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Why We Need to Be in Durban

At the end of August, an expected 10,000 delegates from around the world will gather in Durban, South Africa, at the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (WCAR). Heads of states and non-governmental organizations representing 200 countries will come together to discuss worldwide racism and intolerance and design a global action plan.

This conference is extraordinarily conspicuous for at least two reasons. First, in 1998, the U.N. proclaimed the year 2001 as the International Year of Mobilization Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. The goal of this proclamation was to draw world attention to the World Conference objectives and to mobilize the international community to politically commit to ending all forms of racism.

The second reason this conference is conspicuous is that the Bush Administration (at press time) has threatened to boycott it, thus putting the United States, the crucible of modern democracy, in the position of refusing funding of and participation in this historic meeting. This position is indefensible. The most powerful nation on earth has a moral obligation to engage forcefully and compassionately in any global effort to end racism.

Despite national and international laws, treaties banning racial discrimination, and decades of human rights activism at the regional, national, and international levels, intolerance, discrimination, and ethnic violence continue to plague the world. In this year alone, we've witnessed with alarm race riots in England, a resurgence in neo-Nazi activities in Germany, and the renewed conflict between Israelis and Palestinians.

In the United States, tremendous racial progress has been made. But sadly, America remains divided along racial and ethnic lines. Evidence of persistent racial inequality in American society is widespread. Racial profiling and disparate treatment by the criminal justice system are worse today for blacks. The U.S. prison population is disproportionately filled with black prisoners. And one in seven black men is disenfranchised for life due to felony convictions. Recently released data from the 2000 census reveal that African Americans remain by far the most residentially segregated group in America (see feature in this issue). And in a nationwide survey sponsored by the National Conference for Community and Justice earlier this year, survey respondents said that minorities do not have opportunities equal to those of whites across a broad spectrum of quality of life indicators.

Joint Center research supports these findings. In 1999, when asked in a Joint Center poll to compare the situation of blacks in the U.S. to five years earlier, nearly half responded that nothing had changed, and one fifth felt that it had grown worse. Yet a recent Washington Post/Kaiser/Harvard poll reports that many white Americans just don't believe racial and ethnic discrimination still exist today (see Political Report in this issue).

As world leaders prepare to gather at the WCAR for this landmark conference, we applaud the efforts of the United Nations and the spirit of the World Conference. We join with fellow civil rights and policy leaders in voicing our hope that the Bush Administration will participate in the WCAR and support constructive policy positions aimed at dismantling the root of racism through education, prevention, and protection. It is only through serious dialogue, action, and policy that racism will be eliminated and we can successfully live in a true global village. ■



PRESIDENT



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The Status of Residential Segregation

Despite Decades of Change, African Americans Remain the Nation's Most Segregated Racial Group

By Roderick J. Harrison

Owning a house in a well-kept neighborhood has come to embody the “American Dream.” Throughout the past one hundred years, however, metropolitan life in the United States has been characterized by residential separation of the races—established and maintained by overt housing discrimination, using such means as restrictive covenants, red-lining, and block-busting. These practices helped form the inner-city ghettos and barrios that became home to migrants from the South and from Puerto Rico and later to large waves of immigrants from Latin America and the Caribbean. From racially isolated and poor quality schools, through disinvestment of both public and private capital and city services, to high crime and neighborhood decay, the consequences of racial segregation have been monumental.

Since the rise of the civil rights movement after World War II, social scientists have placed great importance on measuring trends in residential segregation. Thus, within weeks of the release of redistricting data from the 2000 Census, researchers had checked to see how residential segregation had changed over the decade. They found that residential segregation among African Americans had continued to decline, reaching its lowest level since 1920, but the amount of decrease over the last decade was quite small. Consequently, African Americans continue to be the nation's most segregated racial group. Among Hispanics and Asian Americans, residential segregation levels have either remained the same or worsened slightly, probably reflecting a tendency of recent immigrants to move into or near existing concentrations of their respective populations.

The most common measure for calculating the level of segregation is the “dissimilarity index.” This percentage indicates the proportion of group that would have to move to another census tract to obtain an equal representation of the group throughout the metropolitan area. For example, in a metropolitan area that is 20 percent African American, African Americans would have to represent 20 percent of the population in each of the tracts to obtain an index of zero, indicating no segregation. According to a Brookings Institution analysis of the 2000 Census data by Edward L. Glaeser and Jacob L. Vigdor, the dissimilarity index for African Americans declined from 69.5 to 65.2—a very small decrease over the decade, but a substantial improvement over its high of almost 80 in 1970. This means that in the average U.S. metropolitan area, about 65 percent of African Ameri-

cans would have to move to a different census tract to achieve complete residential integration.

Minorities Move to Suburbs and to the South

The Brookings report suggests that the reduction in segregation for African Americans during the decade primarily reflects the growing percentage of African Americans who live in majority non-black census tracts. Half (50.1 percent) of African Americans living in metropolitan areas in 2000 resided in areas that were not majority black, up from 43.5 percent in 1990 and a great improvement over 29.8 percent in 1960.

Substantial increases since 1990 in the percentages of African Americans—and also of Hispanics and Asian Americans—living in the suburbs have contributed to this shift. During the 1990s, the percentage of blacks living in the suburbs rose from 34 percent to 39 percent. Nevertheless, this percentage remains far below the percentages of Hispanics (49 percent) and Asian Americans (58 percent) who were suburbanites by 2000 (up from 46 percent and 53 percent, respectively, in 1990). Non-Hispanic whites were far more likely to live in suburbs (71 percent) than were these minority groups. These trends suggest that African Americans will soon be the only racial or ethnic group that will not have a majority of its members residing in the suburbs.

The growth of minority populations in the suburbs, however, has increased the overall diversity of these communities. In 1990, fewer than one in five suburban residents was a minority, but in 2000, almost one of every four suburbanites was either African American (8.4 percent), Hispanic (11.2 percent), or Asian American (4.4 percent). Yet, in 2000, African Americans, and to a lesser extent Hispanics, were still underrepresented in the suburbs compared to their percentage of the national population (about 12.5 percent each).

At the same time, central cities have become decidedly less white. In 1990, whites made up almost 60 percent of the population of the nation's central cities (defined by the Census Bureau as cities of 50,000 or more, at the core of a metropolitan statistical area). By 2000, whites constituted a bare majority in these areas (51.4 percent). Indeed, in the nation's 100 largest cities, whites have become a minority of the population. The African American percentage of the central city population remained very nearly constant, at just over 20 percent. However, the central city population

Residential Segregation

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became significantly more Hispanic and Asian American. The percentage of Hispanics grew by more than five percentage points to nearly 20 percent, close to parity with blacks, while Asian Americans increased their representation from 4.4 percent to 6.0 percent. So the relative loss of white population in the central cities offset the growth of minority populations in the suburbs. Thus, despite a decade of substantial change, the suburbs remained mostly white and the cities mostly minority.

Also contributing to the decline in the national segregation score was the migration of African Americans from more highly segregated midwestern and eastern metropolitan areas to the less segregated South. African Americans were much more segregated in the Midwest (74.5) and Northeast (69.6) than they were in the South (59.1) and West (54.7), although integration improved within each region.

Rapidly growing areas experienced greater declines in segregation than did areas that lost population. Segregation also decreased more rapidly in metropolitan areas where black populations either grew rapidly (by more than 35 percent) or shrank than in areas where the black population grew only moderately. It did not decrease as much in metropolitan areas where African Americans made up more than 25 percent of the population as it did in areas where they made up less than 10 percent. Consequently, segregation dropped the most in areas where blacks represented a relatively small percentage of the population, such as some of the rapidly growing metropolitan areas in the West. Thus, these declines did not greatly affect national patterns for African Americans.

Segregation Standstill

Social scientists consider dissimilarity scores above 60.0 as representing high levels of segregation. This means that despite the declines, African Americans remain highly segregated in the nation's metropolitan areas. By contrast, Hispanics and Asian Americans experience more moderate segregation, as measured by their dissimilarity scores (Hispanics 51.5 in 2000, 51.3 in 1990; Asian Americans 42.0 in 2000, 43.9 in 1990). (See figure 1.) At the current rate of change (a 4.3 point drop), it would take another three decades for African American segregation to fall to the level Hispanics experience today and five decades to reach the levels Asian Americans currently experience. The changes measured for the past decade can only be characterized as incremental, despite a decade of substantial suburbanization of African Americans and substantial net migration from the more highly segregated Midwest and North to the less segregated South and West. Taken together, these facts provide sobering evidence of how difficult it is to dramatically change entrenched patterns of residential segregation.

Indeed, as John Logan of the State University of New York at Albany suggests, compared with the rapidly growing diversity of the nation as a whole and its metropolitan areas, residential integration has remained at a standstill. The

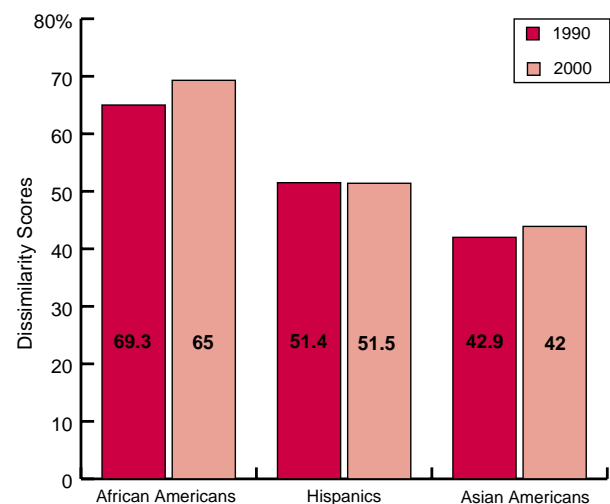
nation is about 69 percent white, 12.5 percent African American, 12.5 percent Hispanic, and 4 percent Asian American. However, the average white lives in a neighborhood that is overwhelmingly white, with few minorities (83 percent white, 7.1 percent black, 6.2 percent Hispanic, and 3.2 percent Asian American). In contrast, the average African American lives in a neighborhood that is mostly black—54 percent black, 33.2 percent white, 9.4 percent Hispanic, and 2.6 percent Asian American. As mentioned earlier, half of all blacks now live in neighborhoods that are not majority black (50.1 percent). The average, however, is affected by the actual percentages of African Americans in these neighborhoods, rather than simply whether they are majority black or not. Therefore, the higher average reflects two relevant facts: (1) even those blacks who live in non-majority black neighborhoods live in areas that are disproportionately black, and (2) blacks who live in majority black neighborhoods are likely to live in areas that are heavily black. For example, the average central city black resident lives in a neighborhood that is 60 percent black. (See figure 2.)

Asian Americans and Hispanics also live in neighborhoods with relatively large percentages of their own groups (42.1 percent and 19.3 percent, respectively). Yet, blacks are clearly, again, the most racially isolated. Both Hispanics and Asian Americans are more likely to live among whites (40 percent and 58 percent) than are blacks (33 percent). Hispanics also have, on average, more Asian American neighbors than blacks do (4.2 percent vs. 2.6 percent), and Asian Americans are more likely to have Hispanic neighbors than blacks are (11.7 percent vs. 9.4 percent).

Although patterns of racial and ethnic concentrations can be important in maintaining cultural and social institutions and for securing political representation, segregation overall has tremendous negative social and economic effects. It is heartening that each racial or ethnic group had greater

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Figure 1
Residential Segregation of Selected Groups from White Non-Hispanics: Dissimilarity Scores (Percent of Each Group Who Must Change Census Tracts to Produce Complete Integration), 1990 and 2000



Generational Shift Among Black Elected Officials

Young Black Elected Officials Are Finding Their Own Voice

By David A. Bositis

The following article reports on a national survey of black elected officials (BEOs) that was conducted as part of the Joint Center's Divergent Generations Project. While the full report, which will be released later this summer, contains extensive statistical results, this article summarizes the major findings and gives statistical results for selected topics.

Since 1996, the Joint Center's National Opinion Polls have tracked divergences in the political attitudes and public policy preferences between different generations of African Americans. In many areas, these differences of viewpoint have been quite substantial. For example, an overwhelming majority of older African Americans strongly identify with the Democratic party, in contrast with younger black adults, fully a third of whom currently declare themselves political independents.

Since such generational differences reflect fundamental changes in circumstances and experiences, those differences should also be reflected in the attitudes of black elected officials (BEOs). However, several factors affect how closely we can expect the opinions of BEOs to match those of the black population generally. First, it is well established that political elites differ from the general public in their political views, as well as in many other ways. Second, BEOs are likely to be older, on average, than the general African American population. Finally, political activists tend to be more partisan and less independent than the general public, which contains nonvoters and those disengaged from the political system. Thus, it was not expected that a significant share of younger BEOs would identify themselves as political independents.

The study upon which this report is based was a national telephone survey of 800 black elected officials in October and November of 1999. The sample was drawn from the Joint Center's National Roster of Black Elected Officials for 1999, which represents a national census of black elected officials. The random stratified sample consists of four strata of elected officials: black state legislators, black municipal officials, black school board members, and black county-level officials. Data from the 1998 and 1999 Joint Center National Opinion Polls is also used to compare BEOs and the black adult population.

Similarities Emerge

The survey data examined in this study, while not conclusive, do suggest that many of the generational changes among African Americans identified in Joint Center

National Opinion Polls over the last five years are beginning to be evident among BEOs. These generational differences are seen in views on public school quality and school vouchers. However, in other issue areas, such as racial profiling, few generational differences are evident.

Clearly, BEOs in different generational cohorts have different experiences. Those over age 65 are much more likely than others to have attended segregated high schools and historically black colleges and universities. They are much more likely to have been active in the civil rights movement, to have served in the military (among the male BEOs), and to have come from families that were not active in politics.

The differences in those experiences are beginning to result in different political and policy perspectives. As an increasing number of older BEOs leave office and retire, those with different experiences will begin to replace them and inevitably bring these new perspectives to the offices they hold.

Highlights: Views on Selected Issues

Among the issues on which the study examines generational differences in views are rating of public schools, support for vouchers, and prevalence of racial profiling and police misconduct:

Rating local public schools. BEOs rate their local public schools much more favorably than do members of the black general population. A significant part of this difference is attributable to school board members, who seem to hold unusually high opinions of their local public schools, with 71 percent rating them as excellent or good and only 6 percent rating them as poor. However, for both BEOs and the general African American population, there are clear-cut differences between age groups. Younger persons in both samples grade public schools more negatively, while older persons are more likely to hold favorable opinions of them. Among BEOs, however, even the younger ones still rate their public schools as excellent or good by wide margins (2.5 to 1). But older BEOs evaluate public schools as excellent or good rather than poor by huge margins that range between 4.5 to 1 and 6 to 1. (See table 1.)

School vouchers. On the issue of government-funded school vouchers for public, private, or parochial schools, the same generational differences seen in Joint Center National Public Opinion Polls of the black population are seen among black elected officials—and there are other interesting differences as well. First, a large majority (69 percent) of

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Black Elected Officials

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BEOs opposes vouchers, while a large majority (60 percent) of the black public supports vouchers. Contrary to what might be expected, black school board members are more supportive of vouchers (61 percent) than are the other categories of BEOs. (See table 2.)

Among the BEOs and the black population, age defines cleavages on vouchers more than any other factor. Only a single subgroup of BEOs favors vouchers—the youngest age cohort—with a plurality in support (49 to 44 percent). Among the remaining BEOs, opposition to school vouchers averages more than 70 percent. In the black general population, there is overwhelming support for vouchers (approximately 70 percent) among the three youngest age groups, all of which are under 50 years old, who clearly represent the core support for vouchers in the black population.

Racial profiling. The respondents in both samples were asked whether they believe that police engage in racial profiling when on patrol. On this matter, one of the most important items on the unfinished civil rights agenda, there are not only no generational differences but no subgroup differences at all. African Americans share a consensus view that police departments regularly engage in the racial profiling of blacks and other minorities. BEOs hold this view by a margin of 77 percent to 16 percent; respondents in the black population likewise hold this view by a margin of 69 percent to 21 percent.

Unlike segregated schools, lunch counters, and water fountains, and the brutality of Bull Connor and others like him, racial profiling represents modern and current racial discrimination, and African Americans of all ages and classes have experienced the reality of the practice. Thus, there is no reason to expect much in the way of generational differences based upon different generational experiences, and little is seen in these surveys.

Police misconduct. The respondents in both surveys were asked whether they think the police misconduct that has received so much media attention in the past few years (e.g., the Diallo case) represents widespread or isolated incidents. Strong majorities in both surveys believe that such misconduct is widespread: namely, 58 percent of BEOs and 62 percent of the black population.

Among BEOs, those in the youngest age group are most likely to believe these cases are a widespread problem (65 percent). The oldest BEOs are significantly less likely to hold this view (47 percent). By contrast, in the black general population, the youngest persons are the least likely to attribute these incidents to widespread police misconduct. ■

The Joint Center gratefully acknowledges the support of the Philip Morris Companies for the elected officials portion of the Divergent Generations project.

Table 1.

Evaluation of Public Schools by Black Elected Officials and by the Black General Public

By Age Cohort

Black Elected Officials, 1999

Age	Excellent/Good	Fair	Poor
18-40	50	31	20
41-49	61	26	12
50-64	53	34	12
65+	57	31	12

Black General Public, 1999

18-25	35	33	32
26-35	44	29	26
36-50	41	29	28
51-64	39	40	16
65+	37	50	11

Table 2.

Support for School Vouchers by Black Elected Officials and by the Black General Public

By Age Cohort

Black Elected Officials, 1999

Age	Favors	Opposes	Doesn't Know
18-40	49	44	7
41-49	27	68	5
50-64	23	74	3
65+	18	73	9

Black General Public, 1999

18-25	71	24	5
26-35	76	20	4
36-50	67	26	7
51-64	49	44	7
65+	42	49	9

Supreme Court Close Calls

5-to-4 Split Rules High Court

By Quintin J. Simmons

In the 2001 term, the nation's highest Court remained sharply but narrowly divided on issues vital to African Americans and other minorities. From the Court's unprecedented role in the 2000 presidential election to less high-profile redistricting, affirmative action, and immigration decisions, many cases were "close calls," decided by a single vote or by no vote at all. More than ever, the Court seemed to defy predictability.

Unquestionably, the case for the history books was *Bush v. Gore*. On December 12, 2000, the Court issued a 5-to-4 ruling that paved the way for George W. Bush to become the 43rd President of the United States. Voting in favor of Bush were the High Court's conservatives—Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist and Justices Antonin Scalia, Clarence Thomas, Anthony M. Kennedy, and Sandra Day O'Connor. Its more liberal justices—John Paul Stevens, David H. Souter, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, and Stephen G. Breyer—all voted for Gore.

This line-up along strictly ideological lines angered Democrats, especially black Democrats who were upset by the irregularities in Florida's election. In his dissenting opinion, Justice Stevens straightforwardly expressed his outrage. "Although we may never know with complete certainty the identity of the winner of this year's presidential election, the identity of the loser is perfectly clear. It is the Nation's confidence in the judge as an impartial guardian of the rule of law."

Two important close calls this past year tested 1996 anti-immigrant laws. On June 25, the Supreme Court ruled that immigrants who pleaded guilty to crimes in the years before a 1996 immigration law took effect do not face automatic deportation. Under the 1996 law, immigrants who had any criminal record faced expulsion. The ruling affects immigrants currently in jail who have been awaiting deportation immediately after serving their sentences. The five justices in the majority on this decision were Stevens, Kennedy, Souter, Ginsburg, and Breyer. Later that week, the Court ruled that immigrants who have committed crimes cannot be detained indefinitely, even if they have been ordered deported and their country refuses to take them. The ruling is expected to affect about 2,700 INS "lifers." Justice Breyer wrote in the majority opinion for the Court that once immigrants enter the country they are entitled to constitutional protections "whether their presence here is lawful, unlawful, temporary or permanent." Breyer was joined by Justices O'Connor, Stevens, Souter, and Ginsburg.

With the next round of redistricting already taking place in state legislatures around the country, the Supreme Court

made a final ruling in a case going back to the last round in 1990. In yet another 5-to-4 decision, the Court upheld a lower court finding that North Carolina's 12th district was legally constructed and not a racial gerrymander. (See May 2001 Political Report). The Court ruled that race, although a consideration, had not been the predominant factor in the district's construction. "The evidence ... does not show that racial considerations predominated in the drawing of District 12's boundaries," Justice Breyer wrote for the majority. "This is because race in this case correlates closely with political behavior." He was joined by Justices O'Connor, Stevens, Souter, and Ginsburg. The dissenters were Chief Justice Rehnquist and Justices Scalia, Thomas, and Kennedy. As in other redistricting cases, O'Connor was considered the key swing vote.

Affirmative action came up twice on the Supreme Court's docket, but the Court declined to review both cases, leaving in place contradictory opinions from the 9th and 5th Circuit Courts of Appeal. Three University of Washington School of Law applicants had challenged their university's admissions policy, saying that it was racially discriminatory because it favored blacks over Hispanics. In 1998, Washington State voters approved a ballot initiative outlawing the consideration of race as a factor in admissions to public universities, but the case continued through the courts. The 9th Circuit Court of Appeals finally ruled that racial diversity in higher education was a compelling state interest and the consideration of race was therefore permissible. On the other hand, in a separate University of Texas Law School case, the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that race-based admissions policies were impermissible.

Upcoming Term

The next term may bring a decision on the constitutionality of school vouchers. The Bush administration has joined the State of Ohio in asking the justices to uphold an Ohio pilot program that offers Cleveland parents tuition assistance to send their children to private and religious schools. Of the 3,700 children enrolled in the voucher pilot program, 96 percent attended religious schools. The U.S. appellate court in Cincinnati ruled last year that the program "clearly has the impermissible effect of promoting sectarian schools" and as a result is unconstitutional. The court will not decide on whether to hear the case until the new term begins in the fall.

Many believe that the High Court will finally agree to review an affirmative action case—perhaps the University of Michigan case—and end speculation about the constitutionality of the practice. A federal judge has already ordered the

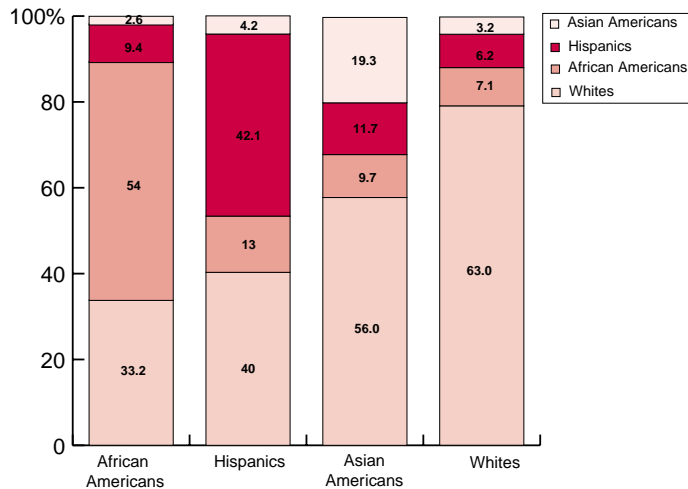
Residential Segregation

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exposure to each of the other groups in 2000 than in 1990. But African Americans remain the least likely to have exposure in their neighborhoods to whites, as well as to the growing diversity represented by Hispanics and Asian Americans. Particularly for African Americans, the slow change in residential segregation patterns suggests that they will remain distinctly separate, at least residentially, in our metropolitan areas for decades to come. ■

Figure 2

Composition of Typical Neighborhood of Selected Groups: 2000



Supreme Court

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University of Michigan to stop using affirmative action in its admissions. If this case does indeed make it to the High Court, then affirmative action could be ended nationwide, as most experts believe that a majority of the current justices would vote against the practice.

Retirement Rumors

With such a narrow margin on major High Court decisions, speculation has abounded about the possible resignation of one or more of the current justices. Stevens, 79, and Rehnquist, 76, because of their ages, are the subjects of many of these rumors. Many believe that both will retire within the next four years. Ginsburg is healthy now, but had colon-cancer surgery last year. Other rumors have involved O'Connor, who is 70 and was treated for breast cancer in 1998, but O'Connor squelched the rumors by announcing unequivocally that she has no present plans to retire.

Bush has said he would appoint "strict constructionists" to the Supreme Court—justices who would "strictly interpret the Constitution and not use the bench as a way to legislate." Democrats counter that these "strict constructionists" are actually judicial activists for conservative causes. If Rehnquist or one of the conservative justices should retire, the composition of the High Court would be unlikely to change, since these justices already consistently vote as a bloc on most issues. However, if one of the other justices should retire, the situation could change dramatically. Joint Center senior political analyst David Bositis notes that if Bush does have the opportunity to appoint a new justice, he would have to appoint someone whom the Democrats approve of because they control the U.S. Senate. But, Bositis cautions, "Bush may try to appoint a conservative Hispanic, and then the Democrats would be pressured to approve that nominee because he or she would be the first Hispanic justice." ■

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POLITICAL REPORT

Many Whites Misinformed About Blacks

By Mary K. Garber

A new poll confirms what many African Americans have long suspected: that large numbers of whites have mistaken ideas about how blacks are faring in American society. According to a poll conducted by the *Washington Post*, Kaiser Family Foundation, and Harvard University, many whites erroneously believe that the tremendous progress of the last three decades has erased the gap between blacks and whites in terms of income, employment, education, and access to health care. But the reality is that they are completely wrong. In all of these areas, statistics show that blacks continue to lag significantly behind whites. Not surprisingly, the opinions of blacks in this survey were much more in line with reality. While progress since the civil rights era has been remarkable, it has not come close to eliminating the disadvantages accumulated during hundreds of years of systemic discrimination and oppression.

The discrepancy between white opinions and reality varied between 40 and 60 percent for these areas:

- **Health care**—More than six in 10 whites believe that African Ameri-

cans have better or equal access to health care than white Americans have. But results from the 2000 census show that black Americans are more than twice as likely as whites to be without either public or private insurance.

- **Education**—About half of all whites believe that blacks have achieved parity in education with whites. But while 88 percent of whites have a high school diploma, this is true for only 79 percent of blacks. The disparity in higher education is even greater, with 17 percent of blacks finishing college compared to 28 percent of whites.
- **Employment**—About half of all whites also believe that whites and blacks have about the same employment levels. In fact, differences in employment remain considerable. Only one fifth of black workers hold professional or managerial jobs compared to a third of white workers. Blacks are twice as likely as whites to be employed in lower paying service-sector jobs—23 percent vs. 12 percent. Blacks are also twice as likely to be unemployed—in May, the rate was 8 percent for blacks and 3.8 percent for whites.
- **Income**—While a majority of whites correctly believed that blacks earn less than whites, a substantial minority (more than 4 in 10) believed that blacks earned as much or more than the average white worker. The fact is black

workers earn far less—the median household income for blacks was \$28,000 in 1999, much less than the \$44,000 median income among whites. Half of all black households exist on less than \$25,000 year, while this is true for only a third of white households. The poverty rate for the black population is twice that for the white population. Blacks also accumulate less wealth and are less likely to own stocks, bonds, and other investments.

Sources of Misperceptions

These misperceptions may come from several different sources. Keith Reeves, an expert in racial attitudes who acted as consultant for the project, offers several suggestions. One is that white Americans see a burgeoning black middle class whose members are in fact doing well in these areas, and this obscures the much larger number of blacks who are not doing as well. It is the black middle-class that whites are most likely to meet in their neighborhoods, workplaces, and schools.

Reeves also suggests that a growing perception of competition with blacks in employment and education contributes to this misunderstanding. In fact, whites with lower levels of education and income were more likely than others to be misinformed about the status of blacks, and it is just these whites who are most likely to feel the pressure of competition. Further, Reeves notes, it is convenient

for whites to feel this way because it precludes having to deal with the difficult question of how to achieve racial equality in American society.

Consequences

The consequences for public policy of these mistaken ideas can hardly be overstated. Whites who believe that racial equality already exists probably do not see any need for affirmative action programs in education or employment or for strict enforcement of the Voting Rights Act. In fact, the poll found that whites with more accurate views were much more likely to assert that the federal government should ensure equal opportunities in education for blacks and equal treatment by police and courts.

This poll is the latest in a series of polls on public policy issues conducted by the *Washington Post*, the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, and Harvard University. Questions on racial attitudes were repeated from the first poll conducted by the project in 1995.

NAACP Speaks Truth to Power

At the NAACP's 92nd annual convention, held July 7–12 in New Orleans, the theme was "Speak Truth to Power," but the truth, as spoken by some NAACP leaders to the 20,000 assembled delegates, brought a strong reaction from the "power" to which it was addressed—the Bush administration. Chairman of the Board Julian Bond and President Kweisi Mfume pledged to continue the civil rights organization's commitment to speak forcefully on important issues and articulated its proposed agenda for the Bush administration. Bond and Mfume advocated the nomination of "fair-minded" candidates for the federal judiciary, reform of the nation's electoral system, an end to racial profiling and racial disparities within

the criminal justice system, improvement of public education, broadened access to health care, and protection of Social Security. Bond's speech brought strong objections from White House spokesman Ari Fleischer for his criticism of certain Bush cabinet members he had referred to as "canine-like" in their devotion to the Confederacy and for referring to the Republican right-wing as its "Taliban wing," a reference to the radical Afghani government known for its suppression of women and destruction of ancient monuments.

Bush personally addressed last years' NAACP convention during his run for the presidency. This year, citing scheduling commitments, he declined to attend and instead sent a videotaped speech. His speech stressed his administration's selection of a racially diverse cabinet and his commitment to educational reform, faith-based and community initiatives, and an end to racial profiling. Conspicuously missing from the Bush speech was any reference to the controversy over the 2000 election or to election reform, a major focus of the convention.

The NAACP announced the formation of a Voter Employment Incentive Campaign, held workshops on reform issues, and made public its first report card grading elected officials on their handling of election reform. Mary Frances Berry, head of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, which just approved a scathing report on the Florida election, spoke to the group. The workshop on election reform featured the Joint Center's senior political analyst, David A. Bositis; Stephen Rosenthal, political director of the NAACP; University of Maryland professor Ron Walters; and Stephanie Wilson, director of the Fannie Lou Hamer Project.

Convention delegates were apparently not moved by Bush's reference to his faith-based initiative. They passed a resolution opposing the initiative because of its failure to require participating organizations to adhere to federal standards for nondiscrimination in employment. The proposed faith-based initiative offers federal funds to religious and charitable organizations to run social service programs, but does not require them to adhere to the same federal standards that other recipients of federal funds must meet.

The convention also ended speculation that the NAACP would call for a boycott in response to the Mississippi referendum in April in which the state's voters overwhelmingly elected to retain the Confederate battle flag as part of their state flag. The convention delegates did pass a resolution to continue to seek the removal of the Confederate symbol from the state flag and from all public sites in the state other than historic sites and museums, but there was no mention of imposing economic sanctions.

An important first for the nation's oldest and largest civil rights organization was the adoption of a five-year strategic plan at a special legislative session held on Wednesday, July 11. The plan calls for the NAACP to double its membership, improve its training programs, and strengthen its legal capacity. ■



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ECONOMIC REPORT

Managing in the Middle: Economic Security for the “Sandwich” Generation

By Margaret C. Simms

As the baby boom generation begins to move through the middle years of life (ages 45 to 55), retirement and other issues related to economic security are becoming more prominent in their thinking. Consequently, it should not be surprising that job security for older workers, the stability of Social Security, and the impact of the stock market on private pensions are topics of high interest in recent policy discussions. Complicating these decisions, however, are family-related obligations as individuals in this generation increasingly find themselves responsible for both aging parents and dependent children. “Sandwiched” between younger and older generations, they must plan their finances with these challenges in mind.

While the African American population is younger than the U.S. population as a whole, it still makes up a significant portion of the baby boomers. It is estimated that about 14 percent of the U.S. population is currently between the ages of 45 and 54. Approximately 4.4 million or 11.3 percent of them are African American (including black Hispanics).

African Americans in the Second Half of Their Work Life

African Americans, like other Americans, are at or near the height of their careers when they are between 45 and 54 years of age. While the situation is generally good for those who are employed, this age group faces a number of unusual obstacles.

A recent issue brief by the National Academy of Social Insurance, entitled “Ensuring Health and Income Security for an Aging Workforce,” points out that events beyond the control of individuals can have a huge effect on their economic security. For example, job loss can occur due to economic downturns or company restructuring. In spite of their seniority, older workers are likely to find themselves at a disadvantage in the job market because of obsolete skills, higher costs of such benefits as health insurance, or other reasons. Health-related factors—long illness or disability—can result in job loss as well. Older workers are also more likely to need time off from work to care for family members. They may experience economic reversals due to the death of a spouse or other adult who contributes to household income. Some of these problems seem to occur disproportionately among African Americans.

Managing in the Middle

A study released in July 2001 by AARP, in partnership with the Joint Center, the National Council of La Raza, and the Asian and Pacific Islander American Health Forum, sheds additional light on the impact of being in the middle for African Americans in the 45-to-54 year-old age group. In the spring of 2001, Belden, Russonello, and Stewart conducted a survey for AARP of more than 2,300 individuals between the ages of 45 and 55. The survey oversampled African Americans (404), Hispanics (429), and Asian Americans (351). While the findings may not be surprising to many African American families, they provide insights for individuals and policymakers who are concerned about the impact of an aging and diversifying population on the social support system in this country.

In general, the report found that most older baby boomers are satisfied with their lives and coping with their family responsibilities. African Americans, however, are more likely than their white counterparts to have suffered a death or serious illness in the family that makes it necessary for them to take care of their parents, relatives, or others. Forty percent of African American respondents were providing financial support to their elderly parents, compared to 22 percent of whites. Of these African American caregivers, 26 percent said that the support provided to parents affected their plans to save for retirement, and 20 percent said it had an effect on their plans for acquiring additional education or training. A similar percentage indicated that caregiving was causing them stress at work, while only 9 percent of whites said this was a problem (see table 1). Some of the additional burdens on African Americans may result from lower levels of income, both their own and that of their elderly parents, who are heavily dependent on Social Security for retirement income.

Assets of African American Households

For a variety of reasons, African American households have lower assets and net worth than white households. With less inherited wealth and lower incomes, African Americans start out behind whites in accumulating assets. Despite what appear to be significant gains in net worth during the mid-1990s, they remain at a substantial disadvantage relative to their white counterparts. While wealth differentials are smaller at higher income levels (up to about \$60,000 in household income), the accumulations of even those in the upper income levels are still quite modest for African Americans. For example, in the income range with the greatest equity between

the races, African American households still only have about half the net worth of whites. This amounts to a mere \$27,275—and only \$7,500 when home equity is omitted. (Table 2). While equity held in pension funds is not included in these totals, its inclusion would do nothing to reduce disparities. The Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), from which the net worth data are taken, does not provide a breakdown of assets by race or by age, so it is not possible to determine how blacks fare as they pass the midpoint of their careers. However, the net worth of even the highest income African American households is about one-third lower than that of all households with heads of household between 45 and 64 years of age.

Policy Implications

These data provide several insights concerning retirement planning. First, it is clear that African Americans remain far behind their white counterparts in accumulating assets for retirement. From an individual perspective, there is a clear need for a well-considered financial plan that includes a sharper build-up of assets before age 50. Second, due to lower incomes and greater family responsibilities, African Americans are still more likely to be somewhat disadvantaged in this effort. Thus, those who favor public policy initiatives that expect workers to rely more on private sources of retirement income need to understand the burden this could place on African Americans.

For additional information from the studies included in this report, go to the following websites: www.nasi.org (for older workers), www.aarp.org (for “Managing in the Middle”) and www.census.gov/hhes/wealth/1995/wealth95.html (for net worth and asset ownership). ■

Table 1: Care for Older Relatives, by Race/Ethnicity

	Financial contributions to older relatives (“frequently” and “sometimes”) (Percent)	Caregiving has had an impact on saving money for retirement (Percent)	Caregiving has had an impact on decisions about getting more education, training (Percent)	Caregiving has caused a lot or some stress at work (Percent)
Total	27	26	12	11
White	22	26	9	9
Black	40	21	20	16
Hispanic	40	25	19	16
Asian American	51	31	15	23

Source: AARP, *In the Middle: A Report on Multicultural Boomers Coping With Family and Aging Issues*, July 2001. Tables 29, 30, 45.

Table 2: Median Net Worth of Households, by Monthly Household Income Quintile and Race of Householder: 1995

Monthly Household Income Quintile	White (Dollars)	Black (Dollars)	Black-White Ratio (Percent)
Quintile (\$0–1,096) Median net worth Excluding home equity	9,720 3,000	1,500 200	15.0 9.7
Second Quintile (\$1,097–2,022) Median net worth Excluding home equity	26,534 7,359	3,998 2,250	15.0 30.5
Third Quintile (\$2,023–3,109) Median net worth Excluding home equity	42,123 12,837	11,623 4,333	28.0 33.8
Fourth Quintile (\$3,110–4,844) Median net worth Excluding home equity	57,445 19,225	27,275 7,500	47.5 39.0
Fifth Quintile (\$4,845 and above) Median net worth Excluding home equity	123,781	40,866	33.0

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Household Net Worth and Asset Ownership: 1995* (P70-71), issued February 2001.

Note: Net worth is all assets minus all debts, including liens against assets. This analysis divides the population into five equal groups (quintiles), ranked from lowest to highest on the basis of monthly income.