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FOCUS

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Racism on College Campuses

As Racial Intolerance on Predominantly White Campuses Becomes More Prevalent, Minority Students Are Demanding that University Officials Find New Ways to Address the Problem

A Common Destiny: Blacks and American Society

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POLITICAL TRENDLETTER®

Perspective

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On Guard Against Racism

Throughout this year, which marks the 25th anniversary of the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, a number of assessments have been made concerning race relations in America. All of them have painted a most discouraging picture: most neighborhoods remain segregated, as do most public schools, and racial violence is on the increase.

The stagnation and decline in the socioeconomic progress of black Americans over the past 15 years is documented in alarming detail in *A Common Destiny: Blacks and American Society,* a major report published recently by the National Academy of Sciences and summarized in this issue of *Focus*. The report also found that over the last two decades, racism has not abated.

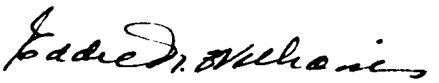
Racial violence is one critical barometer of racism. In New York's Howard Beach and Bensonhurst neighborhoods, in the anti-black conduct of some of Chicago's white police officers, and on college campuses across the nation, the number of incidents of racial violence is increasing. In this issue of *Focus,* Brown University junior N'Tanya Lee dissects the blatant acts of racism occurring in our citadels of higher learning. Racial violence nationwide goes beyond vandalism and harassment to include cross burnings, arson, bombings, and murders. And, beyond the KKK and Nazis, this violence is being perpetrated by proliferating hate groups like the skinheads, the Posse Comitatus, and extremist "Christian identity" groups.

There are as many as 20,000 white supremacist activists in the U.S., according to the Atlanta-based Center for Democratic Renewal, and their sympathizers are estimated to exceed 150,000. Black Americans are not their only targets and victims. Latinos, Native Americans, Asians, Jews, and quite a few white gentiles are being targeted by these groups and individuals.

In assessing the state of race relations it is important to identify major factors that have precluded progress and major steps that can be taken in the future to ensure progress. On the blame side of the ledger, there is enough fault to share so that few Americans are without some of it. But it does seem that national leaders, particularly the President of the United States, might have some unique responsibilities in this area.

During the past 25 years the White House has been occupied by Democrats for nine years and by Republicans for 16 years. During much of this time we have witnessed a dramatic retreat from the major legislative and court-ordered civil rights advances of the 1960s. Progress slowed considerably with the nation's economic problems in the 1970s. And, according to most social and economic measures, it came to a complete stop when Ronald Reagan was swept into the White House on the crest of a conservative tide. He proclaimed one of his mandates to be the dismantling and elimination of affirmative action programs. He didn't completely succeed, but he wreaked enough havoc to adversely affect race relations across the country. And so when we ask who is to blame for today's discouraging state of race relations, President Reagan and his administration and policies will no doubt be in the vanguard of the guilty.

Today's "resurgence" of racism is a painful reminder of the danger to society of letting the racist genie out of the bottle, of the danger of relaxing our guard against bigotry. The challenge now and always is to keep high our guard against bigotry and to aggressively extend the promises of the Constitution to all Americans. □



PRESIDENT

FOCUS
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Racism on College Campuses

As Racial Intolerance on Predominantly White Campuses Becomes More Prevalent, Minority Students Are Demanding that University Officials Find New Ways to Address the Problem

by N'Tanya Lee

It was April 25, 1989, the end of spring term at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island. Students—mostly white and from upper-middle class families—were preparing for Spring Weekend, an annual fling before final exams. That day, found scrawled in large black letters across an elevator door in Andrews Dormitory were the words, NIGGERS GO HOME. Over the next 24 hours, similar racial epithets were found on the doors of several women of color living in that hall; on the bathroom doors WOMEN was crossed out and replaced with NIGGERS, MEN was crossed out, replaced with WHITE. And in that same women's bathroom, a computer-printed flyer was found a day later which read: "Once upon a time Brown was a place where a white man could go to class without having to look at little black faces or little yellow faces or little brown faces except when he went to take his meals. Things have been going downhill since the kitchen help moved into the classroom. Keep white suprmcy [sic] alive! Join the Brown Chapter of the KKK."

On scores of predominantly white campuses in every region of the country, the racial tension of the 1980s has begun exploding in numerous racial incidents like the one described here. For some minority students, it is the "old-fashioned" racism such as assault, or the destruction of property that most associate with days that ended with the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The sting of racial harassment is tearing at minority students' continued attempt to lead a normal life at integrated campuses. The words of Jill Jackson, a black student at Brown University, may reflect what many of them feel: "They [white students and administrators] are basically saying to me, 'This is not your university. We let you in, now be quiet'." In response to these acts, thousands of black and other minority students are taking cues from the militant black student actions of the 1960s by organizing mass protests.

The increasing activism of minority students has forced many college administrations and their student populations to grapple with the reality of growing racial intolerance on their campuses. Prestigious colleges and universities, including Dartmouth, Columbia, Brown, Smith, Stanford, and the state universities of Michigan and Massachusetts, have begun arranging workshops and day-long sessions on racism, appointing task forces to study campus racism and to evaluate university policies on minority students, and creating stricter disciplinary codes against racial harassment.

Nonetheless, black and other minority students, educators, and national civil rights leaders insist that there is no "quick fix" and that resolving the broad range of deeply intertwined racial problems demands an even stronger commitment and more innovative actions by entire university communities, such as expanding the recruitment of minority students, faculty, and administrators and instituting "multicultural" course requirements. Adele Terrell, program director at the Baltimore-based National Institute Against Prejudice and Violence, insists that "The university has a responsibility to do what society has been unable to do—to teach students from day one that confronting racism is an expected part of campus life."

Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire: *In 1982,* The Dartmouth Review, *an independent, ultra-conservative, white-run student newspaper, published an article "ridiculing" black students at the college, titled "Dis Sho' Aint No Jive, Bro." In part, the article reads: "...Dese boys be saying that we be comin hee to Dartmut an' not takin' the classics...We be culturally 'lightened, too. We be takin hard courses in many subjects, like Afro-Am Studies...and who bee mouthin' bout us not bein' good read?"*

The National Institute Against Prejudice and Violence estimates that publicized incidents of ethno-violence (encompassing actions motivated by ethnic, religious, and racial prejudice) have occurred on more than 250 campuses across the country since it began collecting information in 1986. The Institute believes, moreover, that this number significantly understates the "national proliferation of ethno-violence on our college campuses."

The deeper reality underlying these statistics, however, emerges in the anecdotes from thousands of minority students across the nation. These students must live and work in a disturbingly unbalanced environment. For the American university today is perhaps the sole place where

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Ms. Lee, a junior at Brown University, was an intern this summer with the Joint Center.

Racism on College Campuses

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people of many races, religions, ethnicities, and sexual orientations come to live together, oftentimes completely unprepared to do so, in the context of a white institution that is unwilling to meet the new demands. Says Terrell: "You get these white kids from the suburbs and a minority kid from the inner city. You put them together in a room and you expect them to live together peacefully...it's just not going to happen."

Between 20 and 25 percent of black college students experience some form of ethno-violence, according to the National Institute. In a separate study conducted by the Gannett News service, 34 percent of black students reported experiencing some form of racial harassment, ranging from verbal epithets to physical violence.

In addition, students report racism in the higher structures of academia itself—in the classroom, in the design of the curriculum, in the hiring and promotion of minority faculty and administrators, in the distribution of financial aid, and in the admissions process. Students at Stanford University, for example, have charged the school with fostering institutional racism, citing a 92 percent white faculty, the lack of a full-time dean for Chicano students, and overwhelming administration resistance to a "multicultural" course requirement. There have been numerous racial incidents at Stanford, but, says Louis Jackson, a black student there, "I don't think you'll find a blatant out-and-out racist at Stanford, someone who will just come out and call you 'nigger'...but you will find students who come from upper-middle-class families who've never come into contact with black people before, except their maid or a janitor...and all they have in their head is stereotypes." Jackson's conclusion: "There is a lot of ignorance."

Jacqueline Fleming, a noted psychologist at Barnard College in New York, has documented in her book *Blacks In College* that black students' gains in social and intellectual development suffer on predominantly white campuses when compared with historically black colleges. "The problem," she says, "is one of institutional abandonment, isolation, and bias in the classroom—factors that create a hostile interpersonal climate."

Jill Jackson, a black student at Brown University, further explains: "What we are talking about here is 'climate'. ...They know better than to call me 'nigger,' but instead I must justify daily why we have a Third World Center, why we sit together in the cafeteria, why we are 'complaining' about racism on campus, about getting an ethnic studies program, about the lack of tenured black, Hispanic and Asian-American faculty and administrators, and on and on."

University of Michigan, Ann Arbor: *In 1987, WJJX, a campus radio station, received a call from a student requesting air time to tell some jokes: "What do you get when you cross a black and a groundhog?" asked the caller. "Six more weeks of basketball season." The deejay allowed the caller to continue, while searching for a laugh track. "Why do blacks always have sex on their minds?" asked the caller. "Because all their pubic hair is on their head." After that and several other racial incidents on campus, the response from the Black Action Movement (BAM) culminated in a brief occupation of the administration building and the disruption of a Board of Regents meeting. As a result of continued student efforts, plans to increase the number of black faculty are now being implemented.*

Many students, national educators, civil rights leaders, and researchers who study our campus "crisis" insist that it must not be separated from deeply connected issues that affect the life-chances and well-being of blacks in the society at large. Racial polarization on campus mirrors racial polarization in society, they argue. And over the last decade, there has grown an overwhelming sense that relations between whites and minorities are worsening and that we are now facing the frightening consequences—from the 1982 murder in Detroit of Vincent Chin, a Chinese-American, by a white unemployed auto worker and his stepson, to the murder of Michael Griffith in Howard Beach in 1986 by white teenagers who felt their territory had been invaded, to the recent racial killing of Yusuf Hawkins in New York's predominately white Bensonhurst area. According to Dr. Linda Williams of the Joint Center, one reason for the growing tension is that there is an underlying perception among whites that blacks have achieved equality and that now "minority groups are getting some sort of undeserved advantage." The Reagan administration worked *against* affirmative action and severely cut financial assistance for students and to colleges committed to minority recruitment, thereby seriously diminishing black Americans' access to higher education. Argues Adele Terrell: "The sanctioning of anti-female, anti-black, anti-gay, anti-semitic attitudes...the feeling that it is OK to target powerless people, has been integral to the socialization of the present generation."

As Reginald Wilson, minority concerns director of the Washington, D.C.-based American Council on Education (ACE), explains, the attitude of some white students "reflects an assumed sense of ownership among whites in society as a whole in which they seem to be saying that 'this is my world. Who ever said that this neighborhood or university belongs to you?'"

The Citadel, Charleston, South Carolina: *In the fall of 1986, five white male students dressed in Klan-style white sheets and towels rushed into the room of a sleeping black male student, lit a small paper cross, uttered several racial slurs, threw the charred paper cross on the floor and left. President Claudius Grimsley, at first denying the event was racially motivated, later assigned the five students to an 'elaborate on-campus discipline'. Leaders of Charleston's black community called for their expulsion and the president's resignation. Soon after, the black student left the 144-year old military academy.*

While most schools have been struggling to cope with the conflicts in piecemeal, short-term, reactive ways, the consensus among observers is that broad, long-term strategies are in order. "A comprehensive approach is absolutely necessary," says Reginald Wilson of the American Council on Education, "and above all, a commitment by university leaders to institute change." Without that commitment, says Rev. Daphne Wiggins, a chaplain at Brown, "university rhetoric is just that—only rhetoric."

Demands by minority students for comprehensive, institutionalized changes at universities are being heard across the country. Students are calling for mandatory courses covering ethnic studies and the historical development of white racism, and for racial awareness/anti-racism workshops for everyone on campus. They are demanding that intolerance of racial harassment become policy in the disciplinary codes. Furthermore, black and other underrepresented minority student and alumni groups are demanding that colleges significantly increase their recruitment of minority students, faculty, and administrators, as well as calling for space and funding for cultural centers and programs.

> *Whites seem to be saying that 'this is my world. Who ever said that this neighborhood or university belongs to you?'*

While many administrators see no connection between recruiting minority students and hiring minority faculty, organizations like the American Council on Education are making the connections clear and urging university leadership to do the same. Says Wilson: "Schools cannot recruit black students and not recruit black faculty and then wonder why black kids feel alienated from campus life." Reginald Wells of the Washington-based National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives, which provides sensitivity training to administrators and campus security, suggests that "universities that do not have strong recruitment policies convey a message to their students that minorities are not an important part of college life....I believe that is a component of the racial tension and violence we are seeing."

The percentage of the total college enrollment that is black has declined over the last decade (from 9.4 percent in 1976 to 8.6 percent in 1986). Enrollment has decreased in part because of rising tuition costs and reductions in federal assistance. The weakening commitment of some university officials and the federal government to make higher education available to minorities has been part of the problem. Indeed, according to extensive research for the Joint Center by political scientist Gary Orfield of the University of Chicago, during the two terms of the Reagan administration, appointed federal officials chose to reverse years of established, bipartisan policy by halting federal pressure to increase black access to higher education. Instead of pursuing vigorous enforcement of desegregation and affirmative remedies, the administration "assumed good faith" and expected colleges and universities to voluntarily comply with the law. Administration officials often turned a blind eye to the adoption of new state education policies harmful to minority access.

Some universities are now responding. The University of Wisconsin at Madison has adopted what many consider one of the most comprehensive responses in the country. Its "Madison Plan," announced in 1988, calls for doubling the minority enrollment over the next five years, creating 150 financial aid packages for low-income students, substantially increasing the scholarship endowment, endowing 25 new minority fellowships, hiring 70 new instructors over the next three years to double the minority faculty, and requiring ethnic studies courses.

Like the University of Wisconsin, Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota, recently adopted an innovative plan. Carleton's program will give minority scholars the opportunity to teach half-time while completing their doctoral dissertations and, in the process, bring greater diversity to the faculty and offer role models for minority students. Carleton also instituted a requirement that all incoming students take a course that addresses the issue of cultural diversity. Such required courses—found today at Stanford, Berkeley, William Patterson College in New Jersey, and Towson State University in Maryland, among other schools—are being recognized as central to the success of any school's confrontation with racism, according to Keith Achuleta, director of the Black Community Services Center at Stanford.

In addition, workshops on racism for all members of a university community, run by staff, trained students, or consultants, have proven to raise racial awareness and sensitivity on many campuses. Incoming students at Brown University are now required to participate in several forums on racism and the meaning of pluralism during their orientation. Carleton College has hired a consultant on racism and minority issues and has made funds available to staff, faculty, and administrators to request the consultant's services. Minority administrators at Carleton have been pleasantly surprised at the number of requests.

Civil rights leaders and national educators are making a compelling argument to more colleges and universities to take up this challenge: "In a nation that will be one-third minority by the year 2000, if we are not educating all of our citizens, and particularly our minority population," says Reginald Wilson, "we will not have the skilled labor force necessary to compete in the world."

As Rev. Daphne Wiggins of Brown University asserts: "Struggle is necessary to achieve an academic community that moves beyond tolerance of diversity to one that appreciates and embraces difference." Echoing the words spoken more than a hundred years ago by the black human-rights leader Frederick Douglass, Wiggins adds, "Without struggle there will be no progress."

A Common Destiny: Blacks and American Society

Major Study by the National Academy of Sciences Finds No Progress Toward Social and Economic Equality for Blacks Since Early 1970s

Reviewed by Marc DeFrancis

Virtually all the advances black Americans have made over the past five decades were achieved by the early 1970s. Since that time, not only has the remaining racial gap not been bridged, but much of it—particularly in employment and in housing and educational opportunity—has grown wider. And while espoused goals of racial equality have gained broader acceptance among whites, willful discrimination against blacks—especially in the housing market—has shown little change. Some of this may seem surprising, especially to those who have joined the small but growing ranks of the black middle class. But it is amply documented in *A Common Destiny: Blacks and American Society,* a 600-page report recently released by the National Academy of Sciences.

The product of six years of study, the report closely examines how the economic and social status of black Americans changed between 1940 and 1986, covering such issues as income and employment, race relations, education, health, criminal justice, and political participation. It is built on the work of nearly a hundred black and white scholars under the supervision of the Academy's National Research Council and its 22-member blue-ribbon Committee on the Status of Black Americans. The director of the study, Gerald David Jaynes, is a black economist at Yale University. *A Common Destiny* is already being compared in importance with such landmark studies of race relations as Gunnar Myrdal's *An American Dilemma* (1944) and the Kerner Commission's *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders* (1968). According to Robin M. Williams, a Cornell University sociologist and chairman of the study's supervisory committee, the goal of the research was "to describe and analyze the changing position of blacks in American society since 1940—to lay out the currently available facts in a report as comprehensive and objective as we could make it." Williams coedited the resulting publication with Dr. Jaynes. The editors note that the report offers no policy recommendations of its own since it is designed "as a point of departure for future analyses and for the informed development of policies by business, voluntary associations, and local, state, and federal governments."

The authors conclude that, should circumstances and public policies remain unaltered, blacks will continue to lose economic and social ground. Existing trends indicate that in the near future roughly a third of the black population will continue to be poor, and that the relative employment and earnings status of black men is likely to further deteriorate. The report also notes that no convergence is in sight—even into the next half-century—for the disparate ages of life expectancy for black and white men.

No "Culture of Poverty"

The report challenges a recurrent view of poverty that has been fiercely debated throughout the 1980s—namely, that America's lower-income minorities remain chronically poor because they have inherited a "culture of poverty" which embraces dependency. The authors conclude that "the evidence does not support some popular hypotheses that purport to explain [black] female-headed households, high birth rates to unmarried women, low labor-force participation by males, or poor academic performance solely on the basis of government support programs or, more generally, on the existence of a 'culture of poverty' among the black poor. Black-white cultural differences have narrowed since 1960, not widened." As contributing evidence of this narrowing, the authors note that blacks vote at the same or higher rates as whites of the same socioeconomic backgrounds—a dramatic change from the virtual disfranchisement of the pre-civil-rights era. The accumulated evidence shows that the environment of poverty itself—not race or "cultural outlook"—is most closely linked to destructive social problems and behaviors. Moreover, the percentage of those within any given population that experiences a destructive social or health problem most often matches the poverty rate for that group rather than its racial or other composition. The presence of poverty alone, for example, explains the entire black-white difference in the rates of infant mortality and the high-school drop-out rate.

The Force of Economic Trends: Two Eras

The primary correlates of poverty—the factors that can most demonstrably be linked as causes—are "macroeconomic conditions of prosperity or recession and changes in family composition." This helps explain why the portrait of

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Mr. DeFrancis is senior editor at the Joint Center.

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POLITICAL TRENDLETTER®

Inside This Issue

- Manhattan Borough President David N. Dinkins wins New York City's Democratic mayoral primary to face Republican Rudolph Giuliani in the November general election.
- Congress can continue the late Rep. Mickey Leland's legacy of assisting hungry Americans by expanding the food stamp program which is up for reauthorization next year.
- Twenty black women leaders respond to the Supreme Court's *Webster* decision by calling for the protection of reproductive freedoms for all women.
- EEOC Chairman Clarence Thomas may face massive opposition from senior citizens and civil rights organizations if he is nominated for a federal judgeship.
- A new feature film about resistance to the South African apartheid regime, directed by brilliant young film maker Euzhan Palcy, has been released to theatres across the U.S.
- Across the Nation looks at black victors of mayoral primaries in Detroit, New Haven, New York, and Seattle, as well as challenges to Congressman Gus Savage in Chicago.

Dinkins Wins in New York

Manhattan Borough President DAVID N. DINKINS' stunning victory September 12 over three-term Mayor EDWARD I. KOCH in New York City's Democratic mayoral primary has not only generated enthusiasm among the city's blacks, but marks the reemergence of a liberal Democratic coalition that has been dormant since Koch's first election in 1977. Dinkins captured 51 percent of the vote, including 54 percent of the Latino vote and an unexpectedly large 29 percent of the white vote. He also captured the support of 93 percent of black voters, though their numbers were surprisingly low (29 percent of all voters who turned out).

Dinkins' victory vindicated his personal style and campaign strategy, both of which came under criticism for being too "laid-back," especially in response to Koch's aggressive tactics. Dinkins kept the gloves on throughout, while positioning himself as the candidate most able to "heal a racially divided city." His stump speech of unity became particularly important in the final weeks of the campaign after YUSUF HAWKINS, a black high-school student, was killed by a gang of white youths in Brooklyn's predominately white Bensonhurst section. Indeed, it was that incident which many observers point to as galvanizing Dinkins' final support. According to a New York Times/WCBS-TV exit poll, this was especially true among his white support, 35 percent of whom said they decided to vote for Dinkins in the last month of the campaign.

Now the 62-year-old former city clerk and president of the New York City Board of Elections must prepare for what many are expecting will be a tough general election in November. His opponent, 45-year-old RUDOLPH L. GIULIANI, a former Reagan-appointed U.S. attorney who won fame for prosecuting organized-crime bosses and Wall Street stock swindlers, is running on both Republican Party and Liberal Party tickets. While the Democratic Party holds a 5-to-1 edge in voter registration over New York City's Republicans, it is expected that some white voters who have traditionally supported Democrats will not vote for Dinkins. Giuliani, who in his primary race against ultra-conservative RONALD S. LAUDER described himself as a "Republican-fusion" candidate along the lines of former New York Republican mayors FIORELLO H. LA GUARDIA and JOHN LINDSEY, is now repositioning himself more conservatively as he attempts to win the support of disaffected Democrats. Dinkins, who is seeking to become the Big Apple's first black mayor, has already set the tone for his campaign by depicting Giuliani as a "reactionary Reaganite" who "can only take the city backwards." Giuliani, on the other hand, is accusing Dinkins of being a "clubhouse politician" backed by a political leadership that "has dragged the city into decline." Meanwhile, whoever is elected can expect to face enormous challenges, like massive homelessness, high unemployment, and a decaying urban infrastructure. Moreover, State Comptroller EDWARD V. REGAN has already warned both candidates that the city will face a budget deficit of between $1.3 billion and $2 billion during the next mayoral term.

Mickey Leland's Last Mission

Many still mourn for Congressman **MICKEY LELAND,** who was killed last August in a plane crash while en route to a refugee camp in Ethiopia near the Sudanese border. Eight other Americans and seven Ethiopians who accompanied Leland on the humanitarian mission were also lost in the crash. Revered as a passionate champion for the interests of the world's poorest citizens, the six-term Democrat from Houston was instrumental in convincing his House colleagues in 1984 to create the Select Committee on Hunger, which he chaired until his death. Leland used the committee as a platform from which to fight hunger and malnutrition both at home and abroad, and he was a major force in getting Congress to fund U.S. food aid to sub-Saharan Africa (valued at $800 million) in 1985 and hunger relief for America's homeless in 1986.

At his untimely death at age 44, Leland's goal to abolish hunger in the U.S. remained far from realized. Between two and five million children in America are hungry today, yet federal funding for child nutrition and food stamp programs has not kept pace with the need. Even though the number of Americans in poverty has increased since 1981, the average monthly number of food stamp recipients has shrunk, from 22.4 million that year to 20.1 million in 1988, according to a report by the House Ways and Means Committee. This decrease was due to budget cuts made by President REAGAN's administration. Funding for the food stamp program, measured in constant dollars, is now less than it was in 1981 when Reagan took office. With that program up for reauthorization in 1990, nutrition advocates are anxious to see whether the same Democratic and Republican members of Congress who have expressed their admiration for Mickey Leland's commitment will honor his memory and his mission by expanding this and other important nutrition programs.

Black Women Take a Stand on Reproductive Freedom

On September 13, at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., 20 nationally prominent black women leaders declared that all women should have the right to reproductive freedom. The group was responding to the Supreme Court's July 3 decision in *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services,* which gives states the authority to prohibit state-government-supported abortion services. The 20 leaders voiced their fear that *Webster* may enable states to further restrict access to reproductive information and services and that it may become virtually impossible for many low-income and minority women to have abortions performed legally and safely. **The group also outlined the basic reproductive rights they believe should be protected, including: the right to choose whether or not to have a child; the right to good, affordable health care to ensure a safe pregnancy and delivery; the right to information and counseling on reproduction, contraception, and abortion; the right to a range of contraceptive services; and the right to safe, legal, and affordable abortion services.**

Among the women were former congresswoman **SHIRLEY CHISHOLM**; Rep. **CARDISS COLLINS** (D-Ill.); **DOROTHY HEIGHT**, president of the National Council of Negro Women; Georgetown University law professor **ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON**; California state assemblywoman **MAXINE WATERS**; and **FAYE WATTLETON**, president of the Planned Parenthood Federation of America. They add their voices to those of other leaders of the pro-choice movement who led tens of thousands in a march on Washington April 9 in support of women's right to abortion.

Although Solicitor General KENNETH W. STARR reportedly does not plan to argue before the High Court this term in favor of overturning *Roe v. Wade,* which in 1973 legalized abortion in all states, pro-choice activists fear the *Webster* ruling does indicate the Court's willingness to issue such a reversal in the future. Acting on a sense of urgency, these activists are already making their influence felt in the states. Shortly after the *Webster* decision, the U.S. House of Representatives voted to remove prohibitions imposed a year earlier on the District of Columbia's right to use public funds to pay for abortions for poor women. Similarly, the Florida state house and senate recently moved to block Governor Bob Martinez's legislative proposal to add new restrictions to the state's present abortion laws. The issue of reproductive freedom has already emerged in this fall's gubernatorial races in Virginia and New Jersey, and it is likely to be raised again in elections across the country next year. (See "Abortion: Whose Issue Is It Anyway?" in this issue of ***Focus***.)

Conservative Black Judicial Candidate Faces Opposition

Several public-interest organizations are about to oppose the nomination of CLARENCE THOMAS, the black chairman of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), to fill a vacancy on the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals. Thomas is slated to take the seat vacated by ROBERT H. BORK, who resigned in February 1988 after the U.S. Senate refused to confirm his nomination as a U.S. Supreme Court justice. The

D.C. Circuit Court, because it often rules on federal regulatory and civil rights cases of national import, is widely considered to be second only to the Supreme Court in power and stature and can be the springboard to a High Court appointment.

Because of the position's importance, legal rights organizations and women's, elderly, and civil rights groups critical of Thomas's performance as head of the EEOC are preparing for a confirmation battle. (His nomination has not yet been officially transmitted to the Senate.) **Thomas faces his strongest opposition from the powerful senior citizens lobby, which views him as insensitive to their concerns. When congressional hearings conducted in 1987 and 1988 revealed that under Thomas the EEOC failed to process as many as 10,000 complaints brought in accordance with the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA), the elderly community and several members of Congress became up in arms.** The House and Senate Committees on Aging exposed the fact that the EEOC allowed thousands of complaints to expire by not processing them within the law's two year statute of limitation. Thomas claims that he doesn't have the staff to process all the complaints in the EEOC's large case load even though the agency has received increases in its congressioal appropriations each year since 1982.

The Senate Judiciary Committee, with jurisdiction over Justice Department and judicial appointments, may be tiring from battles over controversial nominees. On August 1, after a painful confirmation struggle between the Justice Department and civil rights groups, the committee voted not to confirm **WILLIAM LUCAS** to head that department's Civil Rights Division. This was a major setback for Attorney General **RICHARD THORNBURGH**, who has been unable to fill several top posts in his department. The committee may opt to avoid another such fight.

Thomas had been serving as a legislative aide when in 1981 he was appointed by President Reagan to head the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Education. A year later, in 1982, he was appointed to chair the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. By 1986, Thomas was facing opposition from many groups, including the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights (a coalition of over 200 organizations), the NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund, and the American Federation of Government Employees. They charged Thomas with shifting the agency's emphasis from high-impact, class-action pattern and practice suits to individual cases of discrimination. Thomas's stated view that goals and timetables in affirmative action hiring are discriminatory and a flawed approach to civil rights enforcement has alarmed many civil rights leaders. **RALPH G. NEAS**, executive director of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, says his coalition is studying Thomas's record in the Reagan and Bush administrations and will take a position on his nomination some time this fall.

Witness to Apartheid

In September, Rep. HOWARD WOLPE (D-Mich.), chairman of the House Subcommittee on Africa, hosted the screening in Washington, D.C., of "A Dry White Season," a powerful film about the courage of individuals who resist the racist regime in South Africa. Set in Johannesburg and Soweto during the 1976 student rebellions, the film shows how apartheid has savaged the people of that troubled land—both black and white. It is centered on two families, that of Gordon Ngubene (played by **WINSTON NTSHONA**) and that of Ben du Toit (played by **DONALD SUTHERLAND**). Du Toit, a white Afrikaner teacher in an affluent Johannesburg private school, is disturbed when his black gardener, Ngubene, asks him to help secure justice for his son Jonathan, who has been brutally beaten by the police. At first du Toit chooses not to act and counsels Ngubene to let the matter rest. However, when Jonathan disappears in detention after a peaceful student demonstration is viciously broken up by the police, it becomes clear that the matter will not rest. As Ngubene exposes himself and his family to grave danger by seeking the whereabouts of his son, du Toit witnesses a side of South African "justice" he had never been aware of. Du Toit's steps—tentative and inept at first—to intercede on behalf of the Ngubene family take him down a path that changes his life and profoundly affects his own family.

"A Dry White Season" is based on the novel of the same name by Afrikaner **ANDRE BRINK**. The book, originally published in the Afrikaans language in 1979, was immediately banned in South Africa. Brink has written three other novels as well as several essays critical of the South African government and society, and together with his family has lived under police surveillance and endured death threats since 1974. **The film was directed by the brilliant young black film maker EUZHAN PALCY, age 32. A native of Martinique, her first major film was an award-winning 1983 feature titled "La Rue Cases Negres" (released in the U.S. as "Sugar Cane Alley"), which centers on a black youth who grows up on one of Martinique's oppressive sugar cane plantations. Palcy had to fight Hollywood for five years to make this latest film a reality.** In the process, she and producer **PAUL WEINSTEIN** astonished the film industry by luring **MARLON BRANDO** out of nine years of apparent retirement. Brando is reported to have performed in the small-budget ($9 million) film without a fee, while the other actors worked for fees far below what they normally receive.

"A Dry White Season" is a gripping and powerfully honest film that now joins others—"Cry Freedom" and "A World Apart"—in examining the horrors of apartheid and the sacrificial courage of those who challenge it.

Across the Nation

CONNECTICUT: **On Tuesday, September 12, black state senator JOHN C. DANIELS took on the Italian-dominated political machine in New Haven and won the Democratic nomination for mayor with 58 percent of the vote. If he wins in the November 7 general election he will be the first black mayor of this ethnically diverse community of 126,000, where blacks make up 30 percent of the population.**

He grew up in the city's housing projects and today is a church deacon whom the public regards as a solid citizen. After attending Villanova University in Pennsylvania with a football scholarship, Daniels served as special assistant to the executive director of the Joint Center from 1970 to 1971. He returned to New Haven where he served on the Board of Aldermen and was later elected to five terms as state senator. He succeeded in business as the founder of Enterprise Plumbing and Heating Co.

Daniels' Democratic opponent was **JOHN DESTEFANO JR.**, the chief administrator and development officer under outgoing Mayor **BIAGIO "BEN" DILIETO.** DeStefano, who had never held elective office, failed in his many attempts to link Daniels' name to controversy or scandal. New Haven politics have long been dominated by the Italian community (Italians also make up about 30 percent of the city's population), while Hispanic, Irish, Greek, and Jewish voters, together with the Yale University community, make up the balance of the populace. Running on a broadly based campaign of inclusion, Daniels won through a strong black voter turnout and by carrying the "Yale Ward." He promised downtown development, expanded drug treatment, and better police protection.

The winner of New Haven's Democratic primary is usually a shoe-in for the general election, where Democrats outnumber Republicans 10 to 1. Political observers will be watching to see if the voters in this predominantly white, working-class city can look beyond race and consider Daniels on his merits.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA: **Housing Now, a broad coalition of 70 national organizations, is preparing for the climactic event of its summer-long public awareness and lobbying campaign on behalf of the nation's homeless: a march on Washington. The October 7 march and rally will bring together homeless people, advocates for the homeless, local and state public officials, church leaders, and others. Their demand: that the billions of dollars cut from the federal housing budget since 1981 be restored.** Since 1980, the total budget for federal housing assistance has been cut by more than 75 percent—from $32 billion to $7.5 billion a year. Prevalent estimates place the number of homeless Americans at three million, while families with children now make up the fastest-growing homeless group. The Housing Now campaign was initiated by calls for action from **MITCH SNYDER**, a Washington D.C. homeless advocate; **BARRY ZIGAS**, president of the National Low Income Housing Coalition; **LOUISA STARK**, president of the National Coalition for the Homeless, and **CHRIS SPROWAL**, president of the National Union of the Homeless.

ILLINOIS: **Although most 1990 congressional races won't be decided until November of next year, the election for the House seat of black Democratic Rep. GUS SAVAGE (Chicago) will be decided much earlier (after the March 20 primary), and is already warming up. Two candidates have surfaced so far: MEL REYNOLDS, 37, a Rhodes scholar and administrator at the University of Illinois, and state senator HOWARD BROOKINS, 57, who has formed an exploratory committee.**

Savage, a 63-year-old five-term incumbent, has been plagued by personal peccadilloes, and is perceived as politically vulnerable. He has recently been accused of sexually molesting and harassing a 28-year-old Peace Corp volunteer while on an official visit to Zaire. The House ethics committee is investigating to determine whether to discipline Savage for the incident. During his eight years in Congress, Savage has also been criticized for unreasonable absenteeism and for missing key House votes, including the vote to raise the minimum wage in March of this year. He was also fined by the Federal Election Commission for failing to disclose sources of campaign contributions.

Despite these failings, Savage's 70-percent black district on Chicago's South Side has consistently returned him to office, mainly because the primary vote has always been splintered by fields of three to seven challengers. Reynolds, who has already announced his candidacy, garnered only 14 percent of the vote when he challenged Savage in 1988. But this time around, Reynolds will have the help of Chicago businessman **AL JOHNSON**, a major fund-raiser for the late Mayor **HAROLD WASHINGTON**, and **CHARLES KELLY**, Reynolds' campaign manager who was a top aide to Washington.

Savage, who received 52 percent of the final tally in his last two election primaries, may again be difficult to beat, especially if he faces more than one opponent. In this overwhelmingly Democratic district, the winner of the March 20 Democratic primary is virtually assured a victory against any GOP opponent in November.

MICHIGAN: **The general election in November for mayor of Detroit will pit four-term Democratic Mayor COLEMAN YOUNG against accountant/businessman THOMAS BARROW in a rematch of their 1985 electoral bout. The two were the top vote getters in a fiercely contested non-partisan primary of 15 candidates held September 12. In 1985, Barrow, part owner of the CPA firm of Barrow and Aldridge, led a successful fight to prevent the legalization of casino gambling, in opposition to Young's stance. Barrow subsequently claimed 39 percent of the vote in that year's election challenge against Young. ERMA HENDERSON**, president of the city council, and Rep. **JOHN CONYERS**, who represents the 1st congressional district in the Motor City, were also candidates in the primary. Conyers, a 25-year veteran of Congress who did not enter the race until late July, suffered from a disorganized campaign. Neither his high name recognition in the city nor **JESSE JACKSON'S** endorsement just two days before the primary availed Conyers at the polls.

WASHINGTON: **Black Seattle city councilman NORMAN RICE came in second in a crowded 13-candidate mayoral primary on September 19 and will face city attorney DOUG JEWETT, the first-place finisher, for a run-off general election November 7. Jewett received 24 percent of the vote to Rice's 20 percent.** The winner in November will succeed incumbent Democrat **CHARLES ROYER** who is leaving City Hall to join the faculty of Harvard University. **The primary campaign became racially polarized when Jewett attacked the-court-mandated busing desegregation plan employed by the city's independent school board since 1977. Jewett was the only candidate to back an initiative, which will be on the November 7 ballot, that would offer schools city tax money if they abandon busing.** Rice is joined by the local Urban League and other civil rights groups in support of the desegregation plan and opposition to the anti-busing initiative.

A Common Destiny

(Continued from page 6)

poverty over the last 40 years so neatly divides into two distinct periods, 1939 to 1973 and 1973 to 1986.

Much of the progress during the first period can be linked to the large-scale migration of Southern blacks northward to centers of industrial activity, at a time when sustained economic growth was creating new jobs. This, combined with new access to education and employment mandated in response to the civil rights movement, created a fertile environment for progress toward desegregation and economic parity.

The recession of the 1970s and the continuing disappearance of manufacturing jobs account for much of the more recent stagnation in black progress. Between 1971 and 1984, average real wages fell for workers of both races. And although the gap between black and white wages continued to narrow, the decline in black employment outweighed that gain—causing the average per capita income for blacks to remain as far below the figure for whites in 1984 as it had been in 1971: 57 percent of white income.

Segregation and Discrimination

Contrary to much popular perception, residential segregation has barely improved in 30 years. When 29 large cities were examined for this study, it was found that they remain, on average, 77 percent segregated. In five cities—Newark, New York, Philadelphia, Detroit, and Birmingham—the extent of such segregation has actually increased since 1960. Moreover, racial boundaries separate neighborhoods with equal severity regardless of residents' income or education, so that middle-class blacks who have left the inner-city for the suburbs continue to find themselves isolated.

The authors emphasize that the persisting segregation of American communities is not coincidental but is largely the result of organized, purposeful exclusion, with black renters and home-buyers frequently "steered" by real estate dealers to all-black neighborhoods. The authors cite a major government study by the Department of Housing and Urban Development in 1977, which found that in 40 metropolitan areas, 70 percent of all applicants were being steered into separate black and white neighborhoods when seeking to rent—and that 90 percent were so steered when seeking to purchase homes.

Likewise, although substantial progress was made in school desegregation in the 1960s and early 1970s, the pace has slowed since. Today, the racial separation of students remains significant, especially in cities outside the South. The authors challenge the notion that practices like busing students to achieve desegregation ultimately lower the quality of education available in formerly all-white classrooms. "School desegregation does not substantially affect the academic performance of white students," they write, "but it does modestly improve black performance—in particular, reading." They also note that a majority of parents and students who have experienced school desegregation continue to support it, and that "intergroup attitudes and relations improve after schools are desegregated."

After reviewing four decades of studies, the authors conclude that while white Americans have become more accepting of principles of racial equality, they remain far less willing to see those principles put into practice, and are "more accepting of equal treatment with regard to the public domains of life than the private domains of life." The authors write further, "It is difficult not to conclude that at some fundamental level the attitudes of a majority of whites toward blacks are ambivalent. Whites express a desire for equal treatment [of blacks], at least when small numbers of blacks are concerned, but when close intimate contact is involved, most whites do not yet accept blacks as social equals."

Other Findings

Gaps in Health Status. Yet another consequence of poverty, segregation, and discrimination is evident in the continuing health gap between the races. The authors note that infant mortality rates are still twice as high for blacks as for whites. Meanwhile, for elderly blacks, poverty, discrimination, and the limited capacity of care centers conspire to limit the availability of long-term care.

Access to general medical services is also more limited for blacks today, 22 percent of whom remain without any coverage by private health insurance or Medicaid (compared to 14 percent of whites). One positive note may be seen in the fact that although births to black teenagers still represent a serious problem, the rate of such births has declined over the last two decades.

The Criminal Justice System. Although blacks are found among prison populations at about four times their proportion of the general population, they are also more likely than whites to be crime victims—six times as likely to be victims of homicide, for example.

Bias in criminal sentencing is also a lingering problem, though it varies from region to region and is not entirely racially motivated. "Current black-white differences in sentencing," the authors find, "appear to be due less to overt racial bias than to socioeconomic differences." Regardless of race, those who are poorer receive, on average, more severe sentences for the same crimes than those who are better off. Measurable racial bias does show up in one important form: criminals whose victims are white are on average punished more severely than those whose victims are black.

The authors of this report recognize that dissatisfaction with the criminal justice system is widespread among blacks today. Given the history of the urban riots of the 1960s, they warn, continued imbalances in the exercise of justice could lead to similar upheavals: "We cannot exclude the possibility of confrontation and violence....The surface calm can disappear very quickly." □

Copies of *A Common Destiny: Blacks and American Society* may be purchased from the National Academy Press, 2101 Constitution Avenue, N.W., Washington D.C. 20418.

National Service: Are Points of Light Enough?

The Senate Has Taken the Spotlight on Volunteer Service Legislation, While George Bush Is Still Warming Up In the Wings

by Jack Gerber and David C. Ruffin

By early morning Robert Issacs, half white and half Lumbee Indian, has already put in several hours' work on his family's tiny farm in rural Madison county in Appalachian Kentucky. At six A.M. he can be found reading from the sports pages to Jeanette Humphrey, a black senior at nearby Berea College. Jeanette is teaching Robert, 17, who has never been to school, basic skills in reading and math. Robert's goal is to be able to buy his own shirts and count his money, apply for a driver's license, and read the sports pages unassisted.

Jeanette, an elementary education major, learned about Robert and the 25 other young people and adults she has tutored through Students for Appalachia, a campus-based organization that links Berea students with people in need of educational enrichment. During the past two years, she has also been the surrogate mother to three white boys—William, Glendon, and Kenny Wilson, ages 13, 10, and five—whose real mother, an alcoholic, has left them.

Jeanette is just one of thousands of dedicated volunteers across the country who give their time and talents to those in need. Policy makers in Congress and the Bush administration have young people like Jeanette in mind as they wrestle over the best way to involve more Americans in volunteer service to the nation.

Last March, the Joint Center held a roundtable to review the various bills for national service that have been introduced in Congress and to assess their impact on both the black community and the larger society. Since the roundtable was conducted, the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee has pulled together a welter of proposals on volunteerism to produce the National Community Service Act of 1989 (S.1430), a compromise bill that could be the first step toward creating a new generation of national service programs. The bill would provide stipends and incentives for volunteers and combine the provisions of several alternative bills under one umbrella program. The committee, chaired by Senator Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.), adopted the $300 million bill on August 2 and the measure is expected to go to the Senate floor this fall. Several proposals are under consideration in the House as well, but the full House Education and Labor Committee has yet to act on a comprehensive service program. Congressional proposals on national service differ markedly from George Bush's oft repeated "points of light" concept of civic patriotism. Bush's plan, yet to be unveiled in detail, would require only $25 million a year in federal support, primarily to promote volunteerism.

Service: A Privilege or a Duty?

Of the three dozen bills reviewed at the Joint Center's roundtable, most involve a variety of optional or voluntary social or conservation services for civilians. They would generally offer stipends, cash grants, student aid, or the down payment on a first home in return for service, and would be primarily targeted toward young volunteers in high school or college.

The proposals discussed at the roundtable range from programs that would forgive student loans in return for stints in the Peace Corps or VISTA to the service-in-exchange-for-student-aid bill of Senator Sam Nunn (D-Ga.) and Representative Dave McCurdy (D-Okla.). The Nunn-McCurdy Citizenship and National Service Act (S.3 and H.R.660) was the most controversial of all the proposals and became a lightning rod for opposition. The bill would have made civilian or military service the only way a young person could receive federal student aid or the down payment on a house. All present student aid grants and loan programs would have been abolished and their cumulative $9 billion budgets would have been reallocated to the Nunn-McCurdy service program.

As Lee Ann Alexander, legislative assistant to Rep. McCurdy, stated at the roundtable, "the philosophy behind the Nunn-McCurdy bill is to change student aid from an entitlement program to a benefit program—students shouldn't get aid without working for it." In the framework of this bill, service would have been considered a civic duty

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Army Lieutenant Colonel Gerber, presently posted at the Pentagon, was recently a senior military fellow at the Joint Center. Mr. Ruffin is the editor of *Focus* magazine.

performed *before* receiving public benefits, as opposed to an option that citizens are lured to with incentives.

Opposition to the Nunn-McCurdy approach was strong among black academics and representatives of education organizations attending the roundtable. Many of them took the position that the bill would place further obstacles before low-income students seeking higher education. Michelle Stent, vice president for government affairs of the United Negro College Fund (UNCF), said the bill would place a heavy burden on black students. Since 90 percent of the 45,000 students enrolled at the 41 UNCF colleges and universities depend on financial aid, the Nunn-McCurdy bill, she argued, would impose an "economic draft" on many blacks, Hispanics, and poor whites aspiring to attain a college education. It is unlikely that this burden of service would fall as heavily on youth from upper-income families (most of whom are white) who can afford the rising costs of post-secondary education.

Proponents of stipends take the position that they are necessary to induce involvement by low-income participants in volunteer programs.

A Bill to Revive the Spirit of Service

The Senate's National and Community Service Act (S.1430) does not contain the burdensome provisions of the Nunn-McCurdy bill. Existing student aid and loan programs would remain intact. Voluntary service would not be tied to education benefits. And provisions would be made for young people over 17 from low-income families to receive stipends and in-service training as well as subsequent education benefits and down payments for first homes. Kennedy worked out a compromise among fellow senators Nunn, Christopher Dodd (D-Conn.), Dale Bumpers (D-Ark.), and Barbara Mikulski (D-Md.), who sponsored proposals of their own. Kennedy views the compromise legislation as a measure that will "revive the spirit of service in America."

The bill was adopted by the Senate's Labor and Human Resources Committee by a vote of 11-to-4, with Republicans Thad Cochran of Mississippi and Dave Durenberger of Minnesota joining the Democrats in voting for the measure. Funding for the bill, totalling $300 million annually, would be evenly divided into three titles focusing separately on student volunteers, disadvantaged volunteers, and demonstration programs. Title I of the Act would authorize $100 million for competitive grants to states for community-service programs, based at schools and college campuses, primarily for student volunteers. This title also encourages the innovative use of work-study funds for volunteer programs and would offer partial cancellation of student loan debts in exchange for full-time community service after college.

Title II of the Act would establish a $100 million Youth Service Corps targeted toward young volunteers from disadvantaged backgrounds. The Corps would be administered by a new National Service Corporation which would provide states, on a competitive basis, with funds to support full-time or summer social-service and conservation corps programs for young people ages 16 to 25. These programs would be modeled on the conservation corps presently operating in 25 states, whose volunteers respond to floods and forest fires, build bridges and park facilities, and work on environmental projects. In-service education and training would be emphasized and volunteers would receive stipends equal to 100 percent of the poverty line and post-service education benefits worth up to $100 a week.

The Act would set aside the remaining $100 million (increasing to $300 million within five years) for Title III which would support innovative state-run demonstration programs for volunteers over 17. This part of the measure is designed to encourage Americans of varying ages and from different backgrounds to participate in addressing the special needs of local communities. It would offer volunteers stipends and end-of-service grants of $8,500 a year for up to two years, to be used for education and/or a first-home purchase.

Bush: More Light—Less Money

While the Congress moves forward on national service, the White House lags behind. President Bush has yet to name the members of his Points of Light Initiative Foundation Advisory Committee, although he has appointed its chairman, Republican Governor Thomas Kean of New Jersey. Over the committee's 45-day life, it will be charged with drafting legislation to establish the Foundation and formulate a national service program that conforms to Bush's philosophy of service.

While it is unclear what form a White House legislative proposal will take, administration officials have criticized the Senate proposal as too expensive. They have also argued that the creation of a National Service Corporation, a new federal agency, would unnecessarily expand the federal bureaucracy and might deemphasize local initiatives. Pointing to unremunerated volunteer work—such as that coordinated by the Red Cross and 4-H Clubs—administration officials have criticized the stipended activities proposed by S.1430 as running counter to the principle of volunteerism and as being likely to result in capping the number of participants. Senate proponents of stipends, however, take the position that stipends are necessary to induce involvement by low-income participants, few of whom participate in 4-H Clubs and similar organizations.

The National and Community Service Act is on a fast track and is expected to be taken up soon by the full Senate. The House Education and Labor Committee is also expected to produce a comprehensive bill this fall. But most observers concur that before an agreed-upon national service program is enacted, some hard bargaining will have to take place between the White House and Capitol Hill. ❑

Abortion: Whose Issue Is It Anyway?

Poor and Minority Women Speak Out on Reproductive Freedom, Which Faces New Restrictions With the Supreme Court's Webster *Ruling*

by Teri Cotton

"C.H., a 29-year-old black woman with three children, was admitted [to the hospital] with a history of vomiting, diarrhea, lower abdominal cramps for three days, and vaginal bleeding for one day. [She was 10 weeks pregnant]. The cervix was dilated and some tissue was presenting. Her condition was deteriorating and antibiotics and blood transfusions were administered... on the fourth hospital day an exploratory operation was performed and there was ... a one-inch perforation in the top of the uterus. A hysterectomy was performed, accompanied by additional blood transfusions. Her condition continued to deteriorate, and death occurred on the 9th hospital day [as a result of an unsafe abortion]...."

–from the *Official Journal of the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology,* August 1962, reprinted in the "Women of Color" friend-of-the-court brief filed with the U.S. Supreme Court for the *Webster* case.

"Death occurred on the ninth hospital day." These words echo a tragic and senseless fate in an era of modern medicine and enlightened legal and political thought. Although most women today would like to believe that unsafe abortions are a relic of the past, the Supreme Court's decision last July in *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services* has increased the likelihood that they may once again be compelled for women of limited means. For these women, the deepest fear is that C.H.'s fate could become their own.

The *Webster* decision gives state legislatures renewed authority to regulate abortion, allowing them to prohibit the use of state funding or other public support for the procedure. It also allows states to violate the trimester framework established by the Court's 1973 *Roe v. Wade* ruling. The landmark *Roe* decision, which declared abortion a constitutionally protected right in all states, determined that during the first trimester of pregnancy any abortion decision was a private matter between a woman and her doctor, that between the onset of the second trimester and fetus viability the state government could intervene to save the life of the mother (but not the fetus), and that only after viability could the government intervene to save the fetus. Under *Webster,* however, state governments are free to intervene—wherever state support is involved—to save the fetus at any stage of the pregnancy. Thus, although the Court's decision last July does not officially overturn *Roe,* many agree it signals the Court's intention to begin chipping away at abortion rights.

The *Webster* ruling grew out of a challenge to highly restrictive state abortion legislation in Missouri. The Court upheld the Missouri law, which forbids public employees from performing abortion services, bans the use for such services of public hospitals and other taxpayer-supported facilities, and requires that viability tests be carried out on any fetus thought to be 20 weeks old or older; if the fetus proves viable at that point, abortion is generally prohibited by another Missouri statute.

Even before the *Webster* decision, public funding for abortion had been somewhat restricted by Congress, which in 1976 passed the Hyde Amendment (sponsored by Republican Congressman Henry Hyde of Illinois) outlawing federal funding of abortion. The Missouri law's additional restrictions on state funds and support, combined with its requirement of costly viability tests, will make access to abortion extremely difficult for low-income women in that state and others with similiar laws. Many of these women simply cannot afford the costs of the procedure at private hospitals and clinics.

Emerging Voices, Divergent Views

The *Webster* ruling has reinvigorated both pro-choice and pro-life advocates, who are preparing to fight at the state level now that the Court has moved the issue there. The National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL) reports that its national and affiliate membership has risen 75 percent (to approximately 300,000) since the Court agreed to hear the case last fall. Anti-abortion organizations likewise report an increased awareness of the issue and an increase in the number of people pledging to stop what they often describe as "the killing of babies." Today, as the average citizen grapples to understand what the *Webster* case in fact decided, the threat of an end to accustomed abortion rights raises the need to reevaluate their significance, especially for lower-income and minority women who have not been active in the abortion debate.

Yet, even while the voices of minority and lower-income women have become more prominent in recent years (see "Black Women Take a Stand on Reproductive Freedom," *Political Trendletter*), their number remains small. Part of the problem is the way abortion issues have been framed.

Ms. Cotton, a senior at Wellesley College, was an intern this summer at the Joint Center.

A *Boston Globe* article published last April quotes Sabrae Jenkins, director of the Washington, D.C.-based Women of Color Partnership Program, on this matter: "You have pro-choice organizations that are looking solely at the issue of abortion. They're not looking at issues as they relate to women of color." Though the *Globe* article goes on to suggest that the absence of minority women in the abortion debate is part of their historical exclusion from the nation's larger political process, others argue that both the pro-choice and the pro-life sides of the debate have constituted white, middle-class movements. Says Pat Tyson, director of the Religious Coalition for Abortion, a national organization, "There is a sense the movement is not as fully integrated as it could be. In order for us to win the right to choose, it has to be an effective ethnic mix."

Faye Wattleton, who in 1978 became the first black to head Planned Parenthood, also calls for a more inclusive coalition. By handing the abortion fight back to the state legislatures, she argues, the Supreme Court's *Webster* decision "has given us an incredible opportunity to bring people of all ethnicities together, regardless of class lines....The need now is to confront the realities of politics. What I'd like to see us push for is...a reproductive rights amendment to the constitution."

The NAACP, by contrast, has not placed abortion on its national agenda. Of its 2,300 branches, none has considered the issue a priority. Althea Simmons, director of the organization's Washington Bureau, explains: "You have to understand black culture. We are very closely allied to the black church"—and much of that church, Simmons suggests, opposes abortion. Pamela Carr, a spokesperson for Black Americans for Life (part of the National Right to Life Committee) feels that, historically, adoptions within the black extended family have provided an alternative to abortion. "From the very beginnings," says Carr, "the thought of killing a child was outrageous to black families."

Another alternative is advocated by a number of progressive black ministers, including the Reverend Calvin Butts, a prominent minister with the Abyssinian Baptist church in Harlem, New York. "Freedom of choice is a divine right," says Butts. "In that regard, I am pro-choice, and I suggest that all Christian people are pro-choice."

The Consequences for Teens and Minorities

Given the problems of teenage pregnancy and persistent poverty in many minority communities, abortion rights and family planning would seem to be closely connected. Yet family planning has generally been ignored in the abortion debate. Out-of-wedlock childbearing among teens is strongly associated with poverty, school dropout, and welfare. Teenage pregnancy is clearly a severe problem for the black minority: black women are twice as likely as white women to become pregnant before the age of 18 (41 percent versus 21 percent, respectively). And although many of those pregnancies are terminated, the final birth figures are even more unbalanced: whereas seven percent of white women give birth during these teen years, the figure for black women is 26 percent.

Susan Smith, congressional liaison for the National Right to Life Committee, asserts that "rather than being a part of the solution to teenage pregnancy, abortion is a part of the problem." While Smith does not deny that women who have abortions make a difficult choice, she nonetheless believes abortion is used as a "method of birth control." Most women who seek abortions, Smith contends, have had unprotected sex and have been "less cautious" because this procedure is so easy to obtain.

Rebecca Stone, a policy director of the Center for Population Options, a national non-profit organization dedicated to preventing teenage pregnancy and childbearing, takes another view: "Most teens don't face the crucial decision of whether they can or want to have a child until they are already pregnant," she noted in a recent issue of the Center's monthly newsletter, *Options*. "By eliminating the right to choose abortion, the state would force unwanted childbearing and motherhood on those thousands of teenage girls who simply do not consider in a mature way the potentially grave and life-altering consequences of their sexual activity."

The abortion statistics on young women are clear in their implications. According to the Alan Guttmacher Institute, a research organization for the New York City-based Planned Parenthood, Inc., about three percent of American women aged 15 to 44 end unwanted pregnancy in abortion. The highest concentration of these women is among the younger groups: 3.2 percent of those 15-17 years old, 6.2 percent of those 18-19 years old, and 5.5 percent of those 20-24 years old.

Poor and minority women, as well, make up a disproportionately large part of those who seek abortion. Minority women are more than twice as likely as white women to have abortions—5.3 percent versus 2.3 percent. Moreover, in terms of income, the highest proportion (6.2 percent) is among women who have annual incomes of less than $11,000. In 1985, 60 percent of all reported abortions were performed in abortion clinics and only 13 percent were performed in hospitals. Thus the availability of these clinics is paramount to women whose limited income does not allow for the luxury of a private hospital. "The consequences [of *Webster*] are appalling for women of color and poor women," argues Leslie Wolf, executive director of the Center for Women's Policy Studies in Washington, D.C. "Their rights will be most restricted."

A Return to "Back Alley Butchers"?

Pro-choice advocates are concerned about the inherent danger to women who could once again be forced to seek illegal abortions. Says Sabrae Jenkins of the Women of Color Partnership Program: "You have to look at what women have done in the past" to terminate a pregnancy, Jenkins explains. "This includes not paying rent [so that they can afford an abortion], maiming, killing [themselves], and [unsafe] chemically and physically induced abortions. Members of the pro-choice movement fear that restrictions will not end abortion but rather divide women into two

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Abortion: Whose Issue Is It Anyway?

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classes—those who can afford to get abortions safely and those who must resort to 'back alley butchers'."

A friend-of-the-court brief submitted in the *Webster* case, signed by more than 100 civil rights, women's, and labor groups, including the National Council of Negro Women and the National Urban League enumerates the dangers of illegal abortion. The brief notes that between 1975 and 1979, roughly a third of the women who died from complications caused by illegal abortions had undergone the illegal procedure because they lacked the money to obtain it legally.

Before abortion became legal nationwide, such deaths were disproportionately minority tragedies: in 1972, minority women accounted for 64 percent of them. But because abortion remained a costly option even after legalization, minority women remained at the highest risk. In 1975 they accounted for 80 percent of the deaths.

Minority women are affected disproportionately because so many are poor. Whereas eight percent of white families were below the poverty line in 1987, for black families the rate was 30 percent, for Hispanic families 26 percent. Lack of access to medical facilities is a further problem, especially for Native Americans living on reservations and other people of color living in rural areas.

Poverty also contributes to the frequent failure of pregnant teenagers to receive prenatal care. Some teenagers, attempting to hide or deny their condition, do not seek such care until very late. Meanwhile, for those who decide late in the pregnancy that they are not ready for parenthood, abortion becomes an unsafe and costly option.

The Debate Is Just Beginning

The power the Court has given state legislatures through the *Webster* decision ensures that the abortion issue will dominate the nation's political agenda for years to come. Louisiana is one of several states that have begun using their new-found power to restrict access to abortion and to draw political party lines around the issue in their legislatures. And although in the national platforms of the two major parties Republicans oppose abortion rights while Democrats favor them, the issue crosses party lines at the state and local levels. Last July, the *New York Times* reported that "Republican state legislators from affluent suburbs favor abortion rights [and] ... Democrats from rural areas or white urban enclaves are opposed to abortion."

The apparent ambiguity in many citizens' thinking on the issue will make it even tougher for politicians to take a firm stance either for or against abortion rights. According to a poll published last March by the *Los Angeles Times,* 74 percent of Americans believe abortion is morally wrong (as the pro-life side argues) but also that a woman should bear the right to choose to have an abortion (as the pro-choice side argues).

Meanwhile, activists on both sides believe that *Webster* marks the beginning of an extensive attack by the Supreme Court on *Roe v. Wade.* Three cases the Court will hear this term could make abortion an even more limited option for all women. In *Ohio v. Akron Center for Reproductive Health,* the right of teenage girls to obtain abortions without parental notification will be considered. Similarly, *Hodgson v. Minnesota* concerns a requirement that *both* parents be notified before a teenage girl can receive an abortion. The third case, *Turnock v. Ragsdale,* involves an Illinois statute which regulates the practices of private clinics; the right-to-life advocates argue that limiting in this way the facilities that can provide abortions ensures safer procedures, while pro-choice advocates argue that it could eliminate many smaller clinics which low-income women and teens rely on.

It is clear that the issue of abortion heavily affects the lives of poor women—and consequently of minority women—yet rather than appearing in the forefront of the debate these groups remain, for the most part, bystanders. Those who are presently active on both sides of the abortion question have called for greater participation by their sisters of color. They note that whereas for all women abortion is at least a matter of politics, for women of color it is a matter of life and death. □

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