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FOCUS

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

Ella Baker–A Leader Behind the Scenes

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The FBI Should Fight Bias Military Style

President Clinton's selection of federal judge Louis Freeh to head the FBI offers a new opportunity to finally sweep away the legacy of racism that J. Edgar Hoover left behind. During Hoover's 48-year tenure as FBI director, few blacks were permitted to become agents. Today, just 519 (five percent) of the bureau's 10,324 special agents are black and only one of the 56 special agents running the bureau's field offices is black. Discrimination in the bureau remains more serious and more personal than at many government agencies and private corporations where it lingers as an institutionalized pattern of racial exclusion.

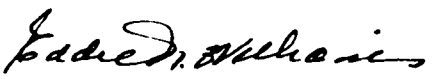
Race relations in the bureau today are similar to what they were in the armed forces back in the 1950s after President Harry S. Truman issued Executive Order 9981 to desegregate the services. Racial integration was resisted at that time by many white officers and enlisted men, and blacks in uniform frequently suffered violent attacks at the hands of white servicemen. By the 1970s, orders came down from the top brass to extend fair treatment to all soldiers, sailors, and airmen, regardless of color. Today, the military serves as a national role model for racial inclusion. The chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is black, and black generals, admirals, and other senior officers hold critical commands in each of the services.

This policy of inclusion did not occur because military commanders wanted to impose racial "quotas." The policy was instituted because the military had determined that discrimination impaired its ability to carry out its mission. Officers and noncommissioned officers today are held accountable for implementing the policy, and "good faith efforts" alone are not accepted as good enough. It is important to emphasize that the military has not been diminished by its policy of inclusion. The U.S. military is superior to the forces of any other nation and is the most effective fighting force ever fielded by this country.

With the FBI's centralized, paramilitary structure, the same kind of top-down, mandated policy of racial inclusion that has succeeded in the armed forces could work at the bureau. What is required is the will to make it happen. But internal resistance to change must be dealt with head on. This year, a federal judge approved a motion filed by the FBI Agents Association, made up mainly of white special agents, to intervene in the settlement of an employment discrimination lawsuit between the bureau and BADGE (Black Agents Don't Get Equality), a group of about 300 black agents (See the July 1991 issue of *FOCUS*).

The agency agreed to provide some black agents with back pay, promotions, and special training. The FBI also promised to revamp its personnel procedures to eliminate what black agents charge is a subjective evaluation process prone to abuse. The white agents called the bureau's proposed plan a racial quota system that would violate the rights of non-black agents. Yet, since whites hold 17 of the top 18 management positions (the inspector-in-charge of the Office of Equal Employment Opportunity Affairs is a Latino) and comprise 87 percent of all special agents, the idea that they would be endangered by the plan is absurd.

Yes, changes must be implemented with common sense and sensitivity for the careers of *all* FBI employees. But those considerations cannot be used as excuses for inaction. Freeh has much of the experience and many of the qualities he will need to succeed in the post for which he was appointed. Let's hope he also has the vision and courage to reshape the FBI so that it looks like the entire population it is charged to protect. ■



PRESIDENT

FOCUS

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Ella Baker–A Leader Behind the Scenes

Much of the Early Success of the NAACP and the SCLC Can Be Attributed to the Organizing Efforts of a Courageous Woman

by Britta W. Nelson

As the nation observes the 30th anniversary of the March on Washington for Civil Rights this month, the following article recalls an unsung heroine of that continuing struggle.

In 1909, the founding year of the NAACP, Ella Jo Baker was a six-year-old black girl in Norfolk, N.C., who didn't hesitate to slap a white boy in the face for calling her "nigger." But, as Baker recalled later, she soon realized that hitting an individual with her fists was not enough to overcome racism and segregation. "It takes organization, it takes dedication, it takes the willingness to stand by and do what has to be done, when it has to be done," she said. True to this sense of commitment, Ella Baker devoted her entire adult life to working for social change and racial justice. For almost 20 years, she was one of the most effective organizers for the NAAC. She later worked with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) in the 1950s and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in the 1960s. According to Congressman John Lewis (D-Ga.), "Ella Baker did more than any other person to make SCLC become what it was. Without her there would be no story of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee."

Yet few people today have ever heard her name. Baker was a person who worked outside the limelight of public attention since she cared much more about getting the work done than about getting credit for it. She was a central figure in the civil rights movement, and her accomplishments should not remain unrecognized.

The Road to Activism

Born and raised in rural North Carolina and the granddaughter of a slave, Ella Baker grew up in a family that held a strong belief in church and community involvement. Her parents stressed the responsibility of helping people in need and of fighting social and racial injustice, principles which influenced her decision to become an activist.

Baker graduated from Shaw University as valedictorian of her class in 1927, but her family's financial situation prevented her from attending graduate school. Instead of becoming a teacher, then the traditional occupation of educated black women, she went to New York City where she worked in a factory and did domestic work. Shortly after her arrival, Baker became involved with radical politics and regularly attended political discussions and demonstrations; often defying the social conventions of the day by being the only woman and the only black in attendance. Her political views became increasingly class-conscious. Observing the economic dislocations caused by the Great Depression, she grew skeptical of what she called "the American illusion that anyone who is determined and persistent can get ahead."

With an eye toward putting her philosophical convictions into practice, Baker went to work as an editor for two liberal newspapers, *The American West Indian News* and the *Negro National News.* In 1931, she became national director of the Young Negroes' Cooperative League (YNCL), an organization that established cooperative economic ventures including forming buying clubs to enable poor people to pool their purchasing power. The YNCL was very successful in several states, and Baker soon gained a reputation as an expert in consumer affairs.

This led her, in 1935, to accept a position as the director of the Consumer Education Project in the Works Progress Administration, a New Deal initiative. At the same time, Baker worked with a variety of labor organizations in Harlem, focusing especially on the problems of female domestic workers and on police brutality against blacks. She joined the staff of the NAACP in 1938, already possessing an abundance of organizing experience which would later prove to be very helpful for her work in the civil rights movement.

A Grassroots Agenda

Baker's first position with the NAACP was that of a field organizer. In four years she made over three hundred trips throughout the South—averaging 12,000 miles a year. Her focus was on membership recruitment, the establishment of new NAACP chapters, fundraising, and above all, consciousness raising. Many Southern blacks had been terrorized and intimidated by the Ku Klux Klan and other white racist groups to such a degree that some of them were afraid to even get involved with the NAACP, which was considered a radical organization at the time and, in some states, had been declared illegal.

Since the NAACP's headquarters were in New York, Southern racists denounced its field workers as "Northern

(Continued on page 4)

Ms. Nelson, a recent visiting fellow at the Joint Center, is an instructor of African American history at the University of Munich in Germany.

Baker

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troublemakers," often threatening, attacking, and in some cases even killing them. Despite high personal risk, Baker was able to obtain the trust of grassroots leaders and to teach them the importance of organizing their communities. As she recalled, "The major job was getting people to understand that they had power but that they could only use it if they understood what was happening and how group action could counter violence."

Because of her impressive success in this field, Baker was named the national director of branches in 1943. However, as time progressed, she grew critical of the NAACP. She thought that the organization's structure was too hierarchical, the leadership too concerned about recognition from white liberals, and its agenda geared mainly towards middle-class interests, not realizing the potential of mass-based confrontational politics and often neglecting economic issues. Baker's criticism resulted in some improvements, like the creation of several regional leadership conferences and a more inclusive youth program, but tension remained between her and the more conservative NAACP leadership. This and the fact that she accepted the responsibility of raising an eight-year-old niece caused her to resign from her national post in 1946.

In the late 1940s, Baker continued to work for several human and civil rights organizations, founding the first office of the American Cancer Society in Harlem and counseling the NAACP Youth Chapter in New York. In 1954, she became president of the New York City branch of the NAACP, which made her the highest-ranking woman in the organization. Eventually, the old conflicts between her and the NAACP leadership reemerged, and Baker left the NAACP for good.

Strong Leaders or Strong People?

She quickly applied her talents to new civil rights endeavors. In the mid-1950s, Baker collaborated with civil rights activist Bayard Rustin to found a new organization in New York called "In Friendship," which provided financial and organizational support to blacks who were fighting discrimination in the South, including the participants in the Montgomery (Alabama) bus boycott. Supporting the boycott was consistent with Baker's belief in building strong mass movements in the South that would pursue a more confrontational course of direct action than had been pursued by the NAACP, which Baker felt had become increasingly "hung-up in its legal successes."

It was primarily Ella Baker and the "In Friendship" group who convinced Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., and other Southern civil rights leaders that the momentum of the Montgomery bus boycott had to be continued and used as a foundation to build a mass organization. "After the Montgomery situation...nothing was happening," Baker said. "The question was raised why there was no organizational machinery making use of the people who had been involved in the boycott. I irritated Dr. King in raising this question. His rationale was that after a big demonstrative type of action, there was a natural letdown, and a need for people to sort of catch their breath, which I didn't quite agree with."

Her idea for a new organization contributed to the formation of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in 1957, with King as the president and Ella Baker as its "interim executive secretary" (the male leadership of the SCLC was not willing to name a woman to be the official executive secretary). While King was preoccupied with his responsibilities as pastor of Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, delivering speeches and dealing with the media, Baker was the one who built up the SCLC's organizational structure. She set up an office in Atlanta, hired staff, worked with community leaders to prepare voter registration drives, created the SCLC's newsletter, *The Crusader*, and organized the 1958 Citizenship Crusade, a massive drive to educate African Americans in the South on how to participate in the electoral process.

Despite her success, Baker soon encountered the same conflicts with the SCLC leadership as she had had with the NAACP. She felt the SCLC was not "people oriented" enough and should have been more involved in mobilizing people in the poor, rural counties of the South, where blacks were not voting at all. She was frustrated with what she called "slow preachers' methods." She also strongly disapproved of the organization's male-dominated hierarchy as well as its low regard for women and young people, whom she perceived as the movement's future. "I had known that there would never be any role for me in a leadership capacity with SCLC," explained Baker. "Why? First, I'm a woman. Also, I'm not a minister. The basic attitude of men and especially ministers as to the role of women in their church as is that of taking orders, not providing leadership."

But what concerned Baker even more was that the SCLC's centralized structure was centered around King as a singular charismatic leader whose presence at any kind of demonstration would guarantee publicity and success. In her view, the degree of adulation and dependence which the SCLC showed regarding King could not be healthy for the movement. On the contrary, she felt that true, lasting change in the South could only be accomplished by replacing the traditional concept of a "leader-centered group" with "group-centered leadership." "Instead of trying to develop people around a leader, the thrust should be to develop leadership out of the group, and to spread the leadership roles so you're organizing people to be self-sufficient rather than to be dependent upon...a charismatic leader," Baker said. "My theory is: strong people don't need strong leaders."

More Than a Hamburger

When the student sit-in movement began in February 1960, Ella Baker saw her chance to develop this new kind of organization. She convinced SCLC leaders to sponsor a

(Continued on back page)

POLITICAL TRENDLETTER

A Congressional Report Card

At an August 3 Capitol Hill news conference packed with reporters, Rep. **KWEISI MFUME** (D-Md.), the chair of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC), flanked by other caucus members announced that the majority of the caucus would support President Clinton's economic plan. Almost as significant as the message was the amount of press attention it received, indicating a new level of respect for the CBC's increased power. The caucus with its 40 members (an increase of over 50 percent from the 102nd Congress) has drawn much attention this year—both on and off Capitol Hill. When the caucus speaks, people listen. CBC support was absolutely essential to the adoption of the president's massive budget and deficit reduction program that passed by just two votes in the House of Representatives (as was **CAROL MOSELEY BRAUN'S** vote in the Senate).

The 38 caucus Democrats were in agreement on over 90 percent of the House roll-call votes so far this year. Black Republican Congressman **GARY FRANKS** from Connecticut generally voted with his GOP colleagues. The caucus has supported a number of major domestic bills that provide for family leave, expanded voter registration opportunities, extended unemployment benefits, protection of the reproductive rights of women, and funds for urban development. Backing for these bills was viewed by caucus members as consistent with furthering the interests of their constituents (CBC members represent districts that are largely or majority black).

Across the nation, however, most African Americans live in districts not represented by black members of Congress. Altogether, there are 102 congressional districts with black constituencies of 15 percent or more. Not all legislators representing those districts voted in ways that were consistent with CBC action. For example, 10 white representatives of districts that are at least 20 percent black opposed the Motor Voter bill, which enables citizens to register to vote when they apply for or renew their drivers licenses. Fifteen white representatives of similar districts voted against the Family Leave bill, which allows workers to take up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave to care for a new-born child or a sick relative (both bills were enacted by Congress).

However, the CBC was not united on all issues. Several caucus members, especially freshmen from high-tech, Sun-Belt areas, have demonstrated their independence. For example, fourteen CBC members, including all the black freshmen from Alabama, California, Florida, and Texas, voted for the construction of the Freedom Space Station, a project that will help create jobs in their states. The rest of the caucus objected to the project as a misplaced priority.

How They Voted

The chart below shows how members of the U.S. House of Representatives with black constituencies of at least 15 percent voted on seven key domestic issues this year. A plus sign (+) indicates a vote consistent with the positions taken by the majority of the Congressional Black Caucus; a minus sign (-) indicates the reverse, and a question mark (?) indicates that the legislator did not vote. CBC members are in boldface type. An asterisk (*) indicates the roll-call votes when **BENNIE THOMPSON** (D-Miss.) was not present since he was elected this year to fill the 2nd congressional district seat vacated by **MIKE ESPY** who was appointed to be secretary of Agriculture. An "I" indicates the votes in which **ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON**, the Democratic delegate from the District of Columbia, was ineligible to vote under the House rule. The votes of each member of the CBC are listed in the chart with the exception of Gary Franks whose district is only five percent black. Franks voted in opposition to CBC positions on five of the seven issues—he supported reproductive rights and appropriations for the District of Columbia.

1. **House Narcotics Committee**—A vote to reestablish the Select Committee on Narcotics Abuse and Control (H. Res. 20) for the duration of the 103rd Congress for the purpose of oversight and recommending legislation to the appropriate House committees on the problems of narcotics, including drug abuse treatment and control. House roll-call vote No. 10, rejected 180-237, January 26. A vote *for* was consistent with action by the majority of the CBC.

2. **Family and Medical Leave**—A vote for passage of HR 1, in the House, a bill to require companies with more than 50 employees to allow 12 weeks of unpaid leave for an illness or to care for a new-born child or sick relative. Roll-call vote No. 22, passed 265-163, February 3. A vote *for* was consistent with action by the majority of the CBC.

3. **Motor-Voter Bill**—Passage of the National Motor-Voter Registration Act (HR 2) requiring states to allow citizens to register to vote while applying for or renewing a driver's license or at other agencies providing public services. Roll-call vote No. 26, passed 259-160, February 4. A vote *for* was consistent with action by the majority of the CBC.

4. **Unemployment Benefits**—Passage of HR 920, to provide $5.7 billion for the processing of unemployment compensation claims from March 6 through October 2, 1993 for extended emergency unemployment benefits. Roll-call vote No. 41, passed 254-161, February 24. A vote *for* was consistent with action by the majority of the CBC.

5. **Reproductive Rights**—An amendment introduced by Rep. **HENRY HYDE** (R-Ill.) to (HR 2518), the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education FY94 appropriations bill to prohibit funds in the measure from being spent on abortions except in cases of rape, incest, or to save the life of the mother. Roll-call vote No. 307, adopted in Committee of the Whole 255-178, June 30. A vote *against* was consistent with action by the majority of the CBC.

6. **D.C. Appropriations**—Passage of an appropriations bill (HR 2492) for FY94 to provide $700 million in federal funds for the majority-black District of Columbia. Roll-call vote No. 317, passed 213-211, June 30. A vote *for* was consistent with action by the majority of the CBC.

7. **Urban Aid**—An amendment to Housing and Urban Development/VA Appropriations (HR 2491) by Rep. **DAN BURTON** (R-Ind.) to cut $223.7 million from the appropriations for Community Development Block Grants to cities. Roll-call vote No. 276, rejected in Committee of the Whole 154-237, June 28. A vote *against* was consistent with action by the majority of the CBC.

State	District	Member/Party		Black Voting-age Pop. (%)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Alabama	1	Callahan	(R)	26	-	-	-	-	-	-	?
	2	Everett	(R)	21	-	-	-	+	-	-	-
	3	Browder	(D)	24	-	-	-	+	-	-	+
	5	Cramer	(D)	14	-	+	-	+	-	-	+
	7	**Hilliard**	(D)	64	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Arkansas	1	Lambert	(D)	15	-	+	+	+	+	+	+
	2	Thornton	(D)	15	+	+	+	+	-	+	+
	4	Dickey	(R)	24	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
California	7	Miller	(D)	15	+	+	+	+	+	?	+
	9	**Dellums**	(D)	29	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
	32	**Dixon**	(D)	40	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
	35	**Waters**	(D)	44	+	+	+	+	+	+	?
	37	**Tucker**	(D)	34	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Delaware	At-large	Castle	(R)	15	-	+	-	?	-	-	-
District of Columbia		**Norton**	(D)	66	I	I	I	I	+	I	+

					1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Florida	2	Peterson	(D)	21	+	+	+	+	-	+	+
	3	**Brown**	(D)	51	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
	11	Gibbons	(D)	15	?	+	+	+	-	+	+
	17	**Meek**	(D)	54	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
	23	**Hastings**	(D)	46	?	+	+	+	+	+	+
Georgia	1	Kingston	(R)	20	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	2	**Bishop**	(D)	52	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
	3	Collins	(R)	16	-	-	-	+	-	-	-
	5	**Lewis**	(D)	58	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
	8	Rowland	(D)	18	-	-	-	+	-	-	+
	10	Johnson	(D)	17	-	-	+	-	+	+	-
	11	**McKinney**	(D)	60	+	+	+	+	+	+	?
Illinois	1	**Rush**	(D)	68	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
	2	**Reynolds**	(D)	66	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
	7	**Collins**	(D)	60	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
	12	Costello	(D)	15	-	+	+	+	-	-	+
Indiana	1	Visclosky	(D)	19	-	+	-	+	-	+	+
	10	Jacobs	(D)	27	-	+	+	+	?	+	-
Kentucky	3	Mazzoli	(D)	16	+	+	+	+	-	+	+
Louisiana	2	**Jefferson**	(D)	56	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
	3	Tauzin	(D)	20	-	-	+	+	-	-	-
	4	**Fields**	(D)	63	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
	5	McCrery	(R)	20	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	7	Hayes	(D)	18	-	-	+	+	-	-	+
Maryland	3	Cardin	(D)	16	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
	4	**Wynn**	(D)	56	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
	5	Hoyer	(D)	18	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
	7	**Mfume**	(D)	68	+	+	+	+	+	+	?
Massachusetts	8	Kennedy	(D)	20	+	+	+	+	+	+	?
Michigan	9	Kildee	(D)	16	-	+	+	+	-	+	+
	14	**Conyers**	(D)	65	+	+	+	+	+	+	?
	15	**Collins**	(D)	68	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Mississippi	1	Whitten	(D)	20	-	+	+	+	-	+	+
	2	**Thompson***	(D)	58	*	*	*	*	+	+	+
	3	Montgomery	(D)	28	-	-	+	-	-	-	+
	4	Parker	(D)	37	-	-	+	-	-	-	?
	5	Taylor	(D)	18	-	+	+	-	-	-	-
Missouri	1	**Clay**	(D)	48	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
	5	**Wheat**	(D)	21	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
New Jersey	1	Andrews	(D)	15	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
	10	**Payne**	(D)	57	+	+	+	+	+	+	?
New York	4	Levy	(R)	15	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	6	**Flake**	(D)	55	?	+	+	+	+	+	+

					1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	10	**Towns**	(D)	59	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
	11	**Owens**	(D)	72	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
	15	**Rangel**	(D)	47	+	+	+	+	+	+	?
	16	Serrano	(D)	42	+	+	+	+	+	+	?
	17	Engel	(D)	40	+	+	+	+	+	+	?
	30	Quinn	(R)	15	+	+	-	+	-	-	+
N. Carolina	1	**Clayton**	(D)	53	+	+	+	+	+	+	?
	2	Valentine	(D)	20	+	-	-	-	-	-	+
	3	Lancaster	(D)	20	+	-	+	+	-	-	+
	4	Price	(D)	19	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
	7	Rose	(D)	17	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
	8	Hefner	(D)	21	+	+	+	+	-	+	+
	12	**Watt**	(D)	53	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Ohio	1	Mann	(D)	27	-	+	+	-	-	+	?
	3	Hall	(D)	16	+	+	+	+	-	-	+
	11	**Stokes**	(D)	55	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
	12	Kasich	(R)	21	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pennsylvania	1	Foglietta	(D)	50	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
	2	**Blackwell**	(D)	58	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
	14	Coyne	(D)	16	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
S. Carolina	1	Ravenel	(R)	18	-	+	-	-	-	-	-
	2	Spence	(R)	23	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	3	Derrick	(D)	19	-	+	+	+	+	+	+
	4	Inglis	(R)	18	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	5	Spratt	(D)	28	-	+	+	+	-	+	+
	6	**Clyburn**	(D)	58	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Tennessee	5	Clement	(D)	21	+	+	+	-	-	-	+
	8	Tanner	(D)	17	-	+	+	+	-	+	+
	9	**Ford**	(D)	54	?	?	?	?	+	+	?
Texas	1	Chapman	(D)	16	-	+	+	+	-	-	+
	2	Wilson	(D)	15	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
	5	Bryant	(D)	15	-	+	+	+	+	+	+
	9	Brooks	(D)	20	+	+	+	?	+	+	+
	11	Edwards	(D)	15	-	+	+	-	-	-	-
	18	**Washington**	(D)	49	+	+	+	+	+	+	?
	24	Frost	(D)	18	?	+	+	+	+	+	+
	25	Andrews	(D)	25	-	+	+	+	+	-	-
	30	**Johnson**	(D)	47	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Virginia	1	Bateman	(R)	17	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	2	Pickett	(D)	16	-	-	-	-	+	-	+
	3	**Scott**	(D)	61	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
	4	Sisisky	(D)	31	-	-	+	+	+	?	+
	5	Payne	(D)	23	-	-	-	+	-	-	+
Wisconsin	5	Barrett	(D)	29	+	+	+	+	+	+	+

Summer intern Edgar E. Stanton IV, who graduated from the University of South Florida last June, and Joint Center library clerk Reginald Presume, a sophomore at the University of the District of Columbia, assisted in the compilation of the data contained in this chart.

Nurturing Democracy in Africa

The National Endowment for Democracy and Other U.S. Organizations Are Providing Funds to African Groups Pressing for Reforms

by Wayne Fredericks

In the last three years, the tenor of debate over political reform in Africa has been greatly influenced by the collapse of communism and the end of the Cold War. Once a battleground in the East-West ideological struggle, African states, like Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, are now grappling with demands from citizens' groups for democratic reform.

The absence of democracy in most of Africa is rooted in the continent's colonial legacy. The economies of the African colonies, many of them possessing rich natural resources and African labor, were exploited to enrich European commercial enterprises. Because the European powers had supplanted traditional systems of political organization with colonial administrations, in the post-independence period of the 1960s Africa found itself without well-established democratic institutions. In fact, the most effective organizations the colonialists left behind were armies and national police forces. When fledgling democracies failed, one-party governments, personal rulers, and military dictators usually took over.

Much of the recent fervor for democratic reform in Africa stems from the failure of African leaders over the past 20 years to deliver on their promises of accelerated economic development and expanded political participation. Those failures are borne of government corruption, mismanagement, and authoritarian rule.

Richard Joseph, a scholar at the Carter Center in Atlanta, has pointed out that African politicians became "the managers, regulators and proprietors of much of the productive capacity in many countries." These mostly authoritarian governments were not accountable to the populace, and they often devised public policies that had little bearing on the true social needs of their constituents. In some African nations, the result has been a continual suppression of independent voices by insecure governments, perpetuating a culture of silence.

A broad spectrum of local African groups supported in part by a variety of American-based organizations has emerged to demand democratic reform. Prominent among the American supporters is the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), a small, publicly funded, Washington-based initiative aimed at strengthening democratic institutions throughout the world through private, nongovernmental efforts. It is a privately incorporated, non-profit organization with a board of directors comprised of leading citizens from the mainstream of American political and civic life—liberals and conservatives, Democrats and Republicans, representatives of business and labor, and others with experience in foreign affairs. NED enlists the energies and talents of private citizens and groups in the United States to work with those abroad who wish to build a democratic future for themselves.

Mr. Fredericks is counselor for Southern African Affairs at the Institute of International Education. He has served as Senior Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs in the Kennedy and Johnson administrations.

Popular Demand for Democracy

"In the last three decades, most African governments have refused to allow anyone—outside of a small clique—to have any say about how the countries' resources were used," says Amadu "Pat" Maddy, a leading playwright from Sierra Leone. "Now, people are demanding a say in how they are governed, and how their taxes are spent."

Indigenous groups calling for democracy have sprung up from Sudan to Angola, from the Ivory Coast to Kenya. In the forefront of those demanding reform is a loose network of activists, including religious leaders, lawyers, journalists, women's rights advocates, students, labor leaders, human rights activists, and educators. These groups usually have strong mass support, and they have become increasingly vocal in the reform debate. In return, over the years, they have earned the enmity of governments who have denied that indigenous voices were calling for reform. In Nigeria, human rights organizations have played a pivotal role in mobilizing support for democratic reform in the face of President Ibrahim Babangida's unkept promises to return the country to civilian rule. In Benin and Congo, reform coalitions played key roles in convening national forums for determining the direction change should take and laying the groundwork for multiparty elections. Representatives of trade unions, church groups, and legal and other professional associations helped outline the broad agenda which led to open elections in those countries.

One offshoot of this activism has been the African Study and Research Group for Democracy and Economic and Social Development (known by its French acronym, GERDDES-Afrique). Based in Cotonou, Benin, with an office in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, GERDDES has established

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Democracy

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chapters in 20 African countries. Its goals are to encourage and support African organizations advocating democracy, provide research on critical issues related to that effort, and bring civic education to a wide audience. It has supervised elections across the continent, trained election monitors, held conferences, published numerous studies, and recruited more than 2,000 members to its various chapters. "We must work hard to make African governments accountable to the people," said Sadikou Alao, president of GERDDES. "Without pressure coming from [a variety of] groups, governments will continue do as they please, and remain answerable to no one."

Heeding the Call

Several American organizations have stepped forward to assist these local drives for change, to which U.S. foreign policy has also become more sympathetic. In a recent speech on Africa at the African-American Institute's annual conference, U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher promised that the Clinton administration would support reform activists. "At the heart of our new relationship will be an enduring commitment to democracy and human rights," Christopher said. "President Clinton has made it clear that promoting democracy and human rights is a pillar of American foreign policy. And that pillar stands just as tall in Africa as it does in every part of the world."

The Constituency for Africa, a nongovernmental program, increases awareness among Americans about Africa and has included democratic reform among its priorities. Other non-profit organizations such as the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies (see July 1993 *FOCUS*) and the African-American Institute have undertaken pro-democracy initiatives on the continent. The U.S. Agency for International Development is a leading federal institution promoting reform.

The National Endowment for Democracy is another organization heeding the call. Active in Africa since the mid-1980s, the NED funds indigenous African pro-democracy groups directly, or through organizations like the Joint Center and other U.S. groups. Acting through the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs and the International Republican Institute for International Affairs, NED funds overseas programs that have trained election monitors, organized international election-monitoring teams, and helped to develop democratic political parties in Africa. Other NED-funded groups work to enhance international private-sector initiatives and to strengthen labor unions overseas. The Center for International Private Enterprise has worked with African entrepreneurs in South Africa to improve their basic business skills. The Free Trade Union Institute works through the African-American Labor Center to help African labor unions better represent their members' interests, and provides seminars to trade union leaders on critical issues such as Africa's debt crisis and economic adjustment programs.

The following are examples of how various groups in Africa have used small NED grants (less than $100,000) to promote democracy in their countries:

- Floribert Chebeya Bahizire, a young Zairean university student, created an organization to monitor human rights abuses by the government of Zaire and to provide medical and legal assistance to victims of political repression and police violence. He founded The Voice of the Voiceless, an organization which operated underground for nine years and now works openly, though under dangerous circumstances, to advocate human rights in his country. This year he won the Reebok Human Rights Award for activists under the age of thirty.
- Martha Njoka, Ida Odinga, and other Kenyan attorneys joined human rights activists to educate women at the grassroots level about their rights as voters and as citizens. They established the League of Kenya Women Voters, which increased the turnout of rural voters in Kenya's 1992 elections.
- A group of South African activists formed a network of people who are trained to resolve conflicts peacefully; the network has been used to establish training centers at South Africa's historically black universities. The activists also founded the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD). So far, ACCORD has successfully mediated a longstanding "taxi war" between drivers for rival cab companies, and provided training to African National Congress members and other officials in the techniques of nonviolent conflict resolution.

NED has also provided funding to the Institute for a Democratic Alternative for South Africa, which as early as 1987 began work to bring together the leadership of the African National Congress and the Afrikaner elite including leading figures in the business and political arenas. Other NED grants have gone to the Soweto Civic Association, a pioneer in efforts to establish democratic local government; the Center for Policy Studies, now one of that country's foremost independent think tanks on democratic issues; and the Martin Luther King-Albert Luthuli Transformation Center, which promotes Dr. King's nonviolent approach to political action among South Africa's youth. The National Democratic Institute and the International Republican Institute are now working with the Joint Center to provide technical assistance to South African political organizations in preparation for next spring's national nonracial elections.

The struggle for empowerment now going on in Africa bears resemblance to the civil rights movement of the 1960s in the United States. Demands for accountability, political participation, and human rights are emanating not only from white-ruled South Africa but in black-led countries such as Mali, Kenya, Malawi, and Burundi, where black elites control the decision-making process.

The attainment of democratic government is not easy. Our own history illustrates this. In Africa, the lack of well-established democratic institutions and the cost of creating them, and of funding effective political parties, make the task especially difficult. There is long, hard work to be done, and the National Endowment for Democracy's commitment to help continues. ■

Pounding a Beat to Human Rights

Olodum, a Black Cultural Group in Brazil, Uses Art as a Weapon to Fight Poverty, Racism, and the Assassination of Children

On June 22, Marcelo Gentil, the director of cultural affairs at Olodum, an Afro-Brazilian community organization located in Brazil, spoke to the Joint Center staff about the group's mission to stimulate self-esteem and economic prosperity among the Afro-Brazilian population. Following are excerpts of his remarks.

Historically, the Brazilian government has put forth the notion, internationally and nationally, that there is no racial discrimination in Brazil. It has developed what is known as the "ideology of racial democracy." However, even government statistics demonstrate that the reality is quite another matter.

Official figures indicate that the Afro-Brazilian population represents 44 percent of the Brazilian population overall—that is about 74 million black people. Brazil's black population is on the lowest rung of the socioeconomic ladder. The majority of those who are unemployed or underemployed are black. The majority of people who are homeless and live under bridges and parks are also black, the majority of illiterate people are black, and the majority of the jail population is black.

According to 1980 census figures, 48 percent of Brazilian blacks and Indians never finished one year of school. For the white population, the comparable figure is 25 percent. Forty-five percent of blacks but only 24 percent of whites earn less than $80 a month.

The proclamation by the government that there is no racial discrimination in Brazil is politically and ideologically motivated. Their thinking is as follows: 'Since we have a racial democracy, if blacks end up on the margins of society and at the bottom of the socio-economic pyramid, it must be their fault.'

Targets of the Streets

One of the most critical issues in Brazilian society right now is the assassination of street children. These assassinations are sponsored mainly by business owners concerned about children running around the streets and near their stores. Because of the economic situation of Brazil in general, and the unemployment and low salaries of Afro-Brazilians in particular, many black children are obliged to go to the streets at a very early age to earn bits of money here and there—washing windows, selling candy, shining shoes. There are few customers for their services, however, and the street children often find that the only way to get anything to eat is to steal it.

Many store owners hire what are called "extermination squads," mercenaries or vigilantes, to assassinate the street children. In the region of Bahia, 91.9 percent of the children killed in 1989 were documented as black. In 1990, the percentage was 88.5. The motto of the assassins is an old Brazilian saying which goes, 'Before the evil rises, let's cut off its head,' meaning, before these children grow up and become more experienced as robbers and thieves,' 'Let's kill them now while they are still young.' The Brazilian government has not made any effort to punish those who commit these crimes. In fact, some studies indicate that the majority of the assassinations are carried out by freelance civilian and military police officers.

The Role of Olodum

The Olodum Cultural Group, originally founded in 1979, uses art to mobilize large numbers of Afro-Brazilians and equip them with tools to combat oppression. The organization focuses on increasing the self-esteem and social esteem of Brazil's black population and pressuring the government to improve social, economic, and political conditions for Afro-Brazilians. Olodum conducts programs in the arts, politics, and social development, as well as community organization in the Northern Brazil city of Salvador, Bahia, which has a large concentration of blacks, most of whom are poor. The main arts component of the organization consists of the internationally famous Olodum band, a dance troupe, and a theater group.

Much of the organization's work is directed toward social development. For example, the Olodum Creative School offers a free, alternative approach to learning to 460 young people, quite unusual in Brazil. Olodum also organizes a number of conferences, seminars, and other public events. Our objective with the creative school is to teach children the things that the formal school system does not teach them, including how to become active citizens able to defend their own human rights. We try to instill in them a sense that they are capable of changing Brazilian society. Seventy percent of the resources that are required to maintain the school comes from proceeds from performances by the band, the theater group, and the dance troupe.

In July of this year, the school will open a brand new project—the Olodum Carnival Factory—which is not going to be simply a carnival-related enterprise. The factory will operate year-round and employ approximately 350 people to produce hats, T-shirts, and other paraphernalia with Olodum logos.

One of the goals of the black movement is to internationalize the struggle against racism in Brazil. Because its cultural groups travel to different parts of the world, Olodum has been able to play a leading role in this effort. ■

Baker

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conference in April 1960 for the student activists at her alma mater, Shaw University. In her speech, "More Than a Hamburger," she asked students to realize their potential and transform their temporary movement to desegregate lunch counters into a broad and sustained movement to achieve major social reform. The result of this conference was the founding of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). In August 1960, Baker, who, much to King's dismay, had successfully blocked the SCLC leadership's plan to make the student movement an arm of its own organization, left the SCLC to work with SNCC.

Using her extensive network, as well as her organizational and fund-raising skills, Baker helped SNCC become a powerful organization with strong grassroots leadership. SNCC operated successfully in rural counties deep in the racist South, areas where neither the NAACP nor the SCLC had ever been before. With Baker's help, the students organized the now famous "Mississippi Freedom Summer" project in 1964, and their success in raising the political awareness of poor blacks in Mississippi was central to the creation of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party.

Baker became SNCC's ever-present mentor, and her advice often helped the students to keep their focus and their motivation going while overcoming external and internal difficulties. SNCC was not as well funded as other civil rights groups and it suffered from internal conflicts over whether to focus on voter registration or engage in more confrontational approaches like direct action. When others of her generation denounced the students as "too loud and too militant," she replied, "Maybe some of us are willing to forego manners to replace the lack of militancy we have found in the old movement."

Never wanting to take full control and impose her own will on the students, Baker was not able to stop SNCC's decline during the late 1960s. After 1965 some of the new SNCC leaders drifted away from the earlier principles of group-centered leadership, became frustrated with the unspectacular work of organizing people in the local communities, and gave in to their desires for publicity.

While SNCC became fractured by a rift between the integrationists and a more radical separatist faction, Baker, who had moved back to New York in 1965, remained in touch with some students who still sought her advice. Always an advocate of interracial cooperation, Baker was particularly disappointed with the organization's decision to expel all of its white staff members. SNCC finally fell apart in 1972.

But the legacy of the movement continues. Many former SNCC members, who were inspired by Ella Baker, continue to work for the ideals that she inspired in them. Some founded their own organizations, such as Marian Wright Edelman, president of the Children's Defense Fund. Others became prominent in the political arena, such as John Lewis, congressman from Atlanta, Georgia. Even for members of the younger generation who grew up after the 1950s and 1960s, Baker's life and her teachings can serve as an inspiration: She has shown ways of successfully breaking down barriers which male-dominated leadership structures impose on women activists. She instituted an inclusive style of leadership and creative group organization. Above all, Ella Baker always served as a bridge builder, proving that effective cooperation between young and old, black and white, Northerners and Southerners, is possible, indeed vital to success in the struggle for racial, political, and economic justice.

Baker never retired from the struggle. In her last years, she worked for the African liberation movement and advised numerous civil and human rights organizations. She died in 1986. Once asked where she got the strength to keep going, Baker replied, "I'm part of the human family. I can't help it. I believe the struggle is eternal. Somebody else carries on."

The quoted statements by Ella Baker that appear in this article are from oral history materials from the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center at Howard University.

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