Volume 24, No. 1 January 1996

FOCUS

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

New Leadership at the NAACP

Congressman Kweisi Mfume's Selection to Lead the Nation's Most Revered Civil Rights Organization Is Widely Embraced

Recognizing Race Privilege

Senator Bill Bradley Says Color-Blindness Will Not Resolve Unaddressed Discrimination; Racial Progress Will Come with Candor and Brotherhood

Neglected Voices

A Joint Center Survey Shows That Poor Americans—Even Those on AFDC—Want Welfare Reformed to Promote Work

REGISTER AND PLEDGE TO VOTE; TAKE RELATIVES, FRIENDS, AND NEIGHBORS WITH YOU.

POLITICAL TRENDLETTER

PERSPECTIVE

ISSN 0740-0195

PRICE $1.50

The Legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr.

This month the nation pays tribute to Martin Luther King, Jr., an American hero. The King holiday provides an occasion for us to reaffirm our commitment to his dream for America. We gain strength from his courage on so many battlefields—from the beginning in Montgomery in 1965 to the end in Memphis in 1968.

We could honor his memory in a thousand ways. I choose to honor him for the political legacy he gave to the disadvantaged in America. It is especially important today for us to remind ourselves of this legacy as we begin our quadrennial presidential selection process.

His legacy challenges each of us to use the power of politics and public office to pursue equal justice, due process of law, and true liberation for all Americans. It challenges us to believe—as he did—that "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere" and that "we are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality tied in a single garment of destiny."

What King knew, as did others before him, was that in America political participation is the shortest road to power-sharing and to improving the human condition. Law has its limits. Moral suasion has its limits. But politics endures so long as we profess to be a democratic society.

"For years," he said in 1967, "I labored with the idea of reforming the existing institutions of the society, a little change here, a little change there. Now I feel differently. I think you've got to have a reconstruction of the entire society, a revolution of values."

This nonviolent revolution must rely on direct political action. Clearly, this was the path that King envisioned in his call for a new thrust "powerful enough, dramatic enough, morally appealing enough, so that people of good will, the churches, labor, liberals, intellectuals, students, poor people themselves would begin to put pressure on congressmen" to achieve the goals of a just society. As one author put it, "Racial compassion had to be reinforced by old-fashioned American political quid pro quo."

Martin Luther King gave focus and leadership to black Americans' struggle for political empowerment. The cause may have been education, eradication of hunger, jobs, or the right to eat at a restaurant or take any seat on a bus, but the objective was always the same: to achieve equality and justice; to be heard, to be taken seriously, to be respected; to sit in the legislative and executive chambers and take part in the decisions on who gets what, when and how in our society.

Just before he died, Dr. King saw his dream beginning to become reality. Street politics moved indoors—into Congress, into state houses, into city halls. And today there are more than 8,000 black elected officials representing many millions of Americans. Their presence assures us that the civil rights movement is not dead. It is marching to the beat of different drummers. Its leaders are sitting-in at city halls, state legislatures, and the U.S. Congress. They are marching into executive offices. They are challenging the political system with their ideas.

So, on what would have been Dr. King's 67th birthday, we are thankful for his victories on so many battlefields: public accommodations, voting rights, equal employment opportunity. We are fired by his inspiration, his sermons of love and hope. We continue to share his dream that one day all of the "sons of former slaves and sons of former slaveowners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood" and that "little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers." ■



PRESIDENT

FOCUS

Copyright © 1996 Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies. The monthly magazine of the **Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies,** 1090 Vermont Ave., N.W., Ste. 1100, Washington, D.C. 20005-4961 (202) 789-3500. The Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies is a national, nonprofit, tax-exempt institution that conducts research on public policy issues of special concern to black Americans and promotes informed and effective involvement of blacks in the governmental process. Founded in 1970, the Joint Center provides independent and nonpartisan analyses through research, publication, and outreach programs. Opinions expressed in signed *FOCUS* articles are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies. *FOCUS* is published ten times a year by JCPES. Annual subscriptions are $15.00.

PRESIDENT/Eddie N. Williams
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT/Fredric Leigh
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT/Eleanor Farrar
VICE PRESIDENT, RESEARCH/Milton Morris
VICE PRESIDENT, PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT/Kathleen Vander Horst
VICE PRESIDENT, FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION/Brenda Watkins Noel

EDITOR, *FOCUS*/David C. Ruffin
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR/Diane Powers
ASSOCIATE EDITOR/Marc DeFrancis
PRODUCTION MANAGER/Theresa Kilcourse
TRENDLETTER RESEARCHER/Alfred Baltimore

BOARD OF GOVERNORS
Pauline A. Schneider/Hunton & Williams, *Chair*
LeBaron Taylor/Sony Music Entertainment, Inc., *Vice Chair*
Hector M. Hyacinthe/Packard Frank Business and Corporate Interiors, Inc., *Treasurer*
Eddie N. Williams/Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, *President*
Bishop John Hurst Adams/Senior Bishop, African Methodist Episcopal Church
Norma Ketay Asnes/Ketay Asnes Productions
Martina L. Bradford/AT&T
Andrew F. Brimmer/Brimmer & Company, Inc.
Charles U. Daly/John F. Kennedy Library Foundation
Julian C. Dixon/U.S. House of Representatives
Wendell G. Freeland/Freeland & Kronz
Elliott S. Hall/Ford Motor Company
Bonnie Guiton Hill/McIntire School of Commerce, University of Virginia
Freeman A. Hrabowski/President, University of Maryland, Baltimore County
Jayne Brumley Ikard, Consultant
Jeremy M. Jacobs/Delaware North Companies
Vernon E. Jordan, Jr./Akin, Gump, Strauss, Hauer & Feld
Robert M. Kavner/Creative Artists Agency
Robert M. McGlotten/McGlotten & Jarvis
Patrice I. Mitchell, Office of Comptroller, City of New York
Bernard Rapoport/American Income Life Insurance Company
Audrey Rowe/National Urban League

Members Emeriti: William B. Boyd, Kenneth B. Clark, Louis E. Martin, James D. Wolfensohn

Eleanor Farrar/*Secretary to the Board*

New Leadership at the NAACP

Congressman Kweisi Mfume's Selection to Lead the Nation's Most Revered Civil Rights Organization Is Widely Embraced

by David C. Ruffin

As dynamic Maryland Congressman Kweisi Mfume prepares to assume the role of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's (NAACP) president and CEO, he brings to the revered civil rights organization a renewed sense of confidence and vigor. Mfume is intelligent, articulate, and widely respected by a broad spectrum of the nation's leadership. His selection to head the NAACP was applauded both inside and outside the black community—and with good reason. He has championed the causes of minorities and the poor throughout his career as a member of Congress and a city councilman in Baltimore.

Mfume's Unique Credentials

Mfume attracted national attention during the first year of the Clinton administration as the chair of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC). Asserting the Caucus's clout in the negotiations over the 1993 budget reconciliation bill, Mfume held out for provisions that included establishing urban enterprise zones, expanding the earned-income tax credit for the working poor, and mandating the immunization of children whose families lack health insurance. As a member of Congress, he developed a reputation as a skillful negotiator and coalition builder, invaluable qualities for the new leader of the NAACP.

Given his age (47) and his experience in the public arena, Mfume is mature enough to command the respect of the NAACP's old guard yet young enough to reach out to the younger generation. This is important if he is to expand the NAACP's base.

His personal background should give Mfume credibility among younger blacks. Born in 1948 with the name Frizzell Gray, he grew up in a poor neighborhood of West Baltimore. After his mother died, he became a 16-year-old high school dropout. In the next six years he fathered five children by four different women.

But in his early twenties, he adopted a new name—Kweisi Mfume—which means "conquering son of kings" in Swahili, and he turned his life around. He went on to graduate magna cum laude from Morgan State University, earn a masters degree from Johns Hopkins University, and become a good father. Mfume has been an adjunct professor at Morgan State, and has hosted talk shows on radio and television in addition to his political career. His unique combination of skills and experience will serve him well at the NAACP, the nation's oldest civil rights organization.

The history of the NAACP is impressive. Founded in 1909 by a coalition of northern white liberals and prominent blacks, the NAACP from its inception sought to expose racial injustice and to advance the cause of black social, political, and economic equality through public education and litigation. In its early years, editorials by W.E.B. DuBois in *Crisis*, then the NAACP's primary information organ, railed against the lynchings of hundreds of innocent black people across the South. Later, NAACP attorneys led by Thurgood Marshall won court cases that overturned the "separate but equal" doctrine in public accommodations and schools.

On August 28, 1963, Roy Wilkins, then executive director of the NAACP, strode in the first rank of the historic Civil Rights March on Washington shoulder to shoulder with Martin Luther King, Jr. The NAACP's Washington bureau in the 1960s was headed by Clarence Mitchell, a man who was so influential in helping to move civil rights legislation through Congress that Washington insiders dubbed him the "101st Senator."

Today, as in the 1960s, a strong NAACP is needed to stem the erosion of hard-won gains and challenge the judicial system, the Congress, and the Executive to pursue policies and programs that will help us achieve a more perfect union.

Following are the remarks made by Mfume when accepting the presidency of NAACP on December 9, 1995:

"It is for me a high honor and a distinct privilege to be here today in the capacity of President-designate of our nation's largest and oldest civil rights organization. I am honored to have been chosen for this opportunity, and I am moved by the support that our Chairwoman, the members of the search committee, and the members of the board have shown me.

"The decision to accept this new opportunity did not come lightly. For the last 16 years, I have served in elected office; seven years in local government and the last nine as a member of the United States Congress. To the people of Baltimore, who year after year have given me the opportunity to represent them and who continue to vest their confidence and trust in my abilities, I am, and forever will be, grateful.

"At this point in time, however, I am convinced, without reservation, that I can best affect social, economic, and political change in the broader capacity that the NAACP represents. As you all know, the NAACP is at a critical point in its history. In fact, it is at the most critical point.

Mr. Ruffin is editor of *FOCUS*.

Continued on page 4

NAACP

Continued from page 3

Our focus must be on: (1) increasing political power by organizing and energizing voters in every congressional district in America, (2) emphasizing educational excellence and individual responsibility, and (3) creating an infrastructure for empowerment and economic parity.

"There is much work to be done and the time for such work is now. We must, without equivocation or timidity, reclaim our rightful place as the voice of African Americans and others who believe in the power and the premise that all persons are, in fact, created equal. The task before us will be significant, but all challenge is significant. The greater challenge will not be measured by its size, but rather by our willingness to accept it. As such, there must be an ever-escalating crescendo of clear and consistent voices that become part of the national dialogue and the national debate.

"The extreme ultra-conservative policies of the far-right wing in our nation are draconian and punitive. They are policies that punish the elderly, restrict the poor, and deny opportunity to our children. Those policies must be countered with effective and realistic responses that reflect our need as a society for inclusion and tolerance. We can only do that by reinvigorating the age-old concept of coalitions where people work together for the common good.

"Racism, sexism, anti-Semitism cannot, and will not, be allowed to enjoy a comfortable and quiet acceptance. The damaging divisions brought about by xenophobia cannot be allowed to color our thinking about those who come to our shores in search of a better life. Fear, which often finds its incubator in our refusal to stand up for what is right, will forever be challenged by a new NAACP—reunited and reinvigorated at the threshold of change.

"At the risk of understatement, we all know the task ahead will not be easy. The time is now to restore the financial, spiritual, and political health of this historic American institution. As such, we must move quickly toward that end, and my job is to provide the leadership to make that happen. Make no mistake about it, there will be change. It will be swift, it will be focused, and it will be constructive. Efficiency and fiscal integrity within the organization will not be just a concept. It must, in fact, become a reality. We will retool our apparatus and reharness our energies.

"The time is now for a new generation to join the NAACP. While we value maturity and experience, we must also learn to cherish youth. Thus, I reach out today to a new generation to join in this effort. And I reach out to the current generation and say to you in the clearest of terms that it's all right to come back home to the NAACP.

"We are at the crossroads of tremendous change in our nation. Despite the gains made by African Americans, racism continues to divide our country and polarize people. We can stand by and watch in the comfort of our own circumstances, or we can step forward and dare to lead.

"The NAACP has a long and proud history filled with major accomplishments that have changed forever the America that we know and love. The lives of millions of our citizens who are black, white, Asian, and Hispanic have been made better because of it. Yet, our country is still in desperate need.

"In his renowned chronology of the NAACP from 1909 to 1920, Charles Kellogg begins his historical work with the following observation:

> In the first decade of the twentieth century few voices were raised in defense of the Negro and his rights as a citizen of the United States. Reactionary attitudes about race had been strengthened. [And] by 1909, the civil rights gained during reconstruction had been severely limited. The prevailing attitudes toward the Negro were reflected in the sensational press, in the hate literature, in the periodicals of the intellectuals, in court decisions reinterpreting the fourteenth and fifteenth amendments, and in legislation.

"Eighty-six years later, in the last decade of the same century, again, few voices are being raised in defense of African Americans and their rights as citizens of the United States. Reactionary attitudes about race regrettably continue to be strengthened. Civil rights gained during the second reconstruction have now also been severely limited. And the prevailing attitudes toward minorities are still reflected in the sensational press, in the hate literature, in the periodicals of the intellectuals, and in court decisions.

"Only a strong, revitalized and focused NAACP can accept the realities that were present in that first decade and readjust to the challenges still present in this last decade. I look forward to this gift of opportunity to serve in a different but continued public capacity, and I thank God Almighty for continuing to bless me." ■

NEW PUBLICATIONS FROM THE JOINT CENTER

EMPLOYMENT TRENDS 1980–1992: A BLACK-WHITE COMPARISON
by Wilhelmina Leigh

AFRICAN AMERICANS TODAY: A DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE
Compiled by Doris Warriner

NEGLECTED VOICES: WHAT LOW-INCOME AMERICANS THINK ABOUT WELFARE REFORM (SUMMARY FINDINGS)
by Katherine McFate

MAKING WELFARE WORK: THE PRINCIPLES OF CONSTRUCTIVE WELFARE REFORM
By Katherine McFate

BALANCING ACT: THE POLITICAL ROLE OF THE URBAN SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT
By Barbara L. Jackson

IN THE NATION'S INTEREST: EQUITY IN ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE
By Marsha Lillie-Blanton and Ana Alfaro-Correa

January 1996

POLITICAL TRENDLETTER

1995, The Year in Review

In the pages of *FOCUS* and *TrendLetter* in 1995, we published articles by national, state, and community leaders, economists, public policy experts, and Joint Center researchers. Topics included the Million Man March, the legislative agenda of the GOP-dominated Congress and its impact on the socioeconomic and political status of blacks, the work of the Institute for Responsible Fatherhood with young black fathers, an assessment of the Voting Rights Act at the thirty-year mark, the future of majority-minority legislative districts, attacks on affirmative action, and the effects of mandatory sentencing and disparate penalties on the incarceration of black males. In our March and April issues, we celebrated the Joint Center's 25th anniversary, which brought to mind the profound social, economic, political, and technological changes that have taken place since our birth. We believe we have been a major force in the political empowerment of black America through our research, policy analyses, conferences, publications, and public commentaries. We have been steadfast in our efforts to improve the socioeconomic status of African Americans; to expand their effective participation in the political and public policy arenas; and to strengthen the nation as a pluralistic society by promoting communications and relationships across racial and ethnic lines. Below are highlights from other articles that appeared in *FOCUS* and *TrendLetter* in 1995.

Contract Meets Veto

Veiled behind the rhetoric of balancing the budget in seven years, Congressional Republicans pursued a three-point agenda of 1) expanding federal welfare to the rich through tax cuts, corporate subsidies, and increased spending on prisons and military weapons systems; 2) reducing the size and scope of the federal government through devolution of its responsibilities to the states; and 3) reneging on the government's commitment to the poor and vulnerable. Most of this agenda was incorporated in the congressional Republican's so-called "Contract With America."

While balancing the federal budget was a vital concern when funding for social programs was considered, it was no obstacle to GOP-promised tax breaks for the wealthy. Despite Senate Budget Chairman **PETE DOMENICI**'s (R–NM) vow at the beginning of the 104th Congress to establish a program of federal spending cuts before tax breaks were considered, he and others of like mind caved in to demands by GOP House first-termers and hard-liners for massive tax cuts including reductions in capital gains taxes and increased dependent deductions for wealthy families.

Balancing the budget again waned in importance when it came to spending for prisons and the military. The $243 billion defense appropriations bill pushed through Congress was $7 billion larger than the defense budget request of the Clinton administration. The Republicans included money to build 20 more B-2 bombers than the Pentagon requested and increased or accelerated spending for other expensive weapon systems.

Congress also appropriated billions to build new prisons. Prison construction is America's newest growth industry, especially in rural areas. To pay for the tax cuts and increased spending on military equipment and penal institutions, congressional Republicans have called for dramatically reducing funds for Medicare, Medicaid, education, environmental protection, and a host of social programs that mostly benefit minorities and the poor.

Among the most egregious of the program cuts was the GOP-sponsored Personal Responsibility Act of 1995, which would convert most welfare programs into block grants to the states. The measure would also terminate the entitlement provisions of the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program, which currently guarantees income minimums to the poor. Federal funding for food stamps, child nutrition, and child care programs would also be cut.

In other areas, Republican-sponsored legislation initially called for slashing Medicare spending by $270 billion over the next seven years, raising premiums, and offering inducements for moving recipients to private insurance plans. Over the same period, $182 billion would be chopped out of the Medicaid budget, and federal matching funds to the states to support Medicaid would be converted to fixed annual block grants to states. Medicaid is the only health insurance available to many of the poor. Republicans in Congress have voted to reduce funding for college student financial aid, Head Start, and compensatory education programs.

At year's end, President **BILL CLINTON** won the battle of wills over the budget when he refused to accede to massive tax cuts and irresponsible reductions in Medicare, Medicaid, and other social spending even though the GOP congressional leadership twice forced a partial shutdown of the federal government. Clinton successfully vetoed a GOP-sponsored welfare bill to radically overhaul the welfare system, as well as appropriations bills that would have cut billions from education, job training, and nutrition programs. In response, the GOP leaders have shifted tactics and threatened "targeted appropriations," that is, funding programs they like and withholding funds from programs they don't like. According to House Budget Committee Chairman **JOHN KASICH** (R–Ohio), congressional Republicans may try to defund AmeriCorps, the youth community service program; Goals 2000, the educational standards program; and the Commerce Department. Many functions of the Departments of Labor, Energy, and Housing and Urban Development may also be defunded. December polls showed that a majority of the public supports the President's vetoes of GOP legislation.

Civil Rights under Attack

Legal attacks on recently created majority-black congressional districts have threatened to dilute the voting strength of African Americans. Last year, the U.S. Supreme Court heard arguments in two cases that may determine the fate of majority-minority congressional districts across the country. Majority-minority districts in Texas and North Carolina are being contested on the grounds that they were drawn predominantly on the basis of race, without regard to traditional redistricting factors such as contiguity and compactness.

Since its narrow 5-to-4 *Shaw* v. *Reno* decision in 1993, the Court has established that drawing district lines predominantly on the basis of race violates the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution unless the state can show that it is necessary to consider race in order to fulfill a "compelling governmental interest" and that the actions taken were narrowly tailored to achieve that interest. The Court is likely to hand down its decisions in the two new cases this summer. The effect on minority representation could be devastating, as all of the 17 black members of Congress from the South represent majority-black districts.

Supporters of affirmative action were disappointed in June when the U.S. Supreme Court handed down its *Adarand Constructors* v. *Peña* decision. While the ruling does not declare any affirmative action program unconstitutional, it steps back from earlier Supreme Court rulings that affirm race-based remedies for discrimination and will complicate the future of such programs. Affirmative action has been the policy of the federal government, many state and local jurisdictions, educational institutions, and businesses since the 1960s.

Many in the nation learned how the basic civil liberties of minorities are still at risk when former Los Angeles police detective **MARK FUHRMAN** boasted to a screen writer that he and other rogue cops deliberately framed innocent black citizens and beat them until they confessed to crimes, whether they had committed them or not. In Philadelphia, police officers also admitted that they had coerced confessions from innocent residents of a poor, mostly black area of the city, resulting in the wrongful conviction and incarceration of dozens of black citizens. In Prince George's County, Maryland (a Washington, D.C. suburb), five white police officers savaged **JEFFREY GILBERT**, a black man, as they took him into custody after wrongfully arresting him for the murder of another officer. The beating Gilbert sustained was so severe that he was hospitalized for four days.

A Double Standard in Criminal Justice

As of June 30, 1995, the United States achieved an unenviable first place: it became number one in the percentage of its population behind bars. According to a report by the U.S. Justice Department's Bureau of

Justice Statistics, this undesirable distinction was achieved because of the largest annual increase in incarceration in history for the year ending June 30. The number of state and federal prison inmates increased by 89,707, with more than a million in state prisons and nearly 100,000 in federal facilities. Inmates in municipal and county jails, incarcerated on average for less than a year, numbered nearly half a million, which brings the total U.S. incarceration rate to 565 inmates per 100,000 U.S. citizens—eight to ten times higher than the rate of any of the industrialized democracies of western Europe. The state with the biggest growth in inmate population was Texas, with a whopping 27 percent annual increase.

The increase in the prison population in general, and among blacks specifically, is not evidence of rising crime (the crime rate has actually decreased), and not an indication of more criminal activity by African-Americans (whites account for a higher percentage of all violent-crime arrests), but a reflection of more stringent sentencing policies and racial bias in the system. That bias has been dramatically demonstrated in the imposition of mandatory minimum sentences, especially for drug offenders.

In October, Congress voted to overturn the U.S. Sentencing Commission's recommendation to eliminate the current disparity in prison sentences meted out to blacks and whites for the possession of crack and powder cocaine. Currently, federal penalties related to crack, a drug commonly used by black inner-city substance abusers, are 100 times more severe than penalties for equal amounts of powder cocaine, which is disproportionately used by whites. If a first-time federal offender is found in possession of five grams of crack (the weight of two pennies), he is subject to an automatic felony sentence of five years without parole. It would take 500 grams of powder cocaine for a person to receive a mandatory five-year sentence. By reversing the Commission's recommendation to equalize the sentencing laws between crack and powder cocaine, Congress preserved the law's disparate effect on racial groups. This marked the first time Congress has ever reversed any of the Commission's more than 500 recommendations.

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

The increase in incarceration has resulted in massive construction of new prisons. But a majority of 157 prison wardens in eight states surveyed last year by the U.S. Department of Corrections opposed building more prisons. Most of the wardens favored more prevention programs, smarter use of prison resources, repeal of mandatory minimum sentences, and expansion of alternatives to incarceration. The wardens, who govern prisons in California, Delaware, Florida, Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Texas, believe society should pay more attention to the root causes of crime, such as poor education and limited employment opportunities.

Helping Fathers Save Families

Not all the articles that appeared in *FOCUS* were gloomy or negative. Our story, "From Troubled Youths to Responsible Fathers" told the story of **CHARLES BALLARD**, the founder and head of the Institute for Responsible Fatherhood and Family Revitalization, a national support organization that helps young black men become positive, nurturing fathers. In the 1950s, Ballard was a troubled black youth. He dropped out of high school in Alabama, and by the age of 17 had fathered and abandoned a child out of wedlock. An abuser of alcohol and drugs, he was a violent and angry young man who served time in prison. While incarcerated, Ballard realized that the reason he lived with so much rage was that he had never been nurtured by the guiding hand of a father. His own father had been diagnosed as emotionally unstable and had been committed to a mental institution when Ballard was just three and a half. So, Ballard decided to turn his life around. Upon his release from prison, he found his own son by then five years old and took responsibility for raising him. He later earned a bachelors degree and a masters degree.

It was while supervising female healthcare workers in 1976 at a Cleveland hospital that Ballard noticed how seldom the fathers were mentioned in prenatal and postnatal healthcare records. Few fathers from the low-income, mostly black neighborhood accompanied expectant mothers on clinic visits. For two years, Ballard visited the obstetrics clinics, talking with the mothers and pregnant women there and collecting the names of 600 fathers. He began one-to-one counseling of the fathers on the list. Many of the men he worked with had been like him as a youth—school drop-outs and ex-offenders with backgrounds of drug and alcohol abuse.

Employing a nontraditional home-based counseling method, Ballard's goal was to foster "responsible fatherhood" by building bridges between generations of family members. Promoting responsible fatherhood enhanced family relations, encouraged men to establish the paternity of their children, and inspired fathers to complete or further their educations, seek employment, and embrace risk-free lifestyles. The program has helped fathers, who ranged in age from 14 to 43, to develop a sense of right and wrong, personal discipline, self-determination, and self-worth. The attitudes of the fathers toward themselves and others improved and they became role models for their children. Many of the fathers participating in the program discarded their high-risk lifestyles—gang involvement, use of alcohol, drugs, cigarettes, violence, profanity, and unhealthy diets. Most fathers established paternity for their children often resulting in the dramatic improvement of the behavior of the youngsters. Their attitudes toward other children changed, and severe "acting out" behavior was reduced. A major goal of the Institute is to spur fathers to finish high school or obtain their GEDs and strive for even higher educational attainment to stop the intergenerational repetition of dropping out of school.

Based on this Cleveland model, the program became the Institute for Responsible Fatherhood and Family Revitalization in 1992, a national program that is now being replicated in six cities. In 1995, the Institute moved its headquarters to Washington, D.C.

A Million Good Men

In October, a million black men came to Washington. "Inside the Million Man March" was a personal memoir by David Ruffin who attended the march. An excerpt of the piece follows:

"Few marchers came as followers of any individual. For many, attending the march was an expression of black unity and a way to affirm what is best among African American men. **KEVIN PARSON**, a teacher at St. Catherine's Middle School in Baltimore, brought 35 boys from the school's Mentorship-to-Manhood program. Many men brought their own sons, some lofted on their shoulder. A father and mother walked hand in hand with their young son and daughter. An entrepreneur from the District of Columbia in colorful African dress with his two sons, eight and 11 said, 'The majority of us here are positive men with good values whose families are foremost in their lives. We are not the drug dealers they show on TV. Throughout history, we have helped build and sustain this nation.'

"The march should not be defined, as some in the media insist, by the personality of Minister **LOUIS FARRAKHAN** of the Nation of Islam and all of his past speeches or any other individual for that matter. The march was really about the hundreds of thousands of other men who came to Washington, paying their own way, less to protest than to assert that they are part of this nation, come from people who have helped build it, and have a stake in its destiny.

"I came away from the march impressed by the fact that so many strong, intelligent black men from all over the country and with such diverse backgrounds could be mobilized for such an event. These were men who came for their own reasons and, unlike many earlier black marchers on Washington, paid for the march themselves. Add to their numbers the millions of sympathetic men who stayed home. Then add the women of similar political bent who also fit the socioeconomic profile of the men on the Mall. The sum is a formidable political force that neither major political party has worked very hard to attract. As we approach the 1996 presidential campaign season, Democratic and Republican leaders would do well to look inside the Million Man March when considering who they should reach out to during next year's elections."

by David C. Ruffin. Linda M. Cunningham also contributed to this issue of TrendLetter.

Recognizing Race Privilege

Senator Bill Bradley Says Color-Blindness Will Not Resolve Unaddressed Discrimination; Racial Progress Will Come with Candor and Brotherhood

by Bill Bradley

This article is excerpted from a speech delivered by U.S. Sen. Bill Bradley (D–N.J.) to Town Hall Los Angeles, a nonpartisan speakers' forum, on the topic of race relations in America on January 11, 1996.

Slavery was America's original sin, and race remains our unresolved dilemma. For the last year, three black males have dominated the nation's focus on race: O.J. Simpson, Louis Farrakhan, and Colin Powell. Each in his own way has fed America's appetite to live vicariously and to shrink from confronting our racial reality. Each said something different about the state of race relations in America, either demonizing, ridiculing, or idealizing black Americans. The Simpson case conveyed an almost irrevocable division between blacks and whites with the same disparate percentages of blacks and whites feeling he was guilty before and after the trial. Some of Louis Farrakhan's pronouncements allowed whites to attack the messenger rather than confront his message about the desperate conditions in much of black America. Colin Powell's position permitted white America to fantasize that an answer to our racial divisions could amount to no more than, "We like you; you do it for us."

As America heads into a presidential election year, the racial landscape of America seems full of land mines. Yet it is precisely at such moments of heightened awareness that we can make the greatest progress—when the necessary pain of candor can be endured and then transcended. So let us ask presidential candidates to give us their pedigrees on race, including the real-life experiences that led to their present understanding. Let us urge them to step up to the subject regularly, not just when there is a racial explosion somewhere in America. Let us urge Republicans not to play the race card and Democrats to do more than the minimum to ensure a strong black voter turnout.

Racism Plaguing Blacks and Whites

So what is the state of black-white relations in America? Both black and white America are caught in a traumatic economic transformation in which millions of Americans feel insecure about their future, and for good reason. There are 130 million jobs in America and 90 million of them involve repetitive tasks, which means that a computer can displace any of those jobs. More and more Americans face losing good-paying jobs along with their health insurance and often their pensions, so that corporate profits can rise and productivity increase.

If you're African American, you've seen it before. In the 1940s mechanization pushed black field hands off cotton farms in the South and to the cities of the North. Labor-intensive manufacturing jobs seemed to be the Promised Land. Then automation arrived and the last hired were the first fired, and millions of black workers lost their jobs. Still, many hung on in the manufacturing sector. Then, with foreign competition, labor unions, such as the multiracial steelworkers, saw their membership plummet from 750,000 in 1979 to 374,000 in 1990. Finally, in the 1960s and '70s, government began to employ African Americans in sizable numbers, but in the 1980s and 1990s, with the fiscal crunch in full progress, government employees were let go. In the midst of the information revolution, just as in the midst of any recession, tough economic winds become a hurricane for African Americans.

Many white Americans feel disoriented and have become easy prey for politicians who want to explain deteriorating standards of living by stigmatizing black Americans. "You have lost your job," these mischief makers say, "because of affirmative action or because of the money government spends to help the poor." Instead of seeing the demographic reality—that only as all Americans advance will white Americans advance—they often fall into the scapegoating trap. It's an old story.

The fact is that economically, black America is in the best and worst of times. Roughly one third of black Americans can now be called middle class. Black Americans distinguish themselves in virtually every field of endeavor. But more than 30 percent of black Americans live in grinding poverty.

Poverty is more than a black problem. It is broad, national, and systemic, flowing from inadequate economic growth unfairly shared. Indeed, there are 16 million more white than black Americans in poverty. Yet many whites feel it is primarily a black problem. Because of lingering racial attitudes and stereotypes, marshaling resources to cope with it becomes more difficult. In that sense, racism contributes to poverty among both blacks and whites.

Skin Privilege

Although some black Americans resent it, white Americans also have a view on how to resolve the problem of race. Although some white Americans resent it, black Americans can challenge us to reflect on our own race. Among other things, that means that we have to recognize that the flip side of racial discrimination is racial privilege,

Continued on page 6

Race Privilege

Continued from page 5

which consists of all those things that come to white Americans in the normal course of living—all the things they take for granted that a black person must never take for granted.

Race privilege is a harder concept to grasp than racial discrimination, especially for whites, because it is more subtle. It is rooted in assumptions about everyday life, yet there is no denying it. For example, if I'm looking to buy a house and I'm white, I never fear someone will say no to me because of my race, but if I'm black, I constantly make assessments about what is possible, problematic, or impossible. Skin privilege means that I don't have to worry that my behavior will reflect on my race; it will reflect only on me and my family. Skin privilege means that I can relate to strangers without first having to put them at ease about my race. I know blacks who walk down the street whistling classical music to let whites know they are not dangerous.

I never thought much about my skin privilege until I became a professional basketball player. Suddenly, in my first year, I began to receive offers to do commercial endorsements. I felt that they were coming to me instead of my black teammates not because I was the best player (I wasn't); no, they were coming because of skin privilege, because I was white and marketers still believed—like the teams that hesitated to start the five best players because they might be black—that a white public would never buy from a black salesman. Some companies still believe that.

Color-Blind with a Vengeance

As long as whites believe that the race problem is primarily a black problem of meeting white standards to gain admittance to white society, things will never stabilize and endure. But the flip side of white skin privilege is negative black attitudes—reflected in even small things, such as coldness in daily interactions at work, slowdowns in providing services to whites, or gathering at separate tables in cafeterias—that cast any attempts by whites at racial dialogue as disingenuous and illegitimate. African Americans have to open up their world to whites just as whites have to open up their world to blacks. Without that kind of candor, the dialogue will be phony, and racial hierarchy will persist.

I believe most white Americans are not racists. Mark Fuhrman is, thank God, the exception, not the rule. We are no longer living in a time when a group of German prisoners of war could be served at a Kansas lunch counter while the black soldiers guarding them could not sit next to them, or when a priest in Washington, D.C., could refuse to continue his sermon until a black worshiper moved to the back of the church. Today there is something much more subtle afoot in America. As Harlon Dalton writes of the African American experience:

> We hardly ever run into Bull Connor or even David Duke anymore.... Instead of confronting nasty people intent on using our color against us, we are surrounded by perfectly nice people who embrace the color-blind ideal with a vengeance.

All of this poses a question I raised in 1992 at the Democratic Convention. The silence of good people in the face of continuing racism is often as harmful as the actions of bad people. At the same time, although they are small in number, there are white and black people in America who remain racists. There are white politicians who play the "race card" and black politicians who play the "racist card." The word "racist" is overused: to say that someone who opposes affirmative action is racist denies the possibility that the person may just be ignorant or unknowledgeable. If one hurls the epithet "racist," a meaningful dialogue is unlikely to follow.

Unaddressed Discrimination

But let us not abandon the quest to end racism. Let us root out what Harlon Dalton calls those "culturally accepted beliefs that defend social advantage based on race." That begins with a president and doesn't end until all of us as individuals become engaged. Ronald Reagan denied that there was any discrimination in America, much less racism. George Bush was a little better, but then he appointed Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court who, in an odd twist, turned the clock back on the whole issue. And now Bill Clinton says, Yes, there is racism; Yes, we need affirmative action; and Yes, I'll give my own pedigree in terms of my own experience. I believe he is strongest when he talks about conviction related to race because I do think he has that conviction. But the question we need to hear him answer is, "What are we going to do about it?" One would like to see him talk about it more, to remind people of our history, to educate Americans about why it's important that we get beyond these stupid divisions that diminish our possibilities as individuals and as a nation.

Affirmative action takes on such a disproportionate place in our national politics because many whites cannot conceive of white skin privilege and because discrimination, when it occurs, remains largely unaddressed. Why are there no black CEOs of major corporations and why do major New York law firms still have only a minuscule number of black partners? Why not deal with the underlying issue, which is discrimination, and facilitate remedies for discrimination?

Affirmative action is a response to a discriminatory pattern over many years in institutions run by individuals who are confident that they don't have to change. To the extent that you don't remedy individual discrimination early and forcefully, then you are going to have thousands of judges around this country making broad-brush rulings that often seem unfair to whites.

We Need Effective Civil Rights Enforcement

To understand what needs to be done requires knowing a little history. The issue arose during the consideration of the 1964 Civil Rights Act: Do we put an administrative enforcement mechanism in the law to remedy discrimination in employment? The Republicans in the Senate said they would join the southern Democrats and filibuster the

Continued on back page

Neglected Voices

A Joint Center Survey Shows That Poor Americans—Even Those on AFDC—Want Welfare Reformed to Promote Work

by Katherine McFate

This article is based on a Joint Center summary report: "Neglected Voices: What Low-Income Americans Think of Welfare Reform." Copies of the summary are available from the Center free of charge.

Conspicuously absent from the welfare reform debate have been the voices of those most likely to be affected by it—the poor themselves. To articulate their concerns, the Joint Center commissioned a comprehensive nationwide survey to find out who the poor are and what they think about the current welfare system and about proposals to reform it.

While popular debate concentrates on people who do not work and who live "at taxpayers' expense," the survey found that most poor families in this country have at least one worker and receive very little assistance from the government. Of the respondents to this survey, 69 percent live in households with at least one worker, and about half of those have two or more workers. Yet surveyed households had annual incomes of less than $16,000. In today's job market, even full-time work does not ensure against poverty.

The only government welfare program used by a majority of the eligible respondents in our survey was the school lunch program, in which 56 percent of poor families with children participated. Three-quarters of the respondents who had worked had never received Unemployment Insurance. About 40 percent of households with a worker and children under age 18 did not receive the Earned Income Tax Credit in either of the past two years. Only 29 percent of the poor households in the survey received Food Stamps, and for those with working members the percentage fell to 17. Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), the program most associated with the term "welfare," was used by less than a third of poor households.

The Poor Want Progressive Change

There are significant differences between the poor and the general public in their opinions about the causes of poverty. While two-thirds of the general public believe that a lack of individual effort is a bigger factor in causing poverty than external circumstances, the poor are more evenly divided on the subject, with 44 percent listing external circumstances and 41 percent lack of individual effort. Sixty-one percent of poor people believe that the problem in their communities is not the number of available jobs, but their quality—that is, that jobs pay wages and benefits insufficient to support a family. However, the proportion of poor people and the general public who believe that the welfare system itself is a major cause of poverty is nearly identical—a substantial 45 percent.

Like the general public, the poor, including those on AFDC, are very critical of the current welfare system. They, like other Americans, believe that the current system fails to encourage and support work. And by a very substantial margin, the poor believe that the top goal of welfare reform should be to help people make the transition from welfare to work.

Our survey revealed a strong consensus among low-income Americans for a progressive reform agenda: 85 percent of the poor strongly favor "providing better opportunities for education and training" and 83 percent strongly favor "providing child care to poor mothers who want to work." The poor are also concerned with wage levels and healthcare: 78 percent strongly favor increasing the minimum wage to $5.15 an hour and 73 percent strongly favor guaranteeing that individuals who do get a job don't lose their health insurance. But 82 percent of the poor also strongly favor tougher child support collection from absent fathers.

Almost 90 percent of the respondents believed the government should provide public-service jobs to poor people who want to work but can't find private-sector jobs. About 69 percent of the poor strongly favored public-sector job creation (79 percent of current AFDC users), while support among the general public for such proposals is more reserved—only 57 percent strongly favored public job creation efforts.

So strong is the support for a more work-oriented system, that 79 percent of poor people (and 78 percent of all AFDC recipients) support the idea of requiring mothers on welfare to do community service. While poor adults would attach many restrictions to such a requirement—for example, exempting mothers of preschool children, requiring only part-time work, and providing childcare assistance—they support the principle that women on welfare should engage in some kind of productive activity.

In sum, like other Americans, the poor support welfare reform proposals designed to encourage and support work. However, they understand that low wages, expensive childcare, and the lack of affordable healthcare make it difficult for many families to be entirely economically self-sufficient. Instead of setting up a false dichotomy between government assistance and self-support, the poor would like government help to bolster work and reward their efforts to improve their lives. ■

Ms. McFate is Associate Director of Research and directs the social policy program at the Joint Center.

Race Privilege

Continued from page 6

bill if President Johnson gave the soon-to-be-created Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) an administrative enforcement mechanism, so he dropped it out. Now, if there is an act of discrimination, what you do is file a petition with the EEOC. But there is no way to bring the issue to a conclusion, so the case languishes indefinitely. There are now 97,000 cases backlogged at the EEOC. For people of modest means, you don't have a remedy for discrimination because you can't afford a lawyer for ten years in order to get your promotion from a $30,000 to a $40,000 a year job.

The EEOC should have the same power that the National Labor Relations Board has, which is cease-and-desist authority, the ability to bring a case to a conclusion and say, Yes, there was discrimination and this is a remedy, or say, No, there was no discrimination, this is frivolous. With a more streamlined procedure for resolving charges of discrimination, companies would pay less to lawyers defending them against frivolous cases and individuals who have a legitimate claim would get a more timely resolution to the problem. But once given real power, the EEOC has to resist ridiculous interventions that allow Americans who don't want to fight discrimination an excuse to discredit the whole EEOC effort. Self-indulgence at the EEOC breeds disrespect for what should be a mechanism of our national self-respect.

Finally, when it comes to attacks on affirmative action, it is important to see how similar they are to the legal justification for segregation in the 19th century. Today, many of the people who oppose affirmative action and state a preference for color blindness—and justify their position by reference to the American tradition of considering individuals equal before the law—are often the same people who seldom have black friends and who will choose the white teacher over the black teacher for their children every time.

When people shout reverse discrimination they ignore our history, the continuation of subtle white skin privilege, and the fact that more jobs were lost by whites in the 1982 recession than have been gained by blacks from court-ordered affirmative action since its inception. When people diminish real, not imagined, black contributions to our society as if they were a threat to our historical canon, they diminish their own understanding of themselves and their country.

Candor, Vision, Humanity

In the 1960s, the civil rights movement thrived on the assumption that without racism America would be spiritually transformed. After all, that is what affirmative action affirms—that America can get over its racial nightmare. A new political vision requires people to engage each other, endure the pain of candor, learn from each other's history, absorb each other's humanity, and move on to higher ground.

Such is the task of those who care about racial healing. It won't happen overnight nor will one person bring it about, however illustrious his career, nor will one person destroy it, however heinous his crime or poisonous his rhetoric. What will be built has its foundation in the individual interactions of individual Americans of different races, so that something is transformed because of the common effort. Slowly, with acts of brotherhood transforming physical circumstances even as they bind the ties among the participants, we can say that racial progress has ceased retreating and is once again on the advance. ■

FOCUS *is printed on recycled paper with soy-based ink.*

FOCUS

Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies
1090 Vermont Ave., NW, Suite 1100
Washington, D.C. 20005-4961
202-789-3500

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Postmaster: Form 3547 requested

IMPORTANT!

NOTICE TO READERS: Please notify *FOCUS* of any change of address or title. YOU MUST ATTACH THE MAILING LABEL FROM THE BACK COVER when writing about service or change of address. No change can be made without this information. Allow 6 weeks for change of address to take effect. Thank you.

NON-PROFIT
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT No. 6958
Washington, D.C.