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25TH ANNIVERSARY 1970-1995

FOCUS

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

The Joint Center: A Historical Portrait

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Fairness, Compassion, and Responsibility

At the Joint Center's 25th Anniversary Dinner, the First Lady Said We Must Extend the Gains in Equality and Justice Made in the 1960s

POLITICAL TRENDLETTER | **PERSPECTIVE**

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We Need Ennobling Leadership

With their sweeping November victory at the polls, congressional Republicans promised conservative leadership. They are delivering on that promise with new legislation that is prompting deep uncertainties among most Americans, especially minorities and the poor. In March, for example, the Republican-led House of Representatives approved cuts of $17 billion in infant and child nutrition programs, summer jobs for teens, heating assistance for the elderly, and housing for the poor primarily to make a down payment on future tax cuts for corporations and wealthy individuals.

The House also passed a measure that would weaken Fourth Amendment protections from unreasonable searches and seizures, a privacy right that is one of the basic freedoms distinguishing the United States from undemocratic societies elsewhere in the world. In addition, GOP legislators are pushing welfare reform proposals that would disqualify thousands of children from financial support. Add to these, attacks on affirmative action. If this is conservative leadership, one must ask if it is befitting a nation that perceives itself to be the greatest democracy in the world.

Surely, it is appropriate for elected officials to invite debate on how better to address long-standing social problems. The election last November, arguably a very close one, appeared to me to provide a new starting point for a dialogue on how to design constructive, lasting, workable policies and programs to meet serious national needs. On this, there seems to be general consensus. Indeed, all of the scholars, elected officials, and community leaders that the Joint Center has worked with are committed to reducing the complexity of government, lowering taxes, preventing crime, and preparing welfare recipients to take care of themselves and to contribute to the nation's prosperity.

We are in danger, however, of wasting this opportunity to advance the domestic policy debate by twisting it into a partisan and ideological game of pin the blame: pin the blame on welfare mothers, on their children, on legal and illegal aliens, and on minorities—or on Democrats or Republicans, or liberals or conservatives. The fact is that we won't solve problems by pinning blame, we won't cure poverty by stripping benefits from young mothers and giving these women no solid alternatives for support. We won't teach moral values to school children by taking away their school lunches. We won't fight crime by lowering our courts' standards for protecting citizens against unwarranted searches. And we won't be able to continue our journey toward a race-neutral society by prematurely ending affirmative action programs.

The tactic of blaming groups for society's problems is not new in this country. In the mid-nineteenth century, presidential candidates campaigned against Irish Catholics. Immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe were the objects of fear and suspicion among law enforcement agencies at the beginning of this century. During the era of segregation in the South, politicians competed for votes with promises to suppress blacks more vigorously than their opponents. President Ronald Reagan decried "welfare queens," and George Bush's 1988 campaign stereotyped African Americans as criminals through its "Willie Horton" television ads. While mean-spirited hunts for scapegoats might bring short-term political gains, they are nevertheless irresponsible, dangerous, and counterproductive in the long run.

We must continue our public debate about new and better ways to solve old problems based on sound information and good judgement, not political expediency. What is required of our elected officials, whether they call themselves Democrats or Republicans, conservatives or liberals, is to provide leadership that does not pander to people's fears but ennobles us and helps us to be better than we are. ■

PRESIDENT

Eddie N. Williams

FOCUS

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The Joint Center: A Historical Portrait

The Joint Center Celebrates Its 25th Anniversary as the Nation's Premier Black Public Policy Research Institution

by Juan Williams

The following is an excerpt of The Joint Center: Portrait of a Black Think Tank, *a monograph by Mr. Williams.*

The Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies is 25 years old. It was created in 1970 to lend a hand to black leaders as they traveled an uncharted road from civil rights activism to mainstream American politics. At ten years old, the Joint Center had grown strong enough to be recognized as one of the nation's leading think tanks. And now, at 25, the Joint Center has extended its wings to Africa, where its political know-how and research offer a welcome hand to black nations beginning to find their own way on the road to democracy.

The Joint Center's arrival on the national scene came just five years after the passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act and two years after the assassination of Martin Luther King. The smoke was still clearing from riots that were consuming urban America. Richard Hatcher and Carl Stokes had been elected the first black mayors of major American cities in 1967, cutting a path for black politicians winning "first-ever" seats on school boards, city councils, and in state legislatures across the nation. In the beginning, these new officials had neither the power to fight for what they needed nor a strong network of insiders to cover their flanks during political storms.

Coming in the wake of the political and social turmoil of the late 1960s, the Joint Center was different from every other group trying to advance black America's cause. Here was an organization heralding the nation's political system as the best way for black people to achieve racial equality. And the Joint Center was happy to work with any and all groups and leaders, joining together the strands of disparate personalities and strategies.

Through seminars to teach administrative and financial fundamentals, the Joint Center offered black political newcomers information to increase their effectiveness and power. The Center also took on the challenge of promoting black political participation, getting people to register and vote by showing them the power of that vote.

The Joint Center Emerges

In a 1969 draft proposal to the Ford Foundation to create an Institute for Black Political Education (later to become the Joint Center), Dr. Kenneth Clark, the renowned social psychologist and president of the New York-based Metropolitan Applied Research Center (MARC); Louis Martin, editor of the *Michigan Chronicle* and later the *Chicago Defender* newspapers; Percy Sutton, Manhattan borough president; California State Senator Mervyn Dymally, who had organized the California Conference of Black Elected Officials; and Vernon Jordan, director of the Voter Education Project; along with other black leaders wrote what now sounds like a manifesto: "Two centuries of isolation and virtual exclusion from meaningful participation in the political process have resulted in a lack of interest, background, and training in practical politics on the part of the black community. Thus there is frustration and disenchantment among Negroes which has led to the advocacy of separatism, confrontation, and violence rather than participatory democracy as the more effective means of achieving the Negro's legitimate goals in our society."

Much of the philosophical justification for creating the Joint Center is contained in those lines. At its creation, the prime sponsors of the Joint Center were the Metropolitan Applied Research Center and Howard University, a historically black institution that gave the fledgling organization a solid academic base. The other essential partner in the creation of the Joint Center was the Ford Foundation, which provided a two-year grant of $820,000. Ford's support came in spite of concerns within the foundation about creating "a guild of Negro elected officials—a trend precisely opposite to an integrated leadership community, which men of reason continue to seek."

Louis Martin, the main White House adviser on issues affecting black America to John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson, was the obvious and unanimous choice to become the first chairman of the Joint Center's board of governors, a role he played until 1980 when President Carter brought him back to the White House. Howard University law professor Frank Reeves was appointed its first executive director. Reeves had served as the Washington representative of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund and had worked for a time as an assistant to President Kennedy and later with Clark at MARC. Reeves' formula for the politicians he advised was simple: He wanted them to mobilize black voters, encouraging them to take an active part in the political parties and take "control of politics at the grassroots level." Speaking to the First Annual New York State Black and Puerto Rican State Legislators Dinner in Albany, New York, in 1972, Reeves urged his listeners to "flood the precinct and ward meet-

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Juan Williams is a political analyst and national correspondent for *The Washington Post*. He is also the author of *Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years, 1954-1965*, and has contributed numerous articles to national magazines. He is currently writing an authorized biography of the late Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall.

Think Tank

Continued from page 3

ings with persons loyal to our cause—we must become the new precinct captains and ward leaders."

Reeves started two publications that have since come to be closely identified with the Joint Center: the *National Roster of Black Elected Officials*, now published biannually; and the guidebooks to black politics, published quadrennially for use by the black delegates to the Democratic and Republican national conventions. He also initiated the Joint Center's first internship program. But Reeves' most important contribution to the Joint Center in those early years was his ability to develop a far-flung network among black elected officials.

By the spring of 1972, however, Reeves' heavy emphasis on black political affairs, to the detriment of other needs of the organization, combined with his intermittent poor health, led the board of governors and the Ford Foundation to look for new leadership. Reeves resigned as executive director in June 1972.

New Leadership

There was general agreement that whoever took the helm of the Joint Center would have to inspire new confidence among funders and politicians and be able to attract top-quality staff. They found their man in Eddie N. Williams, a former journalist with the *Atlanta Daily World* and *Chicago Sun Times*, who was vice president for public affairs at the University of Chicago and director of the university's Center for Policy Study.

Williams' ability to work with the press, to be a leader among blacks and whites, and to relate to both government officials and corporate executives made him the choice of Martin, Clark, and the other members of the board. Williams knew the world of research, ideas, and debate, and was comfortable in the Washington political environment, having been a staff assistant to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and a foreign service reserve officer in the State Department.

Soon after his arrival, Williams began to strengthen and broaden the institution's staff with special emphasis on research. In the first issue of *FOCUS*, the Joint Center's monthly magazine that he founded, he wrote, "Our aim is to identify public policy issues that have implications for [black Americans]... to be both a center for intellectual discovery and a wellspring of practical political knowledge."

In addition to building a professional research staff, Williams set about publicizing the organization more effectively. The Center's data on black America began to catch the attention of politicians, news reporters, and policymakers of all races, parties, and ideological stripes. And the Center held conferences in all regions of the country to provide black elected officials with the expertise they needed to run a government.

Declaring Independence in '76

In May 1976, realizing that black participation in the upcoming presidential election was likely to be low, the Joint Center organized the nonpartisan National Coalition on Black Voter Participation, popularly known as "Operation Big Vote," to help increase voter registration and turnout. That November, black voter turnout showed a considerable increase, particularly in the South. Democrat Jimmy Carter won the White House by a slim margin with a substantial black vote. The National Coalition became an independent entity in 1982 and now includes eighty separate organizations among its members.

The year 1976 was crucial for yet another reason. The Center had been founded "jointly" by the Metropolitan Applied Research Center and Howard University. Program oversight rested with MARC, while administrative and financial control were Howard's responsibility. In time, the Center found these administrative arrangements to be increasingly restrictive. After extended negotiations, the Joint Center became an independent, nonprofit, nonpartisan institution in October 1976.

There was another factor pressing even greater change on the Joint Center. By the late '70s a new generation of black politicians was coming into office. They were still concerned about protecting civil rights, but they were equally concerned about the economic issues plaguing impoverished neighborhoods.

During this same period, black mayors and state legislators as well as black officials at other levels of government started to form their own groups, such as the National Conference of Black Mayors and the National Caucus of Black State Legislators. The Joint Center had helped all these organizations get started, but now the groups were able to function on their own.

Research and Public Policy

Looking ahead at the beginning of the 1980s, Williams and the board believed that the Joint Center should focus more of its attention on the nation's social and economic policies. He asked Kenneth Clark, who was still a member of the Joint Center's board, and the eminent historian Dr. John Hope Franklin to write an essay on the nature and status of black progress. Clark and Franklin concluded that "a significant number of black people are still left out and seem likely to stay that way. In short, a black underclass has become a permanent feature of American society." To deal with the problem of economic progress, they believed, would require a new type of black organization. The authors boldly stated: "The cult of personality among black political and civil rights leadership no longer serves black interest and is a pathetic residue of the past."

In 1981, the Joint Center once again refined its agenda, choosing to become a full-blown public policy think tank. The focus now was on developing the capacity to produce data that could be used by politicians and policymakers—black and white—to help all America in dealing with issues

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April 1995

POLITICAL TRENDLETTER

Inside This Issue:

- A field of Republican presidential hopefuls is already on the campaign trail for '96.
- A federal judge hands down a split decision on a state university segregation case in Mississippi.
- The income gap between blacks and whites remains, but African Americans have made gains in education.

The Race for the GOP Presidential Nomination Is On

A crowded field of nine Republican presidential hopefuls has already descended on New Hampshire and Iowa. And they are already holding million-dollar fundraisers in anticipation of a dramatically shortened nominating season next year. The diverse group includes four U.S. senators, one congressman, a sitting governor, an ex-governor, and two former-government-officials-turned-talk-show-hosts. Following are brief profiles of the nine candidates who have thrown their hats into the ring.

Lamar Alexander, 54, counsel to the law firm of Baker, Donelson, Bearman, and Caldwell

Lamar Alexander has referred to the federal government as "an arrogant empire, spreading its tentacles into our everyday lives." He believes that the administration of welfare programs should be shifted to the states, that states should have the right to restrict abortions, and that most criminal justice issues are local matters. Although he headed the U.S. Department of Education in the Bush administration, he now advocates abolishing that department.

Alexander received a degree in Latin American history from Vanderbilt University in 1962 and a law degree from New York University. In his two terms as governor of Tennessee (1978-86), he instituted reforms in education, establishing merit pay for teachers and standards for teacher competency. After leaving the governor's office, Alexander and his family moved to Australia, an experience he recounted in his book, *Six Months Off*. Upon his return in 1987, Alexander and his wife, Honey, helped found Corporate Child Care Services, a company which today has over 1,200 employees. After serving as Secretary of Education, he left Washington in 1991 to become president of the University of Tennessee, a post he held until 1993. One of the more versatile candidates, Alexander is a country and classical pianist who has played for the Grand Ole Opry and the Billy Graham Crusade.

Patrick Buchanan, 56, since 1993, host of the daily talk show, "Pat Buchanan & Company," on the Mutual radio network

Patrick Buchanan has never held elective office. But running as a far-right protest candidate for the GOP presidential nomination in 1992, he won 37 percent of the vote in the New Hampshire Republican primary against **GEORGE BUSH**. Buchanan believes affirmative action to be "un-American," advocates overturning *Roe* v. *Wade*, opposes gun control, and has called for the construction of a seamless fence along the length of the U.S. border with Mexico to keep out illegal aliens.

A graduate of Georgetown University and the Columbia School of Journalism, Buchanan became an editorial writer for the St. Louis *Globe Democrat* in 1962. He was an assistant to Presidents **RICHARD NIXON** and **GERALD FORD** and was White House communications director for President **RONALD REAGAN** from 1985 to 1987. Until he announced his candidacy, in addition to running his own radio talk show Buchanan cohosted the nightly CNN political debate program "Crossfire" and wrote a twice-weekly syndicated newspaper column.

Robert Dole, 71, U.S. senator from Kansas since 1969

Robert Dole is a highly decorated veteran of World War II who, as a platoon leader in the U.S. Army's Tenth Mountain Division, was severely wounded in Italy in 1945. Announcing his current candidacy during the 50th anniversary of the end of that war, Dole is casting himself as the candidate with experience, a legitimate boast since this senior senator was the GOP vice presidential nominee in 1976 and ran for president in both 1980 and 1988.

Like most of the other Republican candidates this season, Dole, who has spent 34 years in Congress, is running against Washington. He advocates closing down the Education Department and the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities, and he questions the need for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

Dole received a law degree from Washburn University in Topeka, Kansas, in 1952. His long political career began with his election to the Kansas State House of Representatives, where he served from 1951 to 1953. He was Russell County Attorney from 1953 to 1961 and served in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1961 to 1969. He was first elected to the U.S. Senate in 1968 where he has served continuously for 27 years. He has been both minority and majority leader in the Senate and, from 1971 to 1973 chaired the Republican National Committee.

Robert K. Dornan, 62, member, U.S. House of Representatives since 1977

Robert Dornan is one of the most conservative of the would-be Republican nominees. He opposes banning the sale of any semi-automatic weapons and opposes the Brady law, which requires a five-day waiting period before one can purchase a gun. He favors school vouchers and a constitutional amendment to allow voluntary prayer in public schools.

Dornan attended Loyola University in Los Angeles from 1950 to 1953 and served on active duty in the U.S. Air Force from 1953 to 1958 as a fighter pilot. He also served in the California Air National Guard and the U.S. Air Force Reserves from 1958 to 1975. From 1965 to 1976, he was the producer and host of "The Robert K. Dornan Show" and "Tempo" in Los Angeles. He was first elected to Congress in 1976 and represents Orange County. In 1982, he was an unsuccessful candidate for the U.S. Senate.

Phil Gramm, 52, U.S. senator from Texas since 1984

Phil Gramm has declared that the first thing he would do as president would be to outlaw all affirmative action programs. He has criticized President Clinton's decision to stay out of the military in the '60s because he opposed the Vietnam War, but Gramm received military deferments during the war and never served himself. He has used the contacts he has made as a two-term chairman of the National Republican Senatorial Committee to raise more than $14 million for his presidential war chest, more than any of his competitors.

Gramm holds a Ph.D. in economics from the University of Georgia and was a professor of economics at Texas A&M University from 1967 to 1978. He was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives as a Democrat in 1978 but resigned from Congress on January 5, 1983, after the House Democratic leadership removed him from the Budget Committee for cosponsoring President RONALD REAGAN's federal budget plan, which contained drastic cuts in social programs. Gramm then changed his party affiliation to Republican and on February 12 that year was elected to the same seat he had vacated. He was elected to the Senate in 1984.

Alan L. Keyes, 44, newspaper columnist and host of "The Alan Keyes Show: America's Wake-up Call," a call-in radio talk show

Alan Keyes is an outspoken black conservative who favors school prayer and school choice and opposes reproductive choice for women, sex education in schools, and affirmative action.

Keyes, who holds a Ph.D. in government affairs from Harvard University, served as U.S. ambassador to the U.N. Economic and Social Council and as assistant secretary of state for international organizations between 1981 and 1987. In 1988 and again in 1992, he was an unsuccessful Republican candidate for the U.S. Senate in Maryland. From 1989 to 1991, he was president of the conservative group, Citizens Against Government Waste. In 1991, he served as interim president of Alabama A&M University, a historically black institution. He is the first nationally known African American to seek the 1996 Republican presidential nomination.

Richard G. Lugar, 63, U.S. senator from Indiana since 1977

A one-time chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Richard Lugar is running for president on his expertise in international affairs. Lugar graduated from Denison University in Ohio and attended Oxford University as a Rhodes scholar. He served in the U.S. Navy from 1957 to 1960. He began his political career as a member of the Indianapolis School Board and later served as that city's mayor from 1968 to 1975. In his first run for the Senate, in 1974, he lost, but he was elected two years later.

Arlen Specter, 65, U.S. senator from Pennsylvania since 1981

As a U.S. senator, Arlen Specter has often been allied with African American interests, including cosponsorship of major civil rights legislation and support for the South African sanctions bill. He voted against ROBERT BORK to be a Supreme Court justice. Born to Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe, Specter opposes a constitutional amendment to permit organized school prayer. Although he supports a woman's right to reproductive choice, he was heavily criticized by women's organizations for grilling ANITA HILL during the hearings to confirm CLARENCE THOMAS as a Supreme Court justice.

Specter is a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania and Yale Law School and served in the Air Force's Office of Special Investigations for two years in the early 1950s. He was later elected district attorney of Philadelphia in 1965 and reelected in 1969. In that position, he built a reputation as a tough prosecutor, and he was instrumental in getting the death penalty restored in Pennsylvania.

***Pete Wilson**, 61, governor of California since 1990*

Pete Wilson supports the proposed California referendum to eliminate affirmative action programs in agencies and institutions supported by the state of California. He views affirmative action programs as "reverse discrimination" that accords preferences based on race and gender. He also has a long record as a "law and order" politician. During his two terms as governor of California, five new prisons have been opened and six more are planned. Wilson's refusal to implement the Motor Voter law in his state has been challenged in court by U.S. Attorney General **JANET RENO**. The law was enacted by Congress in 1993 to permit citizens to register to vote when they apply for or renew their drivers licenses or receive services at other state government agencies.

Wilson is a graduate of Yale University and the University of California law school. He served as an infantry officer in the Marine Corps from 1955 to 1958. His diverse political experience includes election to the California Assembly from 1967 to 1971, mayor of San Diego from 1971 to 1983, U.S. senator from California from 1983 to 1991, and governor from 1990 to the present.

Judge Gives Mixed Decision in Mississippi Segregation Case

A March 7 ruling by Federal Judge **NEAL B. BIGGERS** handed a partial victory to both sides of a 20-year-old lawsuit charging that the state of Mississippi has maintained two separate and unequal college systems that have resulted in racial segregation. Through the lawsuit, *Ayers* v. *Fordice*, the plaintiffs charged that the state placed few graduate-level programs or professional schools at the predominately black schools in the system—Mississippi Valley, Jackson State, and Alcorn State universities (see *FOCUS*, April 1994). They also charged that those institutions had not received financial support comparable to that received by the mainly white state campuses.

As a remedy for what the U.S. Supreme Court described as "remnants of segregation" in the system, the state proposed to close or downgrade two of the three black institutions in the eight-university system, a plan which was opposed by the plaintiffs in the suit. The state also wanted to impose uniform admission standards for all schools in the system, meaning that student applicants to the predominately black colleges would have to make the same minimum scores on standardized tests and have the same grade-point averages as students applying to the mainly white colleges.

In his 187-page ruling, Biggers pleased the plaintiffs by barring the Mississippi Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning from closing any of the black schools, arguing that the Board had not proven that merging or closing any of the colleges would hasten desegregation. The judge also ordered the state to consider creating new programs for Alcorn State and Jackson State, including professional schools.

But in a move that worries plaintiffs, Biggers approved the state's admissions plan, which many black Mississippians perceive as a threat to enrollment at black colleges. Under the state plan, only those students who received specified scores or better on standardized admission tests and earned certain grade-point averages in core high school courses would be admitted to four-year colleges. Students who didn't meet those criteria but were otherwise acceptable candidates would have to complete a summer remedial program to be admitted to college. Some critics had complained that a remedial program for just one summer would hardly be enough to compensate for what might be years of inadequate schooling. Black-college advocates have also been concerned that the higher admission requirements would harm black colleges and eventually lead to their demise by depriving them of students.

Others are concerned that, although the judge told the state to create new academic programs for the Alcorn and Jackson campuses, his ruling made clear that this order stemmed from his desire to see those universities attracting more white students. The order was not meant to compensate the institution for past discrimination in funding by a state that is the legendary heart of the Jim Crow South.

ALVIN 0. CHAMBLISS, JR., the legal aid lawyer who has been fighting the case for nearly a quarter-century, expressed concern about the judge's ruling on admission standards, but applauded the ruling for saving Mississippi Valley from closure. The Mississippi case was initiated in 1975 by **JAKE AYERS, SR.**, a member of the NAACP whose son was attending historically black Jackson State University, and other blacks who charged that the state was maintaining two separate and unequal higher education systems. Over the years, they said, the state had poured millions of dollars into its five predominantly white universities, while the three black universities were veritable stepchildren, lacking adequate money and facilities.

The Supreme Court previously ruled that Mississippi was in fact maintaining a dual system of higher education, and said its policies had the effect of extending segregation, even though that may not have been the intent. The case was remanded back to the district court with instructions that it be retried, and neither side plans to appeal the decision. Biggers' ruling could have implications in southern states that are still struggling with a history of dual higher education, including Louisiana and Alabama.

Joye Mercer

Blacks Lag in Income, But Graduation Rates Increase

The median income for black families has barely changed over the past 25 years, according to recent Census Bureau reports that offer the most comprehensive statistical portrait of blacks since the 1970s. Based on constant dollars, the 1993 median income for black families of $21,550 was virtually unchanged since 1969. By contrast, the median income for white families in 1993 was $39,310, nine percent higher than in 1969. The data also show that common beliefs about high rates of teen pregnancy and drop-out among black youth are grossly exaggerated.

These and other findings documenting the educational and income characteristics of African Americans were released in February at a news conference held by the Census Bureau and the Joint Center. The findings are published in the Census Bureau's "The Black Population in the United States: March 1994 and 1993," and "Characteristics of the Black Population: 1990."

According to these reports, the income differences between black and white families largely stem from the lower earnings of black husbands, as compared with their white peers. In 1992, the median income for black males was only 72 percent of the income for white non-Hispanic males.

Despite this gloomy record, **EDDIE N. WILLIAMS**, president of the Joint Center, applauds the Bureau for attempting to provide more statistical insight into the economic status of African Americans, who accounted for nearly 13 percent of the nation's population in 1994. "The new Census Bureau reports are the result of greater outreach into black communities and offer a more accurate account of the status of black Americans including their participation in the workforce, education patterns, and family income levels," Williams says.

The Census data also show that the large proportion of black families headed by women has contributed to "the relative stagnation of median family income," says **MARGARET C. SIMMS**, director of research programs at the Joint Center. For families headed by women, median income, at less than $12,000, was only one-third of the income of black families headed by married couples in 1993. Half of all families headed by black women were in poverty that year, as compared with 12 percent of black families headed by married couples.

The data contradict a number of misconceptions about African Americans. For example, contrary to the myth that all single black mothers are welfare-dependent and uninterested in working, the majority of black single-parent families had at least one wage earner. The data dispel another stereotype as well: that parenthood is endemic among black teenagers. Fully 90 percent of black teenagers between 15 and 17 are childless, as are 75 percent of black 18- and 19-year-olds.

Other statistics in the reports indicate that young blacks may be heeding the maxim that it pays to learn: The proportion of blacks ages 16 and 17 enrolled in school has increased since 1970 from 86 percent to 95 percent, compared with an increase among their white peers over the same period from 91 percent to 94 percent. The number of black students earning high school diplomas is greater than ever before, and a third of all black graduates today go on to college.

The data also show a strong correlation between education and income—an especially poignant finding, given the attacks by conservatives on affirmative action programs that seek to achieve racial parity in access to education and employment. Blacks ages 16 and over with less than a high school diploma have a poverty rate of 38 percent, compared with a 23 percent rate for blacks who have graduated from high school, and a rate of just 7 percent for those with bachelors degrees.

"The evidence on income gains in the report does suggest that greater access to higher education and a broader array of occupations resulting from equal opportunity programs was important in terms of the absolute gains made by the black population over the past 30 years," says Simms. "These Census data give credence to a familiar story: the high percentage of black children living in single-parent households at high rates of poverty. But the data also tell a less familiar story of increased high school graduation rates among black youth and the high proportion of black teenagers who do not have children."

J.M.

Drug Laws 100 Times Harder on Blacks

Disparate Mandatory Minimum Sentences for Crack Cocaine Are Keeping Thousands in Prison, But Equitable Measures Have Been Proposed

by Nkechi Taifa

Just as the nation was governed by two sets of laws during the time of slavery and the Jim Crow era—one for whites and one for blacks—a double standard persists today in many aspects of the criminal-justice system. One area pervaded by racial bias is that of sentencing for drug offenses. Federal criminal penalties for the possession and distribution of crack cocaine, the drug of choice among many black inner-city substance abusers, are 100 times more severe than penalties relating to equal amounts of powder cocaine, which is disproportionately abused by whites. Unfortunately, the already harsh impact of these sentencing disparities has been accentuated by the omnibus crime bill passed by Congress last year, and will be further exacerbated if the GOP "Contract With America" proposals on law enforcement are enacted. To help remedy this disparity in the administration of justice, the U.S. Sentencing Commission has voted to amend the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines to make them fairer. The Commission is an independent agency of the federal judiciary that advises Congress on sentencing policy. In addition, Congressman Charles Rangel (D–N.Y.) has introduced The Crack Cocaine Equitable Sentencing Act of 1995 (H.R. 1264), to change mandatory minimum statutes.

More Black Men in Prison Than College

The federal prison population has more than tripled since 1980. Nearly half (48 percent) of that population today is black, although African-Americans constitute only 12 percent of the total U.S. population. The Sentencing Project, a nonprofit advocacy group, reports that black men in the United States are incarcerated at a rate four times higher than black men in apartheid South Africa. One out of every four young black men in this country is either imprisoned, on probation, or on parole at any given moment. Alarmingly, there are more young black men in jail today than in college.

The increase in the prison population in general, and among blacks specifically, is not evidence of rising crime (the crime rate has actually decreased), nor does it indicate any increase in criminal activity by African-Americans (whites account for a higher percentage of all violent-crime arrests). Rather, it is a reflection of more stringent sentencing policies combined with racial bias in the system. That bias has been dramatically demonstrated in the imposition of mandatory minimum sentences, especially for drug offenders.

Included in the mandatory minimum penalties enacted by Congress in 1986 and 1988 was an arbitrary distinction between crack and powder cocaine. Crack, however, has not been found to be more addictive or dangerous than powder cocaine; indeed, there is no medical or scientific distinction between the two. Yet the penalties for crack, enacted in a climate of hysteria over the last decade, are grossly disproportionate in their severity. For example, under current law, if a first-time offender tried in federal court is found in possession of five grams of crack cocaine (the weight of two pennies), he would be subject to an automatic felony sentence of five years without parole; possession of the same amount of powder cocaine, a misdemeanor, requires *no* jail time. A person found with 50 or even 400 grams of powder cocaine would face a maximum penalty of only one year in prison. In fact, it would take 500 grams of powder cocaine for a person to receive the same sentence as someone convicted for possession of just five grams of crack. One effect of this legislation is to punish small-scale crack cocaine users and dealers more severely than their wholesale suppliers.

Drug trafficking and drug abuse transcend all social, economic, and racial barriers. Indeed, whites sell most of the nation's illegal drugs and account for most of the drug abusers. By far the greatest number of documented crack users are white—2.4 million (64.4 percent), compared with 1 million blacks (26.6 percent), according to the Department of Health and Human Services. Yet the "war on drugs" has been disproportionately aimed at inner-city black communities. According to a 1992 study by the U.S. Sentencing Commission, 91.3 percent of those sentenced for federal crack offenses were African American, while only 3 percent were white.

A 1993 report on federal sentencing commissioned by the U.S. Justice Department disclosed that the higher proportion of blacks charged with crack offenses was "The single most important difference accounting for the overall longer sentences imposed on blacks, relative to other racial groups."

In 1991, a U.S. Sentencing Commission study concluded that this racial bias "reflects the very kind of disparity and discrimination that the Sentencing Reform Act [which established the commission]... was designed to reduce." In 1992, the Federal Judicial Center reported that in cases where a mandatory minimum prison term could be applied, African American offenders were 21 percent more likely, and Hispanics 28 percent more likely, than whites to receive at least the minimum. Indeed, although Congress's

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Drug Laws

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intention in passing mandatory minimums was to reduce arbitrary and unwarranted sentencing disparities, the report concluded that mandatory minimums may actually increase such problems.

Sentencing Disparity Is Unjustified

Three reasons are often cited for the gross distinction in sentencing between powder and crack cocaine: addictiveness; violence; and accessibility due to low cost. All of these reasons fail as a justification for the 100-to-1 ratio in punishment between two methods of ingesting the same drug.

Stiffer penalties for crack cannot be justified on the basis that it is more addictive or dangerous. Cocaine hydrochloride (powder) can easily be transformed by the consumer into crack by combining it with baking soda and heat. Thus, to apply a stiffer penalty for cocaine sold in the form of crack than for cocaine sold in powder form is irrational.

Cocaine can also be injected after it has been dissolved in water. The effect on the body of injecting liquefied powder cocaine is similar to that of smoking crack. According to Dr. George Schwartz, an expert in emergency medicine, there are no objective scientific data to support the suggestion that crack is more addictive or dangerous than powder. In fact, he explains, from a medical standpoint cocaine powder is much more dangerous, because the number of reported deaths due to snorting cocaine is three times the number reported due to crack. Likewise, from a public health perspective, injecting liquefied powder cocaine increases the threat of infections, including hepatitis.

Stiffer penalties for crack cannot be justified on the basis that it causes greater violence. It has been asserted that there is more violence associated with the use of crack than with the use of powder cocaine. Evidence, however, does not attribute such violence to the pharmacological effects of smoking crack but to extrinsic socioeconomic factors. According to a report issued by the U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics, the connection of drug use with crime "oversimplifies their relationship," and "a wide range of psychological, social, and economic incentives can combine" to produce violent crime.

Stiffer penalties for crack cannot be justified on the basis that it is cheaper and more accessible than powder cocaine. During debates on the Anti-Drug Abuse Acts of 1986 and 1988, various members of Congress argued that crack must be eradicated because of its relative low cost and availability. However, to apply draconian penalties for first-time possession and distribution of crack on the basis of its low cost discriminates against drug users from low-income communities and disproportionately affects African Americans and Latinos. Furthermore, higher penalties for crack cocaine guarantee that small-time users will be penalized more severely than major dealers who buy and sell powder cocaine before it is transformed into crack.

Commission Votes to Rewrite Guideline

Although Congress could—and should—have repealed this unwarranted disparate punishment as part of the crime bill enacted last year, it chose instead to direct the U.S. Sentencing Commission to submit recommendations on retaining or modifying the law. The Commission completed its study earlier this year and on April 10, based on its findings, voted to (1) end the 100-to-1 disparity in sentencing between crack and powder cocaine in the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, and (2) recommend that Congress equalize the nation's mandatory minimum cocaine laws. If Congress does not revoke the Commission's actions with respect to the proposed Sentencing Guidelines amendment within 180 days, that change will go into effect. Congress, however, must still act affirmatively to change the mandatory minimum statute.

Attorney General Janet Reno has publicly opposed the Sentencing Commission's recommendations to equalize the crack and powder cocaine penalties. Her stated concern is that the Commission's recommendations do not take into account the violence connected with the crack trade that has wreaked havoc in inner-city communities across the country. This concern, however, was addressed by the Commission, which added a provision to the guidelines that will make the base penalties for drug crimes more severe if a gun or violence is used by the offender.

Legislation laden with penalties that lead to greater incarceration of people of color harms their prospects for future employment. In many states, conviction of a felony results in disenfranchisement. And despite the increased resources going into prison construction, it will be impossible to build enough prisons to lock up the massive numbers of people projected to be incarcerated for violation of drug laws enacted over the last decade.

Equitable Bill Proposed

The Crack Cocaine Equitable Sentencing Act of 1995 (H.R. 1264), authored by Congressman Rangel, would remove the arbitrary and unfair distinction in sentencing between powder and crack cocaine and ensure that the federal drug laws relating to them are equitable. Continuing to allow this disparity in sentencing undermines the authority of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution, which guarantees equal protection under the law from disproportionate punishment.

Congress must recognize the strong racial implications of the crack/powder disparity in criminal sentencing and move speedily to adopt the Commission's recommendations. It must not second guess the Commission's experts, who have complied with the mandate contained in last year's crime bill to study the problem and submit recommendations.

The Rangel bill is awaiting action. Congressional hearings should be held immediately and Congress must act speedily to end the racially disproportionate drug sentencing policy. ■

Fairness, Compassion, and Responsibility

At the Joint Center's 25th Anniversary Dinner, the First Lady Said We Must Extend the Gains in Equality and Justice Made in the 1960s

As keynote speaker at the Joint Center's 25th anniversary dinner this year, Hillary Rodham Clinton expressed her hopes that in the next generation, racism will finally be overcome. Mrs. Clinton is a graduate of Wellesley College and Yale Law School. In 1973, she became a staff attorney for the Children's Defense Fund, and the following year she served on the Watergate Impeachment Inquiry staff of the U.S. House of Representatives Judiciary Committee. She married Bill Clinton in 1975 and moved to Arkansas where the couple taught at the University of Arkansas Law School. After her husband was elected governor of Arkansas, she founded the Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families. Mrs. Clinton was also a partner of Rose law firm in Little Rock. After President Clinton was elected to the White House in 1992, he appointed Mrs. Clinton to head his Task Force for National Health Care Reform. The following is an excerpt of the First Lady's address at the Joint Center's 25th anniversary dinner:

The 25th anniversary of the Joint Center offers us a chance to reflect on new freedoms that were born in America in the 1960s from the struggle for civil rights and human dignity that is far from finished, that is sometimes under siege, but that has led our great nation to re-examine its conscience and rewrite its laws. Marching for justice and equality in the 1960s was not easy. Passing civil rights laws and then defending them has not been easy. Most difficult of all has been transforming what is legislated in marble halls into authentic change in the streets, in neighborhoods, classrooms, and workplaces. The lesson of all these years is that this isn't just *your* struggle, it is *our* struggle too, and we must win it—or America isn't truly America at all.

We still have many miles to go, and the Joint Center must continue to chart our course. When the Center began in 1970, it represented a turning point, a new and different phase of the journey. Picket signs were replaced by the tools of research, information, training and technical assistance. The Center is the ground on which a new generation of black elected officials have stood on their way to city halls, state legislatures and the halls of Congress.

The Joint Center stands for unity without unanimity—unity around a fundamental commitment to opportunity and equality for all Americans. You have been teachers of the hard truths of equality. Before my husband was elected President, he and I both learned from your landmark work on employment, welfare, black youth, and education reform.

We must remember that there is much that still challenges us and that the next 25 years may be even more difficult than the first 25. In this era of vast economic change, global competitiveness, and the rise of new technologies, we face new fears and tensions as well as great new opportunities. We face an economic insecurity that invites reaction and a search for scapegoats.

The great test of our national character is to defend and extend freedom for our own people—just as we have sustained and saved freedom in other parts of the world. In the past generation, we saw men and women rise up to overcome communism. In the next generation, let us hope that men and women will rise up to overcome racism once and for all. We should devote ourselves to expressing and renewing our resolve to protect the values of fairness, tolerance, compassion, and responsibility that have made this nation great and have been the foundations of social justice.

We all have much to do—to stand our ground, to stand for our beliefs, and to move ahead. As a society, we can't just profess equality, we have to finish the work of reaching it. We can't decide to compromise our ideals, to retreat from our progress, to set group against group—because then we would endanger not only the gains of the past, but our democracy itself. We cannot accept an America where some are more free than others.

Above all else, I believe we must persist in appealing to hopes, not fears, in seeking solutions, not scapegoats. We must insist that we are here to do more than pass through life, taking what we can for ourselves in our hurried rush along the way. We must get ahead by advancing together, not by climbing over each other. We must seek change that takes us forward, not back.

That is why we cannot allow a debate over welfare reform to turn into a war against the poor. That is why we cannot permit welfare reform to become an excuse for taking food from children, or heat from the elderly, or shelter from homeless families. We need welfare reform that demands responsibility, not deprivation, that offers work, not the whip of shame and fear. And that is why we cannot permit the dream of opportunity to be lost—whether that means protecting school lunches for the children of the inner city or college loans for the sons and daughters of the middle class.

Progress seldom comes without a price, it often encounters resistance—even setbacks. So we must keep fighting, each in our own way, for things that touch the very soul of our country. We can be strengthened in this longer march toward justice and equality by the words of Dr. King:

> The road ahead is not altogether a smooth one. There are no broad highways to lead us easily and inevitably to quick solutions... [but] however difficult the moment, however frustrating the hour, it will not be long, because truth crushed to earth will rise again. How long? Not long. Because the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice. ■

Think Tank

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of race, poverty, and disadvantage, regardless of liberal or conservative affiliations.

From the outset of its new incarnation, according to Dr. Milton Morris, who has directed research at the institution since 1979, "the Joint Center has sought to make its research a distinctive blend of active engagement with timely policy issues, on the one hand, and dispassionate analysis of deep-rooted social problems, on the other." Morris points to the Center's work on voting rights as an example. The organization pulled together a group of scholars to study the subtle practices that had continued to bar black citizens from voting throughout the 1970s. The result was a book entitled *Minority Vote Dilution*, edited by Chandler Davidson of Rice University, still considered the definitive work on the subject. When the Voting Rights Act, as amended in 1982, reached the U.S. Supreme Court in *Thornburgh* v. *Gingles* four years later, the High Court cited the book extensively in what became a landmark voting rights decision.

In short, while it had addressed black voting issues in 1976 by forming the National Coalition on Black Voter Participation, by the early '80s the Joint Center was responding with research. It produced study after study on obstacles to voting, strategies for mobilizing black voters, and critical elections involving black candidates. In the mid-1990s the Joint Center is engaged in studying yet another aspect of voting rights—redistricting as a tool for increasing black representation in Congress, state legislatures, and city councils.

A Think Tank for 2000 and Beyond

As the Joint Center expanded its research to encompass a broader spectrum of social and economics issues, scholars at the institution found that even during the 1980s, a decade of nationwide growth, the poverty of black families, particularly of children, was deepening. Joint Center data also showed that the yawning gaps between blacks and whites in wages and employment were not narrowing. By the end of the decade, the Center had brought a stream of facts and insights to the public debate, including its findings on black economic progress and minority entrepreneurship. Much of this work was directed by Dr. Margaret Simms, recruited from the Washington, D.C.-based Urban Institute in 1986. Four years later the Center added the word "Economic" to its name, a change Williams explained succinctly: "If blacks were better off economically, there are reasons to believe they would be better off socially."

In the 1980s, the Joint Center also developed its long-term commitment to building coalitions across racial and ethnic lines by looking at black relations with Hispanic, Jewish, and Asian Americans, as well as with the Japanese. Toward this end, the Center cosponsored conferences, published academic papers, featured articles in *FOCUS* on coalition building, and has hosted three visiting scholars from Japan.

Lately, the Joint Center has been working in several African countries to help them build viable democratic institutions. Under the direction of political scientist Dr. Pearl Alice Marsh, the Joint Center has brought South Africa's emerging political parties together for training and other nonpartisan activities. International programs have focused on African Americans' participation in U.S. foreign policy and in the nation's military, as well as the impact of international competition on minorities.

In an age that insists on easy political labels, the Joint Center has avoided being categorized. The Center serves the black American community, but it is not a black organization. It supports black politicians, but it is not a political group. It is deeply concerned with politics, but it has no party affiliation. It is usually associated with liberal causes but has strong supporters among conservatives.

Today in the nation's capital, the Joint Center fills a critical niche. Its independence, flexibility, and adaptability have made it a reliable source of data and analysis on key issues of public policy affecting blacks. And the Joint Center can be expected to continue to be an independent voice for the interests of African Americans over the next 25 years. ■

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