹

Thanks to the pioneering works of Oliver and Shapiro and of Michael Sherraden,² a fresh perspective on the questions of racial inequality, poverty, and economic and educational opportunity in America has emerged. This perspective, or paradigm, is assets, by which we mean the ownership of tangible and financial property such as homes, businesses, land, retirement accounts, stocks and bonds, and savings accounts.

We would like to offer two simple, but profound, propositions:

1. The question of race in America cannot be understood without reference to assets.
2. The racial divide in America cannot be overcome without policies and actions that enable black Americans to build assets.

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Racial discrimination in America is fundamentally about assets, or property. Black Americans were brought to America and enslaved as property. After the Civil War, they were denied property when the promise of forty acres and a mule went unfulfilled, while white Americans were given 160 acres under the *Homestead Act*. During Reconstruction, efforts by Blacks to accumulate property through the Freedman's Bank were undermined—and ultimately halted—by the bank's white, corrupt board of directors. Also in the 19th century, "Black Code" regulations, intimidation, and lynchings severely restricted the efforts of Blacks to own and operate businesses, as they would have competed with businesses owned by Whites.

In the 20th century, less blatant but equally powerful forms of housing and lending discrimination, often with the implicit or explicit approval of the federal government, prevented black Americans from acquiring property at anywhere near the rate of white Americans. Even following the passage of very powerful laws—the *Equal Credit Opportunity Act* of 1974, the *Home Mortgage Disclosure Act* of 1975, and the *Community Reinvestment Act* of 1977—there is ample evidence that racial discrimination in mortgage lending continues. And, finally, the U.S. tax code has systematically privileged Whites and those with assets over and against asset-poor black Americans.

What is the extent of wealth inequality between Blacks and Whites? Why does it matter, and what can be done about it?

THE EXTENT OF BLACK/WHITE WEALTH INEQUALITY IN AMERICA

The difference in the asset holdings of black and white Americans is startling, with a large percentage of it explained by race alone. Oliver and Shapiro present the best and most comprehensive data on discrepancies in wealth between black and white Americans. They found that:

- The median income of Whites is \$25,384 and \$15,630 for Blacks, whereas the median net worth of Whites is \$43,800 but \$3,700 for Blacks, a ratio of more than 11:1. Median net financial assets for Whites are \$6,999 but for Blacks are \$0.
- About 33 percent of all American households have no or negative net financial assets, and 61 percent of all black households have zero or negative net financial assets. Nearly 75 percent of all black children grow up in households with zero or negative net financial assets.

Interestingly, and disturbingly, Oliver and Shapiro were able to determine the extent to which such inequality could be attributed to race. Controlling for differences in education, occupation, and demographics, they determined that race alone accounts for 50 percent of the differential in income between Blacks and Whites, 71 percent of differential in net worth, and 76 percent of the differential in net financial assets. Stated another way, the cost of being born black in America is \$43,143 in mean net worth and \$25,794 in mean net financial assets. Oliver and Shapiro label such profound differences in wealth holdings as the "sedimentation of past discrimination."

Two fundamental points emerge. One, while Blacks have lower income than Whites, even equally positioned Whites and Blacks have highly unequal amounts of wealth. And two, differences in asset holdings not only embody sharp differences in future opportunities, they also capture harsh patterns of prior discrimination.

WHY ASSET INEQUALITY MATTERS

Differences in asset holdings matter immensely: when people control assets, they have a sense of ownership, power, and hope for the future that profoundly affects the way they conduct their lives. Assets provide a range of benefits that income or employment alone cannot. Oliver and Shapiro observe that wealth is a particularly important indicator of individual and family access to life chances; it is used to create opportunities, secure a desired status and standard of living, and pass class status and opportunities along to one's children. In their words, "it is our argument that wealth reveals a particular network of social relations and a set of social circumstances that convey a unique constellation of meanings pertinent to race in America. This perspective adds to our understanding of public policy issues related to racial inequality; at the same time, it aids us in developing better policies in the future."³

Sherraden (with his colleagues at the Center for Social Development at Washington University in St. Louis) has garnered substantial evidence that assets generate a wide range of social and economic benefits. After a review of 25 studies that speak to the social and economic benefits of asset holding, Deborah Page-Adams and Sherraden concluded that:

- Studies of assets and personal well-being find positive impacts on life satisfaction and self efficacy, as well as positive impacts on alcoholism and depression.
- Research on the relationship of assets and economic security finds quite positive impacts in both objective and subjective measures of economic security, with several different populations.
- Studies of effects of assets on civic behavior—the Jeffersonian hypothesis—report positive results at the neighborhood level.
- For women, assets are associated with high social status within the household and the community, greater control over reproductive decisions, and improved material conditions for the family.
- For children, the presence of assets in the family leads to improved educational performance, reduced teen delinquency, reduced teen pregnancy, and improved economic outcomes as adults.

WHAT CAN BE DONE TO HELP AFRICAN AMERICANS BUILD ASSETS

If racial discrimination in America is fundamentally about property, then solutions must also be about property. The following recommendations to overcome the racial divide include public education as well as specific program and policy recommendations. Public education must, first and foremost, place the property and assets framework at the center of discussions about the history of Blacks in America. As shown, the property/assets framework reveals both past discrimination and

limitations on future opportunities. Assets thus best capture the economic response to the racial divide in America.

Some of the following recommendations call for asset building for all Americans, with an emphasis on low-income and low-wealth Americans. Such universal policies would, of course, greatly and disproportionately benefit black Americans, while still offering something for everyone. Other recommendations remove specific institutional barriers to asset formation among black Americans.

- The black community can increase its wealth through (1) *entrepreneurship* and business development; (2) better *education and information* on the subject of financial planning; and (3) *networking* to develop capital and economic opportunity. Oliver and Shapiro add that “the key to growth is to break out of segregated markets and into the wider economic mainstream. Also, in order to succeed, African American business in the twenty-first century needs to set its sights on the next great frontier of economic growth: information processing. An emphasis on retail and service will divert the energies of able black businesspeople away from the most fertile area of economic growth.”⁴
- It is important to develop a range of *community development financial institutions* (CDFIs) that can provide capital, loans, and banking services in low-income black communities. For decades CDFIs have played a central role in closing the asset gap. Increasingly during the past ten years CDFIs have begun to achieve meaningful levels of scale, capability, and credibility on a national level.

One example is the Enterprise Corporation of the Delta and Hope Community Credit Union, a CDFI that serves the delta regions of Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi. Since 1994 the Enterprise Corporation of the Delta has assisted more than three thousand entrepreneurs and generated \$150 million in financing for small businesses, homebuyers, and community development projects in the nation’s most economically distressed region. Minority-owned businesses comprise 53 percent of ECD/Hope-assisted businesses, and women-owned businesses are 58 percent.

- *Individual and family asset accounts* should be used to facilitate a whole range of economic and social improvements for black Americans—especially access to higher education through children’s savings accounts. Sherraden proposes and Oliver and Shapiro endorse the creation, at the policy level, of individual development accounts (IDAs) to enable disadvantaged—economically, socially, racially—Americans to accumulate productive assets such as a first home, a higher education, a small business, or a retirement account. Education IDAs, or children’s savings accounts, could, for example, be initiated at birth for all children, with strong incentives (such as high matching deposits) for asset-poor Americans to participate. Recall that nearly 75 percent of all black children grow up in households with no net financial assets and, therefore, with few

prospects for higher education. Children's savings accounts would greatly benefit this and forthcoming generations of black children in America.

Also, IDAs should be incorporated into community development efforts, especially for home ownership, microenterprise, and savings promotion. In fact, asset building is an emerging theme in community development, perhaps best evidenced by the Ford Foundation's consolidation of four anti-poverty programs into one entitled "Asset Building and Community Development." IDAs could, for example, be established in predominantly black communities to facilitate self-employment and access to job training.

- *Tax policies* that favor those with assets should be modified and extended to the asset-poor. A host of government programs and policies have historically assisted the white middle class to acquire, secure, and expand assets. Among the best examples are the home mortgage interest deduction, capital gains tax, and inheritance tax. But the majority of benefits of these policies accrue to wealthy Americans. Asset-building policies should reach all Americans. This can be achieved by extending asset-building tax policies to moderate and poor households through, for example, refundable tax provisions and matching deposits. Again, IDAs could be useful in this effort.

A great deal of discussion has been devoted to the problem of race in America, and while we are much further along than we were fifty years ago, we have a long way to go. It is our firm belief that the assets framework will not only cast a new, fresh perspective on that discussion, it will also provide the framework for policies and practices that will enable African Americans to *fully* contribute to the social, political, and economic fabric of American life.

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The 1990's Economic Boom: Another Period of Missed Opportunity

Dr. William Rodgers

This essay shares lessons I have learned and challenges that I have experienced over the last ten years during my work to improve the economic status of all Americans, but particularly African Americans. The essay describes the serious implications that the current economy's health is having on African Americans and will have on them in the future. The essay concludes with a sketch of strategies that can help to raise the standard of living of African Americans. If chosen, the prosperity of the 1990's will not be known as a period of missed opportunities to address persistent racial inequality.

INTRODUCTION

In April 2000, the U.S. unemployment rate fell to 3.8 percent, a thirty-year low. Even more phenomenal was the fact that the national unemployment rate had been below 5.0 percent for 36 consecutive months, and at or below 4.5 percent for 19 consecutive months. This sustained period of tight labor markets caused inflation-adjusted wages for the typical American worker to rise and created extended economic opportunities across demographic groups and geographic areas. The unemployment rates for minorities fell to their lowest levels since the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) began to report these statistics in the early 1970's.

But on an early Friday evening in April 2000, a Who's Who of African American leaders received a reminder of the speed at which prosperity can dissipate. The event was the taping of President Clinton's Saturday radio address. My position as the Department of Labor's chief economist was my entry ticket. Since it was my first time to attend a taping, I thought we would enter, hear the president read his address, greet him, and leave. But much to my delight he spoke for what seemed

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like half an hour before taping his address, giving us a brief economic history lesson on the late 1960's.

April 1969 has many similarities to April 2000. The U.S. unemployment rate was near its post-WWII low.¹ The jobless rate had also been at persistently low levels for an extended period of time—42 months at or below 4.0 percent. Although extremely high by today's standards, the poverty rate, particularly among African Americans, was at its lowest point since the government began to collect poverty rates.² The enforcement of affirmative action and anti-discrimination laws were helping to open opportunities for minorities and women.³ There was optimism about the country's ability to address its persistent economic and social divides.

Yet, by the summer of 1969, the record period of prosperity had come to an end, damaging the framework on which further gains could be made.⁴ For the United States, this sudden halt in prosperity's growth meant that efforts to improve the material well-being of all Americans would be put on hold.⁵ African Americans would bear a disproportionate share of this halt in progress.

President Clinton brought us back to April 2000 and said that we can't take the prosperity of the 1990's for granted. I don't know if we have taken it for granted, but I am sure that we have taken a sudden u-turn. The economy, in recession from March 2001 to November 2001, is now in the midst of a job-loss recovery. Since March 2001, 2.352 million jobs were lost, with 30 percent of the losses occurring after November 2001.⁶ Although the national unemployment rate has fallen from 6.3 percent in June 2003 to 5.6 percent in January 2004, labor force participation (the percentage of the civilian population that is either employed or unemployed) has fallen. Further, the growth in inflation-adjusted hourly earnings from the payroll survey has stalled.

Federal and state fiscal frameworks have also deteriorated. At the federal level, expenditures on homeland security, Afghanistan, and Iraq have helped to turn the surplus into a deficit. These expenditures plus the tax cuts have reduced government's ability to pay for productive investments such as education, training, and health care. At the state level, over two-thirds of governments have experienced significant revenue shortfalls, leading to cuts in expenditures, tax increases, or both. Thirty-seven states reduced their FY03 enacted budgets by nearly \$14.5 billion. This was the largest total (all states) spending cut since 1979, the first year of the National Governors Association's fiscal survey.⁷

Although the current administration passionately argues that we can't have economic security without national security, the macroeconomic changes in our economy, domestic and international events, and the political and fiscal policy responses to them have a good chance of weakening both the short- and long-term economic status of many Americans, especially the status of African Americans. The effect of this will be to erode the absolute and relative gains that were made during the 1990's.

This essay shares several lessons I have learned and challenges that I have experienced over my ten-year career of working to improve the economic status of all Americans, particularly African Americans. It describes some of the implications of the current economy's health on the short- and long-term material well-being of African Americans. The essay concludes with a sketch of policies and approaches

that can help to raise the standard of living of all Americans but would have a disparate positive impact on African Americans. They are not meant to be exhaustive. Some are a reaffirmation of existing strategies, and a few are new.

LESSONS, CHALLENGES, AND SUCCESSES

The tight labor market of the 1990's was consistent with one aspect of neoclassical labor market theory. In many communities, persistently low unemployment rates created skills shortages—that is, the demand for particular skills exceeded the readily available supply of “usual” workers that employers tap to fill their vacancies. This occurrence placed upward pressure on wages and led to the use of stock options, bonuses, and other forms of compensation to attract and retain workers; furthermore, it forced employers to hire segments of the population that they would not consider in a strong, yet looser labor market.⁸ It enabled many African Americans to purchase homes, the major component of household wealth. Although still well below white ownership, the homeownership rate of African Americans increased to 48.1 percent in 2003.⁹

The shift in the nexus of power from employers to employees had a disproportionate impact on the economic outcomes of African Americans, particularly the least skilled. During the end of the expansion (July 1997 to July 2001), the African American unemployment rate remained at or below 10.0 percent.¹⁰ My research with Richard Freeman found that out-of-school and less-educated young African American men that lived in the “tightest” metropolitan areas experienced the largest improvements in their employment and wages.¹¹ These gains were estimated for 1992 to 1998, 24 months prior to the boom's peak, so they probably understate the boom's impact.

Panel A of Table 1 presents an update of Freeman and Rodgers' estimates by extending the analysis to 2000, and Panel B presents estimates for women. The estimates for men are qualitatively similar to Freeman and Rodgers' estimates. Young men, particularly African American men residing in persistently tight labor markets, have higher employment and wages than in looser economies. They also had the biggest gains in employment and wages.¹²

One challenge was to extend the length of the boom. Macroeconomic policy makers had to be convinced not to take actions that would shorten the boom's length. As the expansion grew longer, the financial markets and the Federal Reserve became increasingly concerned about inflation. At the Department of Labor, we too were concerned about the emergence of inflationary pressures, but our examination of the Bureau of Labor Statistics' data on the growth in compensation, wages, prices, and labor productivity did not begin to seriously raise our concerns until the spring of 2000. During the expansion, productivity growth consistently exceeded the growth in inflation-adjusted wages. Employers were getting more out of their workers, and employees were being rewarded for their accomplishments.

Another approach was to illustrate each month that employers had ample supplies or “pools of potential,” as Labor Secretary Herman referred to the over 6 million who were unemployed, 4 million who were not in the labor force but who wanted a job, and the 3 million American part-time workers who wanted full-time

employment.¹³ Without directly criticizing the Federal Reserve's policy, this evidence was used to argue that interest rates should not be increased in order to slow down the economy. Higher interest rates would increase unemployment, especially the unemployment rates of minorities and of less-educated and younger workers.¹⁴ Another challenge to prolonging the boom came during budget discussions with congressional leaders. Many felt that funding for training programs should be cut because they thought the jobs generated by the booming economy provided the best form of training. This view would have been appropriate if the inability of employers to attract employees was due to individuals not having enough information about potential opportunities. Regardless of where an economy is in the business cycle, employees need assistance in upgrading their skills. Structural shifts induced by trade, immigration, and the adoption of new technologies during this period created additional reasons as to why employees needed assistance in strengthening their skills.

Labor policy played a key role in spreading the benefits across the workforce. The federal minimum wage was increased during this period. The earned income tax credit was expanded. New approaches to investing in areas with extremely high unemployment and poverty rates were implemented. Specifically, the Department of Labor's Youth Opportunity Grants were created as comprehensive programs targeted urban and rural areas in economic distress. The previous administration's macro and fiscal policy helped to create a climate in which investors could make sound decisions. The strategy of reducing the budget deficit such that it did not have to be financed with higher interest rates helped to create a climate more conducive for investment.

One lesson learned from the experience of the 1990's was the inability to halt the long-term structural decline in the employment of young, less-educated, and less-skilled African Americans. The teenage African American unemployment rate was still in excess of 25 percent for the year 2000. In fact, many researchers have shown that the gains of African American men made during the boom are dampened when the removal of incarcerated men from civilian population is taken into account. Harry Holzer, Paul Offner, and Elaine Sorenson provide new evidence that past incarceration and child support arrearages are now making it very difficult for many noncustodial parents to support their children and themselves.¹⁵

Further, there remained geographic areas (such as the Mississippi Delta, the California valley, and Appalachia) where the jobless rate remained well above 7.0 percent. For example, the average annual unemployment rate among Mississippi Delta and Appalachia counties was 7.3 percent in 1999 and 5.5 percent in 1999. These areas saw little improvement from 1991 to 2000.

The tight labor market and public policy worked together to create a sustained period of prosperity in which opportunity was distributed across demographic groups and geographic areas. Yet, as evidenced by teenage African American unemployment rates, much work still remained. Holzer and Offner show that the boom was not able to offset the continued long-term decline in the participation of young, less-educated African American men.¹⁶ The recession, job-loss recovery and the policy responses brought the opportunity to counter the long-term decline to a grinding halt.

And now because of the erosion in the United States' overall macroeconomic health, the African American jobless rate jumped from its historical low of 7.2 percent in March and April 2000 to 11.6 percent in June 2003. It has trended downward since then; however, this is because labor force participation fell. The unemployment rate has remained over 10.0 percent for 15 consecutive months. The African American teenage unemployment rate rose steadily from 25.9 percent in 2000 to 30.5 percent in 2001, 31.5 percent in 2002, and 33.0 percent in 2003.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE CURRENT ECONOMY

It is well documented that the macroeconomy's recovery has been slow, but as private sector forecasters predicted, indicators of macroeconomic activity began to turn more positive during the second half of 2003. Growth in real GDP, industrial production, and consumer confidence are collectively showing signs of improvement. The labor market remains the weakest link. Even after the recession ended, the national unemployment rate continued to rise. It finally began to fall in the 24th month of the recovery. Yet, much of this decline is because people are leaving the labor force.

Today's pattern of recovery has some similarities to what we observed during the job-loss recovery that occurred after the 1990-91 recession. During the current job-loss recovery, the unemployment rate started to stabilize in the 20th month, four months sooner than in the 1990's pattern. The paths of payroll employment differ quite dramatically across recoveries. During the job-loss recovery of the 1990s, the economy began to consistently add jobs in the 13th month of the recovery. During the past 23 months, no jobs have been created. More specifically, during the 1990's recovery, 1,954,000 jobs were created by the 27th month while at the same time during the current recovery, 716,000 jobs have been lost. The current economy has not been able to create opportunity for existing workers and absorb the natural monthly growth of between 100,000 to 150,000 new entrants (e.g., college and high school graduates).

What are the implications of the current job-loss recovery on African Americans? In the short-term, the labor market indicators for African Americans have worsened. Young African Americans have greater difficulty entering the labor market. New entrants to the labor market, particularly young African American high school graduates, are having greater difficulty finding employment. In October 1992, white and African American non-college-enrolled 16- to 24-year-old high school graduates had unemployment rates of 22.4 and 34.4 percent, respectively. At the peak of the boom in 2000, these unemployment rates had fallen to 10.4 and 25.2 percent. In October 2002, they were back up to 13.1 and 33.9 percent.

What is the long-term forecast for the economy? Most private sector forecasters project that the national unemployment rate will fall to around 5.1 percent over the next five to ten years.¹⁷ Economists have established a statistical relationship between the U.S. unemployment rate and the African American unemployment rate. In a recent paper, I updated Clark and Summers¹⁸ and found that the least-skilled African Americans (non-enrolled, 16- to 24-year-old) are the most cyclically sensitive demographic group.¹⁹ From 1970 to 2001, a one-point increase in the national

unemployment rate is associated with a 6.4 percent decline in the employment-population ratio. Over 80 percent of the decline in employment-population ratios is due to individuals moving from employment to unemployment, and not from labor force reentry.

Utilizing the May 2003 Blue Chip Consensus forecast of the national unemployment rate, I project that the African American unemployment rate will remain above 9.0 percent over the next five years, two full points above the 7.2 percent record of April 2000.²⁰ The macroeconomy will not do a good job of extending opportunity to African Americans.

These estimates, however, are on the conservative side. There are several factors that could push the national jobless rate lower and hence decrease the unemployment rate of African Americans. The aging of the baby boomer cohort will create market-wide skills shortages, particularly in health-related occupations. September 11 and now the War on Terror could have a chilling impact on immigration and the movement of jobs abroad. For security purposes, our society may choose to rely more heavily on U.S.-born workers to perform jobs.

POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

This section provides a sketch of policies and strategies that can help to ensure that African Americans have a greater stake in the U.S. economy. Some are amplifications of existing policies and proposals, while others provide a call for a new focus by scholars and practitioners. They are organized into the three categories: civil rights, education, and the economy.

Civil Rights

The enforcement of civil rights and affirmative action takes on even greater importance in a slower-growing economy. The employer-based surveys of Moss and Tilly find that as the economy improved discrimination declined.²¹ This does not necessarily mean that preferences of employers changed. It became costlier to discriminate. As the economy weakened, it seems reasonable to think that discrimination increased.

Along with making economic, social, and cultural cases for educational and workforce diversity, scholars of affirmative action might take a critical look at those claiming reverse discrimination. Organizations will always have to defend their rationale and process for creating diverse student bodies, but scholars should take a look at the profiles of the individuals who are filing the suits. For example, during the recent University of Michigan case, the only school to which plaintiff Jennifer Gratz applied was the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. Do minorities that file discrimination suits face the same threshold?

I ask this question because of economist James Heckman's critique of the Urban Institute's employment audit studies.²² These studies sent pairs of testers to apply for the same jobs. Everything was identical except the testers' race and ethnicities. The statistical evidence showed that minorities were distinctly disadvantaged in the hiring process. Heckman's critique was the following: In the type of jobs that the

Urban Institute was auditing, employers didn't necessarily collect a pool of applications and then choose from them. Tight labor markets and other conditions might lead an employer to offer the job to someone who comes in the door and meets their requirements. The implication of this argument is that some of the racial and ethnic differences could be due to the hiring process being a sequential and not a parallel process.

In response to Heckman's critique, the Urban Institute performed "sandwich" audits.²³ They sent out either two Whites and one African American, or the opposite. The idea was that if two Whites had better success than the one African American, or if the two African Americans were denied while the white applicant was successful, then there would be more compelling evidence for discrimination.

It seems that Heckman's argument could be made to fit Jennifer Gratz's situation. Her claim of discrimination would have been more compelling if she had been rejected from a collection of schools of Michigan's caliber, but since she only applied to one school, we will never know. More research needs to focus and highlight not only the backgrounds of Whites and men who claim they have been mistreated, but also the strategies that they used to seek admission or be hired. This approach will not defend a school or organization's selection process, but it may weed out the frivolous suits that are grounded in Whites and men exposing their feelings of entitlement.

Other research that would inform civil rights policy makers would be to update studies that compared the gender and racial composition of federal contractors to non-federal contractors.²⁴ Did the gender and racial compositions improve during the Clinton-Gore administration and have the gains eroded during the current administration? Further, independent scholars need to examine the data that has been collected from Office of Federal Contract Compliance Program's new Employment Opportunity Survey. This unique survey has been administered to a subset of contractors over the past few years. It collects not only employment utilization data by race and ethnicity, which is in the current equal employment data system (EEDS) files that all contractors supply, but compensation, hiring, and promotion data by race and occupation. Many civil rights groups, race-, ethnicity- and gender-focused, have been concerned about the Labor Department's slow pace at incorporating this unique information into its flagging process.

Education and Training

To achieve the faster growth rates of the 1990's, investment in education and training will be mandatory. In *The Roaring Nineties*,²⁵ Alan Krueger and Nobel economist Robert Solow concluded that investment in education and training will be a necessary ingredient to ensure the continued productivity growth that emerged after 1995.

Economic growth has been fueled both by population growth and productivity growth. With the aging of the baby boom cohort, however, the contribution of population growth will diminish unless immigration picks up. Yet the current structure of immigration is a process tilted toward the admission of lower-skilled workers

and/or workers whose primary language is not English, so many economists are forecasting sizeable skills shortages over the next few decades.

It is well documented that education has played a major role in helping improve the absolute and relative economic status of African Americans. African Americans can benefit from these skills shortages if education and training opportunities are made available in greater quantities. Over the past few decades, African Americans have closed the high school completion gap. Now, the focus should shift to narrowing school quality differences and the bachelors degree gap.

Communities in areas such as Appalachia and the Mississippi Delta, which experienced relatively few of the benefits of the boom, will continue to be left behind if, along with investment in education and training, other infrastructure is not developed. It does little good to designate an area as an empowerment or enterprise zone if it does not have interstates, railways, and high speed access to the information superhighway.

There also needs to be a strategic focus on the types of degrees and skills African Americans acquire. BLS still projects that over the 2000 to 2010 period, occupations that require technology skills will be the fastest-growing jobs. These will be in areas in which skills shortages will be most acute. Most of these jobs are in the high- or highest-paying categories.

Some argue that vouchers are a useful way to improve the quality of public education. Five nationally known and respected education researchers from Columbia, Duke, Princeton, and Stanford Universities, however, recently concluded otherwise. In a June 2003 conference call convened by the Economic Policy Institute, they came to a consensus as to what conclusions can be made about the body of research on school vouchers. Here is a summary of their conclusions.²⁶

The best research available fails to show school vouchers for children from low-income families to be a fruitful approach for achieving real differences in student achievement. On average there is no significant difference in achievement between children enrolling in voucher programs and children remaining in public schools. Statistical evidence fails to show that when parents have a choice via vouchers, their public school districts become more accountable. Private schools that accept vouchers do not cause the quality in public schools to improve. Vouchers have explicit and implicit costs. During their forum, these five scholars collectively describe how voucher programs, such as the often-cited one in Milwaukee, can actually have adverse financial impacts on public school resources and have the unintended consequence of subsidizing private schools.

Increasing the number of African American social scientists, particularly in fields such as economics and public policy must be a priority. The framing of research questions and hypotheses is clearly influenced by the person asking the question. The interpretation of the results is also influenced by who is participating in the conversation. Public policy creation is also influenced by who has a seat at the table.

For example, an influential study of the black-white wage gap found that much of the wage gap is due to racial differences in test scores as measured by the Armed Force Qualification Test (AFQT). The researcher attributed the test score differences to racial differences in family and school quality.²⁷ This result struck me as odd because in my own work I was unable to replicate the researcher's findings.

During a conversation with the researcher, I learned that the researcher's graduate student had misread the statistical output. The researcher admitted that personal perspective led her to accept that family background and school quality differences fully explain the test score differences between African Americans and Whites.

The Department of Labor has developed self-audit tools for the federal contractors. These tools could be modified and applied in academic settings. For example, peer-reviewed journals might utilize these tools to examine their editorial boards and pool of referees along the lines of gender, race, and ethnicity. My hunch is that the results of these self-audits would reinforce the continued need to diversify many of the social sciences, particularly those that have direct links to policy development and evaluation.

For several decades, many disciplines, such as the economics profession, have been sponsoring programs to increase the pipeline of minority scholars. These programs have always faced challenges, but given the current affirmative action backlash, several problems are on the horizon. The first is the continued challenge of fully funding the programs. The second is fear that recent attacks on university admission's programs will eventually spillover into the admissions policies and practices of these programs.

Several years ago the American Economic Association removed minority from the name of its thirty-year-old summer program. It now offers admission to any qualified student but only provides financial assistance to minorities. My source of concern is not about the sponsors of programs that are truly committed to diversity, but about sponsors and potential sponsors who are on the margin—organizations that want to do the "right thing" but are afraid of becoming a test case. These organizations value diversity, but when the risk and hence expected costs of promoting diversity are too high, they choose not to publicly support efforts to help in diversifying the supply of scholars.

The Economy

The diversity of the African American experience requires a blend of policies. Much of the focus is on micro policies; however, the 1990's boom and current job-loss recovery are perfect examples of why we should place greater emphasis on macro-economic policies, such fiscal and monetary policies. Fiscal and monetary choices dictate the amount of revenue that is available for enforcement of civil rights and determine the breadth and length of an economic expansion. The choices dictate the level and availability of expenditures to invest in education and a community's infrastructure.

At the 2003 Harvard Color Lines Conference, Dr. William Spriggs, director of the National Urban League Institute for Opportunity and Equality, said that advocacy groups need to take as strong an interest in whom the president selects not only as federal chair, but also on the Board of Governors and to run the regional banks. Issues of economic and social justice are just as important as civil rights. The Federal Reserve plays an important role in setting the speed limit at which the economy will run. Once that speed limit is set, then it informs us as to what the black experience will be.

There needs to be a return to many of the labor market policies of the Clinton-Gore administration. We must stop chipping away at the *Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA)*. When appropriate, FLSA should be modified, but to claim it is outdated is wrong. The core values on which it is based are constant across time and generations of workers. In fact, our efforts should be to strengthen it.

The federal minimum wage needs to be increased along with an expansion in the earned income tax credit. These simple efforts will raise the value of work. Core labor standards should be included our efforts to level the international playing field.

In my short career, I have seen how the role of think tanks has changed over time. Instead of solely writing reports to support a particular policy, many now are actively engaged in policy development. The Economic Policy Institute (EPI) has played an invaluable role in this area for all Americans. The National Urban League Institute for Opportunity and Equality and the newly created Congressional Black Caucus Foundation's Center for Policy Analysis and Research can complement the work of EPI and others. They will provide an important link between academics in the social sciences and policy makers. These organizations can translate the work of scholars into easily digestible information for policy makers and their staff, and can communicate to scholars the important issues on which scholarly evidence needs to be produced.

More connections need to be made by professional academic organizations (e.g., political science, economics, sociology, government, and law) that are comprised of African Americans and/or focus on issues related to African Americans.

CONCLUSION

To me, the issue is when the economy fully recovers, do we want a prosperity that looks like the 1980's when growth was greatest at the upper portion of the income distribution, or the 1990's when growth was distributed all throughout the income distribution. Figures 1 and 2 illustrate this point. These figures present the average annual percent change in real household income for Whites and African Americans for each period of expansion. For white households, the patterns are similar across periods; however, income growth among white households was larger during the 1980's expansion than the 1990's expansion. For African American households, those in the upper fourth and fifth experienced bigger increases during the 1980's; however, households at the lower two-thirds fared better in both an absolute and relative sense during the 1990's expansion.

If the United States is going to return to a period in which the growth in prosperity is widely distributed, a coalition of Democrats and Republicans at federal, state, and local levels will have to put up stiffer resistance to the current administration's economic, political, and social policies. For example, the tax cuts for upper-income Americans should have been delayed until Americans had more information about the costs of the War on Terror and rebuilding of Iraq. Further, this revenue should have been targeted to middle- and lower-income families, who through no fault of their own have borne the brunt of the recession and current job-loss recovery.²⁸

Implementing a policy framework that leaves no one behind will provide a third opportunity to address the longstanding persistent poverty in many areas such as Appalachia and the Mississippi Delta. Just as we have told the Iraqi and Afghan people that we will not “leave until the job is done,” we must say to our communities that we will not abandon them like we did thirty years ago.

The biggest challenge to implementing a policy framework that leaves no one behind is getting on the agendas of federal, state, and local governments. The War on Terror and the rebuilding of Iraq is not only utilizing scarce financial resources, but it is also making it very difficult for scholars, practitioners, and policy makers concerned about creating opportunities for all Americans to get the issues discussed in this essay on the agenda. For example, the *Workforce Investment Act* and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families were supposed to be reauthorized in 2003. Congress and the administration put them both on hold.

When might these domestic structural issues get their air time? Even if the U.S. labor market strengthens from now to the summer of 2004, the overall record of the administration’s domestic economic achievements should provide an opening for the fall elections. It is highly improbable that the administration’s tax cuts will generate the 1.4 million jobs that were forecast, while there is a high probability that the number of jobs will have fallen during this administration. The administration is on the verge of squandering another opportunity to raise the material well-being of all Americans.

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ENDNOTES

1 During the last quarter of 1968 and the first two quarters of 1969, the U.S. unemployment rate sat at 3.4 percent, the lowest since the early 1950's.

2 The U.S. poverty rate fell from 22.4 in 1959 to 12.1 percent in 1969. The African American poverty rate fell from 55.1 percent in 1965 to 32.2 percent in 1969.

3 For example, see Heckman and Donahue, 36, and others which find evidence that the laws improved outcomes.

4 The NBER Dating Committees denote December 1969 as the beginning of the recession.

5 This period also marks the beginning of the slowdown in productivity growth and the slowdown in convergence in the earnings of Blacks and Whites.

6 The NBER Business Cycle Dating Committee designated the recession lasting from March to November 2001.

7 National Governors Association.

8 This ranged from younger workers to minorities, women, and even ex-offenders.

9 See U.S. Census Bureau. The figure for non-Hispanic whites is 75.4 percent.

10 The last time that this occurred was during the early 1970s.

11 See Freeman and Rodgers. It's important to note the recent work of Holzer, Offner, and Sorenson show that the expansion was not strong enough to outweigh the structural decline among this group of men.

12 Even though the Bureau of Labor Statistics' sample weights have been used to generate the statistics in the table, because of the small sample sizes for African American youth in the tightest economies, we must exercise some caution when interpreting them.

13 In January 2004, this figure stood at almost 18 million Americans.

14 A growing literature is finding that tighter Federal Reserve monetary policy has a disparate impact on the unemployment rates of African Americans, the less-educated and young adults. See, for example, Thorbecke; Rodgers; and Carpenter.

15 Holzer, Offner, and Sorenson.

16 Holzer and Offner.

17 *Economic Report of the President*; CBO, "Budget and Economic Outlook: Fiscal Years 2005-2014," Table E-1.

18 Clark and Summers, "Demographic Differences in Cyclical Employment Variation," 1981; and Clark and Summers, "Demographic Differences in Cyclical Employment Variation," 1990.

19 Rodgers.

20 The forecast comes from CBO, "The Budget and Economic Outlook: Fiscal Years 2003-2012," Table 2-4.

21 Moss and Tilly.

22 See Heckman for the critique. See Turner, Fix, and Struyk for the studies.

23 Galster et al.

24 Leonard; Rodgers and Spriggs.

25 Krueger and Solow.

26 See http://www.epinet.org/content.cfm/webfeatures_viewpoints_vouchers_transcript_20030612.

27 Maxwell.

28 E.J. Dionne, Jr., makes a similar argument in a *Washington Post* editorial dated September 9, 2003 (A23).

FIGURE 1: WHITE HOUSEHOLDS PERCENT CHANGE IN MEAN INCOME RECEIVED BY EACH FIFTH AND TOP 5 PERCENT

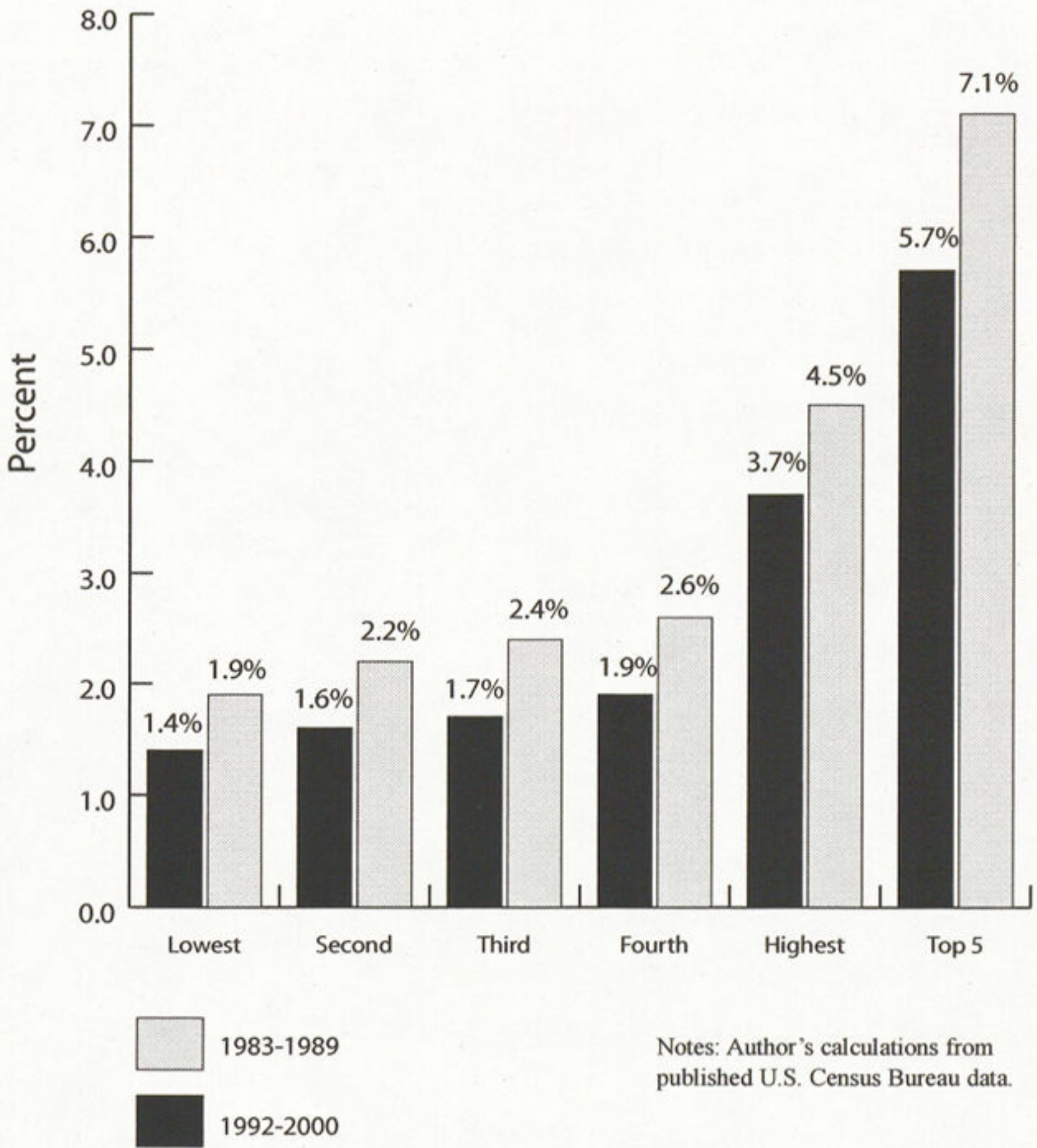


FIGURE 2: BLACK HOUSEHOLDS PERCENT CHANGE IN MEAN INCOME RECEIVED BY EACH FIFTH AND TOP 5 PERCENT

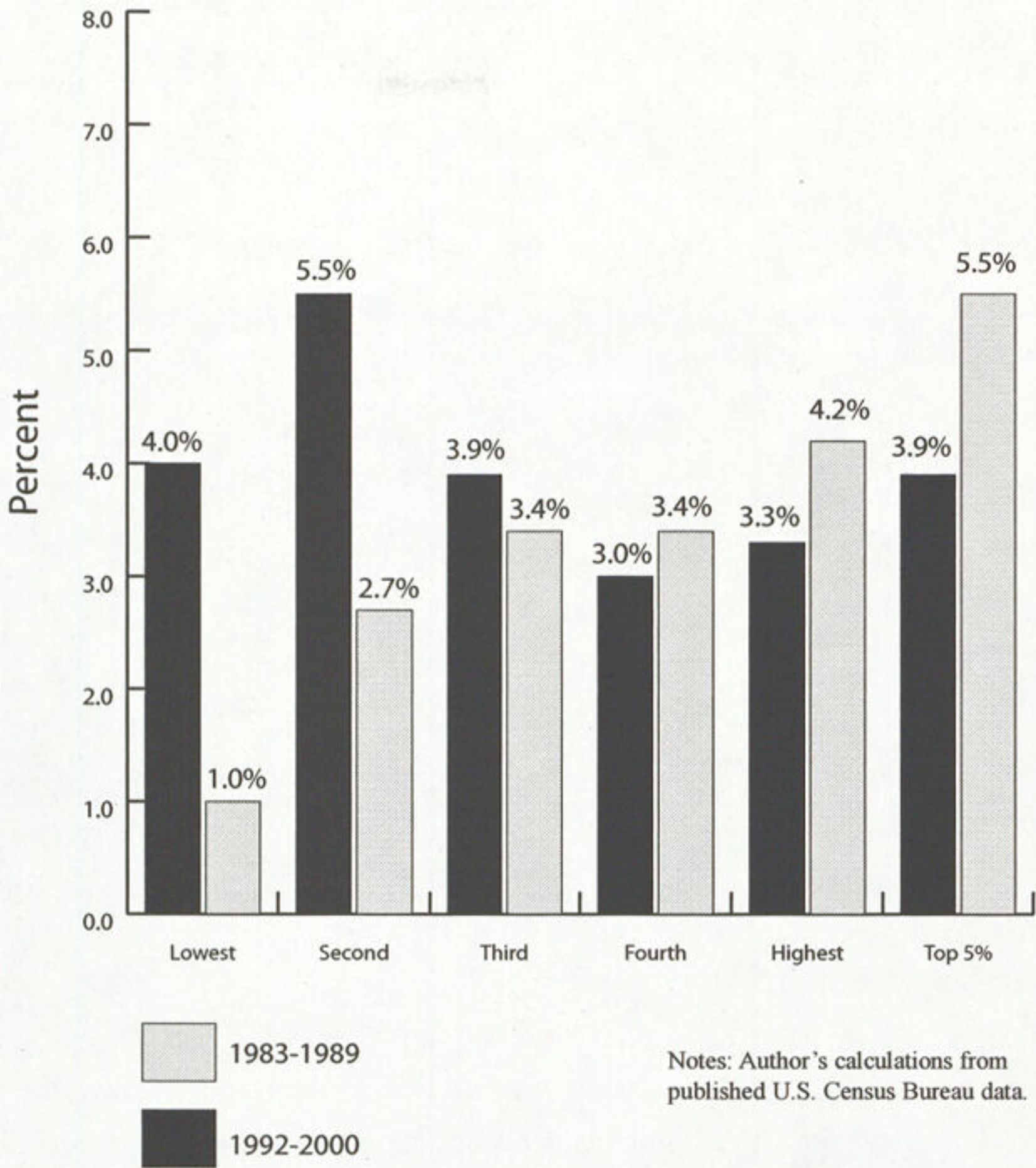


TABLE 1: EMPLOYMENT RATES AND LOG HOURLY EARNINGS BY TYPE OF EXPANSION

Panel A: Men

	Jobless Rate < 4%		Jobless Rate above 7%		Decline > 5 Points	
	Employment	LnWage	Employment	LnWage	Employment	LnWage
African American Youth						
1992	0.513	1.192	0.373	1.594	0.463	1.431
2000	0.790	1.682	0.423	1.422	0.560	1.469
2002	0.586	1.650	0.387	1.398	0.532	1.599
2000-1992	0.278	0.490	0.051	-0.172	0.097	0.038
2002-2000	-0.204	-0.032	-0.036	-0.025	-0.027	0.130
All African American Men						
1992	0.795	1.717	0.663	1.892	0.646	1.885
2000	0.825	1.876	0.668	1.909	0.677	1.832
2002	0.761	1.889	0.620	1.840	0.684	1.840
2000-1992	0.030	0.159	0.005	0.016	0.031	-0.053
2002-2000	-0.064	0.012	-0.048	-0.069	0.007	0.007
All Adult Men						
1992	0.84	1.94	0.72	1.96	0.75	2.04
2000	0.85	1.98	0.76	1.84	0.79	1.98
2002	0.80	1.96	0.72	1.88	0.77	2.02
2000-1992	0.018	0.031	0.046	-0.113	0.045	-0.060
2002-2000	-0.050	-0.016	-0.043	0.035	-0.022	0.041
All Youth						
1992	0.73	1.45	0.57	1.51	0.65	1.56
2000	0.80	1.61	0.66	1.52	0.73	1.57
2002	0.72	1.69	0.60	1.49	0.69	1.65
2000-1992	0.068	0.158	0.094	0.014	0.080	0.013
2002-2000	-0.082	0.084	-0.068	-0.032	-0.037	0.077

Notes: Author's weighted calculations from the Outgoing Rotation Group files of the Current Population Survey. Figures track the original Freeman and Rodgers sample of metropolitan areas. The list and unemployment rates presented in the Appendix.

Jobless Rate <4%: Sample of respondents who reside in metropolitan areas in which the unemployment rate was below 4% in every year from 1992 to 1998, the original Freeman and Rodgers sample.

Jobless Rate above 7%: Sample of respondents who reside in metropolitan areas in which the unemployment rate was above 7% in every year from 1992 to 1998.

Decline > 5 Points: Sample of respondents who reside in metropolitan areas in which the unemployment rate fell by at least 5 percentage points from 1992 to 1998, the original Freeman and Rodgers sample.

Panel B: Women

	Jobless Rate < 4%		Jobless Rate above 7%		Decline > 5 Points	
	Employment	LnWage	Employment	LnWage	Employment	LnWage
African American Youth						
1992	0.279	1.350	0.194	1.459	0.294	1.335
2000	0.435	1.438	0.548	1.474	0.518	1.478
2002	0.325	1.270	0.518	1.340	0.364	1.441
2000-1992	0.157	0.088	0.353	0.016	0.225	0.143
2002-2000	-0.111	-0.168	-0.029	-0.134	-0.155	-0.037
All African American Women						
1992	0.612	1.563	0.491	1.804	0.481	1.684
2000	0.506	1.856	0.538	1.673	0.586	1.634
2002	0.670	1.725	0.530	1.680	0.556	1.654
2000-1992	-0.106	0.294	0.047	-0.131	0.105	-0.051
2002-2000	0.164	-0.131	-0.008	0.007	-0.030	0.021
All Adult Women						
1992	0.71	1.70	0.45	1.75	0.54	1.77
2000	0.69	1.74	0.52	1.66	0.60	1.72
2002	0.69	1.76	0.51	1.67	0.59	1.77
2000-1992	-0.029	0.039	0.074	-0.092	0.061	-0.041
2002-2000	0.003	0.021	-0.007	0.013	-0.009	0.047
All Youth						
1992	0.66	1.36	0.38	1.46	0.47	1.43
2000	0.76	1.44	0.43	1.38	0.56	1.46
2002	0.66	1.52	0.50	1.39	0.56	1.46
2000-1992	0.097	0.073	0.055	-0.076	0.091	0.033
2002-2000	-0.094	0.086	0.066	0.005	0.002	-0.002

Notes: Author's weighted calculations from the Outgoing Rotation Group files of the Current Population Survey. Figures track the original Freeman and Rodgers sample of metropolitan areas. The list of the areas is presented in the Appendix.

Jobless Rate <4%: Sample of respondents who reside in metropolitan areas in which the unemployment rate was below 4% in every year from 1992 to 1998, the original Freeman and Rodgers sample.

Jobless Rate above 7%: Sample of respondents who reside in metropolitan areas in which the unemployment rate was above 7% in every year from 1992 to 1998.

Decline > 5 Points: Sample of respondents who reside in metropolitan areas in which the unemployment rate fell by at least 5 percentage points from 1992 to 1998, the original Freeman and Rodgers sample.

Building Bridges across the Atlantic: An Interview with Zambian Ambassador Dr. Inonge Mbikusita-Lewanika

Interview conducted by Oni K. Blair

Dr. Inonge Mbikusita-Lewanika became ambassador of Zambia to the United States on February 26, 2003. Previously, Ambassador Mbikusita-Lewanika served as an ambassador and special envoy to the Zambian president (2001–02), and a member of Parliament (1991–2001), serving on various committees specializing in foreign affairs, service, education, science and technology, children, youth, and women. From 1980 to 1990, she served as UNICEF regional adviser and senior program officer for Africa. In this interview she emphasizes the important role that African Americans play as investors and as advocates in the development of African nations and discusses the effects of black leadership on international diplomacy.

Oni K. Blair of the Harvard Journal of African American Public Policy interviewed Dr. Inonge Mbikusita-Lewanika on 22 October 2004.

HJAAPP

I want to start with your background and how you got involved in politics. How did that take place?

MBIKUSITA-LEWANIKA

I was brought up by politicians, and my parents were active in the politics of the country. My mother did a lot of work with women and trying to improve the lot of women. She demonstrated her own participation in public life, first of all by going to school—and not only to primary school, but to a higher school, which was very rare in those days.

And then she also was a professional woman. She was a teacher. She was a founding member of YWCA in Zambia. She was the first woman in Northern Rhodesia—that's what Zambia was called before—to register as a voter, the first African woman to do that. And she was also the first African woman to buy a political party card. That was in 1947.

Oni K. Blair is a Thomas R. Pickering foreign affairs fellow and 2004 master in public policy candidate at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. Following graduation, Oni will enter the foreign service as a political officer for the U.S. Department of State.

My father was the first president of the African National Congress of Zambia. And my grandfather, you may be interested to know, was the patron of actually the South African African National Congress in 1912.

So I come from a political family. And my father was a member of Parliament. Our parents brought us up to listen to news, so we did have an idea when we were growing up of what was happening out in the world, which I found interesting. But at an early age—I was 13, 14—after watching my father being in politics, I decided that I didn't want to be a politician.

So I went to school in Zambia and did all my college and university education here in America. And I went back to Zambia and taught at Evelyn Hone College of Further Education. And I did a lot of community work as an NGO[sic]: YWCA, Red Cross, and the Zambia Preschool Association. And then I came back later for my Ph.D. at New York University, where I studied early childhood education and teacher education.

And then I went back to Zambia, taught at the university, continued to do a lot of work with children and young people and women, and then UNICEF [United Nations Children's Fund] invited me to work for them in Nairobi. So I spent five years in Nairobi in the regional office, which covered 19 countries. And then for two and a half years I was the head of UNICEF in Kenya, which gave me a good chance to go all over Kenya.

And then the last three years in UNICEF, I was posted in Abidjan in Ivory Coast, where I was regional adviser to child development and women development in 23 countries of west and central Africa. And after that I thought it was time to go back to support development in [the village where I was raised].

HJAAPP

What year was that?

MBIKUSITA-LEWANIKA

That was 1990. Actually 1991 when I arrived. Because I noticed that each time I went on home leave every two years, things were sort of falling apart in the village. The economy was getting hard; people were getting poorer. Things were just a bit hard. And UNICEF actually had taught me to work in rural areas with village people. So I decided to go back to my own village to see what I [could] contribute. Well, when I arrived to settle in the village, I was sent to Parliament by the people. So I served as a member of Parliament for ten and a half years.

And then after that, the Zambian president appointed me special envoy for African affairs. Zambia's president was the chair—the last chair—of the Organization of African Unity. We participated in that transition to the African Union. So after that [was] when I was appointed as ambassador to the United States of America.

In 1991 in Abidjan, I got involved in the African women peace movement, because that year is when the war in Liberia broke out, and all of us African women in Abidjan, most of us, took in refugees. So I started trying to contribute to preven-

tion of conflict in Africa. And later on we formed the Federation of African Women . . . of which I was president, until I took up this post. And we participate in the preparations for the United Nations Resolution 1325, which is women, peace, and [security]. So now we have a policy that every government, every organization needs to involve women in all peace processes. A few governments are doing it, but we need a lot of lobbying to [expand that number].

So I grew up originally not really interested in women, but it's UNICEF that taught me the life of women. And it really touched my heart. The struggles, the work load—you know, the heavy work that the women did. So that's when I started to be very interested in women's development. And now, for the African Union, I think it's very significant and it's very important. And first of all, I would like the people to know that statutes of the African Union include African Americans. It talks about Africans in the Diaspora as another constituency for the African Union. So . . . I would encourage our brothers and sisters to get the constitution of the African Union and look at all the relations and the instruments that make the African Union. They can get this. There is an African Union office in New York. They just need to know about it and start contributing any way that they can.

One way that they can contribute is to invest in Africa. And also even to buy land, buy property. As you know, in many parts of Africa, people from all over the world, people from Asia, Japan, China, all the other countries, you know, go to Africa. They buy land; they set up businesses; they build houses. I would invite our brothers and sisters, as their own right, as members of the African Union, to also participate in building the economy of Africa. Own some land, own some businesses, as well as participate in other areas of development, like education, by exchange programs. We have had some very successful exchange programs like Crossroad Africa, which was started by an African American, I think in the early 1960's. It may still exist. So young African Americans each year, they used to go in summer to different parts of Africa, work together with our community people, build a bridge, build a school. Do something together. I think those kind of relationships are very, very important.

And then for the African American communities, I know you have ambassadors *in Washington, D.C., and you also have ambassadors and embassies at the United Nations*. So I think it is good to connect. I mean, not everybody may have the time and the money to go all the way to the continent. But I think there are many ways of connecting with each other. [The] embassy is already here. Many colleges and universities have African students. It should be a two-way system where we connect with each other.

But the investment field is very, very open. You can tour as tourists. You know, many parts of Africa, including Zambia, have spectacular tours. Zambia has one of the Seven Wonders of the World, the Victoria Falls, and also a lot of game—animals in their natural habitat.

Now the African Union itself, I believe, is very good news. It is different from the Organization of African Unity. The Organization of African Unity was established in 1963, and its main objective was to decolonize Africa. But they were not allowed to interfere in each member state's affairs. But the African Union is open to

that. And one of the very strong features of the African Union is trying to utilize African resources for its people and also, of course, for trade and export.

One exciting feature about the African Union is that the top structure [*like a cabinet for Africa commissioners*—Eds.] has 50 percent gender balance. We have fifty women in the top positions and fifty men. And this has not happened in other regional groupings.

The African Union has a peer review mechanism, which has not happened in the other regions. They don't have that kind of set up in their structures. It just started [on July 11, 2000]. So we should not really condemn it and say it hasn't worked. It's just beginning.

HJAAPP

Going back to the involvement of the African Diaspora in the African Union, you mentioned African Americans can invest in Africa, particularly by buying property and making businesses. How do you entice them to do that?

MBIKUSITA-LEWANIKA

Well, first of all, just be knowledgeable. Most African countries have an establishment that really goes into details of what's available in the country and where you get it. And most different countries have different incentives. Some have tax rebates, and in most of the countries they are very conscious of marketing in the global village. For example, in Zambia we give a three-year tax rebate, and you can buy the land and own it. So each country has several incentives. And most of these actually are on different Web sites.

Originally, in Africa we had the type of investors who exploited the land and took out everything. But in this day and age we are looking for the type of investors who are committed to a win-win situation, where they take out their profit, of course, but they also invest in the people and in the land.

HJAAPP

And why would you, as the ambassador from Zambia, believe that African Americans would be better than any other investors? What makes you think that that win-win situation is possible?

MBIKUSITA-LEWANIKA

First of all, many people have invested in Zambia and many parts of Africa, but not African Americans. You know, this is the motherland. This is their home. You see, like in America, here you have most of the ethnic groups supporting each other. You have Swedish Americans, very active in Swedish affairs. You have American Irish who own property in Ireland, and they're always lobbying and campaigning for their homeland. Many, many types. Everybody has got their own roots. And I would encourage our people also to activate our roots. We know we have had some prob-

lems because of the negatives associated with Africans in the Diaspora, because of the slave trade, and also because of slavery itself.

And then the media also depicts Africa as a dangerous place. As if there is a war in every place. As if there is crime everywhere. So I would encourage our brothers and sisters to go and see Africa for themselves. They shouldn't allow people to take other people's perspective. They will enjoy it. It's a beautiful place.

And also many other people go there and make lots of money. We have had people who have gone with nothing and become millionaires. So the African Americans have been missing in most of our countries, to go out and invest, to come as tourists, to bring exchange programs in education. There's been more in the missionary field. I must commend the African American church across the board. They've done a very, very good job of supporting Africa for many, many years. Many of them are working in HIV/AIDS. Many of them have sponsored tours. Many of them have sent medical teams. This is excellent. It needs to continue. But they have been missing in the areas of investment and tourism.

And the other area that has been missing is young people. There are many countries in Africa. There are 53 countries. So it's not like one place. And you will be happy to know that, God willing, in 2005 I will be going with a team of mainly African Americans from San Bernardino, and they are going as medical teams, as a cultural group and also as missionaries.

So I think these things should be continuing. And in the university and scholarly sectors, some of these people could be involved in teaching and doing research and partnerships, even with our local colleges and universities. For example, the initial black colleges and universities in America, I think we need to work closely with each other so we can help that partnership, that exchange of ideas, and visit each other. I think it would be good for both the Africans in the continent and the Africans in the Diaspora.

HJAAPP

You mentioned the investment of Irish Americans in Ireland and Swedish Americans in Sweden. But going back to that reality that African Americans don't know their national background because of the slave trade, how do you create that genuine idea to invest, the notion that you are connected, as you have in the other countries where you have a national background?

MBIKUSITA-LEWANIKA

Well, I think it started in the '60's, actually. There were some groups that were connecting Africans and African Americans and trying to overcome the problems of . . . betrayal and the slave trade. So it is really a two-way system. For my part, as an ambassador, I am always trying to reach out to the African American groups and individuals. But they also need to reach out. It's a two-way system. And when we look in the past, like at the original South Africa, African Americans played a key role, you know, people . . . like Harry Belafonte, Sidney Poitier. People like Jesse Jackson and others really played a key role in fighting apartheid. And even now, as

I already said, the African American [community] is playing very important roles in the fight on HIV/AIDS. But we need to do the same thing in investment. And the good thing about investment is also you make profit. We know that African Americans contribute significantly to the American economy, and they do have their resources to also contribute to the development of Africa.

Leon Sullivan felt very, very strongly. He always organized groups of African Americans going to different parts of Africa. And I am happy that in his memory the Sullivan Foundation has continued to engage Africa. So we have examples of where it's happening already, we just need to do more.

We need to expose our young people, both Africans in the Diaspora and in Africa, to each other and to share experiences and to continue the development of their respective countries as well as the continent.

HJAAPP

Going off this idea that the youth should be more involved. I think the youth are the most visible. But what is the perception of people at all levels, or at least in your experience in Zambia, of African Americans?

MBIKUSITA-LEWANIKA

Well, most of them go by the American press. You know, CNN and all the movies that they have seen are basically of Hollywood. So in most of those films, African Americans played very few roles, some of them mainly domestic help. So those who have not struggled, this would be the perception that they would have.

But these days, I think, with modern technology and information, with contributions in the media, black media . . . for example, *Ebony*, I think was the pioneer of showing the adult life of African Americans. *Black Enterprise*, showing African Americans in business. I think these are good examples, but we need to get these to the people, so that more of them know what's happening. The best way to learn is just to visit each other and get to know each other. And of course these days we have [the] Internet. All that is helpful.

But it is very important to expose young people to other cultures. Not only African Americans and Africans. Even others. When young people, for example, through the Peace Corps, go to other countries, sometimes they gain much more than what they give the people. It gives them a different perspective and many of them [are] in Washington. They are leaders. They are in Congress. They are in USAID [United States Agency for International Development]. So just that exposure when they were young to a different culture, to a different way of seeing things, really opens their minds. And they benefit for life.

HJAAPP

So what's the perception of prominent African American leaders like Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice?

MBIKUSITA-LEWANIKA

I think, as secretary of state, this is the first administration, I believe, of Republicans that has gone to Africa, that has tried to feature Africa. So I would assume that some of the African Americans, like the secretary of state, have contributed to that.

Dr. Condoleezza Rice, I think, is a great adviser and works very closely to the president. As ambassadors, we work more with Dr. Jendayi Frazier (senior director of Africa, National Security Council), who is very knowledgeable on the African continent and has commitment to the African continent. I think some of our contributions have come through the administration. There's been a visit to Africa by the president.

And in the Clinton administration, of course, . . . Dr. Susan Rice was very knowledgeable in Africa. I think she was the first assistant secretary of state for African Affairs [and] was an African American. I think all that shows that we are respecting our own people and connecting, and our people are being connected. We need to take advantage of these connections and this person's day in the office.

HJAAPP

Do you think that there's a different attitude among African American diplomats compared to U.S. diplomats from other backgrounds?

MBIKUSITA-LEWANIKA

They are there to implement the policy of the government. However, some of them—I can't say it's 100 percent—some of them take advantage of the roots that unite us to be more of an advocate of Africa. But you see, even the African in the Diaspora, Africa never left them. For an example, if you look at some of the examples of the way African Americans express themselves, [it's] actually a literal translation from the African language, which means you are thinking, really, in African.

And if you look, even, how we bring up our children in large families, like extended family, and also the type of food welcoming visitors, the value of human life. I think these are African values, which unite us. And some of the diplomats have used those to connect more with the people. But, generally, African American diplomats are there to implement the policy of their own government.

HJAAPP

Maybe you could talk a little bit more about the role of America, specifically within the *African Growth and Opportunity Act*. [Editor's note: The act, passed by Congress in May 2000, provides investment and trade advantages to Sub-Saharan African nations that are implementing democratic reforms.]

Mbikusita-Lewanika

OK. Good. The *African Growth [and] Opportunity Act* was worked on in Washington with the support of African diplomats and some African American

Congress people like the honorable Donald Payne from New Jersey, who is a very good advocate for Africa. He chairs the Committee on Africa and has really gone beyond expectations. He's very interested; he's very vocal about it. He has visited a number of African countries. So, of course, he was part and parcel of supporting our goal, which is the *African Growth [and] Opportunity Act*.

Now, in most of our countries, we want a goal, we want to participate. But the numbers required are so much, like agricultural produce or textiles, that we need to partner with people in other produce. And in other countries, they are partnered with other people. So in addition to what's already happening, it would be very nice to have African Americans also as partners. For example, in the area of farming, some of our brothers and sisters are very successful farmers. They've got the knowledge. They bought the equipment. They bought the machinery. So if they can work with their brothers and sisters in Africa to work in agriculture—expand the produce, improve the quality—that would be great. That's another win-win situation. Because it's a business. They're not doing it for free.

HJAAPP

Since you've talked about the African Union, particularly going into the development of the Peace and Security Council, what is your perception on the future of the Peace and Security Council? And, then secondly, what can be the role of African Americans in helping to develop peer review and solidify the success of the Peace and Security Council?

MBIKUSITA-LEWANIKA

I think that peace and security is paramount. And our leaders of the whole African Union have recognized that without peace and security there cannot be meaningful development. So that is part and parcel of our structure. It's very, very important, and they're working on it. And as we have seen from Liberia and from the other conflicts, they are trying very hard to enforce that peace and security.

I think African Americans can play a great role in the peace—some of them, like Mr. Payne Lucas [of Africare]. I mean for over thirty years [Africare] has worked with African government, African leaders, to contribute to development. And people like that, because of their contribution to Africa, I really feel they have made such close contacts with heads of states, and since the African Union also talks about Africans in the Diaspora, people of that nature, I think will be able to participate more and influence and also strengthen peace and security.

And I would suspect that the African American church, which is doing so much in development and HIV/AIDS, [is] also in a position to contribute to peace and security in their informal connections as well as in their formal connections. And the private sector, I think, knows now that where there's peace and stability, they make more business. So I think also they need to have in their mind a contribution to peace and security, so that they can make more money, do more business, and get out more profits.

Africare and the HIV/AIDS Strategy for Africa

Julius E. Coles

Currently, HIV/AIDS is decimating African societies, especially in Southern Africa, tearing apart the extended family system, eliminating skilled workers and creating millions of orphans. In 2003, AIDS killed an estimated 2.3 million Africans, while more than 26 million Africans are now living with HIV/AIDS. Africare has helped the people and leaders of Africa to combat HIV since 1987, shortly after the epidemic began. It is implementing HIV/AIDS programs in 18 countries, including Benin, Burkina Faso, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Guinea, Mali, and Namibia. Programs include HIV prevention, voluntary counseling and testing, care for people living with HIV/AIDS, and assistance to orphans and affected families. In addition, HIV/AIDS is a component of other programs focusing on agriculture, child survival, and emergency relief in all 26 countries where Africare is active.

OVERVIEW OF AFRICARE

In 1970, Africare was founded to improve the quality of life for the people of Africa. Over the course of its 33-year history, Africare has become a leader among private charitable U.S. organizations assisting Africa. It is the oldest and largest African American organization in the field. Africa is Africare's specialty.

When Africare was founded, West Africa was in the midst of one of the most severe droughts in its history. Animals were dying. Crops could not grow. Villagers were fleeing their homes in search of water. Millions of human lives hung in the balance. Among those providing help—medical aid to the Maina-Soroa Hospital in Diffa, Niger—were 17 American volunteers, led by William O. Kirker, M.D., and Barbara Jean A. Kirker, who named their group “Africare.”

Eventually, the organization needed more support. Diiori Hamani, then president of the Republic of Niger, appealed to the United States on the effort's behalf. He went on to pose a broader question: Why don't black Americans, whose ancestors came from the continent, respond to the needs in Africa? President Hamani addressed his appeal to C. Payne Lucas, the director of the Peace Corps Office of

Julius E. Coles is the president of Africare. Before assuming this position, he was the director of Morehouse College's Andrew Young Center for International Affairs from 1997 to 2002 and Howard University's Ralph J. Bunche International Affairs Center from 1994 to 1997. Most of Mr. Coles's career of some 28 years has been spent in the foreign service as a senior official with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Mr. Coles has a B.A. from Morehouse College and an M.P.A. from Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School.

Returned Volunteers in Washington, as well as to several African Americans working in Africa. Lucas had served previously in Niger and knew the president well. Dialogue between C. Payne Lucas and President Hamani ensued.

What emerged was a concept for a new breed of assistance organization: progressive like America, culturally respectful like the Peace Corps, and uniquely multiracial in origin as well as Africa-wide in scope. In 1970, Africare was incorporated in Hawaii, with William Kirker as its founder and first president. In 1971, Africare was permanently reincorporated in Washington, D.C. Lucas became the executive director (and later the president), and Kirker joined the board. Other incorporators were the Nigerian diplomat Oumarou G. Youssoufou and Joseph C. Kennedy, then on the staff of the Peace Corps.

With a \$39,550 budget, a U.S. headquarters in the basement of Lucas's home, and one project in Niger hardly signaled an impressive start. But Africare's founders loved Africa. They envisioned what Africare could become. They also had the tremendous drive needed to pursue their dreams for their new organization and what it could do for the continent.

To date, Africare has delivered more than \$400 million in assistance—representing more than 2,000 projects and millions of beneficiaries—to 35 countries throughout Africa. Africare's 150-plus programs reach families and communities in 26 nations in every region of Africa.

1. Africare has been a pioneer in village-based rural development in Africa. In the area of health, special achievements have been in child survival, river-blindness control, malaria prevention, national-level pharmaceutical management, and HIV/AIDS response at the grass-roots level. Africare has constructed thousands of wells and irrigation systems, bringing safe, reliable water supplies to some of the most isolated communities in desert areas of Africa. Food production, monetization, and security continue to represent major focal points of Africare's work—as does assistance to small-scale entrepreneurs, from edible-oil producers throughout southern Africa to women farmers and women-owned co-ops throughout Africa.

2. Africare has worked on the front lines of virtually every humanitarian emergency for 33 years. Africare was active in the Sahelian drought of the 1970's, the Somalia refugee crisis, and the Africa-wide drought of the 1980's. Since the 1990's, Africare has worked in conflict situations brought on by warfare in Angola, Somalia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, Burundi, and elsewhere. In 2002, Africare responded to the resurgence of widespread famine in southern Africa and the Horn of Africa with emergency food assistance and programs to expand cultivation of drought-resistant crop.

3. Africare has provided a working bridge between Africans and African Americans. Before Africare came into being, African Americans donated relatively little to Africa because there was no single agency that truly sought to create a bridge between these groups. Africare set out to create that bridge, and it has had some success. Among the organization's most loyal donors are African American churches, community groups, social clubs, and sororities and fraternities. Through numerous Africare-sponsored events, African Americans have had the chance to learn about Africa and know its people.

CURRENT PROGRAMS

Since its founding in 1970, Africare has concentrated on the projects that best meet Africa's needs: self-help development projects in the rural areas, where most Africans live. That commitment continues, with priorities in two areas: 1) food security and agriculture, and 2) health and HIV/AIDS. In addition, Africare supports projects in water-resource development, environmental management, basic education, microenterprise development, governance, and emergency humanitarian aid.

Agriculture forms a major part of the economies of most African countries, and it is the work in which most African people are engaged. Africare's food security and agriculture projects range from village vegetable gardens to integrated food, water, conservation, marketing, and monetization initiatives spanning entire regions.

Africare's work in health and HIV/AIDS reaches countries where existing services are scarce and families face some of the most devastating health problems on earth. In addition to child and family health, nutrition, water safety, and health-services delivery, Africare has mounted a major response to the AIDS crisis, with programs such as HIV/AIDS prevention, counseling and support for people living with HIV/AIDS, and assistance to AIDS orphans.

Africare also undertakes projects in:

- **Water resource development.** Examples include well construction, provision of water pumps, and combined water supply and sanitation-education initiatives.
- **Environmental management.** Projects range in focus from alternative energy (solar power, for example), reforestation, and soil desalinization to the training of farmers in techniques for growing food while conserving natural resources.
- **Basic education.** Examples include primary school construction, computer training, and adult literacy (women's literacy, "literacy for health," etc.).
- **Microenterprise development.** Projects focus on credit, marketing, basic small-business management, cooperative development, and women's enterprises.
- **Governance.** Projects range from support to civil-society institutions in Benin and Burundi to governance training in Rwanda and Nigeria.
- **Emergency humanitarian aid** projects are addressing the food crises in southern Africa and the Horn of Africa, warfare in Angola, postwar recovery in Sierra Leone, continuing refugee migrations from Burundi and Rwanda, and more.

HIV/AIDS STRATEGY

Currently, HIV/AIDS is decimating African societies, especially in southern Africa, tearing apart the extended family system, eliminating skilled workers, and creating millions of orphans. In 2003, AIDS killed an estimated 2.3 million Africans, while more than 26 million Africans are now living with HIV/AIDS, according to the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS. The high prevalence of HIV infections

means that the impact of HIV/AIDS morbidity and mortality will be felt for decades.

Africare has helped the people and leaders of Africa to combat HIV since 1987, shortly after the epidemic began. In Nigeria, Africare worked closely with the Federal Ministries of Health, Information, and Education to develop zonal HIV/AIDS-prevention strategies. These strategies evolved into state-level programs, where Africare worked to build the capacity of nongovernmental organizations to plan and implement prevention interventions. In Rwanda, Africare supported the establishment of the National HIV/AIDS Office with financial, material, and technical support.

Today, Africare is implementing HIV/AIDS programs in 18 countries, including Benin, Burkina Faso, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Guinea, Mali, Namibia. Programs include HIV prevention, voluntary counseling and testing, care for people living with HIV/AIDS, and assistance to orphans and affected families. In addition, HIV/AIDS is a component of other programs focusing on agriculture, child survival, and emergency relief in all 26 countries where Africare works.

From the desert of Niger to the villages of Uganda and Zambia, two Africare programs are conveying HIV-prevention information, transmitted via satellite and inexpensive radio receivers. Broadcast programs are supported by local health workers, who lead community discussion groups, support voluntary counseling and testing, and link communities to additional services. More than 82,000 people in thirty communities in the three countries are benefiting at this time. By 2006, radio-based HIV/AIDS education is projected to reach a total of 120 sites in 14 countries, including Burkina Faso, Tanzania, Rwanda, Guinea, and South Africa.

In Malawi, South Africa, and Zambia, Africare has expanded a program to build the capacity of youth-led community-based initiatives to improve adolescent reproductive health. The Youth Empowerment and Support (YES!) program is designed to help youth say YES! to positive health-seeking behavior, YES! to high self esteem, YES! to abstaining from sex, and YES! to an AIDS-free life. The program has reached 2 million youth and supported 144 community organizations.

As parents die of AIDS in Africa, children are left homeless or are taken in by relatives and friends who themselves are very poor. AIDS orphans often lack shelter, health care, schooling, and other necessities—even as they struggle to cope with their emotional loss. Africare programs in Nigeria, Rwanda, and Zimbabwe are helping thousands of young orphans in desperate need. In Nigeria's Rivers State, Africare is working with home-based care providers to ensure access to education, nutrition, and health services for nearly 1,000 orphans. In Zimbabwe's Mutasa district, in addition to support for caregivers, Africare is helping to establish Orphan Clubs, which provide emotional and material support to their young members; to date, 55 Orphan Clubs, with 3,000 affected children and orphans, have been established. Seven-year old Tariro, who lost both of her parents to AIDS, is one of the orphans receiving assistance.

BOX 1: TARIRO'S STORY

At the age of 7, Tariro lost both parents after long bouts with opportunistic infections. Now Tariro and her older sister live with their aged grandparents. Meeting basic needs is a challenge for Tariro's grandparents, who are struggling to cope themselves. In grade 1 at the time, Tariro was often evicted from class for unpaid school fees, no stationery, or improper uniform. Exclusion and stigma have affected her self-esteem and class performance. Through Africare's Orphan Clubs' income-generating activities, Tariro's school fees have been paid. "If this support continues, I am most likely to perform well in class and achieve my dream to be a nurse," says Tariro.

In June 2002, Africare launched its HIV/AIDS Service Corps: an innovative program that enlists grass-roots level Africans—such as parents, adolescents, and teachers—as volunteers in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Like the Peace Corps, the Africare HIV/AIDS Service Corps relies on volunteers; each volunteer has a specific scope of work. Training, oversight, and support are provided to all volunteers, in addition to small stipends for their work. What is unique about the Africare program is that the volunteers are neither Americans nor Europeans nor expert professionals, but Africans who share their time, energy, and compassion to reduce the AIDS devastation in the communities in which they live.

Africare HIV/AIDS Service Corps volunteers are now active in Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Namibia, Rwanda, Uganda, and Zambia. Prevention projects serve such diverse groups as rural farmers, adolescents, and commercial sex workers. Care programs in Rwanda enlist unemployed health workers to support affected families, and in Zimbabwe, they involve men as caregivers to increase their awareness of the disease and their leadership within anti-AIDS efforts.

In a major new initiative, Africare is working jointly with the Ministry of Health and local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in Benin to strengthen HIV/AIDS policies at the central level and to improve outreach to three provinces. Aspects of the program include HIV/AIDS surveillance, HIV-prevention education, management of other sexually transmitted diseases, and overall capacity building among the NGOs. The initiative grows out of a decade of Africare assistance to Beninese NGOs and health providers.

Africare believes that its multifaceted strategy for dealing with the HIV/AIDS pandemic is having an impact on the AIDS pandemic in the African countries where it works. Nevertheless, more resources will be required to enable Africare to carry its program initiatives into other geographic areas and countries being affected by the AIDS pandemic.

Health Challenges Facing the Nation

Dr. Diane Rowland

Providing health insurance coverage for the over 43 million uninsured Americans remains a major challenge for the nation. A substantial body of research shows that there is a strong relationship between health insurance coverage and access to medical care and, ultimately, health outcomes. Though there is public support for guaranteeing coverage for more Americans, the economic downturn, coupled with rising health insurance premium costs and state fiscal constraints to expanding public coverage, pose a significant challenge for reform. This paper examines the uninsured population, the consequences of lack of insurance, and the current health insurance environment.

Providing health insurance coverage remains one of the nation's most pressing and persistent health care challenges. When asked to identify the top health care priorities for the nation, the public lists lack of health insurance coverage among its top priorities. In a public opinion survey conducted in the fall of 2003, one in three Americans (33 percent) rated increasing the number of Americans covered by health insurance as the "most important" health issue for Congress and the president to address.¹

Census Bureau data released in September 2003 show that 43.6 million adults and children—more than one in every seven Americans—were without health insurance in 2002. The new statistics reveal that this is a large and growing problem for millions of Americans. From 2001 to 2002, the number of Americans lacking health insurance increased by 2.4 million primarily due to the decline in employer-sponsored coverage.² Public coverage expansions helped to moderate the growth in the uninsured population, most notably by providing coverage to children in low-income families, but were not enough to offset the decline in private coverage.³ The decline in employer-sponsored coverage is likely attributable to declines in employment, shifts in employment from firms and industries where coverage is more likely to be available to ones where it is less likely to be available, and increases in health care costs.⁴

The uninsured come predominantly from working families with low and moderate incomes—families for whom employer-sponsored coverage is either not

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available or not affordable.⁵ Low-wage employees are less likely than higher-wage employees to work in a firm that sponsors a health insurance plan and are also less likely to take up coverage when offered, largely due to the cost of their share of the premium.⁶ Public program expansions through Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) help to fill some gaps, especially for low-income children, but the fiscal crisis in the states due to a falloff in state tax revenues is now putting public coverage at risk.⁷ Unfortunately, the economic downturn, coupled with rising health care costs and fiscal constraints on public coverage, all point to continued growth in our uninsured population.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF LACK OF INSURANCE

The growing number of uninsured Americans is not without consequence because having health insurance affects people's access to the health care system and, ultimately, impacts their health. Leaving a substantial share of our population without health insurance threatens not only the health and economic well-being of the uninsured, but also of our nation.

There is now a substantial body of research documenting disparities in access to care between those with and without insurance. Survey after survey finds the uninsured are more likely than those with insurance to postpone seeking care, to forgo needed care, and to go without needed prescription medications. Many of the uninsured fear obtaining care will be too costly. Over a third report needing care and not getting it, and nearly half (47 percent) say they have postponed seeking care due to cost.⁸ Thirty-six percent of the uninsured report having problems paying medical bills, and nearly a quarter (23 percent) report being contacted by a collection agency about medical bills, compared to 16 percent and 8 percent of the insured, respectively, who encountered such problems.⁹ The uninsured are also less likely to have a regular source of care than the insured. When they do seek care, the uninsured are more likely to use a health clinic or emergency room.¹⁰ Lack of insurance thus takes a toll on both the access to care and the financial well-being of the uninsured.

Moreover, there is a growing body of evidence showing that access to care and financial well-being are not all that is at stake for the uninsured. There are often serious consequences for those who forgo care. Among the uninsured surveyed, half report a significant loss in time spent on important life activities, and more than half (57 percent) report a painful temporary disability, while 19 percent report long-term disability as a result of their lack of coverage.¹¹ Lack of insurance compromises the health of the uninsured because they receive less preventive care, are diagnosed at more advanced disease stages, and, once diagnosed, tend to receive less therapeutic care and have higher mortality rates than the insured.¹² Uninsured adults are less likely to receive preventive health services such as regular mammograms, clinical breast exams, Pap tests, and colorectal screening.¹³ They have higher cancer mortality rates, in part, because when cancer is diagnosed late in its progression, the survival chances are greatly reduced.¹⁴ Similarly, uninsured persons with heart disease are less likely to undergo diagnostic and treatment procedures, less likely to be admitted to hospitals with cardiac services, and more likely to delay care for chest pain. They also have a 25 percent higher in-hospital mortality rate.¹⁵

The Institute of Medicine (IOM) in its analysis of the consequences of lack of insurance estimates that 18,000 Americans die prematurely each year due to the effects of lack of health insurance coverage.¹⁶ Urban Institute researchers Jack Hadley and John Holahan, drawing from a wide range of studies, conservatively estimate that a 5 to 15 percent reduction in the mortality rate could be achieved if the uninsured were to gain continuous health coverage.¹⁷

Beyond the direct effects on health, lack of insurance also can compromise the earnings of workers and the educational attainment of their children. Poor health among adults leads to lower labor force participation, lower work effort in the labor force, and lower earnings.¹⁸ For children, poor health leads to poorer school attendance and both lower school achievement and cognitive development.¹⁹

These insurance gaps do not solely affect the uninsured but also our communities and society. In 2001, it is estimated that \$35 billion in uncompensated care—care that is not paid for by insurance sources or out of pocket—was provided in the health system with government funding accounting for 75 to 80 percent of all uncompensated care funding.²⁰ The poorer health of the uninsured adds to the health burden of communities because those without insurance often forgo preventive services, such as immunizations and physical exams, or postpone care, putting them at greater risk of illness. Communities with high rates of the uninsured face increased pressure on their public health and medical resources to address the consequences of forgone or delayed care.

A recent IOM report estimates that, in the aggregate, the annualized cost of the diminished health and shorter life spans of Americans who lack insurance is between \$65 and \$130 billion.²¹ Although they could not quantify the dollar impact, the IOM committee concluded that public programs such as Social Security disability insurance are likely to have higher budgetary costs than they would if the U.S. population under age 65 were fully insured.²² A new study by Hadley and Holahan suggests that a lack of insurance during late middle age leads to significantly poorer health at age 65 and that continuous coverage in middle age could lead to a \$10 billion per year savings to Medicare and Medicaid.²³

THE CURRENT ENVIRONMENT

Given the growing consensus that lack of insurance is negatively affecting not only the health of the uninsured, but also the health of the nation, one would expect extending coverage to the uninsured to be a national priority. All indicators, however, point to this year as one in which we can expect little action on coverage, despite the significant growth in our uninsured population.

With the poor economy and rising health care costs, employer-based coverage—the mainstay of our health insurance system—is under increased strain. Health insurance premiums rose nearly 14 percent this year—the third consecutive year of double-digit increases and a marked contrast to only marginal increases in workers' wages.²⁴ As a result, workers can expect to pay larger shares of their premiums and more out of pocket when they obtain care because of increases in cost sharing, putting additional stress on limited family budgets. With average family premiums now exceeding \$9,000 per year and workers' contribution to premiums averaging

\$2,400, the cost of coverage is likely to be increasingly unaffordable for many families.²⁵ For many low-wage workers, the employee share of premiums may now equal 10 to 20 percent of total income, leaving those who are offered coverage unable to take it up.²⁶ However, for most low-wage workers, especially those in small firms, it is not a question of affordability—the firms they work for do not offer coverage.²⁷

From 2001 to 2002, employer-based health insurance coverage declined for low-income adults and children.²⁸ However, Medicaid and SCHIP enrollment increased in response to the sharp decline in employer-based coverage for children, offsetting a sharper increase in the number of uninsured.²⁹ The latest Census Bureau statistics on the uninsured for 2002 underscore the important relationship between public coverage and loss of employer-sponsored coverage. Health insurance provided by the government increased, but not enough to offset the overall decline in private coverage. Most notably, while the number of uninsured adults increased, the number of uninsured children remained stable because public coverage helped fill in the gaps resulting from loss of employer coverage.³⁰

Medicaid is the safety net that provides health insurance coverage for most low-income children and some of their parents. Medicaid coverage, however, provides neither comprehensive nor stable coverage of the low-income population. In 2002, Medicaid provided health insurance coverage to more than half of all poor children and a third of their parents, but it covered only 28 percent of poor childless adults.³¹ Most low-income children are eligible for assistance through Medicaid or SCHIP, but in most states, parents' eligibility lags far behind that of their children. In 39 states, eligibility levels for children are at 200 percent of the federal poverty level (\$30,520 for a family of three in 2003) while parents' eligibility levels are much lower.³² A parent working full time at minimum wage earns too much to be eligible for Medicaid in 19 states.³³ For childless adults, Medicaid funds are not available unless the individual is disabled or lives in one of the few states with a waiver to permit coverage of childless adults. As a result, more than 40 percent of poor adults and a third of near-poor adults are uninsured.³⁴

In recent years, with SCHIP enactment and Medicaid expansions, states have made notable progress in broadening outreach, simplifying enrollment processes, and extending coverage to more low-income families.³⁵ Participation in public programs has helped to reduce the number of uninsured children and demonstrated that outreach and streamlined enrollment can improve the reach of public programs. However, the combination of the current fiscal situation of states and the downward turn in our economy are beginning to undo the progress we have seen.

States are now experiencing the worst fiscal situation they have faced since the end of World War II. Recently, state revenues have fallen faster and further than anyone predicted, creating substantial shortfalls in state budgets. In 2002, real state revenue collections, after the effects of legislative changes are taken into account, declined for the first time in at least a decade, falling 6.8 percent from the previous year. That was followed by a 3.3 percent decline in 2003, although states project slight growth in 2004.³⁶ At the same time, Medicaid spending has been increasing as health care costs for both the public and private markets have grown and states face growing enrollment in the program, largely as a result of the weak economy.

However, even as Medicaid spending grows, it is not the primary cause of state budget shortfalls. While state Medicaid spending rose in FY2002 by \$7 billion more than projected based on recent trends, this contribution to state budget deficits is modest compared to the \$62 billion gap in state revenue collections relative to projections.³⁷

The state revenue falloff is placing enormous pressure on state budgets and endangering states' ability to provide the funds necessary to sustain Medicaid coverage. Turning first to "rainy day" and tobacco settlement funds, states have tried to preserve Medicaid and keep the associated federal dollars in their programs and state economies.³⁸ But, as the sources of state funds become depleted, states face a daunting challenge in trying to forestall new or deeper cuts in Medicaid spending growth. In the *Jobs and Growth Tax Relief Reconciliation Act* enacted in May 2003, Congress provided \$20 billion in state fiscal relief, including an estimated \$10 billion through a temporary increase in the federal Medicaid matching rate. This has helped states avoid making deeper reductions in their Medicaid spending growth.³⁹ This fiscal relief will expire in June 2004, however, and it seems unlikely that states' fiscal conditions will improve by then. States are expecting a major budgetary impact when the fiscal relief expires.⁴⁰

Because Medicaid is the second largest item in most state budgets after education, cuts in the program appear inevitable—in the absence of new revenue sources—as states seek to balance their budgets and the fiscal relief expires. Indeed, survey data the Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured released in September 2003 indicates that every state and the District of Columbia put new Medicaid cost containment strategies in place in fiscal year 2003. All of these states planned to take additional cost containment action in fiscal year 2004.⁴¹

States have continued to aggressively pursue a variety of cost containment strategies, including reducing provider payments, placing new limits on prescription drug use and payments, adopting disease management strategies, and trying to better manage high-cost cases.⁴² The pressure to reduce Medicaid spending growth further, however, has led many states to reduce eligibility and benefits as well as increase cost-sharing for beneficiaries.⁴³ Although in many cases reductions have been targeted fairly narrowly, some states have found it necessary to make deeper reductions, affecting tens of thousands of people.

The fiscal situation in the states jeopardizes not only Medicaid's role as the health insurer of low-income families, but also its broader role as the health and long-term assistance program for the elderly and people with disabilities. Although children account for half of Medicaid's 51 million enrollees, they account for only 18 percent of Medicaid spending.⁴⁴ It is the low-income elderly and disabled population that account for most of Medicaid spending. They represent a quarter of the beneficiaries but account for 70 percent of all spending because of their greater health needs and dependence on Medicaid for assistance with long-term care.⁴⁵

It is these broader roles for the elderly and disabled population that drive Medicaid's costs. Most notably, for 7 million low-income elderly and disabled Medicare beneficiaries, Medicaid provides prescription drug coverage, long-term care assistance, vision care, dental care, and other services excluded from Medicare.⁴⁶ While these dual eligibles represent 14 percent of the Medicaid popula-

tion, they account for over 40 percent of Medicaid spending.⁴⁷ Most of the growth (60 percent) in Medicaid spending between 2000 and 2002 was attributable to elderly and disabled beneficiaries, reflecting their high use of prescription drugs—the fastest growing component of Medicaid spending—and long-term care, where the bulk of spending on these groups goes.⁴⁸ These are all areas in which states will find it difficult to achieve painless reductions and understandably areas for which states are seeking more direct federal assistance, especially with the costs associated with dual eligibles.

CONCLUSION

Looking ahead, it is hard to see how we will be able to continue to make progress in expanding coverage to the uninsured or even maintaining the coverage Medicaid now provides. The latest statistics on the uninsured from the Census Bureau show that lack of health coverage is a growing problem for millions of American families. The poor economy combined with rising health care costs make further declines in employer-sponsored coverage likely. The state fiscal situation combined with rising federal deficits complicate any efforts at reform. In the absence of additional federal assistance, the fiscal crisis at the state level is likely to compromise even the ability to maintain coverage through public programs. Although Medicaid has demonstrated success as a source of health coverage for low-income Americans and a critical resource for those with serious health and long-term care needs, that role is now in jeopardy. Assuring the stability and adequacy of financing to meet the needs of America's most vulnerable and addressing our growing uninsured population ought to be among the nation's highest priorities.

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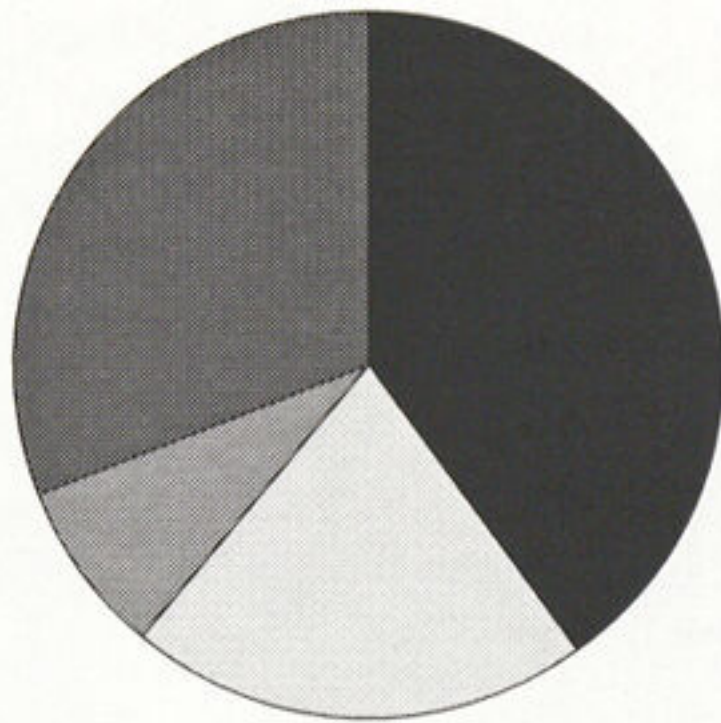
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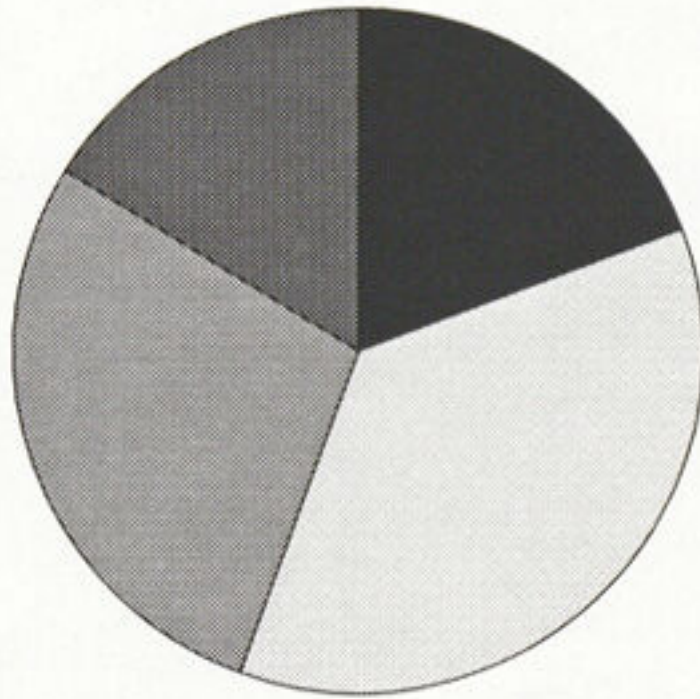
CHARACTERISTICS OF THE UNINSURED, 2002

Age



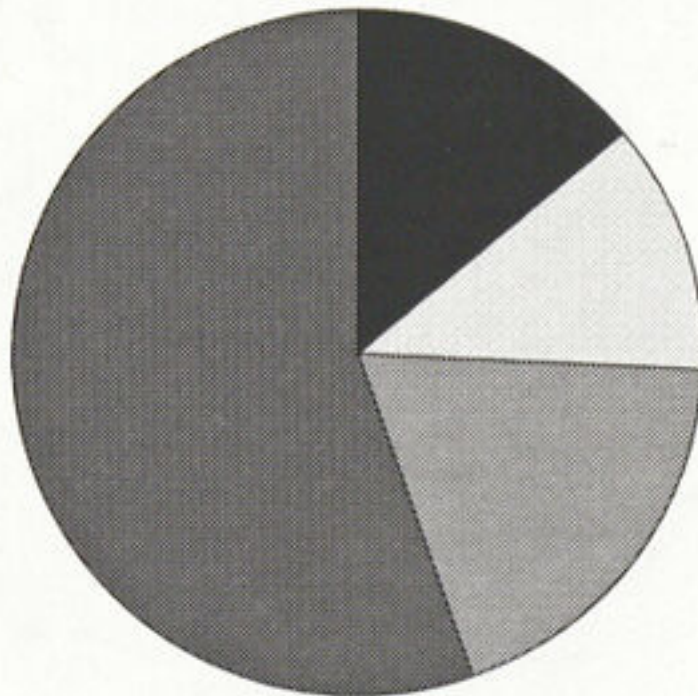
Adults 35-54	31%
Adults 55-64	8%
Children Under 19	21%
Adults 19-34	40%

Income



200-299% FPL	16%
100-199% FPL	28%
<100% FPL	36%
300% FPL & Above	19%

Work Status



1 Full-Time Worker	56%
No Workers	19%
Part-Time Workers	12%
2 or More Full-Time Workers	14%

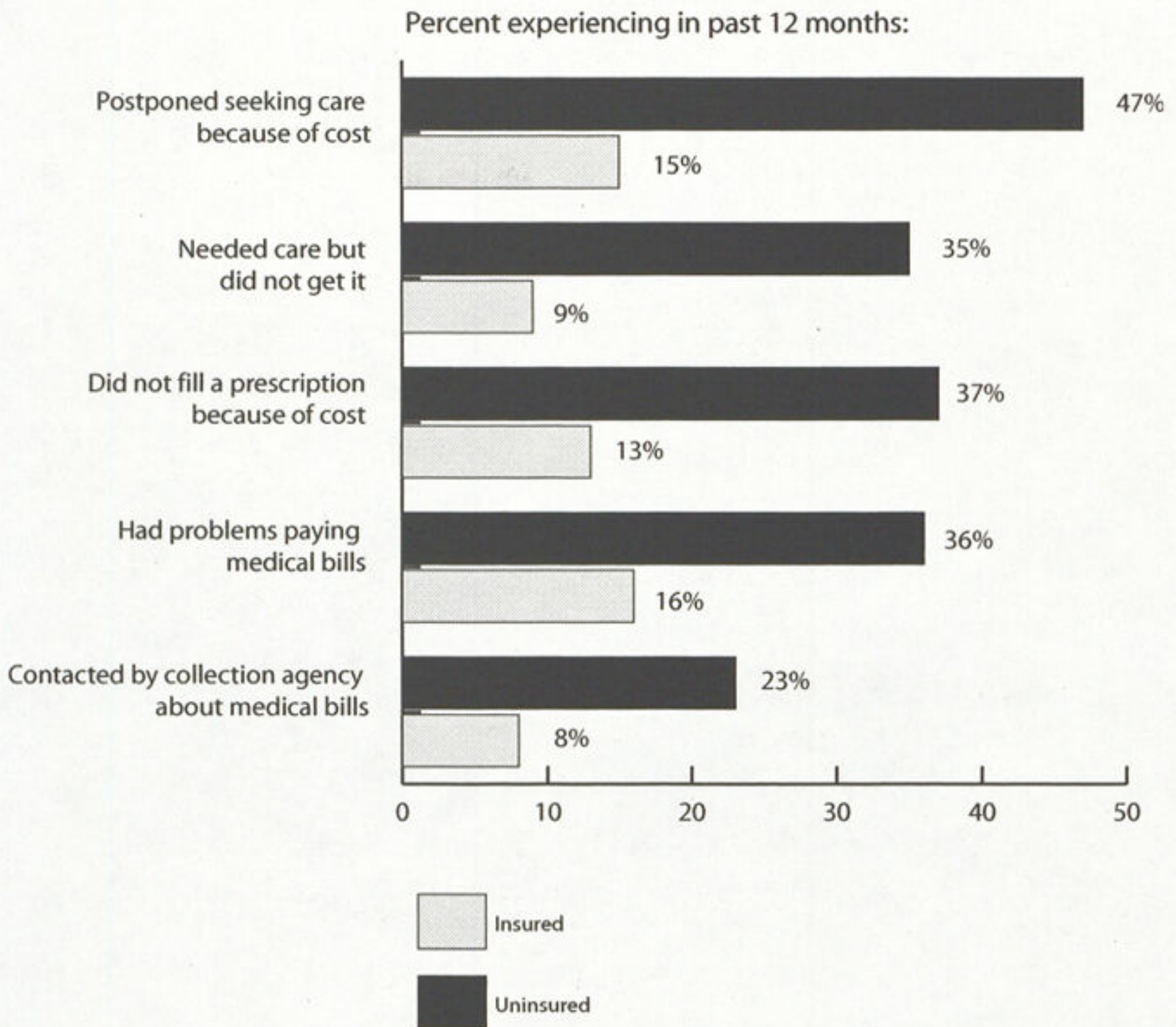
Total = 43 million uninsured

Note: The federal poverty level was \$14,348 for a family of three in 2002.

Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

SOURCE: KCMU and Urban Institute analysis of the March 2003 Current Population Survey.

BARRIERS TO HEALTH CARE BY INSURANCE STATUS, 2003

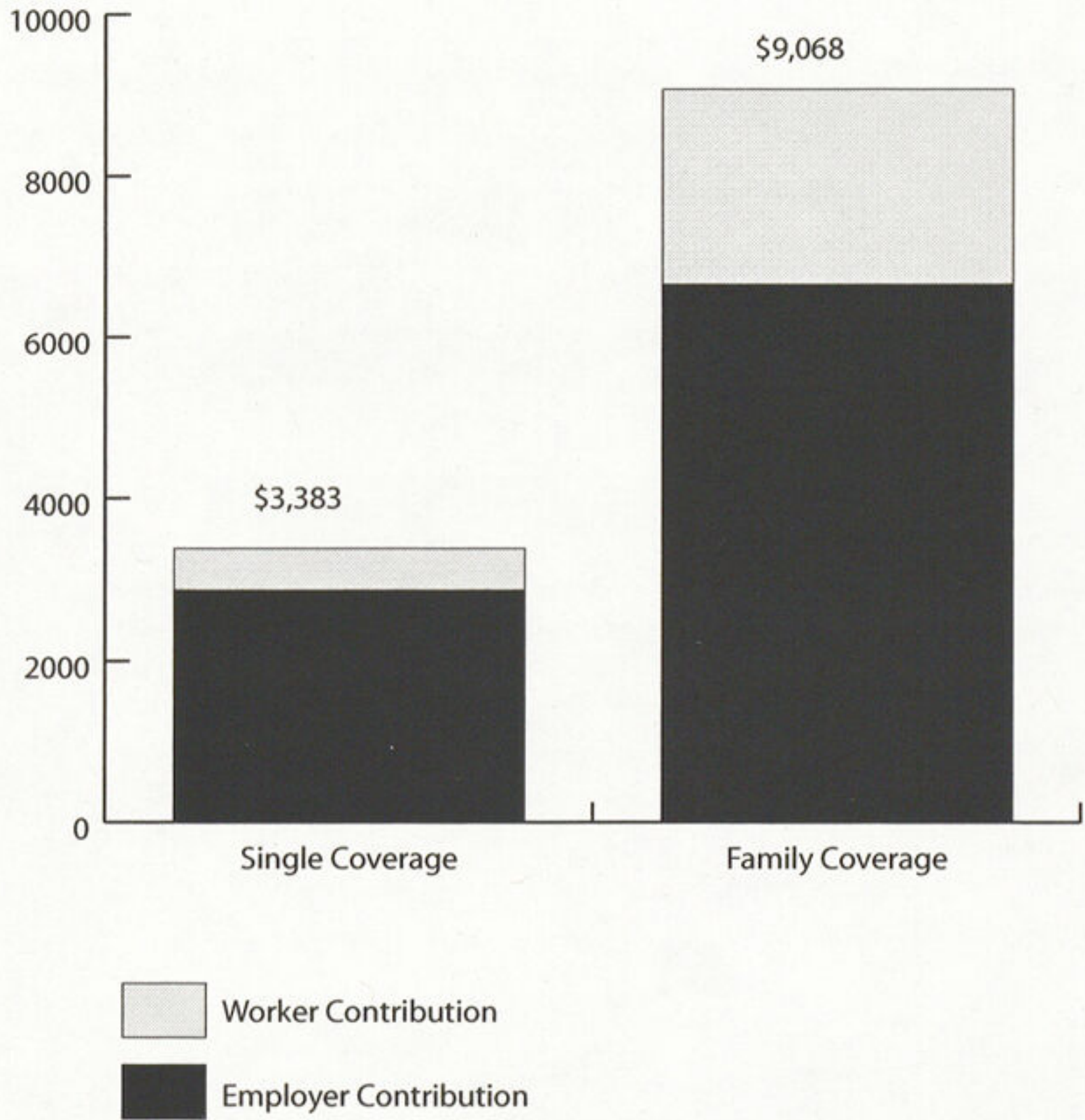


*Experienced by the respondent or a member of their family.

Note: Insured includes those covered by public or private health insurance.

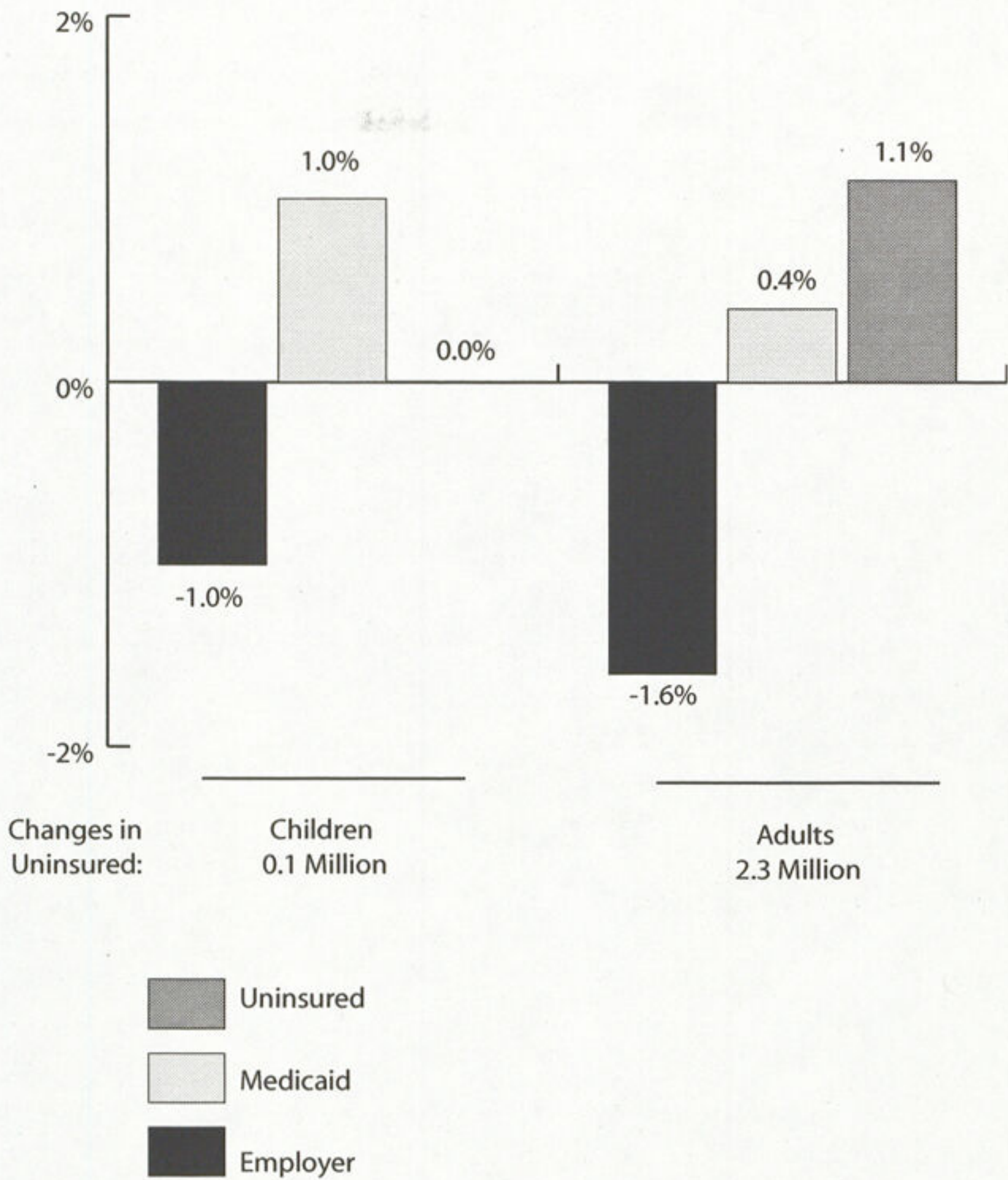
SOURCE: Kaiser Family Foundation, Kaiser 2003 Health Insurance Survey.

AVERAGE ANNUAL PREMIUM COSTS FOR COVERED WORKERS, 2003



SOURCE: Kaiser Family Foundation and Health Research and Educational Trust, Survey of Employer Health Benefits, 2003.

CHANGES IN HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE, CHILDREN VS. ADULTS, 2001-2002 (PERCENTAGE POINT DIFFERENCES)

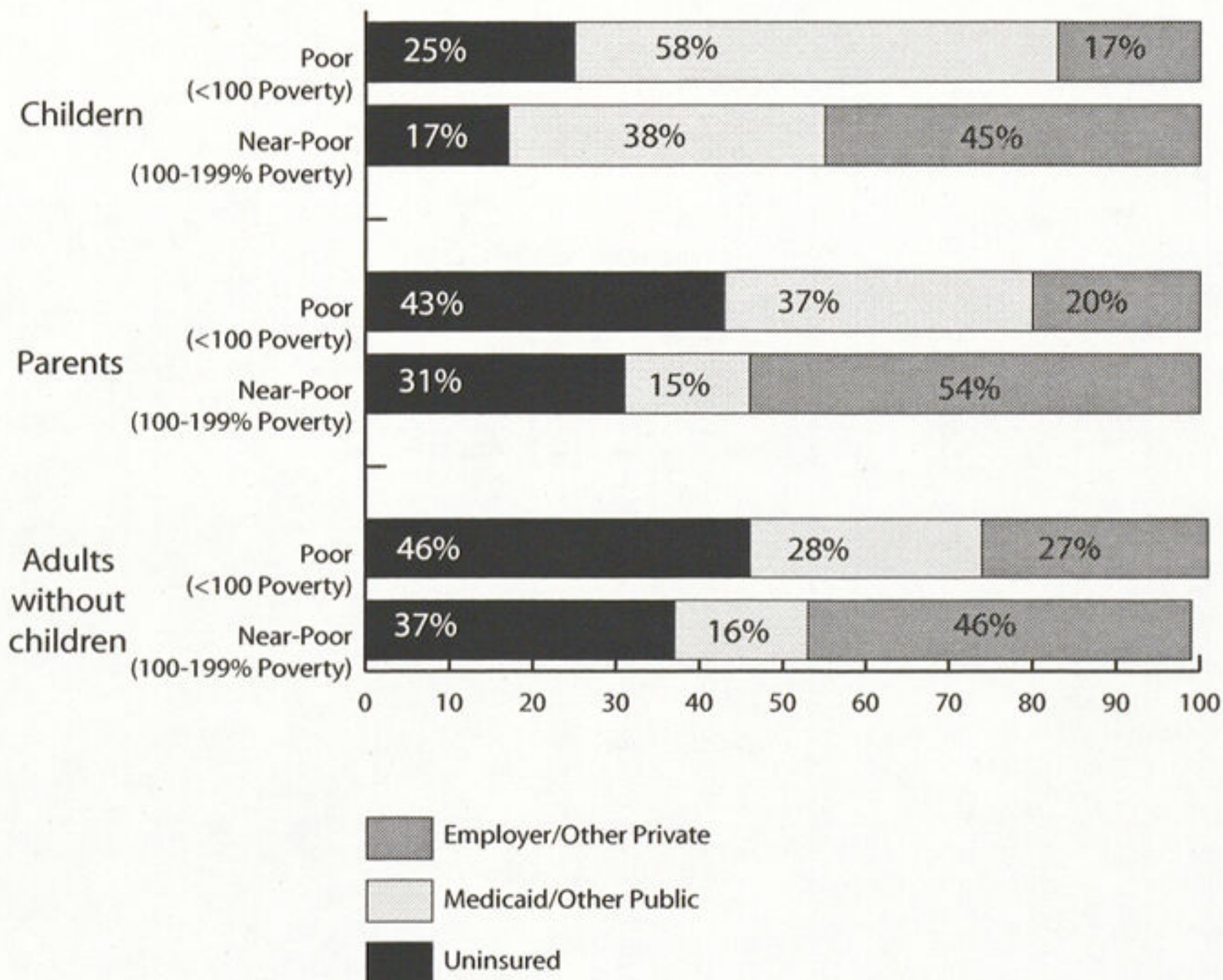


*Statistically significant change between 2001 and 2002 (p<.10).

Note: Medicaid also includes SCHIP, other state programs, Medicare and military-related coverage.

SOURCE: KCMU and Urban Institute analysis of the 2003 Current Population Survey.

HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE OF LOW-INCOME ADULTS AND CHILDREN, 2002



Notes: Adults age 19-64. Medicaid also includes SCHIP and other state programs, Medicare and military-related coverage. Data may not total 100% due to rounding.

SOURCE: KCMU and Urban Institute analysis of March 2003 Current Population Survey.

Sentinel Disparity in Health Care: A Uniquely Unacceptable Phenomenon

Dr. John McKnight

The quality and reform of health care is a prominent component of national discussions in the year leading to the 2004 presidential election. Many issues such as Medicare reform, prescription drug benefits for the elderly, and improved access for uninsured Americans have been prominent in the national discourse. For African Americans and other ethnic minorities, the results of a groundbreaking study by the Institute of Medicine focus attention on the issue of racial and ethnic health care disparities. The study reveals poor outcomes in health care, solely based on race or ethnic background exist in every level of American health care.

The author, who is a practicing physician of 25 years, discusses the issues surrounding racial and ethnic disparities and the implications for African American health care consumers. In order to focus national attention on the problem of racial disparity in health care, the author coins a new term, sentinel disparity, to describe this uniquely unacceptable phenomenon. Recommendations are put forward to gain better understanding of the scope of sentinel disparity and to suggest new methodological approaches to both research and intervention.

INTRODUCTION

In the spring of 2003, I celebrated my 25th anniversary of medical school graduation. Like many of my classmates, it was difficult for me to chart where the years

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had gone, yet paradoxically easy for me to acknowledge the opportunities, blessings, and challenges of patient care carried over these same years. In this election year, I also pause to consider the American health care system from the perspective of an African American provider who has participated in this system at many levels. Caring for the underserved at a city general hospital, training at a university teaching hospital, serving in an urban clinic, participating in high-level clinical research at a major institution, and providing twenty years of focused care for cancer patients create the scaffolding of experience around which I pause to contemplate changes in health care and the issues confronting African American health care consumers.

It is truly amazing to appreciate how quickly our understanding of human illness, the challenges of care delivery to an increasingly diverse population, and the demands for a more productive and accountable research movement change and progress. Recall that HIV was first described in 1981 and has become a worldwide scourge.¹ The human genome reference sequence for *Homo sapiens* was completed in 2003.² A consensus on the application of this new knowledge still defies researchers, ethicists, and policy makers. Revelations from the Tuskegee experiments surfaced in 1972.³ These disclosures still reverberate as a mandate for research design, monitoring, and accountability. It is staggering that these events have taken place over a mere 33 years.

The reflections of a 1978 medical school graduate on the specific issues confronting African Americans are the product of experience, humble appreciation for rapid change, and hopeful examination of future challenges. While national media focuses on health matters such as the reform and privatization of Medicare, prescription drug benefits for the elderly, and reduction of the rising numbers of uninsured Americans, the most vexing problem facing African Americans may be racial and ethnic disparities in health care.

Health care disparity, as a term of understanding, came into the national lexicon in the 1990's. In 1999, the United States Congress officially requested the Institute of Medicine (IOM) to assemble a committee to examine disparities in the type and quality of care received by U.S. racial and ethnic minorities and non-minorities. The results of this groundbreaking study were reported in the IOM publication entitled *Unequal Treatment: Confronting Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health Care* (hereafter, the IOM report) that was released to the public in 2002.⁴ The IOM study committee defines disparities in health care as racial or ethnic differences in the quality of health care that are not due to "access-related factors or clinical needs, preferences and the appropriateness of intervention."⁵ The powerful message of the IOM report is that African Americans, as well as other ethnic minority groups, when entering the health care system with insurance and no other reason to give rise to inadequate outcomes frequently receive substandard care. Substandard care causes poor outcomes, and as a result, lives are lost. Obviously, this does not occur with every encounter an African American patient has with the health care system; however, the true frequency of this phenomenon and its true cost in lives shortened or lost remains unknown. From my vantage point as a health care provider, the existence of racial and ethnic disparities is fundamentally wrong. Addressing the

problems of adequate insurance coverage for all citizens and prescription drug coverage must be a national priority.

Even though IOM has called this problem unacceptable,⁶ many hard questions still exist. How do we elevate the level of discourse on racial and ethnic health care disparities to the person-on-the street level? How do we challenge presidential candidates from each side of the aisle to address this issue as a national priority? How do we encourage the national media to sustain discussion on a health care concern of such specific importance to African American and other minority communities? How do we separate access-related barriers, such as available coverage for the uninsured, from the unique phenomenon of substandard care received by racial minorities as detailed in the IOM report? How do we involve thinkers from multiple disciplines such as law, medicine, education, human behavior, and policy in the solution of this far-reaching problem? Effective engagement and informed policy making is predicated on the dissemination of clear evidence of sentinel disparity.

THE WEIGHT OF EVIDENCE

The conclusions of the IOM report are clear (see Table 1) and carry far-reaching implications for analysis and intervention by clinical researchers, front-line health care providers, social scientists, legal experts, and health care policy makers. Anyone interested in better health care in this country should find the IOM report provocative. In this essay, I highlight two components of the IOM report: first, the extent to which the study committee separates data on race as a causative factor in poor outcomes versus all other variables (e.g., access barriers or socioeconomic), and second, the consistency of findings across a wide range of illnesses and levels of health care.

Race as a Factor in Poor Outcomes

Poor health outcomes for racial and ethnic minorities in this country are a complex problem with many contributing variables. Examining these variables in an organized, categorical manner improves the quality and validity of our research designs, process analyses, strategic interventions, and, ultimately, outcomes. The separation of access-related barriers from racial differences in care, for example, becomes critical both for our understanding of the problem and for finding a solution (see Table 2).

Racial and ethnic minorities are often segmented by health plans in ways that constrain resource allotment and limit service coverage (also called fragmentation of health plans). As a result, patients are limited to a fixed range of services. Defragmenting health plans via legislative or legal remedy could insure that groups of patients presently restricted in the breadth of care available gain access to the same high-end services and care available to non-minority patients. While one could certainly argue that health plan fragmentation strategies actually have race (or socioeconomic status as a surrogate marker for race) at their etiologic centers, the key barrier placed before these patients is impaired access—that is, full and complete access to a broad range of services. Clarifying fragmentation as an access issue

facilitates interventions. Lumping all variables that could lead to a disparate outcome in care, such as poor access and low socioeconomic status, under the umbrella term of racial and ethnic disparities is equally misleading. Unfortunately, the tendency to lump all variables has been a traditional approach, which impedes true identification of underlying causes. The efforts of legislators to solve racial and ethnic disparities in health care via programs that merely broaden insurance coverage will address simply that insurance coverage.

The more deeply pernicious problem of poor outcomes levied solely based on race will continue to be unaddressed unless it is held out as a stand-alone concern for understanding, study, and intervention. The IOM report was specific in this regard, defining disparities as those “not due to access-related factors or clinical needs, preferences, and appropriateness of intervention.”

Consistency of Findings

The IOM findings showed consistency both horizontally (across a vast array of disease states and clinical circumstances) and vertically (spanning every level of the health care system). Sample studies from the report highlight the fact that race is an issue in care for conditions ranging from prenatal care to heart attack management (see Table 3). It is staggering to consider that there was no major disease category or specialty of care in substandard care and poor outcomes were not revealed as to be a result of race. Similarly, each rung in the ladder of the American health care system demonstrated positive findings in the study. Patient- to provider-level and health care system-level variables are key trigger points for study. Obviously, the conscious and subconscious elements, which feed into the interactions between physician and patient, are vast. Evidence-based criteria for decision making and monitoring for adherence will help on the back end. Study for improved medical nursing and residency education to root out and prevent bias in the clinical process will help at the front end. Surely, the impact of data as derived from the IOM report is an important first step in understanding the challenges.

THE NATIONAL DISCOURSE ON DISPARITY

Over the past 15 years, an increasing national discourse on disparities in health care has taken place. Several notable surveys have examined public and physician perspectives on the issue. Since 1998, a number of significant federal and private foundation initiatives have also been established with widespread interagency cooperation to align and foster new programs against disparity. In the fall of 2003 the *Health Care Equity and Accountability Act* of 2003 was introduced to both houses of Congress as a major legislative measure in the fight against disparity. Finally, each of the Democratic presidential candidates offered platforms to improve health care and, with mixed participation, to address the issue of racial and ethnic disparity.

Public Perception

The October 1999 Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation study entitled "Survey of Race, Ethnicity, and Medical Care: Public Perception and Experiences" was a national random telephone survey designed to explore "the public's perceptions of race and health care."⁸ The telephone survey of approximately sixty questions on race, ethnicity, and their potential influence on education, housing, health care, and the workplace was administered to 1,479 white, 1,189 African American, and 983 Hispanic adults age 18 and older in July 1999. The major finding of this study was that the public has widely divergent beliefs about the quality of care received by fellow Americans, with this pattern of divergence falling along racial lines. While the vast majority of white respondents (67 percent) reported a belief that African Americans receive the same quality of care as Whites, the vast majority of the African American respondents (70 percent) reported just the opposite perception—that African Americans receive lower quality of care than Whites do. Hispanic respondents were close to evenly split with 47 percent reporting a perception that African Americans receive the same quality of care as Whites and 43 percent reporting a belief that African Americans receive lower quality of care than Whites do. In an attempt to discern the reasons for disparate care based on race or ethnicity, white, African American, and Hispanic respondents identified an assumption by doctors that members of racial and ethnic minority groups do not have enough insurance or money to pay for the care they get as the major reason for disparate care. Lack of geographic proximity to health care providers and issues of cultural competence were also cited as major reasons for the disparity by all three respondent groups.

In August 2003, four years later, a Harvard Health Forums on Health national poll of the public's knowledge about health disparities found a similar pattern of polarized response. The poll asked questions in three major areas: (1) disparity in the quality of care received by minorities as compared to Whites, (2) reasons for the difference in quality, and (3) importance of proposed initiatives in removing the differences in quality.⁹ A total of 806 Americans age 18 and older were surveyed (501 non-Hispanic Whites, 130 non-Hispanic African Americans, and 109 Hispanics). When asked to compare the quality of care received by minorities to care received by Whites, approximately half (48 percent) of the total sample of respondents felt care was the same quality, 30 percent responded that the care received by minorities was of lower quality, 19 percent responded they don't know, and 4 percent responded that minorities receive a higher quality care than Whites. When the responses to this question were stratified by race of the respondent, however, the results revealed a racially polarized and diametrically opposed picture, similar to the 1999 Kaiser Family Foundation Survey. Fifty-two percent of the white respondents felt minorities receive the same quality of care as Whites, while 65 percent of African American respondents felt minorities receive lower quality care than Whites. The Hispanic respondents were again almost equally divided on this question with 48 percent answering that minorities receive the same quality of care as Whites and 41 percent answering that minorities receive a lower quality of care than Whites do.

Provider Perception

Physicians have also been surveyed to analyze their perceptions on race, ethnicity, and health care. In 2001, the Kaiser Family Foundation conducted the "National Survey of Physicians Part I: Doctors on Disparities in Medical Care."¹⁰ It was a random sample of 2,608 physicians whose major professional activities were identified as "direct patient care" in the databases of the Association of American Medical Colleges and the American Medical Association's Physician Masterfile. The physicians' race and ethnicity information was taken from these databases, and survey results were weighted by race and other factors to reflect the actual distribution of physicians in the nation. Amazingly similar to the public's perceptions of disparate care based on race, physicians were also widely divergent along racial lines in their perceptions of whether our health care system treats people unfairly based on race. While 75 percent of white physician respondents feel our health care system treats people unfairly based on their race or ethnic background only rarely or never, 77 percent of African American physician respondents feel our health system treats people unfairly based on their race or ethnic background somewhat often or very often. Mirroring the Hispanic public perception survey results, the Hispanic physician responses were almost evenly split between 47 percent responding rarely or never and 52 percent responding somewhat often or very often to this question. Sixty-five percent of Asian physician respondents feel our health system treats people unfairly based on their race or ethnic background rarely or never. Physicians from all racial and ethnic groups surveyed perceive insurance coverage, more often than race or ethnic background, as the most frequent reason that people are treated unfairly in our health system. After stratifying responses according to race of respondents, the perceptions of physicians seem to mirror the public's views on matters of disparity.

FEDERAL INITIATIVES

In 1998, President Clinton announced the goal of eliminating the disparities experienced by racial and ethnic minority populations in the areas of cancer screening and management, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, HIV/AIDS, immunization rates, and infant mortality by the year 2010. These six health areas were selected for emphasis because "they reflect areas of disparity that are known to affect multiple racial and ethnic minority groups at all life stages."¹¹ Under the leadership of Donna Shalala, then-secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), and David Satcher, M.D., Ph.D., then-surgeon general of the U.S. Public Health Service and assistant secretary of health, the various agencies of DHHS began their efforts to meet the obligation of the federal government to bring the complex issue of health care disparity to the forefront of health care policy.

In 1999, Congress mandated the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) to prepare an annual national health care quality report (NHQR) and a congressionally mandated sister report entitled "The National Healthcare Disparity Report" (NHDR). The conceptual framework for both the NHQR and the NHDR is to measure the quality of health care across this nation through performance indicators developed to capture the five dimensions of health care quality: safety, effectiveness, patient-centeredness, timeliness, and equity. As recommended by the

IOM, access to care will be given prominent attention in the NHDR with an expanded number of indicators to measure equity in health care, use of services, and cost of services. AHRQ and the IOM have worked closely on the conceptual framework for the NHDR. The DHHS also convened a department-wide NHDR interagency workgroup to align and bolster new and existing federal and private health disparity initiatives.

In 2000, the *Minority Health and Health Disparities Research and Education Act* established the National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NCMHD). The mission of NCMHD is to promote minority health and to lead, coordinate, support, and assess the National Institutes of Health's (NIH) effort to reduce and ultimately eliminate health disparities. The "NIH Strategic Research Plan and Budget to Reduce and Ultimately Eliminate Health Disparities, Fiscal Years 2002–2006" was developed by NCMHD in collaboration with DHHS and the NIH's institutes and centers. The plan's three main goals are 1) research, 2) research infrastructure, including the development of a culturally competent cadre of biomedical and behavioral investigators and minority basic and clinical biomedical researchers, and 3) community outreach through information dissemination and public health education.

In March 2001, the National Cancer Institute (NCI) demonstrated their commitment to addressing cancer health disparities by creating the Center to Reduce Cancer Health Disparities (CRCHD). The CRCHD has taken a very public position that "equal care for cancer results in equal outcomes and equal survival rates, regardless of race or ethnic background. Conversely, unequal outcomes strongly suggest unequal care."¹² The Center's stated goal is to nearly triple the amount spent on cancer health disparities to \$270 million by investing in research to explain the social, cultural, environmental, biological, and behavioral determinants of cancer disparities.

The Healthcare Equality and Accountability Act of 2003

On November 6, 2003, Representative Elijah E. Cummings (D-MD), chair of the Congressional African American Caucus (CBC), Delegate Donna Christensen (D-VI), chair of the CBC Health Braintrust, Senate democratic leader Tom Daschle (D-SD), House democratic leader Nancy Pelosi (D-CA), and leaders from the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus, and the Native American Caucus introduced the *Healthcare Equality and Accountability Act of 2003*,¹³ a major piece of legislation to improve the health of minority populations (see Table 4).

Presidential Candidates

The Commonwealth Fund has been providing monthly analyses of the 2004 presidential candidates' health care reform proposals.¹⁴ According to the Commonwealth Fund's November 17, 2003, analysis, the presidential candidates and the incumbent president had recommended strategies to extend health insurance coverage to the growing ranks of uninsured Americans. Gen. Wesley Clark, Gov. Howard Dean,

Senator John Edwards (D-NC), Representative Richard Gephardt (D-MO), Senator John Kerry (D-MA), Representative Dennis Kucinich (D-OH), and Senator Joseph Lieberman's (D-CT) proposals for increasing health insurance coverage focused on group health insurance options. President George W. Bush's recommendations for increasing coverage are structured around the individual insurance market.

On the issue of improving the quality of health care and eliminating health disparities, candidate Carol Mosley Braun recommended a variant of a single-payer system that "provides for the quality of care that we enjoy in this country to be maintained and that provides for, if you will, a reenergizing of the relationship between patients and providers."¹⁵ Candidate Al Sharpton proposed a health care amendment to the Constitution as a means of legally guaranteeing not only health care to all Americans, but also "health care of equal high quality." Candidates Clark, Dean, Lieberman, Edwards, Gephardt, Kerry, and Kucinich offered a myriad of recommendations including, but not limited to, a greater emphasis on evidence-based medicine, translation of medical research into practice, value-based purchasing, financial incentives for providers, enhanced applications of information technology, and enhanced disease-management and self-management programs as means to improve health outcomes for the U.S. population.

On the stand-alone issue of eliminating racial and ethnic disparities in health care, candidates Dean, Edwards, Lieberman, Clark, and Kerry were the most effusive candidates in their acknowledgment of the existence of racial and ethnic disparities in health care and their interest in eradicating disparity. Candidate Dean also publicly endorsed the *Healthcare Equality and Accountability Act* of 2003.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: Accept and acknowledge that there are differences in the quality of health care based solely on racial and ethnic background.

The IOM report was clear in its overarching conclusion that race explains poor outcomes in health care, even after allowances for insurance coverage, socioeconomic status, and other variables. That race must be acknowledged as a cause of substandard care from this data in no way diminishes the human, economic, and societal burdens produced by other current problems, such as care for the uninsured. We must be clear about the facts and delineate the problems for deliberation and resolution. These findings must be accepted by the American public, health care providers, the media, and political leaders. In order to promote clear discussion, I have termed racial and ethnic disparity in health care sentinel disparity. The term sentinel disparity applies specifically to the unique, stand-alone issue of health care disparity solely attributable to race. Sentinel disparity stands out among leading health care problems as demanding immediate acceptance, understanding, and intervention.

Recommendation 2: Involve a broad cross-section of thinkers, experts, and leaders in an effort to understand and solve the problem of sentinel disparity.

The multiple views of the American public on the reality that race is a distinct and factual cause of poor outcomes in health care is telling. The observation that physi-

cian perspectives on this same issue also diverge along racial lines is even more alarming given that the IOM report was widely disseminated among physicians. Imagine a group of physicians in 2004 arguing over whether tobacco usage causes poor health. Are the facts from the IOM report unclear? Has the message not been brought to the physician and public sectors with clarity?

In my opinion, the issue of sentinel disparity requires the dedicated involvement of a broad range of thinkers. Public and professional perspectives could be realigned with the facts by an involved media. Social scientists and behaviorists will need to tease out the triggers involved in biased thought and behavior. Policy makers and legal experts should reexamine the implications of system-wide practices, such as fragmentation in health plans, as a civil rights concern. Legislators must continue efforts to address all problems in health care delivery. Certainly, the *Healthcare Equality and Accountability Act* of 2003 is an important step. As argued above, however, this act, in large part, addresses matters of impaired access. Matters directly addressing sentinel disparity require a more focused remedy.

Recommendation 3: Establish new research methodologies and approaches that specifically target sentinel disparity.

The IOM report resulted in part from an extensive review of available literature. A number of methodological and interpretive limitations quickly became evident in formulating study charge guidelines ranging from sample size to the use of reports based on administrative data. Consequently, the IOM study committee was rigorous in developing criteria for the body of literature used for the final IOM report. I applaud the IOM study committee.

As the nation digests the true meaning of the IOM report, the need for a body of disparity research that retains scientific rigor is evident. Inasmuch as disparity research remains poorly defined and not widely practiced, considerations for new approaches may allow analysis of the many contributors to sentinel disparity as a problem of poor outcomes. When viewed from this perspective, the study of sentinel disparity lends itself to methodologies drawn from the disciplines of quality improvement, health services research, and process management in business.

In 1996, Avedis Donabedian, M.D., M.P.H., a renowned expert in health care quality, provided a basic tenet for improving the quality of health care. He taught that an outcome is impacted by the quality and efficiency of the processes and structures that support it.¹⁶ In other words, health care systems with flawed processes and structures will consistently give rise to poor outcomes. The business world also has a longstanding body of research aimed at understanding how we do what we do (process) in order to improve endpoints (outcomes). In business, the discipline of improving efficiencies in each element leading to an endpoint is called process management.

I submit that many of the study questions raised by sentinel disparity could be approached in this manner to achieve improvements in health care outcomes. In my opinion, study questions pertaining to process driven matters, such as precisely how to achieve bias-free education of nurses and medical students, are the type of sentinel disparity problems potentially solved by new methodologies.

Recommendation 4: Embrace the best of who we are as a health care system and create a model of change for the nation.

In order to completely address the complex issues that contribute to a thorough handling of sentinel disparity, one would have to incorporate knowledge and understanding of the intricate underpinnings of American history and race relations, health economics, medical ethics, and many other disciplines. I remain convinced that the American health system is comprised of intelligent, compassionate, and dedicated individuals. To be sure, the health system is imminently capable of phenomenal success and accomplishment. What better facet of American society exists to accept, confront, dissect, and correct the dilemma of sentinel disparity? My final recommendation is a challenge to the American health care system: accept the findings of the IOM report and create new approaches to understand and eliminate sentinel disparity.

CONCLUSION

The Institute of Medicine has written a groundbreaking report, which establishes the fact that disparities in the quality of care provided, based solely on race, do exist at every level of American health care. I have termed this unique disparity *sentinel disparity*, in order to distinguish this phenomenon from all other causes of substandard health care. The term sentinel disparity refers to a stand-alone problem with distinctive historical origins that requires multidisciplinary consideration, analysis, and intervention. The true frequency of sentinel disparity relative to other quality of care problems such as impaired access "is simply not known."¹⁷ Sentinel disparities should be a focus of national acknowledgement and concern. Sentinel disparity should be a platform issue at the forefront of the 2004 presidential election, and the focus of new levels of analysis, research, and intervention.

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ENDNOTES

1 On June 5, 1981, "Pneumocystis Pneumonia – Los Angeles" written by Dr. Michael Gottlieb of UCLA appeared in the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report and was the first article about AIDS in the medical literature. See NIH.

2 NCBI.

3 Peter Buxtun, a Public Health Service venereal disease interviewer, leaked the story to Jean Heller of the Associated Press. The *Washington Star* published the story on July 25, 1972.

4 IOM.

5 *Ibid.*, 3.

6 *Ibid.*

7 *Ibid.*, 3.

8 The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation Survey of Race, Ethnicity, and Medical Care: Public Perceptions and Experiences was designed and analyzed by researchers at the foundation and conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates between July 7 and September 19, 1999. (See KFF, "Race, Ethnicity & Medical Care.")

9 The Harvard Forums on Health is a Harvard University Interfaculty Program for Health Systems Improvement project. Lake Snell Perry & Associates were commissioned to conduct the poll August 19–26, 2003. (See Lake Snell Perry & Associates.)

10 The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation National Survey of Physicians was conducted by mail from March 26 through October 11, 2001. This survey included Asian respondents; however, the survey of the public's perceptions of race and health care did not include this racial group, which limits the ability to make comparisons on certain survey responses. (See KFF, "National Survey of Physicians Part I.")

11 Satcher, 2.

12 NCI.

13 The *Healthcare Equality and Accountability Act* of 2003, H.R. 3459.IH, has 79 co-sponsors, and S.1833.IS has 18 co-sponsors.

14 Collins and Davis.

15 Statements of Candidate Moseley Braun. Iowa Health Care Forum, hosted by Governor Tom Vilsack of Iowa, Drake University, Des Moines, Ia, 14 August 2003

16 Donabedian.

17 Lavizzo-Mourey and Knickman, 1379.

**TABLE 1: KEY FINDINGS OF THE IOM
REPORT—UNEQUAL TREATMENT:**

CONFRONTING RACIAL AND ETHNIC DISPARITIES IN HEALTH CARE

- Racial and ethnic disparities in healthcare exist and, because they are associated with worse outcomes in many cases, are unacceptable.
- Racial and ethnic disparities in healthcare occur in the context of broader historic and contemporary social and economic inequality, and serve as evidence of persistent racial and ethnic discrimination in many sectors of American life.
- Many sources—including health systems, healthcare providers, patients, and utilization managers—may contribute to racial and ethnic disparities in healthcare.
- Bias, stereotyping, prejudice, and clinical uncertainty on the part of healthcare providers may contribute to racial and ethnic disparities in healthcare. While indirect evidence from several lines of research supports this statement, a greater understanding of the prevalence and influence of these processes is needed and should be sought through research.
- A small number of studies suggest that racial and ethnic minority patients are more likely than white patients to refuse treatment. These studies find that differences in refusal rates are generally small and that minority patient refusal does not fully explain healthcare disparities.

TABLE 2: SAMPLE ASSOCIATIONS—ACCESS AND HEALTH OUTCOMES

ACCESS RELATED VARIABLES

- Lack of health insurance
- Absence of racially or culturally sensitive providers
- Lack of hospital care in proximity
- Fragmentation of health plans

CONSEQUENCES

- Poor/Zero entry into system
- Diminished regular prevention therapy – equivalent to zero entry
- Poor access
- Limited coverage and services

TABLE 3: SELECTED LITERATURE FROM THE IOM REPORT—UNEQUAL TREATMENT: CONFRONTING RACIAL AND ETHNIC DISPARITIES IN HEALTH CARE

CLINICAL CONDITION	STUDY	KEY FINDINGS	IMPACT
Acute Myocardial Infarction Patients	Peterson et al	African American patients less likely to receive bypass surgery	Lower survival among African American cardiac patients
Lung Cancer Surgery	Bach et al	Lower rate of potentially curative surgery performed on African Americans compared to Whites all with comparable Medicare coverage. Similar rates of survival among African Americans and Whites that were given surgery.	Lower survival among African Americans largely explained by lower rate of surgical therapy.
Diabetic Care and Management	Chin et al	African Americans less likely to have monitoring of glycosylated hemoglobin, lipid (cholesterol) levels, eye examination visits, and influenza vaccines	Substandard care for diabetes High risk for long term complications
Peripheral Vascular Disease (Poor Circulation)	Guanagnoli et al	African American patients more likely to undergo all forms of amputation compared to Whites. White patients were two times more likely to undergo revascularization procedures and angioplasty than African Americans were.	Higher rates of amputation.
Maternal and Infant Health Care. (Prenatal Advice to Mothers)	Kogan et al 1994	More White women reported receiving advice on alcohol and smoking cessation. Single African American mothers were 104 times more likely not to receive advice on drug cessation. No differences in advice given to married African Americans and married Whites	High risk pregnancy, Neonatal complications

TABLE 4: THE HEALTHCARE EQUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY ACT OF 2003

KEY CONGRESSIONAL FINDINGS*	STRATEGIES PROPOSED IN LEGISLATION*
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Persistent lag in the health status of racial and ethnic minority populations as compared to the white population despite significant advances in health care • Disparities in health status can be attributed largely to underlying differences in socioeconomic status and insurance coverage • Lack of available interpretation and translation services or bilingual providers contributes to racial and ethnic disparities in health and health care • Research has demonstrated that minority health professionals dramatically increase access to care for minority patients and improve the quality of care that they receive • There is substantial evidence to demonstrate that race concordance between physicians and patients increases patient satisfaction and participation in health decision-making • Minority health care providers can bridge linguistic, cultural, and other barriers that hamper access to care • Government institutions must be held accountable for the quality of healthcare delivered to all patient populations and resultant health outcomes • There is a need for reduction of disease occurrence and disease-related complications among minorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase access to health care for all populations • Expand culturally and linguistically appropriate health services for all populations • Promote health workforce diversity • Support and expand programs and activities that will improve the prevention, diagnosis, and management of disease in minority populations • Enhance racial, ethnic, and primary language health data collection at the local, state, and federal level • Ensure accountability for the quality of health care and health outcomes for minority populations • Strengthen the technical and financial resources of the safety net institutions of the United States.

* Summarized from H.R. 3459 posted on the Thomas –The Legislative Information on the Internet provided by the U.S. Library of Congress. November 2003.

The Politics of Education

Leslie Thornton

This reflection identifies education as the primary domestic priority for both major political parties. Her commentary opens our conversation about education with an important question: How do you fundamentally change public education in a way that is not intrusive and over-reaching but, in the short-term, turns education around?

Having learned his lesson from the senior President Bush, whose poll numbers plummeted when he vowed to abolish the U.S. Department of Education in the 1992 presidential race, Senator Bob Dole (R-KS) vowed instead to “overhaul” it when he ran for president against Bill Clinton.

President Clinton, you may remember, actually ran as the “education president.” He had been the “education governor” in Arkansas, after all, and championed policies that raised test scores and helped more disadvantaged kids get to college. In the 2000 presidential election year, both candidates ranked education among their highest priorities. George W. Bush called himself the “real” education presidential candidate, and now President Bush still calls education his top domestic priority.

None of this is surprising. Previous presidential election cycles have seen education emerge as the number one issue on which most Americans believe more federal dollars should be spent. A 2000 survey by the University of Chicago revealed that over the preceding ten years, support for education had risen to the top of America’s priority list, surpassing concerns about crime.

September 11, 2001, has likely skewed those conclusions for the upcoming presidential election, but, unquestionably, a presidential candidate’s view of and plan for education is one of the issues voters prioritize in evaluating and picking their national leader. President Bush has already begun to run on the issue. Unlike in other presidential cycles, however, Bush faces opposition to his own education policies from within his party and from Democrats. For the first time anyone I know in education can remember, state governors, legislators, and administrators are actually considering not taking Bush’s federal education funds. Imagine it. The federal government offers hundreds of millions of education dollars to a budget-strapped state, and the state says, “Naaaaaaaaah—you keep it.” It’s extraordinary, particularly at a time when almost every state in the union has a budget deficit.

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So, what's going on? In 2002, President Bush enacted *No Child Left Behind*, the signature piece of education legislation that he promised voters in his 2000 campaign and the bill he expected to propel him through a 2004 reelection. Indeed, the fact that he—by his own admission—has not actually read the bill aside, President Bush has been traveling the country talking about the bill's importance and its early success. The new law requires annual testing of students in grades three through eight and requires schools whose students do not meet the bill's standards for "adequate yearly progress" to take remedial action. The schools could be designated as failing, and they are exposed to penalties, including forced transfer of students and being taken over by the state. The complicated new law is more than one thousand pages long and attaches the availability of federal funding to successfully meeting the bill's stringent, high-consequence requirements. A study of the law's first year of implementation by the Civil Rights Project at Harvard University says the federal law's "accountability requirements have derailed state education reforms and assessment strategies . . . leaving too many children . . . and teachers . . . behind,"¹ an obvious play on the bill's title.

Both Democratic and Republican state and local legislators are pushing back, making the criticism of *No Child Left Behind* a major election-year issue. For example, Democratic leaders in Oklahoma are so unhappy with President Bush's *No Child Left Behind* law that they recently drafted a resolution asking Congress to overhaul it. Before that resolution could be voted on, however, one of the state's most conservative Republicans stepped in with his own resolution—have Congress repeal the law entirely. The new resolution passed amidst a standing ovation. Even Senator Arlen Specter (R-PA), the powerful Republican chairman of an education subcommittee, sees the writing on the wall. Just this month, Specter invited several superintendents from his home state to the Senate, so that U.S. education secretary Roderick R. Paige could hear their criticisms of the bill.

Secretary Paige says that the criticism is much ado about nothing. He argues that much of the unhappiness relates to the complexity of the law, and a bunch of folks in the Washington "union establishment." Of course that argument might be taken more seriously had Paige not called the "union establishment" (the National Education Association) a "terrorist organization" that used "obstructionist scare tactics" to undermine the new law.² I can just imagine Mr. Bush's early fall presidential debate preparation session: "Question: Mr. President, do you think it is appropriate to pledge the White House's complete and continued confidence in an education secretary who thinks the nation's largest teachers union is a terrorist organization? If so, will you go after them in your War on Terror?"

The worst of it is likely to come in the very heat of the campaigns (in August and September) when the U.S. Department of Education is expected to release the names of schools it has already deemed "failing" under the new rules. Unquestionably, the legislators from those states—both Republican and Democrat—will cry foul, adding to the growing list of unhappy implementers. Still, the most important issue remains: How *do* you fundamentally change public education in a way that is not intrusive and over-reaching but actually, really, in the short-term, turns education around? To be honest, I'm not certain the Democrats have a good answer either.

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ENDNOTES

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- 2 King; Goldstein, Amy; Pear; "Another Mistake by Rod Paige"; Robelen.

Anticipating Success: Removing the Barriers to Educational Equity and Equality

Dr. Mary Hatwood Futrell

In this article, Dr. Mary Hatwood Futrell addresses challenges America faces regarding ensuring equity and quality of education for all children, especially children from minority or low-income families. She discusses the implications of changing demographics and the "whatever" attitude that students have about academic achievement as well as the unanticipated collision between the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act and the academic structure of schools. Finally, several policy changes are discussed (redefining the academic structure, enhancing the enrollment of minority students in gifted and talented programs and mentoring programs, recruiting highly qualified teachers, and obtaining adequate resources) that the author believes will provide a better guarantee of all children receiving a quality education.

INTRODUCTION

Every day when we turn on the television or the radio, read the newspaper, attend a conference, or simply sit and talk with the people in our communities, we learn more and more about how complex the world has become. It is a different world from the one in which many of us grew up. It is much more intercultural, interdependent, and technological and therefore requires people to be better educated than ever before. Each generation has faced similar challenges, but what is perhaps different from the past is the speed and breadth with which change is now occurring. What is also different is the diversity that is redefining America, changing the make-up of Americans to whom responsibility of fulfilling the promise of our democratic society will be given.

It would be wonderful to be able to say that we have resolved a centuries-old dilemma of ensuring every child an equal educational opportunity, that we have structured the school system so that every child will be taught in an environment that nurtures teaching and learning to maximize each student's potential.

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Unfortunately, these are some of the challenges to which we still need to respond—educationally and politically. Thus, one of the most critical issues facing Americans today, especially African Americans, is determining how to ensure that every person is educated to understand and is prepared to meet the challenges and opportunities of the future.

Four decades as a teacher at the P-12 and at the university levels have taught me that while we have made much progress, we still have a long way to go toward achieving the goal of quality education for all Americans. In this article I will discuss four issues: 1) the effect of poverty and changing demographics on equal educational opportunities, 2) implications of the *No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)*, 3) the academic organization of our schools, and 4) the “whatever” attitude students have about academic achievement and its impact on the quality of educational opportunities provided for children. Finally, I will conclude with some recommendations that I believe could, if implemented, ensure greater educational success for all students, but especially for students who come from minority and/or low-income families.

THE IMPACT OF DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES AND POVERTY ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Today, there are more than 54 million students in our elementary and secondary schools: 61 percent are white, 39 percent are from minority groups, 25 percent live in poverty, and 13 percent have special needs.¹ By 2010, student enrollments are expected to exceed 55 million, with 45 percent coming from language or racial minority families or families living in poverty.

There is a demographic transformation occurring in the United States, and the message is clear: America’s public school population reflects the future of our nation—a future increasingly populated by a people more diverse than at any other period in our history. Public schools and the education earned by children attending those schools will define the quality of life for each of us as well as define who we are as a nation—a nation finally united or a nation still divided.

Unfortunately, as we continue to diversify demographically, we are increasingly balkanizing our communities and schools. Much of this division can be attributed to housing patterns that foster residential segregation, which directly impacts the way our schools are populated and their capacity to educate the students who attend them. Balkanization is being defined along the lines of economics or class as well as by race and language.

In this millennium, class will be a strong competitor along with race in defining the equality of our schools, thus the equality of education. As in the past, schools are characterized by the neighborhoods in which they are located. Today, we basically have two school systems in America: one for those who live in suburban areas, which educates predominantly affluent and white and Asian students—schools that are most likely succeeding; and one for those who live in our urban areas, which educates predominantly poor and minority students—schools that are most likely failing.²

Although these factors continue to define our schools, if we look at minority academic achievement overall, the record shows that African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans have made significant progress. For instance, graduation rates for minority students are up (81 percent for African American and 63 percent for Hispanic students), and the achievement gaps between African American and Hispanic students, and white and Asian students have narrowed.³

Data show that while performance by minority students on standardized tests has improved, on average, many minority students still perform well below white students on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), the American College Test (ACT), and the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) examination. This is true even in suburban districts that have the financial means and the staff to more effectively ensure equity and equality in education for all students.⁴

To be certain, ensuring that schools have state-of-the-art instructional resources (including technologies), well-defined curriculum, and highly qualified teachers who believe all children can learn is a critical component of the support structure needed to enhance student achievement. That, however, is not enough. Schools must ensure that all students meet high academic standards, and students must be held more responsible for their academic successes or failures.

NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND ACT

Over the last twenty years, states and the federal government have adopted policies to bring these issues to the forefront and have proposed strategies to address them, in partial response to the mixed academic achievement of students, especially students from minority or low-income families. One of the strategies being used is increased accountability through standards and assessments. The purpose of the accountability movement is to hold educational institutions, especially schools and school districts, more accountable for students' academic success or lack thereof. A major component of that strategy is the *No Child Left Behind Act* (officially the reauthorization of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act*) that was signed into law on January 26, 2002, by President George W. Bush.

NCLB calls for school districts to produce adequate yearly progress reports reflecting student achievement on performance standards established by their state. *NCLB* also requires all students to reach state-defined proficiency levels in reading and mathematics by 2012. Each year the results of the assessments are to be made public, and each year the achievement levels are to increase. (At the state level, data will be disaggregated to identify student achievement based on grade level, gender, racial and ethnic group, language proficiency, income, and students with disabilities.) Schools that fail to demonstrate adequate progress for two consecutive years will receive technical assistance to help them improve students' academic achievement. Moreover, students attending schools that continue to fail will have the right to use public funds to transfer to another public school. In addition to *NCLB*, states have increased their accountability for schools by implementing high-stakes assessments, which require students to pass tests to be promoted from one grade to the next and/or to graduate from high school.⁵

On the one hand, *NCLB* could force school districts to do what civil rights groups and the courts have been unable to achieve—guarantee each child the right to a quality education, especially those from minority and low-income families. It also could cause great harm. The language setting forth high-stakes mandates described above is directed at all students but has special implications for minority and low-income students. The mandates will significantly impact students who are in low-ability groups or tracks if they do not have access to programs that will prepare them to meet the standards required. In other words, if these students are not taught the content on which they will be tested, but have to meet the same assessment standards as all other students, the impact could be devastating. So far, *NCLB* has not addressed the potential negative outcomes of this issue.

There are several questions regarding the implementation of *NCLB* that need to be addressed, the answers to which will tell us whether the educational playing field is being leveled for all children or whether we are stepping onto a slippery slope that will leave millions of children behind. These questions are:

1. Will *NCLB* provide schools with the necessary resources to insure that they have the capacity to enable students to meet the new standards?
2. Will the academic structure change and the quality of the curriculum become more rigorous to guarantee that all students will be taught the content on which they will be assessed?
3. Without policies to address the broader problems of poverty, will these changes solve the problem of low achievement, especially among minority and poor students?
4. What will be the anticipated impact on the academic performance of the school that is struggling if their best students leave to attend other schools?
5. What will be the fiscal impact of declining student enrollments on struggling schools' financial abilities to restructure?
6. Are there enough spaces in the "receiving" schools to accommodate all students who might desire to transfer?
7. Will those schools accept the transferring students?
8. Will the exodus of students leaving low-performing schools further widen the floodgates for vouchers to private schools?
9. Is *NCLB* a strategy being imposed upon public schools that federal leaders know cannot be met at the levels mandated?

If the federal government is not going to provide the resources that states need to implement *NCLB*, then the fulfillment of *NCLB* as an accountability strategy will fail and many public schools and students, particularly those who are minority and/or poor, will be left behind. Furthermore, the schools that will have the most difficulty meeting the *NCLB* challenge are in communities or sections of communities with a high concentration of poverty, such as the 25 most densely populated metropolitan areas.

The issue of financial constraints will continue to plague school districts, especially those in urban areas, until local communities and states guarantee that every school has the financial capacity to assure equal educational opportunities for all children. We need to understand that the supply of education (qualitatively and

quantitatively) is not instantly elastic. It must be adequately resourced to realize its potential; thus, upgraded curriculum, increased space, professional development for faculty and staff, instructional materials and technology, and other resources must be provided to help schools and schools of education respond more affirmatively to the educational demands of society.

Communities must also be willing to develop the political, educational, and financial policies and structures that will eliminate educational inequalities. The inequality within our national education system is fated to continue to exist unless we are willing to renew efforts to dismantle the internal and external segregation that, unfortunately, still defines education and schooling in this country. The best way to strengthen democracy is through universal, free quality public education for all children.

THE ORGANIZATION OF SCHOOLS

The Impact of Ability Grouping and Tracking on Student Achievement

As mentioned in the previous section, a major deterrent to the full realization of educational equity and equality is reflected in the way schools are organized academically and socially. That organizational structure—ability grouping and tracking—contributes to inequalities in educational achievement among students. What does this mean? This section will focus primarily on the organizational structure of the curriculum at the secondary level; however, that does not mean that there is not curricular stratification at the elementary level.

As a result of widespread ability grouping in elementary schools and tracking in secondary schools, all students do not receive a comparable education. Ability grouping and tracking predate the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. Tracking was first introduced into our schools in the 1920's⁶ but seems to have become more pernicious and pervasive post-*Brown*. Ability grouping and tracking are and always have been on a collision course with efforts to desegregate schools and to provide equal educational opportunities for all children.

Vertical tracking is defined by five “curricular tracks”: gifted and talented, academic, general, vocational, and special education. Vertical tracking as described here characterizes the way secondary education is structured, usually beginning in middle school and becoming even more defined in senior high school. It is at this level that students begin to select the career paths they plan to pursue and, thus, the curriculum they will study. It is important to point out that regardless of the track, all students are still required to study core courses such as English/language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies.

Where ability grouping and tracking have their greatest impact is in the stratification of the content of the core subjects required at all levels of the education system. The quality and rigor of the content of the core curriculum (also called “gatekeeper” courses) are defined by the track to which students have been assigned. For example, in addition to vertical tracking, there is horizontal tracking that in essence stratifies the substance and quality of core courses, (i.e., ninth-grade English could have seven or eight different levels of intensity with primarily low-

income, minority students assigned to the lowest, less-challenging classes). Also, unofficial tracking occurs because schools in high-poverty communities often have less-demanding curricula and fewer course options.

As Jeanie Oakes states in the foreword to *Crossing the Tracks: How "Untracking" Can Save America's Schools*, "Clearly, tracking hasn't helped schools prepare students to meet the demands of the workplace."⁷ Oakes goes on to say, "The matching of students to different tracks carried with it racial, ethnic, and socio-class overtones *from the very beginning*."⁸ Students are tracked into different groups and programs based on the expectations that they will follow different career paths upon graduation from high school. Still, with increasingly diverse student populations defining our education system, the need for future graduates to compete for jobs in a global economy, and societal demands for greater civic engagement on the part of all citizens, the question must be asked whether the current academic structure should remain.

For example, studies conducted by Oakes and Wheelock⁹ reveal that there are very few African American, Hispanic, or Native American students in our schools' gifted and talented programs and only slightly more in the academic programs. Nor are there very many children from low socioeconomic backgrounds in the two tracks that define the upper echelon of the academic structure. Most Hispanic students are in the general track, and African American students tend to be in the vocational educational track. Further, we are all too familiar with the growing number of studies that have documented the disproportionate numbers of African American and Hispanic male students who have been assigned to the special education track.

The overemphasis on grouping and tracking, especially to the detriment of minority and poor students, has resulted in not only thwarting desegregation of our schools, but in the denial of equal educational opportunities for millions of children.

As a result, there is serious cause for concern as to whether educational equity and equality for all children can be achieved. This point is particularly relevant as a consequence of the educational accountability movement that is sweeping the country and the demand for all students to demonstrate their ability to meet higher academic standards through standardized tests. Minority students and poor students can meet those standards if they have the educational resources and experiences (i.e., a rigorous core curriculum aligned with state standards and assessments, highly qualified certified teachers who have strong repertoires of teaching strategies, and instructional resources, including technologies, to enhance teaching and learning) to prepare them to do so. All schools must be equipped to have the capacity to ensure that students achieve at educational levels that will enable them to fully participate in the economic, political, and social mainstreams of our democratic society.

These institutional educational inequities and abuses will not change until educators, parents, and other community leaders provide the leadership and the courage to dramatically reduce ability grouping and tracking in our schools. Unfortunately, parents are often ill informed about the educational implications of their children being assigned to certain groups or tracks. And we must admit that many times it is also "our" fault as parents that we do not inquire enough in our schools about the education of our children. Once a student is assigned to a group or track, it is very

difficult to have him or her moved to another academic level. As such, by the time parents realize the negative effects such programs have had on their children's educations, they generally believe it is too late to correct the situation. Parents should realize that they have the power and the right to request the transfer of their child to more academically challenging programs and that they can petition local school administrators and boards of education to make the change.

In addition to parental awareness, students must be aware of the implications of failing to assume responsibility for their education. Contrary to what many adults think, students are very perceptive regarding the quality of education they receive and their ability to learn. If they perceive, however, that the schools they attend and the teachers who teach them have low expectations of their ability to achieve, some students may begin to believe or act as though they cannot or should not excel academically. Unfortunately, ability grouping and tracking instill this deficit model of learning in too many of our children. We can change that model and attitude by setting high academic expectations for all children and then ensuring that they have access to courses of study and to teachers who reinforce their ability to excel academically. Regrettably, some of the low expectations that permeate our schools are now reflected in the attitudes students have about academic achievement.

THE "WHATEVER" ATTITUDE ABOUT ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

Research shows that part of the problem of low academic achievement is reflected in the attitude of African American students, especially males, that achieving academically is "acting white."¹⁰ As a result, some African American students are excluding themselves from the more challenging academic arenas. People have proffered a variety of reasons as to why they believe the "whatever" attitudes about educational achievement of African American students have been so persistent: poverty, cultural differences, peer pressure, lack of self confidence, teacher indifference, and low expectations of African American students, to name a few.¹¹ But, what people often do not realize is that this defeatist attitude of placing a guilt trip on students who are developing their intellectual capacity has become a major contributing factor to educational inequity that inadvertently feeds into the strategy of those who are using more obvious means of denying minority and poor children their right to a quality education.

No, students taunting classmates who excel or who have the capacity to excel academically is not new. We are all aware of students, including minority students, who are labeled as "nerds" because they can and do excel academically. This attitude of academic indifference or denigration is not just a "black thing," but it is a growing phenomenon among students in general, especially those who are in middle and high schools. Nonetheless, what has evolved among African American students who taunt their classmates connotes racial overtones being attached to developing intellectual talents and skills. As Theresa Perry said, "The ideology of African American intellectual inferiority is more robust today, in terms of its impact on students, than it was in the pre-civil-rights era."¹² And, no, this is not an exaggeration or overreaction.

Children, especially those who are African American and Hispanic, need to be reminded what the struggle for equity and equality was and is all about—opportunities to use education to more fully develop their mental, emotional, and intellectual capacity. By allowing the “whatever” attitude to prevail and by rejecting educational opportunities, young men and women will shackle their destiny and that of their children to another generation of ignorance, poverty, and segregation.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Within the smaller, more global arena in which we live, the competition is no longer predicated simply on the political, military, or economic might of a nation. Nor are we simply competing against each other for corporate niches and markets. As David Kearns stated,

“Increasingly, decision makers are acknowledging the connection between a healthy economy and a solid educational system . . . More workers of the future will come from the fast-growing population groups that today are making up a larger and larger proportion of the school-age population—African American, Latino, immigrant, Asian and Native American children . . . Eighty-five percent of all new labor force participants will be non-white, female, or both.”¹³

We now scrutinize our educational system with the same frequency and intensity with which we for so long have monitored the performance of our economy. Educational achievement is now assessed on an annual basis, not only state-by-state, but in comparison with the academic achievement of students in other countries. America has a long way to go before we can say that all of our children receive the same support that children receive in those countries with which we like to compare ourselves.

MOVING FORWARD, NOT BACKWARD

The dilemma America faces is not that public education has not worked. It has and will continue to enhance quality educational opportunities for children and adults regardless of their race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or gender. But we also need to admit that much remains to be done. The challenge of fully realizing the promise of universal quality education remains complex educationally, financially, legally, and politically. If we are to realize full educational equity and equality, we must concentrate our efforts more on: 1) improving the quality of education for all children, 2) understanding that the struggle is as much an internal academic struggle as it is an external political and legal struggle, and 3) ensuring that everyone understands that it is in the best interest of America’s future for every citizen to be well educated.

America must:

- *Redefine the organizational and academic structure of our educational system.* Redefining the academic structure of our system will be as much a political issue as it is an educational issue, but it is one we can no longer ignore. We should start by

radically reducing ability grouping and tracking in our schools. School districts should be mandated to conduct an audit of the policies used to assign students to groups or tracks (especially the number of minority male students assigned to special needs programs).

- *Develop a core curriculum for students, at least through grade eight, to ensure that during the formative learning years students are studying basically the same content.* The structure and content of the curriculum should be revised to guarantee a rigorous curriculum in every school and the sequencing of educational programs to strengthen students' understanding and applicability of the concepts being taught. Schools and districts should align their standards, curriculum, and assessments to insure that all students are being taught the content on which they will be assessed. An example of designing and implementing programs that provide a stronger academic background for students is the program being introduced in the Wakefield High School in Arlington, Va.¹⁴ The school, which has one of the highest percentages of low-income students among suburban Washington, D.C., schools, has strengthened its core academic courses and has encouraged all of its students, especially male students from African American and Hispanic families, to take at least one advanced placement (AP) course before graduating from high school. This program is part of the district's efforts to prepare students to go beyond the state's standards of learning test and the *NCLB* requirements.

- *Guarantee that only highly qualified teachers are certified to teach in our schools, whether urban, suburban, or rural.* To achieve this goal, all teacher preparation programs should be required to include a repertoire of teaching strategies to enable teachers to teach diverse student populations more effectively, to understand and be more responsive to students different learning styles, and to appreciate the cultural experiences students bring into the classroom. Teachers, through pre-service and in-service development, such as induction programs, need to learn how to place more emphasis on student learning, to make their classes more "learner friendly," and to hold all students to high expectations. In addition, counselors and administrators also need to be more aware of the impact they have on student achievement, especially in determining what curriculum students, including those from minority or low income families, are encouraged to study. Accomplished teachers in schools and school districts should be provided flexible schedules allowing them to mentor colleagues needing help in strengthening their teaching skills or those who are implementing new teaching practices.

- *Design and implement enrichment programs to support more students from poor and/or minority families being part of gifted and talented classes.* In Fairfax County, Va., the decision was made to enhance the quality of educational programs to encourage more minority students to enroll in the gifted and talented programs. Sixteen of the lowest performing schools have been targeted, and teachers have received special training in a program called the "Young Scholars Program," which has been designed to identify and to work with minority children as part of the gifted and talented programs in those schools. The county has also decided to waive the fee for all students who want to take the AP or the International Baccalaureate (IB)

examination. To date, 50 percent of all juniors and seniors in Fairfax County are now taking those exams.¹⁵

- *Develop mentoring programs to provide additional support for students, especially those who are being pressured by their peers not to excel academically.* Mentor programs should be designed to help students understand and develop the self-confidence to achieve academically. Implement more lunchtime, after-school, weekend, and summer support and tutorial programs to help students strengthen their academic abilities. Critical components of successful mentoring programs include well-trained mentors to work with students, interesting activities, supportive relationships, and adequate resources to deliver and sustain such programs. Much of this can be accomplished through time and resources donated by volunteers, local businesses, and other community groups.

- *Develop programs to better prepare children to be ready for school.* One way to achieve this goal is by requiring compulsory pre-school and kindergarten for children ages four and five, and voluntary preschool for three-year-old children. Montgomery County, Md., made a decision to implement an all-day kindergarten program to better prepare children for school. In monitoring the reading progress made by 16,000 youngsters over two years in kindergarten and first grade, the gap between white and Asian students and their African American and Latino peers narrowed by as much as 11 points on some measures.¹⁶

- *Develop and implement policies that encourage parental involvement.* Most private schools require parents to be actively involved in the education of their children. Why don't parents in public schools do the same thing? Do more to encourage parents in general, but African American and Hispanic parents in particular, to become more actively involved in the education of their children. The School-Without-Walls high school in the District of Columbia, as part of its admissions criteria, interviews all students who apply for admission to the school and their parents. In addition to high admissions criteria for students, parts of the admissions criteria require parents to participate in school activities and to be actively involved in the education of their children. Eighty-five percent of the students who graduate from the School-Without-Walls go to college. The school's student body is 90 percent African American and Hispanic.

- *Continue to strengthen political and legal strategies to ensure more equitable support, including additional resources where needed, for schools regardless of location.* Reinstate programs such as the *Emergency School Aid Act*, which was repealed in 1981, to provide incentives to school districts to continue efforts to provide quality education, especially in low-income communities. These programs can assist in ensuring that schools have the resources (facilities, staffing, instructional resources including technologies) to enhance students' learning opportunities and to ensure greater educational successes. Also, educational and community groups should work with their congressional representatives to ensure full funding of the implementation of *NCLB*.

These recommended policy changes, if implemented, can result in significant improvements in the efforts to provide quality education for all children. They are, however, simply recommendations, and will remain so unless there is a commitment on behalf of policy makers, educators, and parents to implement them, thus assuring all children a greater opportunity to receive a quality education.

REFLECTING ON THE PAST TO ENVISION THE FUTURE

The struggle to achieve educational parity for African Americans started in the 1930's with efforts to persuade state legislatures to provide equal resources for Blacks and Whites at the higher education level, but by 1945 the focus had shifted to elementary and secondary education. Almost a decade later, the Supreme Court in its unanimous ruling in the *Brown v. Board of Education* case decided in favor of equal educational opportunities, especially throughout the South.¹⁷ Fifty years later we are still struggling, but we have come too far to turn back now. If the *Brown* decision is not to become a footnote in the annals of history, we must do more than talk about our failure to realize its full potential—we must commit ourselves to realizing its promise for all Americans.

The public education system has been and will continue to be the primary means for boys and girls, men and women, to realize the American dream. As a result of our education system, millions of people, including African Americans and children from every segment of our society, have been well educated and, as a result, have been able to take advantage of opportunities in life never dreamed of before. Future generations will anticipate even greater opportunities; thus the demand for every person to be better educated than ever before will continue to be a national priority. The question is, are we willing to change our education system to ensure that each generation is indeed prepared educationally to benefit from those opportunities? Most public schools are doing a good job; some are not. With the expectation that by 2025 the majority of the 55 million school-age children in America will be from language and racial minority families and a growing number will be from low-income communities, maintaining the current educational structure translates into a future in which the majority of our citizens will not be educationally prepared. Is this the future we want?

Education is no less important today than when the Supreme Court made its historic pronouncement half a century ago. We must predicate our hopes for the future on the students currently in schools—students who today will be the ordinary citizens and the leaders of tomorrow. We must continue to support our public education system, but we must also insist that it be changed to guarantee equal, quality educational opportunities for all children and provide the resources to do so. The focus must be on how to enable public schools to function more effectively to educate all students and how to make student learning the focal point of the teaching-learning process and, thus, of our education system. Communities are rising to the challenges of instituting more rigorous standards and accountability measures, educating more diverse student populations, and responding to the challenges of living in a global society where Americans will increasingly compete with workers from other countries—countries whose governments recognize that education is their most valuable

resource. As we reflect on where we have been, where we are today, and where we are going, let us concentrate our attention and efforts neither on the past nor on the present, but on future efforts to educate America's diverse student population and on how to realize true educational equity, equality, and quality for every American.

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- 1 DOD, 45-46; Futrell and Gomez, 381.
- 2 Ogbu, 286-7.
- 3 Kaufman, Kwon, Klein, and Chapman, 47.
- 4 Boozer, Krueger, and Wolkon, 89.
- 5 McRel and Public Agenda, 3-5.
- 6 Oakes, 681.
- 7 Oakes as quoted in Wheelock, ix.
- 8 Oakes as quoted in Wheelock, x. Emphasis is from the original.
- 9 Oakes, 687-8; Wheelock, 9.

- 10 Ogbu, 290–1; Perry, B10.
- 11 Meier, Stewart, and England, 29–30.
- 12 Perry, B10.
- 13 Quoted in Wheelock, 14.
- 14 Matthews, B7.
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- 17 Tushnet, 18.

No Parent Left Behind: Evaluating Programs and Policies to Increase Parental Involvement

Kyshun Webster

Section 1118 of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) is intended to provide opportunities for inclusion of those historically disadvantaged groups of parents. This article discusses recent legislative trends in parent involvement policies; the need for monitoring the implementation of programs and policies, such as those suggested in NCLB that are intended to increase parent involvement in public schools; and the inherent challenges of evaluating policies and programs. The author also provides a conceptual framework for systematically evaluating programs.

INTRODUCTION

Educators and policy officials often make normative presumptions about the actions that urban parents should take, with very little empirical research gathered regarding what these parents are actually doing at home to support the social, cultural, and religious education of their children. The pessimistic views held by educators and policy makers regarding urban minority parents are largely informed by the rhetoric, romanticism, and cultural views surrounding their notions of "parental involvement." These constructed politicized viewpoints often categorize minority and low-income parents as uninvolved. Despite the many unknown variables, the widely varying expectation levels for parental involvement, and the lack of program evaluations, many states have begun legislating parental involvement in schools in response to mandates in Section 1118 of the *No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)*. These state and local school board policies come with a range of punitive consequences for parents deemed uninvolved by the schools' determination. Ironically, schools have not engaged fully in involving parents meaningfully nor granted parents access to opportunities for involvement in school affairs. These policies are problematic and counterintuitive to the spirit and intent of the law. Although these intentions may win in rhetoric, they lose in logic.

In the states of Minnesota and Louisiana, I intervened in policy discussions and convinced legislators of the need to learn about this issue before legislating. I draft-

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ed model legislation calling for systematic reviews of parental involvement initiatives using parents as state-sanctioned reviewers. These policies, introduced by Representative Keith Ellison (DFL-Minneapolis) of Minnesota (H.S Bill 217) and Senator Paulette Irons (D-New Orleans) of Louisiana (SN Bill 706), provide a model for establishment of state-level systems that allow parents the unique opportunity for self-determining parental involvement accountability standards and home-school relations in a systematic, state-sanctioned manner. These two bills received overwhelming bipartisan support in the bicameral houses of the legislature.

In this paper, I will propose a systematic conceptual framework for evaluating parental involvement programs in schools, and I will present some reasons for employing this framework. This conceptual framework is based on systems theory and is intended to help establish uniformity in political and communal accountability standards for evaluating parental engagement in schools and for conforming to parental involvement policies at the federal level. This matter of parental involvement should be viewed as both a civil rights issue for minority families as well as a reform strategy. The nation's public schools are largely comprised of low-income, minority families, which creates an imperative for minority parents to gain access and acquire a proper understanding of current reforms to ensure that their children enjoy a high-quality education in a globally competitive society.

For these reasons, creating an oversight system to institutionalize parental involvement in school procedures is a major thrust of this conceptual model.

THE CURRENT STATE OF AFFAIRS

Federal mandates in Section 1118 of *NCLB* ambitiously raise the bar on student achievement, as well as on the expectation that schools will increase parental involvement, as research has proven that parental involvement is highly correlated to student achievement.¹ Much of the emphasis on parental involvement in schools is based on the logic that effective local reforms require "buy-in" from parents such that reform models are supported at home. Over the years researchers and school districts have experimented with various methods of stimulating parental involvement. In the process, some individual schools and school districts have been more successful, while others have given up, rebuked, scorned, and resisted the notion as mission impossible.²

In this period of preoccupation with "parental involvement" and "home-school relations," idealized scenarios are exalted and labeled "best practice." Often, these models do not highlight contextual variables that make some parental involvement programs more successful than other strategies. In the process of over-marketing the ideal, two of the most important elements rarely discussed in critiques are the organizational system requirements and the resources necessary to achieve the ideal. In a postmodern society of mixed perceptions, ambiguous definitions of proper parental involvement, parents' missing voices, and cultural biases, it appears that there is no true ideal that can be legislated in an equitable manner.

Further complicating the matter, program evaluations are not conducted regularly or systematically.³ The program evaluations that have made it into academic literature have been consistently criticized on the basis of methodological flaws

challenging their internal and external validity.⁴ Although parental involvement programs are deemed critical, schools and school districts have selectively chosen not to spend the time and money required to evaluate parental involvement programs. Hence, little is known about what is actually happening in the field or about the systems failures impeding the implementation of parental involvement programs in under-resourced schools.

What I have shared here should come as no surprise to those who follow the proliferating body of literature on the home-school phenomena and the “partnership” doctrine. However, concerned scholars and advocates for parental involvement have sufficiently examined the value of parental involvement, problematized the inhibitors, and identified its positive correlation with student achievement. So much so that stakeholders at every level are convinced, especially politicians of every political stripe, that improved home-school relations and increased parental involvement in schools is a good social investment for schools and communities. Non-articulation of systematic solutions to address the actual execution of policies and the non-implementation of programs, however, seem to have created a void in scholarly and practical discussions of parent involvement and home-school relations. To ensure the successful execution of parental involvement policy mandates, program implementation, and institutionalization in this period of reforms, policy makers and administrators must move beyond the convoluted, value-laden rhetoric packed into the notion of parental involvement and move towards establishing comparable systems of accountability with constant monitoring and evaluation of parental involvement initiatives in schools. Developing a systematic method for monitoring parental involvement programs could actualize the promise in these notions and increase the value of social and educational investment. Moreover, equitable data-driven decisions can be made with regard to resource allocations that enhance programming or that build infrastructure for proper program implementation.

TOWARDS A SOLUTION FOR PARENT-DRIVEN MONITORING

Because legislative actions have raised the stakes at schools, and schools in turn are raising the stakes on parents to become “involved”—a relative term—tensions are brewing and unrealistic expectations are being imposed on both sides. Given that school administrators and teachers unions have greater access and more influence on the political establishment, laws to induce parental involvement can have a negative paternalistic bent towards parents. More opportunities for parent-driven involvement are necessary for the development of a “New Think” model focusing on balance, equity, and reciprocity. Exalting a parent-driven approach will allow parents, as taxpaying consumers of public education, the opportunity to give the systems (local, state, and federal) feedback. Before equitable policy can be drafted we must first attempt to systematically and objectively examine the current state of affairs regarding school-based parental involvement programs, the imposition of parents in these policies, and the forced expectations. To restore checks and balances, we should make the conflict of interests inherent in this seemingly forced relationship transparent. Teachers feel threatened by parental involvement; princi-

pals resist parental involvement in their decision making, and parents overly emphasize the needs of their children and their overall distrust of the system. Since we know that these conflicts exist and finger pointing is not so easy in this instance, we must approach resolution through some fair and logical method that untangles the roles and the onus of responsibility for increasing parental involvement. Hence, schools should be held accountable for minimally striving to comply with *NCLB* Section 1118 mandates by executing the measurable standards I propose:

1. Co-create with parents a reasonable, visible, functioning, and sustainable infrastructure at school that supports and encourages parental involvement.
2. Co-create with parents varied opportunity structures that appeal to family interests and needs.
3. Co-create with parents quality principles for integrated involvement in all facets of home-school efforts.

These standards for program development should provide a framework for a comprehensive and systematic evaluation of parental involvement efforts. The standards, if implemented properly, provide a tangible and uniform premise for extracting evidence to support the claim that schools are systematically putting “best efforts” forward to increase parental involvement. As a point of clarification, the term *best efforts* used in this paper is not intended to suggest best practices. Furthermore, the goal of measuring effort over success is to get beyond the relativity of what success means or looks like in varying contexts of schools and local communities. Borrowing from contingency theory,⁵ a systems analysis of effort should be defined in terms of a school’s authentic and systematic movement towards co-creating with parents and other primary stakeholders to support systems and opportunities that provide a reasonable quality of range, access, and input informed by primary stakeholders and research. The following framework juxtaposed with a basic systems model can serve as measurable and observable indicators that can then be related to the contingency theory model:

1. School overall capacity
2. Staff competency
3. Quality of opportunity structures
4. Quantity of opportunity structures
5. Parents’ at-school experiences

Figure 1 shows how these indicators relate to the contingency systems model that ought to undergird well-developed plans for parental involvement programs. This type of conceptual mapping and concise implementation planning could serve as tangible evidence, demonstrating schools’ overall efforts towards involving parents. It may also get beyond the lip service that comes when schools are asked the question, “What are schools doing to involve parents?” As fundamental as planning may seem, the state of Arkansas enacted a bill (H.S. Bill 603) that requires schools to develop a plan to involve parents. The old-think way of planning for parental involvement is to insert a formulaic paragraph into the school improvement plans (SIP) which sit on the principal’s shelf until the next one is due. The Arkansas bill

should provide a fresh example that can eliminate haphazard efforts by schools to involve parents. Engaging in strategic planning under this framework could highlight the conceptual connections that are often missed when evaluating the successes and failures of parental involvement programs. Moreover, the framework could be useful in assessing school capacity for parental involvement in a more tangible and concrete way. At the same time, this framework could showcase the actualities of a school's earnest efforts to policy makers and other stakeholders.

JUSTIFICATION FOR FRAMEWORK

School Overall Capacity

Since *NCLB* calls for systematic analysis of "capacity building to increase parental involvement," assessing overall capacity could stimulate greater support for under-resourced (lacking capacity) schools or could unveil sheer negligence on the part of schools that deem this mandate symbolic. Under-resourced schools may require additional funding allocations to build an infrastructure that can support the type of community outreach needed to increase parental involvement. Within organizations that are not achieving desired outcomes, organizational capacity factors are often taken for granted. These factors exist as tacit elements, or invisible conduits for program implementation. However, the conceptual alignment of these tangible and intangible resources, when brought together strategically, has great potential for enhancing any school's ability to produce the desired outcomes. In the case of schools, the desired outcome is increased parental involvement.

If parental involvement programs are to become successful, then we must look underneath overly simplified "recipe approaches" championed by academic journals and practitioner publications as best practices. Instead, we must apply honest systems analysis to these discussions. The reason I make this claim is because best-practices recipes often leave out a key ingredient, the elements of implementation that are fundamental to replicating success. Structural barriers such as school capacity factors often inhibit the implementation and delivery of programmatic strategies derived from reform policies.

By using the contingency theory model⁶ as part of the analytic framework for evaluating parental involvement initiatives, a more explicit dialogue with consistent elements can occur among stakeholders using a common vocabulary to assess school capacity for parental involvement and overall program quality. By being more explicit about school capacity to carry out programs, in this instance parental involvement programs, school staff, citizens, and policy makers can become better informed about the objectives that programs and policies are actually accomplishing with existing resources.

Staff Competence

Providing school staff with new information via training that focuses on the benefits, importance, and logic of parental involvement is critical to encourage staff to effectively implement any programmatic model. The limitations on teacher

education programs have not addressed parental involvement in the pre-service curriculum. This means that for the past three decades, veteran teachers have operated under federal policies that require them to involve parents yet have not had formal training to help them implement the policies. Consequently, many teachers presently in the system have not had substantive exposure to information about parental and community involvement. Furthermore, those districts that have begun to address professional development in this area are obviously focused on strategies to pacify parents, instead of using this as an opportunity to gain critical skills to engage parents artfully and meaningfully.

This is unfortunate because Tomlinson argues that there is evidence that teachers in urban schools are still not well informed about the lives, backgrounds, expectations, and desires of ethnic minority parents. Consequently, minority families are stereotyped as “problems.” There is also evidence that suggests that schools have not substantively changed their way of doing things as a result of parental involvement. It appears that parents’ ability to influence school practices is not high, and parents who do not share the prevailing culture of the school, such as ethnic minorities, working class and poor parents are likely to have no voice.

While most practitioners and researchers support increased involvement, few agree on what constitutes effective or meaningful involvement. Quality parental involvement remains elusive because confusion persists regarding the operational definition of “parental involvement” and regarding the activities, goals, and desired outcomes of various parent involvement programs and policies. A major source of this confusion is attributed to the lack of scientific rigor in the research informing practice and policy. Because of these factors, less is known about parental involvement than commonly assumed by the notion of this construct. Many programs and policies developed at school sites to promote parent involvement are not explicitly based on the sparse existing evidence. Reliance on such data may also lead to unrealistic expectations from teachers and administrators of what parent involvement programs and practices actually are able to accomplish.⁷

These pervasive ambiguities have greatly minimized and convoluted the overall efficacy of parental involvement initiatives and the promise of the outcomes intended to democratize education and increase student achievement.

Quantity of Opportunities Structures

Examining the quantity of available opportunities is not intended to convey a high value for quantity over quality, but to consider the options available for parents from diverse groups and interests to become involved with schools seriously endeavoring to tap into the uniqueness of all families and individuals. Single outlets such as the PTA do not provide multiple outlets for involvement. When parent initiatives are conceptualized, planned, and implemented exclusively by school administrators and teachers without considering parents’ interests, educators are likely to meet resistance. Within these programs, knowledge of parental needs and wishes are presumed, and parental compliance taken for granted. Parent-school partnerships are established on the professionals’ terms—conceptualized through professional ideology and articulated through professional language, each of which creates bar-

riers for parents. Under these circumstances, many parents experience such “partnership” in terms of inequality, social distance, and powerlessness. Hence, parental involvement initiatives become meaningless to parents.⁸

Previous studies have shown that parent-involvement patterns vary according to parent’s social, racial, ethnic, and economic characteristics,⁹ but the findings have been mixed. Numerous studies make suppositions that low-income minority parents often have different beliefs about parents’ in-school involvement and are less involved in school activities than higher-income, non-minority parents.¹⁰ Few studies look within these racial and ethnic groups to explore environmental contexts, such as urban communities.

Observers have suggested that parental involvement is lacking where it is most needed—in impoverished urban schools. Research confirms several elements that may impede productive parental involvement in urban schools: 1) lack of time, 2) minimal opportunities for involvement, and 3) indifferent or antagonistic attitudes on the part of school personnel.¹¹ In order to optimize parent involvement, there must be several co-created opportunities present that meet the lifestyle constraints and interests of parents.

Quality of Programs

Although schools have a history of implementing several programs, these programs are prepackaged in decorative “kits.” When we talk of parental involvement programs, and of organizing community people, these programs should not be handed off to principals and teachers in the form of how-to-manuals. Instead, they should be co-created by stakeholders. Overly simplified recipe approaches eliminate pre-planning dialogue and the conceptualization phase that is required for stakeholders to reach consensus, feel a sense of ownership, and ultimately buy into the strategy. Therefore, examining the process of program development may be an important indicator of buy-in from those parents who maintain a connection to program structures at the school.

Parents’ Experiences

Creating opportunities for parents to have positive, equitable, and respectful experiences when interacting with the school system should be one of the ultimate goals of the involvement/partnership doctrine. Hence, student achievement should not be the sole end. Positive experiences will support parents’ continued involvement in schools. Although partnership doctrine occupies a symbolic space in schools’ philosophy, however, Lareau and Horvat note that in the process, parents encounter subliminal rules by which educators define desirable family-school relationships predicated on “trust, partnership, cooperation, and deference.” Crozier confirmed the lack of authentic partnership between schools and parents. In her study, she states:

Although teachers talked about partnership as working together with parents, it was in fact based on the teacher’s concerns and definition of the situation, a commitment to bringing about parents’ agreement with their view or indeed ensuring consonance. Frequently, teachers spoke of the fact that where parents were happy, then they were

no problem; [teachers considered] parents were happy when their view matched that of the teachers. Where this was not the case criticisms of parents, or indeed a deficit model of parents, [was] developed.¹²

DISCUSSION

Systematic monitoring of programs and policies will be a crucial factor for parental involvement to work in schools and for providing minority parents with the type of access to the system that is required under the law. Using the conceptual framework proposed in this paper, educators, parents, and policy makers can forge a common understanding of what is happening in schools with regard to this policy initiative. Credible data can then be used to make data-driven decisions about what ought to happen and what types of policies should be implemented at the state level to induce or ensure that these programs are enjoying success at the levels deemed vital by parents, the intended recipients of these programs.

Systematic monitoring and evaluation could be helpful in establishing parameters of accountability from the school to the community. Taking a parent-driven approach towards monitoring parental involvement programs could insure that parents are repositioned as equal stakeholders with input that affects decisions, priorities, and policies and that educational policy is data-driven and not rhetoric.

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1 Epstein, 135–137; Gillum; Henderson and Berla; Moles.

2 Winters.

3 Mattingly et al.; Baker and Soden.

4 Baker and Soden.

5 Jackson.

6 *Ibid.*

7 Baker and Soden.

8 Bastiani.

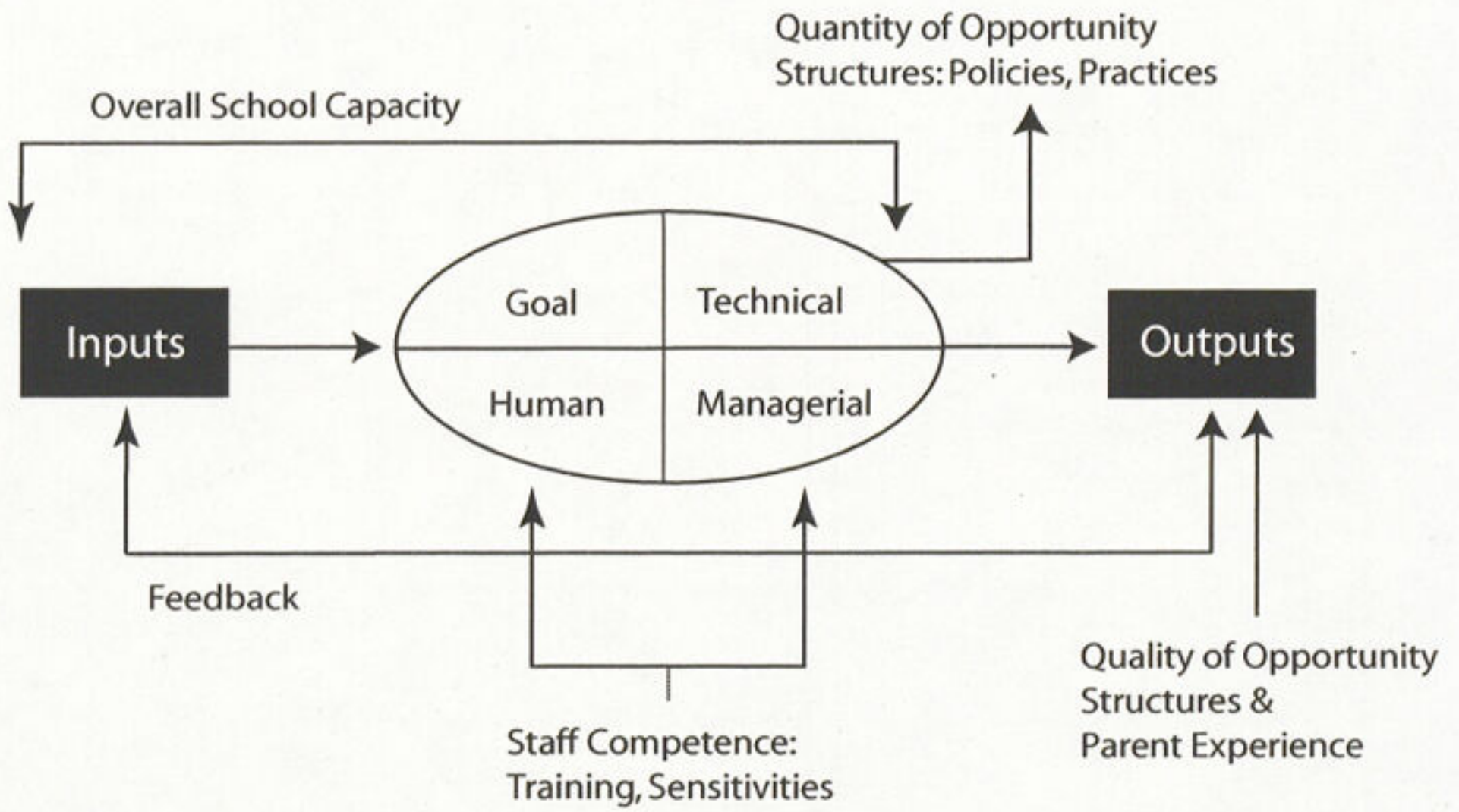
9 Hoover-Dempsey and Brissie.

10 Chavkin and Williams.

11 Becker and Epstein; Hobbs et al.; Lightfoot; Lortie; Moles.

12 Crozier, 132.

FIGURE 1



Urban Blues: The Candidates' Failure to Address the Plight of American Cities

Jacqueline Thomas

America's cities were once key to would-be presidential candidates' campaign strategies. During the 2004 primary season, however, cities were not on the candidates' radar screens. Whether because of indifference to the plight of cities and their residents or out of fear of being labeled "tax and spend" Democrats, none of the frontrunners addressed the cities' plight nor offered any bold plans for dealing with housing, mass transit, and other infrastructure needs. Too easily forgotten is that cities remain not only a source of votes, but crucial centers of culture and commerce that are ignored only at great peril to our nation.

Where, oh where, have the cities gone?

Once key to presidential contenders' campaign strategies, cities were rarely, if ever, a topic during the primary season. Carol Moseley Braun talked of a WPA-like program to rebuild the cities' infrastructure, but the idea of forging a comprehensive urban agenda was nowhere on the radar screen of Democratic frontrunners in the 2004 race.

Most Democrats, afraid of the "tax and spend" label, responded with the same indifference to the cities' plight as the White House and congressional Republicans. Against the backdrop of the escalating price tag of the war in Iraq and an economy slow to emerge from a major slump, there are no bold plans for addressing the critical urban problems. There is only silence. Forgotten is the crucial role cities play in the nation's economy and the demonstrated failure in the past of a rising economic tide to lift all boats.

Those of us who live in big cities need not look far to find our neighbors for whom the boom of the 1990's was a bust. Approximately 20 million people live at or near the poverty level, despite the fact their families are headed by full-time workers. Disproportionately, they are city dwellers.

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So often it is really a tale of two cities—one full of glittering retail districts, the other of boarded-up storefronts. One is blessed by welcoming mega-bookstores with coffee shops; the other served by public library branches that have had to reduce hours due to budget cuts. One sees Osama bin Laden as the chief source of terror; the other sees the drug dealer on the corner.

SHIFTING GROUND

For many years, cities were valued as centers of industry, arts, culture, and opportunity, and resources were devoted to bridging the gap between urban haves and have-nots. In the aftermath of the previous decade's riots, federal aid to cities increased during the presidencies of Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford, and Jimmy Carter, who was cheered when he visited the South Bronx in 1977. In 1980, grants to municipal governments totaled some \$70 billion.

A chill had begun by the 1980 campaign, though, exemplified by candidate Ronald Reagan's decision to decline an invitation to address the annual meeting of the U.S. Conference of Mayors.¹ Many later saw a broader message in the oft-repeated story of President Reagan's failure to recognize Housing and Urban Development (HUD) secretary Samuel Pierce, publicly greeting him as "Mr. Mayor."

Even if cities continued to be embraced as hubs of commerce, the Reagan years seemed to mark the repudiation of the people who lived in them. By 1986, grants to municipalities were down to roughly \$14 billion, when inflation is taken into account. By the close of the first Bush administration, the cities were said in the *Star Tribune* of Minneapolis to be "at the nadir of their political clout and economic strength."² Block grants and other various forms of aid, such as the *Comprehensive Employment and Training Act* (CETA), had all but dried up. And in the previous decade, appropriations for HUD had been reduced by half.

Increasingly, some Democratic mayors began to adopt the rhetoric of the Republicans, especially that of Jack Kemp, President George H.W. Bush's HUD secretary and the leading proponent of enterprise zones—government-designated areas in which job-creating businesses receive tax and other assistance. Coleman A. Young of Detroit, Mich., and Ed Koch of New York were the exceptions, employing their colorful rhetoric in defense of more traditional federal aid programs for their cities. Talk at the summer 1987 meeting of the Conference of Mayors focused on the need for an urban investment policy, and there was liberal use throughout the mayors' key policy statement of the then-fashionable political term "competitiveness."³

Perhaps it was only a matter of being realistic in the face of a significant change in the political landscape: The voters coveted by both Democrats and Republicans were suburban voters. Meanwhile, Democrats took the urban vote, especially the African-American urban vote, for granted.

INTERMITTENT ATTENTION

In the years since, urban issues are sporadically raised during presidential campaigns.

- After the riots in Los Angeles, President George H.W. Bush and Democratic challenger Bill Clinton were forced to react. Jack Kemp, who was sometimes described as an “outsider,” took a more prominent role in the Bush administration. The president, resisting what he described as the failed programs of the past, offered an urban revitalization plan based on Mr. Kemp’s enterprise zones. Meanwhile, Governor Clinton advocated a shift of funds from defense to housing construction and public works projects in cities, as well as his own brand of enterprise zones.
- City Vote was an idea that held some promise for reversing years of neglect. It was designed to get urban voters out ahead of those in New Hampshire and Iowa and bring urban issues to the forefront by holding a non-binding presidential preference poll in conjunction with November 7, 1995, municipal elections. The problem was that political professionals hated the idea, and some states’ restrictive election laws prohibited this kind of straw vote.
- Vice President Al Gore emerged as a strong champion of the fight against urban sprawl during his unsuccessful 2000 bid for the presidency. He put himself in the company of those who insisted that strengthening the urban core was the best defense against uncontrolled growth.
- Illicit drug-related crime became an issue during the 1990’s. It prompted discussion about the need for more police on the streets and more funds for drug treatment programs.

21ST CENTURY ANSWERS

In 1976 the Republican platform declared “effectively helping our cities now requires a coordinated National Urban Policy.” Ironically, the declaration was nearly identical to ones used today by urban advocacy groups, looking for federal help to continue improvements in urban quality of life. With state and local governments facing some of the most severe budget deficits in years, how else will resources be available to build affordable housing, adequate recreational facilities, and mass transit systems and to rebuild urban roads and sewer systems?

Yet making the case for an urban agenda isn’t all that difficult. Three-quarters of the U.S. population live in metropolitan areas. Suburbanites, meanwhile, continue to look to the cities for educational, health care, and other services, as well as recreation and cultural activities. Moreover, the lines between city and suburb are blurring as so-called inner-ring suburbs increasingly face the same problems as the cities.

There is an unavoidable link between the health of this nation and the health of its cities. But the cities won’t truly prosper, despite their strategic locations, without a federal commitment of resources.

Are the candidates listening?

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ENDNOTES

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Redefining Devolution

Marc H. Morial

In his essay, Morial argues that devolution of resources and responsibilities to non-profits and local governments is the most efficient way to implement federal policies. The closest unit of government to our nation's citizens, municipal governments are better able to fashion meaningful solutions to local challenges. Similarly, national and grassroots non-profits are better able to deliver efficient programs absent the bureaucratic and political constraints of federal government.

Because the devolution defined by the so-called new federalism of the late 1970's and early 1980's ignores the essential features of America's 21st century political structure, the concept—and practice—of devolution must be redefined if the greatest number of people, and America as a whole, are to fully benefit from it.

Under devolution's old meaning, programs that were created and substantially funded by the federal government were given to the state governments to implement. The reality for many years in this country, however, has been that cities and metropolitan areas constitute the basic units of political, cultural, and economic equilibrium.

Cities are the nation's lifeblood. When you ask city dwellers where they live, they will say the name of the city because people relate to cities—to New York City, Philadelphia, New Orleans, or Orlando. Cities are where most companies are headquartered. Cities are where jobs are to be found. They are where many institutions of higher education are located, where major newspapers and media centers are based, and where institutions of art and culture thrive. Cities are our units of being—of living and breathing—much more so than states. So city governments and, in some areas, county governments are best able to shape, direct, and administer certain kinds of social and economic initiatives.

Thus, from a public policy perspective, devolving programs to the unit of government closest to the people, most responsive to the people, most in touch with the

Mr. Marc H. Morial, president and CEO of the National Urban League, served two distinguished four-year terms as mayor of New Orleans, La., from 1994 to 2002. During that time, he also served as president of the United States Conference of Mayors in 2001 and 2002. Morial also served two years in the Louisiana State Senate. Prior to his elected service, he was a lawyer in private practice. He holds a law degree from the Georgetown University Law Center in 1983 and also earned a bachelor degree in economics and African American studies from the University of Pennsylvania in 1980.

people's problems, and most able to fashion meaningful solutions to those problems ought to mean devolving them to cities, not states.

There are some programs in areas such as health and perhaps criminal justice and corrections where devolution to the states is appropriate. But when it comes to community economic development, many aspects of social services, job training, and other governmental activity, cities and counties are where the action and the innovation are concentrated. Local government also has the ability to make programs work best.

One reason for this is that, in many respects, state governments are not necessarily effectively closer to the people than the federal government. In some areas with large populations, state governments are no closer to the people than the federal government. State governments may be encumbered by bureaucracies that are difficult for ordinary citizens to navigate.

Of course, city government bureaucracies may also be large and bureaucratic, but their core functions—oversight of police and fire departments, garbage collection, water, street cleaning, parks, playgrounds, schools, libraries, and so on—involve services people see and use in their everyday lives. In addition, the media typically cover local government much more closely than state government. City councils meet on a regular basis, while state legislatures typically meet just part of the year. Everyone knows their mayor, their city council member, and their representative in Congress, but not everyone knows their state legislator. In reality, local government is most often closest to the people. State government can sometimes be the farthest from the people.

The fact that we need to think about devolution in a new way is best exemplified by an old political saying: "Put the jam on the lower shelf." That is, put the programs and opportunities where people in communities can reach them. Giving all block grant funds solely to states and letting them fashion programs is not the best way to achieve this goal. More effort needs to be made to empower our city halls and county halls to carry out such important governmental functions as fighting crime, community economic development, and housing. An additional benefit would be the reduction of administrative overhead. Taking a program directly from the federal to the local governmental level would eliminate administrative expenses for the state bureaucracy—yielding a bigger bang for the buck.

Perhaps this means taking some power away from state officials, which may be part of the next step of devolution. After all, if you're serious about devolution, you ought to transfer more power to the local level, and that means devolving money, not just mandates. There is a tendency to devolve mandates to the local level with no money to implement them—in other words, red tape and regulation without the resources to comply with them.

For example, as a result of the federal *Clean Water Act*, cities are under pressure to upgrade their sewer systems, which in many cases are now one hundred years old. These systems have leaky pipes to old treatment facilities and can infect and contaminate the ground water. There need to be substantial upgrades, but forcing a compliance model on local governments from state departments of the Environmental Protection Agency without providing adequate resources to get the job done is a hollow policy.

I am not suggesting an indiscriminate devolution to urban areas that would produce an illogical jumble of programs and responsibilities. The objective should be to fashion effective programs under local control, programs for which local government officials have the authority to focus the money and are accountable for the program's implementation. We went through this in the 1990's with the Community Policing Program. Officials in some cities wanted to hire additional police officers. Officials in other cities said they could better spend the funds enhancing their police department's equipment—improving technology, purchasing more automobiles, expanding facilities, and so on. In such cases, local officials should be given latitude to do what they feel is necessary—even, for example, taking 20 percent of the funds and applying them to making improvements in drug-treatment programs—if the purpose is to improve public safety because public safety is uniquely a local responsibility.

Any large city in any state will have more police officers on its force than the entire state police force. For example, when I was mayor of New Orleans, the Louisiana State Police was a 1,500-member force. The New Orleans Police Department had 1,700 officers, and I had set a future goal of 2,000.

So if it's a matter concerning hospitals, which states run, give the block-grant funds to states. If it's housing, community economic development, law enforcement, or jobs, in which cases the city's role is more dominant, devolve the authority to the level of government that is the most appropriate—the local level.

One of the most successful devolutionary programs in the last quarter century has been the Community Development Block Grant Program, which was created and funded through the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to replace revenue sharing. It essentially gives money from HUD directly to cities, except for those cities of less than fifty thousand people. In such instances, the funds go to the state, which oversees the program at the municipal level, enabling state officials to ensure that the money is spent on projects that meet local needs while adhering to particular regulations. As a result, Community Development Block Grant funds have built, or in other ways aided, community centers, libraries, faith-based facilities and programs in youth services, housing developments, and other economic-development projects across the urban landscape. This program is a great example of devolution to the local level.

To cite another example, during the 1990's, mayors across the country vigorously challenged Washington's dictate that all the funds for the Welfare to Work Program go to the states because we knew that the large majority of welfare recipients affected by the new rules would be in cities. And we knew that the cities—and we, as mayors—would be on the front lines of coping with any effects of the failure of welfare reform. We argued with the Clinton administration and the Congressional Republicans that we ought to get some direct funding. The result was that the funds were split—some went to the cities and some to the state. It was a political and policy compromise that gave both states and cities a role to play.

It should be no surprise that my opinion is still shared by only a minority of the population. Devolution is still widely considered a “property” of the states, in part because governors have significant power in our political structure. After all, it's no accident that four of our last five presidents ran for the White House from the state

house; however, it is at the level of mayors and local government where real innovation and true efficiency can be found and where the best results can sometimes be found.

I must add, however, now that I'm leading a non-profit social service and civil rights organization, I favor the federal government retaining the ability to do work directly with national non-profits or, in some cases, local non-profits. In my new position, I am becoming a lot more aware that in some instances national community-based groups and local community-based groups are able to do some things quicker, better and more effectively than the government because we do not have the bureaucracy or the political difficulty of dealing with deliberative bodies like city councils and special interest groups that sometimes bog down government.

I favor more of a hybrid model when it comes to devolution. I don't think that there ought to be one model—give all the money to the states, or give all the money to the cities, or bypass the states and go to community-based groups. A hybrid approach that enables some programs to be managed by the state, some managed by the city, and some managed by community-based or national non-profit groups allows for greater flexibility of response to solving problems that citizens and communities face. At the same time, everyone in the system is held accountable.

This model includes faith-based programs as well. Faith-based initiatives have long been integral to social welfare activities. Indeed, before the New Deal, if you were in need, you went to the Salvation Army or a local church, but government dollars have never before gone directly to churches. Funding has gone to community-based groups that were closely related to churches, but also separate and distinct from them. I think that this model is still the most effective approach. Of course, as a civil rights organization, we are opposed to allowing religious institutions that receive government money to discriminate in hiring on the basis of religion, which some want to permit. I would suggest that such faith-based efforts as the Associated Catholic Charities and the Lutheran Social Services, as well as those of people like the Rev. Floyd Flake of Allen AME Church in New York City, offer great examples of how many religious institutions and individual churches have been able to make faith-based activity work very well under the existing regulations.

These examples of the realities city and state officials have faced, and the adaptations that have been made, in utilizing federal dollars to improve their communities and the lives of their citizens underscore my point: more authority and funding must be given to local governments when issues affect local communities.

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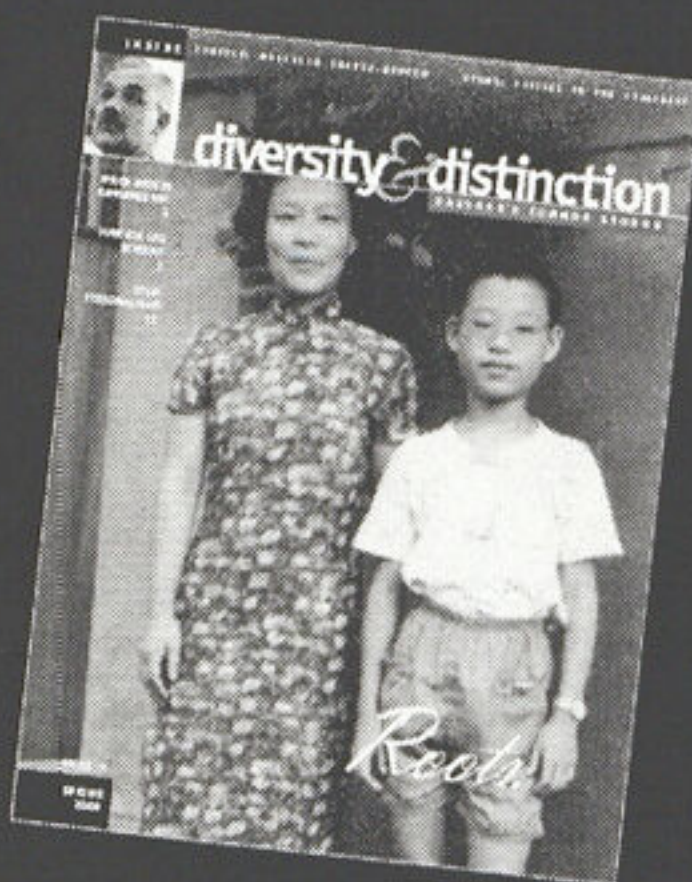
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