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A Child's Distress and That of Millions

The case of six-year-old Elian Gonzalez, the Cuban boy found adrift off the Florida coast at Thanksgiving, is a tragedy. Not only had the child lost his mother in the crossing to these shores, but in the past five months he has become a pawn in a grotesque political chess game. Although there's little evidence that his life was distressed in Cuba, members of Congress have introduced legislation to grant him permanent-resident status to keep him here. Cuban President Fidel Castro seems to have made Elian's return a priority for his nation. What is worse, the boy has become the object of a media circus and is the lead story in major newspapers and TV news shows. Most of us watching all this hope that Elian's situation is resolved soon so that he can have a chance at a healthy, happy childhood, preferably—in my view—with his natural father. To me, this is a no-brainer.

At the same time it must be said that this skewed focus on one child is revealing. It is unlikely that so much attention would be paid to one child if he were from China, Africa, Central America, or Haiti. In the aftermath of the 1991 coup to overthrow the democratically elected Haitian government of Jean-Bertrand Aristide, many Haitians sought refuge in the United States to escape the reign of political violence that followed.

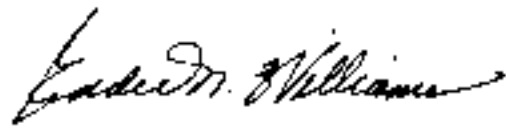
Among the thousands who attempted the journey on rafts and leaky boats were children whose parents were killed or arrested by the military junta. According to Marleine Bastien, president of Haitian Women of Miami, Inc., virtually all of these youths were sent back without a hearing or any other form of due process. When a wooden freighter carrying 411 Haitians bound for the United States ran aground January 1 this year, all aboard were brought back to Haiti on two U.S. Coast Guard cutters including 22 unaccompanied minors. Haitian Women of Miami found that some of these children have ended up on the streets of Port-au-Prince living hand-to-mouth. But voices like those of Madame Bastien, calling for compassion for these and thousands of other children in a land racked by poverty and political terror, are not heard. But the anti-Castro Cuban voices *are* heard—and for good reason.

We needn't look as far as Cuba or Haiti to find children in despair. Millions of American children also are inadequately housed, suffer from poor diets, receive substandard educations, and have little access to health care. According to recent data from the Children's Defense Fund, 13.5 million children in the United States are poor—that's one in five children. More than a third of all black and Hispanic children are poor. Rarely does their plight reach the front page or lead the evening news.

Among industrialized countries, the United States ranks first in gross domestic product, first in the number of millionaires and billionaires, but (according to the Children's Defense Fund) 10th in eighth-grade science scores and 21st in eighth-grade math scores.

The neglect of American children is not without costs. One in five American children who live in poverty today are at heightened risk of stunted growth, incomplete educations, and lower earnings. When they become adults, the cumulative lifetime economic contribution of these workers will fall below its full potential by hundreds of billions of dollars.

These facts are certainly worth the attention of the media and the nation's political leaders. If we are sensitive enough to hear the distress of a single Cuban child, we should not be numb to the suffering of children everywhere, including in the United States. ■



PRESIDENT



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Black GOP Activist Resigns from the Party

In a FOCUS Interview, Faye Anderson Speaks Frankly About Why the Republican Party Fails to Reach Black Voters

On March 28, *politicallyblack.com* commentator and Republican activist Faye Anderson publicly resigned from the Republican Party. She had been a national vice chair of the Republican National Committee's New Majority Council and worked in the 1988 and 1992 presidential campaigns of George Bush. She was also a policy advisor to Bob Dole's campaign when he ran for the White House in 1996.

Anderson said her resignation "comes in the wake of a pattern of racial blunders that I cannot dismiss as mere 'mistakes.'" She cited the 1999 refusals of congressional Republicans to support a resolution condemning the Council of Conservative Citizens (CCC), a white supremacist group, and Republican presidential candidate George W. Bush's refusal to condemn the flying of the Confederate flag over the South Carolina Statehouse, as well as his failure to speak out against Bob Jones University's ban on interracial dating. Anderson was interviewed by David C. Ruffin, the editor of FOCUS.

Ruffin: Do you see your resignation as emblematic of the Republican Party's difficulty in retaining black support?

Anderson: I believe that 25 percent of black folks could be added to the Republican base. But the people who are running the party are not convinced they can get the black vote. It's no coincidence that the black vote for Republican presidential candidates hovers around 10 percent. The problem is, those same blue suits who have been hanging around the Republican party for the last 20 to 25 years don't know how to put together a message that would appeal to black voters.

Ruffin: What do you mean by blue suits?

Anderson: I mean white political advisors and consultants to Republican candidates. They don't see the black middle class, so when they talk about reaching out to blacks, they don't see the black professional class, the entrepreneurial class, or the upper class for that matter. They only see poor folks. So where do Republicans go when they start talking about reaching out—the inner city, because that's all they know. The Republican Party is not the party of poor white folks, it's the party of the middle class, the small businessperson. So why is it, when it comes to black folks, the only black folks they talk about are the poor?

Ruffin: Why do these miscalculations continue?

Anderson: Those of us who know better say, don't waste your time there. But we are not present when those deci-

sions are made. I'll give you a good example. In '98, the National Republican Congressional Committee made a big deal out of "Operation Breakout" to focus on minority voters. There was a \$37 million advertising budget. Not a dime was spent on black radio or black newspapers, which have very inexpensive ad rates. You can't say you are serious about wanting to reach out to black voters, but you never deliver the message where black voters are likely to hear it.

Ruffin: Do you think Texas Governor Bush is doing a better job of reaching African Americans in his presidential campaign?

Anderson: When George W. Bush came out of the box last year to run for president, he was a blank slate to the American people. He could have been anything he wanted to be. He was able, at least in the beginning, to pull off the idea that he was a compassionate conservative. Then he got in trouble when he surrounded himself with the blue suits.

Ruffin: What kind of trouble?

Anderson: Well, we saw it in the South Carolina primary. Bush didn't condemn the confederate flag. He went to Bob Jones University. He snubbed 6,800 minority journalists at the Unity '99 Convention in Seattle last year. These were not only black reporters, editors, and columnists, but also Latinos, Asian Americans, and Native Americans. He couldn't put minority journalists on his schedule, but we learned later he found time to meet behind closed doors with John Carlson who was the chairman of Initiative 200 [Washington state's anti-affirmative action initiative]. Bush said he's a different kind of Republican who will be able to attract a broad base of support, but then he does the same things old-school Republicans have done. His advisors have to be blamed for some of this.

The same thing happened to Bob Dole in '96—a good man who had a credible civil rights record, who enjoyed significant black support in his various elections in Kansas. But in the hands of his handlers, what happened? He became a foe of civil rights. How much of the black vote did he get—10, 11 percent? That's the same as [President George] Bush in '92.

Ruffin: But according to exit polls, in his last gubernatorial election, George W. Bush got more than 25 percent of the black vote.

Anderson: That's why everyone was excited about the 27 percent of black support Bush claims he got in his run for governor of Texas in 1998. Bush's initial appeal was that he

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Black Republican

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would not just win in traditionally Republican states. If he could get that 27 percent or close to it in Midwestern and Northeastern battleground states in the presidential election, he'd be home free. Now he'll be lucky if he gets 10 percent. He has to get black folks to take him off mute. Black people are tuning him out, they're not listening to him. And I think the damage is irreparable. I don't think there is anything he can say to convince black folks to vote for him. There's not enough time between now and November.

Ruffin: *Is the GOP today the party of Lincoln?*

Anderson: No, it's not the party of Lincoln because those in control are the old Dixiecrats—the Democrats who opposed the civil rights movement and moved over to the Republican party. In the 21st century, the first standard-bearer for the party of Lincoln is George W. Bush, who has reservations about condemning the flying of the confederate flag over the capitol of South Carolina.

Ruffin: *Are there conservative values that black people can embrace?*

Anderson: Oh yes. Family values are what got us through slavery, reconstruction, and Jim Crow. We, of all groups, understand the middle class values of hard work and an entrepreneurial spirit. Quality education is the only way we are going to get ahead. That's part of our ethic.

When you look at specific policy areas, I happen to be pro-choice, but there is significant black support for the pro-life position. Nobody is harder on crime than black folks because we are so often the victims of it. I think we have the highest percentage of churchgoers. These aren't necessarily Republican values. They're basic American values. The Republican Party has tried to appropriate them for political advantage.

Ruffin: *In the late 1950s, the Republican party had 25 percent or more black support. There was the liberal-to-moderate Rockefeller wing of the party. What happened to that?*

Anderson: Well, [Republican presidential candidate Barry] Goldwater was what happened. In 1960, black self-identification with the Republican party was 22 percent. Blacks fled the party in '64 for good reason—Goldwater's opposition to the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act. Apart from Nixon's 1968 campaign and platform of black capitalism, the Republican Party has not made any efforts to reconnect with black voters since the mid-1970s. Incidentally, the same time he called for black capitalism, Nixon was putting together his Southern strategy to roll back civil rights gains.

Ruffin: *What does it mean to the political health of the nation that African Americans do not perceive that they have a home in the GOP and give lopsided support to the Democratic Party?*

Anderson: It says race still matters. Blacks disproportionately support Democrats, not because of Republican policies

and the party's mainstream conservative values, but because of the perception of hostility to black folks. So long as there is only one party where black people feel that we are welcome, that's a problem. In the 1956 election, [President Dwight] Eisenhower got about 40 percent of the black vote. Nixon got 23 percent in 1960. It is in our self-interest as black Americans to get back to that.

Ruffin: *Why?*

Anderson: It would be win-win. The Republicans can add to their base, which they need, because they have all the white votes they are going to get. And black folks would have influence with both parties. We wouldn't have the situation we had in '94 when we had a "blackout" on Capitol Hill. We were all bunched up in the Democratic Party and the Republican Party takes control of Congress—and overnight we're powerless. Competition for our vote between the two parties is in the country's interest if we can remove race and its divisiveness as factors in politics.

Ruffin: *Is the hostility toward blacks a problem across the board in the GOP?*

Anderson: No. [U.S. Senator] Kit Bond (R-Mo.) got 35 percent of the black vote in his 1998 reelection campaign. In other states you have folks like [Senator George] Voinovich in Ohio, [New York Governor George] Pataki, [New Jersey Governor Christine Todd] Whitman—Republican governors and senators who get a significant percentage of the black vote.

Ruffin: *How do they get that support?*

Anderson: First of all, they ask. They package a credible message delivered by credible black messengers, and it yields votes. So outreach is happening at the state and local levels. It's not happening in Washington or at the national level because that's where you have that same old circle of advisors.

Ruffin: *What does the Republican party have to do to broaden its national appeal to blacks?*

Anderson: Well, it has to clean house. It's not just about the Council of Conservative Citizens (CCC). The CCC is more a code, like the confederate flag is code. The Republican Party is talking its outreach "big tent" rhetoric, but it's a party dominated by white southerners—Southern culture, Southern heritage. The Republican party has to go through the experience that the Democratic Party went through during the civil rights era. It has to be purged of its racist element in order to survive. Maybe the thing to drive that home is for the party to lose big.

Ruffin: *Are there any black people who have influence in the inner circles of the Republican party as there were, say, 30 years ago?*

Anderson: I don't know whether there are any black people who have Bush's ear. There may be, but they are not in touch with the black community because, if they were,

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Implementing the Workforce Investment Act

Legislation That Replaces the Job Training Partnership Act Provides Funding for Vouchers for Individual Training Accounts

by Steve Savner

During the next year, states and localities will be putting into effect the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA), which replaces the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) as the main source of federal funding and policy for job training and workforce development. The WIA will offer more funding than JTPA did for information and referral services, and less funding for training. It will be relying more upon vouchers to provide training rather than contracting services directly.

Local officials will be making key decisions about the use of WIA funds and how the workforce development “system” will be structured. (Each state was asked to submit a plan to the U.S. Department of Labor by April 1, 2000, to ensure that it continued to receive federal funds.) For each state plan, the governor must designate Local Workforce Investment Areas, which are likely to be the same or very similar to the service delivery areas that were established under JTPA. These designations are important because roughly 85 percent of all federal funds that come to a state will be distributed to these areas.

For each area, the chief elected local official(s) will select members of local Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs), similar to the Private Industry Councils that have existed under JTPA. Working with the local elected official(s), these boards will plan training programs based on the needs of job seekers and local employers, how much money is available for information and referral services, and how the new vouchers for Individual Training Accounts are designed.

Through this local planning, a set of critical decisions will be reached:

- To what extent will resources be targeted to training for low-income adults?
- How will individual eligibility for training services be determined?
- How will the new voucher (Individual Training Account) system work?

Targeting Low-Income Adults

Under JTPA, most federal funds were spent on training programs. Under WIA, there are three different levels of services: core services, intensive services, and training services. Core services, primarily information and referral, must be available to all adults who seek them through one-stop delivery systems in each local area. These two requirements—universal availability and one-stop delivery—are

expected to be costly, requiring the use of funds that previously paid for training services.

Under Title IIA of JTPA, at least 90 percent of the funds available for adults (who did not qualify as dislocated workers) had to be used to provide services to low-income job seekers. By contrast, under WIA there is no such requirement. If funds for training services are “limited” in any local area, the training of low-income individuals must receive priority. (Under the Act, the term “low-income individual” is defined to include, among others, anyone who receives cash payments under a public assistance program or has an income at or below the poverty line.) States and local areas must find ways to ensure that such a priority is followed, unless local officials find that a priority system is unnecessary. The federal WIA regulations offer little guidance on this, so it will be up to states and localities to determine what portion of WIA training resources will be earmarked for low-income individuals and public assistance recipients, and what portion may be used for individuals at higher income levels.

The issue of training priorities for WIA funds may diminish in importance in places where low-income adults can access education and training programs funded from other sources. In the near future, WIA funds for adults are not likely to increase. Because a growing proportion of those funds will be spent on one-stop systems and core services, only a small part of the roughly \$1 billion available nationally will be given to local officials for training purposes. This in turn means that it will be vital for education and training funded from other sources to be effectively coordinated. For example, the federal government currently distributes \$16 billion to the states each year under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program. States may use these funds at their discretion to educate and train low-income parents, including noncustodial parents, whether or not those people receive cash assistance. Similarly, states and localities spend roughly \$13 billion per year on public two-year colleges, which run many of the nation’s vocational programs. In the end, the targeting of WIA funds may be less important than ensuring that people have access to these programs. WIA can be used to improve this access if states and localities undertake strategic planning and thoughtfully carry out their new one-stop systems.

Workforce Act

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Determining Eligibility

The WIA requirement of universal access to core services applies to every adult. Intensive services will be available to people who are either unable to obtain employment through core services or who are employed but determined (by a one-stop operator) to need intensive services to obtain or retain employment self-sufficiency. Intensive services can include in-depth assessments and individualized planning, job readiness activities, case management for individuals seeking training, literacy activities, and paid and unpaid work experience. Training services will be available to those who receive intensive services but are still unable to obtain employment.

These provisions of the Act are sometimes misleadingly referred to as “work first” requirements. Many have assumed that they require job seekers to accept any job available before they qualify for training. However, the federal regulations give local boards broad discretion in deciding who is eligible for intensive and training services. The regulations stipulate that an individual must participate in at least one core service before it is declared that he or she has been unable to find employment through core services or has been unable to move from one job to another that “allows for self-sufficiency.”

Nothing precludes establishing standards regarding wages, fringe benefits, or career ladders when a local board defines the type or quality of employment it will consider in carrying out this eligibility rule. Federal policy also does not require that an individual spend any minimum amount of time receiving core services before becoming eligible for intensive services. Local policy might even allow an individual to begin receiving intensive services on the same day he or she is first assessed.

Local officials will have similarly broad discretion in determining who will be allowed to advance from intensive services to receive training. The federal regulations specify that an individual receive at least one intensive service, for example, development of an employment plan with a case manager or counseling and career planning. Again, the participant need not spend any minimum amount of time receiving intensive services before entering training.

In implementing this new system of “sequential eligibility,” local boards will have to balance the need to spread limited training funds among the large number of job seekers who seek services, while ensuring that low-income adults are not blocked from receiving training for better jobs simply because they might be able to find low-wage employment. Public participation in the development of local plans, and oversight of the plans’ implementation, will both be critical if these competing demands are to be fairly balanced.

Individual Training Accounts

Under JTPA, virtually all training for low-income adults was provided by training vendors under contract with the

local Private Industry Council. Marking a significant shift in policy, WIA requires that training be provided through the use of Individual Training Accounts, often referred to as vouchers. Individuals approved for training receive a listing of eligible providers together with information about their performance as trainers and the costs of their services. Each individual will then select a provider and program, and the costs for the program will be paid through funds in an Individual Training Account (ITA).

Several exceptions have been established to allow local boards to provide training through contracts rather than ITAs. Even under these exceptions, however, providers will still have to meet eligibility standards. The exceptions include on-the-job training provided by an employer, or customized training; a determination by a local board that an insufficient number of providers are available in the local area (“such as in a rural area”) to provide meaningful consumer choice; a determination that a demonstrably effective training program is offered by a community-based organization or another private organization to serve special participant populations facing multiple barriers to employment. Examples of the latter type of special populations include ex-offenders, homeless people, and low-income people with substantial language or cultural barriers.

The new ITA system could give job seekers far greater control and a wider range of options in selecting from providers than they have had elsewhere. However, many details about the new ITAs are being left to state and local decisions. Most significantly, the monetary value of the ITA is not established under federal policy, and both state and local decisions may determine how the ITA is structured.

Limits on the value of ITAs may be established in several ways. A limit may be applied to an individual based on the needs identified in his or her employment plan. The state or local board may also establish a range of amounts or a maximum amount applicable to all ITAs. *It will be important for well-informed officials and experts to participate in both the state and local planning processes to ensure that ITAs will be of sufficient value to cover the full cost of high-quality training at least for low-income adults.*

A further concern about the use of ITAs is their potential impact on community-based training providers. Many of these providers are small organizations with limited financial resources. They may have a difficult time sustaining their programs without access to stable contracts, even though they offer high-quality programs. The third exception noted above, concerning contracts for programs of demonstrated effectiveness in working with individuals with significant barriers to employment, may be useful in arranging contracts in some of these instances. However, not all high-quality programs offered by smaller organizations may fit within the required focus on individuals with “multiple barriers.” At the state level, it will be valuable for the governor to identify other groups with barriers who would benefit from services from community-based providers. Local boards should make use of the flexibility they are allowed so that they can use contracted services as necessary

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Lighting the Way for Children

In Her New Book, Child Advocate Marian Wright Edelman Extols the Value of Mentoring by “Ordinary People”

by Wiley A. Hall, 3rd

Marian Wright Edelman, the founder and president of the Children’s Defense Fund in Washington, D.C., has an undergraduate degree from Spelman, a law degree from Yale, and was director of the Center for Law and Education at Harvard. She was awarded a MacArthur Foundation “genius” fellowship and is a recipient of the Albert Schweitzer Humanitarian Prize. Her contemporaries and mentors have included such luminaries as Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert F. Kennedy. Yet, in her new book, *Lanterns: A Memoir of Mentors*, Edelman focuses on the care and attention she received from the adults in her youth and childhood—the people she calls “ordinary people who do extraordinary things.”

“Some of the most important lessons I have learned did not come from Harvard or Yale or law school or Ph.D.-trained mouths,” she writes. “They came from poor women and men educated in the school of life. Their books were struggle. Their pencils and pens were sharpened by poverty.”

Lanterns is Edelman’s powerful and moving autobiographical call for a return to the values that helped shelter the black community even through the dark years of slavery and segregation. The author says she wrote the book in the hopes of reawakening the spirit of service and sacrifice that once fueled the civil rights movement. The true movers and shakers, says Edelman, are parents, grandparents, teachers and preachers—people who touch other people, particularly children, with their caring.

This kind of spirit is particularly important today, at a time when half of America’s children will live in single-parent homes at some point in their lives. Thirteen and a half million American children live in poverty, and one in three is at least a year behind in school. According to a recent report from the Children’s Defense Fund, one of the nation’s leading child advocacy organizations, nearly 80,000 young people were killed in America between 1979 and 1997—one and a half times the total number of Americans killed in the Vietnam War. Improving the welfare of children may require a national effort, new programs, and increased spending. But *Lanterns* is Edelman’s testimony that there also are more immediate, more intimate things that each adult can do to nurture and protect the children around them.

“This book is not about volunteer mentoring programs for children and youths, or about career mentoring for those seeking to move up corporate or other professional ladders,” she writes in her preface. “This book is about the crucial

influences of the natural daily mentors in my life—my parents, community co-parents and elders, preachers, teachers, civic and civil rights leaders.” She asserts that even as we lament the breakdown of families and the lack of government funding for key programs, such as health care and public schools, each adult has the personal resources to change a child’s life in profound ways.

Edelman grew up in the segregated southern town of Bennettsville, South Carolina, one of five children in a close-knit, deeply spiritual family. In addition to her parents, she credits several women in her community with instilling values—often in subtle ways. She recalls helping Mrs. Theresa Kelly, known as “Miz Tee,” with her chores, and going to Sunday school with Mrs. Nancy Reese—“Miz Nancy.” Such women were role models who helped build her self-esteem just by paying attention to her. “All children need adults who believe in them and expect them to achieve, who love them, and whom they love so much they live up to their expectations of success,” she writes.

After graduating from Spelman and Yale Law School, Edelman became the first African American woman admitted to the Mississippi Bar in the mid-1960s. She directed the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund in Jackson, Mississippi. She served as counsel for the Poor People’s March on Washington, which Dr. King was organizing before his death. Later she founded the Washington Research Project, a public interest law firm that became the parent body of the Children’s Defense Fund, which was founded in 1973. Although much of the work of the Children’s Defense Fund focuses on the needs of neglected and impoverished children, Edelman says she is concerned about the welfare of children from all walks of life.

“We are at risk of letting our children drown in the bathwater of American materialism, greed and violence,” she says. “And I’m talking as much about the children of the middle class as I am about poor children, the children of whites as well as blacks.” “I am so sick of this preoccupation we have with celebrity,” she continues “...We have become so caught up in acquiring things and being important that our community has lost its way.”

However, in *Lanterns*, Edelman shines a light on the path to recovering those values. “Each of us can make a difference in small ways, just speaking to kids, smiling at them, letting them know we care,” she told the *Christian Science Monitor* last fall. “Anybody who says they can’t find the time to reach out to a child is abdicating their responsibility.” ■

Black Republican

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they would tell Bush, "You don't go to Bob Jones University and apologize to Catholics and not to blacks." They would tell Republicans, "You don't refuse to support a resolution condemning the Council of Conservative Citizens." How can a black person say they are in a position of influence and the presidential front runner of your party is wrapped in the confederate flag?

Ruffin: *The Democrats make racial blunders and recover. What's the difference?*

Anderson: In '92, when Clinton criticized black rap singer Sista Souljah for what he called cop bashing lyrics in her songs, that could have backfired and depressed black voter turnout for him. But there were credible black leaders who could say to black folks, "Yes, we know what he did, but be cool. If he gets elected, we'll be all right, trust me." Those black leaders could vouch for Clinton because they were trusted in the black community. The Republican Party has no credible blacks who can vouch for it.

Ruffin: *What do you see as the future of African Americans and the Republican Party?*

Anderson: Some serious damage has to be undone. You can't just pretend there's no history of hostility and insensitivity. You can't just say, from today forward let's start communicating. In the long term, the party will have to rebuild, but it cannot be rebuilt with the same people who have run it into the ground. ■

Workforce Act

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to supplement the ITA system. If states or local boards fail to take advantage of the community-based provider exception, it would likely have the perverse effect of decreasing rather than increasing consumer choices, exactly the opposite of what the Act intended.

Conclusion

Under WIA there will be fewer funds available for training low-income adults, and what funds are available generally will be provided through ITAs, which are one of the chief measures designed to improve the quality of training programs. Much funding will be used to develop one-stop systems intended to better coordinate and integrate services across a range of federal and state workforce programs at the local level. The benefits of the new law for low-income adults are more likely to come through coordination of services and leveraging of other resources rather than through the rules that directly govern WIA's relatively limited resources. If the difficult task of forging an integrated system out of the disparate pieces of today's workforce development services is to succeed, the efforts of elected officials, community leaders, employers, and low-income groups will all be needed. ■

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TRENDLETTER

POLITICAL REPORT

Police Attack on LA's Rampart

In September 1999, Rafael Perez, a member of the Los Angeles Police Department's (LAPD) anti-gang CRASH unit in the city's northwest Rampart neighborhood, broke the police code of silence and exposed a practice of targeting minorities for abuse. CRASH is the acronym for Community Resources Against Street Hoodlums.

On behalf of their minority clients, defense attorneys had been complaining about police corruption for years. But according to defense attorney Charles L. Lindner, a past president of the Los Angeles Criminal Bar Association, these complaints have fallen on the deaf ears of judges and prosecutors.

"The criminal justice system in Los Angeles is broken," says Lindner, "and the police Rampart scandal could not have occurred without the judiciary and the district attorney's office turning a blind eye to police perjury." A variety of abuses by Los Angeles police have resulted in a stream of false convictions of residents of the Rampart neighborhood.

An investigation stemming from Perez's disclosure has revealed that police in the CRASH unit have beaten suspects, sold confiscated drugs, planted evidence on innocent people, doctored crime scenes,

perjured testimony, used deportation to eliminate troublesome witnesses, and covered up unjustified shootings. Perez divulged that he and his partner shot a handcuffed prisoner. Perez also pleaded guilty to stealing \$1 million in cocaine from the LAPD's evidence facilities. In exchange for his cooperation, he has been given a relatively light five-year prison sentence.

To date, as a result of the Rampart police corruption revelations, 29 officers have resigned or been relieved of duty, suspended, or fired. Fifty criminal cases involving residents of the Rampart neighborhood who have been arrested by the police have been dismissed or overturned, and more are expected to be. By March 11, all of the Los Angeles Police Department's CRASH units had been disbanded. Lindner says the dysfunction of Los Angeles's criminal justice system is multifaceted. The following points summarize Lindner's analysis of the problem:

- According to Lindner, many judges demonstrate a lack of any responsibility for protecting defendants' constitutional rights under the Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Amendments. The general refusal of judges to question the credibility of police testimony has created a courtroom environment where police feel they can lie on the stand without fear of judicial sanction. Defense attorneys who complain about these irregularities repeatedly hear from judges the refrain, "Counsel, the police department is not on trial here."

Republican Governors George Deukmejian and Pete Wilson appointed conservative former prosecutors to judgeships. Few of these appointments went to African Americans or Latinos. According to California Appeals Court Associate Justice Candace Cooper, only 13 of the 407 Los Angeles Superior Court judges are black. (There are 21 vacancies.)

- District Attorney Gil Garcetti and his deputies have failed to recognize that Los Angeles police officers lie in their police reports and testimony. Lindner believes there is no political will to listen to charges of police corruption or take legal action against officers that could lead to their imprisonment. Furthermore, deputy district attorneys routinely withhold from defense attorneys exculpatory evidence that might show their clients' innocence. Worse still, some prosecutors make "suggestions" to officers as to how they might fortify a weak case.

- The problem is exacerbated by the unique independence of the LAPD and the absence of a civilian police review board. The LAPD is under the control of the five-member Board of Police Commissioners. The department was removed from mayoral supervision in the 1920s based on the premise that independence would prevent corruption by insulating the department from political meddling. This independence has not been justified by the conduct of the Los Angeles police.

The criminal allegations arising from the Rampart police abuses are being investigated by the LAPD, the Los Angeles District Attorney's Office, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Harvard Professors Demand Diallo Probe

The open letter below first appeared in the Los Angeles Times on March 26, 2000. In it, black Harvard University professors Charles J. Ogletree, Jr., and Henry Louis Gates, Jr., argue that effective crime fighting should not require citizens to forfeit their personal security—a reference to the shooting of Amadou Diallo by New York City police officers. Since that incident, two other unarmed black men have been shot to death by New York policemen. The letter calls on President Clinton to charge the Justice Department to conduct a thorough investigation. Twenty-one other distinguished black Harvard professors also signed the letter, including Lani Guinier, William Julius Wilson, Cornel West, Christopher Edley, Jr., Sarah Lawrence-Lightfoot, Randall Kennedy, and Alvin Pouissant.

“The tragic death of an unarmed immigrant, Amadou Diallo, and the pain felt by so many as a result of the recent acquittal of the four New York police officers who shot him, require immediate action to ensure that such a senseless act never occurs again. The killing of two unarmed black men by New York police in subsequent incidents makes the situation all the more compelling. The sense of outrage from the Diallo shooting has been measured, with protesters asking the justice system to respond appropriately and denouncing the violence that cost Diallo his life. Now that the first step in the justice system has exonerated the officers, it is important that efforts to address this tragedy are increased rather than diminished.

“President Clinton should ensure that the Justice Department conducts a complete and thorough investigation of this incident. No stone should be left unturned in investigating the factors that led to such a tragic and senseless death, including obtaining all of the facts about the New York Police Department's Street Crimes Unit, to which the four officers belonged, and its training, practices, and policies.

“The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, which held hearings last year focusing on the NYPD, must ensure that its report and recommendations encompass the Diallo case.

“We must examine the way we deploy law enforcement officers to fight crime. Black people are more often the victims of crime. We strongly support police efforts to prevent and reduce the prevalence of crime in our communities. The success of crime prevention programs in cities like Boston and San Diego illustrates that partnerships between communities and the police can achieve the dual goal of preserving and maintaining respect for communities of color and providing protection and policing. Our commitment to fighting crime, however, should not be viewed as forfeiting our rights of privacy and freedom to travel or as approving practices that lessen our rights as citizens. We should not be forced to choose between public safety and personal security.

“To the extent that the police officers' conduct—firing 41 shots at Diallo, 19 of which hit him—is consistent with police procedures and policies, such practices must end. It is reported that many police practices instruct officers to discharge their weapons not for the arguable purpose of subduing or fatally wounding a suspect, but for the purpose of protecting themselves and each other from individual culpability. This

sinister expression of solidarity has no purpose in a civilized society, and the president, governors, mayors and police chiefs should take immediate steps to eliminate such practices.

“While many are talking around the issue of race, we believe it is a matter of central importance in the Diallo case. The problems of racism, conscious and subconscious, must be addressed immediately. We must not ignore the underlying pervasive and lingering rage that an incident like this generates. Kadiatou Diallo, Amadou's mother, came to America to bury her son and to seek answers for his death. As she sat through the trial, with her first observance of our system of justice at work, she had to experience pain, sadness, and shock at hearing defense lawyers argue that her son was, in large part, responsible for his own death.

“It is not enough for leaders to question the competence of the investigation or even to empathize with outraged citizens. This is also a moment for leaders to teach Americans about the continuing power of color in the lives of average people. Few of us are immune from the toxins of racial mistrust and misunderstanding, but law enforcement professionals must be held to a higher standard because they are public servants armed with the discretion and power both to destroy and to save lives. We share the somber view of many that had Diallo been a European immigrant in a white neighborhood, he would be alive and unharmed today.

“Black mothers understandably must fear the risk that their sons or spouses will be mistaken for suspects and face similar fates. The disturbing number of such shootings requires us to reexamine how race plays a role in the expectations, suspicions, and even fears of all police officers and results in tragedies like the Diallo case.” ■

ECONOMIC REPORT

White House Conference on the New Economy

by Margaret C. Simms

On April 5, President Clinton invited 150 economists and policy makers from government, business, academia, and several research institutions to the White House to discuss the "New Economy" and its implications for economic equality, civil society, and government. As did many of the other guests, I found the sessions thought-provoking but merely the beginning of a much needed dialogue on these issues.

There was widespread agreement that technology is the engine for the New Economy. It has enabled the private sector to boost productivity from an anemic 1.5 percent annual increase in 1977 to over 3.0 percent in 1999. The high productivity has lengthened the economic expansion by creating jobs (and consumer demand), boosting production, and keeping inflation rates low.

While the technology industries are only a small part of the overall economy, they have contributed to 85 percent of the annual growth. Speakers at the White House gathering identified ways in which technology has had far-ranging effects on other industries, for example by reducing the time needed to move new products from the research and development phase to actual production, and by influencing more mainstream "brick and mortar" companies to think outside the box.

Another aspect of the New Economy is the globalization of commerce. This has contributed to

price stability through importing goods from abroad. However, the by-product of the increase in imports is a large trade deficit for the United States. On this issue and the related issue of the impact that imports have on employment and wages, there was less certainty among the group. The general consensus was that the policy focus should be not to turn back the tide of globalization, but rather to develop effective strategies for alleviating problems caused by worker displacement.

Even though Secretary of the Treasury Lawrence Summers said that "social policies become economic policies when jobs are looking for people," there was no consensus on whether the public or private sector should take the lead in training or retraining workers who need upgraded skills to find high-wage jobs in the New Economy.

Some speakers addressed the New Economy in a more global context, discussing its impact on employment, health, and education in other countries. Several pointed out that the Internet and related computer technology make it possible for people in remote villages to gain access to new markets and get information to improve their health and quality of life. Educational deficits, a paucity of software in languages other than English, and, of course, hardware are a few of the obstacles to socioeconomic groups seeking to benefit from this technology. But the President argued that it would not be difficult to make these programs available to a large percentage of the population. In his words, it would only take "pocket change to make a sea change" around the world.

A few of the participants pointed out that inequality is a persistent problem in this country and in other countries. Dr. William Darity, Jr.,

from the University of North Carolina, raised the issue of racial inequality directly, pointing out that the U.S. black/white per capita income ratio of 0.58 had been constant since 1860. He believes that more education alone would be insufficient to change that and would also be insufficient in other countries with similar disparities.

Proposal for an Annual Survey of Minority Businesses

Every five years since 1972, the Census Bureau has compiled statistics on minority businesses as part of the Economic Census series. While the Survey of Minority-Owned Business Enterprises (SMOBE) has provided the only national picture of the status of minority companies, the information is not always timely. For example, 1997 data will not be released until later this year. When the minority business sector was relatively static in nature, this was not as serious a problem as it is today given the rapid changes that the economy and the business world are undergoing. Researchers, policymakers, and others who use the data have been calling for a more frequent survey for years.

This year, President Clinton's Fiscal Year 2001 budget submission contains a proposal for an annual SMOBE with an annual appropriation of \$1.5 million. In addition to the usual statistics on number of firms, gross receipts, and employment, the Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA) at the Department of Commerce sees the annual survey as a source of information on critical public policy issues and for private sector decisions. It would combine the SMOBE with the Characteristics of Business Owners survey that was conducted between 1982 and 1992. Among the likely users of more current data are corporations inter-

ested in using minority companies as subcontractors or joint venture partners and financial institutions that want to offer loan services.

Based on inquiries coming into the Joint Center for information from our own minority business database, it is quite clear that the demand is there, not only for more current data, but for information on a wider array of business issues. A more frequent survey would allow MBDA to gather information on such cutting edge issues as participation in e-commerce and access to growth capital. For information on the release of the 1997 SMOBE, go to the Census website at <http://www.census.gov>.

State Tax Burdens on Poor Families

Despite federal and state policies that encourage individuals to be self-supporting through work, a study recently released by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities reveals that many states tax families with very low incomes. According to the study, 20 of 42 states with income taxes require tax payments of families with incomes below the poverty line. Thirteen of these states impose tax burdens on families working full-time at minimum-wage jobs.

Three states, Delaware, Hawaii, and New Jersey, which currently levy taxes on poor families have recently reduced this tax burden, and the income thresholds at which taxes are imposed are expected to rise over time. In eight other states, Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Montana, Oklahoma, Virginia, and West Virginia, the taxes owed by a poor family of four actually increased between 1994 and 1999.

On the other hand, 10 states have tax thresholds that are over 125 percent of the poverty line, and nine states provide tax credits with refund

State Income Tax Thresholds for Two-Parent Families of Four, 1999 States Taxing Families Below the Poverty Line

State	Income Level at Which Taxes Are Imposed	Tax Burden on Family With Income of \$17,028
Alabama	\$4,600	\$423
Kentucky	5,200	555
Illinois	6,600	313
Virginia	8,200	311
Montana	9,100	227
Indiana	9,500	341
New Jersey	10,000	168
West Virginia	10,000	272
Hawaii	11,000	382
Michigan	11,800	230
Ohio	12,300	108
Louisiana	12,700	98
Oklahoma	12,700	208
Missouri	13,900	68
Oregon	14,400	256
Georgia	15,300	37
Utah	15,500	38
Arkansas	15,600	287
Delaware	16,100	50
North Carolina	17,000	2

provisions that offset the impact of other state taxes (such as sales and property taxes). The highest refund offered for a family of four (with two children) in Minnesota (\$1,222). Vermont offers a maximum refund for a family of three of \$910. A summary and the full report, "State Income Tax

Burdens on Low-Income Families in 1999," can be found on the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities' website, <http://www.cbpp.org>. ■



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