



HARVARD Kennedy School
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HARVARD JOURNAL
of **AFRICAN AMERICAN**
PUBLIC POLICY

FEATURES

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David C. Wilson

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Implications for African Americans**

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**Determining the Current Status of the Environmental Justice
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By Harriet A. Washington

Review by David Markus

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Harvard Journal of African American Public Policy

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The 2008 issue of the *Harvard Journal of African American Public Policy* is currently available. The journal is a must-read for scholars, students, social scientists, and practitioners with an interest in interdisciplinary works on policy making and politics affecting the African American community in the United States. This edition explores the issues of environmental justice, organized labor, and voter perceptions on race and gender. Featured in volume XIV are interviews with:

- **Juan Williams**
- **Van Jones**

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Editor's Note

For the first time in decades, the U.S. election in November promises to be particularly historic and undeniably pivotal. Regardless, the simple act of electing the 44th president of the United States, whoever that may be, will not extinguish the momentous debates, nor resolve all of the national issues that fuel the sentiments permeating our national discourse. In recent months, we have seen the public's appetite for something different manifest itself in both the Republican and Democratic primaries. The question is whether this deep-seated desire is producing results on the ground. Are we still banging our heads against the same walls that stood before our parents? Or have we actually made progress and transcended the same questions of inclusiveness, justice, and community that have fallen in the laps of not only African Americans, but everyone truly concerned with the future of our great country?

While the content of this volume includes valuable insights into our political consciousness, this year's edition of the *Harvard Journal of African American Public Policy* also endeavors to highlight several issues that continue to challenge the African American community nationwide. Our objective is to contribute to the discussion such that we, policy makers and citizens alike, are more informed and empowered this November and in the years that follow.

In an effort to vary our content and provide access to a broad range of issues and opinions, this year's edition has opted to publish without a collective theme. Instead, we offer the opportunity for several voices to give their perspectives on important areas of interest to the African American community. David C. Wilson explores not just the public's support of black and female candidates, but also delves into the question of whether we think they have a realistic chance of winning an election. Christina D. Sanders and Blake E. Green discuss continuing struggles among youth voters, particularly in the African American community of Waller County, TX.

The journal is also proud to feature articles and commentaries that address continuing challenges facing African Americans, including Bill Fletcher Jr.'s analysis of organized labor in Black America. Uhuru Hotep critically examines the role of protest politics in the 21st century, in the context of the Jena Six. Additionally, Heather Dillingham explores the characterization of environmental justice as a revolutionary movement and its relation to minorities more broadly.

This edition further includes three literature reviews. Marsha Bannister reviews *Come On People*, Bill Cosby and Alvin F. Poussaint's social commentary on what the African American community, writ large, can do to overcome various challenges. Portia Boone reviews *Black Wealth/White Wealth* by Melvin Oliver and Thomas Shapiro, highlighting socioeconomic disparities in wealth, and David Markus reviews Harriet A. Washington's *Medical Apartheid*, which considers a historical basis for the contemporary relationship between African Americans and the medical community.

Additionally we offer two interviews with leading voices in politics and activism. Senior National Public Radio correspondent and political analyst Juan Williams offers his perspective on several topics, from black political leaders like

Barack Obama and Condoleezza Rice to reflections on China's political institutions. Van Jones is a political advocate and the cofounder of the Oakland-based Ella Baker Center for Human Rights. He speaks with the journal on the effectiveness of building coalitions and on his efforts within the environmental movement and green initiatives.

The publication of the 2008 *Harvard Journal of African American Public Policy* owes a great deal of thanks to all the individuals involved in its conception. The dedication, creativity, and initiative of this year's journal staff are unparalleled. Without their hard work and support this edition would not be possible. Their unique experiences, interests, and commitment to solving policy challenges facing the African American community are embodied within this compilation. A special thanks is also extended to our publisher and faculty advisor, working tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure that our efforts continue to be realized year after year. Finally, it is with deep gratitude that we thank our readership. It is through your work and the important contributions you make each and every day that progress is made for African Americans, minority communities, and, in effect, our entire society.

From the demonstrations in Jena, LA, to the streets of urban America; from equal access to voting polls to environmental justice, the issues affecting African American communities today span a broad spectrum. Though this volume captures a snapshot of the energy and excitement of this momentous year in our political history, with election day on the way and voters still largely undecided, we hope it will also provide perspective on concerns that will continue to challenge policy makers, activists, and ordinary citizens in the longer term.

Natalie Colbert

Editor-in-Chief

Harvard Journal of African American Public Policy

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Prospective Black Presidential Candidates: Can They Win?

David C. Wilson

INTRODUCTION

There are few empirical studies focusing on the public's perceptions of hypothetical Black presidential candidates (Sigelman and Welch 1984), and none examining their viability: whether or not a Black candidate can win.¹ In part, this is due to the limited number of presidential contests in which there are Black candidates to consider, coupled with the belief that after the 1980s, Black presidential candidates have not received serious consideration in terms of primary support or campaign contributions. However, the current political climate presents both a new political reality for African Americans, as well as a new pool of experienced Black presidential prospects.

The current political situation in the United States is ripe for a Black presidential challenger. Illinois Democratic Senator Barack Obama is among the top contenders for the Democratic nomination, and there are a number of Black political figures being mentioned as future leaders in their parties, both Republican and Democrat, and male and female. The public reports an overwhelming willingness to vote for a Black candidate if nominated by their party (Bardes and Oldendick 2006), and at

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Wilson earned his bachelor degree in government from Western Kentucky University and multiple masters degrees—an M.P.A. (public policy and administration) and M.A. (political science)—and a Ph.D. in political science from Michigan State University.

This paper was originally presented at the Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago, IL, 13 April 2007. Comments and paper requests can be submitted to dcwilson@udel.edu.

least among Democrats, there appears to be some broad acceptance of Black candidates. For instance, during the 2004 presidential campaign, a June 2003 Gallup Poll found the public supported activist Al Sharpton (who is Black) more than it did Wesley Clark (a White retired army general). Thus, based on current political signals, prospects for viable Black presidential candidates appear positive.

However, the perceived racial realities of Black Americans paint a different picture. There are discouraging reports about the deepening pessimism and alienation of African Americans (Bobo 2001; Cose 1993; Hochschild 1995). For example, Dawson's (1994) Black politics survey of 1993 found African Americans report high levels of cynicism and frustration with America. In the survey, 81 percent of Blacks believed that "American society owes Black people a better chance in life than we currently have." The study also reported that 50 percent of African Americans believed it was time to support a separate national political party. Studies by the Gallup Organization (2004) also support a pessimistic view. In 2004, African Americans reported less positive views of Black-White relations than Whites, they were more likely to believe that race relations will always be a problem, they were more pessimistic about job and housing opportunities and educational opportunities for their children relative to Whites, and they were more likely than Whites to believe discrimination and racial profiling exist.

The climate in America is both ripe for political success for Black candidates, and at the same time, African Americans feel their opportunities for fairness and equality are still limited by race. These competing realities call for a renewed attention to the political climate for Black presidential candidates. In this paper, the author questions how perceptions of viability are influenced by voter race, political party affiliation, localized context, and/or perceptions about race relations.

These questions are important because they help understand the prospects of current presidential candidates like Barack Obama. As a Black candidate, his perceived racial background will bring about expectations and stereotypes related to other Black political figures, including past candidates. During the primary season, the electorate tends to vote for candidates who have a strong chance of winning in November; thus candidates who are perceived as less viable start off at a disadvantage. Even more problematic are factors (e.g., race, sex, handicap status) that the candidate cannot control but that influence perceptions of viability in presidential primaries. In these cases, the candidate and his or her public relations staff must find ways to direct attention back to relevant candidate issue positions and objective qualifications.

Focusing on issues of race relations is a common strategy for Black candidates, especially in the context of larger Black populations (Bobo and Gilliam 1990). Yet this strategy can backfire if negative perceptions about race in America correlate with beliefs about the inequality of the political process. Blacks, particularly preadult Blacks, are shown to be less efficacious and trusting of the political system (Abramson 1983) and may therefore be less inclined to believe that Black candidates can win in presidential primaries or elections. As a result, a more negative outlook on racial matters translates into weaker perceptions of Black candidate viability, which in turn can translate into fewer financial contributions from potential supporters, less attention overall, and eventually fewer votes.

If perceptions of race relations are associated with perceptions of candidate viability, then candidates would do well to promote the positive rather than the negative aspects of race. A negative approach may also backfire if the racial negativity is too overt and events of the recent past are ingrained in the minds of the public. This would mean that civil rights era candidates who promote messages around the victimization of Black American and highlight historical injustices would be at a disadvantage while more mainstream post-civil rights era or even moderate Black candidates might have an upper hand, at least with the mass public. For now, however, the concern is for what, if any, empirical differences exist in perceived viability, the factors that influence these differences, and why.

POLITICAL VIABILITY AND PERCEPTIONS OF RACIAL REALITIES

Perceived candidate viability is critical to a candidate's ability to win his or her party's nominations (Bartels 1988). Voters use a number of factors, including viability, to decide which candidate they will vote for. However, because voters cannot digest all of the information about each candidate, their positions, and their chances of winning, they use shortcuts (Ferejohn and Kuklinski 1990), particularly in low-information elections (McDermott 1997, 1998). These shortcuts mostly consist of party identification and other individual character traits, but can also include seemingly less relevant factors such as candidate race, gender, incumbency status, and physical attractiveness, which can bias electoral outcomes (Krebs 1998; Sigelman et al. 1995; Sigelman, Sigelman, and Fowler 1987; Terkildsen 1993).

Candidate race can be a particularly problematic factor because of the vulnerability of Black candidates to stereotypes (McDermott 1998). Black candidates are more likely than White candidates to be described as liberal, empathetic to the poor, more compassionate to disadvantaged groups, and more concerned with racial issues such as civil rights (McDermott 1998; Sigelman et al. 1995). Historically, the fact that African Americans have needed federal protection simply to vote barely speaks to what the actual candidates have had to endure. The first Black presidential candidate, Shirley Chisholm, had to endure both intra- and interracial derogation (McClain, Carter, and Brady 2005), and to date, Black candidates still face uphill, racially charged battles in elections at the gubernatorial and senatorial levels. Thus, race plays an important role in the perceived viability of candidates, especially in presidential elections.

Although viability seems to be the relevant factor in electoral politics and voting behavior, research on Black candidates has almost exclusively focused on voter intentions: namely, whether the public is willing or reluctant to vote for Black candidates (Sigelman and Welch 1984). There are two problems with this direction. First, respondents have become less overt in their responses to racial questions. Providing the socially desirable response to racially sensitive questions is now the norm (Schuman et al. 1997). Second, by failing to find voter bias against Black candidates, studies often conclude that candidate race is less important to voting behavior. Indeed, the skewed reports on willingness to vote for historically under-represented candidates may shed light on whether questions regarding willingness

to “vote for” should still be an area of focus. Figure 1 shows the historical trend in response to the public’s willingness to support a hypothetical Black candidate.

Survey variables measuring likely vote intent (i.e., willingness to vote for a Black candidate) toward Black candidates have reached such a skewed distribution that support could be considered unanimous (Bardes and Oldendick 2006).² It’s likely that respondents face social pressure to say they would vote for Black or female candidates due to social desirability factors. However, they should face less pressure to report whether they believe the candidates would win in presidential campaigns because neither optimism nor pessimism are necessarily undesirable responses. As a result, one might expect that there would be no differences between Blacks and Whites in their reported willingness to vote for Black candidates, but there would be likely differences in their beliefs about a Black candidate’s chance of winning.

POLITICAL AND RACIAL REALITY

The political reality framework posits that there is a disproportionate political reality as it relates to equal treatment and equal representation. The disproportionate setting can be real or perceived, is assumed to be based on group membership, and is systemic rather than episodic. Thus, individual political attitudes and behaviors are influenced by a system of perceived unfairness which seemingly results in the unequal distribution of political resources (Abramson 1983; Bobo and Gilliam 1990; Emig, Hesse, and Fisher 1996; Howell and Fagan 1988).

Past studies examining the political reality model have mainly focused on differences between Blacks and Whites. There is evidence that the political reality model may explain differences in Black Americans’ political attitudes, particularly on trust and efficacy (Abramson 1983; Howell and Fagan 1988), and political behaviors (Bobo and Gilliam 1990). However, these studies either assume that there are racial differences in perceived political realities or they focus mainly on “political empowerment” (i.e., actual political representation) as a proxy for political reality.

For most Black Americans, their racial reality is their political reality. Those who perceive the environment to be more racially negative should be less likely to believe that Black presidential candidates would win in either primary or presidential elections. A negative racial reality would be characterized by pessimism about Black-White relations, mistrust, perceptions of racial discrimination, and negative beliefs about prejudice. Given the pessimism and deeply rooted cynicism, distrust, and perceived unfairness related to the national political system (Bobo 2001; Cose 1993; Dawson 1994; Hochschild 1995), the author expects African Americans to be less optimistic than Whites about Black candidate viability. And although Black representation may be stronger in more localized contexts (e.g., cities, counties, or states), at the national level history shows that Black presidential candidates are less likely to be seen as viable presidential candidates, much less win the party’s nomination (McClain, Carter, and Brady 2005).

Black presidential candidates have been more prominent in the Democratic Party. Many might believe the party would only have a greater proportion of Black candidates if they are viable; however, given the unsuccessful experiences of past

Black Democratic challengers, many Democrats may believe that Black (and likely women) candidates are more symbolic than viable. Thus, the political reality for Democrats should be a heightened awareness of racial problems in the United States—particularly among Black Democrats—and a more pessimistic outlook on race relations. As a result, Democrats should be less likely to perceive that Black candidates would win, even though they are front and center in the party.

There is not much empirical evidence regarding Black candidate support within the Republican Party. However, high-profile Black Republicans who are sometimes mentioned as prospective candidates (e.g., Alan Keyes, Condoleezza Rice, and Colin Powell) tend to have strong ties to government and the military and thus have institutional and political credibility. Therefore, if the Republican Party nominated a Black candidate for president, the nominee would likely be someone who shared the moderate to conservative views of the party. The relatively small number of Black Republicans would then likely support the candidate that the majority of Republicans, who are largely White, would support. Thus, the author expects Republicans to be more likely than Democrats to believe a Black candidate could win.

Contextual characteristics related to race, such as neighborhood racial composition, have also received considerable attention in racial attitudes literature (e.g., Gay 2004; Oliver and Mendelberg 2000). Assuming that, en masse, Blacks tend to be more pessimistic about racial realities in America, the aggregate effect should trickle down to individuals who live among greater numbers of Blacks. According to the political reality model, living among more Blacks should lower perceptions of the perceived viability of a Black presidential candidate. However, this relationship should be mediated by perceptions of race relations because it is the aggregate pessimism regarding race rather than simply living among more Blacks that is the determining factor.

The author defines “racial reality” as the perception of race relations in the United States. Assuming the American public sees race when they see a Black political candidate, it is likely public views on race relations are in fact related to views about the (Black) candidate. When it comes to Black candidates, broad perceptions of race relations encompass the subrealities (social, economic, educational, employment, etc.) of race through notions of equality and fairness. Given Blacks’ skepticism about the decline of racial negativity (Bobo 2001; Gallup 2004; Schuman et al. 1997), the author expects Blacks to have more pessimism about race relations and thus be less likely than Whites to believe that Black presidential candidates would win in an election.

DATA AND VARIABLES

In July of 2005, along with the Gallup Organization, the author collected data to address questions regarding hypothetical Black candidate viability. Respondents for the study come from the Gallup Poll Panel (GPP) representing broad and diverse segments of the U.S. population. GPP members are recruited by random-digit dialing (RDD) and are asked to complete two to three surveys per month, although the upper limit is rarely reached. The GPP has been shown to provide similar results to

Gallup's national RDD studies. The survey methodology consisted of a disproportionate stratified RDD telephone survey of GPP members. In an attempt to sample approximately equal numbers of Blacks and Whites, the Black population in the GPP was oversampled. The final sample contains 603 (59 percent) Whites and 423 (41 percent) Blacks. In terms of gender, 614 (60 percent) respondents are female and 412 (40 percent) are male. The gender-race composition breaks down as follows, 354 (34.5 percent) White females, 260 (25.3 percent) Black females, 249 (24.3 percent) White males, and 163 (15.9 percent) Black males. The overall sampling error for the study is ± 3 percent.

The primary dependent variable in this research is the concept of viability. The measure of viability in this research results from questions about whether or not respondents thought Black and female candidates could win in a presidential election. The author included preliminary analyses of the items about female candidates to provide a comparative group to Black candidates. First, respondents were asked whether they were willing to vote for Black/female candidates, and then they were asked whether they thought the Black/female candidates would win. The questions were asked as two adjacent items ("vote for" and "will win") per set ("Black candidate" and "woman candidate"). The items are listed below.

Black Candidate Set

If your political party NOMINATED a Black person for president in 2008, would you VOTE for him or her if they were qualified for the job, or not? (1=Yes, would vote for him/her, 0=No, would not vote for him/her)

If a Black candidate were RUNNING for president in 2008, do you think he or she would WIN, or not? (1=Yes, would win, 0=no, would not win)

Female Candidate Set

If your political party NOMINATED a woman for president in 2008, would you VOTE for her if she were qualified for the job, or not? (1=Yes, would vote for her, 0=No, would not vote for her)

If a woman candidate were RUNNING for president in 2008, do you think she would WIN, or not? (1=Yes, would win, 0=no, would not win)

In an attempt to cancel out the effects of question order, the gender and race item sets were randomly ordered. Thus, a random half of respondents answered the female candidate set first, and others were asked the Black candidate set first.

Perceptions of perceived racial realities were measured by five questions gauging respondents' beliefs and opinions about Black-White group relations. The exact question wording for the items are listed in the Appendix.

Respondent demographics were collected by self-reports. Respondent gender, race, education, and age were self-reported.³ Respondent political party identification was also self-reported, with three categories: Democrat, independent, and Republican. Local Black context is operationalized as the percentage of Blacks in the areas where respondents live. Percentages were based on statistics from the

Census Bureau and were appended to the data by the respondent's self-reported five-digit zip code.⁴

RESULTS

Tables 1 through 3 summarize the relationships between target candidate (Black candidate and female candidate), vote support (would vote for), and perceived viability (would win). Each table shows the difference across vote support and viability per target candidate, as well as the gap between the two items referencing candidate characteristics. The tables present the relative differences in political support levels between Black and female candidates, and the proportional differences within candidates. The cell statistics are the total sample percentages and the total sample sizes for each bivariate cell.

Public support for female and Black presidential candidates is both high and roughly equal although statistically different. However, perceptions of viability exhibit much larger differences. These results are shown in Table 1. Female candidates are perceived as having a greater chance of success than Black candidates by 14 percentage points. This can be gleaned from the column labeled Gap. Also, Black candidates have more to overcome in perceived chances of victory. While 98 percent of respondents say they would vote for a Black presidential candidate, only 26 percent believe a Black candidate would win, a difference of 72 percent. Alternatively, 94 percent of respondents say they would vote for a female presidential candidate, and 40 percent believe she would win.

The results show equal support, but different perceptions of viability. A Black candidate is perceived as having a lower chance of victory than a female candidate if nominated for the presidency in 2008. The next sections examine the extent to which individual background factors might help account for differences in public opinion toward prospective female and Black presidential candidates.

The tables in the next two sections are transposed for comparison purposes. For these tables, the target candidates are listed on the rows and the respondent characteristics are listed across the columns. This method allows for direct comparisons across demographic categories.

RESPONDENT RACE

Table 2 shows differences across Blacks and Whites in terms of vote support and chances of victory for both female and Black candidates. The results show no differences across race in terms of support but show significant differences in viability.

Blacks are more likely than Whites to perceive that a female candidate would win: a difference of 8 percent. However, Black respondents are less likely than Whites to perceive that a Black candidate would win—a difference of 13 percent. Similarly, for a female candidate, Blacks and Whites do not vary in their difference scores (overall difference = 4 percent; i.e., the difference between vote support and viability). Yet, for a Black candidate, the change in difference scores is large (13 percent). These results highlight the perceived racial differences in political realities: Blacks are more optimistic about the prospects of a female candidate than they

are about a Black candidate. Blacks appear still to believe candidate race has negative consequences in politics.

PARTY IDENTIFICATION

In terms of party identification (party ID), Table 3 reports the differences in political support, across target candidate, and across party membership. Democrats are more likely than Republicans to vote for, and perceive as viable, a female candidate; yet, with a Black candidate, Democrats and Republicans report equal levels of vote support and differ dramatically in their perceptions of viability mainly because Republicans are more likely than Democrats to believe that a Black candidate would win in a presidential election.

Further analyses examining the race by partisanship interaction show White Democrats are more likely than Black Democrats to believe a Black presidential candidate would win. Twenty-five percent of White Democrats said that a Black candidate would win, compared to 17 percent of Black Democrats (percent difference = 8 percent, $p < 0.05$). Among Republicans, there were no significant differences in perceived viability for a Black candidate. Thirty-nine percent of Whites and 33 percent of Blacks (percent difference = 6 percent, n.s.) believed that a Black candidate would win.

PERCEIVED RACE RELATIONS AND BLACK PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE VIABILITY

There are five measures of perceived race relations (i.e., racial realities). The five measures focus on general perceived relations (BLKWHT), whether Blacks have “too little” influence (BLKLTL), racial mistrust (BWTRST), whether an individual perceives race as a factor in discrimination (RACEMTRS), and perceptions of Whites’ prejudice toward Blacks (WHTPREJ). The BLKWHT measure is coded so that higher values indicate more positive race relations, and all of the other variables are dummy coded so that positive values indicate more negative racial perspectives. The results are compared across race and party ID, and are shown in Table 4.

On all five measures, Blacks report more pessimism—negative racial reality—than Whites. The largest differences between Blacks’ and Whites’ perceptions are in the issues of perceived Black influence (BLKLTL: percent difference = 36 percent, $p < 0.01$) and perceptions about race as a likely discrimination factor (RACEMTRS: percent difference = 52 percent, $p < 0.01$). The results support the expectation of racial differences in racial realities.

Table 5 also shows differences in racial realities across party ID. Since most of the Democrats in the sample were Black—56 percent of Democrats are Black and 43 percent are White—it is not surprising that Democrats are more pessimistic about race relations than Republicans. This might partially explain why Democrats are less likely to perceive Black candidates as likely to win (see Table 3) in a presidential race.

MULTIVARIATE ANALYSIS OF PERCEIVED VIABILITY OF BLACK PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES

Moderated multiple logistics regression (MMLR) analyses (see Stone-Romero and Anderson 1994) were used to analyze the hypothesized relationships with perceived candidate viability.⁵ The results, shown in Table 5, are presented separately for Blacks and Whites. The coefficients represent the effects of each variable on perceived viability, with signs indicating the direction and asterisks indicating significance levels.

Perceived race relations account for the majority of the differences in perceived viability for Black presidential candidates, especially among Blacks (Δ in $R^2=0.102$). Blacks who live in areas with greater Black populations are less likely to believe that a Black candidate would win a presidential race; however, once racial realities are considered, the Black population effects disappear. This pattern is an example of a mediation effect (Baron and Kenney 1986), and supports the idea that the effects of population on viability are due to the perceptions that exist within the community rather than the actual proportion of Black people who live in the community. After controlling for sex, age, education, and Black population size, party identification has no significant effect on perceived viability for either racial group.

Of the racial reality measures, only positive perceptions of Black-White relations (BLKWHT) are associated with positive perceived viability among Whites, and negative self-reports about interracial mistrust (RACETRST) are associated with negative viability among Blacks. Those Whites who perceive a Black candidate could win have more positive perceptions of race relations. This suggests that Whites may use a general assessment of general group relations in their assessment of Black candidate viability. Blacks on the other hand may make a single group assessment—those with less trust toward Whites are less likely to believe a Black candidate could win.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The results paint a picture of the obvious—that perceptions of the viability of Black presidential candidates are related to race. What is most telling about the findings presented here are the differences in how Blacks and Whites interpret the viability of Black candidates. Blacks tend to view viability of Black presidential candidates in terms of trust, with less trust equating to less optimism, whereas Whites tend to view viability in terms of racial optimism, with more positive perceptions of race relations translating into greater optimism for Black candidates. The final picture is one of a glass half-empty, or half-full.

Black presidential candidates are constantly faced with a double-edged sword regarding how to best market themselves. They can either be a Black politician, or a politician who happens to be Black. Either way, they are likely to be stereotyped from the start (McDermott 1998), and framed by the media as politicians who either do or do not know their political identities. What Black candidates can count on is that people will, in part, view their viability in relation to some aspect of race

relations; especially by Blacks who live in areas more heavily populated by Blacks. This is something that White candidates have to worry about less.

The key for a prospective Black presidential candidate for 2008, such as Obama, would be to continually promote an American identity and tout the merits of the electoral system to the public. This essentially means persuading Blacks that they can trust Whites and trust the political system to work for them, and persuading Whites that race relations are good, but not perfect, and that they will continue to get better. Unfortunately, the results of the last two elections, as well as Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath, do not bode well for this prescription. There is still a sting from the 2000 election (Herron and Sekhon 2004), high Black Democratic turnout in 2004 did not translate into a Democratic victory, and Blacks and Whites have different opinions about who's to blame for the negative events surrounding Hurricane Katrina (Dawson, Harris-Lacewell, and Cohen 2005).

Yet future primaries and presidential elections may turn out differently due to a new nonhypothetical Black presidential candidate (Obama) and other Black political figures running for high profile offices. Aside from the vice presidency, presidential candidates typically spawn from senatorial and gubernatorial positions. Although unsuccessful in 2006, Lynn Swann (Pennsylvania governor), Michael Steele (U.S. senator from Maryland), Ken Blackwell (Ohio governor), and Harold Ford (U.S. senator from Tennessee), or others like them, may potentially bring new political prominence to both parties while simultaneously increasing the pool of prospective Black presidential candidates. Couple these recent campaigns with current high-profile Black political figures such as Barack Obama, Condoleezza Rice, Colin Powell, and Deval Patrick, and there exists a new image of Black presidential prospects: one characterized by political figures who are less activist or demonstrative and more experienced in institutional politics and electoral governance.

The data presented in this paper highlights the need to delve into the factors related to the perceived viability of historically nonrepresented groups vying for the presidency. This study attempts to look at how candidate characteristics such as race influence Black presidential candidates' perceived chances of success. The results point to the need for new Black presidential candidates who can appear both viable and electable, and who have a track record of winning.

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ENDNOTES

1 Researchers (e.g., Bartels 1988 and Abramson et al. 1992) have made a distinction between the two concepts of *viability* and *electability* based on the context of the presidential campaign: nomination process (viability) and general election (electability). For the purposes of this research, I will use viability because no Black candidate made it past the nomination process and also because the measures in this study explicitly incorporate the idea of a nominee.

2 Schuman et al. (1997) characterize questions about voting “for a Black candidate” as a way to measure attitudes toward nondiscriminatory political choices and believe such questions should be considered targeted principles of equal treatment.

3 Respondent education was recoded from a six-point ordinal (less than high school, high school, some college, trade/tech/vocational training, college graduate, and post graduate) to a dichotomous (1=college/post graduate, 0=all others) variable. While a purposefully reduced level of measure may be inappropriate, the rationale for this change was mainly for parsimony of interpretation (i.e., uncertainty over midpoints), and analysis revealed no differences between the two measurement levels.

4 The zip-related percentages are based on the 2004 American Community Survey (ACS).

5 The use of zip code aggregate level data in any individual level analysis is risky due to violation of the “independent errors” assumption. Thus, the estimated regression effects are based on the maximum likelihood estimation technique in the non-linear model logistic link function within the HLM software. This technique is appropriate for multi-level data with dependent variables having binary outcomes (Raudenbush et al. 2004).

APPENDIX. PERCEIVED RACE RELATIONS ITEMS

(*BLKWHT*) Would you say relations between (read and rotate A–D) are very good (5), somewhat good, neither good nor bad, somewhat bad, or very bad (1)?

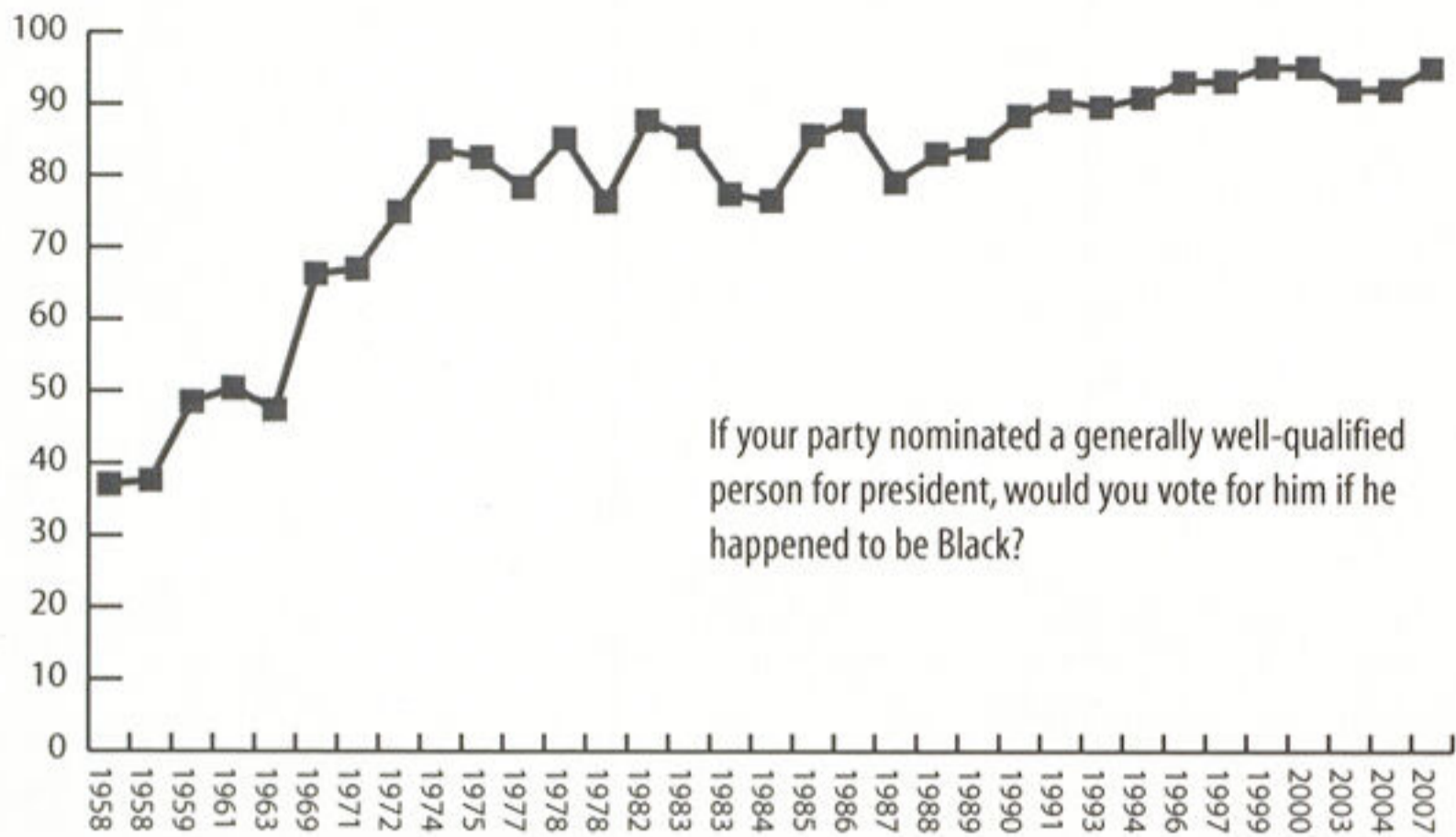
(*BLKTL*) Some people think that certain groups have too much influence in American life and politics, while other people feel that certain groups don’t have as much influence as they deserve. I am going to read you a list of groups. For each one, please tell me whether that group has too much influence, just about the right amount of influence, or too little influence. The first group is (Blacks). Would you say they have too much influence, just about the right amount of influence, or too little influence?

(*BWTRST*) Do you feel you can trust most (White/Black) people, or not? * Blacks’ trust of Whites, and Whites’ trust of Blacks.

(*RACEMTRS*) If you were treated unfairly in a particular situation, for example by a store clerk or a stranger on the street, would you generally think that your race had something to do with it, or not?

(*WHTPREJ*) How prejudiced would you say Whites are towards Blacks? Would you say they are not at all prejudiced, slightly prejudiced, or extremely prejudiced?

Figure 1. Trend in Public Opinion Support for a Hypothetical Black Presidential Candidate



Sources: Gallup and National Opinion Research Center

Note: The wording of the question has varied over time, using labels like “a Black man,” “Negro,” and more recently “African American.”

Table 1. Political Support and Viability by Target Candidate: Overall Sample

	Presidential Candidate		Gap
	Female	Black	
Would Vote For	94% (1,016)	98% (1,010)	4% *
Would Win	40% (963)	26% (962)	14% *
Difference	-54% *	-72% *	

Notes: Values in parentheses represent the total N size for the contingency values; significance based on independent and paired samples z-tests; *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01.

Table 2. Political Support and Viability by Target Candidate: Across Race

		Respondent Race		
		White	Black	Gap
Female Candidate	Would Vote For	92% (598)	96% (418)	4% *
	Would Win	37% (560)	45% (403)	8% **
	Difference	-55% **	-51% **	
Black Candidate	Would Vote For	97% (594)	97% (416)	0%
	Would Win	32% (558)	19% (404)	-13% **
	Difference	-65% **	-78% **	

Notes: Values in parentheses represent the total N size for the contingency values; significance based on independent and paired samples z-tests; *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01.

Table 3. Political Support and Viability by Target Candidate: Party Identification

		Respondent Party ID		
		Republican	Democrat	Gap
Female Candidate	Would Vote For	86% (267)	97% (543)	11% **
	Would Win	34% (251)	45% (523)	11% **
	Difference	-52% **	-52% *	
Black Candidate	Would Vote For	97% (265)	97% (540)	0
	Would Win	39% (251)	20% (521)	-19% **
	Difference	-58% **	-77% **	

Notes: Values in parentheses represent the total N size for the contingency values; significance based on independent and paired samples z-tests; *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01.

Table 4. Perceived Race Realities for All Respondents and Across Race and Political Party Identification

	Perceived Racial Realities				
	Mean Perceptions of Black-White Relations	% Saying Blacks Have "Too Little" Influence	% Saying They Don't "Trust" the Opposite Race	% Saying Race Is Discrimination Factor	% Saying "Whites Are Extremely Prejudiced Toward Blacks"
	BLKWHT	BLKLTL	BWTRST	RACEMTRS	WHTPREJ
Overall	3.45 (1,018)	60% (1,018)	26% (989)	27% (1,006)	19% (1,002)
<i>Race</i>					
Black	3.34 (420)	81% (419)	39% (405)	59% (409)	28% (409)
White	3.53 (598)	45% (599)	17% (584)	6% (597)	12% (593)
Difference	0.193**	36%**	21%**	52%**	16%**
<i>Party ID</i>					
Republican	3.67 (265)	34% (267)	20% (263)	11% (265)	7% (268)
Democrat	3.33 (545)	73% (545)	30% (524)	38% (536)	25% (533)
Difference	0.334**	39%**	10%**	27%**	18%**

Notes: Values in parentheses represent the valid N sizes for the groups on the left; significance based on independent samples t-tests for means and z-tests for proportions; *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01. Exact question wordings can be found in the Appendix.

Table 5. Logistic Regression Estimates of the Effect of Perceived Racial Realities on Black Presidential Candidate Viability Controlling for Race

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	Black	White	Black	White	Black	White
<i>Demographics</i>						
Sex (male=1)	0.06 (0.29)	0.08 (0.20)	0.04 (0.29)	0.04 (0.04)	0.07 (0.31)	0.05 (0.21)
Age (in years)	0.00 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)
College Educated	-0.41 (0.29)	-0.23 (0.20)	-0.48 (0.29)	-0.26 (0.20)	-0.38 (0.31)	-0.31 (0.21)
<i>Racial Context</i>						
% Black Population	-1.1 (0.47)*	-0.66 (1.0)	-1.0 (0.47)*	-0.36 (1.0)	-0.94 (0.49)	0.24 (1.1)
<i>Party ID</i>						
Democrat			-0.20 (0.21)	-0.25 (0.30)	-0.04 (0.45)	-0.18 (0.31)
Republican			0.69 (0.56)	0.40 (0.29)	0.68 (0.59)	0.38 (0.30)
<i>Racial Realities</i>						
BLKWHT					0.10 (0.16)	0.25 (0.12)*
BLKLTL					-0.69 (0.36)	0.10 (0.22)
RACETRST					-1.1 (0.37)**	-0.53 (0.29)
RACEMTRS					-0.52 (0.30)	0.11 (0.43)
WHTPREJ					0.06 (0.40)	-0.78 (0.40)
Constant	1.0 (0.56)	-0.35 (0.40)	-0.95 (0.66)	-0.36 (0.46)	-0.36 (0.97)	-1.2 (0.66)
N	345	479				
△in Model R2	-	-	0.018	0.026**	0.102**	0.046**
R2	0.037	0.007	0.055	0.033	0.157	0.079

Notes: The N size for Blacks and Whites in the analyses are respectively 345 and 479. *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01. Exact wording of the racial realities items can be found in the Appendix.

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Unions, Organizing Cities, and a 21st-Century Labor Movement: Implications for African Americans

Bill Fletcher Jr.

There are two noteworthy facts regarding the state of labor unions today that, at first glance, may seem unrelated. First, since the mid-20th century the percentage of workers represented by labor unions has dropped significantly, from slightly above 35 percent in 1955 to approximately 12 percent in 2008 (BLS 2008). The causes of this relative decline range from the growth of the workforce itself to the inability (and often unwillingness) of organized labor to keep pace with—and concretely address—changes in the workforce and the changes in capitalism. Second, African Americans workers are, as a percentage of the African American population, more unionized than anyone else—approximately 15 percent of African Americans are unionized (Journal of Blacks in Higher Education 2006)—and tend to be more pro-union than other sectors of the population. The relationship between these two facts will be a theme running throughout this article, and the strategic implications for both organized labor and Black America will be explored.

ORGANIZED LABOR'S CRISIS

The crisis facing organized labor is one that goes well beyond the actual numbers. In the late 1940s the leaders of organized labor, in response to the Cold War “imperative” to purge the Left, ousted more than one million members from the Congress of Industrial Organizations (Foner 1974). This great purge eliminated the “soul” from the ranks of organized labor. The unions (and unionists) that tended to be the most aggressive and those that tended to take stronger stands against racism were eliminated as a result of their refusal to bow to the Taft-Hartley Amendments to the National Labor Relations Act, which restricted Communists from holding union office.

Also, during the late 1940s, organized labor turned away from a program of expanding President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal, particularly with regard to

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national health care. A systematic caving in took place whereby unions focused on negotiating bilateral benefits agreements with employers rather than building the sort of national coalition needed to bring about the expansion of what has come to be known as the “social wage.” The negative implications of this choice would become very evident in the 1980s and 1990s, but at a point when unions represented more than one-third of the workforce and when larger nonunion employers were often offering semicomparable benefits to workers as a way of staving off unions, they were not yet apparent.

The leadership of organized labor, particularly with the founding of the AFL-CIO, believed that they had established a permanent place at the table of national decision making. Despite the decreasing percentage of workers represented by unions, this shrinkage was only marginally evident until the late 1970s. For many union leaders, the situation appeared to be a blip on the screen rather than indicative of a deeper problem.

The combination of the purge of the Left, along with the related self-delusion that organized labor had a permanent seat at the table, caused a turn away from what is often referred to as movement building, i.e., the efforts to build a transformative social movement(s) to alter the political power balance in the United States. The extent to which leaders of organized labor, such as the AFL-CIO’s first president, George Meany, thought of movement building or social transformation was more in the context of lobbying the political party establishment rather than changing the balance of power. An implication of this was that organized labor, rather than being or becoming a hub for social movement activity, became an institution preoccupied with fighting for both respectability and stability. At a point when the Black freedom struggle was gaining steam—in the form of the civil rights movement (1950s–1960s)—organized labor’s ossification and inability to look beyond its own institutional boundaries imperiled its own future.

THE CRISIS FACING BLACK AMERICA

Beginning with World War I, the African American population in the United States began a geographic shift from rural to urban centers and from the South to the Northeast, Midwest, and West Coast. The Great Migration, as this movement has come to be known, was driven, ironically, by much of what drives people to immigrate to the United States: to seek refuge from oppression (in the case of African Americans, attempting to escape Jim Crow segregation in the South) and to seek economic opportunity. With regard to the latter, the demand for labor in the manufacturing sector catalyzed the movement of hundreds of thousands of African Americans out of the South as well as the movement of West Indians from the Caribbean.

The massive introduction of African Americans into manufacturing presented a major challenge for organized labor. Hitherto, organized labor in the United States had largely been racially segregated, with African Americans, Latinos, Asians, and Native Americans generally excluded from the ranks of the formal movement. With the exception of left-led labor formations, e.g., the Industrial Workers of the World and some industrial unions, such as the United Mine Workers of America, and inde-

pendent unions formed largely on the basis of race or nationality,¹ organized labor in the United States was largely White. Yet with the introduction of African American and Chicano/Mexicano workers, particularly into manufacturing, a profound organizing dilemma befell organized labor. As the 1919 Great Steel Strike proved with the introduction of African American strikebreakers, organizing without challenging the color line in these new industries was a recipe for disaster.

Thus, it came to pass that by the 1930s, African Americans, Chicanos/Mexicanos, and, on the West Coast particularly, Asians proved to be central to the success or failure of organizing the mass production industries. This unionization, generally speaking, if not led by the Left, resulted in some cases in an improvement in living standard but not an end to segregation in the workplace. In general, the Left took the lead in challenging racial discrimination in the workplace, including, as was the case with the Packinghouse Workers Union, challenging hiring practices on the part of employers.

The purge of the Left from the CIO and the merger of the AFL and CIO did nothing to improve the condition of workers of color. Black workers in particular faced the end of World War II and the period up through the beginning of the Korean War in economic distress. Though it is true that there was economic growth among all sectors of the country after World War II, it was also the case that this growth was racially uneven. African Americans were not major beneficiaries of the legendary post-World War II GI Bill, and in many cases were displaced from work by returning White veterans. Organized labor did not tend to take up the challenge of responding to this crisis any more than it took up the challenge of defending the rights of women who were displaced by returning World War II male veterans.

By the 1950s, a new challenge was becoming apparent. Automation and mechanization was spreading outside of agriculture and beginning to have a significant impact on manufacturing. Despite continued growth in the economy, African Americans found themselves falling behind. Low-skilled jobs were being eliminated, but this was not accompanied by the exit of African American workers toward so-called middle income jobs. It was more evidence of growing structural unemployment. This situation helps to explain the principal demand/slogan of the famous 1963 March on Washington: Jobs & Freedom.

Again, most of organized labor refused to acknowledge either this situation or the impact of suburbanization, with the flight of White workers and the White professional/managerial strata from the cities and into the areas ringing the major urban centers. The absence of a social movement response by organized labor meant that the fight for jobs and freedom had to be shouldered first and foremost by African Americans and increasingly by other people of color. Independent organizations came on the scene, sometimes workplace-based and other times community-based, in order to organize a challenge to an increasingly ominous tendency.

The Vietnam War held off some aspects of the decline noted above, but with the 1973–1974 recession, the changing nature of the U.S. economy and its impact on African Americans became quite apparent. By the mid 1970s, the outlines of what noted scholars Bennett Harrison and Barry Bluestone (1982) were to describe as de-industrialization could be seen on the U.S. landscape. Irrespective of one's acceptance of the term, what was unfolding was a hollowing of the U.S. cities, the

heart of major manufacturing. Given the urbanization of Black America, this hollowing had a dramatic impact on the economic stability of African Americans and set the stage for the polarization of wealth that we see both in the United States in general and also within Black America. The jobs that gave a major section of Black America a middle-income living standard evaporated over time with neither a replacement being introduced nor an elevation of African American workers into higher-income employment. The fissure within Black America, all too apparent by the late 1990s and early 2000s with the Michael Jordans, Bill Cosbys, and Oprah Winfreys on the one hand, and the Black structurally unemployed former auto and steel workers on the other, can be traced to this period.

Once again, organized labor had no real program to address this crisis, either at the general level or with regard to the African American worker. To the extent to which there was a program, at least during the 1970s and 1980s, it was largely focused on economic protectionism—specifically, “Buy American” campaigns—rather than a comprehensive look at the economic foundations of the United States. The racial differential between what was transpiring for White workers versus African Americans was largely ignored, except and insofar as people of color-based organizations called attention to the scope of the problem.

THE CITIES

From the 1950s through the 1970s, the main trend in evidence with regard to the cities was suburbanization. White working and professional/managerial people, through the assistance of the growth of the interstate highway system, the automobile industry, low cost oil, the GI Bill, and the growth in private home construction, were leaving largely ethnic enclaves in the cities and moving farther and farther from urban centers. The cities seemed to be imploding, through the loss of employment and their tax base. In some cases, entire sections of cities crumbled altogether, coming to resemble the ruins of post-World War II Berlin (e.g., the South Bronx, NY). And, in other cases, certain cities were largely abandoned by the White establishment altogether (e.g., Camden, NJ; East St. Louis, IL).

An economic turnaround became noticeable in the 1970s with the growth in importance of what came to be known as the FIRE (finance, insurance, and real estate) sector of the economy. The cities became targets for the growth of this sector, and with that came a transformation in the look and purpose of the cities. It was at this moment that the notion of gentrification became a point of discussion on the U.S. scene.

Starting in the 1970s and continuing through today, one witnesses an ominous racial and class “cleansing” of the cities, with an overall demographic transformation. Ghetto areas have become targets for new development. Poorer sections of the working class, irrespective of race or ethnicity, are finding it increasingly difficult to live in major urban areas and, following a trend that arose in the 1980s, are moving further from the cities, often into so-called “dead cities.”² In this respect, the United States is coming to resemble the European model, where the working class lives outside of the cities and the cities are largely the homes for the upper echelons of the professional/managerial strata and the capitalists.

The response by organized labor to this tendency has been rather anemic. As its members in many cases have moved to the suburbs, the question of the future of the cities has not been center stage for them. While, on the one hand, unions based in particular cities will continue to focus on the politics of that city—specifically at election time—this issue has become less and less relevant to a membership base that, while working in an urban center, lives elsewhere. Insofar as unions have not been expanding their membership bases within cities, there is, therefore, a disconnect between the issues facing the cities and the priority issues of suburbanized members.

INDEPENDENT WORKERS ORGANIZATIONS

In response to the facts that the formal union movement both has devoted insufficient attention and resources to organizing new members and also has no real program for the redevelopment of major urban centers for the working class, new forms of working class organizations have emerged. These independent organizations (independent in that they tend not to be affiliated with organized labor) have most immediately responded to the growth in the immigrant workforce, both documented and undocumented. Yet their growth speaks more generally about the absence of an organized movement presence to address the changes underway in U.S. cities.

Most of these independent workers organizations, e.g., the Miami Workers Center, CAAV (in New York), and Tenants and Workers United (in Alexandria, VA), have located themselves among the poorer sections of the working class, whether immigrant or nonimmigrant. Additionally, their principal support comes from the foundation world, which contrasts with a membership base found among labor unions. This factor is of critical importance since it speaks to the limits of actual independence for these organizations (given that most are 501(c)(3) organizations, i.e., tax exempt, tax deductible charities that cannot participate in partisan political activity and have a limit on the amount of lobbying that they can do).³

The additional factor, with regard to these independent working class organizations, is that with the exception of the building trades/construction industry, there are few organizations that focus explicitly on African American workers.⁴ Thus, we face another paradox. African Americans are disproportionately unionized, yet most unions pay insufficient and nonspecific attention to the crisis of the cities or to a program of organizing Black workers. At the same time, independent working class organizations by and large do not target African American workers, and there have been few successful efforts arising on their own out of the Black working class in the recent past.⁵

STRATEGIC OPTIONS FOR THE UNIONS

In the face of the crisis exemplified by declining union density (the proportion of workers represented by unions), greater rhetorical attention, and eventually substantive attention, was turned to unionizing unorganized workers. Among those who paid any attention to this matter, there has tended to be either a “hot shop”

organizing approach or a strategic, generally sectoral approach. The hot shop approach refers to organizing any potential target where there seems to be interest and the potential to win. Such an approach pays no attention to the history and base of the union, but simply looks for victory.

The strategic, sectoral approach tends toward the direction of organizing by industry. Thus, a union might be organizing either an entire industry (e.g., health care or a segment of it, such as nurses). The thinking here is that by organizing the entire industry or industrial sector, greater power can be won and thus influence the conditions of those unionized since wages have been taken out of competition between employers.

What has been missing, however, is the recognition that the power to influence working conditions concerns not only what takes place in the workplace, but also what is happening in the broader geographic context. Thus, a heavily unionized city will be one where there will tend to be greater levels of social services and funds devoted toward human needs. The cumulative impact of a union presence brings with it a degree of power that may not correspond to what exists in the industry as a whole.

During the mid-1990s, the AFL-CIO attempted to rehabilitate an approach to organizing that has in the past shown promise. The notion was called "geographic organizing," which called for the organizing of a city by several different unions. The most advanced articulation of this was the Stamford, CT, organizing effort, known in union circles as the Stamford Project (see, for example, Donaldson 2000). This project brought together multiple unions, and also additional resources from the national AFL-CIO to address community issues. In that sense, the unionizing of workers was envisioned as part of a larger effort to address economic justice and economic development. Unfortunately, this project was terminated, in part due to disagreements among affiliates of the AFL-CIO as to whether geographic organizing should be pursued (i.e., whether it was a distraction for sectoral organizing).

The Stamford Project came closest to the strategic option that, along with sectoral organizing, could show promising results. Yet even here the project did not go far enough in exploring the development of a class movement that, for purposes of this paper, would have great relevance to the Black worker.

To develop a class movement, organized labor would not only need to look at cities through the lenses of economic justice and economic development, but also see itself as a component of a larger movement to change the power relationship for working class people in that city. In other words, labor unions cannot do it alone. This is the fundamental difference of the Stamford Project. In the case of Stamford, it is true that the unions looked for allies, yet the project of organizing was driven by the unions rather than as part of a larger bloc.

A DIFFERENT APPROACH (PART I)

Organized labor, if it wishes to rehabilitate itself as a component of a larger labor movement, must recognize that it operates on a global battlefield and, as such, must learn to practice genuine labor internationalism. Some unions are getting, at least partially, in the swing of this through cross-border initiatives. Yet such initiatives

remain largely at the realm of what one could reference as a counter-corporation rather than as a working class movement. That is, they focus on a short-term pragmatic basis for unity, rather than a basis for unity or solidarity founded upon long-term strategic interests.

The other major component, and the focus for this paper, is domestic, and this is where targeting the cities could be the basis for renewal. In early 2007, over 20 independent working class organizations, such as the Miami Workers Center, formed a collaborative called the Right to the City Network.⁶ This initiative aims to create a framework to address the urban crisis, including addressing issues previously mentioned in this paper, e.g., gentrification. Whether it will be successful is too early to determine, but what is worth noting is the absence of labor unions from this alignment. It appears that the founding organizations lacked the confidence that there were unions that could and would actively embrace the framework of Right to the City. While such a lack of confidence may be well founded, it is nevertheless a stinging indictment of the current state of organized labor that such a conclusion could be drawn.

The Right to the City Network is attempting to fill a void that organized labor and other social movements have left by their failure to develop a comprehensive approach to the cities. Yet, and with all due respect to these organizations, they lack the scale to catalyze by themselves an urban movement (though they can certainly contribute to the building of one). For that reason, the energy and intellect of the Right to the City Network, irrespective of the future of the formation itself, need to fuse with that of organized labor in order to build the sort of pro-working class, antiracist urban movement so badly needed. The urgency of such an effort can be established by examining the post-Katrina disaster on the Gulf Coast and specifically within New Orleans.

The basis for the Katrina disaster in the draining of funds from the public sector over a number of years, along with the incompetence of the Bush administration, is legendary. The transformation of New Orleans post-hurricane, however, is the focus here. The demographic shift, both with respect to race and class, has quite apparently played itself out in city elections. Though there is a Black mayor (who is pro-corporate and has never been seen as a voice for the Black community), the city council is no longer in the hands of African Americans. The poor have largely been removed from the city, and the city's decisions—with the active collaboration of the federal government—to demolish public housing point in the direction of the lack of intention to ever have the poor return to the city. The vision for the “new” New Orleans, however, is one that is absent the poor and the Black. The destruction of the Teacher's Union, privatization, and the use of undocumented workers under horrendous conditions all speak to a vision of New Orleans derived from a neoliberal economic scenario rather than one based upon the needs and desires of the people who once lived in that city.

Community-based organizations in New Orleans have been attempting to fight on behalf of the survivors and evacuees, struggling to raise national awareness to the racial and class cleansing that has taken place. Their calls have received limited attention. Some informal and semiformal networks have emerged to give support to those on the ground struggling around the post-Katrina crisis. Organized labor has

offered charitable assistance, including funds for the rebuilding of housing. What is missing, though, is a social justice movement approach to addressing this crisis—an approach that not only mobilizes the people of New Orleans, but also mobilizes their supporters, particularly within Black America—nationally to demand that a pro-people approach be taken toward redevelopment.

The situation in New Orleans is typical of what is happening in many other U.S. urban centers. It is only the tip of the iceberg. In that sense, one can learn from the approaches that have been taken that these do not equate the building of a movement, even when they do help to address the immediate needs of those in struggle.

A DIFFERENT APPROACH (PART II)

A different strategic approach to the urban crisis, from the standpoint of social movements, is summarized in the notion of “working people’s assemblies.” The basic idea draws from U.S. history (such as the work of the Knights of Labor during the 19th century) as well as experiences in other countries. Working class organizations within a specific geographic area, such as cities and counties, would engage in a process of internal and multilateral discussions leading to an assembly or congress in order to delineate a working people’s program of action for that specific geographic area.

What is different about a working people’s assembly from the myriad of coalitions that have come into existence over time is that it emphasizes a discussion both within and between organizations about the key issues facing working people in that geographic area. It is not limited to discussions at the top between leaders, but rather suggests engaging the members of such organizations, including but not limited to labor unions, independent working class advocacy groups, consumer groups, and tenant associations, in a dialogue regarding the future. Specifically, what is a pro-working people’s agenda for that geographic area? What would that geographic area look like if that agenda were actually implemented? And finally, how should one go about advancing such an agenda, i.e., what organizational vehicle(s) will be necessary in order to build the political and economic power of working people?

Were organized labor to introduce such an approach to addressing the crisis of the cities, it would at the same time lay the foundation for actually organizing—and unionizing—workers in the cities and also build a foundation for a different level of power for working people. Engaging other working class organizations would, if successful, result in the creation of a bloc or strategic alliance that could be mutually supportive. Thus, unions taking on a particular employer could count on community-based or constituency-based organizations to come forward in support. Community-based organizations tackling matters such as unemployment and gentrification could count on the support, including resources, from labor unions.

For African Americans, such a bloc would be of great significance. A working people’s agenda will not come to fruition if it does not tackle matters of race and the racial divide. While there would certainly be efforts by some in such a process to ignore race in the name of unity, every issue that afflicts working people has within it a racial bent, whether it is a differential in health care, housing, education, jobs, or transportation. In that sense, the proverbial call of AFL founder Samuel Gompers

for “more” for working people is simply not enough.⁷ While working people need more schools and more health care, they equally need to ensure that such education and health care is provided fairly. If not, the same problem that confronted the CIO in the 1930s will reappear in the 21st century (i.e., an overall improvement in conditions while still split by a racial differential in treatment).

Moving towards working people’s assemblies will necessitate:

1. A transformation in the strategic outlook of organized labor. Unions in cities and counties are often organized into central labor councils. For many of the unions, there is the assumption that this is the only sort of working class organization that is necessary—if even on narrow pragmatic grounds such a point of view falls on its face.
2. A linkage between independent working class organizations and unions. As noted earlier, as important as the Right to the City Network and similar such local initiatives are, they do not have the scale to catalyze an urban movement. Yet they are based within sectors of the population all too often overlooked by organized labor and other social movements. Specifically, they tend to reach out to the poorest sections of the working class. They are, therefore, absolutely essential for a new urban movement.
3. The organized presence of African Americans and a corresponding “Black agenda.” U.S. history demonstrates time and again the tendency not only to ignore the racial differential, but also to also take for granted the participation of African Americans in progressive social movements. In order to avoid this, an independent and clear Black presence must exist that ensures that the needs and demands of the African American are not overlooked or given second place. In that sense, no one can be relied upon to advance the Black agenda—which, in its essence, tends to be the most prodemocratic agenda—except Black people themselves. This takes nothing away from other social movement allies but rather holds that one must participate in one’s own emancipation.

BY WAY OF CONCLUSION

African Americans can be a major source for the revival of a labor movement in the United States. Organized labor can be a component in this same revival. Yet for both to happen, a strategic framework needs to be introduced that is different from the one existing within both of these social movements.

For African Americans, there must be the greater recognition of the significance of class both within Black America and globally. The notion of a common, all-class Black unity is historically dated. While there remain certain key points of unity for all or most African Americans given our shared experiences with White supremacist oppression, it is also the case that Black America is undergoing some very profound changes. The elimination of legalized segregation brought with it the elimination of a

visible and common enemy. The willingness of corporate America to open its ranks to some Black Americans, as well as the growth of a Black elite, have changed the way that Black America looks at itself.

Organized labor faces possible extinction as a social movement unless it introduces a radically different analysis and practice. The potential source of its renewed growth can be found in the cities, not just in terms of numbers but in terms of the social struggles that can introduce new vitality. This means that organized labor must look to create a new social bloc that wins greater power for working people. Such a bloc is not the same thing as winning allies for the existing union movement. It is more about uniting with partners in the forging of a common program and common action. The results could very well be a different power dynamic than we have experienced, and one that has broader implications than reserved only for cities.

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1 In the late 19th century and early 20th century it was not uncommon to find unions that were exclusively Black, Chicano/Mexicano, or Asian. In Hawaii, for instance, there were entire labor federations exclusive to particular ethnic groups.

2 A term that became popular in the 1980s to describe smaller cities that have been largely abandoned by industry but have not been able to develop as upscale suburbs. Such cities tended to be dependent on one industry or employer. When abandoned, these cities tended toward collapse. Housing, therefore, would tend to be cheaper though there would be little, if any, livable employment.

3 It also speaks to the reality that these formations are not competitors with organized labor, but can conceivably operate alongside or, ideally, in concert with the union movement under different conditions.

4 Black Workers for Justice, based in North Carolina, is a major and important exception to this. They have, since the early 1980s, been a voice in the community and the workplace for economic and social justice and have, on occasion, partnered with unions on specific campaigns.

5 The Black working class has a long history of independent organization, though generally such organizations have been formed to address issues within the formal union movement. The National Negro Labor Council, formed in 1951, was the first major post World War II effort. Such organizations were significant forces into the late 1970s. Remaining today is the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists and the A. Philip Randolph Institute, along with several Black caucuses in different unions. With the noted exception of Black Workers for Justice, however, there are few independent Black working class organizations.

6 Information regarding this network can be obtained by writing to Right2City@tides.org.

7 Gompers is often misquoted as suggesting that all that organized labor wanted was “more” or everything. Although this writer is no fan of Gompers, it is important to note that he was, instead, attempting to suggest that there need to be different priorities for society, such as fewer prisons and more schools. He was not suggesting some sort of social hedonism.

Determining the Current Status of the Environmental Justice Movement: Analysis of Revolutionary Actions

Heather Dillingham

INTRODUCTION

In America there are communities where drinking water is contaminated by poisons, expectant mothers struggle to carry their babies to term, and children become sick from playing in their backyards. Chemical dumpsites and industrial toxins that have invaded these communities threaten the livelihoods of residents. All across the nation, these victims of injustice suffer due to a lack of environmental justice. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recognizes environmental justice, referring to it on its Web site as “the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.”

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ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE: THE BUILDING OF A REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT

Environmental Justice: Definition and Relevance to Society

Although difficult to define, environmental justice is a well-known and easily recognizable issue. The phrase itself offers as many definitions as it does examples of injustice. However, there are aspects within the definition that most can agree upon. For example, the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit in 1991 came to agreement on important principles of environmental justice. In general, agreed-upon definitions could include:

- All people—judged regardless of race or income
- Fair treatment—no disproportionate burden
- Meaningful involvement—the opportunity to participate, actual influence
- Development—pertaining to laws, policies, and regulations

The siting of projects involving municipal waste disposal and transit systems has continued to have a negative impact on communities primarily populated by minorities and low-income families. The hazardous nature of such sitings is sharply contrasted by the benefits reaped by those outside the communities. Such problems have developed a wide expanse: there are marked and increasing disparities between those who have access to clean and safe resources and those who do not. Nationally and internationally, disparities of this nature may be the result of historical circumstance, economic and trade relations, or inadequate governmental regulation. Whatever their source, the severity of these disparities has been the foundation of a divide, both politically and economically.

The push for environmental justice is based on the premise that all people have a certain right to a “safe, healthy, productive, and sustainable environment,” as described on the Coalition Against Environmental Racism’s Web site. Proponents of the environmental justice movement proclaim that access to a safe environment is a human right, worthy of the same discussion surrounding, for example, the right to vote and the right to marriage. However, there are certain subpopulations most often deprived of this liberty. The realization that groups identifiable by their race, income, or even age are the targets of environmental discrimination underscores important issues surrounding policy formation and government inaction.

The environmental justice movement seeks to highlight the existing, deficient policies and regulations that allow for injustices to occur. It is not chiefly focused on a particular community or singular policy issue; rather the movement aims to revolutionize the legislative process and refocus the government’s attention on the daily lives of people instead of abstract economic cost-benefits analyses. Fundamentally, the movement is about fairness toward the disadvantaged and unspoken for.

Revolution: A Vital Component to Any Major Movement

In the words of Dave Stratman (1998), “fighting for revolution allows and demands that we abandon petty concerns and narrow issues and think big. Revolution forces us to try to understand the whole world and to imagine a new one.” The environmental justice movement is not, and cannot be, content with the simple acknowledgement of its existence and recognition for its concerns. The movement yearns for revolution; however, much discord revolves around the questions of what an environmental justice revolution actually entails and how the revolution can be effectively accomplished. It has been noted that within the movement much disparity exists, as there is a lack of centrality to the many groups fighting for environmental justice (Rechtschaffen and Gauna 2002; Ikeme 2003).

An environmental justice revolution would create a drastic and reaching change in the thought processes and behaviors of mainstream society. Only by transforming the thinking and behavior of the everyday citizen, whose life is not affected firsthand by environmental injustice, can the revolution succeed in creating a real change. Unfortunately, most present-day environmental justice advocates are perceived more as rebellious leaders than true revolutionaries. An effective revolution would materially alter the structure of environmental policy and zoning regulations, force policy makers and government officials to modify their decision-making process, and transform the effectiveness of the government in oft-overlooked communities (Booth 1985).

A revolution typically has three major components that classify it as a truly transformative period instead of a general divergence from the status quo. These include major legislative reform over a determinable time period; consistent acts expressing disapproval, such as rallies, marches, and sit-ins; and a strong support base and network of advocates and advocacy groups. A movement absent of these criteria is not a revolution, following the definition provided by the online Elwell’s Glossary of Social Science; it is simply a body of people wishing for change without the power to actually inspire it.

Theory Statement

Defense of the movement typically hinges on the premise that environmental justice is worthy of its revolution and points to the repeated occurrences of discriminatory sitings to substantiate the claim (see, for example, Roberts and Weiss 2001; Wing 2005). This contention is fundamentally weak; although the idea has clear merit, it opens the discourse on environmental justice from an incorrect basis. The question is not whether environmental justice as an issue warrants a movement, but whether the actions to date can truly be called revolutionary.

This question can only be answered by delving into the history of the environmental justice movement and balancing its achievements and setbacks while simultaneously comparing it to other successful revolutions of the past. An environmental justice evolution guarantees a fresh start for thousands of Americans living in polluted communities; these people are in desperate need of a dramatic change, sooner rather than later.

It seems a relevant argument to state that a revolution should be the “last means possible” approach, since historically American social movements have often been breeding grounds for new sources of contention or vicious acts of violence. On the other hand, it also seems fair to claim that such reasoning is a cowardly view. It is more relevant to consider the known and unknown lives being adversely affected by environmental injustices than to wait until the situation worsens with more societal devastation. Furthermore, it is important to note that current society is much less tolerant of such discriminatory violence than in past revolutions. This movement should strategically seek revolutionary status as its goal because a movement that is not revolutionary can never achieve success; rather it will fail to change the current situation and yield permanent solutions.

THE HISTORY OF ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE: EVOLUTION OF THE MOVEMENT OVER TIME

Many advocates would point to one significant event to mark the beginning of the environmental justice movement. Warren County, NC, was home to the first noted incident of environmental injustice: the situation surrounded a PCB landfill site.¹ The county consisted primarily of Black Americans. The residents of the county held a demonstration protesting the siting of the hazardous waste landfill. The protest brought national attention to the situation; many churches and civil rights organizations took notice and assisted Warren County in the fight, which led to their becoming proponents in the new environmental justice movement.

From 1982 onward, the environmental justice movement has developed from scattered cries of injustice to a more organized and unified movement, aimed at providing a voice for communities in dire circumstances (Cole and Foster 2001). At its core there has always remained the knowledge that economically disadvantaged persons and minorities bear disproportionate environmental risks; therefore, it is daunting that the movement has faced a continual denial that environmental discrimination truly exists. Such denial is an affront to numerous communities across the nation facing injustices similar to those in Warren County. Examples of this include:

- *Emelle, Alabama:* The nation’s largest hazardous waste landfill is located in Emelle. The landfill receives waste from more than forty states as well as many foreign countries. The residents of Emelle are economically disadvantaged and predominately Black (Bullard 2003).
- *Tucson, Arizona:* An industrial waste site is located in a neighborhood on the south side of Tucson. The residents of this particular neighborhood are predominately Latino and suffer from high rates of cancer, birth defects, and genetic mutations (Reyes 2002).
- *Love Canal, New York:* Abandoned hazardous waste was discovered beneath the community of Love Canal when after record rainfall, the waste began leaching. The residents of Love Canal are all working class individuals who also suffer from high rates of birth defects and miscarriages (Brown 1980).

- *Cancer Alley*: Cancer Alley is home to one of the most well-known incidents of environmental injustice. The area extends between Baton Rouge and New Orleans, a seventy-mile stretch along the Mississippi River. This area, also known as the River Parishes of Louisiana, is home to more than ninety industrial plants. The residents here also suffer from high rates of rare cancers, miscarriages, and massive tumors (Lerner 2005).

Environmental problems also exist in large cities such as San Diego, CA, and Detroit, MI, as well as in smaller towns such as Alton, RI, and Dickson, TN (Boer et al. 1997; Novotny 1995). All of these communities also suffer from similar serious health complications resulting from heavily polluted air, ground, or water.

PROGRESS THROUGH ADVOCACY: THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE LEADERS IN THE ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE MOVEMENT

The following are several organizations and individuals whose main or partial focuses are the assurance of environmental justice on both national and international scales.

United Church of Christ

On its Web site, the United Church of Christ (UCC) details their role in the environmental justice movement. The UCC entered the environmental justice scene in 1987. The church's Commission for Racial Justice published a study, "Toxic Waste and Race in the United States," showcasing the connection between hazardous waste sites and communities of poor and minority composition. The study indicated that Black, Latino, Native American, and Asian American communities held disproportionate amounts of toxic wastes and pollutants. Along with the Warren County protest, the UCC's study was critical in the beginning of the environmental justice movement. The UCC has consistently acted with the interest of environmental justice in mind but is somewhat limited in that only a particular segment of the UCC is dedicated to the movement, and its resources cannot be solely allocated to its Commission for Racial Justice.

Environmental Justice Resource Center at Clark Atlanta University

The Environmental Justice Resource Center (EJRC), as stated on their Web site, established in 1994, is chiefly a research and policy analysis entity with the goal of reaching and reforming government agencies and officials. The EJRC works in civil rights, environmental racism, facility and land use permits, transportation effects, and development. The center is a community-based group, with a primarily African American client base.

The EJRC provides valuable services to its patrons. The center holds environmental justice archives; maintains a paper trail for articles, books, and reports relating to environmental justice; composes communication to the community, courts, and policy makers; and performs research vital to advancing the movement. It also plans, coordinates, and hosts conferences that focus on having a significant

impact on environmental justice. The EJRC has the resources to provide excellent background and actively recruit new supporters to the movement; however, the center faces certain staff limitations because of their ever-revolving student base.

Environmental Advocacy Programs

The environmental justice movement has been spurred further by the development of collegiate programs dedicated to teaching the history of and advocacy for environmental justice. The University of Michigan (UM) broke new ground by developing an environmental justice program. In 1972, the School of Natural Resources and Environment emerged on the college campus, with a specific program geared toward environmental justice. Two professors, Bunyan Bryant and Paul Mohai, instituted the program at UM and also were early pioneers in the movement.² By 1990, the Environmental Justice Program was in full swing, with undergraduate, master's, and doctoral degrees attainable. The students and faculty of the program lobby policy makers to keep communities safe and raise awareness of environmental injustice.

The Sierra Club

Nonprofit organizations have often offered vehement advocacy for environmental justice. While focusing heavily on all environmental matters, the Sierra Club's Web site details their environmental justice program, which encourages grassroots advocacy. The club provides organizing assistance in communities, empowering local leaders to keep the movement thriving.

Congresswoman Hilda Solis

Congresswoman Hilda Solis (D-CA) has emerged as a figurehead in the fight for environmental justice. Solis represents San Gabriel Valley and other regions of East Los Angeles.

Solis spent eight years in the California State Senate, where she advocated for communities suffering disproportionately from pollution and sponsored landmark legislation to alleviate environmental racism. Currently, Solis is a member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee and the Energy and Air Quality Subcommittee of the U.S. Congress; she is also a ranking member of the Environment and Hazardous Materials Subcommittee. Solis recently introduced legislation to facilitate nationwide implementation of key environmental justice regulations. Information about Solis's district, tenure, and accomplishments are further detailed on her Congressional Web site.

PROGRESS THROUGH LEGISLATION: THE PROS AND CONS OF ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE POLICIES

National Environment Policy Act of 1969

The National Environment Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) predates the modern environmental justice movement by thirteen years. The intent of NEPA was to make certain that government agencies took the environment into account before initiating federal action with the possibility of substantially affecting the environment. NEPA can be seen as the forerunner to Executive Order 12898 discussed below; it established an environmental review process as well as the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) to advise federal agencies.

Executive Order 12898

During his administration, President Bill Clinton provided some of the strongest government support for environmental justice to date. On 11 February 1994, Clinton issued Executive Order 12898, titled "Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations." The order directed federal agencies to consider the environmental effects of their programs and to address any disproportionately high effects that such programs could potentially have on minority and disadvantaged communities. As such, it aims to provide these populations with access to information and participation in environmental justice, helping to ensure that all receive equal opportunity to live in safe and healthy environments.

Additionally, the executive order established the Interagency Working Group. The group brings together figureheads from the following executive departments: the EPA, CEQ, Domestic Policy Council, Council of Economic Advisors, Office of Management and Budget, Office of Science and Technology Policy, and Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Energy, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Interior, Justice, Labor, and Transportation. The overarching group collaborates on projects aimed at addressing environmental inequities.

EPA Environmental Justice Plan

In 2005, the EPA created and introduced to Congress an environmental justice plan. The initiative was met with harsh criticism by both the Senate and House of Representatives (Raju 2005). Nearly eighty legislators signed a letter highlighting the major shortcomings in the EPA plan, citing that it failed to declare race as a factor when dealing with environmental justice matters. Environmental justice activists perceived the plan as disregarding race as the fundamental aspect of the problem, and considered it to be an impediment to the movement and damaging to Executive Order 12898. Lawmakers also noted that the plan did not account for the then-recent criticism of the EPA (GAO 2005). As expressed in a 21 July 2005 statement released by Senator John Kerry the EPA's "failure to identify the intended recipients in a

manner that truly reflects environmental justice communities is ultimately another attempt to de-prioritize the importance of focusing on our nation's most vulnerable populations . . . [The plan] will do nothing to reduce the existing disparate impacts suffered by low-income and minority communities and may contribute to the future increase of these impacts."

SB 115 – California State Senate

Initiated by Congresswoman Solis, SB 115 was enacted in 1999 and was the first bill of its kind in the nation to become state law. The bill required state governmental agencies to make environmental justice a consideration on environmental impact reports and to effectively incorporate an aspect of environmental justice into their respective missions.

Environmental Justice Act of 2007

Congresswoman Solis has continued her strong advocacy of environmental justice as a national lawmaker. During the 110th Congress, Solis introduced H.R. 1103, which would essentially codify Executive Order 12898 and require the EPA to fully implement the recommendations of the inspector general of the agency and the comptroller general of the United States. The legislation is referred to as the Environmental Justice Act of 2007. If enacted, the act will serve as protection for minority and economically distressed communities suffering disproportionate impacts of environmental hazards.

PROGRESS THROUGH DEMONSTRATION: LOCAL COMMUNITIES FUEL THE FIGHT FOR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

The environmental justice movement has not been without its share of active demonstration by its proponents and those suffering injustices. Community residents have protested, pursued legal action, marched, and participated in other acts of civil disobedience to raise awareness to their cause. Such actions have occurred in West Dallas, TX; Alson, LA; and Northwood Manor, WV (Baugh 1991). Additionally, citizens have begun to recognize their power as voters and push those seeking elected office to take consideration of environmental hazards in the community. Local activists spread their message through newsletters, e-mail listservs, and editorial and article submissions.

While these demonstrations can be highly effective, they have not been able to generate the type of support or advocacy needed to gain nationwide attention. This is due in large part to the fact that most demonstrations arise as the sole result of local activists organizing these activities, while larger, national organizations maintain a disappointing idleness (Baugh 1991). The primary form of demonstration gaining national attention and attracting powerful figures are conferences focused on environmental justice. The most often noted are the two conferences that occurred during an earlier stage of the movement, the Michigan Conference on Race and the Incidence of Environmental Hazards in 1990 and the First National People

of Color Environmental Leadership Summit in 1991. While these conferences provided powerful discourse and the rare opportunity for governmental figureheads to converge, they ultimately served to publicize the debate more than formulate new policies and regulations.

STATUS OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE REVOLUTION: COMPARISON TO THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT OF THE 1950s, '60s, AND '70s

The environmental justice revolution—as a movement built upon the struggles of, and often kept afloat by, minorities—maintains unmistakable parallels to the American civil rights movement. In fact, the movements share similar goals, with both focusing their efforts on the protection of disadvantaged communities and the affording of equal rights to the rest of society. For many, the environmental justice movement is more a specified continuation of the larger civil rights movement, fighting against the inequities of institutional racism.

The same disparities that stood out during the civil rights movement are the unfortunate foundations that the environmental justice movement is built upon. Discriminatory housing practices, racially unbalanced land use, inferior public transportation, limited access to education and employment, and political disempowerment have strong causal links to poor environmental conditions of numerous communities. These conditions have long-term health, cultural, and social effects on the communities, often preventing economic development in the area and social elevation of its residents.

Essential Advocates from the Civil Rights Movement

There are many who stand out as being responsible for the launch of the modern civil rights movement in the 1950s. Two of these include the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and Rosa Parks. The NAACP represented the legal gains possible after its victory from *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954. For her part, Rosa Parks came to be the embodiment of the community activism aspect of the movement. Individuals such as Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, and Stokely Carmichael were extremely instrumental in carrying on the momentum of the movement. Through their charismatic and passionate leadership, the movement found voices to appeal to and inspire the masses. These leaders were able to accomplish demonstrations of monumental proportions due to the establishment of additional civil rights organizations such as the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, and the Black Panthers. Such organizations created a sense of power for the everyday citizen and provided a critical base of support for advocates and followers to rely on during the darkest hours of the movement.

While the environmental justice movement has a plethora of organizations and centers advocating on its behalf,³ few have come to the forefront as a powerhouse in the movement. Whether this breakdown stems from lack of initiative, lack of capability, or lack of concern remains to be revealed. The involvement of such

organizations does enhance the awareness of environmental justice; however, the everyday citizen lacks a working knowledge of environmental hazards afflicting communities and the widespread nature of the problem. This lack of communication provides the separation between the environmental justice movement and the civil rights movement: the latter made the effort to actively inform concerned citizens of the problem and to force the situation into the eyes of the unconcerned. The environmental justice movement is sorely lacking advocacy groups dedicated to such work.

The Moments That Pushed the Civil Rights Movement

The timeline of the civil rights movement could serve as a model for almost any movement. Consistently, tragic events occurred to test the supporters of the movement; however, advocates publicized these horrors to exemplify the need for major reform. The murders of Emmitt Till and Medgar Evers, the integration of the Little Rock Nine at Central High School in Arkansas, and the race riots in Los Angeles, Newark, and Detroit stood out as horrifying moments in American history, events that reminded citizens of the importance of civil rights.

The environmental justice movement does not lack in its own devastating examples to arouse the passion and empathy of Americans. Unfortunately, the small and unknown communities across the nation that suffer from environmental hazards caused by industrial bigwigs and toxic waste dumps continue to remain unnoted with massive concern or publicity.

Major Legislative Reform Resulting From the Civil Rights Movement

The accomplishments of the civil rights movement wholly transformed the nation and everyday lives of its citizens. Comparatively, the legislative advances of the environmental justice strain to attain the level of achievement as those from the civil rights movement.⁴ However, with advocates like Congresswoman Solis and the interests of such groups as the Congressional Black Caucus, the need for powerful legislation is less of an issue than the support of other lawmakers to effectively enact sustainable policies.

AN ANSWER TO THE DIRE NEED FOR NATIONWIDE EXPOSURE OF ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE: THE AFTERMATH OF KATRINA

On Monday, 29 August 2005, a Category 4 hurricane made landfall on the Gulf region of the United States. The heavy rainfall and massive winds from Hurricane Katrina breached several levees restraining Lake Pontchartrain, leading to the massive flooding of New Orleans, LA. Eighty percent of the city was flooded at depths reaching up to 25 feet. The Ninth Ward, a particularly distressed and predominately minority area of the city, was hit the hardest by the storm and presently remains uninhabitable.

The devastating aftermath of Hurricane Katrina has provided an unprecedented opportunity for the environmental justice movement to step into the forefront.

Environmental racism is a particularly significant context to frame the impact of Katrina on the environment, social climate, and racial discontent. Katrina is the ultimate platform for the shortcomings of the government to protect underprivileged and minority communities from hazardous environmental situations.

Environmental justice activists have long been aware of the despair of the communities in and near the path of Katrina (Roberts and Weiss 2001). The Environmental Justice and Climate Change Initiative (EJCC) encouraged environmental justice activists to be anxious about the racially disproportionate effects of coastal flooding and heat waves in the region. The EJCC, as stated on their Web site, is a coalition of twenty-eight environmental justice, climate justice, religious, policy, and advocacy groups formed to pressure the lawmakers on climate change and the Kyoto Protocol. In 2002, the EJCC issued a fact sheet that foreshadowed the devastation of storms such as Katrina on New Orleans (Sze 2006).

Time and time again, the poverty and racial makeup of New Orleans has been pointed out by victims of the storm, civil rights activists, and other influential individuals in society. The environmental justice movement would be well-served to identify the contribution of environmental racism to the severity with which Katrina hit New Orleans, and the way it continues to affect the victims of the storm and its aftermath. Additionally, there is real fear that areas hit by Katrina are now home to severe contamination (see, for example, Furey et al. 2007; Reible et al. 2006; and press releases from the National Resources Defense Council). Environmental justice activists must step to the forefront to ensure that New Orleans will be effectively rebuilt and redeveloped without neglecting serious health concerns resulting from such environmental injustice (Featherstone 2005).

CONCLUSION: WHAT IS THE SOLUTION?

Despite the legislative advances and organized activity of people caught in the wave of environmental justice, these efforts simply are not enough. Much of this can be attributed to a lack of exposure.

There are three main impediments to the environmental justice movement's culmination as a true revolution: 1) regional differences that allow small pockets of the nation to suffer a wide variety of environmental injustices, which are difficult to properly track and monitor; 2) confusion between the major environmental arguments and advances currently occurring with environmental justice progress; and 3) conflicting issues, including regular environmental concerns, constitute more important problems in society.

Regional Differences

The regional gaps between communities affected by toxic wastes and industrial pollutants cause an unfortunate separation and sense of solidarity. In fact, environmental justice has the power to strengthen the connection between groups based on race, class, gender, and age. The regional separation is sadly an impediment to this unity, but one that can be overcome by media exposure and strong leadership of the movement.

Environmental Revolution Versus Environmental Justice Revolution

The mainstream environmental revolution focuses mainly on preservation of natural resources and wildlife and on conservation initiatives. The mainstream environmental movement is regrettably lacking minority representation in its advocacy, due to insufficient recruitment and appeal to minority communities. Also, mainstream advocates find the environmental justice movement takes the focus away from the issues they find most pertinent. While the nation has gotten swept into a struggle against global warming and deforestation, mainstream environmentalists have not pushed environmental justice as part of the movement. Instead environmental justice is characterized as wholly separate, unconnected revolution.

Outweighing of Issues

Society is struggling to balance competing interests; unfortunately, the environment is not the only urgent issue facing the nation. War, education, public safety, and immigration debates are just a few other issues vying for societal attention and support. An even direr problem arises when all of these concerns are warranted and somewhat intertwined. No single issue should be advocated for at the expense of others. Rather, advocates should take advantage of these connections to emphasize the need for major reform and governmental overhaul to provide satisfactory representation of all citizens.

Final Thoughts

Despite the focus of mainstream environmentalists, social justice in environmental burdens is an equally, if not more, important goal and would be beneficial to include in the mainstream movement. There must be some identification of the irony in the vehemence with which mainstream environmentalists advocate the rights of endangered species while ignoring the vulnerable human populations suffering from heavily polluted living conditions.

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1 The suggestion that Warren County is the start of the environmental justice revolution is somewhat contentious. The fight against environmental injustice includes demonstrations before Warren County and the first Earth Day. However, most advocates in the movement cite the Warren County demonstrations as the Rosa Parks of the modern movement.

2 Bunyan Bryant used his career, as did Paul Mohai, to present evidence that minorities also have stake in environmental issues, due to the disproportionate number of environmental hazards present in minority communities.

3 The NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund; the American Civil Liberties Union; Earthjustice Legal Defense Fund; the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under the Law; the Center for Constitutional Rights; the Center for Race, Poverty and the Environment; the National Lawyers Guild Sugar Law Center; the Environmental Justice Resource Center at Clark Atlanta University; the Deep South Center for Environmental Justice at Xavier University; the Thurgood Marshall Environmental

Justice Legal Clinic at Texas Southern University; and the Environmental Justice and Equity Institute at Florida A&M University.

4 Dorceta E. Taylor (2000) provides such a comparison, noting the civil rights movement's rapid growth in her paper chronicling the accomplishments of the environmental justice movement.

From “Block the Vote” to “Protect the Vote”: Historically Black Student Voting Suppression and Disenfranchisement in Texas

Christina D. Sanders and Blake E. Green

INTRODUCTION

Voting, arguably the most important and precious right in a democratic society, is an essential one that every citizen has, and, if eligible, should not be denied under any circumstances. Despite that fact, our country’s history has shown the opposite. A consistent pattern of voter oppression, suppression, and intimidation has poisoned the American electorate since the beginning days of the union. This type of suppression can be most often traced to women, communities of color, particularly those communities in the South, and young people.

Blatant disenfranchisement of students’ voting rights is still prevalent in the United States, especially for students of color. Instances of voter suppression and intimidation have been consistently ignored with the intent to render young voting blocs impotent. In this case, we examine the past and present state of the right to vote for students at Prairie View A&M University, a historically black university in Texas.

Christina D. Sanders is the coordinator of Black Youth Vote! Texas, a voter empowerment component of the Houston Coalition on Black Civic Participation that seeks to register, educate, and mobilize black men and women aged 18–35. Christina has served as a guest panelist alongside Dr. Cornell West of Princeton University for the Tavis Smiley Foundation National Leadership Institute, as a youth voting commentator on CNN Radio, and as an advocate of youth voting issues in Houston/Harris County, TX.

Sanders, a native of Houston, TX, is a proud member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., holds a bachelor of arts degree in political science and is a master of public administration candidate with a public policy focus at Texas Southern University.

Blake E. Green is the assistant state coordinator of Black Youth Vote! Texas. Blake is a native of Houston, TX. He holds a bachelor of business administration degree in management, and is a candidate for the master of business administration degree at Texas Southern University. He is a member of the National Black MBA Association and the Association for Financial Professionals.

Prairie View A&M University

According to its Web site, Prairie View A&M University, a historically black university founded in 1876, is the second oldest public institution of higher learning in the state of Texas. The university was created by the Texas state legislature under a land grant, which provided funding to create a school for “colored youth” that would serve as a training ground for black educators. The legislature established that the university would operate under the governance of Texas A&M University, the state’s first and oldest public institution. Since its inception, Prairie View has experienced immense growth—from a student body of less than 50 students to a fully accredited university with over 8,000 students and over 50,000 graduates.

Waller County

According to the Waller County Web site, Waller County is located approximately forty-five minutes north of Houston. It has four major Texas communities: Hempstead, Prairie View, Waller, and some parts of Katy. The county’s historical significance stems from serving as a medium of transporting products and goods from Houston to other cities in Texas and eventually to other states. In addition to a few plantations in the area, cotton and cattle were the mainstays of the county’s economy in the late 1800s, which brought many African Americans to the county. The current population of Waller County is over 35,000, including the students residing on Prairie View’s campus. The ethnic composition of the county is in dramatic contrast to the largely African American demographic of Prairie View A&M University. County officials feared that students would have the power and influence to drastically change the outcomes of the county elections. Greater still was their fear that a day might come when student voting power would be great enough to elect a student representative or alumni as a county official.

The Voting Rights Act

On its Web site, OurDocuments.gov recounts the events preceding President Lyndon B. Johnson’s passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965. Throughout 1964, African Americans across the country held demonstrations to protest methods that were employed to rob them of their right to vote. Violence ensued in response to the demonstrations, including the murder of voting rights activists in Mississippi and attacks on marchers in Selma, AL. The Voting Rights Act, implemented specifically to protect African Americans against the lingering injustices of Jim Crow laws, ended voting discrimination in the form of poll taxes, literacy tests, White primaries, and other tactics used to render impotent the African American electorate.

Many obstacles to voting are present in the Waller County election processes that ignore the very essence of the Voting Rights Act. Evidence of the county’s non-compliance has accrued over the years as we have constantly seen Prairie View students entangled in legal battles and protesting the actions of Waller County community members who are maintaining a system that disobeys the Voting Rights Act and consistently seeks to oppress the votes of the Black student electorate of Waller County.

BLOCK THE VOTE

Prairie View was one of the first groups of students to take a case of student voter suppression to the U.S. Supreme Court. This federal case, *Symm v. United States* (1979), serves as a landmark for student voting rights protection. In a 25 January 2008 letter to Christopher Coates, acting chief for the voting section for the Department of Justice, Senior Counsel Marcia Johnson-Blanco, voting rights project for the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under the Law, wrote that despite key laws and policy measures such as the Voting Rights Act and Help America Vote Act, Prairie View students have experienced disenfranchisement resulting in legal battles dating back to the 1970s.

Symm v. United States was the first legal battle for the Prairie View students. The case involved LeRoy Symm, tax assessor-collector of Waller County, in which students were given a questionnaire (see appendix) that required them to answer specific questions before being allowed to register to vote. The primary concern with the questionnaire was that it unfairly interrogated Prairie View students, and the interrogation seemed to be limited to the students and not all residents of the county. The district court found that Symm's registration practices violated the Twenty-sixth Amendment and permanently prohibited him from using the questionnaire. This landmark case led to the elimination of the questionnaire for the students from Prairie View. Furthermore, this case demonstrated how Prairie View students chose not to settle for the prescriptions for voting as were created by the county officials. Instead, they rose with conscience and determination, and paved the way for future students by demanding equality and fairness when exercising their democratic voting rights.

Prairie View A&M students Versus Oliver Kitzman, Waller County District Attorney

The 2000 presidential elections convinced many Americans that the system of voting was broken, as illustrated by the various debates over "dimpled" and "pregnant" chads. However, what the country largely ignored was the major abuse of power and total disregard for voting rights for students that would soon occur in Prairie View, TX. In March 2004, Prairie View students were wrongfully informed that they could not vote in Waller County because they were not permanent residents of the county (PFAW). Students from the university were denied the ability to register and vote at their campus addresses. This incident involved the then-district attorney Oliver Kitzman, who "published a letter in a local newspaper accusing unnamed citizens of 'feigned residency'" (Cave 2004). Kitzman warned that any "illegal voting" would lead to a 10-year prison sentence and a \$10,000 fine. Despite this intimidation, students fought back. As Cave relates, the students protested by marching through the town on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday, followed by a Rock the Vote rally in support of the students. Cave continued, "The next day, under pressure from state and federal authorities, Kitzman settled a voting rights lawsuit filed by the students and issued a public apology."

Suppression of student voting did not end with this case, however. The ballot for the general election of 2006 included a black candidate for Waller County district attorney. The candidate, Morris Overstreet, campaigned heavily on Prairie View's campus and its surrounding Black communities. Black Youth Vote, a youth-focused program of the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation, worked in conjunction with campus leaders and was able to successfully register an estimated 2,200 students at their Prairie View A&M University address in Waller County.

However, on the day of the election, each of the estimated 2,200 students was not listed as registered when they went to the polls to cast their vote. In fact, the authors, as Black Youth Vote! Texas, representatives, saw that those students were turned away and did not get the chance to participate based on the fact that they were not on the voting rolls.

In the winter of 2006–2007, both the local KBTX news station and *The Houston Chronicle* reported that the Waller County Commissioners Court had closed the county elections office following the efforts of the Black leadership in Waller County, along with community activists, who sought an investigation concerning possible voter disenfranchisement of the Prairie View A & M University students. According to Helen Erikson in a 22 December 2006 *Houston Chronicle* article, Justice of the Peace DeWayne Charleston was so outraged, he was prepared to walk 111 miles to Austin to protest what he said were criminal violations in the 7 November 2006 election in the county. Erikson also noted that the state did launch an investigation of voting records at the Waller County election office, in response to claims of student voter disenfranchisement.

Attempts were made to contact the Waller County Elections Office for answers only to find out that everyone who had previously worked in the office had been fired and the office was closed. County officials made it clear that no questions would be answered until the investigation was completed. Voter intimidation and suppression has often gone unnoticed. However, Steven Carbo, senior director of the Democracy Program at Demos, is certainly aware of the challenge, as quoted in a 6 November 2006 Demos press release.

It's unfortunate that in 2006 we need to be so concerned with potential threats to an individual's right to vote from partisan operatives. But with so many documented cases of suppression and intimidation in 2004, and recorded abuses already this year in primary elections, we must be as vigilant as ever.

What are the expectations for an election in 2008? What protections or policy changes could serve in protecting the Black student vote in Texas?

PROTECT THE VOTE THE CALL FOR GREATER PROTECTION, EXTENSIONS OF VOTING RIGHTS ACT

Help America Vote Act

The Help America Vote Act (HAVA), enacted in 2002 by Congress, requires that voters that have registered to vote, but whose names do not appear on the voting rolls, be allowed to vote using a provisional ballot (Weiser 2006, 1–3).¹ However, despite the enactment of HAVA, there still remains a strong possibility that votes will not be counted. In the case of the Prairie View students, HAVA could be a measure that would be arguably ineffective. For instance, in 2006 when the students were not on the county's voting rolls, HAVA protections would have allowed the students to vote but would not have guaranteed that their votes would count. The act does not provide that provisional ballots necessarily be counted since it gives discretion to the states to be executed in accordance with state law. While there may be several reasons provisional ballots are counted, it is most common when the election is contested. In this sense, greater protections must be taken especially when hundreds of students are disenfranchised even after they followed the entire process through election day.

Deceptive Practices and Voter Intimidation Prevention Act

The People for the American Way Web site outlines the Deceptive Practices and Voter Intimidation Prevention Act of 2005, sponsored by U.S. Senator Barack Obama (D-IL). The bill would make it a federal crime to use dishonest or deceptive practices that disenfranchise voters. The legislation has been approved by the Senate Judiciary Committee and is currently pending before the full Senate. It is imperative that this bill becomes law in time for the 2008 elections. This would serve as an essential component to deterring attempts to suppress the African American student vote in Texas. Even more, this legislation would offer greater strength for states and citizens in upholding the Voting Rights Act and all amendments to the Constitution that guarantee this right for all Americans.

Still, there are additional measures that can be taken through alternative policies that would provide greater protections for many disenfranchised communities, particularly that of students. These alternative measures can be found in some states and others should be recommended for implementation at the federal level.

Election Day Registration

The organization Demos, A Network for Ideas and Action, supports a Web site that explains the concept behind election day registration (EDR), which is often referred to as same day registration. The program, currently operating in seven states—Maine, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Idaho, New Hampshire, Wyoming, and Montana, allows eligible voters to register and cast their ballot on the same day. Demos reports that for the past twenty-five years, states using EDR have had consistently

higher voter turnout, including the 2004 presidential race, in which voter turnout in EDR states was on average 12 percent higher than in non-EDR states. In fact, the Prairie View students who were turned away from the polls in 2006 would have been able to vote had Texas utilized EDR.

Polling Locations at Universities

Just as the campus of Texas A&M University has polling locations, there should be a polling location on the campus of Prairie A&M University. With thousands of students that are eligible to vote on one campus, measures should be taken to place a polling location on the campus for increasing student turnout and protecting the student vote.

CONCLUSION

Prairie View A&M University is listed as the #9 Worst Place in America to Vote (Abramsky 2006). Abramsky goes on to say that Prairie View A&M University is a Black school in the heart of east Texas, where the local leadership has, over many decades, worked to deny the students' claims to being full-time county residents and thus eligible to vote. This article highlights a sad reality of how discrimination in America ushers itself from generation to generation to deny rights to targeted groups of American citizens.

In a 6 February 2004 *New York Times* article, Yolanda Smith, executive director of the NAACP branch in Houston, said it best when she stated that the threat of jail time for voting was "a fear no student should have to go through." The African American student vote has been attacked in Waller County for generations. There must be greater protections in place for the students as we embark on one of the most historical presidential elections for African Americans. Students have rights and their voices must be heard. Progressive measures such as election day registration, passing the Deceptive Practices and Voter Intimidation Prevention Act, and simply placing a voting booth on campus would dramatically increase turnout and protect the Black youth vote in Waller County, TX.

APPENDIX

Below are the questions that were placed on the questionnaire provided by the *Symm v. United States* Supreme Court case.

Are you a college student?

If so, where do you attend school?

How long have you been a student at such school?

Where do you live while in college?

How long have you lived in Texas?

In Waller County?

Do you intend to reside in Waller County indefinitely?

How long have you considered yourself to be a bona fide resident of Waller County ?

What do you plan to do when you finish your college education?

Do you have a job or position in Waller County?

Own any home or other property in Waller County?

Have an automobile registered in Waller County?

Have a telephone listing in Waller County?

Belong to a Church, Club, or some Waller County Organization other than college related?

If so, please name them:

Where do you live when college is not in session?

What address is listed as your home address with the college?

Give any other information which might be helpful.

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1 A provisional ballot is where a voter claims to be registered, but whose name does not appear on the list of registered voters. The person completes a provisional ballot, and once his or her voter registration status is confirmed, the ballot is counted after the election (Texas Secretary of State, 2008)

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Protest Politics and the Jena Generation: Lessons for 21st-Century Black Leaders

Uhuru Hotep

INTRODUCTION

This essay lays the foundation for a paradigm shift in Black leadership practice by exposing the limitations of protest politics and its major tactic, the mass march. If we are to achieve real power as a community of African people in 21st-century America, present-day Black leaders must subject even their most cherished practices, like the mass march, to critical analysis. Without this critical analysis, future Black leaders may settle for leading noisy demonstrations that end up strengthening the powers against whom we struggle. This we must prevent at all cost. As much as our tradition is our guide, we must not be blinded by it. Times and conditions change. What was yesterday's solution may be today's problem. And so it is with protest politics and the mass march in particular.

BACKGROUND

According to historian Peter Bergman (1969), Africans in the United States have been petitioning the White power structure for redress of our grievances since 1769. During the first six decades of the 19th century, Black leaders like Frederick Douglass and Sojourner Truth organized dozens of rallies, made hundreds of speeches, and submitted numerous petitions to White America's political and religious leaders, North and South, demanding the abolition of slavery. Their rallies, speeches, and petitions were largely ignored, so it took a bloody civil war (1861–1865) to end chattel slavery in this country.

The first series of 20th century mass protest marches led by African Americans was organized during the period 1919–1925 by NAACP activists Ida B. Wells and W.E.B. DuBois. Designed to pressure Congress into passing legislation outlawing lynching as a federal crime, these early efforts at protest politics failed to achieve their stated goal, though they did succeed in placing the protest march into our political vocabulary.

Over the past forty years, the protest march, perfected during the civil rights era (1955–1970), has emerged as our preferred method of voicing our collective grievances to the White power structure. Sanctioned by the U.S. Constitution, held in public spaces, and directed at the White political establishment, the protest march,

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like a safety valve, has been extremely effective at siphoning off pent-up Black frustration and anger, but in a fashion that leaves our adversaries intact and empowered.

THE IMPORTANCE OF JENA

The 20 September 2007 mobilization that attracted 60,000 Black youth and their supporters to the backwater hamlet of Jena, LA, to protest the injustice meted out to six Black high school students breathed new life into our fading protest tradition. Columnist Steven Ward wrote in the 10 October 2007 edition of *Black Agenda Report* that many in his generation viewed the Jena mobilization as a “rekindling of the spirit of the civil rights movement” when wide-spread discontent with institutional racism stirred thousands of ordinary Black people to behave in extraordinary ways. According to CNN’s Web site on 21 September 2007 alone, both Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton voiced similar sentiments. However, before we embark upon yet another round of marching and protesting, let us first review the strengths and weakness of our protest tradition as revealed by the Jena 6 mobilization.

STRENGTHS OF THE JENA MOBILIZATION

First, in an article published in *The Michigan Citizen* and then quoted in Ward’s article, Amber Jefferies, a seventh-grade student from Detroit, reported that for her the Jena march was a “life-changing” event. Sister Amber speaks for thousands of Black youth who marched in Jena or who participated in post-Jena demonstrations. Our protest tradition is extremely powerful. It often makes a deep and lasting impact on those who participate in it. Coming together with tens of thousands of our people to collectively voice our discontent is heady stuff. It’s euphoric and literally mesmerizing, but only temporarily.

Our history tells us that planning and/or participating in a protest march has been an important rite of passage into Black American political life since the 1950s. So it is no surprise that the Black youth who marched in Jena were deeply moved by our protest tradition, which can in fact change one’s life. As a child of the Black Power/Black Consciousness movement of the late ’60s, I too can attest to the life-changing impact of protest politics.

Second, the Jena mobilization, supported by key members of the hip-hop community, was the first Internet-driven Black youth protest in American history. National Public Radio’s Eric Weiner reported on 21 September 2007 that African American bloggers, list servers, and chat room junkies—not the mainstream media—were the driving force publicizing the plight of the Jena 6 and the march. Others have noted that Black youth have not mobilized against our racial oppression on the scale of Jena since the civil rights movement. *As long as the Internet exists, Black youth must use it as a tool for creating educational, economic, medical, political, religious, and other institutions to meet their needs and the needs of African people, both at home and abroad.*

A final benefit of Jena is the opportunity it provides to begin the emotionally cumbersome but essential task of bridging the generation gap. Black activist Dr. Oba T’Shaka in his 2004 book *The Integration Trap: The Generation Gap*

correctly identifies the “generation gap” between Black youth and their elders as “the most serious internal issue facing African American communities across the United States.” If properly used, Jena could be the catalyst for an intergenerational dialogue and then widespread cooperation between Black youth activists, progressive hip-hop artists, African-centered students, and their politically astute elders. Personally, I’m interested in what made the plight of the Jena 6 so compelling that it moved Black students across this country to turn off BET, pull up their pants, reach into their wallets, and travel to Jena to defend six of their own.

WEAKNESSES OF THE JENA MOBILIZATION

The Jena march, like all one-day mobilizations—including the March on Washington in 1963 and the Million Man March in 1995, is at best symbolic and at worst diversionary. We know that it takes constant, long-term pressure by those, like Blacks, who lack the organized wealth and high-level influence to make even the smallest change in the American political system. We also know that nothing of lasting value can be achieved in American politics by a one-day protest, regardless of the numbers involved, except duping us into believing that we have accomplished something concrete and tangible. And that is the hidden danger of protest politics.

Even when a protest is successful, we can still be manipulated by our psychological need for recognition and fall prey to accepting symbolic acts of change in lieu of substantive ones. In other words, once CNN, BET, NBC, MTV, the *New York Times*, etc., begin to cover our protest and we are invited to Washington to meet the president or downtown to meet the mayor, we celebrate in the belief that we have won them over to our cause and they will soon redress our grievances, when nothing could be further from the truth. We are confusing symbol with substance.

Furthermore, if we insist on practicing protest politics, then we must accept that as long as we confine ourselves to protesting the unjust actions of others, we will never be proactive. Protesting is not acting; it is reacting, which means that protesting is basically reactionary. Furthermore, being locked into the protest mode actually allows our adversaries to strategically manufacture events they know will stir us to react. And as long as we are reacting to their initiatives, we are not acting to further our agenda; and as long as we are reacting, we are not building. Protest politics, by its very nature, forces us to play by rules that are not our own.

Another major limitation of protest politics is economic. It is estimated that the 60,000 youth who marched in Jena on 20 September 2007 dumped at least \$3.2 million into the local White-controlled economy. This means that White-owned motels, restaurants, fast-food joints, grocery stores, gas stations, etc., made big money from the marchers, as did the White-owned airlines and bus companies that transported them to Jena. The Africans who live in Jena did not share in this stupendous cash flow because they own few businesses in which the Jena marchers could spend their money.

Like the civil rights activists who preceded them, the Jena march organizers failed to consider the economics of mass mobilization. LIBRadio commentator Keidi Awadu has leveled the same criticism at the organizers of the Million Man March, who unwittingly delivered at least \$100 million into the hands of the White

business community of Washington, DC.¹ These are funds we should have used to begin acquiring the farms, factories, schools, and hospitals we need to empower ourselves—not squandered on one-day extravaganzas. This tremendous transfer of wealth, from Black hands to White hands, is yet another reason why the mass march must be abandoned.

One of the critical lessons Black youth must learn from Jena is that a true movement for social transformation and change will leave grassroots institutions—businesses owned and operated by African Americans—in its wake.

A fourth limitation of protest politics is its endorsement by the White power structure. Our right to peacefully assemble and petition the government to redress our grievances is “guaranteed” by the first amendment to the U.S. Constitution. This means that our protesting and marching are actually sanctioned by the very political and economic systems that oppress us. Why? The answer is simple. There is no law or power that requires the American ruling elite and its agents to change how they govern in Jena or anywhere else because we lead a public protest.

Black youth leaders and activists must realize that adopting forms of political engagement sanctioned by the ruling elite will have them actively participating in their own destruction. Simply protesting and marching—even voting and winning public office—will not transform or even reform how this nation treats Black people. Many of us already know this from living in cities governed by Black officials we elected, naively believing they had the power to change the quality of our lives.

A fifth and most disturbing weakness of our protest tradition is psychological. Protest politics are rooted in what psychologists call an “external locus of control” (Rotter 1972). This means that protesting has us looking outside of ourselves and our community to the U.S. government and its agents—the mayor, the governor, the president—to solve our problems under the false belief that they are better qualified than we are to make decisions about our lives.

We foolishly turn our lives over to the White power structure, then we march downtown to their city/county building, their courthouse, their police department, to Washington, DC, or Jena, to demand justice from the very people who created and profit from our unjust condition in the first place. This is absolutely insane! *The Jena generation must first love themselves, then “flip the script” and establish an internal locus of control, which means their center of power, authority, and legitimacy must reside within their families, our people, and our culture, and not mainstream politicians and government agencies.*

For 21st-century Black leaders to embrace the politics of protest and its tactic of mass mobilization for one day of demonstration as its preferred mode of direct action is dangerous. It misdirects our energies, finances, and other resources into political activity that is largely symbolic at a time when our people need secure sources of food, clothing, shelter, and the other essentials of life—not empty rituals. Consequently, Black leadership must call a nationwide moratorium on protest marches while we shift our political paradigm to embrace new forms of direct action tailored for Black empowerment in a post-Katrina America.

The “new” direct action that I envision will mobilize millions of us who are dissatisfied with the status quo—not to noisily march or loudly protest, but to quietly pool our resources so we can buy the land, buildings, equipment, and everything

else we need to exercise sovereign control over the production, distribution, and consumption of the basic necessities of life: our food, clothing, shelter, education, transportation, medication, and self-defense. *Black youth must know that ethnic groups in 21st-century America who fail to control the production, distribution, and consumption of their basic survival needs will be the servants of those who do, and no amount of marching and protesting will change this fact.*

CONCLUSION

African people in the United States have been practicing protest politics for more than 250 years with mixed results. Over the past forty years, the mass mobilization for a one-day demonstration has become the preferred medium through which Black leadership publicly communicates our grievances. To the exclusion of other forms of direct action, the mass protest march, according to our leaders, is the most effective way to bring attention to our concerns, demonstrate our group strength, and thereby pressure the ruling elite into redressing our grievances. In keeping with this belief, the Jena march is being exploited by these same leaders (or should I say *mis-leaders?*) to sell what they know is a failed political strategy to a new generation of Black youth and their leaders. This must not happen; this we must challenge, and this we must denounce.

In spite of the fact that protest politics has won us concessions in the form of federal legislation, its costs far outweigh its benefits. As we have seen, it encourages reactionary behavior; it obscures our need to build independent Black institutions; it compels us to divert scarce funds away from where they are urgently needed; it persuades us to surrender control of our lives to external powers; and it blinds us to the reality that peaceful mass protest in the American political system is state-sanctioned and thus of symbolic value only.

The core political challenge facing the Jena generation and its leadership is three-fold. First, they must fully comprehend the symbolic and diversionary nature of protest politics; next, they must ignore anyone who would suggest that mobilizing Black people for a one-day protest march is an intelligent response to institutional racism; and finally, they must devise new and engaging forms of direct action that generate the emotional appeal of the protest march while also moving us forward toward economic and political sovereignty.

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1 Information based on author's own recollection from radio broadcasts over the past year.

You Must Set Forth at Dawn—The Presidential Race of Barack Obama, Condoleezza Rice’s Legacy, and China: A Conversation with Juan Williams

*Juan Williams is a senior correspondent for National Public Radio (NPR). He is also a political analyst for the Fox News Channel and a panelist on Fox News Sunday. He is the author of *Enough: The Phony Leaders, Dead-End Movements, and Culture of Failure That Are Undermining Black America*, *Thurgood Marshall: American Revolutionary*, and *Eyes on the Prize: America’s Civil Rights Years, 1954–1965*, among other books. During his 21-year career at the Washington Post, Williams served as an editorial writer, op-ed columnist, and White House correspondent. He lives in Washington, DC.*

HJAAP

*As you reported in *The New York Times*, Senator Obama (D-IL) “has built his political base among White voters” and the senator “actually trails Hillary Clinton” in national polling of African Americans. This news comes at a time when the Pew Research Center reports that White Americans are more than twice as likely to be optimistic about the future as African Americans. Furthermore, 49 percent of Black Americans say their lives are no better off than they were five years ago; another 29 percent say that their lives are worse. Do you think that pessimism is eroding support Senator Obama would otherwise receive from African Americans?*

WILLIAMS

Yes, and I think that also it’s a function of who’s pessimistic. The people who support Barack Obama in the Black community tend to be well-educated people; more affluent, as well. And people who have had more global experiences and have a sense of a reason for being optimistic about the American economy or the American century to come. Often the people who identify Obama as not really Black are people who don’t have education and people who are not doing well in the current economy. They see him as an Ivy League educated—Columbia undergrad, Harvard Law School—guy. And a guy whose father is Black, but comes from Kenya, and

Interviewer: Christian Nwachukwu Jr. is an associate editor for the Doubleday Broadway Publishing Group. In 2004, he graduated from Morehouse College, where he studied biology. He lives in New York City, NY.

whose mother is White. So he's part of a highly educated, affluent, global society. That's threatening to people who feel left behind. As a result they don't identify with him and they're not quick to support him.

HJAAP

What are some of the reasons for the African American support enjoyed by Senator Clinton (D-NY)?

WILLIAMS

Her husband, Bill Clinton, was president for two terms in this country. Toni Morrison dubbed him the "first Black president." And, the other day, Andrew Young said in a statement that I think has raised a lot of eyebrows—he says that "Bill Clinton has dated more Black women than Barack Obama; he's just as Black if not Blacker than Barack Obama." I mean, it's very interesting, but even with the kind of offensive tone, you can sense that what Ambassador Young is trying to say is that he is comfortable with Bill Clinton and that the Black community knows and appreciates Bill Clinton. I think part of this, therefore, is that for the Black political establishment, they know how the patronage flows from the likes of Bill Clinton; they have established networks of relationships and they know that when they go to Clinton officials they can get the kind of response, including response for funding, that they have counted on. So they expect that if Hillary Clinton is elected that same network of influential connections and patronage will be back in action, and they look forward to that day.

The second thing to say, though, is beyond that, Hillary Clinton strikes a number of people as experienced and able to play the Washington game and deliver for them. So you see that working class—middle class, working class and lower income—Black people support Hillary Clinton and that's the strength of her support in the Black community. They question the level of Barack Obama's experience. They don't really know him. They don't know what to expect of him. They don't know if he would be the kind of person who felt he had to prove something by not being overly generous with the Black community. And I think they worry that he would be challenged by Whites in a way as to not demonstrate his loyalty to the Black community.

And then finally, I think there's a sense that—and this has to do with the pessimism you were talking about—if you were to make Barack Obama the nominee, White people ultimately would not vote to make a Black man president of the United States. We've known in the past that Whites will say, "Yes, we'll vote for him" by about 5 to 10 percent more than what they actually do when they go into the voting booth. And you account that for congressman or governor—but when it comes to the president of the United States, I think there is a strong suspicion that White people are never going to give that kind of power to a Black man. They're never going to make him the leader of the Western world; that there's just too much racial

baggage in our society still to see someone purely in terms of their talent and potential and not take into account their skin color.

HJAAP

Is there some reticence among Black voters because we're not farther along in terms of elected African American governors and African American senators?

WILLIAMS

Yes. When you think of [Governor of Massachusetts] Deval Patrick, he did have tremendous White support; you think of [former Governor of Virginia] Doug Wilder, he had tremendous White support, but in both cases they were able to count on the Black vote. In the case of Barack Obama, he's counting almost exclusively on the White vote and trying to get the Black vote to come along—this is a different political dynamic; we've never seen this before. But to go to your point, if there were more Black elected politicians in the country holding high office, I think there would be the sense "Well, this is possible." But the fact is, I think Black people—and especially low and middle income Black people—look at it and say, "Now exactly why are so many White people supporting this guy? What makes him so different? And is what makes him so acceptable to Whites a reason for me to have concern about him?"

HJAAP

Have you seen support for Senator Obama among African American conservatives?

WILLIAMS

What I've noticed is that conservatives—Black, White, Hispanic, Asian—are very supportive of Obama. And in the polls what you see is that Obama is the favorite Democrat among Republicans. Now, why is that? I think it has a little bit to do with what Barack Obama represents, which is an end to the kind of racial conversation that we've been having in the country for centuries. He does not come out of the White guilt, victimization mind-set. He's someone that talks about America as a miraculous place; the kind of place where there is unlimited and unbridled opportunity. This is not the language that you hear from most Black leaders in this country. Most often they're talking about the debt owed to Black people by those who enslaved us. Most often they're talking about Black people as still suffering from the damage done by slavery and legal segregation.

Obama represents a new kind of conversation, so I think that for many conservatives, he's like a breath of fresh air. They tap into the idea that Barack Obama changes the racial conversation in America. That it's a new day, a new generation—you're moving beyond the generation that came out of the pulpit and out of the civil rights movement, and onto people who are academically well trained and to people who have a sense of presence in American corporate and political halls of power

without any sense that they are there as tokens or that they are there as pretenders, but that they are there to compete openly—to win, to lose, to succeed, and fail on their own. And that's very attractive, I think, to not only conservatives of all stripes, but particularly to Black conservatives of this generation.

HJAAP

You were just in China and I'm wondering if you can shed some light on the training and academic background of Chinese legislators.

WILLIAMS

In terms of specific areas, you see that they are very well trained. So my experience was—for example, when I went to Peking University, which is the best school in the country—there's tremendous competition for government jobs, which was a surprise to me. But I'm told that a government job comes with tremendous security, good pay—the idea that you're going to get a car and a house pretty soon. And in China, they have government owned enterprises, so you could be a government official in China—not an elected official, but a bureaucrat—and then shift from something like what would be our Federal Communications Commission over to a new start-up on the Internet or a new start-up on television that's government owned. And then switch back. So it puts you in this very privileged position in a way that's not analogous to our system here in the United States. You have cases where people work in government and then go over to private industry, but it's not necessarily related directly, it's that they have played on their reputation and connections in government and now have gone into private industry. But in China there is not even a paper wall.

The other thing to say is that in China, there is so much competition to get into the very best schools, and with all that competition, it whittles the field and then you have the very well-prepared, well-educated people primed to go into policy-making positions in the government. And those people are, by the party, nurtured in terms of their field. So, for example, someone involved in housing would be given additional responsibilities and education in the housing area to almost continue their education as a government official with the idea that they will be able to function to the benefit of the Chinese people. The Chinese system really is designed to take advantage of highly educated people and give them additional training in their policy area so that they can perform and be trusted to perform at a very high level for the country.

HJAAP

Are there some factors of China's growth that they have learned from the United States? Or are there some things that we can learn from them, considering their current success?

WILLIAMS

Well, it's an interesting thing. I remember at one point having a conversation with a man who is a foreign policy expert in China; he was the head of a think tank there. And he says he comes to America and Americans are always asking, "Why don't the Chinese have a more democratic system and allow for more representation and the voice of the people to rise up?" And he said, "Well, wait a minute. Why is it in the United States, the politicians are hamstrung by the fact that their constituents may not want to acknowledge that there's a global economy in place, or not want to acknowledge the importance of immigrants in their society, or not want to acknowledge the importance of emerging economic sectors because they're worried about old and industrialized sectors that are fading?" He said, "That's because in your system the leaders are not free to make decisions about what is best for the future of the country; they're constantly responding to people who may be having adverse reactions to some recent development." He says, "Why don't the Americans think about changing their system?"

I had never had this thought in my life. Because I'm an American, I'm accustomed to this system and I think that democracy is the right way to go and that we need more transparency and more democracy, but here's a guy who points out that, in light of the recent paralysis in American government over issues like immigration, tax reform, environmental procedures, and the like, what would it be like if we had a government that was acting in the best interests of the people and wasn't constrained by the approach of the next election? Would we be better off? The way policy is made in China, the government does have a freer hand to act, but the question is, Do they act in the best interests of the people because people don't vote directly for their leaders?

HJAAP

I want to shift gears a little bit because I want to talk about Secretary Rice. I think there are three biographies out about her now. In all of them you see a woman who has changed her policy positions over time—from the realism of Brent Scowcroft to the idealism of George W. Bush. Some people wonder would she have had to change her positions as much were she not an African American woman. What is your sense?

WILLIAMS

My sense is that if you think about her growing up and her education, part of it relates to the fact that she is an African American who came out of Alabama and that her parents moved to Colorado. And they were clearly, I think, in search of freedom from the kind of Southern stereotypes and oppression that Black people were subjected to at the dawn of the civil rights era of the '40s, '50s, and '60s. So she was trying to move on and she was trying to distinguish herself as an intellect and a talent, in terms of a concert pianist. And then, of course, she goes on to graduate study and to be an academician.

My sense is that she has been in constant change from the time she was a child, reacting to events. But that she's always been her daddy's child, her daddy's girl. And daddy was an academic himself. And this has policy implications in this sense: Rice was always about trying to demonstrate her capability—her capability in terms of coming from an educated family of strivers, anxious to demonstrate that she could compete at the highest levels in any area—and so it has opened her to the idea that she is to accommodate people who are in positions of power because those are the people who can give her opportunity. And so I think that it has made her much more pragmatic, much more of a pragmatist as opposed to an idealist. She is not one to stand on principle. She is one to try and see how she can move up and get that opportunity because I think her ultimate goal is to show the world what she can do as a Black American woman born in the mid-20th century. And she has risen to heights that are unparalleled and done so largely on the basis of conservative Republican patrons.

HJAAP

If there's a successful conclusion to the peace talks between the Israelis and the Palestinians, will that be her legacy as secretary of state?

WILLIAMS

That would be tremendous for her. I think the effort that she's making now in the Annapolis peace talks, the kind of ongoing efforts between the Israelis and the Palestinians is an effort for her and for President Bush to shift the focus of the foreign policy legacy in the second term from Iraq to Israel and the Palestinians. And if she were able to accomplish that, if President Bush were able to accomplish that, they would be in line for a great deal of celebration and possible Nobel Peace Prizes.

HJAAP

What do you think is next for Secretary Rice?

WILLIAMS

You know, she's such a talented person and well liked. People may have questions about her, but I remember—a year and a half or two years ago—being at a conservative union event here in Washington and they were pumping up the idea of Rice for president. I think they would have been pleased to have Rice running against Hillary Clinton. And they would have been able to claim the higher ground, and I think they would have felt that she has more foreign policy experience and more time in government, they could make all of those very positive contrasts for Secretary Rice as their nominee.

My sense is that she would like to have some high-level position in the private sector or in academia, like be a major college president, but it's not fully formed yet. And she really has an appreciation—I just saw her the other day at the (State

Department) Christmas party—she really has an appreciation for where she is, and I don't think there's any chance she leaves before George Bush leaves office. I think she views being secretary of state as a privilege and is willing to hold off on what's next for now because she wants to fully have this experience and be branded as a real and successful secretary of state. And I think that's why the Middle East peace talks are so important: because if it's just a matter of how the Bush administration stumbled and, diplomatically, had little political success in Iraq, then her tenure will be flawed. And she doesn't want that; she is fully invested in being known as the first female African American secretary of state and wanting that to have been a successful stint that people then could celebrate her and it would allow her to move to a higher level in American life.

HJAAP

Would the conversation be radically different if we were talking about Condoleezza Rice as the first African American president of the United States versus the conversation surrounding Barack Obama? For example, you can't make the argument that she's not Black.

WILLIAMS

This comes down to an interesting point. Someone was saying to me the other day that when Oprah Winfrey lines up with Barack Obama, that it's about race and that you can't say it's about ideology because most of Oprah's viewers are women, and they tend to be working class to middle class White women. And so, clearly it would suggest it would be in Oprah's best interest to say that "gender trumps race and I identify with the idea of supporting the first woman with a legitimate chance to win the presidency of the United States: Hillary Clinton." But instead she says, "Race trumps gender, and I see, in this Black man, such a rare opportunity for a Black person to be president and he's such an extraordinary human being, I'm going to go with Barack Obama." Now in that scenario, race also trumps ideology because I think Hillary Clinton and Maya Angelou and Oprah Winfrey have been along the same lines in terms of policy for years.

So the question becomes, Is it about ideology or is it about race? And that's where that old thing we spoke about earlier—values—comes into play. Are your values ones that come out of the pulpit, the civil rights movement, the growth of Black politics, the need for Black politicians to have lines of patronage? Or are your values ones that come from some other experience—the global idealism that Barack Obama speaks of so beautifully and, I think, excites so many people? With regard to Condoleezza Rice, is she ideologically in line with mainstream Black thought in the United States? And, of course you see the numbers. Overwhelmingly Black people identify as Democrats. Even among young Black people that's the case, although you see some more tilting toward independent status, but not toward being Republican. And she's a Republican.

So if she was running, there are people who would say, "She's a Black woman, no question about that, but she is really not representing the Black community." Nobody says that quite explicitly about Barack Obama because he's a Democrat and he's pretty much a liberal Democrat and his policy prescriptions are, for the most part, in line with the Black political establishment in this country. Not so with Condi Rice. So if she was running, I think there would be excitement about the idea of the first Black woman, but I think that there would be no hesitation on the part of established Black political leaders to oppose her, just as many of them are opposing Barack Obama.

Taking Leadership in the Green Economy: A Conversation with Van Jones

Van Jones is working to combine solutions to America's two biggest problems: social inequality and environmental destruction. Jones is the cofounder of the Oakland-based Ella Baker Center for Human Rights. Named for an unsung civil rights heroine, the center promotes positive alternatives to violence and incarceration. The center's Books Not Bars campaign has helped reduce California's overall youth prison population by more than 30 percent. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, Jones helped to found ColorOfChange.org, an online advocacy organization. With more than 100,000 members, ColorOfChange.org is now the nation's biggest e-advocacy organization tackling Black issues. Founder of the national Green for All campaign, Jones worked with U.S. House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi and others to pass the Green Jobs Act of 2007. The legislation will provide \$125 million in funding to train 35,000 people a year in "green-collar jobs." Among many honors and awards, Jones was recently selected as a World Economic Forum "Young Global Leader." A 1993 Yale Law graduate, Jones is also a husband and father. Jones's dual roles have given him a unique perspective on the country's problems and its potential solutions.

HJAAP

In the past few years, you have become one of the leading voices in the national environmental movement. The emphasis of your work is green economic development in urban communities. Can you explain the "green jobs, not jails" approach?

JONES

Who has more of an interest in the green economy than we do having suffered the most with pollution? Who has more of an agenda than we do in a massive reinvestment in the infrastructure of the country? We've got levies falling down, bridges falling down. You're going to have to weatherize billions of buildings to save on energy. You're going to have to cut billions of solar panels to get off of oil. Who's going to get those jobs? Rather than dismissing this as other people's agenda, we

Amoretta Morris of the Harvard Journal of African American Public Policy interviewed Van Jones on 6 December 2007. Morris is a master in public policy candidate at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. Prior to attending graduate school, Morris worked in Washington, DC, as a community organizer and then youth policy advisor to the deputy mayor for children, youth, family, and elders and the deputy mayor for education.

can recognize it as the agenda we've been talking about the whole time—massive reinvestment in the cities, a more full employment agenda at the end of the day. Somebody has to get these jobs and do this work. The president, whoever it turns out to be, is not going to put up all these solar panels. You are going to have to put it up. I'm going to put it up. Cousin Pookie is going to have to put it up.

You begin to see political opportunity opening up for the first time since the '60s. A Black political entrepreneur like me or you could develop a very interesting constituency of working class Black folks who need more opportunities, middle class Black folks who are very concerned about the overall direction of the country, and a bunch of other people who have money, access, et cetera, and have a popular front—not a tight, united front, but a broad popular front that would generally get us in a situation where we're more advantaged than not.

HJAAP

In June 2007, the city of Oakland adopted a proposal from the Ella Baker Center and the Oakland Apollo Alliance to create a “green jobs corps.” The corps will train youth for eco-friendly green-collar jobs. What did you all ask for in that campaign?

JONES:

We initially asked the city council to allocate \$100,000. It became \$250,000 to start a job training program in Oakland. And we focused on the green trades. The process by which we arrived at that was to really talk—to really have one of our staff members talk to a number of people in Oakland city government and build a consensus that the young people of Oakland really needed more opportunity to be a part of the growing part of northern California's economy.

We held town hall meetings, which we called solution salons, a couple of rallies, and then a very constructive hearing at committee level and city council. The proposal received a unanimous vote from the city council. The program will start in 2008. The mayor has made a public commitment that he wants to try to get a million dollars for the program. And Congresswoman Barbara Lee (D-CA) is generating congressional support to expand the program [to other communities].

The various job training organizations will go through a training process to be outlined in the request for proposals. Our hope is that in the first year, we'll get a few dozen people through and by this time next year, people will be graduating and get employed. And the curriculum that we will have developed will then be available to people all across the country.

HJAAP

That's a pretty incredible success. Unanimous support can be rare. What do you think were the biggest factors in that win?

JONES:

You know, probably three factors. One is that the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights is a relatively mature organization. We're 19 years old. We have a \$6.17 million dollar budget and a strong staff. So we have the ability to take a chance on doing something that just might not have worked out at all. Often when organizations are smaller or newer or just brand new, they can try anything because there's nothing at stake. But then you get to a certain middle stage where you've got bills to pay and reputations to preserve and also skill sets that you want to play to. For instance, until that point, we worked primarily on police accountability and juvenile justice reform, trying to get alternatives to prison, trying to get police reform done. We had no experience in workforce development, no experience in job training, no experience in economic development, no experience in green technology, no experience. So it really didn't make a lot of sense for us to go in that direction. But we were self-confident and felt like this was something to attempt. So having either nothing to lose or having the confidence to take a risk even though you have something to lose is a hidden factor.

Secondly, we have the partnership and support of the national Apollo Alliance which had been formed a few years earlier. We worked with them at the state level when they created the California Apollo Alliance. Their whole focus is green, creating clean energy jobs. They work a lot with labor unions and environmentalists. And they work with a few racial justice groups. We were one of two they were working with in California. So we had a very good national partner. And fortunately one of their employees, Jeremy Hayes, had worked as a community organizer in Oakland for two or three years prior to going to work for Apollo. So he knew the Oakland scene very well and knew the players even better than we did in some cases. Apollo's assistance was another factor.

The other factor for success was the increasing national awareness of global warming, climate change, and ecological solutions. The amount of attention given to the green economy by national media, magazines, and television shows created a different willingness to listen on the part of decision makers. I think decision makers have been hearing a lot about the climate on the negative side but not a lot about the green economy on the more positive side. We were able to convince people that this would be a great way for us to move down the path to becoming a Silicon Valley of green capital.

Those are some of the factors. But, obviously, you also have to put the coalition together well and have good ideas and listen more than you talk and do all those things that are important in coalition building. But I think we have the right organization, the right support.

HJAAP

Speaking of coalitions, the work you're doing now, in addition to your previous juvenile justice reform work, relies heavily upon being able to build strong coalitions and partnerships with nontraditional organizations. How has that worked? Do you have advice for other people who might be in a similar situation?

JONES

Well, everybody's not good at everything, right? It's really important to think about the skills and personality traits you need to have on your team when you're building a coalition, and build that inner team first. A lot of people want to go and build this big, gigantic coalition. Then it blows up because people haven't thought through what would really make a coalition work. For instance, coalitions don't work because of me. Coalitions work because of relationships. So you want to create an inner team of two or three people who are very good at managing relationships and a few more people who are very good at the basic boring stuff of calling people and setting up one-on-one meetings.

Secondly, you have to have a goal that will benefit everybody in the coalition. Often with coalition building an individual will have a goal or an organization will have a goal and the coalition is [designed to support that goal]. But that's called a campaign. You've got a goal and you're enlisting allies to help you meet your campaign goals. And that's good. No person or organization can do very much by themselves. You need the support of your allies. But you have to know the difference between a campaign, which is trying to get a number of groups to aid an organization meet its goals, versus a coalition bringing organizations together to meet a [shared] goal.

People often get confused. They'll declare their campaign a coalition or the allies in their campaign a coalition, but they're really doing their own thing. So this goes to the question again of getting your goal and what you want to achieve right. Is there a goal that I can announce that a lot of people would see a benefit from? You talk about green-collar jobs, and the business community would love to get better-trained applicants for their jobs. The environmental community can say, "Hey, listen, [protecting the environment] is bringing up the economy." Public health people might say, "Hey, listen, if we move toward organic food and cleaner energy, some incidences of public disease like cancer, asthma, or respiratory illness may go down." Young people could get excited: "Oh, here's some opportunity—maybe not for me because I'm going to college already, but maybe my cousin can do this." Lots of different people can get excited about this. That should be a criterion.

And finally, coalition work can be triggering at a personal level. If you are used to working with African American folks and people who have a certain political perspective, sitting down at the table with a fast-talking White person who tries to tell you how the world works and that they have all the information is difficult. On one hand, you may have picked the wrong coalition partner. But then again, you may have picked the right coalition partner and now you have to manage a couple of things. You have to manage them and their behavior. You have to manage the group

and the group's reaction to their behavior. And you've got to manage your own reaction to their behavior. That's a real leadership challenge.

If we are going to be effective you've got to be able to lead beyond all that because that's what's required to really help the people who need help. It requires a lot of personal work, literally counseling, therapy, support groups, and the like. It means knowing how you ground yourself in this work. Before you go into a meeting, think, "Who am I doing this for?" Sometimes we are not emotionally and morally anchored in the true depth of what our calling is. We are constantly staying busy, so we substitute being busy and calling meetings from actually trying to figure out what would make a difference, and how am I in the way of making a difference? How is my ego in the way? How is my lack of skill in the way? How is my unresolved anger toward White folk actually a barrier? And we have to take 100 percent responsibility for the outcome. That's what leaders do. So if it doesn't work out, if our green job campaign does not deliver enough jobs [to young people across the country], I take responsibility for that. I'm not going to [blame it on anyone else].

HJAAP

There are advocates who try to make that leap and try to take that step from advocacy to the type of leadership that you refer to. And some may experience what I'll call a "crisis of representation." They begin to think they are losing their edge if they stop being so oppositional and work hand in hand with government officials. At what point do they pull back to make sure they are still representing the interests of their constituents?

JONES:

Well, there's legitimacy and legitimation. You get your legitimacy from your constituents. And you get legitimation from the institution or the establishment. This is a real challenge that a labor union leader faces. On one hand, they have to negotiate and understand the industrial or economic sector they are working in. It could be that there is a time for truck layoffs or it could be a time to go on strike. But when you are in that role, you always risk a loss of face and a loss of legitimacy within your constituency. And yet, if you try too hard to represent the most oppositional forces, then you lose the legitimation and perception as a trusted negotiating partner to the other side. It's a problem that's built into living in an unequal society and trying to change that society.

What is actually at stake is a question of trust. At a tactical level, a leader sometimes faces her flock and is speaking to and trying to move and trying to identify with her flock. And sometimes the leader has her back to the flock and is speaking for, speaking on behalf of, advocating on behalf of. And if you speak too much for, you can get pulled away from. If you speak too much to, you can also get pulled to. So it's about being able to turn. It's hard but if you really are trustworthy, it makes it at least possible. It doesn't make it inevitable but it makes it at least possible to pull this incredible leadership challenge off. Mandela was able to do this. Gandhi was able

to do this. There's no doubt that they were implacable opponents of apartheid and colonization, but [they were able to turn].

HJAAP:

I'd like to close with one last question about leadership. Your organization's namesake, Ella Jo Baker, talked a lot about leadership. How do you see your leadership contribution in this political moment?

JONES:

Forty or 50 years ago, you could afford to have extreme stereotypes—an MLK, charismatic leader, doing his thing, and an Ella Baker doing the opposite. Today, you really have to be able to do both. You have to be able to speak truth to power effectively. You can't be afraid of a microphone. You can't be afraid of the information society. Right now, Ella Jo Baker wouldn't be walking around door to door, she would have a satellite TV station based on educating. An Ella Jo Baker empowerment strategy right now would require massive engagement with multimedia. Ella Jo Baker would be producing films. You would know her name. You didn't know her name then. You would know her name now. And if you didn't know her name, you'd know the name of her production company. She would probably have a profile more like Oprah Winfrey.

Fundamentally, the most important thing for us to do as Black people at this point is to actually solve the problem, not critique it, not analyze it, not to have the most radical stance with regard to it, but to solve the problem. So what's the problem?

Come On People: On the Path from Victims to Victors

(Thomas Nelson Inc., 9 October 2007)

By Bill Cosby and Alvin F. Poussaint

Reviewed by Marsha Bannister

In May 2004, at an NAACP event to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision, Bill Cosby criticized the Black community for the exclusive use of African American vernacular, for the preponderance of single-parent families, and for the emphasis on material gain at the expense of necessities. Since then, there has been a raging debate about whether issues that affect the Black community, such as violence, poor health, and poverty, are a sign of the continued systematic racism in our society or simply the lack of personal responsibility. The book *Come on People*, written by Bill Cosby and Alvin Poussaint, adds yet another dimension to this debate.

In *Come on People*, Cosby and Poussaint highlight key concerns affecting the African American community and give practical advice as to how we should go about addressing them. Unlike other authors who write about the state of the Black community, Cosby and Poussaint do not emphasize the systematic pressures that African Americans face although they do acknowledge them. Instead, the authors encourage African American families in particular to adopt personal responsibility and take on the task of transforming our community from one of victims to that of victors.

Cosby and Poussaint argue that the bulk of the problems that African Americans face can largely be attributed to the deconstruction of family and community values. As a result, the book mostly consists of advice toward parents regarding not only self help, but also the raising of children. *Come On People* begins by addressing the issues concerning Black men. Currently Black men suffer from high rates of incarceration and violence and low levels of education, just to name a few issues. The authors tackle each concern and urge men to accept the responsibility as fathers and

Alvin Poussaint, M.D., is a distinguished professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, and the author of numerous books on child psychiatry with a particular focus on the raising of African American children. Poussaint is also an expert on race relations in America and the dynamics of prejudice.

*Bill Cosby, Ed.D., is largely known as a comedian and for his role in *The Cosby Show*. However, Cosby is also a television producer, activist, and the author of several books that focus on the family.*

Marsha Bannister is a master in public policy candidate at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. Her concentration is political advocacy and education. Her goal is to address issues of inequality and access for minorities.

role models instead of succumbing to the stereotypes that paint Black men as irresponsible, violent, and oversexed.

In addition, Cosby and Poussaint take on matters such as African American vernacular, the media, violence, health, and education. Concerning each one, *Come On People* outlines several steps that adults can take to overcome the overwhelmingly devastating problems borne out by the statistics. For example, regarding health Cosby and Poussaint encourage the Black community to think holistically, paying attention to mental, emotional, and physical health. They highlight past (and present) obstacles, such as the inhumane treatment and the inequality of health care that Black people have faced due to an unjust health care system. However, Cosby and Poussaint do not allow the readers to engage in a pity party. They challenge us to eat right, exercise, use condoms, stay clear of addictive substances, get regular checkups, and seek professional treatment when necessary.

Furthermore, scattered throughout the book are the voices of real people in different cities who participated in call-out sessions across the nation. These excerpts include stories of people who were victims of abandonment, addictions, and violence as well as professionals who are working to alleviate the problems. They at times give a grim sense of the reality that the African American community faces today, but more importantly provide hope and optimism that change is indeed within our reach. However, while I consider the content of the testimonials from those who attended the call-out to be valuable, at times, particularly when three or four followed upon one another, they did interrupt the flow of the book.

Furthermore, despite the pertinent and useful information that Cosby and Poussaint provide, I fear that this book will not achieve its aim for a few reasons. First of all, the people whom the authors aim to reach probably are not the ones who will pick up this book. Those who are most likely to pick up this book are parents who are already committed to doing the best that they can or those who have at the very least considered the complicity of the Black community in its current state. Secondly, the tone is very patronizing and at times slightly arrogant. For example, regarding television, they (although I assume this is Cosby) write, "When you watch together as a family you can talk to each other and comment on what you are watching. You can even make fun of stuff together and live life like, well, a family. How about that?" (136). Here you can see how a good tip could simply get lost in ineffective sarcasm. Like Cosby's speech in 2004, some will chalk *Come on People* up to tough love, but in the end no one likes to be scolded or talked down to. Lastly, as one who is dedicated to policy issues that affect Black people, the danger of placing the responsibility primarily on the Black community precludes society from righting past and present wrongs committed against minority populations. As mentioned before, while Cosby and Poussaint do mention at times governmental accountability, I think there should be more of a balanced portrayal of the situation at hand.

In any case, *Come On People* has proven that help could not be more needed at this time. It is indeed time for the African-American community to enter on the path from victims to victors. As Cosby and Pouissant declare, "By doing the things we can do, we can make the future much brighter . . . for everyone" (243). I tend to agree, whether it is the way we take care of ourselves, raise our children, or even reform policy.

Black Wealth/White Wealth: A New Perspective on Racial Inequality, 10th Anniversary Edition

(Routledge Press, 26 April 2006)

By Melvin Oliver and Thomas Shapiro

Reviewed by Portia Boone

The United States is a nation whose social canvas has historically been, and arguably still is, overshadowed by its long-standing racial paradigm. The topic of race seems to permeate every issue, and the comparison of Blacks to Whites in various socioeconomic situations is the source of much heated debate. Everyone, from the president to the neighborhood bus driver, seems to have an opinion on the causes of the achievement gap between Blacks and Whites, the disproportionately high Black incarceration rates, lower Black income levels—and the list goes on. In the new tenth anniversary edition of *Black Wealth, White Wealth*, Melvin Oliver and Thomas Shapiro provide a few theories of their own. However, instead of focusing on the more common themes of racial disparities in academic achievement or income, Oliver and Shapiro address the causes and effects of the huge differences in wealth between Blacks and Whites in the United States.

According to Oliver and Shapiro, wealth, not income, is the most reliable depiction of a family's economic stability. While income is often used to supply the necessities of life, wealth is a "surplus resource" that includes ownership of stocks, real estate, and other assets that can be used to improve life chances and transfer status over generations. However, in discussing wealth in relation to race, the authors note that disparities in wealth between Whites and Blacks do not exist because of chance, inborn traits, or individual accomplishments. Wealth inequality, according to the authors, is the result of a constructed, multigenerational process that has been maintained by many of the same systemic impediments that have plagued Blacks for centuries, such as slavery, social and economic segregation, institutional discrimination, and policies that have either intentionally or inadvertently disadvantaged Blacks.

Dr. Melvin Oliver is a professor and dean of social sciences at the University of California, Santa Barbara. He is a former vice president of the Asset Building and Community Development Program at the Ford Foundation.

*Dr. Thomas Shapiro is the Pokross professor of law and social policy at Brandeis University. He is also the author of the critically acclaimed book *The Hidden Cost of Being African American: How Wealth Perpetuates Inequality*.*

Portia Boone is a Roy O. Rodwell Trinity scholar at Duke University, where she is pursuing a bachelor's degree in political science and African and African American studies.

As the book progresses, the authors provide us with a very interesting account of the evolution of American policy and institutional practices over the years, along with suggestions for policy innovations based on a frank analysis of the effects of past policies. For example, in an early chapter the authors discuss how the Federal Housing Act of 1934 made home ownership possible for many White Americans for the first time through low-interest, long-term mortgages. Blacks, however, were routinely denied loans under FHA policies and were ultimately excluded from one of the largest wealth-building opportunities in American history. In Chapter 9, the authors point to the demonstrated success of more recent “inclusionary zoning” policies which require communities to build a set percentage of housing units in new residential areas specifically for families of low to moderate income. They suggest that the widespread implementation of similar policies could be very useful in increasing Black homeownership rates and combating the centralization of poverty.

In addition to being a valuable contribution to academic literature, *Black Wealth, White Wealth* provides an important commentary on the difficulties encountered in the struggle to achieve the American dream and the prospects of stability and advancement for the Black middle class. Although first released in 1995, the themes discussed in *Black Wealth, White Wealth* remain extremely relevant. The 2006 tenth anniversary edition includes two new chapters that provide a valuable discussion of successful examples of asset-based policies that have emerged since the book’s initial publication as well as policy goals, such as the criminalization of predatory lending, regulatory reform of the banking system, and even the formation of a reconciliation commission to assess the far-reaching implications of the legacy of race in America. Despite the extensiveness of the topics covered, Oliver and Shapiro have managed to achieve the often elusive balance between preserving intellectual and academic authority while still being engaging and easy to follow. The inclusion of excerpts from interviews with everyday Americans also gives the book a more personal, even conversational tone. In addition to reading about the vital role played by entrepreneurship or family background in facilitating asset accumulation, we are also introduced to respondents such as Camille, Rosa, and Kevin, who discuss the various themes through statements like this one on leaving an inheritance:

Here’s how it goes, I have a drawer called “When I Go.” It has in it twenty folders. The yellow folders I call them...All made out ahead of time...It’s a gold file. When I’m gone, gold. It’s all there. The yellow folders. Follow the yellow road, that’s me.”

At times, portions of the book are redundant, expressing previous ideas from only a slightly different viewpoint. This criticism is perhaps most relevant in the book’s discussion of housing. While Chapter 1 includes a section discussing the suburbanization of America that includes several paragraphs discussing the FHA’s effects on the process of Black wealth formation, Chapter 2 includes another entire section devoted to the FHA. While the second section does discuss the government’s encouragement of residential segregation in greater detail, many of the focal points of this section tend to reiterate the concepts that are mentioned in the previous chapter.

For the most part, however, if there is repetition of a concept from time to time, it usually appears to be done in an attempt at thoroughness and clarity. All in all, *Black Wealth, White Wealth* is a stellar book that challenges modern conceptions of equality and provides us with a timely reminder that when it comes to understanding the causes of racial wealth inequality in America, the answers will not always be in black and white.

Medical Apartheid: The Dark History of Medical Experimentation on Black Americans from Colonial Times to the Present

(Doubleday, 9 January 2007)

Harriet A. Washington

Reviewed by David Markus

*As Democratic candidates in the 2008 presidential election discuss universal health care, African American communities across the country are dealing with shocking health disparities that will not be solved simply by providing health insurance. The rates of diabetes, heart disease, certain cancers, and AIDS are much higher in the Black community than in White communities. Even more concerning is the higher rate at which African Americans die of liver ailments, heart disease, and breast cancer compared to their White counterparts. In Harriet A. Washington's recent book, *Medical Apartheid: The Dark History of Medical Experimentation on Black Americans from Colonial Times to the Present*, the author recognizes that many factors contribute to this health gap, but adds one more: iatrophobia, which is the fear of medicine.*

Medical Apartheid is a compelling book of shocking stories of medical abuses perpetrated against Blacks balanced with a clear and compelling commentary fitting these stories into a general narrative of African Americans' relationship to the medical establishment. In the end she convincingly argues that medical nontherapeutic research on African American subjects, both past and present, make many Blacks wary of doctors. She also suggests that the same attitudes that allowed these abuses to be perpetrated in the past are still present to a more limited extent today.

Washington's journey from a self-proclaimed "medical voyeur fascinated with the more noble history of medicine" (13) to a writer exposing the sordid history of experimentation on African Americans is fascinating in its own right. The journey began when she found two files from the 1970s of patients with kidney failure. The first patient was White and the doctors were preparing him for a transplant, while the second patient was a "Negro" and his doctors were preparing him for his death. Since that day she has worked as a researcher, inner-city medical social worker, journalist (mainstream and medical), and an editor of the *Harvard Journal of*

Harriet A. Washington has been a fellow in ethics at Harvard Medical School and at the Harvard School of Public Health. She also has written for numerous academic journals, such as the Harvard Public Health Review and the New England Journal of Medicine.

David Markus is a midcareer master in public administration candidate at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. He has spent the last sixteen years of his life teaching history and studying the civil rights movement.

Minority Public Health. She supplemented this experience by further studying medicine and completing a Harvard Medical School fellowship in medical ethics. All of these experiences fed into the writing of the book.

In Part 1, "A Troubling Tradition," the author describes racial attitudes toward African Americans from the colonial era that serve as the roots of the unethical experimental practices she exposes. Whites' beliefs, supported by "scientific" writings, that Blacks had different reactions to disease and pain, different ideas about modesty and sexual conduct, and different intellectual capacity led to a rationalization of the abuses perpetrated against them. As one reads these personality and physical characteristics ascribed to African Americans by early doctors, one sees the roots of many of today's worst stereotypes about African Americans. From this theoretical base Washington describes practices such as surgery without anesthesia, grave robbing from Black cemeteries, and the use of African Americans in medical schools as experimental subjects that are natural outgrowths of the disrespect for African Americans born out of the period of slavery. While the stories in this part are disturbing, it is Washington's discussion of the Tuskegee syphilis experiment in the last chapter that provides the greatest support for her connection between history and current attitudes about medicine among African Americans. The impact of this chapter is enhanced by her discussion of the government's ad hoc committee cover-up of the full extent of the experiment, raising the question of what lessons researchers were prevented from learning due to the limited scope of the report.

Part 2 brings the author's thesis into the twentieth century with the story of Fannie Lou Hamer of the Mississippi freedom movement, who returned home from an operation to find out that she had unwittingly received a "Mississippi appendectomy," or a hysterectomy. The loss of her uterus was not due to a medical condition but was part of the eugenics movement that forcibly sterilized many women in and outside the Black community. This story introduces the main theme of this section, the experimental abuse of vulnerable populations such as African American women, children, and prisoners. Washington documents radiation experiments and drug experiments done on prisoners and youth without adequate informed consent. Each chapter in part 2 begins with a story that can be chalked up to the foolishness of past times, but before the reader becomes complacent that these issues are a part of history the author introduces us to stories that take place as recently as the 1990s.

Finally, Part 3 addresses current research issues including the marketing of Black-only drugs, public health measures that target mostly Black populations, biological warfare experiments, the misuse of DNA by the justice system, and a long section on South African abuses against Blacks. This section presents some less-convincing arguments for the development of iatrophobia in the American population. Though many of the stories of current research do affect large African American populations, it is unclear whether the intent or impact of these research studies is negative. For example, if many of the large medical research hospitals are in urban areas with large African American populations, is using Blacks in experiments with proper informed consent and therapeutic goals racist or unethical? This question will be answered differently depending on the lens the reader brings to the book.

Overall, *Medical Apartheid* opens a window into a history that is largely unknown to the general population. Most of the book supports the author's argument that cases

of unethical medical experimentation have led to a fear of doctors among some African Americans. As more African Americans become medical professionals (44,000 physicians alone according to the 2005 census), the experience of medicine for many is changing. Also while the book evokes outrage due to the stories of abuse, it is crucial that the reader not forget the other causes of the health gaps between Blacks and Whites. The closing of these gaps will involve changes in lifestyle, reforms of our medical system, and lessening of the structural inequality in American society that causes some of the disparities. At the same time, Washington reminds us that the best medical interventions might not be completely effective without taking into account African Americans' lingering suspicions of doctors.

Best of African American Policy Conferences Compiled by the Staff of the Harvard Journal of African American Public Policy

**John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University Black
Policy Conference**

<http://www.ksg.harvard.edu/bpc/>

**National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Leadership
500 Summit**

<http://www.naacp.org/events/leadership/>

National Urban League Legislative Policy Conference

<http://www.nul.org/legislativepolicyconference.html>

Southern Conference on African American Studies, Inc.

<http://www.scaasi.org/>

Kellogg School of Management Black Management Association Conference

<http://www.kellogg.northwestern.edu/bmaconference/>

National Black MBA Association Annual Conference

<http://www.nbmbaa.org/>

**Congressional Black Caucus Foundation's Center for Policy Analysis
and Research Annual Legislative Conference**

<http://www.alc2007.com/>

National African American Student Leadership Conference

<http://www.naaslc.org/>

Whitney M. Young Jr. Memorial Conference

<http://wmy.wharton.upenn.edu/>

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