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FOCUS

The monthly magazine of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies

Blacks and Jews–The Turbulent Friendship

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American Violence Is Home Grown

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POLITICAL TRENDLETTER®

Perspective

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Making Diversity Our Strength

In remarks I gave at the Joint Center's 1993 annual dinner, I expressed my concern about violence and the way it damages the quality of life for all Americans. I said that it was time to put an end to the "Urban Arms Race" that was dividing our nation in fear. Since then, violence has become public policy issue number one. This year, on the occasion of our 17th annual dinner, more than violence threatens to divide America.

Today we face a different but equally dangerous threat to our society: the unravelling of civility and the upsurge in intolerance. Once again American society is being challenged to maintain its social cohesion in the face of rapidly increasing racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity. One of this month's *FOCUS* articles, "Blacks and Jews—The Turbulent Friendship" by Milton D. Morris and Gary E. Rubin, explores a facet of this subject.

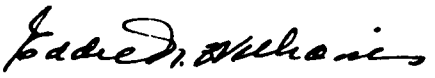
Maintaining social cohesion is synonymous with "Making Democracy Work," the theme of our 1993 annual report which was released at our March 24 dinner. This report documents the Joint Center's contributions to "Making Democracy Work," abroad and at home. While our annual dinner was being held in Washington, D.C., the Joint Center was hosting a major conference in Durban, South Africa, on "Safeguarding Free and Fair Elections" in that country. With the support of the Agency for International Development, we have been helping to prepare more than 25 political parties for South Africa's first nonracial election. Two previous conferences focused on "Polling and the Use of Campaign Research" and "The Role of the Opposition in the Democratic Process." The fourth and final conference will assess the progress of South Africa's transition to democracy.

But one does not have to go abroad to feel the compelling need to make democracy work. If America is going to lead a "New World Order," it will have to start here at home where the fight for justice, equality, and inclusion continues. Moreover, fundamental questions are being raised about the values underlying our diversity as a society and about the relationships between and among various racial and ethnic groups.

In a recent speech, Senator Bill Bradley summed up the meaning of American pluralism quite succinctly: "The American experiment says you can hold your ethnic or racial identity and still adhere to the American creed. But you can't allow racial and ethnic identity to overshadow the tolerance, respect, and mutual commitment to liberty that rests at the core of being American." The challenge we all face is to find ways to foster cultural diversity while preserving national unity. As always, it is easier to diagnose the illness than to develop a cure. But we must continue the search.

The Joint Center is working on several fronts to promote better communication and relationships across racial and ethnic lines and to strengthen the fabric of our pluralism. Our concerns have been particularly focused on relations between blacks and Jews, blacks and Hispanics, and blacks and Asian Americans, notably Korean Americans. On March 8, the Korean American Alliance honored the Joint Center "for outstanding leadership and contributions in working together for a better community."

This honor is greatly appreciated, and we will expand our efforts to build bridges across lines of race and ethnicity. Toward this end, our combined efforts will be strengthened: if we refuse to be seduced by simplistic solutions to complex problems; if we refuse to be silent in the face of intolerance; and if we refuse to be divided by false prophets. ■



PRESIDENT

FOCUS
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Blacks and Jews–The Turbulent Friendship

Two Observers Review the 100-Year-Old Relationship Between Black and Jewish Communities and Discuss the Prospects for Future Cooperation

by Milton D. Morris and Gary E. Rubin

A common yet appropriate observation of black-Jewish relations is that the good old days were never as good as we remember them. Claims of a rapidly deteriorating black-Jewish relationship rest in part on the false assumption that there was once a warm, conflict-free relationship. For too many, recollections of the generosity of Jews in the development of critical black institutions and in helping meet urgent needs of new black migrants to the cities, as well as of black-Jewish collaboration in the courts and on the streets in pursuit of civil rights, have blurred the memories of simultaneous conflicts and tensions between the two groups. The result is that most recent discussions aimed at improving black-Jewish relations are steeped in nostalgic recollections of these presumably good old days, and implicit advocacy of recapturing that relationship.

Reality differed substantially from these recollections, however. Black-Jewish relations throughout more than 100 years of interaction were always substantially limited in scope and depth. Both groups found common cause as their needs and circumstances permitted. Jews became early supporters of black efforts to cope with the harsh legacy of slavery. They assisted black migrants to the Northern cities from the rural South after World War I, and they became strong, resourceful allies in the long, costly struggle for civil rights in the courts and in the streets. Through these activities, black and Jewish leaders gradually forged strong, close ties that probably reached their peak in the major legislative triumphs of the mid-1960s.

The epic joint struggle for black civil rights had implications for the Jewish community as well. During the years of struggle, Jews had themselves been victims of discrimination throughout the United States, not to speak of the hate and discrimination to which they had been subject elsewhere in the world for centuries. They therefore rightfully felt threatened by any form of hate and intolerance, and in fighting alongside blacks were actually fighting for their own interests. Historian Hasia Diner points out in this regard that

> many of the issues raised by black civil rights groups spoke directly to the problems faced by American Jews. Job discrimination, restrictive housing markets, exclusion from universities and professional schools were concerns of Jews also.... Through race issues, Jews could show America how useful they had become.... In doing this, they not only drew links between themselves and the rhetoric of American democracy, but they illustrated the compatibility of their own heritage and culture with that of America.

This sense of common interest undoubtedly constituted a special basis for the close black-Jewish relationship that emerged around civil rights. Yet, even during those years of close, cooperative relationship between leaders of the two communities, there were significant tensions, especially below the leadership level. In 1946 black sociologist Dr. Kenneth Clark's analysis of black-Jewish relations concluded that there were grounds for antagonism in virtually every area of black-Jewish relations. Even at the height of the civil rights struggle, some black analysts were pointing to numerous irritants—from the daily encounters of the two groups in the urban ghetto to the chafings of black leaders at what they perceived as overly patronizing attitudes by Jews.

By the late 1960s, the bases and nature of black-Jewish conflict had begun to change significantly. The change, reflected most sharply in the emergence of a young cadre of black leaders advocating Black Power, in battles for control of local schools in New York and Chicago, and in vigorous disagreements with those Jews opposed to strong forms of affirmative action, signified a major shift in direction by relative newcomers to the leadership struggle. Moving beyond the broad principles of equal rights and racial tolerance that were bases for black-Jewish cooperation, new black voices sought to direct their own search for increased political influence and economic opportunity. The conflict at this juncture became more pronounced and more substantive than at any time in the past. But it hardly signified a breaking point in the relationship.

New Attitudes Toward Diversity and Identity

Black-Jewish relations have been complicated by powerful new currents in group attitudes toward race and ethnicity and in the way these attitudes are expressed. Historically, the great divide in American society has been racial. The civil rights struggle was fundamentally about whether blacks would be fully incorporated into society

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Dr. Morris is vice president for research at the Joint Center and Mr. Rubin is executive director of Americans for Peace Now, a New York-based organization which is working for peace and security in Israel.

Blacks and Jews

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with the same rights and opportunities as whites. Although blacks had long debated issues of their identity and status in the society, the overwhelming sentiment and drive were for inclusion in a multiracial, multiethnic community. Gradually, this simple black-white dichotomy has been changing to a more complex multiethnic picture, aided in large part by the heavy immigration of the past two decades. Along with this change has come a broader range of group conflicts, new concerns and insecurities by African Americans about their position and opportunities, and greater emphasis on group identity than at any time in the recent past.

In this changing environment, African Americans have been seeking to affirm their identity and assert their cultural autonomy with renewed vigor and controversy. They are demanding greater attention to their African heritage and their distinctive contributions to a common American culture. Use of the term "African American," demands for an Afrocentric curriculum in the public schools, increased conflicts with some newly arrived groups like Koreans, and increasingly angry expressions in speech, music, and literature are all reflections of this development.

The black community has tended to accommodate or tolerate a wide range of expression, some angry, distinctly antiwhite, and anti-Semitic, and some thoughtfully challenging their place in the common culture but most deeply committed to their heritage as part of an American society made richer by its diversity. Such accommodation of widely diverse views on matters of race, culture, and status has been a long-standing tradition in black America. The Black Panthers, the Republic of New Africa, the Nation of Islam, the National Urban League, the NAACP—all vastly different entities with different beliefs—have nevertheless coexisted in the black community at various times, some gradually disappearing as others remain and grow. This tradition of accommodating diverse viewpoints has made many blacks less perturbed about and less condemnatory of extremist rhetoric and hateful expressions than might be expected or desirable.

Such acceptance of within-group diversity is not peculiar to blacks. The Jewish community, too, has long been characterized by a very wide array of beliefs and attitudes about most major issues, including race relations. There are visible, vocal Jewish proponents of racist views, opponents of relationship building, and opportunistic proponents of the view that blacks are enemies of the Jews. More broadly, a concern with Jewish continuity and fears of population erosion through intermarriage have caused many in the Jewish community to turn inward and place less emphasis on building relations with others. In many respects, these trends parallel similar attitudes and expressions in the black community. What is noteworthy and encouraging is the fact that the hostile fringes in both communities have been and remain small. For all the many years of Jewish fears of rising black anti-Semitism, militant and overt anti-Semitic expression has remained confined to a relatively small segment of the black community, though its appeal to a larger audience is unknown and worrisome.

One factor that now magnifies black anti-Semitic expression and tends to exacerbate black-Jewish tensions is the communications revolution, which allows easy access to mass media, and the greater availability of major public forums for nontraditional, angry, even hateful expressions. Thus the Nation of Islam preached its anti-white and anti-Semitic views in the 1950s much as it does now, but today those views are expressed via talk radio and from the podium of major universities. We live in an age when outrageous expression has market appeal and when little is taboo. Yet public and widely broadcast expressions of hatred have unprecedented potential to affect public attitudes. A major challenge both black and Jewish communities face is trying to maintain the taboo against hateful and bigoted expressions while being mindful of the rights of free speech and the dangers of overreacting in the current climate.

Revitalizing the Relationship

Black and Jewish communities have had a long and mutually beneficial relationship through most of this century. That relationship, based in part on mutual self-interest and always more limited and contentious than most commentators now recall, has been changing. To some observers this change amounts to a serious deterioration that threatens a once-potent alliance.

While claims of serious deterioration seem exaggerated, there clearly has been change, and it is important that both communities use those changes as starting points in revitalizing the relationship. A strong, cooperative black-Jewish relationship is important because over time it has been clearly beneficial to both groups; it has demonstrated the efficacy of coalitions or alliances across social groups in the political system; the two groups share a strong interest in combatting hate and intolerance and fostering support for a diverse yet cohesive society; and because they have a broad array of shared policy interests. The challenge, therefore, is to determine how they can most effectively proceed to forge a relationship that appears likely to meet their respective interests. Three steps seem essential in that effort: to accept the principle of limited partnership, one that acknowledges the inevitability of disagreements and builds on areas of agreement; to choose issue areas of importance to both sides for long-term collaboration—a policy agenda for expanding opportunities is one such area; and to resolve to serve as special guardians of the society's pluralist values.

Limited Partnerships. Black-Jewish relations have been set back by a tendency on both sides to stress the issues on which there is disagreement and to overlook the broad areas of agreement and common interests. For many blacks, the Jewish community's failure to fully support affirmative action programs defines the state of the

(Continued on back page)

POLITICAL TRENDLETTER

Inside This Issue:

- President Clinton named Boston attorney Deval Patrick to be assistant attorney general for civil rights.
- Youth protesters were instrumental in forcing a waste management company to abandon plans to build a hazardous waste facility in a black Birmingham, Alabama neighborhood.
- Black women graduate from college at a rate that is 25 percent higher than black men, and more black women complete medical and law school than black men.
- Across the Nation: State attorney general Roland Burris lost the Illinois Democratic gubernatorial nomination; Marc Morial was elected mayor of New Orleans; in Pennsylvania, Democrat Dwight Evans presses his quest to be governor, and Republican Joe Watkins runs for the Senate; and Sheila Jackson Lee beat Houston Congressman Craig Washington in the primary.

Justice Civil Rights Chief Named

On April 14, **DEVAL L. PATRICK**, 37, was sworn in as the assistant attorney general for civil rights at the U.S. Department of Justice, ending a long and troubled search to fill that position. Patrick is the third African American candidate for the post. The first choice for the job, University of Pennsylvania law professor **LANI GUINIER**, was withdrawn by President **BILL CLINTON** amid charges from right-wing groups that she was a "quota queen" because some of her law journal articles were perceived to be controversial. District of Columbia corporation counsel **JOHN PAYTON** was also considered but he removed himself from the nomination process after members of the Congressional Black Caucus voiced strong objections to his nomination because he had failed to vote in the District of Columbia for 15 years.

Deval Patrick grew up in a poor black neighborhood on Chicago's South Side and attended public elementary and junior high schools there. He was awarded a scholarship to the prestigious Milton Academy in Massachusetts through the Boston-based program, "A Better Chance," which places minority students in prep schools. He later won a scholarship to Harvard University, where he received a bachelors degree in 1978. He then spent a year in the Sudan and Nigeria as a Michael Clark Rockefeller Travelling Fellow before returning to Harvard to attend law school. After law school, he spent a year as a clerk for U.S. Court of Appeals Judge **STEPHEN REINHARDT**. From 1983 to 1986, Patrick worked for the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund where he litigated a variety of civil rights cases and specialized in capital punishment and voting rights. He was a partner in the Boston law firm of Hill & Barlow before joining the Justice Department.

During his civil and commercial practice at Hill & Barlow, Patrick took on several civil rights cases on a *pro bono* basis, and he chaired the New England Steering Committee of the Legal Defense Fund. For the past three years, Patrick served on the executive committee of the Legal Defense Fund's National Board. He formerly served as vice chair of the Massachusetts Judicial Nominating Council, which screens candidates for appointments to state court judgeships by Massachusetts Governor **WILLIAM WELD**.

When President Clinton announced his nomination of Patrick at the White House on February 1, he said: "Because of our pursuit of equal treatment under the law, we've made a lot of progress in this country—in the workplace, in the schools, in the voting booths, and in the courts. But there is still much more to be done. We need a strong and aggressive civil rights division [of the Department of Justice] and a strong and compassionate advocate for freedom and fairness at the helm of that division."

Echoing the President's assertion that the government has more to do in civil rights enforcement, at his confirmation hearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee, Patrick said: "The legal and moral effort to end discrimination derives from a sense shared by most Americans that to do less would be a national failing.... But our work is not yet finished.... We still have Americans who can't get jobs, or places to live, or bank loans, or a decent chance to go to school, or who can't participate meaningfully in the political process.... Some ultimately irrelevant fact of life may still have a profound effect on whether a citizen gets to experience the fullness of American citizenship.

"This is apparent not just to racial, ethnic, and language minorities, not just to women and to people with disabilities or others in America who, by virtue of status alone, are left out and left back. It is apparent to all Americans generous enough to see that a victory for civil rights is a vindication of American democracy—something more than a mere shifting of entitlements from one group to another. That is why, I believe, anti-discrimination efforts have enjoyed such a noble tradition of bi-partisanship in this country....

"The civil rights division must move firmly, fearlessly, and unambiguously to enforce the anti-discrimination laws the Congress has passed, so that it becomes as plain as it can be that the Congress means what it says when it says that discrimination is illegal....

"I come to this challenge as neither a so-called liberal nor a so-called conservative—but as a pragmatist, with very high ideals. I view the civil rights laws as among the most important laws on the books, and I believe they exist to help solve real problems in real people's lives. I have litigated cases under many of those laws, and I have seen, through my cases, what the law can achieve, in terms of breaking down barriers, opening up opportunities, and reaffirming those core American values of opportunity, equality, and fair play."

Black Youth Stop Construction of Hazardous Waste Site

Marches and demonstrations by the youth task force of the Southern Organizing Committee in January and March of this year have been instrumental in blocking plans by Browning Ferris Industries (BFI) to build a hazardous waste site in Titusville, a predominantly black neighborhood in Birmingham, Alabama. The task force was established in 1991 as a multiethnic umbrella organization to give young people of color a national voice on social and environmental issues. The task force includes nearly 70 groups of young people in nine Southern states, from Florida to Texas. Although many of its leaders are college students, most chapters have no college affiliation.

The task force accused BFI, a multimillion dollar waste management company, of environmental racism for choosing a black community as the location for its facility. BFI has a history of Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) violations regarding waste management disposal dating back to the mid-1980s. In 1988 the EPA cited BFI for 1,400 such violations. The majority of the company's facilities are located in black and Latino areas in the South.

The nine-month long struggle between BFI and Birmingham-area residents began when the company purchased seven acres of land in Titusville during the first part of 1993 without notifying community residents, and began construction of a waste collection facility. The Birmingham City Council held up construction of the facility and demanded that the company's acquisition be reviewed and voted on.

In the January 15th demonstration to observe Dr. **MARTIN LUTHER KING**'s birthday, a group of youth task force members led by **ISHMAEL MUHAMMAD**, a 21-year-old political science student at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, marched in downtown Birmingham to protest construction of the BFI facility. The demonstration was violently disbanded by 100 white Birmingham police officers who charged that the group was marching without a permit and incitement to riot. The demonstrators said that, although they did not have a permit, they did have support from Birmingham Mayor **RICHARD ARRINGTON**'s office including a police escort. "We were just trying to do what was right for our community, and the police came with no word or warning," said Muhammad. "When I tried to come to the aid of some young women who were being kicked by the police, they attacked me, yelling 'What are you going to do now, nigger?'" Muhammad said. In the melee, 12 youths and three adults were arrested. Five young people sustained injuries and one young woman was hospitalized. Over 300 youth and civil rights activists demonstrated again in March to "finish" the January task force march.

BFI reentered negotiations with the city over the release of the property and in March, the company and the city reached a $6 million settlement in which the company agreed to vacate its facility in Titusville. Many feel that the pressure placed on BFI by the youth task force and resident activists through letter-writing campaigns, demonstrations, and media attention compelled BFI to abandon its plans to build the waste facility. "This waste facility was blocked because of pressure from the people and their determination not to allow its construction in their community," said Mayor Arrington.

Many black organizations began to focus on environmental racism when the United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice released a report in 1987 that found that three of five hazardous landfills in the United States are located in predominantly black and Latino areas. The hazardous conditions posed by these landfills, which contain pesticides and toxic chemicals, have accounted for a disproportionate number of illnesses, including cancer and birth defects, among African Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans.

25% More Black Women Finish College Than Black Men

According to U.S. Department of Education statistics, black women are graduating from college at a rate that is 25 percent higher than that for black men. In 1991 (the latest date when figures were available), 65,338 African American students graduated from college; of these, 41,012 (62.7 percent) were women and 24,326 (37.3 percent) were men. A similar disparity occurred among black medical and law school students in 1991, when the graduation rates for women were more than 13 percent higher than that for men. Specifically, of 882 African American medical school graduates, 500 (56.7 percent) were women and 382 (43.3 percent) were men, and of the 1,860 black law school graduates, 1,058 (56.9 percent) were women and 802 (43.1 percent) were men. By contrast, men dominated these two fields among all other racial groups—whites, Latinos, Asians, and Native Americans.

One area where the number of black men exceeded the number of black women was among the 3,536 masters degree graduates in business and management (1,829 men and 1,707 women). This was not the case among undergraduate business majors, where black women were 22 percent more numerous than black men (see table below).

According to U.S. Department of Education data, of all black male and female students graduating from college in 1991, 16,689 or 25 percent majored in business, making business by far the most popular academic discipline among black college students. Business majors were more than double the number of students who graduated in the next most popular major for both men and women, social science (8,099). The majors that ranked third and fourth for women were nursing and education, and for men they were engineering and related technologies, and public affairs.

TOP TEN MAJORS OF BLACK MALE AND FEMALE COLLEGE GRADUATES IN THE SCHOOL YEAR 1990-1991*

WOMEN			MEN		
Business and Management	10,220	15.6%	Business and Management	6,469	9.9%
Social Sciences	4,588	7.0	Social Sciences	3,511	5.4
Health Professions (Nurse, Therapist)	3,680	5.6	Engineering and Related Technologies	2,506	3.8
Education	3,626	5.5	Public Affairs and Services	1,839	2.8
Public Affairs and Services	2,926	4.5	Interdisciplinary Studies	1,334	2.0
Psychology	2,883	4.4	Communications	1,236	1.9
Communications	2,401	3.7	Education	1,199	1.8
Interdisciplinary Studies	2,072	3.2	Computer and Information Sciences	1,001	1.5
Letters (English, Speech, Literature)	1,845	2.8	Psychology	903	1.4
Life Sciences	1,442	2.2	Letters (English, Speech, Literature)	720	1.1

* Percentages reflect portion of total black college graduates (graduating in 1990-91) who were in respective gender and major categories.

Source: *"Trends in Degrees Conferred by Institutions of Higher Education: 1984-85 through 1990-91."* The National Center for Educational Statistics, U.S. Department of Education.

Across the Nation:

ILLINOIS: **ROLAND W. BURRIS**, Illinois' first black attorney general, was defeated in his quest for the Democratic nomination for governor by state comptroller **DAWN CLARK NETSCH**. Netsch ran an unconventional campaign that stressed the need to increase personal income taxes to allow for cuts in property taxes and more spending on education. Netsch defeated Burris by a vote of 45 percent to 36 percent, although most polls had showed Burris to be the frontrunner as late as a week before the election.

Burris' statewide name recognition gave him a commanding lead over Netsch and the third Democratic candidate, Cook County Board President **RICHARD PHELAN,** for most of the campaign, but many believe that this early lead worked to Burris' disadvantage, leading him to run a safe campaign that steered clear of addressing difficult issues.

In his concession speech, Burris, who was Illinois' comptroller for eight years before being elected attorney general in 1990, said, "Roland Burris' illustrious political career will soon come to an end." His term as attorney general ends in January, 1995.

LOUISIANA: Sixteen years after his father, **ERNEST (DUTCH) MORIAL**, became the first black mayor of New Orleans, **MARC MORIAL** defeated white candidate **DONALD MINTZ** in a run-off election on March 5 to claim the office. Morial, who is currently a Louisiana state senator, defeated Mintz, the former chair of the New Orleans Dock Board, by 53 percent to 47 percent of the vote. His victory came despite a strong showing for Mintz in the primary election, where Mintz led Morial by 5 percentage points and received more than 10 percent of the black vote (See January 1994 "Across the Nation"). Exit polls indicated that 95 percent of black voters cast their ballots for Morial. The city is 62 percent African American.

PENNSYLVANIA: Black state representative **DWIGHT EVANS** aired his first campaign commercials in his race for governor of Pennsylvania, where just over nine percent of the state's population is black. Evans, a 13-year Democratic member of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, is running for the party's nomination against three other opponents, including white Democratic Lieutenant Governor **MARK SINGEL** and 1992 Democratic Senate candidate **LYNN YEAKEL**. Evans is being advised in his campaign by **PAUL GOLDMAN**, the manager of former Virginia Governor **L. DOUGLAS WILDER**'s successful 1985 campaign for lieutenant governor and 1989 campaign for governor.

Goldman is not the only high-profile consultant working for an African American statewide candidate in Pennsylvania this year. **EDWARD ROLLINS**, who gained recent notoriety for running New Jersey Governor **CHRISTINE WHITMAN**'s successful campaign for the New Jersey governorship and claiming afterwards to have paid black voters to stay away from the polls, is advising the U.S. Senate campaign of **JOE WATKINS**, a black businessman and former aide to former Vice President **DAN QUAYLE**. Watkins, a Republican, is challenging Sen. **HARRIS WOFFORD**. Rollins now says that he fabricated the charge about the Whitman campaign, and says he apologized personally to Watkins about the incident before offering his consulting services.

TEXAS: Black at-large Houston City Councilwoman **SHEILA JACKSON LEE** surprised many when she defeated incumbent Congressman **CRAIG WASHINGTON** in the March 8 primary by a vote of 63 to 37 percent. Exit polls revealed that Lee led Washington among all ethnic groups in the 18th congressional district's electorate. (The district is 51 percent African American, 38 percent white, and 15 percent Latino). In this mostly minority and overwhelmingly Democratic district, Lee's primary victory all but guarantees her a seat in Congress.

Washington was elected in 1989 to fill the seat left vacant by **MICKEY LELAND**, who died in a plane crash over Ethiopia during a humanitarian mission. Washington began his tenure opposing the congressional resolution to support the Persian Gulf War and was a key sponsor of the 1991 Civil Rights Act. An advocate of free speech, he fought against the amendment that would ban burning the American flag and opposed hate-crime legislation because he said it would violate the First Amendment. Washington recently angered many members of the Houston business community and the Texas congressional delegation by voting against the North American Free Trade Agreement. Two years ago, Washington lost his bid to chair the Congressional Black Caucus to Rep. **KWEISI MFUME** (D-Md.).

Over her three terms as a member of the Houston City Council, Lee has made preventing youth violence a priority. Last summer, as a part of an anti-gang initiative, she brought together city police, park and health officials, and the Coalition of Ministers Against Crime to develop a program to keep recreational facilities open late at night in five high-crime locations to divert young people from criminal activity. The program was adopted as a model by the city government and replicated citywide. While in Congress, Lee wants to sponsor legislation that would extend the Brady law to ban the manufacture of military-style assault weapons and stop gun trafficking across state lines. Lee also hopes to attract funds to Houston to help address crime prevention, job training, and provide affordable housing for low-income citizens.

Mississippi School Desegregation-1994

As a Lawsuit to Abolish a Dual University System Comes to a Head, Plaintiffs Are Fighting With State Officials to Keep Black Schools Open

by Joye Mercer

You won't find ivy-covered buildings, lush grounds, or rolling hills at Mississippi Valley State University. In fact, there's not much to look at that would recommend the Itta Bena campus of concrete slab buildings. But supporters of this school that was founded in 1950 to educate black teachers are fighting to prevent the state from closing it.

For nearly two decades, African American advocates of equal education have challenged the Mississippi college system through a lawsuit, *Ayers* v. *Fordice*, for maintaining the dual public-college system that created predominately black Mississippi Valley, Jackson, and Alcorn State Universities. They say the Mississippi system continues to treat the colleges unfairly. The state proposes to close or downgrade two of the three black institutions in the eight-university system as its remedy for what the Supreme Court has called remnants of segregation in the system. The U.S. Justice Department has submitted an alternative plan that would keep all the schools open. Now the case has reached a new juncture where federal District Judge Neal B. Biggers, Jr. is likely to fashion a solution to one of the country's longest running desegregation cases.

Those who have watched it wind its way through the legal system say that the *Ayers* case has significance far beyond Mississippi's borders. Civil rights leaders and black college advocates warn that whatever happens in Mississippi could serve as the blueprint for other states, such as Louisiana and Alabama, that are seeking answers to questions such as: How does the state desegregate public-college systems that are no longer segregated by law? Is providing more money to black colleges, in concert with pressuring white colleges to step-up admission of black students, the answer? And, does desegregation mean closing black colleges that were originally established to keep blacks out of white colleges?

Separate But Not Equal Enough

Such questions have been pondered in Mississippi for years. In 1975, a group of African Americans in the state, including Jake Ayers, Sr., whose son was attending historically black Jackson State University, sued the state for maintaining two separate and unequal college systems. Represented by Alvin O. Chambliss, Jr., a lawyer with North Mississippi Rural Legal Services, the plaintiffs claimed that the state was providing meager resources for Jackson, Alcorn, and Mississippi Valley, compared to the support its five predominantly white universities received. "Our issue was equity," said Louis E. Armstrong, one of the original plaintiffs and now a member of the Jackson City Council.

State authorities maintained that Mississippi's public colleges had been desegregated since the early 1960's, when James Meredith became the first African American to attend the University of Mississippi. The Mississippi College Board, which governs all public four-year institutions in the state, said it treated all its colleges in a "race-neutral" manner—from the admissions policies it adopted, to the way the colleges were funded. There was no discrimination against the historically black colleges, state officials maintained; white institutions received more money because they were larger and had more academic programs. The plaintiffs continued to disagree, and vowed to fight.

After a federal court trial that the plaintiffs lost, an appeal of the verdict went all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. In an opinion handed down on June 26, 1992, the Court sent the case back to federal court in Oxford, where it began. The Supreme Court ruled that Mississippi was in fact maintaining a dual higher education system, and said that its policies had the effect of extending segregation, even though that may not have been their intent. But the answer is not upgrading black institutions to perpetuate a separate, "more equal" system, the Supreme Court ruled. Instead, the justices directed the district court to consider in a new trial four issues that they said were remnants of segregation, including:

- Admissions standards are different at black and white universities;
- Academic programs are duplicated in several areas including disciplines such as business, which is offered at all of the universities;
- Institutions' missions limit the kinds of academic programs black schools can maintain. For instance, Mississippi Valley is designated as a "regional" institution to train teachers and has few graduate-level programs, while the University of Mississippi, as a "comprehensive" university, offers most of the masters, doctoral, and professional programs in the state; and
- Is there "sound educational justification" for Mississippi to maintain eight public universities?

Ms. Mercer is a reporter on government and politics for *The Chronicle of Higher Education* in Washington, D.C.

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Desegregation

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A Green Light for the State

Initially, the verdict was hailed as a triumph by African Americans who believed the Court had acted on behalf of predominately black institutions. But when the glow of victory wore off, some were unsure of how to interpret the Court's ruling. They also worried that the verdict could be used to justify the demise of black schools because the Supreme Court questioned the number of universities in Mississippi.

Others pointed to a concurring opinion written by Supreme Court Judge Clarence Thomas that seemed to presage much of the debate that the majority-opinion has spawned: "Although I agree that a state is not constitutionally required to maintain its historically black institutions as such.... I do not understand our opinion to hold that a state is forbidden from doing so. It would be ironic to say the least, if the institutions that sustained blacks during segregation were themselves destroyed in an effort to combat its vestiges." "What goes forward in Mississippi is dangerous if it doesn't go forward in a way that satisfies the plaintiffs," Elias Blake, Jr., former president of Clark Atlanta University, said months after the verdict.

Many say the Court's ruling was indeed read by the state as a green light to diminish the presence of black colleges. In its own response to the Court's ruling, the Mississippi College Board offered a plan in October 1992. Under its proposal, Jackson State would be infused with additional resources to expand its mission and attract more white students. But Alcorn State would become a unit of predominantly white Mississippi State University, and Mississippi Valley would be closed and merged into Delta State University, a white institution about 35 miles away in Cleveland.

Much of the plan was immediately denounced by black college alumni and civil rights groups across the country, including the NAACP. What drew the greatest opposition was the proposed closing of Mississippi Valley, the smallest of the state's public universities and the institution that is located in the poorest part of the state. Opponents of the plan argue that the *Ayers* case was about providing more education to black Mississippians, not less. "Of all the states in the nation, Mississippi can least afford to close opportunities for its people," said State Representative George Flaggs, Jr., after the plan was announced. The college board's proposed solution only made the plaintiffs more deeply entrenched in their belief that things hadn't changed much for black people in Mississippi.

Throwing Down the Gauntlet

In the meantime, another plan to settle the case was advanced in January by the U.S. Department of Justice, which entered the case on the side of the plaintiffs several years ago. The Justice plan centers on keeping all of Mississippi's universities open, and giving Jackson State control of the state's only medical school which is located in Jackson but is now part of the University of Mississippi in Oxford. Other aspects of the proposal include giving Jackson State control of Hinds Community College, a two-year institution with seven campuses, one of which is in Jackson and competes with Jackson State for students. Alcorn State University would be renamed the Alcorn Institute of Applied Science and Technology and would offer undergraduate and master's degree programs in the sciences. And all the universities in the system would be required to withdraw from all-black or all-white athletics conferences.

The emphasis on augmenting black colleges with high-profile academic programs and professional schools can have two effects, black university administrators say: redressing past discrimination and attracting white students to black campuses. This approach is advocated by black university administrators in other states. For example, Florida A&M University President Frederick A. Humphries has been lobbying state officials in Florida for several years to fund a law school at his university.

Robert L. Albright, former president of Johnson C. Smith University and a member of a national panel that is developing strategies to end college segregation, said the Justice Department had "thrown down the gauntlet" by challenging state officials to reconsider their approach. "The extent to which they reject these recommendations out of hand suggests that they are not concerned about solving the problem, but about preserving their system," says Albright.

The Justice Department's plan is a necessary strategy not just for attracting white students, but for improving the universities "for the students that we have right now," says James E. Lyons, Sr., Jackson State's president. But the plan itself has not been embraced by all parties as the solution. Mississippi's commissioner of higher education, W. Ray Cleere, says that the Justice Department's proposal is probably too little effort, too late in the game, because the state has been gearing up for a trial. For its part, the NAACP plans to attract more than 10,000 people at a major rally on April 30 in Jackson to support the state's black colleges.

As the two sides in the case grew farther apart, U.S. District Judge Biggers set a new trial date for February. But to give the parties more time to negotiate a settlement, he postponed the date until May. Despite this postponement, it seems a new courtroom confrontation cannot be averted. The trial is expected to last five to six weeks, and reams of evidence will be introduced on all of the remnants of segregation that the plaintiffs charge remain in Mississippi's college system—from the way black colleges are funded, to the condition of their campuses. Once again, higher education in Mississippi will take center stage, and what happens there may set a precedent for how other states proceed in desegregating their university systems. ■

American Violence Is Home Grown

Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders Says Violence Is a Dangerous and Costly Public Health Problem But It Can Be Prevented and Cured

The following is an excerpt of an address delivered by Surgeon General Elders at the American Medical Association's National Conference on Family Violence in Washington, D.C., on March 13.

There are two aspects of family violence that make it a priority for the average physician. First, the direct consequence of family or interpersonal violence—child abuse, partner abuse, abuse of adolescents and elders—is community violence. Our adolescents so often take violence from the home into the community. Second, violence may well be the camel that breaks the fiscal back of our health care system.

The statistics about interpersonal violence are appalling: 30 percent of all emergency room visits by women result from domestic assaults; more than 1,300 women are murdered by their husbands or boyfriends each year; and 2.7 million cases of child abuse and neglect are reported in a single year. Women who are physically abused by their partners are more than twice as likely to abuse their children. And children who see and experience violence in the home are more likely to physically injure themselves or others later in life. A review recently published in the *Psychological Bulletin* found that convicted male felons report higher rates of childhood physical abuse (particularly those who had committed sexual offenses) than do non-institutionalized males.

The average cost of a violent injury (fatal and non-fatal) was $44,000 in 1992. In 1989, about 80 percent of gunshot and stabbing victims treated in some urban trauma centers were uninsured, underinsured, or Medicaid-eligible. About 85 percent of such hospital costs are cost-shifted onto the privately insured. And the total medical cost of all violence in the U.S. was $13.5 billion in 1992—$3 billion due to suicides and suicide attempts; $10.5 billion due to interpersonal violence, including murder, rape, assault, robbery, drunk driving, and arson.

Prescriptions and Cures

We must take a multidisciplinary approach to ending violence that draws from criminal justice, education, social services, and health. Our experiences over the past 20 years have taught us that the criminal justice system alone cannot solve the problem.

We must get people to think about violence in a new and very different way: as something that can be prevented and cured, rather than endured; that violence is something abnormal that can be changed, rather than a part of the human condition—in essence, to think of violence as a public health problem. There's an analogy between violence and traffic crashes. When the toll of traffic crashes skyrocketed twenty-some years ago, the first thing we did was strengthen drivers' education classes and made them a requirement. Then we worked with the automobile manufacturers to make cars safer, adding seat belts and child safety seats. And then we cracked down on unsafe, usually drunken, driving. Just as we reduced the number of deadly traffic crashes, we can reduce the deaths and injuries caused by violence.

The following are my "prescriptions" for violence prevention and treatment for already-violent families that are intended to prevent violence through education. Interventions for families that live with violence must be for both the victims and the perpetrators of abuse.

1. We must keep the tools of violence out of the hands of our children. We must add a ban on semiautomatic assault weapons to the Brady law.

2. We must incorporate violence prevention into our school curricula with classes in conflict resolution designed to help children develop empathy with others, develop problem-solving skills, and manage anger. To prevent family violence, such programs can focus on belief systems and early dating behavior to promote the value of positive, supportive behavior as opposed to coercive or violent behavior as the basis of intimate relationships.

3. We must educate parents on how to be parents, beginning with prenatal classes. Nurses should visit homes of expectant parents to talk about child rearing, the risks of child abuse, and how to prevent it. The family support programs that are cropping up around the country provide parenting education and support for young parents and their children.

4. We must offer and support early childhood education programs like Head Start. Violence prevention should be a part of all preschool programs.

5. We must provide comprehensive health education classes that include violence prevention in all our schools.

6. We must develop programs to train young people, build their skills, and make jobs available for them.

We have to advocate for children and develop an action plan at every level to attack this problem. We must educate our students in medical, dental, and nursing schools to recognize abuse and be aware of the problem of violence and its prevention. Finally, we must educate our children and each other about violence and how to prevent it—we must empower ourselves to make changes. Our young people must find hope in the future. We must make this happen because they *are* our future. ■

Blacks and Jews

(Continued from page 4)

relationship, in much the same way that some black leaders' failure to swiftly denounce Louis Farrakhan and his anti-Semitic statements does for many Jews. But it is unrealistic to expect full, across-the-board agreement on issues or approaches to problems from two large, diverse communities. The success of black-Jewish relations depends in large part on a willingness to accept the inevitability of differences, to respect reasoned disagreements, and to keep litmus-test issues to a minimum.

The Jewish and African American communities already share a commitment to the core issues for each group. Both sides, for practical reasons as well as on principle, share an especially strong opposition to hate and bigotry whether expressed as anti-Semitism or racism. Both sides, too, share a strong commitment to basic civil and human rights and equal opportunity. In addition, the black community has a long and unassailable commitment to the security of Israel, a fundamental concern of the Jewish community, and Jews have been prominent in the struggles against apartheid in South Africa and oppression in Haiti. On this foundation, it should be possible to build a trusting relationship able to cope with occasional differences in policy and strategy.

Fundamental to this view of the relationship is mutual respect as equals in society. In the rhetoric of the 1960s' Black Power movement, there was often the assertion that equality was a prerequisite for coalition politics. Although African Americans are nowhere close to the economic status of the Jewish community, in the political arena there has been dramatic movement toward the kind of equality that makes for a trusting coalition of equals.

Focused Collaboration. Relationships invariably are forged through cooperative action rather than through debates. It is not surprising that the two groups seemed closer and may have felt closer as they worked toward a clear set of shared goals. Currently, those goals—the civil rights agenda—have been partly replaced by a quality-of-life or economic opportunity agenda for African Americans. The relationship might be considerably enhanced by a joint effort on this front.

Already there is evidence of general agreement about several major social policy issues, many being promoted by the Clinton administration. African Americans and Jews in Congress and in the public interest community are likely to form the core of support for new social policy initiatives. Such a development could have a strong reinforcing effect on the working relationship between the two communities. But there is hard work beyond the ready, almost automatic areas of agreement. Leaders of the two communities need to work to narrow their differences on strategies to expand black economic opportunities beyond general and essential steps like expanded educational opportunities. The data show clearly that while education helps, it does not do nearly enough to narrow the black-white opportunity gap. Some form of affirmative action that pushes both public and private sectors to expand opportunities is critical.

Guardians of Pluralism. Finally, this collaboration would not only serve to advance the interests of both communities and improve economic fairness in society broadly; it would also demonstrate that two communities can overcome differences to work effectively toward common goals. In the current fractured atmosphere of American life, this demonstration of working pluralism would reaffirm the value of diversity and the potential for cooperation to overcome ethnic and racial division. The future of relations between the Jewish and African American communities will tell much about the potential of U.S. society to live fruitfully within its pluralistic structure, repudiate hatred, and secure a better future for all. ■

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