

Part VI

A DREAM DEFERRED



The Black Middle Class. (Getty Images)

Chapter Nineteen

AFTER THE MOVEMENT: AFRICAN AMERICANS AND CIVIL RIGHTS SINCE 1970

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During the first half of the 1960s, a rising tide of African-American protest forced the nation to dismantle the legal edifice of segregation and disfranchisement. Spurred on by the moral claims of civil rights leaders, the growing insistence of African Americans, and fear of the consequences of inaction, Congress passed landmark civil rights legislation. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 committed the national government to dismantle segregation in public places and outlawed employment discrimination. The Voting Rights Act, passed a year later, destroyed the barriers southern states had established to prevent African Americans from voting. These measures dramatically altered race relations, especially in the South. By the beginning of the 1970s, “whites only” signs were relics of the past, and African Americans enjoyed service in restaurants, theaters, hotels, parks, and sports arenas that previously had been closed to them; significant school desegregation occurred, making southern schools the most integrated in the nation by 1972; and African Americans registered and voted in large numbers, becoming a significant force in southern politics.

By the late 1960s, however, support for civil rights reform had waned. As debate over the war in Vietnam raged in the years after 1965, civil rights lost much of the salience it had enjoyed. Even more important, support among northern whites — which had been critical to the victories of the mid-1960s — quickly declined. The emergence of a militant Black Power movement, a series of eruptions in America’s inner cities in the years following the Watts Riot of 1965, and growing mass protest against segregation and discrimination in the North produced a white backlash against civil rights and a shift to the right in American politics that helped Richard M. Nixon win the Presidency in 1968. In the face of mounting white resistance, the civil rights movement itself appeared in disarray by the end of the decade. Groups like the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), which had provided the movement’s shock troops, were torn apart by internecine struggles. And the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., in 1968, deprived the movement of its most charismatic and unifying leader.

Although the civil rights movement appeared to expire with the 1960s, during the following decades civil rights leaders were surprisingly successful. Relying on lobbying and litigation rather than on mass protest, they not only held the ground they had won during the 1960s, but made significant gains. Civil rights advocates pushed beyond the demand for simple nondiscrimination that had characterized the movement in the halcyon days of the mid-1960s. Recognizing that the effects of a centuries-old caste system continued to disadvantage African Americans and well aware that discrimination could take subtle forms, they demand-

ed that government take affirmative action to undo the effects of slavery and segregation. Yet the victories won in the 1970s and 1980s produced more ambiguous results than the triumph over segregation and disfranchisement in the 1960s. They also generated a powerful reaction that gained force in the 1980s and by the mid-1990s threatened to roll back many of the gains won during the Indian Summer of the civil rights movement.

School desegregation remained high on the civil rights leaders' list of concerns in the early 1970s. Although by 1972 there had been substantial progress toward integration in rural areas and small cities in the South, urban schools remained highly segregated. In rural areas, where there was little residential segregation, assignment of students to the schools nearest their homes produced considerable integration. In towns and small cities, which encompassed small areas, school attendance zones could easily be drawn to achieve integration. But large cities often sprawled over several hundred square miles and had highly segregated residential patterns. Consequently, no matter how school attendance zones were drawn, most neighborhood schools would remain highly segregated. Meaningful desegregation was possible only if children were bused to schools outside their neighborhoods.

Civil rights attorneys pressed federal courts to use busing, arguing that without it, segregated schools would remain a part of the urban landscape, perpetuating racial polarization. School officials demurred, insisting that while the 14th Amendment banned racial discrimination, it did not mandate integration. In *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education* (1971), brought by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) segregation in the urban South, where state laws had required black and white children to attend separate schools. Its implications for the North were less certain, however. Northern urban schools were highly segregated; in 1962, for example, two-thirds of the African-American students in Gary, Indiana, attended schools that were 99 percent black. Conventional wisdom held that northern school segregation was a product of residential patterns and had not been imposed by law. In fact, few northern states had enacted school segregation laws, and many had explicitly banned segregation. Nevertheless, in most northern cities school officials had chosen school sites, drawn school attendance zones, and adopted pupil transfer policies in ways calculated to promote racially segregated schools.

The United States Supreme Court soon burst the bubble of northern self-righteousness. Its decision came in *Keyes v. School District No. 1, Denver, Colo.* (1973), a case initiated by the NAACP. If school officials were shown to have adopted policies that promoted segregation, the Court ruled, federal judges could impose desegregation plans. And those plans might include busing if that were necessary to dismantle segregation and achieve integrated school systems.

Swann and *Keyes* triggered a flurry of desegregation activity by federal courts in the North as well as in the South. Predictably, as busing spread northward, white opposition mounted and became a powerful force on Capitol Hill. In 1972, legislation drastically restricting the federal courts' authority to order busing gained broad support in Congress, and only a filibuster by Senate liberals prevented passage. Two years later, similar legislation was defeated by one vote in the upper house. In the face of these defeats, antibusing sentiment became more powerful, and congressional opponents of busing redoubled their efforts. Although ultimately they were unable to end the federal courts' authority to order busing, in early 1976 the antibusing forces enacted legislation stripping the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) of authority to cut off federal aid to school districts which refused to adopt busing plans to achieve integration. As a result, the agency lost its authority to invoke the power of the purse — which had been crucial in desegregating schools in the rural South — to achieve integration in the nation's cities.

As antibusing pressure grew in Congress, the Supreme Court itself imposed a significant restriction on the tools available to remedy segregation. Because of white movement to the suburbs in the decades after World War II, by the 1970s most urban schools had become

heavily black while the surrounding suburban districts were predominantly white. Therefore, in most cities meaningful desegregation required busing of students between city school districts and suburban districts. In *Milliken v. Bradley* (1974), however, a sharply divided Court severely restricted the federal courts' authority to order busing across school district lines. Unless plaintiffs demonstrated that suburban districts intentionally adopted policies designed to promote segregation, the majority ruled, they could not be included in metropolitan busing plans.

Although it did not preclude the use of busing, *Milliken* was a severe setback for proponents of school desegregation. In cities with metropolitan-wide school districts (such as Charlotte, which had a county-wide school district) *Milliken* did not pose a barrier to desegregation. And in cities such as Louisville, Kentucky, and Wilmington, Delaware, where civil rights attorneys could show that school district boundaries had been drawn with segregative intent or that the policies of suburban districts promoted segregation in the city, federal courts ordered students bused between city and suburban schools. Nevertheless, *Milliken* meant that in most of the nation's large cities, judges' options were limited. When they ordered city-wide desegregation plans, they often merely spread a few white students among predominantly black schools, in the process speeding white flight to the suburbs. They could — as they did in Kansas City and Chicago — devise plans that compensated for past discrimination by enhancing the quality of inner-city schools. But this seemed like a reversion to *Plessy v. Ferguson*'s separate but equal doctrine rather than a fulfillment of the dream of achieving integration. By devising plans which called for establishing schools with special curricula (so-called magnet schools), judges could attract white as well as black students to select inner-city schools, thereby creating pockets of integration in a sea of predominantly African-American schools. However, in the absence of cross-district busing, the federal courts lacked the tools to desegregate schools in most cities. Consequently, the rapid progress toward school integration that had occurred during the late 1960s and early 1970s came to a halt; by the early 1990s, schools in most of the nation's large cities, where a majority of blacks lived, were more segregated than they had been in 1968.

Civil rights advocates fared better in their efforts to win more effective remedies against employment discrimination. Deeply rooted discrimination in the North as well as the South had relegated most African Americans to unskilled, low-paying jobs and contributed to an extremely high rate of poverty among African Americans. Discrimination and poverty (not to mention inferior schools in black neighborhoods) undermined young African Americans' incentive and ability to finish high school, thereby locking them into low-paying, dead-end jobs. Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 had attempted to deal with the economic problems of African Americans, prohibiting discrimination by private employers and creating the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) to monitor compliance. The civil rights act and changing attitudes generated by the civil rights movement had eliminated much of the most blatant ("no colored need apply") discrimination and had contributed to significant gains in employment and earnings among African Americans during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Yet discrimination did not disappear; it became more subtle, harder to detect, and more difficult to prove. Even more troubling, those for whom past discrimination denied education, job training, and employment experience continued to find the promise of economic opportunity and a better life elusive.

The 1970s proved a less propitious time than the 1960s to tackle these difficult problems. Not only had the conservative political tide deprived civil rights leaders of allies in the White House, but the economic climate militated against further efforts to redress the effects of past discrimination. The dynamic economic growth of the 1960s slowed during the 1970s, and sharply rising inflation alarmed most Americans, convincing them that it was harder to make ends meet and to maintain their standard of living. Afraid that the pie was no longer growing, many whites felt threatened by programs which promised a bigger piece to African

Americans. Consequently, like busing, the issue of employment discrimination promised to become highly charged and hotly debated.

Nevertheless, civil rights advocates, working closely with supporters of the resurgent women's movement, scored important victories. In 1972, Congress adopted the Equal Employment Opportunity Act, considerably strengthening the EEOC. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 had given the agency authority to investigate complaints of employment discrimination, but had denied it real power to move against offenders. The 1972 law remedied this defect, authorizing the EEOC to initiate lawsuits against employers or unions that refused to end discriminatory employment practices. Equally important, during the 1970s the agency's budget increased dramatically, allowing it to expand the size of its staff. By 1977, the EEOC's Office of General Counsel employed over 300 attorneys, giving the agency adequate personnel to use its newly won powers.

Civil rights advocates also secured legal changes that facilitated private lawsuits by victims of discrimination. In 1976, Congress authorized the federal courts to award attorneys' fees to victorious parties in civil rights suits, thereby removing one deterrent to private lawsuits. The same year the Supreme Court opened the way for employment discrimination suits under a federal statute first adopted during Reconstruction. Although the law required proof of intentional discrimination, it authorized federal courts to award monetary damages that were not available under the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which limited remedies to reinstatement in the position denied with back pay. This offered a potent remedy to victims of discrimination and encouraged private attorneys to take employment discrimination cases.

These changes resulted in a five-fold increase in employment discrimination cases between 1970 and 1981. This surge in litigation helped break down barriers that African Americans and women had encountered. Employers, eager to avoid the expense of lawsuits, had an additional incentive to open their doors to minorities and follow equal employment guidelines promulgated by the EEOC.

Civil rights attorneys also succeeded in broadening the definition of employment discrimination under the Civil Rights Act of 1964, making it easier to win lawsuits initiated under that act. In *Griggs v. Duke Power*, a 1971 case argued by attorneys from the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund, Inc., the Supreme Court held that requirements that disproportionately excluded African Americans (e.g., requiring prospective employees to have a high school diploma or to pass an aptitude test) were suspect under the 1964 Civil Rights Act's ban on employment discrimination. Job requirements that had an adverse impact on African Americans could only withstand scrutiny if the employer could prove that they were job related.

The *Griggs* rule freed plaintiffs in employment discrimination cases brought under the Civil Rights Act of 1964 from having to prove that employers intentionally discriminated against them, something that was very difficult to establish. It also provided remedies to blacks who were denied employment and job advancement on the basis of arbitrary policies that were ostensibly non-discriminatory but which, in actual practice, gave the edge to whites. Equally important, it encouraged employers to remove unnecessary employment criteria that excluded African Americans.

By the early 1970s, affirmative action programs also offered a potentially effective — if highly controversial and frequently misunderstood — remedy for discrimination in the workplace.

Developed in the late 1960s by the Department of Labor to guarantee non-discrimination by firms doing business with the federal government, affirmative action principles were adopted by the EEOC during the early 1970s. The Commission warned employers that the equal employment opportunity guaranteed by the Civil Rights Act of 1964 required more than adoption of non-discriminatory hiring practices. Rather, it demanded that employers work actively to increase the number of minorities in their work force by developing recruiting



Thurgood Marshall. (CORBIS)

strategies, setting goals for hiring minorities, and establishing timetables to reach those goals. Given the EEOC's newly-won authority to sue employers and the rapid growth of employment discrimination cases, many employers took notice, adopting and even implementing affirmative action programs as a hedge against litigation.

Like busing, affirmative action generated passionate arguments. Critics charged that it gave special preferences to African Americans and women and amounted to "reverse discrimination." Moreover, they argued that by assigning rights on the basis of race, affirmative action violated the principle of color-blind citizenship established by the 14th Amendment and threatened the most important accomplishment of the civil rights movement. Discrimination was wrong, the critics argued, whether it worked against African Americans or in their favor.

Defenders of affirmative action responded that rules which were formally equal often served to perpetuate discrimination and inequality. Although it generally took more subtle forms, they asserted, discrimination against African Americans and women continued to be a reality. White men generally controlled hiring decisions in business, government, and education. Even when not consciously prejudiced, they frequently felt most comfortable with applicants who were like themselves, believed that they would "fit in" better than blacks and women, and thus subtly slanted hiring decisions in favor of white males. According to its defenders, affirmative action would serve as a check against subtle forms of discrimination that were still all too prevalent.

Proponents of affirmative action also argued that while a color-blind society was a laudable goal, it was essential to take color into account to remedy the continuing effects of past discrimination. Generations of white men, they pointed out, had benefitted from a de facto affirmative action program which had reserved the choicest jobs for them and relegated blacks mainly to low-paying and menial positions. Moreover, they argued that the legacy of segregation, unequal education, and poverty made it difficult for African Americans to overcome the historic advantages enjoyed by whites and threatened to leave them stuck at the bottom of the economic ladder. The temporary special protection afforded by affirmative action, its defenders concluded, was designed to achieve meaningful equality and therefore was fully in keeping with the spirit of the 14th Amendment and the civil rights movement.

Opponents countered that affirmative action penalized persons who themselves were not guilty of discrimination in order to rectify wrongs committed by previous generations. By giving special consideration to African Americans, they argued, affirmative action meant that better qualified white males were passed over for jobs and promotions. Consequently, they would be made to suffer, not because of wrongful behavior on their part, but because of their race. Concomitantly, individual black applicants would benefit, not because they themselves had been the victims of discriminatory acts, but because members of their race had been subject to discrimination. Moreover, critics pointed out that for many lower class whites who came from severely disadvantaged backgrounds, affirmative action would be one more obstacle to overcome. Indeed, middle class blacks would reap the benefits of affirmative action programs, even though they were not disadvantaged, while whites would be penalized, regardless of their background.

To claim that special treatment for blacks inflicted wrongs on innocent whites, proponents of affirmative action responded, was only half the story. Even if blatant, systematic discrimination against African Americans had ended, they argued, its effects continued to burden young blacks who had never known the harshness of segregation. High rates of poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, and broken homes in the African-American community were the legacy of centuries of discrimination. As a result, young African Americans all too frequently lacked the supportive home environment that was crucial to success in school; grew up without role models to encourage success; found schools frustrating places that were irrelevant to them

and dropped out; and lived in urban ghettos where high unemployment made it difficult to obtain essential work experience. Refusing African Americans special assistance would only condemn them to compete in a game whose rules were stacked against them and perpetuate injustice in the name of policies that were formally neutral but actually gave decided advantages to whites. Moreover, while defenders of affirmative action admitted that there were disadvantaged whites, they pointed out that, as a group, African Americans labored under a heritage of discrimination that was far more severe than that whites had ever known. Indeed, it was so severe and so pervasive that policy makers were justified in giving special treatment to African Americans as a group.

Questions of justice aside, opponents charged that affirmative action subverted the principle of reward according to merit and thus threatened to bury American society in mediocrity. Although they admitted that most affirmative action programs did not establish formal quotas, critics contended that they put almost irresistible pressure on employers to hire blacks and women regardless of their qualifications. They argued that this made race rather than merit the crucial factor in hiring decisions. At a time when American firms were coming under increasingly sharp competition from abroad, the critics argued, the nation could ill afford to promote mediocrity.

Defenders of affirmative action strenuously denied these charges. Pointing to the Griggs case, they argued that employers frequently established arbitrary qualifications that were irrelevant to job performance but which effectively screened out African Americans and women. Moreover, proponents charged that the critics had created a largely imagined golden age, before the onset of affirmative action, when employment decisions were made solely on the basis of merit. They pointed out that employment decisions frequently had been based on race and gender (excluding blacks and women from consideration regardless of their qualifications) or on family influence and personal connections rather than merit. Indeed, plenty of mediocre and incompetent white men had found their way into jobs without raising the hue and cry that greeted affirmative action. By encouraging the hiring and promotion of African Americans and women, proponents argued, affirmative action would help break down the “old boy” networks that had long worked in favor of white males.

Not surprisingly, the debate over affirmative action soon found its way before the Supreme Court. Although often sharply divided, the Court was generally supportive of affirmative action. In *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke* (1978), it struck down a state medical school program that set aside a specified number of spots for minority candidates. Even though the Court held that it was impermissible for states to establish racial quotas, a majority ruled that schools might take race into account in the admissions process in order to create a more diverse student body, thereby opening the door to affirmative action programs.

The Court looked more favorably upon voluntary affirmative action programs established by private employers. In *Weber v. United Steel Workers* (1979), it upheld a plan — agreed to by an employer and a labor union — setting aside half the places in a training program for African Americans. In deciding the case, the majority emphasized that the plan did not involve discriminatory state action (prohibited by the 14th Amendment), was temporary, and had been adopted to redress a long history of discrimination that had excluded African Americans from well-paid skilled jobs. *Weber* was significant, signalling that the Court would not block the momentum building among private employers for affirmative action.

Although civil rights advocates built on the successes of the '60s and won surprising victories against employment discrimination in the 1970s and early 1980s, many wondered whether they were winning the battles but losing the war. To be sure, affirmative action had helped open avenues of opportunity to African Americans in business, labor, education, government, and the professions. Many observers pointed to a growing black middle class as proof that African Americans were slowly but surely moving into the mainstream of American

life. African-American students were graduating in greater numbers than ever before from colleges and professional schools. And after graduation they were being recruited by businesses, universities, law firms, and government. Indeed, in 1978, the black sociologist William Julius Wilson published a prize-winning study proclaiming *The Declining Significance of Race*.

Yet Wilson and many others who applauded the growth of the black middle class were not sanguine about the future. Paradoxically, while some blacks were reaping the fruits of the civil rights movement and entering the middle class, unemployment and poverty rates among African Americans actually grew during the late 1970s and early 1980s. The nation's inner cities contained a large black proletariat beset by joblessness, poverty, single-parent families, low levels of educational achievement, crime, drugs, and despair. Yet affirmative action, which helped open opportunities for those who had the basic qualifications for employment, could do little for those who had no work experience or skills and little education. Moreover, the changing structure of the economy locked these people — Wilson called them “the truly disadvantaged” — into poverty. The drift of businesses to the suburbs put many jobs beyond their reach. More important, the decline of the automobile, steel, and other basic industries during the 1970s and early 1980s denied unskilled and semiskilled blacks access to jobs that paid well and offered hope of economic mobility. New jobs opened primarily in the service industries, where those without skills could expect to earn low wages and live close to or even below poverty level.

Although their efforts to achieve equal employment opportunity had mixed results, civil rights advocates were more successful in expanding African Americans' access to political power. This effort focused principally on the South, where Africans Americans had been systematically excluded from the political process prior to 1965. Although the Voting Rights Act of 1965 opened the ballot box to black southerners, they confronted barriers to effective use of the ballot. Given the prevalence of racial bloc voting, African-American candidates could usually hope to win elections only in districts with a majority or near-majority of African-American voters. White politicians sought to minimize the number of black officials — and thereby reduce the effect of black voting — by establishing multi-seat electoral districts and at-large elections. For purposes of illustration, consider a hypothetical city with a five-member city council and a black population of 40 percent. If the city were divided into five wards, each electing one council member, African Americans would be likely to have majorities in two wards and elect two black members. However, if members were elected at-large, with voters throughout the city casting ballots for all five seats, the white majority could preserve a white council.

There was sharp debate over whether the Voting Rights Act prohibited such electoral changes. In states and counties with a history of discrimination, the act required preclearance by the Justice Department or the federal district court for the District of Columbia for any change in “voting qualification or prerequisite to voting, or standard, practice, or procedure with respect to voting.” The change would be permitted only if the attorney general or the court were satisfied that neither its purpose nor its effect was discriminatory. Civil rights advocates contended that laws establishing at-large elections or otherwise diluting the effect of black votes were not only subject to preclearance but were illegal because of their discriminatory effect. Conservatives disagreed, arguing that the Voting Rights Act prohibited laws and regulations designed to prevent individuals from registering and voting but did not apply to all changes in the electoral process. Indeed, they charged civil rights advocates with attempting to transform a measure that had been adopted to guarantee the right to vote into a one that would guarantee proportional representation for African Americans. Like affirmative action, they contended, the Voting Rights Act would give African Americans special privileges and violate the 14th Amendment's equal protection clause.

The Supreme Court quickly swept aside arguments for a narrow interpretation of the law. In *Allen v. State Board of Elections* (1969), a case brought by the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, it held that a law replacing single-member districts with multi-seat districts and at-large elections was subject to preclearance and should not be allowed to take effect if it diluted black votes. The Voting Rights Act, the Court concluded, gave “a broad interpretation to the right to vote, recognizing that voting includes ‘all action necessary to make a vote effective.’” Procedures diluting the votes of African Americans would “nullify their ability to elect the candidate of their choice just as would prohibiting some of them from voting” and therefore came within the act’s purview. Four years later, in *Georgia v. United States* (1973), the Court ruled that a state’s plan for reapportioning seats in the legislature was covered by the preclearance requirement. Moreover, the majority suggested that any plan that made it more difficult for African Americans to elect candidates of their choice should be rejected. These holdings enabled civil rights advocates to block redistricting and reapportionment measures that diluted African-American voting strength and thus contributed to a steady increase in the number of African-American elected officials during the early 1970s.

The Voting Rights Act’s rigorous preclearance process, however, applied only to newly adopted laws and procedures, not to those already in force in 1965. During the 1970s blacks began to challenge pre-1965 laws establishing at-large elections and multi-seat districts, many of which had been enacted around the turn of the century as part of the campaign to disfranchise African Americans. Initially, the Supreme Court proved receptive to claims that these laws were discriminatory and therefore violated the Voting Rights Act and the 14th and 15th Amendments. In *City of Mobile v. Bolden* (1980), however, the Court reversed course, ruling that plaintiffs who challenged existing laws and procedures had to prove that they were adopted with intent to dilute African Americans’ voting strength, a very difficult matter at best.

Rebuffed by the Supreme Court, civil rights advocates turned to Congress for a remedy, even though the political climate in Washington, D.C., was chillier in the wake of Ronald Reagan’s landslide victory in the 1980 presidential election. Despite facing a more conservative Congress and sharp opposition from the Reagan administration, in 1982 civil rights advocates won passage of legislation extending the life and expanding the coverage of the Voting Rights Act. The new measure not only renewed the preclearance provision of the Voting Rights Act (which was to have expired in 1982) for 25 years. It also prohibited existing electoral laws and procedures that gave minorities less opportunity than whites to elect candidates of their choice. The effect was to sweep aside *Bolden*’s intent requirement.

The 1982 legislation had a dramatic effect. It made challenges to at-large elections easier to win and compelled state legislatures to redraw legislative and congressional districts to maximize the number of districts with African-American majorities. The result was a dramatic increase in the number of African-American elected officials — from school boards and county commissions to state legislatures and the U.S. House of Representatives. Between 1982 and 1992, for example, African-American representation in Congress jumped from 20 to 39.

Civil rights advocates’ success helped fuel a powerful reaction as the 1980s progressed. The Reagan administration, which relied heavily on support from conservative southern whites and northern Democrats who had left that party because of its liberal policies, led the way. The President, who had been at odds with civil rights leaders since the mid-1960s, sharply criticized busing and affirmative action. And he appointed persons who shared his views to such crucial positions as attorney general, assistant attorney general for civil rights, chair of the EEOC, and chair of the U.S. Civil Rights Commission.

Shortly after Reagan entered office, his administration launched a concerted attack on the gains civil rights leaders had achieved during the 1970s. In 1981, administration leaders mounted a powerful albeit unsuccessful campaign against broadening coverage of the Voting Rights Act. They also trained their guns on affirmative action, denouncing it as establishing

racial quotas and sanctioning “reverse discrimination.” Although equating affirmative action with quotas was inaccurate, it was a rhetorical masterstroke. The term struck a responsive chord among many white Americans who were fearful that in a zero sum economy African Americans’ gains would come at their expense. And it helped reassure the President’s middle and working class white supporters that he was standing up for them, even though his economic policies resulted in a significant transfer of wealth to upper income Americans.

The administration’s attack on affirmative action went beyond mere rhetoric. During the 1980s, Justice Department attorneys regularly filed briefs on behalf of white male plaintiffs who challenged affirmative action programs. Despite these efforts, the Supreme Court continued to support voluntary affirmative action programs as long as they did not establish quotas, were temporary, did not unduly burden whites, and did not disregard the seniority rights of white workers when layoffs were involved.

By the end of the 1980s, however, it appeared that the administration’s efforts were not in vain. Reagan’s judicial appointments transformed the federal district courts and courts of appeals, shifting them sharply to the right. Moreover, by 1988, with the appointment of Justice Anthony Kennedy, the President appeared to have secured a conservative majority on the Supreme Court.

During the 1988-1989 term, the new majority clearly signalled its hostility to many of the innovations in civil rights law that had occurred during the previous two decades. In *Patterson v. McLean Credit Union* (1989) the Court sharply restricted its interpretation of the Reconstruction-era civil rights measure that enabled parties who could prove intentional discrimination to sue employers for monetary damages. It also dealt a severe blow to the use of consent decrees (i.e., court orders enforcing agreements reached out of court by parties to a lawsuit) to settle employment discrimination cases. In *Martin v. Wilks* (1989) the Court ruled that affirmative action plans embodied in such decrees were not immune to legal challenge. White employees had the right to challenge them, the majority ruled, even if they had ample opportunity to do so before the decree was announced. By leaving employers who entered consent decrees vulnerable to continued litigation, the decision reduced their incentive to settle employment discrimination suits out of court, thereby making the work of civil rights lawyers more time-consuming and expensive. Finally, the new conservative majority undermined the Griggs ruling of 1971. In *Ward’s Cove Packing Company v. Atonio* (1989), it held that even when plaintiffs demonstrated that company policies had an adverse effect on hiring and promotion of minorities, the burden remained on the plaintiffs to prove that these policies were unnecessary.

The Court also dismantled state and local programs requiring that a certain percentage of the funds spent on publicly financed construction projects be awarded to minority-owned firms. Such programs were designed to redress the historic exclusion of African Americans from the construction business. Writing for the majority in *Richmond v. Croson* (1989), Justice Sandra Day O’Connor held that the Richmond, Virginia, set-aside program at issue established a racial classification and therefore was inherently suspect under the 14th Amendment’s equal protection clause. Moreover, she denied that the city’s desire to overcome general societal discrimination against African Americans constituted the compelling interest the city had to show to justify the program. Only if the city could demonstrate that actual discrimination had occurred against the minority contractors who benefitted from the set-asides would the program pass constitutional muster. And that, she concluded, the city had not done. *Croson* not only led to the demise of state and local minority set-aside programs, but O’Connor’s analysis cast a long shadow over other affirmative action programs.

The Court also appeared poised to strike down creation of black majority electoral districts under the Voting Rights Act. In *Shaw v. Reno* (1993), it considered a challenge to a North Carolina congressional district that had been drawn to create a black voting majority

and therefore to send an African American to Congress, something that had not happened in the state since 1900. The district, drawn by the state legislature in order to comply with the Voting Rights Act, was strangely configured, snaking along Interstate 85 for more than 160 miles, linking heavily black communities in Charlotte, Greensboro, Durham, and Winston-Salem. While the Court ultimately returned the case to the trial court for further hearings, Justice Sandra Day O'Connor's opinion strongly suggested that the majority considered the creation of black majority districts constitutionally suspect. She charged that the North Carolina district "bears an uncomfortable resemblance to political apartheid" and suggested that it was inherently suspect because it was based on racial classification. *Shaw* led to a flood of cases challenging other black majority districts, in the process threatening many of the political gains African Americans had made during the 1980s and early 1990s.

While it remains unclear how far the Court will go in dismantling the victories civil rights advocates won in the 1970s and 1980s, the conservative majority that emerged in 1989 will probably continue to control the Court's civil rights jurisprudence in the near future. Four new justices (Clarence Thomas, David Souter, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, and Stephen Breyer) have joined the Court since 1989, but that appears not to have altered the balance on civil rights. Even if Souter (who dissented in *Shaw*) and Breyer (a Clinton appointee) hew to the line of William Brennan and Harry Blackmun, the liberals they replaced, and even if Ginsburg is more liberal than her predecessor Byron White, the conservative majority will remain because Justice Thomas, an outspoken conservative, sits in the seat once occupied by Thurgood Marshall, the father of the modern civil rights revolution in American law. Moreover, if the Democrats fail to hold the White House in 1996, the likelihood is that the conservative majority will be strengthened.

As the Supreme Court became a less friendly place, civil rights advocates looked to Congress to redress some of the setbacks dealt them by the Court. In 1989, following the Court's assault on remedies against employment discrimination, Senator Edward M. Kennedy and Representative Augustus Hawkins introduced legislation that reversed the Court's decisions in *Martin v. Wilks*, *Patterson v. McLean Credit Union*, and *Ward's Cove*. Seeking to further erode Democratic support among southern whites and working class northern whites, President George Bush repeatedly attacked the measure as a "quota bill" and vetoed it in 1990. One year later, however, as supporters of the measure appeared to pick up enough Republican supporters to override a veto, the President acquiesced and signed into law the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1991, which undid much of the damage of the 1988-1989 rulings.

Yet this victory may have been a kind of last hurrah of civil rights activists. The elections of 1994 made Republicans the majority party in both houses of Congress for the first time since 1954. Conservative Republican leaders, many of whom had entered politics or had emerged to positions of leadership during the "Reagan Revolution" of the 1980s, held a special hostility for affirmative action. Moreover, they were well aware that opposition to affirmative action was smart (if divisive) politics. By early 1995, Republicans prepared to introduce two measures that targeted affirmative action. The first barred all organizations with at least 15 employees from taking race into account in hiring. The other prohibited the federal government from granting preference to anyone on the basis of race or sex.

As the nation neared the end of the century, the Indian Summer of the civil rights movement appeared to be over. The victories of the 1960s were truly monumental achievements, ending the state-imposed segregation and disfranchisement that had for so long made a mockery of the nation's promise of equality. However, centuries of slavery, segregation, and disempowerment had left many African Americans without the education, skills, experience, social connections, and, in some cases, hope to enjoy the fruits of the civil rights movement. Further complicating matters, at the moment the civil rights movement broke down legal barriers to African-American advancement, the deindustrialization of the American economy lim-

ited economic opportunity for persons without skills and education. Moreover, although it usually took more subtle forms, racism remained a reality of American life. During the 1970s and 1980s, African-American leaders and their white allies attempted to overcome these barriers and realize the promise of the civil rights movement. In an unfavorable political climate, they achieved remarkable success, creating some of the tools necessary to chip away at the barriers. Yet by the 1990s, a powerful reaction had built, dividing the nation along racial lines, rolling back the modest victories of the 1970s and 1980s, and threatening yet again to deny African Americans the promise of equality.

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Chapter Twenty

AFRICAN AMERICANS AND EDUCATION SINCE THE BROWN DECISION: A CONTEXTUAL VIEW

Stephen N. Butler

Since the 1954 Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* of the City of Topeka, Kansas, which declared segregation in the public schools unconstitutional, the education of African Americans has generated continued debate and controversy. Desegregation, integration, educational opportunity, and affirmative action have been the main issues for the public and for policy-makers concerned with black intellectual empowerment. But other questions have risen recently, generating much confusion and controversy. Many African Americans, previously committed to school integration, have now begun to challenge the merit of mixed schools and common curricula to advocate Afrocentric approaches and all-black academies for young men.

The problems faced by African Americans as the 21st century begins are quite different than those of 50 years ago. Massive demographic change and equally important restructuring of the American economy have produced a totally different historical context that has given rise to a host of new questions about black education in the United States. The fact that the inclusionist principles embraced and enshrined in the original Brown decision are no longer accepted without qualification and that positive values are increasingly associated with separate black schools relates to changes in the context of black life in the 40 years between the passage of the Brown decisions and the present day. A review of the progress in black education since 1954 and African-American perceptions of contemporary conditions explain this curious transition.

THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF THE BROWN DECISION

Segregation in itself is a matter of law, and that law can be changed at once, ...I think in every community there is some segregation that can be changed at once, and the area of higher education is the most favorable for making the change.

— Robert Redfield in *Sweatt v. Painter*

The end of World War II marked the beginning of profound changes in American society; nowhere more than in the revolution in education. Soldiers, returning home to resume their civilian lives, received support from the federal G.I. Bill of Rights enabling unprecedented numbers of ordinary Americans to enter the world of higher education, previously the preserve of the wealthy. Fifty years later, 14 million Americans would be enrolled in America's

colleges and universities. Public school facilities were vastly expanded. At the time of Pearl Harbor, the average American had an eighth grade education.

As they had following the Civil War, the Spanish-American War, and World War I, black soldiers returned to their families and communities determined to attain the freedom long denied them. After having fought to defeat racist regimes abroad, the veterans of World War II were confronted with the frustrating reality of continued domestic racism. Few adapted easily to the old conventions and practices, and many took up directly or indirectly the battle for first-class citizenship, many ultimately becoming part of black community action programs initiated to desegregate public schools in the South, becoming part of what historian/theologian Vincent Harding calls the “Great Tradition of Protest.”

Black communities, especially in the rural South, were faced at the time with chronic problems related to education. At the beginning of World War II, three-quarters of all African Americans still lived in the states of the old Confederacy. There, a large majority lived in rural areas and was involved in agriculture, economically bound in various states of dependency. Schools at all levels were not only segregated but also “undernourished and inadequate” in almost every way. According to the Swedish sociologist, Gunnar Myrdal, who published his classic *An American Dilemma* in 1944, “The insufficient support of Negro schools in the South is reflected in a complete lack of schools in more rural areas, an insufficient number of schools in other areas, a grave lack of equipment, a lack of enforcement of truancy laws for Negroes, an inferior quality of teacher training, differential payment of teachers, and miserably poor standards all around.”

Although Myrdal commented that “the usual measures of school efficiency” were inadequate to plumb the depths of the problem, he did use them to sketch the general outlines of the problem. While the average African American had less than a sixth grade education, the condition of rural-farm blacks was worse: 15 percent had no education at all and nearly two-thirds never reached fifth grade. “Only 5.5 percent of rural-farm Negroes ... [in the South],” according to Myrdal, “have received any high school training whatsoever.” The figures for the nation as a whole were slightly better, but still only one out of 14 African Americans completed high school and a mere 1.2 percent graduated from college at a time when 5.4 percent of whites did. At each grade a larger number of blacks than whites dropped out; the black school year was shorter than that for whites; the teachers were over-worked and under-educated; and, as a result, African Americans scored “far below the national average in scholastic achievement.” Yet, African Americans showed a zeal for education that exceeded their white countrymen’s optimistic faith that education would continue to guarantee success for whites.

Education had been seen as the key to success for African Americans from the time of emancipation. For years African-American parents had extolled their children with the value and importance of education, a “good” that belonged to one for life once attained. Many accepted the idea that “the race” would prosper through education. Whether one agreed with the trade school orientation of Booker T. Washington or espoused W. E. B. DuBois’ vision of the “Talented Tenth,” African Americans generally viewed education as their best chance for improving their situation. Throughout the era of segregation, African Americans worked through their own separate institutions to be assimilated eventually into the American social fabric. They took seriously the simple notion of “one people, with liberty and justice for all” and firmly believed that change through the institutions of law and education would remove the obstacles and stigmas that denied them the benefits of first-class citizenship.

It was the post-WWII initiatives of blacks in law and education that first effectively tested the doctrine of “separate but equal” that legalized racial segregation. Enunciated in 1896 in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, this decision addressed separate accommodations on railways, but its provisions were rapidly extended during the era of Jim Crow to support the entire edifice of

segregation including education. For over half a century, the decision had stood as the prime premise of American apartheid. It was not until the era of the depression that lawyers of the National Association of Colored People (NAACP) mounted a serious attack on the doctrine of “separate but equal” and it was not until a decade after the victory over fascism that its attorneys were able to overturn Plessy.

The NAACP experienced its first successes, ironically, in desegregating the nation’s law schools; in 1950 it won a case before Supreme Court in *Sweatt v. Painter*, which overruled the attempt by the state of Texas to circumvent earlier rulings. It was in this case that Thurgood Marshall, head of the NAACP’s Legal Division, first introduced expert testimony from social scientists to support the NAACP’s case. Subsequently, social science research became an integral part of the NAACP’s legal argument in the fight against segregation.

The same year that the Court ruled in *Sweatt v. Painter*, Marshall and his staff challenged local school boards in Prince Edward County, Virginia, in Clarendon County, South Carolina, and in the city of Topeka, Kansas. Earlier cases had been prosecuted under the idea that separate schools were not provided with equal facilities as required by the law. NAACP lawyers gradually shifted their strategy, and their assaults on segregation in primary and secondary schools increasingly included not only evidence that the facilities of the black schools were inferior to those in white schools but also the broader assertion that the fact of separation itself violated the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment.

After hearing the arguments in five related cases in 1952 and 1953, the Supreme Court called for reargument in which the lawyers addressed a series of historical questions concerning the original intent of the 14th Amendment. Finally, on May 17, 1954, the Supreme Court under the leadership of Chief Justice Earl Warren declared in its first *Brown* decision, “that in the field of public education the doctrine of ‘separate but equal’ has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal.” In the second *Brown* decision the following year, the Court remanded the cases “to the District Courts to take such proceedings and enter such orders and decrees consistent with this opinion as are necessary and proper to admit to public schools on a racially nondiscriminatory basis with all deliberate speed the parties to these cases.”

Although these two decisions “dismantled” legal justification of school segregation, the phrase “with all deliberate speed,” designed to give judges discretion to find appropriate modes of compliance for each community, offered an opportunity for the “massive resistance” movement among southern whites that fused racism with traditional states’ rights arguments to hold off effective integration of southern schools for over a decade. Across the South, white communities and local boards of education supported religious leaders and elected officials who opposed desegregation. Old cultural patterns proved resistant to modification. Southern social and political institutions were permeated with racism. In the face of the growing civil rights movement, many whites embraced a clear and simple formula: maintain segregation and fight integration. Meanwhile, for blacks the battle became more intense as they resolved to gain the political and educational rights so long denied them.

The post-WWII Supreme Court decisions gave legitimacy to the growing conviction that segregation could no longer be tolerated. In 1956, Autherine Lucy attempted to enter the University of Alabama. Nine African American students tested the law in 1957 at Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas. Governor Orville Faubus placed the city of Little Rock forever on the American map of racial intolerance by his refusal to integrate the high school. President Eisenhower believed that “Negroes... must be patient” and not move “too fast” in their pursuit of racial equality, but white behavior forced him to federalize the National Guard to prevent “anarchy” in Arkansas.

BLACK PROGRESS IN EDUCATION

The years between WWII and the passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964 witnessed a slow, but positive increase in the educational position of American blacks. Illiteracy continued to decline, the average number of years completed increased to nine, and the gap between blacks and whites narrowed. The proportion of African Americans graduating from high school had tripled since 1940. In part, these improvements were due to the higher levels of enrollment of the school age population which by 1961 was about the same as that for white children. It was also due to the sizable demographic shift in the African-American population that was moving out of the South during these years. Although blacks faced prejudice and discrimination in the North, they had always fared better in the northern schools. In the cities that drew most of the black migrants, the rates of high school graduation for blacks were twice what they were in southern cities. By 1960 two-fifths of the black population lived outside the South and the exodus was increasing.

The quality of African-American education still suffered when compared to that available to whites. Half the black population left school before completing the eight grade and over one-third of those entering high school in 1960 dropped out. The vast majority of black students continued to attend segregated schools with inadequate facilities and poorly trained teachers.

A decade after the Court ordered the southern states to desegregate, practically no headway had been made. As late as 1962 only 1.2 percent of the black students in the southern states attended mixed schools and most of those were in Texas. There were only 12 blacks in schools with whites in Florida and nine in Georgia; there were none in Mississippi, Alabama, or South Carolina. Eight of the most powerful men in the United States Senate introduced an amendment to the Constitution that would preserve to the states the right to control public education and maintain segregation.

THE EDUCATIONAL SCENE

The launching of the Sputnik unmanned satellite by the Soviet Union in 1957 took professional educators by surprise. The Soviet foray into space raised harsh questions about the quality and standards of American education, particularly in mathematics and science. Thus international developments, which would exert increasing pressure on American society, intruded into what many saw as a domestic issue. Although African Americans emphasized integration and eventual assimilation as a solution to the nation's racial ills, the connection between their educational achievement and larger social forces had not yet become a major topic of debate among professional educators.

During the '60s American education became the focus of an intense debate about both the quality of education and its social impact. Much of the discussion shifted from questions defined by integration in the South to those directly related to urban education in the North and the West where *de facto* segregation was becoming an increasing problem as the proportion of blacks living outside the South grew from one-third in 1950 to one-half by 1970 and residential segregation in these regions increased with the continued movement of whites from the central cities to the suburbs.

Slums and Suburbs, by the former president of Harvard University, James Bryant Conant, had already used the term "social dynamite" to describe out-of-school and out-of-work urban youth, when Frank Riessman articulated a new view of urban education, introducing, in 1962, the concepts of "culturally deprived" and "culturally disadvantaged" to describe African Americans. At the same time, Columbia University's Teachers College, taking the lead in addressing problems of urban education, created the Institute of Urban Education. Two years later the Institute helped the State Education Commissioner's Advisory Committee

on Human Relations and Community Tensions produce a report for the New York City Board of Education, "Desegregating the Public Schools of New York City." Although the report offered a clear blueprint, the state's Board of Education pursued its own agenda, according to unwritten rules that included "do not bargain with militant civil rights leaders over desegregation" and "do not question the ability of headquarters professionals to make meaningful innovations and evaluations of programs."

Jonathan Kozol, Herbert Kohl, and James Herndon, among others, argued in widely read books that African Americans' education, indeed American education in general, was suffering from a crisis of major proportions. Kozol, perhaps the most consistent critic of American education in the latter half of the 20th century, emphasized particularly the educational deprivation of African Americans and portrayed the racism endemic to the Boston public schools in *Death at an Early Age* (1967). In the same year, Elliot Liebow published *Talley's Corner*, a sensitive study of black street-corner men that echoed Conant's earlier view of "social dynamite." Still, terms like "culturally deprived" and "educationally disadvantaged" served as rallying points for professional educators and helped to create career opportunities for often well-meaning educators of all stripes and colors who located the educational "problems" of African Americans in their "culture."

Kenneth Clark, the prominent African-American psychologist who had given crucial and dramatic testimony in the *Brown* case, considered deficient schooling of African Americans a result of larger social dynamics. He identified power relationships, economics, psychological factors, and social class as the components of a social pathology that contributed to the existence of "ghetto schools, separate and unequal." Clark believed that Riessman's conception of African-American students as "culturally disadvantaged" could be used as an excuse for denying them an adequate education. He described a pattern of growing segregation in urban areas across America — a trend that would continue through the early 1990s.

In the two decades from 1970 to 1990 the nature of the educational problems facing black America changed dramatically. From the mid-1960s into the early 1970s most of the school districts in the South were successfully integrated. By the end of the decade, nearly every indicator of educational improvement signaled that a revolution in schooling had taken place in black America. The median years completed by African Americans was twice what it had been at the time of World War II and only slightly different than that of whites. Over half of all black adults were high school graduates. In 1980 the proportion of black college graduates (8.4 percent) was higher than the proportion of high school graduates in 1940, four times the proportion of black college graduates in 1950, and well above the percent of whites who graduated from college in 1960. The proportion of black high school graduates enrolled in college, (28.3 percent), had moved close to that for whites (32.4 percent).

As one detailed study pointed out, however, "while it may appear that blacks and whites are receiving comparable educations, the actual facts may be the opposite." The educations of whites and blacks differ in relative quality and the contrasting educational experiences of African Americans and Americans in general are reflected in the outcomes of standardized tests like the California Achievement Test for grade school children and the Scholastic Aptitude Test which is required for entrance into most colleges. These differences are clearly related to racial segregation in central cities with deteriorating school systems. "White representation in urban school districts has been rapidly declining since the mid-1960s." In just a decade from the late 1960s to the late 1970s, the white student population in cities like Detroit, San Francisco, Washington, and Atlanta decreased by 60 percent or more as the urban core of the country's major metropolitan areas has become increasingly black and populated by a growing "underclass."

THE TUMULTUOUS SIXTIES

In his inaugural address John F. Kennedy sparked the idealism of a new generation with the admonition: “Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country.” Despite political pressure from Southern Democrats, he took a strong moral position on segregation. In his June 11, 1963, television address to the nation, against a backdrop of civil rights demonstrations across the South, he supported first-class citizenship for African Americans. With Kennedy in charge, it seemed as though both national and international crises could be dealt with effectively, and African Americans looked forward to a new day under the leadership of a young and dynamic president. But his 1,000-day reign ended in Dallas on November 22, 1963.

A southerner from Texas, Lyndon Johnson, became president after Kennedy’s assassination, but he proved a greater ally to African Americans than his predecessor, pushing through Congress both the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and then mounting his “War on Poverty.” Growing involvement in the war in Vietnam, however, sapped the vitality of Johnson’s domestic program and drained the necessary funds to make his “Great Society” a reality. Meanwhile, the movement emerging in opposition to the war called into question the nation’s integrity and ultimately resulted in Johnson’s decision not to seek a second term in office.

During the civil rights movement of the 1950s, Martin Luther King emerged as the moral leader of African Americans. As the movement advanced, King sought to expand its scope. In addition to desegregation and voting rights, he identified poverty, housing and unemployment as critical problems. In this respect, King’s views came to complement the ideas of the black nationalist leader Malcolm X whose message to the urban masses focused on improvement of their social conditions. Neither leader, however, had much time to develop or implement his plans for black economic advancement. Both were assassinated as were John and Robert Kennedy. By 1968, when King was gunned down in Memphis, white and black America were devastated emotionally. It appeared that violence and death were tearing the nation apart at its seams. That fear was intensified by the riots of the late 1960s.

URBAN RIOTS

Police! Police!
Come and get this man!
He’s trying to ruin the government
and overturn the land!

— Langston Hughes

The riots of the late 1960s in major American cities — Atlanta, Cincinnati, Detroit, Tampa, and Newark — awakened America to the seriousness of the nation’s urban problems and led to the establishment of a presidential commission to study the subject. To Kenneth Clark this seemed an exercise in futility. He told the commission he had recently re-read the report on the 1919 riots:

and it is as if I were reading the report of the investigating committee on the Harlem riot of ’35, the report of the investigating committee on the Harlem riot of ’43, the report of the McCone Commission on the Watts riot. I must again in candor say to you members of this commission — it is a kind of Alice in Wonderland — with the same moving picture re-shown over and over again, the same analysis, the same recommendations, and the same inaction.

When it appeared in 1968, the *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders* acknowledged that “What white Americans have never fully understood — but what the Negro can never forget — is that white society is deeply implicated in the ghetto. White institutions created it, white institutions maintain it, and white society condones it.” High unemployment rates for African Americans, spreading drug addiction, a rising number of single-parent, female-headed households, and the poor academic performance of students in urban areas were brought into sharp focus by the urban riots.

Despite the ambitious government “War on Poverty” and the efforts of institutions like Columbia University’s Teachers College, the Center for Urban Education, civil rights organizations, and local community groups, education in the cities deteriorated steadily. Slightly over one-fifth of African Americans were two years behind their grade level; a larger proportion dropped out of high school than enrolled in college; and black parents constantly complained that among those graduating far too many were functionally illiterate. The trends that Conant, Clark, and the Center for Urban Education had noted were exacerbated by the lack of job opportunities in the cities and by the increasing departure of the black middle class from urban ghettos.

While America’s political leaders started belatedly to pay attention to the growing problems of the cities, major corporations had already begun their exodus to the suburbs which increasingly separated white suburbia from inner-city black ghettos. This further contributed to the wide variation in property tax revenues supporting public schools, an issue that would become acute in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and give rise to new court and legislative battles. These developments forced Americans to acknowledge the relationship between major social forces and the deficient educational experience of African Americans.

INTEGRATION AND THE BUSING WARS

In the 1970s the courts ordered busing as the way to achieve integration as the Nixon administration withdrew executive support from the enforcement by the Justice Department. Across America transporting black children to predominantly white schools and white children to predominantly black schools reminded Americans of the desegregation/integration struggles of the late 1950s and early 1960s. When violence erupted in Boston, television brought the “busing wars” into the living rooms of America. Resistance to “racial balance” and “forced busing” quickly became national in scope. Anti-bussing protests occurred in New York City, in San Francisco, in Pontiac, Michigan, and in various cities and towns across the South.

In fact, busing of American school children was and has continued to be a common experience for Americans in all parts of the country. In 1970 two-thirds used either school buses or public transportation everyday. At the time of the *Brown* decision one-third of American school children took school buses and by the time of the Boston crisis in 1973 that proportion increased to 45 percent, but relatively little of this (only 3 percent of the *increase*) was related to desegregation plans. No President publicly protested when black children were bussed to enforce segregation. An NAACP study pointed out that there was no “massive” use of busing to counteract residential segregation and that the actual positive uses of school buses helped improve the quality of education. Quite obviously the general response was part of the white backlash against the civil rights movement and the gains of African Americans in the 1960s and 1970s. Insensitive judges, a cowardly Congress, and an unscrupulous President combined to make a difficult situation worse and to heighten racial animosities.

While busing was relatively successful in most major cities and medium-sized towns, private academies for white students sprang up in much of the South to thwart these efforts to achieve integration. In the face of strenuous resistance from whites, some African-American parents began to question busing as a remedy. Providing high-quality education in local



Anti-busing rally, South Boston. (Archive Photos)

African-American communities — an idea that was to gain force and intensity in ensuing years — began to appear more desirable. Many Americans, black and white, were torn between the belief in integration and the recognition that pushing it in this fashion might do more harm than good.

In suburban areas in the North and in the West, white Americans fought to preserve the chimera of the “neighborhood school” although this meant maintaining residential segregation and consequently, because school districts relied on property taxes for funding, providing sufficient financial support only for largely white suburban schools while furnishing, at best, minimal maintenance for those in the inner cities whose students were predominately black. Jonathan Kozol later commented in his devastating analysis of American urban education, *Savage Inequalities* (1991), that because students are required to attend school in their own district “the state, by requiring attendance but refusing to require equity, effectively requires inequality.”

ISSUES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The War on Poverty programs designed to prepare “culturally deprived” students for higher education helped to bring new perspectives to the nation’s colleges and universities. “Upward Bound” proved successful in preparing poor African American, white, and otherwise “disadvantaged” students for college. Some predominantly white institutions, responding to the temper of the times, modified their admission policies or formulated new standards to encourage the admission of students from these groups.

African American students who had grown up during the struggle for desegregation and integration witnessed the 1963 March on Washington; the assassinations of the Kennedys, Malcolm X, and King; the re-emergence of black nationalism; and the 1968 Black Power demonstration by Tommie Smith, Lee Evans, and John Carlos at the summer Olympics in Mexico City. They brought a new agenda to institutions of higher education, one that would shake cherished ideas about the nature of knowledge and of social reality. Colleges and universities did not yet understand the subcultures and world views of different classes of African Americans — particularly the students from urban areas — and were naive in their belief that simply bringing African-American students to campus would be sufficient. On the whole, the academy was ill-prepared for the impact of these students.

As the proportion of African Americans graduating from high school grew dramatically, black students flooded into American colleges and universities. A little remembered fact is that in 1940 a larger proportion of blacks than whites who graduated from high school went on to graduate from college! From fewer than 50,000 in 1950 the number of black college students more than tripled by the early 1960s and passed the half million mark in the early 1970s. Three-quarters of these students attended colleges and universities that were neither traditionally nor predominately black.

The arrival of this new population on the campuses posed serious challenges to higher education. African-American students demanded the hiring of more black professors and administrators and the inclusion in the curriculum of courses relevant to the African-American experience. Borrowing protest tactics from the civil rights movement, these students took over college buildings and presented their lists of demands to college authorities. African-American students also sought relationships with local black communities, something new to the college scene.

Misunderstandings abounded. White professors often assumed that all black students were needy and lacked the educational preparation necessary for college success. This characterization did not go unnoticed by those to whom it referred and these students, in turn, questioned how whites could adequately study, teach, and understand things they had not experienced. Epistemological issues — “How do we know what we know?” — were crystallized at a Yale symposium in 1969, and a “new” discipline, Black Studies, was introduced.

At the same time, historically black private colleges and state supported institutions generally located in the South, institutions that together had produced the vast majority of African-American college graduates, grew in popularity among the expanding black middle class that was the primary beneficiary of the federal government’s programs. No doubt encouraged by television’s popular *Cosby Show*, African Americans saw these institutions as places that offered nurturing academic and social environments, and from 1980 to 1990 their enrollments grew 15 percent — from 186,000 to 214,000 students. These colleges had long had black faculty and administrators and occasionally taught courses such as African and African-American history essential to Black Studies.

With this increase in popularity, however, came new questions concerning these historically black colleges. Do they prepare African-American students to cope in a multi-cultural society? Should state-supported predominately black institutions be merged with predominantly white state universities and effective integration extended from primary and secondary schools to undergraduate education? Were African Americans exchanging psychological comfort for inferior education and the perpetuation of the known deficiencies of a segregated society?

Persistent unemployment and underemployment and the growing “underclass” called for a more complex interpretation of American society. But the college students of the late 1980s and early 1990s had missed the civil rights movement and the tumultuous ’60s. They had spent their adolescence listening to the economic ideology of the Reagan and Bush

administrations, which championed free enterprise, deplored “big government,” and tacitly supported those who blamed African Americans for their social and economic disadvantages. It became increasingly acceptable for whites to denounce “affirmative action” with claims of “preferential treatment” and “reverse discrimination,” although African-American students still faced problems encountered by their predecessors.

CHALLENGES TO AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

The 1978 Supreme Court decision in *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke* brought a new challenge to affirmative action. In a complex opinion that reflected a divided court, the case was fought and won on the popular notion of “reverse discrimination.” The *Bakke* case made it more difficult for African Americans to take full advantage of opportunities created by federal legislation and programs. Those who opposed affirmative action found refuge in the decision and justified the status quo in education and employment. More sophisticated educational institutions found they could hire token African Americans who would not push for change. While these institutions were producing African-American professionals who mirrored their view of things, many white Americans were rallying to the unspoken word from the nation’s capitol. The message they heard was that the injustices faced by African Americans had been rectified and no longer needed to be taken seriously.

Among whites hostile to African Americans’ advancement, affirmative action became equated with “preferential treatment” and with the rejection of merit as the basis for employment and promotion. Such people devalued African Americans’ achievement in colleges, government, and the professions; and, in response, some African Americans shied away from requesting racially based consideration.

The conservative African-American scholar, Thomas Sowell, argued that affirmative action “policies set in motion complex reactions which pit minority and non-minority students against each other, and generate stresses and reactions among faculty, administrators, and outside interests.” African Americans faced hostility from whites who assumed that they had benefited from “preferential treatment” and racial conflict at colleges and universities, including Princeton, the University of Rhode Island, the University of Arizona, the University of Nebraska, and the University of Michigan — whose Institute For Social Research had foreseen such events. In 1985, the popular African-American magazine *Ebony* described the academic and social discrimination that plagued black students on predominantly white campuses where the response to their concerns ranged from minimal support to indifference and outright hostility. African-American students came to see themselves as outsiders — at best, marginalized and, at worst, victims of a racist America.

NEW PARADIGMS FOR AFRICAN AMERICANS

Educators and academics grappling with the growing complexity of the times and influenced by neo-Marxist “critical theory” and the perspective of “post-modernism” sought new ways to understand social life. Peter Berger and Bernard Luckmann’s *The Social Construction of Reality* set the stage for multiple ways of understanding social problems; in the 1980s and 1990s and black scholars adopted its mode of analysis. Black feminist, Audreya Lorde’s widely circulated article, “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House,” echoed the insight of the African-American historian and educator Carter G. Woodson who wrote 45 years earlier, calling for new forms of analysis. Patricia Hill Collins’ article “Learning From the Outsider Within: The Sociological Significance of Black Feminist Thought,” that followed a similar intellectual strategy, quickly became the most widely cited article in the field of Black Studies. Martin Bernal created a stir in the scholarly community with his book, *Black Athena*, which emphasized the importance of Africa in the development of Western Civilization while

Molefi Asante provided a new paradigm that encouraged African Americans to replace Eurocentric approaches with Afrocentrism, placing themselves as the center of scholarly discourse. In popularized form, this paradigm easily took hold in communities that had responded to the oratory Malcolm X. In *Countering the Conspiracy to Destroy Black Boys*, Jawanza Kunjufu caught the attention of those who have attempted to give voice to the “underclass.”

By the end of the 1980s, a confusing array of solutions was offered. Conservatives promoted the ideal of individual achievement; older liberals and civil rights leaders continued to emphasize integration; Black nationalists demanded separatism. Meanwhile, middle-class African Americans continued their flight from the inner city, leaving the poor to face the pathologies spawned by increasing racial and social class isolation and the disintegration of the social fabric.

THE NEGLECT OF CITIES

Reagan’s victory, which originated in the rise of the “Sunbelt” and the shift of southern whites to the Republican party in response to the success of civil rights movement, signaled the further marginalization of African Americans and their concerns within the government of the United States. Bush who had begun his career in opposition to the civil rights legislation of the 1960s made race the core of his first election campaign with the infamous “Willie Horton” television advertisement that exacerbated white America’s fears of black male sexuality and criminality. Playing the “race card” served to obscure the 12-year policy of neglect of urban America, in favor of more affluent white suburbs where the wealthiest 2 percent of the country multiplied their riches at the expense of the huge majority of the American people.

African Americans of all classes suffered from the federal government’s neglect of the cities. This neglect was fueled by the economic Darwinism of the Reagan and Bush administrations which led Kevin Phillips, a former Republican political strategist and Assistant Attorney General under Reagan, to write in his polemic against the affects of Republican tax policy, *The Politics of Rich and Poor*:

Regions, neighborhoods and people without capital, skills or education were losing their identities. Impoverished small cities definitely became more noticeable during the 1980s. Forgotten municipalities like East St. Louis, Illinois, Benton Harbor, Michigan, and Camden, New Jersey, all largely black, sank below stereotypical big-city slums like the South Bronx, eliciting attention as America’s new version of apartheid... [A] number of major cities — Newark, Atlanta, Miami, Baltimore and Cleveland — had counted at least 20 percent of their population living below the poverty line... [T]he gap between the big city slums and the rest of metropolitan America was getting bigger.

The economic policies of the Reagan and Bush administrations had a far greater impact on inner-city education and the nation than most people realized. The retreat of the federal government from the urban scene, tax policies that favored the rich, and rhetoric from the White House that denied the existence of racial problems and championed private enterprise, contributed to the devastation of the nation’s urban centers. The infrastructure of cities, from roads and bridges to housing, schools, and health-care facilities, deteriorated. Urban schools continued to decline as suburbs prospered. While the Reagan and Bush administrations asked Americans to return to the values and simplicity of the past, the social pathologies Kenneth Clark had identified grew in the nation’s cities to an extent unimaginable in the 1950s.

Urban problems grew despite the election of African-American mayors in cities like Atlanta, Birmingham, Chicago, Detroit, Flint, Newark, and New Orleans. Increasing racial and social class isolation of the underclass resulted in high unemployment, proliferation of gangs, mounting drug use, rising crime rates, growing rates of teenage pregnancy and occurrence

of female-headed households, and homeless families and individuals. African-American mayors could not overcome greater political, social, and economic forces that contributed to inadequate education in the nation's cities. African-American theologian and social critic, Cornel West, told a Newsweek interviewer:

Economic desperation coupled with social breakdown now threatens the very existence of impoverished communities in urban areas — with growing signs of the same forces at work in rural and suburban America. The drug and gun cultures among youth are the most visible symptoms of this nihilism. If we are to survive as a nation, the 1990s must be a decade in which candid and critical conversation takes place about race and poverty, rights and responsibilities, violence and despair.

CONCLUSION

In the 1954 *Brown* decision, the United States Supreme Court proclaimed “separate educational facilities inherently unequal” and ruled that “To separate [African Americans] from others of similar age and qualifications solely because of their race generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone.” Fourteen years later, the riot commission’s *Report* stated that “Our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white — separate and unequal” and accurately predicted the decline of urban America accompanied by decreasing job opportunities and the deterioration of the public schools with the end result of increasing segregation. Ironically, in July 1993, the Supreme Court let stand a federal appeals court ruling that Topeka, Kansas, had failed to desegregate its schools.

Forty years after the first *Brown* decision, while the educational attainment of African Americans has improved immensely, segregation of African-American students remains a problem, particularly in the decaying urban schools of the North, and has caused thoughtful critics to raise troublesome questions. Was school integration possible? Did curriculums adequately address the African-American experience? Could white teachers ever learn how to teach black students? Have talented African-American students intentionally not achieved in school because their peers would accuse them of “acting white?” Why should African Americans have to deny their experiences in order to be successful in white America? Questions like these brought up a long-standing problem, namely this: Could African Americans be honest about their experiences without being ignored, stigmatized, or viewed as radical by white Americans?

Whether or not black academies and Afrocentrism flourish in the next century, one thing remains clear. African Americans value their children’s education and will persist in promoting programs to advance black learning. They appreciate that knowledge is the key to self-esteem, independence, and positive social transformation. They agree, in essence, with the opinion of the noted black social critic and novelist, James Baldwin, who poignantly explained in 1963:

The purpose of education, finally, is to create in a person the ability to look at the world for himself, to make his own decisions, to say to himself this is black or this is white, to decide for himself whether there is a God in heaven or not.

Baldwin expresses concern that, in a society that does not really value such persons, preferring instead “a citizenry which will simply obey the rules,” institutions are unlikely to pursue this purpose. Responsible people, says Baldwin, have an obligation to fight for change, to demand genuinely liberating education for all members of society.

Table 20.1

Educational Development in the US, 1940-1990*

	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990
Median years of School Completed						
Black	7.0	8.6	9.9	12.1	12.6	12.7
White	10.3	12.0	12.3	12.6	12.9	12.9
Percent High School Graduates						
Blacks	11.6	22.2	37.7	55.4	75.3	82.2
Whites	38.1	52.8	60.7	73.8	84.5	85.5
Percent College Graduates						
Blacks	1.6	2.7	4.8	6.0	11.4	12.7
Whites	5.9	7.7	11.1	16.3	22.1	23.4

*Persons 25-29 years old

From: Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1991 (Washington, D.C., 1991), p. 138

Table 20.2

Percent of African-American Students in Segregated* Public Schools, 1968-1980

	1968	1972	1976	1980
Northwest	44	48	51	49
Midwest	58	58	51	49
Border	60	56	43	38
South	77	25	23	24
West	51	44	37	35
United States	64	40	37	34

*With 90% or more black students

From: Jaynes and Williams, *A Common Destiny*, p. 77.

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Chapter Twenty-one

THE QUEST FOR BLACK EQUITY: AFRICAN-AMERICAN POLITICS SINCE THE VOTING RIGHTS ACT OF 1965

Lawrence J. Hanks

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 was a milestone in the modern struggle for black equality. Its passage paved the way for actualization of a theory of black power that perceives politics as the path to extensive American empowerment. A consequence of black leaders' views since slavery on the attainment of political, social, and economic equity, the theory is derived from four basic assumptions: (1) Americans from Africa would gain through continued agitation access to the ballot; (2) enfranchised, African Americans would elect to public office black officials or other politicians sensitive to their interests; (3) elected officials concerned with black needs would enact progressive public policy; the result would be (4) that the socio-economic status of the African-American collective would ultimately gain parity with the white majority.

This chapter examines efforts to optimize black political power in America since the Voting Rights Act. As background, it reviews the origins of the theory of black political empowerment. It then assesses the impact of the 1965 law on the American political system, recent changes in black political activity, the growth of African-American elected officials, the influence of black interest groups, shifting ideologies, and the viability of electoral politics as a strategy to achieve black equity at large.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE THEORY OF BLACK POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT

The 20 Africans originally brought to Jamestown in 1619 probably came not as slaves but as indentured servants. However, as history shows, with the gradual recognition that success of the colony depended on permanently unfree labor, Virginia's planters increasingly treated black servants as lifetime workers even before laws made it legal. It is true that some Africans in British America acquired free status and property, but by 1664 permanent bondage, limited to Africans, had been legalized in six of England's American colonies.

For the first African Americans, the sanctioning of racial slavery provided dramatic testimony of the power of policymakers and furnished the basis of a nascent theory of black political empowerment — the view that if politics can be used as a means of oppression, it could also be used as an instrument of liberation. Awed by the power derived from political action, Americans from Africa appealed repeatedly during the colonial period and after to lawmakers for the amelioration of the dark race's oppressed condition, most notably suppression of the slave trade, abolition, and citizenship rights leading to black political empowerment.

An instrumentalist approach to American politics has dominated black thought throughout U.S. history. Despite severe despair and doubts at times about legislators' will to

enact and enforce progressive race laws, black leaders have generally viewed political participation as the most effective strategy for African-American advancement. This assumption is reflected in the actions of African Americans in the major historical periods following the abolition of slavery in 1865: (1) Reconstruction, 1865-1877; (2) the Nadir, 1877-1909; (3) Era of the NAACP, 1909-1954; (4) the Civil Rights Movement, 1955-1968; and (5) Struggle for Political, Social and Economic Equity, 1968 to the present.

The era of Reconstruction provided major impetus to the instrumentalist strategy. With the passage of the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments to the Constitution, black Americans were formally freed from bondage, granted citizenship, and permitted to vote. In tandem with the disenfranchisement of certain classes of Confederate officials, African Americans gained access to political offices in considerable numbers in the South. The progressive politics black lawmakers pursued aided fellow blacks as well as poor whites. They abolished property requirements for voting, eliminated imprisonment for debt, established statewide public schools, and suspended cruel and unusual punishment such as public whippings.

The political achievements of African Americans, however, proved to be transient. As the white abolitionist and officer of a black regiment in the Civil War, Thomas Wentworth Higginson noted, "Revolutions May Go Backwards." Even as African Americans made progress, a series of events converged to undermine Radical Reconstruction and return the white Democrats to power in the former states of the Confederacy.

White southerners fought fiercely throughout Reconstruction to restore home rule, to regain control of state affairs from blacks, from the scalawags, and from carpetbaggers. Their efforts, often involving violence, were eased by events outside the South. By the mid-1870s, many Northerners had grown weary of the intersectional tension caused by Congress's reconstruction program. The death of Thaddeus Stevens and Charles Sumner, the major leaders of the Radical Republicans, and a racist backlash that returned control of Congress to the Democrats after the elections of 1874, significantly undermined the progress made by blacks. Black advancement was undermined further by the Supreme Court which had grown increasingly hostile to the civil rights legislation of 1866 and 1875 and eventually sharply restricted the scope of the Reconstruction amendments. When Republicans reached a compromise with Democrats during the presidential elections of 1876 and agreed to remove federal troops from the South, the die was cast. Blacks in the South had been essentially abandoned by the rest of the nation.

From 1877-1909, the southern states erected new barriers to black advancement. Virtually all of the gains of Reconstruction were lost. During the 1890s, the Jim Crow system of racial segregation was established throughout the South producing the post-Civil War nadir of African Americans. Thus, a politically facilitative period was followed by an ominously oppressive era. It was in this context of intensified racial oppression that Booker T. Washington, the period's most influential leader, gained the support of whites nationally by urging blacks to suspend their demands for social and political rights and to focus on economic empowerment.

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was founded on Lincoln's birthday, February 12, 1909. Between then and 1954, the NAACP revitalized black protest activity among African Americans, mainly in the North, and spearheaded the movement in the first half of the 20th century for black equity. The organization protested against southern segregation and discrimination in the federal government and carried out an ultimately fruitless effort to obtain a national anti-lynching law. More successful was their vigilant legal fight against discrimination and segregation that reached its culmination with the decision in the case of *Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* (1954). Overturning *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), the court ruled that separate facilities were inherently unequal and thus that segregation was unconstitutional. This ruling set the stage for the post World War II Civil Rights Movement.

Between 1955 and 1968, African Americans fought vigilantly to secure their constitutional rights. The major strategy was utilization of the courts and direct action, specifically the theory of non-violent protest. Martin Luther King, Jr., was the movement's major leader. Although the views of black nationalists such as Muslim leaders Elijah Muhammad and Malcolm X and Black Panthers and other black separatists affected the outcome of public policy, King was the decisive black leader and strategist of the era. By the time of his assassination in April 1968, African Americans had regained precious political rights they had lost following the Reconstruction.

The key events that restored lost political ground spanned a decade of intense struggle, beginning with the *Brown* decision of 1954 in which the U.S. Supreme Court undermined the entire system of Jim Crow and placed the federal government on the side of Civil Rights. Following the Court's ruling, the struggle for black justice in America escalated. Mass mobilization on behalf of black rights started with the Montgomery Bus Boycott in December 1955 and continued with the Freedom Rides, sit-ins in numerous Southern cities, the March on Washington, the Mississippi Freedom Summer Project, and marches in support of "freedom now" for black citizens all over the nation.

These activities contributed to the enactment of three major pieces of legislation: the Civil Rights Act of 1964; the Voting Rights Act of 1965; and the Fair Housing Act of 1968. The Civil Rights Act, aided by the unfortunate assassination of John F. Kennedy, provided African Americans with access to places of public accommodation. The Voting Rights Act, whose passage gained impetus from the brutal police assault of civil rights demonstrators in Selma, Alabama, provided access to the ballot. Finally, the Fair Housing Law, following the murder of Martin Luther King, Jr., made it possible for African Americans to have legal access to neighborhoods of their choices. Ironically, King's assassination brought an end to a major phase of the African-American struggle for equity. Blacks now had the legal rights which had been systematically denied them since the onset of slavery. It was now time to turn theory into practice.

For the first time in American history, *all* African Americans, males and females in all geographic locations, had the right to vote as a result of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. With the elimination of literacy tests and understanding clauses, registration was the only requirement for voting. The ballot had long been held as the great equalizer but never had there been systemic opportunities for African Americans to turn theory into action. The period from 1965 through 2003 has seen unprecedented progress in the procurement of black political power, even though numerous blacks have lost ground economically. The progress made came primarily in two areas: (1) politics in general, but particularly in the South, and (2) the number of black elected officials.

AMERICAN POLITICS TRANSFORMED

Before 1965, blacks had been essentially excluded from the political process in the South where white superiority prevailed through law, custom, and force. White politicians there were sensitive to the region's racism and widely played the race-card. They often sought to "outnigger" their opponents with anti-black diatribes and warnings of the strong need to perpetually prevent Negro voting.

With the passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, however, African Americans assumed a permanent place in American politics. Whereas there had been no national black electorate previously, African American voters now constituted a nationwide political force. The American voters now constituted a nationwide political force. The result, especially in the South, was the gradual transformation in the country of race politics. A new strategy involving the language of racial moderation and the consideration of black interests emerged. Political pragmatism now dictated that overt racism and manipulation of traditional prejudices

would no longer work. In face of the changed political dispensation, campaign rhetoric would become more civil, genteel, and issue-oriented. The South had been transformed from a place where non-participant blacks were demeaned to a place where attempts were overtly made to win their votes.

Perhaps the major transformation in American politics in recent decades has been the shift of African Americans from protest to participation. The Voting Rights Act enabled blacks to vote and elect individuals who would strongly advocate their interests. While they have become powerful "balance of power" actors in areas where they do not have sufficient numbers directly to elect the candidate of their choice, blacks have dramatically increased their numbers in elective offices primarily in predominantly black areas. The rural black belt of the South, however, continues to be an underdeveloped area of black political power. While national black registration rose from less than 31 percent in 1965 to approximately 66 percent by 1984, black elected officials rose from approximately 500 in the early 1970s to over 8,015 by 1993. African Americans have served as mayors of major cities such as Atlanta, Baltimore, Birmingham, New Orleans, Cleveland, Detroit, New York, Philadelphia, Seattle, Los Angeles, and Washington, D.C.. Following the election of 1992, the Congressional Black Caucus was 40 strong, 39 representatives and America's first black female Senator, Carol Mosely Braunn.

Braunn's election to the U.S. Senate from Illinois in 1992 was most noteworthy given the paucity of black officials at the state and national levels. It is at the national level where the limits of black politics are most pronounced. Of the nation's 100 Senators, only one in the 1990s was African American. Although L. Douglas Wilder was elected America's only black governor in 1989, he was the first and elected by the slimmest of margins, 7,000 votes out of the 1.7 million cast. Moreover, despite the rather pronounced increase in participation of blacks at the state and national level, one can reasonably question the extent of its impact. The Reagan-Bush years, 1981-1993, provide strong support for the view that black political power is limited in the face of unified white support. When the majority white vote is split fairly evenly between the major parties, however, the black vote acts as the balance of power and in effect selects the winning candidate. (The balance of power strategy operates better at the local and state levels where the size of the black minority is more significant.) Even under this scenario, transforming support into public policy is often challenging.

The passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 gave the black political empowerment theorist the long-awaited opportunity to test their theory. Now that blacks had access to the ballot, would they be able to elect blacks and other candidates of their choice? The answer is that when blacks possess sufficient numbers, leadership, organization, and resources, they have been fairly successful at gaining political offices. This can be clearly seen when one examines black elected officials at the local, state, and national level.

A major factor in electing black officials is the percentage of the voting age population which is black. Local areas, cities, counties, county commission districts, and city council districts have the largest concentration of African Americans and it is at the local level where you will find the greatest percentage of black elected officials. These officials include mayors, county commissioners, city councilmen, and other municipal and county governing boards. According to the 1993 volume of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, Roster of Black Elected Officials, there are 5,709 black local officials, comprising approximately 70 percent of the 8,015 black elected officials.

Senators and representatives comprise the overwhelming majority of black elected officials at the state level. This cohort of black elected officials comprise the second largest group of black officials. In the period from 1965 to the 1992, there was a dramatic increase in the proportion of black legislators elected to state houses, primarily in southern states. There were 533 black state officials comprising approximately 7 percent of the 8,015 black

elected officials. During the '70s, approximately 84 percent of the black legislators represented predominantly black districts while the figure increased to 90 percent during the 1980s.

L. Douglas Wilder, a black representative who had risen to the ranks of Lieutenant Governor, became America's first black elected governor. Given the low tendency of whites to support black candidates, his victory was held as a progressive breakthrough although he did not receive a majority of the white vote. The 39 percent of the white vote, coupled with an almost monolithic black vote, provided Wilder a victory margin of microscopic thinness. As is the case in all of the states, African Americans constituted a minority of the voters in Virginia and could not deliver the election for Wilder on the strength of their votes. However, given the strong support in the white community, the black electorate became the balance of power in this historic election.

Representatives and senators comprise the smallest cohort of black elected officials even though, as a result of the 1992 elections, they have reached an all-time high of 40. But their capacity to influence national policy makes them arguably the most far-reaching. Although they have not been uniformly successful, their influence on the Clinton administration was at times clearly felt, particularly in the question of policy toward Haiti.

An examination of black elected officials at the local, state, and national level reveals that the theory of black political empowerment has borne fruit. When leadership, organization, resources, and numbers are present, the black electorate is capable of electing a candidate of their choice. Although areas in the rural black belt South have the requisite number of black voters, they generally lack the leadership, organization, and resources that are required to elect African-American candidates to office. It is also important to note that while blacks comprise approximately 12 percent of the U. S. population, they hold fewer than 2 percent of all elected offices.

The election of black officials, however, pushed the theory of black political empowerment to another level. Once African Americans gained a significant number of political offices, they were faced with the task of influencing public policy in such a way that black people as a whole would benefit. It is in this area — the translation of votes and offices into a wide-ranging policy agenda — where the theory of black political empowerment has been found wanting.

BLACK POLITICAL POWER AND PUBLIC POLICY, 1965-2003

The theory predicted that once blacks gained access to the ballot, they would elect black officials who would promote positive public policies which would eventually raise the collective black socioeconomic status to parity with white socioeconomic status. This prediction was articulated by white politicians as well as black leaders such as Aaron Henry, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Stokely Carmichael. The impact of black political participation has been mixed. While there has not been a socioeconomic revolution, the benefits of black political empowerment have been considerable.

One cannot overemphasize the initial sense of group pride in the African-American communities when the first blacks gained elective offices. On the national level, 1967 marked the year when Carl Stokes and Richard Hatcher became the mayors of Cleveland, Ohio, and Gary, Indiana, respectively. By 1970, the Congressional Black Caucus was organized in a show of strength for black Americans. Moreover, as the number of blacks increased at the local level, great pride was taken merely in the symbolic victory of having African Americans in heretofore unaccessible positions of power. However, this novelty would soon wear off and cries for substantive public policies would be heard.

The material benefits from black political empowerment have been substantial. They have included the following: (1) access to officials; (2) a decline in police brutality; (3) additional resources for job training; (4) improvement of municipal water systems; (5) better

medical services; (6) more low-income houses; (7) improved basic services; and (8) greater access to government jobs. In brief, most of the benefits of black political power have been in a more equitable share of the benefits distributed by the public sector. Before blacks gained political power and offices, African Americans were unfairly treated by government in all of these areas — the treatment is far more equitable now, but still blacks have not been able to make their power felt as effectively in the private sector, i.e., business and industry. Most urban areas have a predominantly black electorate, but when business and industry move to the suburbs, black mayors find themselves crippled by the lack of a tax base which had heretofore been provided by these businesses. For the businesses that remain, black elected officials have generally been less than effective in garnering their support for efforts that would benefit the predominantly black residents of the inner city. Efforts to woo them back into the city have usually ended in failure.

On the positive side, many black mayors have instituted set-aside programs for major city contracts. Thus, black businesses are guaranteed a minimal proportion of city contracts. Maynard Jackson, the first black mayor of Atlanta, was especially artful with his affirmative action efforts: he threatened to move all city accounts from local white banks unless they developed affirmative action programs and he held up construction on Hartsfield International Airport, the world's largest, until black contractors were guaranteed a considerable share of the contracts.

Given the differing needs of rural and urban black America, it becomes clear as to why black political power has had a far greater impact in rural areas than in urban ones. Many predominantly black rural areas are underdeveloped and sorely lack basic services. Street lights, paved roads, water treatment facilities, low-income housing, and more access to public resources are monumental breakthroughs. These political plums are taken for granted in urban areas where there is a more urgent need for jobs and other remedies that would chip away at poverty and inequality, but that challenge entrenched white interests. As predominantly black rural communities have become more accustomed to the accoutrements of modern living, they are also demanding more from their elected officials.

Although the increased political participation and office holding proved not to be enough to attain the highest hopes of black political empowerment theorists, i.e., black socio-economic parity with whites, a number of developments took place between 1965 and 2000 which highlight the continued importance of black involvement in political participation. Chief among these developments were the increased political prominence of the Congressional Black Caucus, the black electorate's participation in presidential politics, and the Jackson Presidential candidacies.

The Congressional Black Caucus was organized in 1970 with 13 members. These members all represented primarily urban constituencies outside of the south, primarily in the mid-west, northeast, and California. They represented a national voice for black America. However, prior to 1992, they did not wield any appreciable degree of power. Although their number increased to 20 before 1992 and their chairmanships and subcommittee chairmanships peaked in 1987 at 7 and 18 respectively, President Reagan's refusal to meet with them is indicative of their lack of bargaining leverage. However, this was to change significantly in the election of 1992.

The size of the Congressional Black Caucus doubled from 1990 to 2003, from 20 representatives to 39 representatives, all Democrats. This expansion resulted from the Justice Department's efforts to create predominantly black districts primarily in areas where white racial bloc voting had produced a situation in which blacks faced insurmountable odds in their efforts to get elected to Congress. The redistricting that took place after 1990 created black majorities who in turn voted for black candidates. They moved the Congressional Black Caucus from the status of being "the conscience of the House," primarily using moral suasion, to a voting bloc with the capacity to play hardball politics.

During the Nixon and Carter years, the Congressional Black Caucus lacked the numbers to have a major impact on legislation. During the Reagan and Bush eras, they also faced unified and loyal Republican support which was enhanced by conservative “boll weevil” Democrats from the South. The fact that Clinton’s Democratic support was not loyal — enhanced the Congressional Black Caucus’ bargaining power. With their high degree of solidarity and the Democratic internal dissension, the Congressional Black Caucus was positioned to spell either victory or defeat for the President’s programs.

When Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, January 1, 1863, he laid the foundation for loyal black support of the Republican Party. Frederick Douglass once said, “The Republican Party is the deck, all else is the sea.” Thus, the Republican Party garnered the lion’s share of the African-American vote until blacks shifted to the Democratic Party in response to Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal. During the Eisenhower years blacks divided their votes rather evenly between the two parties, but since 1964 they have voted in much larger numbers and have given their overwhelming support to the Democratic Party. In fact today they are the most Democratic element of the electorate.

This trend was encouraged in 1960 when John F. Kennedy made the first overt appeal to the black electorate, using his influence to get King released from Georgia’s Reidsville State Prison. Martin Luther King, Sr., switched his support from Nixon to Kennedy as did millions of other black voters. Black voters provided the margin of victory for the Massachusetts Democrat in crucial northeastern precincts and expectations rose concerning his advocacy of civil rights. But because Kennedy had to concern himself with southern opposition in the Senate, he de-prioritized civil rights to the chagrin of the black electorate. Thus, when the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was passed largely as a tribute to his civil rights leanings, some analysts wrote that he did more for civil rights in death than he did in life.

Lyndon B. Johnson, Kennedy’s southern-bred vice-president who had initially been opposed by civil rights leaders, received overwhelming support from the black community at the polls when Johnson turned out to be a major advocate of civil rights. Johnson would eventually sign the three most important pieces of major civil rights legislation since Reconstruction: the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the Fair Housing Law of 1968. His War on Poverty created social service structure that greatly benefited poor blacks as well as having signed an omnibus bill that included a mandate for implementing school desegregation. Thus, it was apparent that overwhelming Democratic support was justified — Goldwater received less than 10 percent of the black vote against Johnson in 1964.

The conservative law and order campaign of Richard Nixon did not attract an appreciable increase in black support for the Republican Party in 1968. When Ford ran against Carter in 1972, it was the black vote that provided Carter with the winning margin of victory in seven states having a total of 117 electoral votes. Thus, expectations were high that Carter would develop programs to help black Americans in their quest for socioeconomic equity inasmuch as they played a crucial role in his election. Nonetheless, given his thin margin of victory, Carter, like Kennedy in 1960, was more interested in repositioning himself so as to attract more white support for his administration. Carter eventually set a new ceiling for senior level black appointees, created the job-training Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA), and passed a diluted version of the Humphrey-Hawkins Bill, a legislative effort to create more jobs and economic development. While blacks were somewhat disappointed in his level of support for black issues, their level of registration increased and African Americans solidly supported Carter in his losing effort against Ronald Reagan in 1980.

The Reagan-Bush era was a 12-year period of extreme black frustration with presidential politics. Both men had opposed the civil rights legislation of the 1960s and threatened

many of the gains that were made at that time. In fact, opinion polls indicated that the majority of whites were feeling that the government had gone too far. The Reagan years may then be properly characterized as “The Second Nadir.”

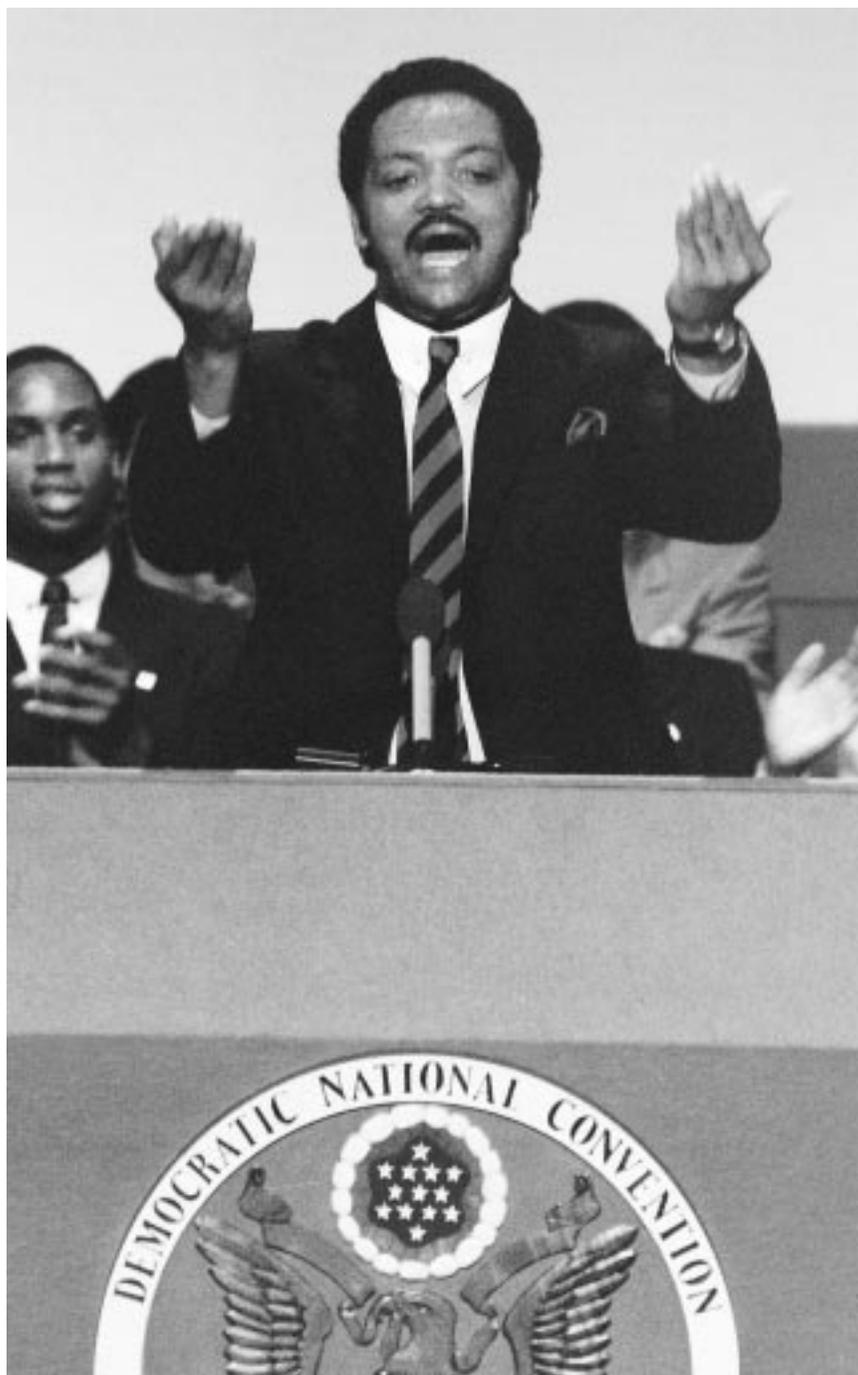
While the popular Republican promised economic growth that would “trickle down” to the black community, he actively retreated from the enforcement of civil rights laws. Social welfare efforts were reduced; the Equal Opportunity Commission and the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights were filled with appointees who opposed civil rights; and courts were packed with conservative federal judges. Moreover, the Justice Department ceased vigorous enforcement of busing orders and affirmative action laws while the Solicitor General argued against their constitutionality before the Supreme Court. Although Bush’s rhetoric had a more conciliatory tone, his domestic agenda did not differ sufficiently from Reagan’s to convince African Americans to take his promise for a “kinder and gentler America” seriously.

The Reagan-Bush era highlighted a major new challenge for the black electorate: what is to be done when one major party takes your vote for granted while the other one simply ignores you? It also brought attention to a major weakness of the black electoral strategy. At best, blacks can be a part of the winning coalition, and optimally provide the margin of victory, legitimizing their demands for public policy preferences, which historically have been ignored. At worst, blacks provide overwhelming support for the losing candidate and have no pragmatic claim to public policy preferences. In the final analysis, the public policy preferences of African Americans are dependent upon forces beyond their control.

The black electorate provided Clinton with overwhelming support. The 1992 election was the fourth time since 1960 that the black vote was critical to the Democratic victory. On two of these occasions, 1960 and 1976, black issues were deprioritized to gain white support because of their paper thin victories. In 1964, issues of civil rights had national support and gained priority status. While Clinton set a new record for black senior level appointees, programs that were likely to help the black masses primarily were not forthcoming, although African Americans stood to be major beneficiaries of any policies that helped the poor.

This analysis of the black electorate’s involvement in presidential politics reveals a dilemma. The black electorate plays a pivotal role in presidential elections only when the white vote is evenly split. While this encourages blacks to expect political payoffs, it also creates a fear in the new president that his white support is not sufficiently strong to sustain a commitment to issues of importance to the black electorate. When African-American voters give monolithic support to the losing candidate, they are ignored. Thus, it appears that the black electorate at the national level is powerless in either case. It appears that black public policy preferences get attention only when they are embraced by a majority of the white electorate. This was the case in 1964 when Johnson received over 60 percent of the vote and went on to sign the major civil rights legislation of the post-World War era.

Jesse Jackson’s 1984 campaign for the Democratic nomination for the presidency was the first campaign effort of an African American to be taken seriously. Although Shirley Chisholm sought the nomination of the Democratic Party, several factors helped to deny her the status of a serious challenger. Chief among them were her lack of funds and other resources. Moreover, her lack of nationwide name recognition made it difficult for her to overcome opposition from black and feminist leaders. She received only 35 delegates, 7 percent of the total number of black delegates at the 1972 Democratic Party National Convention. In 1984 Jackson’s campaign was an attempt to gain leverage within the Democratic Party. Jackson generated 3.3 million votes (18 percent of those cast; 77 percent of the African-American voters) and received 384 delegates. Despite the fact that he created new enthusiasm among blacks, he was unable to get the concessions that he sought: to change the 20 percent threshold needed to get delegate; to end the run-off primary system; and to gain more



*Jesse Jackson addresses the Democratic National Convention.
(CORBIS/Bettman/UPI)*

minority representation on the Mondale campaign staff. Nonetheless, Jackson was not deterred; he returned in 1988 for a revitalized campaign. The 1984 campaign had generated new-found interest in political participation for African Americans. Ultimately, the Jackson campaign produced largely symbolic results and revitalized the discussion regarding the ability of political participation to create substantive and measurable change which impacts upon the socioeconomic status of blacks.

Jackson's campaign in 1988 was more successful. He doubled his primary vote from 3.3 million in 1984 to 6.7 million, receiving approximately 29 percent of the primary vote. Jackson's delegate count of 1,122 nearly tripled his 1984 count. Several factors were responsible for his success: (1) the endorsements of black officials were more numerous and increased his support among blacks from 77 percent to 92 percent; (2) a broader range of issues allowed him to gain 13 percent of the white Democrats; (3) he had the advantage of his 1984 experience; (4) he was not running against an established national Democrat; (5) the threshold for winning had been reduced from 20 percent to 15 percent; and (6) he had more experienced campaign managers running his campaign.

Because of his increased success, Jackson was able to win more concessions from the party regarding its platform. Democrats endorsed the designation of South Africa as a terrorist state, increased set asides for minority contractors in federal contracts, urged D.C. statehood, and supported same-day voter registration. However, the Jackson forces failed to gain support for a tax increase for the wealthy, a U.S. pledge against first use of nuclear weapons, and Palestinian self-determination. Overall, the party's concessions did little to improve the conditions of rank-and-file African Americans. Thus, although temporarily there was a renewed interest in presidential politics in black America and a heightened sense of community pride, the two failed Jackson candidacies highlighted the fact that even unprecedented levels of black political participation meant little in the face of opposition from a sizable majority of whites who favored the Republican Party.

THE FUTURE OF BLACK POLITICS

Examination of the impact of black elected officials at the local, state, and national level, it reveals that the theory of black political empowerment overestimated the power of elected officials in general and that of black elected officials in particular. While political activity is not the predicted panacea for the ills of the black community, it is a resource which has benefitted the black community. The battle for equality cannot be fought without an arsenal of political activity and office holding. However, there is a growing understanding that the goal of socioeconomic parity cannot be addressed solely within the confines of electoral politics. Thus, strategies for economic empowerment must be developed independent of the political process. This insight embraces a view espoused by Booker T. Washington during the Nadir Era.

Booker T. Washington publicly argued that African Americans should focus their activities on developing their economic resources and forego efforts to attain political and social rights. He argued that political and social rights would eventually flow from the acquisition of skills and economic resources. Although this view was the dominant black strategy during his life, it was abandoned upon his death.

W.E.B. DuBois and the NAACP had always challenged Washington's emphasis on economic resources while accommodating whites on the issue of political and social equality and pursued political and social equality. Between 1909 and 1954, they paved the way for the post-World War II Civil Rights Movement. In the 1960s African Americans gained access to places of public accommodation and to the ballot box. Thus, political and social equality had arrived in the legal sense, i.e., the U.S. government no longer sanctioned discrimination. The

lack of economic power, however, severely limited the benefits of this political and social victory. Economic intimidation continues to keep many blacks from voting; a lack of economic resources continues to hamper the campaigns of black candidates; and a lack of money continues to keep a large majority of blacks from patronizing many places of public accommodation. These factors, coupled with the constraints on black elected officials, have convinced practitioners and scholars that political empowerment is not sufficient to secure economic empowerment.

This conviction has given a new impetus to the black economic empowerment movement. Black leaders, from all points on the political-ideological spectrum, are calling for black Americans to develop the economic resources of their community. The new economic empowerment theorists argue that to the extent that African Americans can start to provide jobs for themselves, economic disparity will be lessened. Black consumers, entrepreneurs, and capitalists must develop a group consciousness with respect to the economic development; the black dollar has to remain in the black community longer than it presently does. While there is appreciation for the role of government in the black political empowerment process, there is a growing consensus that the ultimate answer to black economic inequality must come from within the black community.

The post-World War II Civil Rights Movement achieved voting rights and access to places of public accommodations. It was hoped that political participation and freedom from discrimination would bring about equity for African Americans. After approximately 30 years of equal opportunity and voting rights, blacks are still disproportionately poor and ridden by negative lives. While political development and constitutional protection will remain on the activist agenda, there is a growing appreciation for the notion of economic empowerment. There is also a growing acceptance that racism, in some form, may be a permanent feature of American society.

Racism is a moral and pragmatic problem. It is a moral problem simply because it is unjust to judge individuals based on group membership. Racism is a pragmatic problem because it keeps African Americans from living the best life possible — it denies for instance the optimal learning and advancement opportunities which provide the foundation for security and happiness. The advocates of black economic empowerment argue that if somehow African Americans could develop their own economic institutions and have the capacity to hire a large segment of the black collective, then racism would cease to be a pragmatic problem. In other words, if African Americans could develop their own institutions, which would be open to all people and which would meet their human needs, then despite the existence of racism, African Americans could live productive lives. While still pushing for strong enforcement of political and social rights, this view de-emphasizes political participation as the major tool of black empowerment.

The goal of integration at the expense of dissolving black institutions has little credence in the present era. While blacks will continue to maintain access like all other ethnic groups, black pluralism argues that blacks must develop and maintain their own political, social, and economic institutions. Thus, while politics alone cannot increase the socioeconomic status of the black collective, it is now believed that political activity supplemented by strong social and economic institutions can. As opposed to expecting socioeconomic conditions to change because of political activity, there will be independent movements which will focus on the economic and social condition of African Americans. Hard lessons have been learned and new strategies are being born.

	1960	1970	1980	1988
Black	29.1	43.5	56.5	63.3
White	61.1	56.0	65.8	66.6

From: M. Margaret Conway, Political Participation in the United States (Washington, D.C., 1991), p. 108.

	1964	1968	1972	1976	1980	1984	1988
Black	58.5	57.6	52.1	48.7	50.5	55.8	51.5
White	70.7	69.1	64.5	60.9	60.9	61.4	59.1

From: Jaynes and Williams, A Common Destiny, p. 235

	Federal	State	City	Total*
1941	1	26	6	33
1951	2	40	40	82
1965	4	103	145	280
1975	18	281	2,266	3,503
1985	20	396	3,838	6,016

**Includes all other elected officials*

From: Jaynes and Williams, A Common Destiny, p. 240

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Chapter Twenty-two

BLACK INTERNATIONALISM: AFRICAN AMERICANS AND FOREIGN POLICY ACTIVISM

William R. Scott

The American Negro should have as much interest in the development of Africa as the American Jew has in the development of Israel...No other group as a whole should be more sensitive to the aspirations of African peoples for freedom, equality, and recognition, more understanding of the underlying factors of motivation, and more determined that the United States make a significant contribution to Africa's uplifting.

— Charles C. Diggs, Jr.
June 1959

AFRICA CONSCIOUSNESS, CONNECTIONS, AND CONCERNS

Inspired by strong bonds of allegiance to their ancestral homeland, ethnic groups in the United States have exerted considerable influence on America's policy toward their countries of national origin. From the founding of the American nation to the present, political theorists observe, immigrants of diverse overseas origins have organized to pressure the U.S. government to pursue foreign policy advantageous to kinfolk abroad. American ethnic groups, states Alexander DeConde, traditionally have operated as special interest lobbyists on foreign policy, often affecting government decisions involving countries with significant numbers of immigrants in the United States — the Irish, the Germans, eastern and southern Europeans, and the Jews. The response of policymakers to ethnic group pressure has varied but the views of Americans from Europe have consistently influenced aspects of American diplomacy.

Unlike European ethnic groups, African Americans have rarely been a force in the formation of America's relations with Africa, the black motherland. Exclusion until the last quarter of the 20th century from effective participation in all facets of government produced the preoccupation among American blacks with the attainment of domestic rights long denied them. Constricted constantly by the color line, most severely in the country's southern states, African Americans generally had little reason to be concerned with the conditions of blacks beyond America's borders. In addition, pejorative stereotypes of Africa, pervasive in American society since the Atlantic slave trade, had created a marked resistance to an African identity and interest in African affairs among numerous Americans of African descent. White racism and the rationalization of racial slavery had spawned widespread negative images of Africa and Africans. "These stereotypes," explains Robert Weisbord, "enjoyed wide currency among whites and not infrequently were ingrained in black minds." Africanness became a source of shame to many African Americans constantly subjected to society's racist defamation of Africa and African peoples.

Despite the prevalence of negative perceptions of Africa and Africans among Americans from Africa, there has always been a stratum of American blacks that consciously embraced an African identity and espoused Africa's progress. For instance, blacks in 18th century America preferred the name "African" over the other racial appellations then applied to them, names such as the Portuguese-derived term "negro." It was the designation they commonly gave themselves and their organizations, as witnessed in the Free African Society, the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the African Lodge of Prince Hall Masons, and the African Grove Playhouse. During and after the colonial period, observes Sterling Stuckey, "the term African held pride of place among black leaders in the North, to say nothing of the preferences of the black masses."

Some early proponents of an African identity established programs to promote the welfare of African nations through black emigration, enterprise and evangelism. Paul Cuffee, the devout Quaker and prosperous Massachusetts trader, proposed a selective Africa return of African Americans. In 1811, the black sea captain and shipbuilder sailed to the West African colony of Sierra Leone, newly formed by British abolitionists as a sanctuary for freed blacks in England, to inspect the prospects there for repatriation. As a Christian, successful entrepreneur, and member of the "African race," Cuffee believed he could convert his benighted brethren from paganism and participation in the slave trade into disciples of the Cross and capitalism. Content with the conditions he found in Sierra Leone, Cuffee returned there four years later, taking largely at his own expense 38 free blacks who settled there and made the British colony their home. The black Yankee planned subsequent ventures in West Africa, but his untimely death in 1817 abruptly ended those undertakings.

Other black men of substance — Daniel Coker, Lott Carey, John Russwurm, Martin Delany, and Henry H. Garnet — also moved by beliefs in black brotherhood emerged in the antebellum period as prominent advocates of African emigration and generation. A religious leader in Baltimore's black community, Coker aligned himself with the American Colonization Society (ACS), an organization that was formed in 1816 by whites devoted to the wholesale deportation of free blacks in Africa, in the newly formed colony of Liberia. Carey, a Baptist preacher in Richmond, and Russwurm, editor of America's first black newspaper, *Freedom's Journal*, also cooperated with the ACS and settled in Liberia under its sponsorship. Delany and Garnet, on the other hand, dissociated themselves from the society. They independently sought to settle African Americans among the Yoruba in the Niger River Valley where they felt blacks could develop their own culture and institutions outside the dominance of white men.

"Pan-Negro nationalism," however, never succeeded in creating a major return to Africa or a persistent contact with African communities. Most articulate Northern blacks before the Civil War opposed colonization, insisting that they were no longer Africans but the descendants of Africans. Two centuries of acculturation in America, they argued, had melded them into a new people — Americans from Africa whose appropriate name was "colored American." Africa was the land of their ancestors but America had become their home. Among free blacks adamantly opposed to white-led repatriation, however, adopting an American nationality and rejecting an African identity did not mean that African Americans had severed all ties with Africa.

Between 1850 and 1900, in the years of Europe's penetration and domination of Africa, some elite black Americans remained proud of the African part of their identity and initiated efforts to affect American policy toward the ancestral continent. Some of America's Africa conscious black bourgeoisie had begun to employ diplomacy as a means of advancing the welfare of overseas African people. The initial focus of these efforts was the fragile republic of Liberia, beleaguered throughout Europe's partition of Africa by the threat of French and British encroachment. By the end of the century, the foreign policy initiatives of African Americans — led by Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois — extended across the continent to the Union of South Africa, the Congo Free State, and Abyssinia (as Ethiopia was then called) in the Horn of Africa. In the next

century, black diplomacy, prominently reflected initially in the series of Pan-African conferences organized by DuBois, embraced causes throughout colonized Africa. By the advent of the Civil Rights Movement headed by Martin Luther King, Jr., an area of special concern was Southern Africa where entrenched white settler regimes ruled over vast black majorities whose leaders had embarked upon armed resistance to liberate their nations from minority rule.

Rarely, however, did African-American ventures into international affairs comprise coordinated cooperation of the black elite and the rank-and-file. Whatever the issue — whether it was Africa's partition, Belgian atrocities in the Congo, the Anglo-Boer War, African self-determination, Liberian aid, decolonization, or majority rule — action to affect U.S. policy toward Africa was generally limited to Africanists among the black intelligentsia. As Congressman Charles Diggs observed on the eve of sub-Saharan Africa's liberation from colonialism, very few African Americans "below a select leadership" appreciated the important implications of America's relations with Africa. The imposition during slavery of ideas of African inferiority based on an imputed lack of cultural heritage and group achievement, he explained, had trained the black masses to disdain Africa and dismiss America's duty to advance Africa's development.

Only twice in the history of U.S. and Africa relations were Africanists able to organize broad inter-class action around America's Africa policies. The first time African Americans organized extensively across class lines to lobby Washington on behalf of an African nation was in 1935, when both the black masses and leadership mobilized around the defense of invaded Ethiopia. It was not until 50 years later, at the height of anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa, that similarly large coercion was coordinated to pressure the White House to advance human rights in South Africa. Aside from these two instances of foreign policy activism, American blacks have not organized extensive inter-class action on behalf of African causes.

The mass response of African Americans to the Italo-Ethiopian crisis and the mobilization of U.S. blacks against South African apartheid are historic landmarks. In the modern era, the events mark milestones of the reclamation of an African identity among Americans of African ancestry. Both constituted the continuation and consequence of major black nationalist movements, movements with distinctive international dimensions and launched by influential race-first ideologues in the 1920s and 1970s. They also demarcate the extended time it took — from the advent of Garveyism to the aftermath of Black Power — for African Americans to acquire the amount of African awareness and public influence required to affect America's relations with Africa and other parts of the black world.

THE ETHIOPIAN DEFENSE MOVEMENT

Momentous events in the Horn of Africa shortly before Pearl Harbor precipitated the process that would ultimately "Africanize" and internationalize modern black American politics. It was in November 1934 that an Anglo-Ethiopian commission surveying the contested boundary between Ethiopia and Italian-ruled Somaliland found itself faced by a force of Italian colonial soldiers at Walwal, a tiny oasis in the Ogaden desert near the disputed border. The two forces were soon plunged into battle, with casualties suffered on both sides. It was the clash of arms at Walwal that precipitated a major diplomatic crisis between Italy and Ethiopia and provided Benito Mussolini, the Italian premier, with just the excuse he needed for a war to avenge Italy's defeat in battle in Ethiopia in 1896.

Although faced with abject indigence and rampant racism, America's deprived black multitudes were deeply stirred by Italian militarism's threat to the freedom of the East African kingdom of Ethiopia. For two years — through the diplomatic crisis of 1935 that preceded fascist Italy's invasion to Ethiopia's occupation in 1936 — aroused sectors of the African-American population struggled to defend and aid the ancient black monarchy ruled by His Majesty Haile Sellassie I. The mass character of the campaign is reflected in the scope and constituency of pro-

Ethiopian activism. In their first major foray into foreign affairs, blacks from all geographical regions and socioeconomic backgrounds participated in anti-fascist activity. In small- and large-scale demonstrations, both spontaneous and organized, aroused sectors of the black privileged and poor prayed, petitioned, and protested for Abyssinian rights, albeit without success.

Pro-Ethiopian activists included an array of elites from the African-American establishment. Leaders of the major civil rights, church, and civic associations actively participated in or contributed to Ethiopian defense actions. Prominent black figures such as the NAACP's Walter White, Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. (pastor of Harlem's Abyssinian Church), and Mary Church Terrell (an influential figure in the black women's club movement), were ardent champions of Abyssinian justice. So were the distinguished black scholars of the day. The noted historians W.E.B. DuBois, Carter G. Woodson, and Charles Wesley propagandized vigorously in black publications for Ethiopian rights. Leaders outside the black mainstream, such as the heads of the nationalist and socialist associations who stressed the power of mass politics, were deeply involved in pro-Ethiopian agitation. A. L. King, a principal Garveyite, and the Communist James W. Ford became central figures in the grass-roots mobilization of African Americans around the Ethiopian cause.

African-American secular and spiritual organizations heeded the calls of their leaders and vowed their allegiance to Ethiopia's freedom, on essentially racial grounds. The NAACP, the Urban League, and the National Association for Colored Women published statements supporting Ethiopia's position against Italy. They also lobbied the White House to oppose the territorial encroachment of Ethiopia and urged African Americans to send contributions to Addis Ababa. Varied black church denominations depicted the African kingdom of Ethiopia as an ancient Christian state and declared U.S. blacks were bound by race and faith to aid their Abyssinian brethren.

The African-American press acted similarly. Aware of the news value and racial symbolism of the Ethiopian dispute, black newspaper editors devoted extensive coverage to the Abyssinian crisis. The *Pittsburgh Courier*, the *Chicago Defender*, the *California Eagle* and other black papers carried scores of pictures, reports, and commentaries on the war. In pro-Ethiopian articles and editorials, leading black journalists such as Roi Ottley and Joel Rogers contended that African Americans had a racial duty not only to defend Ethiopia but to have an effective voice in policy affecting Negro nations.

At times African-American radicals and racialists worked jointly and with other black grass-roots groups in coalitions such as the Provisional Committee for the Defense of Ethiopia (PCDE). A black united front, the PCDE was headed by Garveyites and Communists based in New York. The organization raised funds for Ethiopia's defense, requested the Vatican's intervention in the dispute, and chastised Franklin Roosevelt for America's neutral stand on the Abyssinian crisis before it dissolved in late 1935 and was replaced by support groups formed for war relief — the Friends of Ethiopia, the United Aid for Ethiopia, and the Ethiopian World Federation. These extensions of the PCDE were black-led and mass oriented. Through the dispute, they operated as the spearhead in America of the Abyssinian defense and relief effort.

Underlying most black agitation and mobilization were the sentimental ties of ordinary African Americans with venerable Abyssinia. American blacks generally felt a far greater sense of racial identity with Ethiopia than they felt with the rest of Africa. It was rooted in the tradition of Ethiopianism, which peaked when Tafari Makonnen was crowned as Emperor Haile Selassie I. Tafari's coronation in 1930 as king of kings implied to African Americans nurtured on Ethiopian symbology that the promised day of global black redemption was imminent. The fascist menace to Ethiopia seemed, therefore, to threaten the last great hope for African salvation everywhere.

Of great import was the relation African Americans perceived between Italian fascism and American racism. The masses of American blacks typically identified neo-Roman imperialism with "Red-neck" racism. They equated the lynchings of blacks in the American South with the slaughter of Africans in Abyssinia. In the South, the parallels were accentuated by the terrorist



Emperor Haile Selassie. (Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University)

actions of the Blackshirts, white vigilante groups named after the fascist militia that forced Benito Mussolini into power in Rome and led to the bloodbath in Ethiopia.

Black American concern for Ethiopia's freedom had no impact on U.S. foreign policy or on the war's outcome. Appeals of Ethiopianists to the black public for relief funds produced meager results. The efforts of race patriots to enlist in the Ethiopian military were thwarted by U.S. law. And, pleas sometimes made with white liberals and leftists to Washington and Geneva for antifascist sanctions were rejected by the Powers. It was the policy of the White House, under great pressure from the powerful isolationist lobby, to avoid involvement in the conflict, and the League of Nations was far more concerned with appeasing Rome than with protecting the safety of a small African nation.

The state of black America in the 1930s impeded black ambitions in foreign affairs. African Americans were wretchedly poor during the Depression years. Furthermore, they were politically impotent. There was only one black in Congress, Arthur B. Mitchell, a Democrat from Illinois. Nowhere, not even in the North where they could freely vote, had blacks obtained political power sufficient to wield influence over government policy, domestic or foreign. They constituted no electoral threat. The only lobbying apparatus at the time was the NAACP which, although committed to Ethiopia's freedom, was naturally preoccupied with domestic rights. The Ethiopian societies had no experience in foreign affairs and no access to policymakers. There were also the problems of general U.S. disinterest in Africa, the "dark continent," and the American public's widely held isolationist outlook. It would take 50 years before Africanists could cultivate a critical Africa constituency among blacks and generate public awareness and pressure around America's Africa policy.

THE FREE SOUTH AFRICA MOVEMENT

The issue that galvanized broad segments of the black community again around foreign affairs was major race conflict in South Africa. Township unrest, sparked by the exclusion of the African majority from the newly created tricameral parliament, erupted in a people's war in 1984 against the apartheid state. The insurgency was widely covered in the foreign press as was the Italo-Ethiopian War many years earlier. Until official bans were placed on the media, reports of the rebellion and repression in South Africa, especially televised images of the unrest, brought the issue of apartheid into the homes of most African Americans. The press reports of the battle inside South Africa inspired and incensed American blacks. The news of black repression and resistance pushed black American emotions to almost a fever pitch, producing widespread demands for punitive measures against South Africa. In the 1930s, reports from the press, radio, and newsreels of Ethiopian valor and the ruthless Italian assault had essentially the same effect on black Americans.

American blacks first became conscious of South Africa at the same time they became aware of modern Ethiopia. Their knowledge of the people and politics at Africa's southern extremity dates from the end of the last century when Reverend Magena Makone, the leader of an "Ethiopianist" secessionist movement from the Wesleyan Church, came to the U.S. to affiliate the sect with the African Methodist Episcopal Church. The ensuing associations that the black preacher from Pretoria formed between South Africans in the church independency movement and African Americans in the AME denomination during the era of expanding race segregation extended into the new century.

The formation of these trans-Atlantic ties coincided with wars in Ethiopia and South Africa. An event covered extensively in African-American newspapers, the Ethiopian conflict of 1896 ended in the defeat of an invading Italian army at Adwa, raising hopes of black freedom everywhere and symbolizing ascendant black power globally. British might prevailed over Afrikaner nationalism in the other conflict, the Anglo-Boer War — the so-called "white man's

war.” The victory in South Africa of a British expeditionary force over Boer soldiers also lifted black hopes around the world. But the conciliatory peace the Crown made with the Boer generals at Vereeniging paved the way for the decline of black rights in South Africa. After creation of the country’s new political union, its race policies increasingly resembled segregation in America’s New South.

It was not until about a century later that white supremacy in South Africa became a priority of the African-American public and politicians. Through the decades of disfranchisement and dispossession that followed the Anglo-Boer War and preceded the Nationalist Party’s election victory of 1948, American blacks attentive to African affairs sympathized with oppressed blacks in South Africa. But black leaders imbued with the “romance of Africa,” such as Paul Robeson, chairman of the Council on African Affairs, America’s leading Africanist organization at the time of the triumph of Afrikaner nationalism, were unable to generate serious opposition to expanding white power overseas. African Americans, with the exception of the Council’s members, rarely linked the black American struggle with African liberation. Even after the imposition of apartheid rule, South Africa remained a remote issue for most American blacks, who were becoming increasingly absorbed in the mounting domestic struggle for racial equality.

From the Eisenhower to the Kennedy administration, apartheid was mainly the concern of the predominantly white American Committee on Africa, a private policy-oriented group formed in 1953. In the 1960s, however, the decade of African decolonization, notions of common cause with African nations expanded among African Americans. Martin Luther King, Jr., and other members of the civil rights establishment showed through the American Negro Leadership Conference (ANCL), a coalition of the Negro vanguard, heightened interest in African affairs, including South Africa. They issued affirmations of African kinship, urging African Americans to identify with black liberation movements overseas, and appealed to the Kennedy and Johnson administrations to associate America with the aspirations of Africans under apartheid. These actions advanced awareness among African Americans of their African ancestry and America’s adoption of a South African arms embargo. Even so, at the time of Dr. King’s murder in Memphis in 1968 most U.S. blacks still remained disinterested in white supremacy in faraway Africa.

The gospel of black separatism, as preached by the Black Muslim Malcolm X and later popularized by Black Power ideologues such as the grass-roots activist Stokely Carmichael and the radical poet LeRoi Jones, produced a wave of Afrocentric sentiments and styles in the 1970s. A pan-African ethos surged through black communities inspiring popular conceptions of global black identity and unity. Just as Ethiopianists had drawn from the Garveyite philosophy to generate pro-Abyssinian activism, militant and moderate black organizations were inspired by neo-nationalist ideas in the Civil Rights aftermath to advance assorted African support action. The Congress of African Peoples, the National Black Political Convention, and the Congressional Black Caucus were among the varied black interest groups that sponsored pro-Africa resolutions and rallies signaling to Washington expanding African-American support of African causes and of action to affect America’s Africa policies.

But it would take another decade, after the Nixon, Ford and Carter administrations, before apartheid would become a central concern of African Americans. It was only when brutal white repression of the black revolt in South Africa revealed the depth of African despair and President Reagan responded to the escalating crisis with a policy of “constructive engagement” with the government of P. W. Botha, whose intent was to reform white politics but retain at all costs white power, that numerous U.S. blacks were finally moved to anti-apartheid action. It had taken almost 40 years — after the Sophiatown removals, the Sharpeville shootings, and the Soweto uprisings — before American blacks had embraced South Africa as a cause celebre and assumed a vanguard role in the American anti-apartheid movement.

Black denunciation of Italian aggression in Ethiopia had been mainly a protest of white abuse of black rights. It also represented dissent with American foreign and public policy per-

taining to Africans and African Americans. The reasons for black American mobilization around South Africa were similar. In the 1980s, African Americans also organized against external and internal black subjugation. Anti-apartheid activism was inspired by Afrikaner persecution of Africans and by American policy that was perceived to prevent black liberty abroad and black dignity at home.

The reelection in 1984 of Ronald Reagan, a longtime leader of Republican conservatives, who had won the presidency four years earlier in a landslide victory, caused Civil Rights leaders grave concern. Black rights advocates feared that the agenda of the conservative coalition the president headed was to reverse the Civil Rights gains of the 1970s. They complained that the president, in his first term in office, had “retreated from well established bipartisan civil rights policies.” The Civil Rights Task Force of the Washington Council of Lawyers claimed that the Reagan administration had failed to implement cohesive and consistent civil rights policies. In its opinion, the president had even encouraged resistance to further black progress. Moreover, there was evidence that he was insensitive to the problems of minorities and the poor, aggravated in the recession of the early 1980s by spiraling inflation and soaring unemployment. The economic recovery plan of the Reagan administration featured major federal cuts of social programs for the poor at a time when life for disadvantaged Americans sometimes resembled conditions in the dark days of the Depression. The result was widespread alienation from the White House — an estrangement which had not been so strongly experienced and expressed since the Nixon years when the White House had retreated from vigorous enforcement of civil rights policy set by the Lyndon Johnson administration.

Black estrangement was underscored by White House policies on South Africa. To many articulate African Americans, the administration’s view that it could best promote change by cooperating with the white oligarchy and by retaining trade with Pretoria represented complicity in white minority rule and indifference to legitimate black aspirations. Also, the increase in the regime’s aggressive and repressive security activity in black townships seemed to have been a consequence of Washington’s permissive policy. Black leaders charged that, expecting no criticism from the United States, Pretoria had acted with “Draconian impunity.” America had sent wrong signals to the apartheid state and the world. Constructive engagement with the Afrikaner minority and containment of Communism among radicals in the African majority disparaged black rights and defended white privilege. U.S. policy toward South Africa, it was contended, revealed the Oval Office’s Cold War philosophy and preference for white over black power.

There was no specific incident that initiated pro-Ethiopian activism. Black anti-fascist action evolved in response to each act of Italian aggression taken after the skirmish at Walwal in 1934 and culminated with broad protests against the actual invasion several months later. There was, however, a particular event that ignited extensive anti-apartheid action. It was the demonstrations launched in 1984 on Thanksgiving eve at the South African embassy in Washington, D.C. The arrests, a sophisticated media ploy, of three noted African Americans — D.C. Congressman Walter Fauntroy, Mary Frances Berry of the Civil Rights Commission, and Randall Robinson, executive director of TransAfrica, the black lobby for Africa and the Caribbean — sparked a national campaign against apartheid and U.S. policy known as the Free South Africa Movement.

Within a week public demonstrations against South African consulates, Krugerrand coin dealers, and corporations tied to South Africa spread throughout the nation under the banner of FSAM, which became a national multiracial front against apartheid under essentially black leadership. Every state, major religious denomination, ethnic group and occupation was represented in the new coalition. For two years and in more than 40 U.S. cities, operating mainly within the FSAM structure, ordinary blacks and professionals marched, rallied, sat-in, picketed and petitioned for justice in South Africa. Other blacks unattached to the alliance, such as student advocates of university divestment from American companies operating in South Africa, aided its aims through independent anti-apartheid action. By the end of 1985 a

mass free South Africa movement had emerged involving large-scale coordinated and spontaneous action on the part of thousands of Americans, black and white, across the country. Turmoil in South Africa and tolerance in the White House of the domination and disadvantage of blacks there and at home had finally catalyzed African Americans into widespread protests against apartheid and administration policy.

FSAM drew a black constituency that reflected elements active in the pro-Ethiopian movement. It attracted support from the black bourgeoisie and rank-and-file. Trade unionists, office workers, religious forces, student groups, scholar-activists, and Civil Rights leaders responded to its calls to protest South African racism and U.S. policy. In addition, but in contrast to the 1930s when there was no black politician of national prominence, FSAM derived support from the constituency formed by Jesse Jackson in his run in 1984 for the presidency. The broad organization in the multiracial Rainbow Coalition of blacks around Jackson's candidacy, which highlighted the issue of apartheid, constituted a bridge to mobilization against apartheid.

Through the enforcement of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, African-American politicians had won election by the mid-eighties to a critical number of seats in local, state and national legislative assemblies, including the U.S. House of Representatives. Black elected officials numbered in 1985 about 6,000. The Congressional Black Caucus, formed in 1969 to build power through collective voting, had grown from its original 16 members to 20. Because of their increased numbers at various levels of government, African Americans now had expanded bureaucratic access to policymakers and enhanced means, albeit still limited, to affect American foreign policy.

It was the Black Caucus that carried popular anti-apartheid agitation from the streets and campuses of America into the halls of Congress. In 1985, a leading member of the Caucus, Representative Ronald Dellums of California introduced legislation in Congress to end most U.S. trade with South Africa. Although defeated in the Senate, after having passed the House of Representatives, the Dellums Bill publicized and propelled FSAM's push for comprehensive sanctions against the apartheid state.

African Americans from the arts, entertainment, and sports participated in FSAM actions. This was a stratum of black society that had taken no prominent part in the Ethiopian campaign. The voices of black celebrities were rarely heard in the outcry against fascist aggression — muted in the Depression by personal, professional, and political considerations. Prominent athletes and artists felt sufficiently secure to speak out, however, against apartheid and American policy. Arthur Ashe, Harry Belafonte, Dick Gregory, Stevie Wonder, and Alfre Woodard, who portrayed Winnie Mandela on film, were among the many African-American personalities who helped publicize the free South Africa campaign.

The main factor motivating black anti-apartheid activism was the perception of the affinity of struggle in South Africa with the battle for black American rights and protection of the law against white violence. For many African Americans, South Africa was a clear-cut case of racist immorality and white complicity that extended to the White House. Apartheid-rule represented an overseas version of Jim Crow that the conservative powers in Washington supported. The persistence of exclusive white power in South Africa was perceived as unfinished business in the continuing struggle of American blacks against white supremacy.

This was also the case in the 1930s, when black Americans equated fascist aggression in Africa with white terrorism in America's "tar and feather belt." African Americans in the 1980s viewed apartheid from the perspective of their own history of race oppression. It had only been 20 years since Birmingham and Selma. Many could personally remember the humiliation of segregation and readily recognized in the vivid television scenes of police brutality connections between Afrikaner apartheid and the American caste system of Jim Crow.

The black elite at the forefront of the anti-apartheid movement made much of the connection and the common experiences of blacks under lynch law and minority domination.



Nelson Mandela. (CORBIS/Peter Turnley)



*A 1985 anti-apartheid march in Washington, D.C.
(CORBIS/Bettmann/UPI)*

Randall Robinson argued that U.S. blacks were uniquely concerned about America's reaction to apartheid. One reason was that African Americans were bound to Africa by race and heritage. Another was that they had acquired through their own struggle for racial equality a frame of reference for empathetically understanding the pain of black South Africans.

Another element present in both the 1930s and 1980s was the perception of charismatic leadership of African resistance to racist domination. Nelson Mandela had been lionized as the heroic icon of the black freedom struggle, not only in South Africa but worldwide. The jailed leader of the banned African National Congress epitomized the long battle against apartheid and racism in general. Mandela's stature among African Americans, heightened by his long years of principled opposition to white domination, matched in many ways an earlier generation's reverence of Haile Selassie. In the Depression era, Ethiopia's king represented the figurehead of global African redemption. In contemporary times, the Xhosa patrician Nelson Mandela became the world's preeminent symbol of race emancipation. According to Howard University professor Ronald Walters, the vast majority of African Americans marveled at Mandela's integrity and his consistency in the long pursuit of democracy in South Africa.

A similar stimulus to African-American identification with the South African struggle was the significance black Americans attached to South Africa. A free Azania, the preferred name of black nationalists for South Africa, symbolized the black race's new Zion, its new promised land. Before, Abyssinia represented Africans' last great hope for race resurgence. South Africa, a country of vast wealth, the continent's most industrialized nation, constituted revived hope in Africa's global renaissance. It signified for contemporary American blacks a potential center of worldwide black power, the place where, as the South African sociologist Mamphele Ramphele has commented, African Americans felt they might come to win battles and gain opportunities they had given up for lost in the United States.

There are other relevant parallels. African Americans were acutely conscious in the 1980s of a positive African identity. The rise of Black Power after the Civil Rights Movement effectively advanced identification with Africa. This had been true of the African heritage movement led by Marcus Garvey in the years preceding the Ethiopian crisis. The modern Africanist spirit, evidenced in the philosophy of the martyred Malcolm X, remained a potent force through the seventies and eighties. Advanced by Maulana Karenga and other cultural nationalists devoted to the recovery of an African identity and aided by the emergence of the Black Studies movement in the American academy, it inspired black and white collegians to explore and embrace the aspirations of the African world — from Selma to as far as Soweto. Because of the black revolution of the seventies, African Americans had become especially aware of their links to Africa.

There were also critical differences between the 1930s and 1980s. The passions of Ethiopian patriots ran deeper than the emotions of modern Africanists. So intense were anti-fascist and pro-Abyssinian sentiments that riots erupted between African and Italian Americans. There were also violent clashes with police in New York City and its environs. The distinctly radical and racialist dimension of Ethiopian activism encompassed the extensive, although failed, recruitment of black combat troops for service in Ethiopia. FSAM's anti-apartheid activism was mainstream, moderate and multiracial. Civil disobedience was its most militant form of protest, which made the movement easy to support in liberal circles.

No persistent or permanent black lobby for African causes existed during the Depression. The black world had no voice at the time on Capitol Hill. The pro-Ethiopian societies were ad hoc groups organized to halt Italian militarism or provide Ethiopian medical relief. They also operated out of Harlem, the focus of Ethiopian activism, instead of Washington — the center of national power and diplomacy. The organizational base of the Ethiopian aid societies was mainly an impoverished black rank-and-file and their mostly black nationalist or socialist leadership had no access to the nation's power structure.

Conceived at an African-American leadership conference held by the Congressional Black Caucus, TransAfrica was organized in 1977 as a permanent organization with funding from liberal religious groups and the Ford Foundation. Its main constituency was the black middle and upper class which by the eighties had gained substantial affluence and access to the nation's power centers. The economic and political power gained by African Americans by the time of South African crisis contrasted sharply with the desperate plight of blacks during the Ethiopian War. The educational, economic and political empowerment in the post-Civil Rights era of a critical mass of African Americans, who were prepared to work as partners with whites, explains much of the success of the anti-apartheid movement.

The White House and Congress had become especially sensitive by late 1985 to the strong opposition of the U.S. public, black and white, to apartheid rule and American policy. Faced with South Africa's defiant rejection of calls for change and foreign banks' suspension of credit to Pretoria, President Reagan issued an executive order in September placing limited trade and financial sanctions against Pretoria in an unsuccessful move to preempt stronger measures by Congress. In response to the intransigence of the South African government and the wave of FSAM protests, Congress, with the support of liberal Republicans, overrode a presidential veto and passed in October 1986 the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act, which imposed strident selective sanctions against South Africa. For the first time, African Americans had played a major part in shaping U.S. policy toward Africa. And, for the first time, African Americans had shown that they comprised a potentially powerful foreign policy constituency.

FSAM constituted the kind of interracial network the Ethiopianists were never able to organize. Strong impulses toward white racism and black nationalism prevented the formation of a broad coalition of Ethiopian support groups with a black organization at the vanguard. FSAM was a classic example of how interracial but decentralized coaction could be successfully coordinated around foreign policy issues. The movement also demonstrated the importance of interracial struggle. As was the case with the Civil Rights Movement, liberal white allies played an integral role in the Free South Africa Movement. The alliance's success showed as well how basic American values, such as human rights and majority rule, could be effectively used to affect liberal and even conservative public opinion.

THE FUTURE OF MASS FOREIGN AFFAIRS ACTIVISM

The broad organization of African Americans against fascist aggression and racist rule during severe economic depression and recession pose important tactical questions for Africanists inspired to galvanize U.S. blacks in the interest of future African causes. For instance, how likely is it that broad action can be generated around other Africa crises and policy disputes? What is the probability, when officials reject the policy preferences of African Americans, that mass pressure can be organized to influence policymakers? Should pro-Africa lobbies, when all else has failed, be sanguine about possibilities of mobilizing the African-American elite and masses in public protest?

Black politics in the United States has now been sufficiently internationalized to insure continued concern, in the future, for the welfare of overseas black communities. As Francis Kornegay, a Washington expert on African affairs, has stated, the black American connection with Africa has come into its own as a permanent asset and influence in U.S.- Africa relations. The linkage has increased in importance since the re-emergence of pan-African consciousness among key sectors of the African-American population in the late 1960s and will doubtlessly contribute to efforts to ensure that "Africa is more than an after-thought on the U.S. foreign policy agenda." However, mass mobilization of African Americans around African issues, whether in autonomous or in cooperative action with allied groups, seems unlikely.

The critical force generating mass black activism around Italian fascism and South African apartheid was white supremacy. It was the the parallel African Americans saw between expressions of white racism in Africa and in America that captured the minds of African Americans and motivated their protests. It was mainly the extraordinary power that race exerted on African-American attitudes that moved blacks in the United States to confront imperialism in Ethiopia and racism in South Africa. In the case of apartheid, notes journalist Okey Nibe, South Africa's racist philosophy and practice struck a raw nerve among people who had made considerable strides toward racial equality but were themselves just emerging from the depths of racial segregation and discrimination. Because of its affinity with white supremacy in modern America, apartheid represented a deeply resented moral and psychic affront that black Americans felt compelled to attack.

Nonracialism has officially defeated racialism in South Africa. Apartheid has now been repealed. Nelson Mandela has become the country's president. And settler domination has been abolished throughout Africa, but with the end of white supremacy on the African continent, the emotive relation between racism in America and in Africa, the relation that Trans-Africanists and Ethiopianists exploited to organize broad pro-African action, has ceased to exist. Crises caused by conflict across the color line are not now as likely anywhere in Africa as are catastrophes caused by poverty, famine, ethnic antagonisms, and civil war. However, African destitution and devastation — sometimes involving the loss of millions of lives — seemingly lack the power to provoke African-American passions and protests in ways that racial suppression has.

The tragedy in Rwanda is telling. With the exception of elite blacks in the Congressional Black Caucus, TransAfrica, and other Africanist organizations, the bulk of American blacks were publicly silent about the mass murder of Africans by Africans. In sharp contrast to the strong reaction of African Americans to Afrikaner racism, no public demonstrations were mounted by black special interest groups to protest the massacre or pressure U.S. policymakers to prevent the human rights disaster in Rwanda. The destruction in three weeks of a million Tutsis and moderate Hutus by extremists Hutus in the Rwandan military and militia appalled — but prompted no major action from — African Americans. Rwandan genocide, one of the great human rights disasters of modern time, produced no considerable outpouring of concern from American blacks or from Americans in general.

Black inaction on the Rwandan crisis underscores the point that pro-Africa mobilization has only occurred during crises involving major interracial conflict, crises that coincided in critical ways with the racial suppression of African Americans. It has only been where racial strife in Africa has produced potent parallels with racist practices in modern America — practices such as segregation, police violence, and lynching — that African Americans have been aroused en masse. The implication of the fact that black mobilization has depended on the recognition of commonalities between the domestic and foreign struggles of African people against racist rule is that, in the post-apartheid era, Africanists will be hard-pressed to mount broad solidarity action in support of African causes.

Whether they view mass mobilization as the ultimate pressure tactic or as a strategy of last resort, Africanists will have to discern and deploy powerful inducements other than antiracism to arouse elite and grass-roots African Americans to concerted action. Their success in organizing massive foreign policy activism around African issues will depend on how well Africanists employ the expanding Afrocentric tendencies of African Americans and demonstrate that people of African descent have a part to play in Africa's salvation beyond the substitution of white dominance with black governance.

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Chapter Twenty-three

AFTERWORD: THE FUTURE OF AFRICAN AMERICANS

Charles V. Hamilton

It is safe to say that there has not been a time in the struggle of African Americans in the United States when the strategies and tactics of that struggle have not been intensely debated. While most fair-minded persons, blacks and whites, could agree that the general goal of improvement of the condition of blacks was the focus, there have been many different views on precisely how to bring that about. This perennial debate predates the Civil War, gained increased attention after Emancipation, accelerated during the era of the New Deal, leaped to absolute prominence at the height of the civil rights movement in the 1960s, and is still of immediate concern at the dawn of the twenty-first century. It is reasonable to expect the discussion to continue into the future.

Always, the debate centers on *what* to concentrate on (broadly described universal economic development for everyone or specific race-oriented advancement for blacks) or on *how* to pursue those goals (protest action, litigation, electoral politics, even emigration, etc.). At times, the debates become condensed to rather simplistic dichotomies such as race vs. class, and integrationist alliances vs. nationalist political mobilization.

This essay carries the debate into a discussion of the future of African Americans and suggests that although the issues are not new, the coming years will present an environment where both the goals of the struggle *and* the strategies pursued need not be in conflict, but, indeed, may be seen as complementary. In fact, one might argue that the debates in the past have been exaggerated and that there has always been room for different emphases and multiple strategies. But certainly, as we move toward the 21st century, the complementarity of goals and strategies will be even more manifest. Neither should one be surprised to find that while other groups (namely, European ethnic immigrants) have faced similar intra-communal debates, these issues, for various historical and racial reasons, have been most public and persistent among and about African Americans. Whatever the current state of political-civic concern for other groups (ethnics, women, gays and lesbians, handicapped), the fact is that when one refers to America's "dilemma," the historical reference is to race and African Americans in the society. It has been the struggle of blacks that has fueled the long concern over interpretation of the Constitution's Civil War amendments. It has been the traditional black-oriented civil rights movement that has served as a catalyst to other groups to seek civil rights protections for themselves.

Thus, in many ways, the African-American struggle has been in the vanguard of transforming the United States from a parochial, closed, caste-like society to a more open, egalitarian one. It has been that struggle that has, in the realm of citizenship and human relations,

been the critical barometer to measure the country's commitment and capacity to achieve a viable democratic polity. Therefore, in a precise sense, a discussion of the future of African Americans is a discussion of the future of the United States of America.

In the new millennium, as we watch dramatic changes in a post-Cold War world, our attention understandably is turned to such foreign locales as Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, the Middle East, and South Africa. But the thrust of this chapter is that the United States is faced no less urgently with its own internal challenges of adapting to a new era.

THE DUAL AGENDA

Going back only to the 1930s, there seems to have been no annual conference of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) where at least one speaker did not admonish the black delegates to be sure to concern themselves not only with the plight of African Americans but with that of "all" Americans. The refrain became a familiar one: granted, blacks faced serious problems of racial segregation and discrimination, but in economic terms, they were more likely to advance if they thought and acted in concert with the majority society, irrespective of race. A rather typical observation is found in the address in 1933 by Dr. Paul H. Douglas (future Senator from Illinois, and then a Professor of Economics at The University of Chicago):

As I see it, Negroes face two sets of problems — one set of problems peculiar to themselves, and one set of problems they face in common with all mankind.... when you think of the Negro race and how we can benefit them, we must think how we can benefit them as poor farmers and as poor wage-earners... I believe the reconciliation of the Negro and white races ... is going to come through our being partners in a common enterprise; and so I say to you as a friend, along with all the noble work which you are doing to protect your position as Negroes do something also to protect your position as common members of the human race.

It was not as if such admonitions were falling on deaf ears or were not heeded by civil rights organizations. In fact, historical records amply reveal that the NAACP and the National Urban League (NUL), two of the oldest and largest groups formed to assist blacks, spent more than a small amount of time specifically on attempting to push *both* a civil rights agenda that would protect blacks from racial abuses and a broader social welfare agenda that would provide economic security and development for everyone. On more than a few occasions, the NAACP had to remind others that it was indeed mindful of and active in both arenas. When an Ohio congressman misread a letter sent to him from Walter White of the NAACP in 1937, White responded laconically:

My dear Mr. Harter:

Thank you for your good letter of October 25. However, my letter to you of October 21 was not about the anti-lynching bill but regarding the passage of a nondiscriminatory wages and hours bill at the next session of Congress. I am not surprised that you assumed that my communication had reference to the anti-lynching bill since that has been the subject of our correspondence for so long a time. But you can see from my letter of the 21st that after all I can write about other matters.

Ever Sincerely,

This concern for "other matters," that is, broader socioeconomic issues in addition to civil rights, has characterized the position of many African American organizations over the

decades. They have always understood the necessity to pursue what can best be described as a dual agenda. Thus, they supported proposed full employment legislation in the 1940s even though no attention in the proposed bill was paid to racial discrimination in employment. The same was true with health, education, and housing proposals. They agreed not to link civil rights demands to these bills.

For a time in the 1950s, however, the patience of the organizations ran out, and the strategy of subordinating civil rights to broader liberal social legislation was changed. The NAACP vigorously supported the so-called “Powell Amendment” (named after the sponsor, Congressman Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., of Harlem, New York) proposing that no federal funds should be appropriated to any institution, agency, or local or state government that practiced racial segregation and discrimination. This caused an intense debate within liberal, progressive circles, with blacks and whites lining up on both sides. The liberal opponents of the amendment argued that such a provision would lose votes for the broader social legislation, because southern democrats and northern conservatives would reject the attempt to enforce civil rights protections in such a manner. The proponents, on the other hand, insisted that both goals — liberal social legislation *and* protection of civil rights — should be combined and pursued simultaneously. To do otherwise, they argued, would reinforce the old “separate but equal” doctrine, which the Supreme Court was already declaring unconstitutional in the historic school desegregation cases.

Finally, in 1964, with the passage of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act outlawing segregation, the two agendas were no longer theoretically in conflict. After that point, the civil rights groups pursued the two agendas in a complementary, not conflictual, manner. They supported measures to end *de jure* segregation and discrimination, while at the same time pushing for liberal, progressive legislation on socioeconomic issues: the anti-poverty programs of the 1960s and 1970s; an expanded version of the proposed Family Assistance Plan of the early 1970s; a meaningful Humphrey-Hawkins bill for full employment; adequate aid to urban areas. All these measures were seen as applicable not only to African Americans, but to all Americans. And yet, for rather unfathomable reasons, critics of the civil rights groups persisted into the 1990s in claiming that such organizations were overlooking economic issues or were narrowly focused on racial discrimination and racism.

These charges, incidentally, came from blacks and whites, and from conservatives and liberals. African American columnist William Raspberry pointedly chastised civil rights advocates in 1991 for putting so much effort into passage of a civil rights bill that focused on the means of establishing proof of racial and gender discrimination in employment. To be sure, the bill should be passed, but, he and others wondered, would it really deal with the immense problems of joblessness, family dissolution, crime, drugs, and “the economic marginality of our people.” He concluded, “the Civil Rights Act of ‘91 won’t do a blessed thing about these problems.” What was needed was to put priority on the economic issues, and this, in turn, would probably avoid aggravating racial tensions sure to result from race-specific remedies.

Echoing the admonitions going back to the 1930s (cited above), sociologist William Julius Wilson wrote in 1987:

Politicians and civil rights organizations...ought to shift or expand their definition of America’s racial problems and broaden the scope of suggested policy programs to address them. They should, of course, continue to fight for an end to racial discrimination. But they must also recognize that poor minorities are profoundly affected by problems in America that go beyond racial considerations.

Equally as reminiscent of historical sentiments was the statement in 1991 by the President of the National Urban League, John E. Jacob. Laced with frustration and pique, he

wrote a letter that sounded much like Walter White in 1937. Responding to an article in *The New York Times*, April 12, 1991, that suggested lack of adequate attention by civil rights groups to economic issues, Jacob wrote:

Those who accuse civil rights groups of ignoring the crucial economic problems of African Americans or who condemn them for not transcending black concerns, conveniently choose to ignore the National Urban League's Urban Marshall Plan proposal. ... We object to articles that misinform the public into believing that civil rights and social problems represent an either/or choice for the civil rights movement. Both need to be pursued and both are being vigorously pursued.

One might ask, in the face of clear evidence to the contrary, why the critics of civil rights groups persist in raising the issue as if there has been a failure of or at least a reticence on the part of black civil rights groups to address economic problems. The answer very likely lies, paradoxically, in the record of successes of those groups on one agenda — civil rights, *per se* — and the increasing economic problems of large numbers of blacks in terms of the social welfare agenda. There is no denying that a vibrant civil rights movement in the United States has achieved enormous victories overcoming *de jure* racial segregation and, especially, obtaining the right to vote over discriminatory racial denials of the franchise. This is, indeed, a success story. But economic conditions of blacks have improved only slightly for some and have deteriorated for many others. The conclusion, however, that this latter situation results from earlier inattention is unwarranted. African Americans accomplished through diligent struggle what they could in a most reluctant socio-political system. To assume that *more* emphasis earlier on universal, economic issues would have yielded more substantive gains for masses of blacks flies in the face of long-standing political and economic realities. Blacks were not unaware of the transformation of the productive sector of the economy, or of the importance of developing marketable skills to fit a changing labor market. They raised these issues over the decades, but to no avail. And as a minority, they were certainly in no position on their own to overcome the dire consequences of these developments. Historical data attest to their efforts to enlist sufficient enlightened allies in the struggle. The social welfare agenda clearly did not have the support that was evident for the civil rights agenda at critical times, especially in the mid-1960s. Very many people — liberals and conservatives, blacks and whites — erroneously assumed that all groups would benefit equitably from an expanding economy. This was hardly the case, even as civil rights gains were made.

After the 1960s, when many white Americans began to experience harsh economic problems — modernized production and business practices that could maximize profits with fewer employees, loss of job security, lay-offs, inflation, lowering standard of living with rising prices and stagnant wages, need for higher educational skills, vulnerability to soaring health care costs — problems that were common, long-standing experiences of blacks, became part of the daily lives of many other Americans. Not until those actual, painful facts of life were broadly shared could there be any real prospect for effective political mobilization to address the problems.

This was the new dimension for the social welfare agenda to seize. With pursuit of the Civil Rights Agenda up to the mid-1960s, there was no real economic cost to be borne by the larger society. In fact, as legal racial barriers were removed, many whites stood to gain economically from blacks who were then able to spend their money in non-segregated markets — in such places, for example, as business establishments, schools, colleges. In an ironic sense, the end of legal racial segregation created new markets for white Americans!

But dealing with problems of increasing economic insecurity not only among blacks and other minorities but among whites as well presented a very different circumstance.

PROSPECTS: SOCIAL POLICY AGENDA

Given the problems facing the country in the twenty-first century, there is every reason to believe that the pressing issues of economic growth and social welfare, broadly defined, will be top priorities. Health care, welfare reform, and job creation are, of course, obviously high on the list. As indicated, African Americans have always been concerned about these issues and have supported progressive reforms to deal with them. Their organizations are not late-comers to these interests precisely because these problems have always plagued a majority of blacks. Even in the best of times, especially during the period of greatest economic growth after World War II, African Americans have lagged behind other Americans in reaping the benefits of prosperity. Therefore, one would not be surprised to find sustained interest in social welfare policies.

The critical point is that these issues will have to be dealt with in an environment of economic austerity and devastating budget deficits, along with increasing economic competition from foreign countries. Such circumstances always produce clashes between contending economic theories about how best to support a market economy and commit to social welfare protection. For too long, African Americans have been effectively locked out of access to the resources and benefits of a market economy. It is not surprising that an enormous amount of energy has been devoted to breaking down those barriers. This struggle will continue. It will require joining the continuing American debate on the most appropriate role of the government in fiscal and monetary policies, subsidies, and investment in human capital.

There will continue to be the perennial debate in American society over how far the national government should go in committing resources to education, and, indeed, over what form those commitments should take — loans, scholarships, tax credits, vouchers. The policy options are numerous, each carrying its own ideological stamp of justification — from the left and the right. This is no less the case in areas dealing with chronic unemployment, health care, and affordable housing, not to mention the always vexing questions of taxes and how to finance the programs so many need.

Through their established organizations and growing numbers of elected and appointed officials, blacks have indicated a particular liberal-progressive orientation on all these issues. But, candidly, in such matters, if such an orientation is to prevail in the long-run, it will need a broad political support base. This means allies and coalitions. It is equally evident that these coalitions will be shifting and based on perceived self-interest of the component parts. In this sense, when discussing black political empowerment, it is necessary to discuss strategies that cut across racial/ethnic lines. The appeal for allies is predicated on the assumption that there are some issues — for example, health care, jobs, education, housing — that affect many people, not just African Americans. To be sure, blacks are disproportionately disadvantaged, and, therefore, would benefit greatly, but not exclusively, by progressive social-economic legislation. There is, in other words, a possibility for a political strategy of “deracialization,” a strategy that identifies common interests among as wide a spectrum of interest groups as possible. Such interests ought to be the targets of specific coalitions, with no naive expectation that such alliances can or ought to be all encompassing or even permanent. (The old political adage: No permanent enemies, no permanent friends, only permanent interests — is appropriate here. Not to mention its kinship to James Madison’s ideas of factions and the formation of temporary majorities in *Federalist Paper No. 10*.)

As African Americans increase their political mobilization, they will be more adept at playing in that classic American political pluralist game. Without question, to some — perhaps many — this process appears as opportunistic (in the negative sense of that term, meaning without scruples or principles). In fact, it is political pragmatism that rather accurately characterizes much of how politics in a *democratic* polity operates. Rather than capitulation, it is the recog-

nition that the political struggle is a protracted one, with victories and defeats from time to time, not irrevocably for all time. Those groups best equipped to participate in that process are those groups best able, *over the long run*, to maximize their victories and minimize their defeats. And, it should be said, they are the very groups that ultimately gain the *respect* of others.

In candor, when the cry of “Black Power” was raised in the late 1960s, this was the vision of some (certainly not all) of the proponents. “Before a group can enter the open society, it must first close ranks.” Rather than a call for “separatism” or some variant of racial superiority and race hatred, it was a call to mobilize and become an effective participant in a process that rewarded cohesiveness, clarity of goals, and persistence. This is an approach engaged in for much of this country’s history, especially by ethnically conscious groups, organized labor, and trade associations and business groups. Rather than being perceived as divisive and alienating, these groups unashamedly considered themselves, appropriately, as shrewd participants in the pluralist political process.

PROSPECTS: CIVIL RIGHTS AGENDA

Paying attention to economic and social welfare issues should not be understood as sufficient to deal with persistent problems of racial discrimination. Clearly, an argument has been made — normally articulated in terms of race vs. class — that poverty, not racism, was the major reason for the lowly status of many African Americans. Tend to matters of eradicating poverty, proponents claimed, and in time the effects of racism would substantially, if not entirely, disappear. As indicated earlier, this has been a theme, from liberals and conservatives, for several decades.

While many African Americans have understood the importance of the social welfare agenda, they have not been sanguine that this by itself is enough in a race-conscious society. A society with a legacy of centuries of slavery, segregation, and discrimination based on race should not be naive in believing that racist beliefs and practices could be easily eradicated. The dual agenda recognizes the need to continue to struggle against denial of basic civil rights. The passage of important legislation in the 1960s ending *de jure* segregation could not be expected to have completed the task of achieving racial equity. That racism remains a prominent factor in American life should not be difficult to document. Indeed, such evidence is available, especially in the areas of employment and housing.

A continuing responsibility of those so inclined is to push vigorously the Civil Rights Agenda, to ferret out those acts of discrimination, and to seek the most appropriate means of remediation and punishment. It should also be clear that at times remedies might call for the most firm implementation of *measurable* affirmative action policies. This is as clear a value in a democratic polity as is the achievement of economic development. It should also be clear that pursuit of the Civil Rights Agenda, of necessity, must be race- (and gender-) specific precisely because the obstacles to be overcome are embedded in racial and gender prejudices. There should be no pretense otherwise. While pursuit of the Social Welfare Agenda can and ought to be deracialized, that is, in issues raised and policies proposed, this is not, understandably, the case with the Civil Rights Agenda.

A Social Welfare Agenda addresses problems shared across race lines. A Civil Rights Agenda confronts head-on problems of discrimination faced by specific, identifiable, ascriptive groups.

In recognizing the distinction between the two agendas, it is important to understand that different political coalitions will be available for different goals. The coalitions possible for achieving *full* employment might well not be the same coalitions amenable to achieving *fair* (non-discriminatory) employment, especially when achieving the latter involves certain policies calling for preferential hiring.

This fact got confused in the 1960s when liberals prematurely announced the death of racism in the brief, euphoric period of passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the launching of the Great Society's War on Poverty. Many changes were taking place on the civil rights front along with the enactment of significant new social legislation in education, Medicare, and Medicaid. At the same time, beginning in 1964, the country began to experience riots in the inner cities among blacks, stemming from many causes economic and social, that occurred with such rapidity every year that journalists began to refer prospectively to the "long hot summer." Poverty became associated with race relations and civil rights. Analysts combined the two.

In 1965, Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey was designated by President Lyndon B. Johnson to serve as Honorary Chairman of the National Advisory Council to the Office of Economic Opportunity, a group to advise on implementing the various War on Poverty programs. In his initial remarks to the Council, he stated:

As you may know, the President has asked me to take on another area — coordination of our government's far-flung civil rights activities. Actually, I consider the poverty and the civil rights assignments part of one objective — the opening up of real opportunities for all of our people. Civil Rights victories as such will be meaningless unless we give people the education and the jobs and the housing that will permit them to have genuinely equal opportunities. All of you in this Council have served the cause of equal rights; now you can help obtain equal opportunities for the victims of discrimination.

Given the times and the politics, such a linkage of poverty and civil rights was understandable, even if somewhat simplistic and overly optimistic. Very many people held Vice President Humphrey's views at that time.

But over time, it has become clearer that while the two agendas are certainly related, they nonetheless present quite different policy options and political challenges. A viable national health care system for all, which is by no means race-specific, is one thing. Effective remedy — for example, affirmative action — against racial discrimination in hospital employment is another matter. The Social Policy Agenda, of necessity, must consider class differentiations. The Civil Rights Agenda is aimed at overcoming race differentiations. Achieving success in one arena will not ipso facto produce success in the other. And therein lies the need to understand that these are importantly related, but at the same time distinct areas of operation.

It may well be that more emphasis will have to be put on one (say, Social Welfare Agenda) for *political* reasons. That is, the political coalitions may be stronger and more easily built. In a sense, this was the case regarding the earlier Civil Rights success in the courts and Congress in overcoming legal segregation in the 1950s and 1960s. But this should be understood as a matter of political calculation, as a matter of the need to make pragmatic political choices. It is hardly a matter of one agenda being intrinsically more important than the other. African Americans have economic *and* racial problems [recall Paul Douglas' comments 60 years ago, which still apply], and it would be inadvisable to conclude that either set of problems ultimately should be subordinated to the other. This was done in the 1930s and 1940s to the detriment of African Americans then and in subsequent years. The failure, for instance, to include two-thirds of the black labor force (agricultural and domestic workers) under initial social insurance coverage in the social security system severely restricted economic security of blacks decades later. This was a consequence foreseen by the NAACP and the NUL, but their potential liberal allies were insufficiently responsive to the warnings.

CONCLUSION

Charting strategies in the future to deal with these two agendas will be the essential challenge for African Americans and their allies. If coalitions will be shifting based on the particular policies pursued, it is also clear that strategies will include reliance on different political institutions at different times. For a long time, the United States Supreme Court was the major institution in moving the Civil Rights Agenda forward. In the near future, that institution is not likely to be as responsive as the Warren Court was in the 1950s and 1960s. Initiation of effective policies may require more attention to the Congress where, incidentally, African Americans are increasing their presence and influence. The same is true for the executive branch. Political regimes change, and political strategies must be adaptable. This has obvious implications for political mobilization. Litigation, electoral politics, and protest action are all viable means for pursuing one's political objectives. The fragmented nature of the American political system has its strengths and weaknesses. But it is clear that over the years African Americans have not been remiss in taking advantage of both the complicated check-and-balance structures of the three branches of government and the federalist nature of the system. The future will require no less attention to this frustrating but at the same time potentially rewarding situation.

In the nature of things, in the near future, one is likely not to see dramatic, cataclysmic changes in the form of a burst of social expenditures or path-breaking laws or decrees emanating from Congress or the White House positively impacting either components of the Dual Agenda. Neither the current nor projected economic and political situations, now complicated by the menace of global terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, suggest such developments. But if any group in the United States has understood and engaged the protracted political struggle in the face of seemingly insurmountable obstacles, African Americans have demonstrated that capacity.

	Total	African American	Percent Black	Percent of Blacks in Region
Northeast	50,809,000	5,614,000	11.0	18.7
Midwest	59,669,000	5,716,000	9.6	19.1
South	85,446,000	15,830,000	18.5	52.8
West	52,786,000	2,828,000	5.4	9.4
United States	248,710,000	29,988,000	12.1	

From: Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1991, *p.* xii.