


FOCUS

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America Needs Women in the Game

For anyone who enjoys a tough, competitive athletic event, the Women's World Cup soccer final fit the bill in every way one can imagine. It was physical, full of suspense, and each member of the American and Chinese teams demonstrated the heart and skill of champions. But fans don't have to wait four years until the next World Cup to see outstanding women athletes compete.

More and more, sporting events featuring top female amateurs and professionals are making it to prime time television. For those yearning for the excitement of live competition, WNBA games have become affordable entertainment for the whole family. But for every celebrity athlete, there are thousands of girls participating in weekend youth softball, basketball, and soccer leagues.

More than any other single factor, the dramatic expansion of women's athletics in America over the last three decades can be attributed to Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972, which banned gender discrimination in education. The measure covers almost 15,000 school districts, more than 3,600 colleges and universities, and thousands of libraries, museums, vocation rehabilitation agencies, and correctional facilities. Title IX didn't just level the playing field for girls and women, in many cases it provided one.

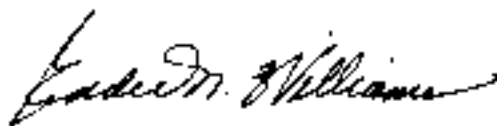
According to the U.S. Department of Education's 1997 report, "Title IX: 25 Years of Progress," a year before the legislation was enacted fewer than 300,000 high school girls played interscholastic athletics. That number has jumped to over 2.4 million and includes participation in nontraditional sports like lacrosse, wrestling, rugby, and ice hockey. In 1973, about 50 women attended college on sports scholarships. Today, women receive approximately one-third of all athletic scholarship money. Sports heroes must now share the spotlight with sports "sheros," as Maya Angelou would call them, like Sheryl Swoopes in basketball, Mia Hamm in soccer, and Marion Jones in track.

But the impact of Title IX extends far beyond providing opportunities for women in sports—it has opened the doors of higher education to millions of women. Department of Education figures show that in 1971, only 18 percent of young women had completed four or more years of college, compared to 26 percent of young men. Now there is virtually no gender gap among college graduates, and by 2006 women are projected to earn 55 percent of all bachelor's degrees. Currently, women earn more masters degrees than men and 44 percent of the Ph.Ds.

The battle, however, isn't over. Although women earn half of all college degrees, they lag far behind men in computer science, engineering, and mathematics. In high school, there are still 24,000 more boys' varsity athletic teams than girls' teams. And from 1992 to 1997, the rate of growth of funds spent on men's athletics outstripped the rate for women by 23 percent. Brown University was sued

for its 1991 decision to demote women's gymnastics and volleyball from varsity status to club sports. The California state university system has failed to implement its five-year plan to come into compliance with Title IX. And conservative members in Congress have voiced concerns that Title IX hurts men's sports.

Title IX should not be treated as a zero sum game: if women benefit, men are disadvantaged. When Congress passed the measure, it intended to expand opportunities for both men and women. Participation in athletics gives young people opportunities to train their bodies, hone skills, and learn essential lessons in leadership, teamwork, and discipline. These benefits derived from sports should not be a male preserve—that wouldn't be fair play. ■



PRESIDENT



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Shared Lessons on Combating HIV/AIDS

Fighting HIV/AIDS Among African American Youth Requires Prevention, Testing and Treatment, and Money

by *Wilhelmina A. Leigh*

African American youth are disproportionately affected by both HIV infection and AIDS. Although only 15 percent of the population ages 13 to 19, black non-Hispanic youth accounted for 66 percent of the cases of HIV infection and 48 percent of the AIDS cases diagnosed among this group between 1981 and June 1998. With no cure in sight, it becomes important to arm youth with knowledge that can limit high-risk behavior and disease exposure.

Toward this end, since 1994 the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies has hosted forums to encourage the support of black public officials and community leaders for HIV/AIDS prevention education. The forums held in Oakland, California (1995), Detroit, Michigan (1996), Memphis, Tennessee (1996), and Durham, North Carolina (1997) made clear how complex providing effective education on this topic to African American youth really is. In February 1999, the Joint Center convened selected participants from the four forums to assess the five-year project and discuss the lessons learned. Discussions centered on prevention education, testing and treatment, and funding needs.

Preventing High-Risk Behaviors

The prerequisites for effectively educating youth about the prevention of HIV/AIDS were generally agreed to be the following: including parents at every step; enhancing the skills and comfort levels of teachers; and making messages available in multiple venues. Parental involvement is critical, since parents can be natural teachers. Although HIV/AIDS-related instruction may be necessary for some parents before they can assume this vital role, the cost of such training was deemed worth it.

One group viewed as pivotal in implementing HIV prevention education is “voting parents of students within a school system.” Because school systems are usually evaluated on their math and reading scores, making the case for HIV/AIDS prevention education within an underperforming system can be challenging. Nevertheless, if concerned parents and other like-minded adults—such as health educators and providers—work together to outline what they want youth to be taught, they can be instrumental in moving school boards to action.

Another key component in effective prevention education is having a cadre of trained teachers who are comfort-

able offering such instruction to youth. Training can enhance the comfort level of the teachers of biology, social studies, or physical education who are often assigned to provide HIV/AIDS instruction but who may be ill at ease when discussing sexuality with teens. Parents and other community members can help by letting school boards know that they support the spending needed to train teachers to offer this potentially life-saving instruction.

School-based health programs, although sometimes limited in the type of instruction or demonstrations they can offer, are one potentially valuable venue of instruction. Durham, Memphis, and Oakland offer another model for in-school instruction. Upon request from classroom teachers (and with parental permission), staff from community-based organizations and health educators unaffiliated with these school systems often provide instruction within local schools.

Although schools are a logical place for providing instruction, whether they are the best place in which to teach teens how to avoid becoming HIV positive was debated. If youth already engage in high-risk behaviors, one participant noted, then they need not only information about condoms but also the knowledge to enable them to incorporate condom use into their lifestyles and behavior. Even if the basic information can be imparted in school, she doubted whether the knowledge necessary to change behavior and lifestyles could be. In short, instruction on ways to avoid HIV infection should be provided using multiple messages in multiple venues, including outside of school.

Ways mentioned to reach students during their out-of-school hours included a weekend retreat for teenage girls at which sexuality issues were aired extensively. Taking youth out of their normal environments can enhance the flow of information and range of issues discussed. School-based after-school programs also have been used. Although after-school programs may provide opportunities to convey messages that could not be provided during school hours, forum participants were uncertain whether the rules that govern school-time programs also would apply to after-school instruction and, thereby, limit its flexibility and advantages.

Participants felt that an impediment to putting prevention education into practice in schools is the way AIDS-related issues are covered by the media. Media emphasis on declining death rates from the disease was criticized

Combating HIV/AIDS

Continued from page 3

because it minimizes the urgency of the need for prevention education. This media focus was blamed as a source of difficulties in sustaining people's interest in the epidemic, implementing prevention education in places that have none (or that have only fledgling programs), and mounting vigorous education campaigns among the people now most affected (e.g., people of color, women).

Testing and Needle Exchange

Part of becoming educated about HIV/AIDS is learning one's status as a result of being tested. In both Detroit and Oakland, to reach youth and others who may be reluctant to learn their HIV status, testing is made available via a mobile clinic. In Durham, testing is offered from a van that operates on a circuit through high-risk communities, a project supported by a community-based organization and the local health department. In Memphis, several churches provide HIV testing on their premises for persons who may be unwilling or unable to go to the Memphis-Shelby County Health Department (which collaborates with the churches on this initiative) for this purpose.

Testing the noninstitutionalized population comes with one set of challenges; testing the incarcerated population comes with another. In Tennessee, a major concern is the spread of HIV infection as the result of incarceration, both among inmates and among the sexual partners of former prisoners. Legislation was passed requiring HIV testing of all persons under age 21 convicted of a crime and sentenced to a state prison. Although this recently passed law may help limit the spread of HIV infection, the unwillingness of the state to distribute condoms in all prison facilities will diminish its effectiveness. Condoms are distributed within the Tennessee prison system only in facilities that allow conjugal visits.

Needle exchange also was discussed, as a form of harm reduction and as a means for substance abusers to get treatment for their addictions as well as testing and treatment for HIV infection. Privately funded needle exchange programs operate in both Detroit and Oakland. Neither Durham nor Memphis has a needle exchange program, although community-based organizations in Durham distribute bleach kits to substance abusers.

The needle exchange program in Oakland has operated for four years. Although needle exchange is illegal in Alameda County, where Oakland is located, the program survives because local police and sheriffs honor an unwritten agreement to "look the other way." The three-year-old Detroit needle exchange program is legal, having been implemented after a thoughtfully orchestrated campaign to win community support. Detroit Health Department staff met with all concerned parties (e.g., clergy, law enforcement officials, and the general public) to garner the support necessary to persuade the city council to change the existing statutes. Clients of Detroit's program can get health and hygiene kits from the needle exchange facilities

and can get referrals to treatment for substance abuse, HIV infection, and other conditions.

Competing for Money

All site participants reported that funding to meet the unmet and changing needs of African Americans affected by HIV/AIDS was in short supply. The Detroit Health Department had applied for but had not received funding to evaluate its needle exchange program. The executive director of an HIV/AIDS management and service organization in Durham also works full time as a nurse since her organization's limited funding does not allow her to be salaried. Although President Clinton, at the urging of the Congressional Black Caucus in 1998, set aside funds to address issues related to minorities with HIV/AIDS, participants questioned where this money has been channeled and how it has been disbursed.

There was a generalized frustration at the prospect that the allocation of federal dollars for HIV/AIDS would only offer more "business as usual," that is, with two problems likely to persist. First, AIDS dollars would continue to go to service organizations established to work with gay males, even though the funds are now earmarked for populations that these organizations may be culturally incompetent to serve. Second, many African American community-based organizations would lose out in the competition for funds, not because their programs are ineffective, but because their programs have not been evaluated or because their record-keeping is sub par.

Oakland provides an unusual example of steps taken in the hopes of procuring funds. In November 1998, at the request of community-based organizations, the Alameda County Board of Supervisors and U.S. Representative Barbara Lee (who represents Oakland) declared a state of emergency with respect to the growing rate of AIDS among African Americans in this jurisdiction. Although the declaration does not guarantee additional public or private funding for any entities, Oakland organizations supported it as a means of enhancing the likelihood of funding for service organizations in Alameda County, raising community awareness, altering public policy development, and improving the continuum of care made available to persons with HIV/AIDS.

Learning From Each Other

The Joint Center's project provided the means for community members to air their concerns about prevention education for African American youth and for black public officials and community-based organizations already working on HIV/AIDS prevention to share their knowledge. Although Detroit, Durham, Memphis, and Oakland vary in the policies and politics governing their approaches to preventing the spread of this disease, people from the four sites were able to learn from and teach one another. As efforts to limit the spread of infection among African American youth continue, black public officials and community-based organizations in these and other locations undoubtedly will play vital roles. ■



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President's Challenge to America's Lawyers

Citing the Legacy of the Lawyer's Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, Clinton Seeks a Renewed Commitment to Pro Bono Support for the Poor

In 1963, at the height of the Civil Rights Movement, President John F. Kennedy summoned America's finest attorneys to the White House and challenged them to commit themselves to the struggle for equality. On July 20, President Bill Clinton made a similar White House challenge to the nation's lawyers. He asked them to continue the fight against discrimination and champion the causes of the poorest Americans. Excerpts of his address follow:

As has been pointed out, President Kennedy called more than 200 of America's leading lawyers to this room 36 years ago, the summer of 1963—when America was awakening to the fact that in our laws and in our hearts, we were still far short of our ideals.

It is difficult today to imagine an America without civil rights. But when I came here 36 years ago in the summer of 1963, as a delegate to American Legion Boys Nation, there were only four African American boys there, and the hottest issue was what we were going to do about civil rights.

It didn't seem so inevitable back then. Across my native South, there were sheriffs, mayors, governors defying the courts; police dogs attacking peaceful demonstrators; fire hoses toppling children; protestors led away in handcuffs; and too little refuge in the hallowed sanctuary of the law.

It was in this atmosphere that the President turned to America's lawyers and enlisted them in the fight for equal justice.... The President asked the lawyers there to remember their duty to uphold justice, especially in places where the principles of justice had been defied.

The lawyers answered that call, creating a new Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, and a new tradition of pro bono service in the legal profession. I asked you here today because we need your help as much as ever, in our most enduring challenge as a nation, the challenge of creating one America....

Just as your predecessors, with the Constitution as their shield, stared down the sheriffs of segregation, you must step forward to dismantle our time's most stubborn obstacles to equal justice—poverty, unemployment and, yes, continuing discrimination. Behind every watershed event of the civil rights struggle, lawyers, many pro bono, remain vigilant, securing equal rights for employment, education, housing, voting and citizenship for all Americans....

Thirty-six years ago, there were 50 African American lawyers. They came to the White House, but they couldn't have found the same welcome in the hotels, restaurants and lunch counters of America—a cruel irony.

Today, thanks in large measure to the efforts of our lawyers, Americans of all backgrounds and colors and religions are working, living and learning side by side. The doors of opportunity are open wider than ever. We are

living in a time of unprecedented prosperity, with the longest peacetime expansion in our history and the lowest African American and Hispanic unemployment ever recorded since we began to keep separate data in the early 1970s. Our social fabric is mending, with declining rates of welfare, crime, teen pregnancy and drug abuse.

But the challenge to build one America continues.... I saw firsthand in the New Markets tour I took a couple of weeks ago, we will never be one America when [people in] our central cities, our Indian reservations, our small towns and rural areas, here in the most prosperous time in history are still living in the shadows of need and want. They're struggling with unemployment and poverty rates more than twice the national average—over 70 percent on some of our reservations. Your fellow Americans, many of them, are living in houses that it would sicken you to walk through—at the time of our greatest prosperity.

Everything President Johnson worked for and dreamed of that he thought could happen after all these years has still not reached quite a large number of your fellow Americans. So what are we going to do about it?

We know that two out of five African American and Latino children under the age of six are still in poverty, in spite of all of our prosperity, in spite of the fact that a million children were lifted out of poverty just in the last couple of years. We also know that we can't be one America when a lot of minorities still distrust law enforcement and our legal system generally, and shy away from entering the legal profession....

The struggle for one America today is more complex than it was 36 years ago, more subtle than it seemed to us that it would be back then. For then there was the clear enemy of legal segregation and overt hatred. Today, the progress we make in building one America depends more on whether we can expand opportunity and deal with a whole range of social challenges. In 1963, the challenge was to open our schools to all our children. In 1999, the challenge is to make sure all those children get a world-class education....

And so I ask you to do two things today. First, I ask you to recommit yourselves... to fighting discrimination, to revitalizing our poorest communities, and to giving people an opportunity to serve in law firms who would not otherwise have it. You can help inner-city entrepreneurs negotiate loans to start new businesses. You can help neighborhood health clinics navigate the regulatory mazes they have to do to stay open. You can help nonprofits secure new supermarkets and merchants in under-served communities. Just for example, those of you who come from urban areas, today in the highest unemployment

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President's Challenge to...

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urban areas in America, there is still at least a 25-percent gap between the money that the people who live there earn and have to spend to support themselves and the opportunities they have to spend it in their own communities. In East St. Louis where I visited, there is a 40-percent gap....

The second thing I want you to do is to set the best possible example.... We may have torn down the walls of segregation, but there are still a lot of walls in our hearts and in our habits. And sometimes we are not aware of those walls in our hearts, but we have to test them against our habits. So invite more lawyers of all backgrounds to join your firms. How are we going to build one America if the legal profession which is fighting for it doesn't reflect it? We can't do it.

I am so pleased that the organizations here have made the commitments they've made—to diversity and to pro bono work. I thank the American Bar Association, the Corporate Counsel Association, for pledging to launch new initiatives to promote greater diversity in the profession. The ABA will bring together lawyers and academics, law firms and bar associations, to provide financial aid to minority law students and to mentor them as they embark on their legal careers....

The Counsel Association has promised to encourage its 11,000 members to hire more minority-owned law firms and to dedicate more of their resources to pro bono legal work in communities. I thank the hundreds of law firms who have agreed to dedicate at least 3 percent of billable hours—about 50 hours a year per

lawyer—to pro bono work, which is the ABA standard.... There will never be a better opportunity to help those who need it most....

A 1993 ABA study found that half of all low-income households had at least one serious legal problem each year, but three-quarters had no access to a lawyer. Now we can fill that gap. Now America's lawyers can afford to fill that gap. And I would argue, if we really believe in equal justice we cannot afford not to fill that gap.

I want to thank the Association of American Law Schools for pledging to help more schools incorporate community service in their curriculum... so that more law graduates will come out of law school predisposed to do volunteer work and pro bono work....

We will know we have succeeded if more lawyers begin to make community service a vital part of their practice. We will know we will have succeeded when we have more businesses, more health clinics, more affordable housing in places once bypassed by hope and opportunity. We'll know we'll have succeeded when our law schools, our bar associations and our law firms not only represent all Americans, but look like all America.

One of the best things Dr. King ever said was that "the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice." Our nation's lawyers have bent that arc toward justice. Our nation has been transformed for the better. So I ask you again to lead us along that arc—from the America we know to the one America we all long to live in. ■

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TRENDLETTER

POLITICAL REPORT

by Ninette Philips

Bill Clay, a Founder of the CBC, to Retire

Congressman Bill Clay, one of the last old-guard militants of the civil rights era, will not run for reelection at the end of his current term. Elected to Congress in 1968, the St. Louis Democrat made his mark as soon as he arrived on Capitol Hill as one of the founding organizers of the Congressional Black Caucus. In his 31 years as a legislator, Clay has been a persistent champion of civil rights, education, and labor concerns and a major supporter of the Family and Medical Leave Act and reproductive choice.

Among his accomplishment, Clay can count amending the Hatch Act in 1993 to permit federal employees and postal workers to participate campaigns on their own time. He successfully opposed a Republican proposal to ban "salting," a practice whereby individuals seek jobs in non-union companies in order to organize workers. He has also been a major supporter of the Family and Medical Leave Act and reproductive choice.

During the remainder of his tenure on the Hill, Clay will focus on gaining passage of legislation to increase the minimum wage. He is also committed to reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act with

amendments to fund the hiring of more teachers to reduce class size, and to provide money to build and renovate more schools.

Clay is the first African American to be elected to Congress from Missouri. He was an activist even before he began his political life. While serving in the Army in Alabama in the early 1950s, the swimming pools, barber shops, and the non-commissioned officers club on the post where he was stationed were all closed to blacks. Clay led fellow black soldiers in protest swims and demand to be served at the officers club and in barber shops.

After returning home to St. Louis, he mixed his civil rights activism with politics and labor advocacy. He was elected an alderman in 1959, and in 1963 he was jailed for 110 days for leading a protest against a bank that discriminated against African Americans in its hiring practices. In 1966, he became an official of the politically active Pipefitters Union.

Most of St. Louis's black citizens wound up in Missouri's 1st congressional district when it was redrawn in 1967, offering an opportunity for a black candidate to run for the seat. A year later, Clay drew the support of most local black political leaders and prevailed in a divisive four-way primary election. He won the general election with 64 percent of the vote.

At the time of his election in 1968, Clay's congressional district was two-thirds black. Since that time, the

boundaries of his district have shifted farther into St. Louis's white suburbs, and now blacks make up a slim 52 percent majority in the district. Nevertheless, Clay has won each reelection with few serious obstacles over the last three decades. He had no challenger in the last primary, and he won the general election with 70 percent voter support. As he is steps down, there are strong indications that his son, State Senator William Lacy Clay, Jr., will run in 2000 to succeed him.

Raising the Minimum Wage's Buying Power

For the last three years, the burgeoning economy has sent wages on a steady incline. Most of America has benefitted from this growth. But congressional Democrats contend that this prosperity has not extended deep enough to reach those at the bottom of the wage scale. To address what they see as a serious income disparity, Senator Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.) and House Democratic whip David Bonior (D-Mich.), with the support of President Clinton, have introduced the Fair Minimum Wage Act of 1999. If passed, the measure would increase the minimum wage, which currently stands at \$5.15, by \$0.50 as of September 1, 1999, and increase it by another \$0.50 by September 1, 2000. The last time the minimum wage was increased was in 1996, when it was

also raised by one dollar, phased in over two years.

Proponents of the raise charge that at a time when the economy is at its strongest in 30 years, the wages of Americans on the higher rungs of the income ladder have increased considerably, while many full-time workers earning the minimum wage have remained poor. Kennedy notes that someone earning the minimum wage receives \$10,712 a year, which is \$3,200 below the poverty line for a family of three. By contrast, he argues CEOs of large, publically held companies are compensated on average at about \$5,100 an hour. At this rate, CEO would only have to work for two hours and six minutes to make what a minimum wage worker earns in a full year.

Those favoring the raise argue that such a move would ensure that the working poor would no longer fall between the bureaucratic cracks of making too much money to qualify for welfare, but not making enough to escape poverty. Low-income workers with families are often ineligible to supplement their meager wages with food stamps or Medicare programs.

Opponents of the legislation claim that a congressionally mandated raise in the minimum wage would make hiring entry-level workers too expensive and drive down demand for low-wage workers. They also charge that the raise would place the heaviest burden on struggling small businesses. The bill's supporters counter that when the minimum wage was raised in 1996, it was at a time when the economy was not as strong. In the aftermath of that raise, unemployment has plummeted among all segments of the population. Supporters say that of the eight million new jobs created since then, about 5.5 million are in service

occupations—many of which pay minimum wage.

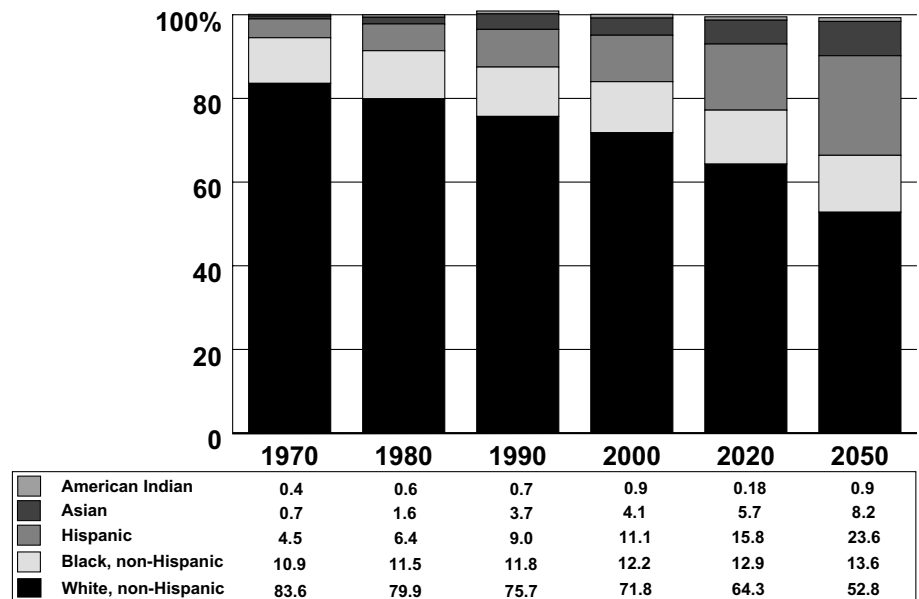
Sponsors of the Act charge that the real buying power of the minimum wage is two dollars below its 1968 level. Their bill would put an additional \$2,080 a year in the pockets of minimum-wage workers. Contradicting their adversaries' claim that the bill will only help teenagers, Kennedy and Bonior emphasize that three-quarters of these workers are

adults, and 59 percent are women. . They hold jobs like teacher's aide, child care provider, home health care assistant, office cleaner, and retail clerk. Two-fifth of all such workers are the sole breadwinners of their households. ■



For more information on this subject, visit our website at www.jointcenter.org and look for this icon.

Projected Racial/Ethnic Composition of the U.S. Population



Since 1960, America has experienced more change in its racial and ethnic composition than in any period of our history. By the year 2010, projections show that Hispanics, who now represent 11 percent of the population, will have replaced blacks

as the largest minority group. If recent demographic trends continue, by the year 2050 Asians, non-Hispanic Blacks, Hispanics, and American Indians together will approach 50 percent of the population, expected to total 394 million people. ■

Source: Bureau of the Census

ECONOMIC REPORT

By Margaret C. Simms

How Big is the Hole in the Net?

On July 8, 1999, the National Telecommunications and Information Agency (NTIA) issued its third report on Americans' access to various forms of communication. The report, *Falling Through the Net: Defining the Digital Divide*, received a great deal of attention in the media, in particular because of the racial differences in access that were identified. Inequities in access to communication, especially to a medium as powerful as the Internet, can lead to further inequities in terms of educational information, employment opportunities, and consumer bargains. Just how real is the racial divide and what implications does it have for policy?

Who is Connected?

The report emphasizes both the rapid growth in connectivity, meaning the number of people who are connected to the telecommunications and information infrastructure, and the gaps among different groups within American society. The report notes that computer ownership and Internet use have grown tremendously among all demographic groups, but the widening gaps between different groups are seen as a matter of grave public concern. Those most likely to be connected are individuals who are highly educated, in urban areas, and living in households with high incomes and two parents. Conversely, those in rural areas with less education, income, and parental resources are

less likely to be connected. Race and ethnicity also play critical roles. African Americans and Hispanics are less likely to have Internet access when compared to whites and Asians living in similar circumstances. The report notes that a child in a low-income white family is "three times as likely to have access as a child in a comparable black family, and four times as likely to have access as children in a comparable Hispanic family."

People use the Internet for a variety of purposes, many directly relevant for employment and economic advancement. Among the unemployed, the Internet is used to find jobs. Others, especially low-income individuals and minorities, do research and take courses. In other words, they recognize the power of the Internet in terms of improving their skills and obtaining information that leads directly to economic advancement.

Internet Access at Home

The first section of the report updates information on household access to telephones, computers, and the Internet that was first released by NTIA in 1995. The percent of households with a computer nearly doubled between 1994 and 1998, and computer ownership was over five times higher in 1998 than in 1984, when the Census Bureau first collected such information. This rate of growth applied to all major race/ethnic groups. So the good news is that people in all sectors of American society are getting on the computer bandwagon. Unfortunately, because African Americans and Hispanics started off so far behind whites and Asians, the percentage-point gap has widened. Among African Americans, computer ownership more than doubled, from 10.3 percent of households in 1994 to 23.2 percent in

1998. But the ownership among white households rose from 27.1 percent to 46.6 percent, resulting in nearly a 50 percent increase in the gap (from 16.8 to 23.4 percentage points).

This difference in computer access is magnified for the Internet because not everyone with a computer is hooked up to it. In 1998, approximately two-thirds of white and Asian households with a computer or WebTV used the Internet at home. Only about one-half of African American, Hispanic, American Indian, Aleut, and Eskimo households with the necessary equipment were connected to the Internet. Most of those who were not on the Internet cited either its cost or their disinterest as reasons for not being connected. Among African Americans, 24 percent said cost was the main reason, while an additional 22 percent said they did not want Internet access.

For African Americans, the combination of owning fewer computers and having a lower likelihood of being connected to the Internet among those who have computers has resulted in a 20.7 percentage point gap between their households and white households in terms of Internet connections, a gap that has grown by over 50 percent in the past year.

As might be expected, differences in access can be explained by factors such as education and income. Among households with over \$75,000 in income, racial differences have largely disappeared over time. But income is not the only explanatory variable, because significant differences exist between white and black households at lower income levels, with black households being less likely to have computers at every income level below \$75,000. For black families with incomes under \$35,000, the racial gap has grown over time, while it has remained

constant for those with incomes between \$35,000 and \$75,000. Family composition has an impact on Internet use as well, with two-parent households being more likely to have Internet access than one-parent households, even when income and race are held constant. African American households with two parents are twice as likely to be connected as one-parent African American households with similar incomes.

Internet Access Outside the Home

The fact that individuals do not have computers at home does not mean they cannot access the Internet, since access can be had from the job or from public locations such as libraries or community centers. In recognition of this fact, in 1998 the Census survey collected information on these other access points. In many ways, these data are reassuring, because they indicate that a significant number of people are using these other venues. About 17 percent of the population is “going on line” outside their homes. In particular, the report notes that people who are less likely to have access at home or work (those with low incomes or educational levels and those without jobs) are going to public facilities to use the Internet. Unfortunately, the combined points of access available to these groups does little to close the gap. While 12.4 percent of African Americans and 10 percent of Hispanics use the Internet outside their homes, whites, Asians, and other races are more likely to use these sources as well. While the gap among racial groups shrinks when all sources are added together, whites and Asians are about twice as likely to use the Internet as blacks and Hispanics (see table).

Policy Implications

The good news in the report is the growth in access to computers and the Internet over the past four years. Minorities are participating in this growth at rates similar to those among whites, and computer access is becoming more widespread even among people with modest incomes. The fact that people without computers or Internet access at home are making connections at work and at community centers suggests that selling the idea of the Internet may not be as big a problem as it was five years ago.

The problem of the digital divide is one of leveling the playing field. In other words, how do we boost access for those who are the least advantaged so that the gap between the “haves” and the “have nots” shrinks rather than grows?

Of particular concern are those who are not easily connected because of their age, employment status, or geographic isolation. Here the report focuses on expanding access outside the home by utilizing public facilities. For example, children who do not have access in the home should have access in their schools. This is particularly important because the children who are least

likely to have access at home are those in low-income and single-parent households, and these children are more likely than others to lack other educational resources as well.

Other groups that should be targeted are those living in the inner city, small towns, and rural communities where the value of distance learning and on-line job search may be even more important since it is difficult for residents to travel to educational facilities and employment centers. While much remains to be done to make minority communities more aware of the power of the Internet, increasing the demand should not get ahead of increasing the supply. And that means increasing awareness among the policymakers and civic leaders who make community access centers available.

The full report is available on the Internet at www.ntia.doc.gov/ntiahome/fttn99 or can be obtained by contacting the National Telecommunications Information Agency in Washington, D.C. ■



For more information on this and related topics, visit our website.

Percent of U.S. Persons Using the Internet, by Race/Origin,* 1998

	At Home	Outside the House	From Any Location**
White	26.7	18.8	37.7
Black	9.2	12.4	19.0
American Indian/other	17.5	17.8	29.5
Asian/Pacific Islander	25.6	19.4	35.9
Hispanics	8.7	10.0	16.6

* Racial totals do not include Hispanics

** Rows do not add since some use multiple locations

Source: NTIA