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FOCUS

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Giving Our Babies A Chance

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POLITICAL TRENDLETTER®

Perspective

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To the Bloom of Youth

May is a month of hope not only because it brings spring to full bloom but because it is a time when we celebrate the flowering of our youth. There are few rituals in life more rewarding for a parent, and more hopeful for our society, than graduation exercises at our academic institutions. This year, like so many Americans, I will have the pleasure of attending a commencement for a son who is graduating from law school.

I wish every parent could share the same exhilaration I feel. Unfortunately, for all too many African Americans, seeing our sons graduate from college is becoming a rare experience. Recent statistics indicate that males represent only 37.3 percent of the 65,000 blacks who graduate from four-year institutions of higher education. There are less than 2,000 black law school graduates, and the proportion of males in this group is declining. While the number of black males who graduate from college continues to decline, the number who go to jail and get sucked into the underground economy continues to increase.

These depressing facts are symptoms of deep and disturbing problems in our society: racism, poverty, inadequate health care, violence, to name a few. Regardless of the reason, a society that promotes upward mobility through education and thrives on an educated electorate and work force is irreparably harmed when so many of its human resources are doomed to a future of limited opportunities. As the number of unskilled jobs declines, the unemployment rate of those with the least education increases.

The increasing success of young black women in the educational arena also suggests that we need to delve more deeply into the nature and extent of underachievement among black males. Since they come from the same homes and attend the same schools as their brothers, why are they doing relatively better? The answer, I suspect, is much deeper and more complicated than the conventional wisdom of far too many black males: "the white man wants to keep the brother down."

I think it is time to document disparate treatment of African Americans, to cite the things the "brother" is doing to keep himself down, and to identify some promising new approaches to this increasingly complex problem. If black males are underachieving (and overreacting) due to some special damage to their psyches, we need to know what the problem is and how it can be solved. While we may be able to place significant blame on environmental factors, surely some of the responsibility for the status of black males rests squarely on their own shoulders, and we must be prepared to address that deficit as well.

Acknowledging this latter responsibility is a first step toward seeking truth and relief. The immortal words of Martin Luther King, Jr., may serve us well: "It is not a sign of weakness, but a sign of high maturity to rise to the level of self-criticism..." When we reach this stage, it will be easier for us to open our minds to new approaches to problemsolving.

I hope it also will be easier for us to attach the highest priority to educational achievement. Frederick Douglass once said that, "if we are ever elevated, our elevation will have been accomplished through our own instrumentality." Education lies at the core of our elevation, and one of the most important challenges facing black Americans today is to increase the number of parents who celebrate the May ritual of graduation as a rite of passage to opportunity and achievement. ■

Eddie N. Williams

PRESIDENT

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Giving Our Babies A Chance

The Public Health Service's Healthy Start Initiative Seeks to Reduce the High Infant Mortality Rates in Targeted Communities

by Thurma McCann

Without even taking a pregnancy test, Renee, a 19-year-old welfare recipient and drug abuser who lives in a poor section of Pittsburgh, knows she's going to have a baby—again. She recognizes the symptoms, having given birth to Michael 18 months earlier and then losing her second child, who was born prematurely. Despite the death of her child, Renee doesn't plan to seek prenatal care for her third pregnancy. She went to a clinic before Michael was born and didn't like the way the staff treated her.

Renee is just one of the thousands of expectant mothers in the United States who are at risk of giving birth to low-birthweight babies, babies who have poor chances of surviving their first year or growing into healthy children. These mothers-to-be usually do not obtain prenatal care either because of poverty, lack of access to health facilities, or their failure to understand the importance of such care. Despite recent progress in reducing infant deaths in this country, the United States still has an infant mortality rate far higher than most other industrialized nations. About 250,000 American babies born each year weigh less than five pounds, and over 36,000 die before they are a year old. Yet early and continuous prenatal care reduces the incidence of low birthweight by 20 to 50 percent and minimizes the likelihood of birth defects and retardation in babies who do survive.

The Healthy Start Initiative of the Public Health Service's Maternal and Child Health Bureau provides prenatal care to at-risk expectant mothers across the country by targeting programs for communities with high rates of infant mortality. The long-term goal of the initiative is to prevent infant deaths, reducing them by 50 percent over a five-year period in communities whose infant mortality rates are up to two and a half times the national average.

The need for Healthy Start in African American communities is critical. According to recent statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the number of black babies who die before their first birthday is 18 per 1,000 live births, more than double the rate for white infants (7.6 per 1,000). A black infant's risk of dying was 2.3 times higher than that for white infants in 1989 and rose to 2.4 times by 1990.

The leading killer of black babies is low birthweight. Those babies who weigh 5.5 pounds or less at the time of birth are 20 times more likely to die than babies born with normal birthweigh, while those weighing under 3.3 pounds are 40 times more likely to die before their first birthdays. While 5.7 percent of white babies are born underweight, 13.2 percent of black babies are. At the same time, African American women are twice as likely as white women to receive no prenatal care at all or to receive it only during the last three months of pregnancy.

Poems to His Children

Healthy Start focuses on helping communities assess their needs followed by planning and implementing appropriate programs that will work best to cut their infant mortality rates in half. The initiative is based on the principle that the community, guided by local individuals and groups, is best able to devise the services most needed by the women and children who live there. The financial benefit from this form of prevention is significant. For every dollar spent on prenatal care, three dollars in health care costs can be saved after a baby is born. Childbirth costs are the biggest single item in our nation's health care bill: A normal delivery costs about $3,000; problem deliveries can run as high as $21,000, while a month in intensive care for a baby who has become addicted to drugs in the womb can cost $61,000.

In 1991, Healthy Start grants were awarded to organizations in 15 communities across the country, usually city or state health departments but sometimes private nonprofit groups, like the United Way of South Carolina. Four new Healthy Start special project sites will be selected later this year. For fiscal year 1994, $97.5 million was appropriated for comprehensive services for women and infants in the project sites. Each Healthy Start site must have a locally created consortium to direct efforts at the community wide project level. Typically, these consortia include representatives from every sector of the community—health care providers, clinics, schools, churches, neighborhood organizations, local businesses, and consumers of services.

Some of the creative features of Healthy Start include the way women are recruited to participate: In the Baltimore program, "Judy's Angels" range over the West Baltimore neighborhoods of Sandtown-Winchester and Harlem Park. The "angels" are the Healthy Start outreach workers supervised by Judy Washington, a 38-year-old resident of Sandtown-Winchester who is chief recruiter for the Healthy Start-Baltimore Project. She and her team of

Dr. McCann is director of the division of Healthy Start, Maternal and Child Health Bureau at the U.S. Public Health Service.

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Babies

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"angels" go door-to-door throughout the project area in search of pregnant women or women with infants up to six months old to urge them to enroll in the program.

On one occasion, Washington and her recruiters were driving through the target area in the project's van and spotted a pregnant woman sitting on the steps of a row house. After persuading her to go with them to the Healthy Start facility, they saw a 17-year-old woman emerge from the house holding a small infant. She turned out to be the first woman's daughter. Judy Washington told the pregnant grandmother, "We'll get her when we bring you back."

Mothers and pregnant women are not the only participants in Healthy Start. In East Chicago's Central High School, the Healthy Start Project of Lake County, Indiana, conducted weekly writing sessions in family relations class, encouraging teens to address the issues they face in their everyday lives.

One young man, who was reluctant to take part at first, wrote about his shame at being involved with drugs and gangs and fathering three children, all by different young women. He wrote that he had no emotional feelings for his babies. Challenged to write poems to both the babies and their mothers, the teenage father soon was the most active participant in the group. He wore buttons bearing his babies' pictures, improved his grades, gave up both gangs and drugs, and began visiting his children. He later got a summer job to help support them.

Integrating Programs

Other innovative elements of some of the Healthy Start programs include: on-site child care; integrating prenatal care with other programs, such as the Women, Infants and Children Supplemental Food program (WIC) and job training; increasing the number of culturally competent health care providers to ensure acceptable and effective care to racial minorities; and collaborating with the Food and Nutrition Division of the U.S. Department of Agriculture to establish a Farmer's Market that accepts food stamps from the residents of the community. The following are brief profiles of some of these programs:

- Washington, D.C. long has had the highest infant mortality rate in the nation, but in 1992 it declined to its lowest level in a decade. The most pronounced decreases in infant deaths occurred in the two sections of the city where Healthy Start has been sponsoring a door-to-door campaign by 25 local women to find pregnant neighbors and steer them toward prenatal care.
- Pittsburgh Healthy Start hired six core teams through a contract with a federally funded Community Health Center and established relationships with 27 nurse practitioners in the city schools to extend services such as outreach to pregnant teens.
- Cleveland Healthy Family/Healthy Start Project hired more than 150 community outreach workers to serve their neighborhoods after participation in a 12-week training program sponsored by the County/City Jobs Training and Partnership Act. The workers were offered subsidies through the county's Supplemental Employment Program.
- One of the programs in Chicago's Healthy Start Project focuses on mothers incarcerated in the Cook County Jail and, through family resource centers, provides information on breast feeding and offers substance abuse counseling and support groups at a central location.

Size and Language Problems

The size and complexity of the Healthy Start projects represent major challenges. With project areas encompassing either several rural counties or large sections of major urban centers, integration of services is often difficult. For example, the Northern Plains Healthy Start Project of the Aberdeen Area Indian reservations must serve 19 tribal sites situated across four states. Simultaneously, the service delivery issues—what services to provide, to whom and how—are supposed to be decided at the local neighborhood level, while collaboration at and between all levels of government is encouraged, thus increasing the complexity.

Another challenge confronting many of the programs stems from the tensions inherent in racial, ethnic, and class differences. Frequently these tensions arise when consumers feel alienated from health care providers, which may result in their refusing to seek services. In the Boston Healthy Start Initiative, the target area is a multi-ethnic community where cultural and linguistic competency among health care providers who work with Haitians and Asians became critical to the success of the program.

The collaborative effort Healthy Start promotes is essential to reducing infant mortality precisely because the problem itself is so complex. Infant mortality is exacerbated by such broad socioeconomic conditions as poverty, inadequate housing, unemployment, racism, drug abuse, and violence. No organization can solve such multifaceted problems by itself. For many low-income pregnant women, personal issues such as substance abuse and hopelessness compound the problem. Only a collaborative effort with the community can create the long-term vision needed to attack the infant mortality crisis from each of its many angles.

The successful strategies developed and implemented during the national Healthy Start Initiative will be useful to save babies in many other communities in the future. Those involved in local Healthy Start projects are concerned, however, about what will happen to their programs—and more important, the communities they serve—once the federal grants expire. But many project managers are confident that their programs have sufficiently demonstrated their effectiveness to attract funding from other sources that will enable them to continue their work beyond the federal mandate.

Let us hope that is so. For indeed, what better investment can we make than to help ensure that our most precious and vulnerable citizens grow up to be strong and healthy, and that they enrich our society? ■

May 1994

POLITICAL TRENDLETTER®

Inside This Issue:

- A Joint Center forum on the South African Election Support Project looks beyond that country's all-race elections.
- The newly created Corporation for National Service initiates its Summer of Safety and National Civilian Community Corps programs.
- While African Americans buy a large percentage of the Japanese cars sold in this country, they own few of the Japanese auto dealerships.
- **Across the Nation:** Robert Benham becomes presiding justice of Georgia's State Supreme Court; Lonna Hooks has been appointed secretary of state of New Jersey; State Senator Theo Mitchell makes a bid for lieutenant governor of South Carolina; in Texas black candidates are running for state comptroller and congressional seats in Austin, Houston, and Dallas.

A Hopeful Future for South Africa

The people of South Africa have spoken—all of them. The results of the long awaited, all-race elections have swept African National Congress leader **NELSON MANDELA** into his nation's presidency and established a new government. In this historic transfer of control, Mandela will lead a newly created National Assembly in the next phase of the democratization process—drafting a new constitution—because the ANC won the majority of the seats in the Assembly. While people around the world celebrate this extraordinary moment, South Africans must prepare for difficult new challenges in instituting an equitable, democratic society.

During the past year, the Joint Center made major contributions to the achievement of this historic event through its South African Election Support Project, funded by a contract with the U.S. Agency for International Development/South Africa. While most of the project's activities have been held in South Africa, several programs have been conducted in the United States. On April 12, for example, the Joint Center held a forum, "Voter Education, Violence, and the South African Elections," in Washington, D.C., to discuss prospects for South Africa's future in the wake of the elections. The audience, mainly experts on South Africa, policymakers, and journalists, heard **BILLIE MODISE**, executive director of the Johannesburg-based voter-education group Matla Trust, talk about the issues South Africans will face as they enter a new phase in their nation's history. Modise's comments were supplemented by those of Dr. **PEARL-ALICE MARSH**, director of the South African Election Support Project.

In order to move the country beyond its legacy of racism, Modise believes, the new South African political leadership must practice "effective consensus" on many of the issues the country now faces. For many months, factions among white right-wing groups and the Inkatha Freedom Party have intentionally disrupted the electoral process, and they could continue to be agents of disorder after the elections. Modise stressed that disagreements among black political parties and ethnic groups must be reconciled if democracy is to be achieved. This may mean making concessions to a white minority whom many blacks still see as oppressors. "I am black, and I am an African," Modise said. "But blacks should not be considered weak when we reach consensus with white South Africans. Blacks know that to proceed without consensus would not solve any problems, because whites are equally entitled to every inch of South African soil and opportunity. Self-interest by one ethnic group could become a problem for South Africa."

The mission of Matla Trust has been to raise voter awareness and maximize participation in the elections among

a largely illiterate or semi-literate populace of first-time voters who are poor, mostly female, and black. To reach this group, the Trust produced a 13-part television series and conducted a number of radio programs in various languages spoken by different ethnic groups. Among the innovative methods the Trust has employed to reach target audiences are cassette recordings with voter education messages that are played in taxis for commuters and improvisational theater where the mechanics of voting are played out on a stage. The Trust has also produced a 40-page comic book that depicts the election process in graphic detail in nine different languages.

To date, the Joint Center's South African Election Support Project has conducted three multiparty forums in South Africa in an effort both to help the new political parties compete in the all-race elections and to help reduce inter-party tensions. Said Marsh, "South Africans want desperately to have a stable, democratic government, and now the makings of such a government are within their reach." A fourth, post-election forum will assess the project's overall effectiveness. The project is being carried out in collaboration with the National Democratic Institute and the International Republican Institute.

National Service—Getting Things Done

"I'm afraid to go out at night," declared **MILDRED JACKSON** (not her real name), a 74-year-old resident of public housing in Southeast Washington, D.C., to **CURTIS HORTON**, coordinator of programs at the Senior Citizens Counseling and Delivery Service. Horton had invited Jackson to a 7:00 p.m. meeting to protest fare hikes on Washington's subway system. He says, "It's no use scheduling any event for seniors in the evening because they fear for their safety on the streets." That sense of fear is not unique to Mildred Jackson. Thousands of elderly Americans have become virtual prisoners in their own homes because they are afraid that if they walk to the corner grocery store, or the laundromat, or to pick up a prescription, they'll be mugged.

To help secure the safety of thousands of Americans like Mildred Jackson, the newly created Corporation for National Service has instituted President **BILL CLINTON**'s $10 million Summer of Safety plan to reduce crime. On April 28, the Corporation awarded 90 Summer of Safety project grants to 70 communities around the country. With a start date of June 21, the plan will involve approximately 7,000 citizens of all ages in projects that will last from eight to 10 weeks. Many summer workers will receive a minimum wage of about $170 a week, and half will also receive $1,000 awards that can be applied to college or vocational training. In one Summer of Safety project, 40 young people will join the Safety Service Corps Partnership in St. Louis to escort elderly public housing residents on shopping trips and excursions around their neighborhoods. In another, the New York City Police Department will expand its cadet program by 100 members to better patrol the city's parks and public housing areas.

The Summer of Safety program will precede the Corporation for National Service's September launching of AmeriCorps, the national service program that will mobilize thousands of citizen volunteers to address problems in the areas of public safety, education, human needs, and the environment. The National and Community Service Trust Act, signed into law by President Clinton last fall, established the Corporation which administers AmeriCorps. Two AmeriCorps programs are new—the AmeriCorps grants program and the National Civilian Community Corps. The third, Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA), is now 30 years old. In all, this collection of AmeriCorps programs will provide opportunities for 20,000 Americans to serve the nation by the end of this year. Referring to the three AmeriCorps programs, **ELI SEGAL**, executive director of the Corporation for National Service, says National service has the "potential to transform our troubled but wonderful land at the same time that it builds a new generation of responsible citizens."

National service in this country is not new. President **FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT** created the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s and President **JOHN F. KENNEDY** formed the Peace Corps in the 1960s. In his inaugural address, President Clinton called a new generation of Americans to seasons of service. Those who answer this most recent call will join national service teams that will be "doing the tough work of democracy," as Segal puts it, immunizing children, rehabilitating homes, supervising after-school activities, teaching adult literacy, and working with Head Start programs. These volunteers will receive a modest living allowance and, after a full year of service, each will be granted an education award of $4,725. Local AmeriCorps teams will be supported by grants from the Corporation's $155.5 million budget to sponsoring organizations such as nonprofit groups, academic institutions, and government entities.

Another new AmeriCorps program is the National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC), which will induct its

first members this June. While the mission of the NCCC is similar to that of the other AmeriCorps programs, its participants will comprise solely young adults from the ages of 18 to 24. These volunteers will be trained and housed on military bases in four regions over their 11-month program of service. In addition to lodging, meals, uniforms, health care, child care, and job skill training, NCCC volunteers will receive an $8,000 living allowance and an education award of $4,725. Living up to AmeriCorps' motto, "Getting Things Done," VISTA has recently assisted Americans in need in several communities over the last year. For example, in Chicago, VISTA volunteers boarded up abandoned buildings to prevent them from becoming crack houses. Last summer in South Texas, a crew of 87 VISTA volunteers, in partnership with the state health department, assisted in the immunization of over 100,000 young children against crippling diseases. And in the aftermath of the Los Angeles earthquake, several groups of volunteers helped distribute food and provided information to the public about shelters. In order to accommodate inquiries from those interested in applying to any of these AmeriCorps programs, the Corporation for National Service has set up an 800 number: 1-800-94ACORPS.

Black Dealers of Japanese Cars Are Scarce

Japanese automobile plants operating in the U.S. have been improving their record of hiring African Americans and women. According to U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission statistics, in 1984 only 1.2 percent of the jobs at Honda's plant in Marysville, Ohio, went to African Americans, and only 12.5 percent to women. By 1991, Honda had increased the presence of black employees at the plant to 10.2 percent and women to 32.5 percent. The representation of African American workers is also increasing at other Japanese auto plants in the United States. For example, at Nissan's plant in Smyrna, Tennessee, 17 percent of the employees are African American, virtually matching the proportion of African Americans in the local community which is 18 percent. In 1988, African Americans were 14 percent of Nissan's workforce. The picture was not as bright for black-owned Japanese car dealerships, however. While studies indicate that African Americans make up between 10 and 20 percent of the U.S. market for Japanese cars, they own only a handful of Japanese automobile franchises (see chart). Of the total of 6,920 Japanese car dealerships in the United States, only 22—that is, 0.3 percent—were owned by black Americans. Blacks fare slightly better among the 19,005 Chrysler, Ford, and General Motors dealerships. They own 333, or just under two percent of the franchises selling cars made by the big three American auto makers.

—This article was contributed by Yasuhiro Idei, a visiting journalist at the Joint Center from Japan and former correspondent with the Tokyo-based Nihon Keizai Simbun *newspaper that reports on business and economics.*

Black-Owned Automobile Dealerships by Franchise, 1992

	All Dealerships	Black Dealers	Percent Black
American			
Chrysler	4,923	76	1.5
Ford	5,144	181	3.5
GM	8,938	76	0.8
Japanese			
Honda	1,287	2	0.1
Isuzu	599	4	0.6
Mazda	908	2	0.2
Mitsubishi	520	1	0.1
Nissan	1,212	2	0.1
Subaru	722	1	0.2
Suzuki	332	0	0.0
Toyota	1,340	10	0.7

Source: *National Association of Minority Automobile Dealers*
Note: GM includes Saturn; Honda includes Acura; Nissan includes Infiniti; and Toyota includes Lexus.

Across the Nation

GEORGIA: Justice **ROBERT BENHAM** was sworn in March 3 as presiding justice making him the second-ranking judge on the Georgia Supreme Court. Among his duties, Benham will preside over the court in the absence of the chief justice, **WILLIS B. HUNT**. Benham became the first African American to be appointed to the Georgia Supreme Court in 1989. He previously served as a judge on the Georgia Court of Appeals.

Benham is a graduate of Tuskegee University and holds a law degree from the University of Georgia and a master of laws degree from the University of Virginia.

SOUTH CAROLINA: Black State Senator **THEO MITCHELL** (Greenville), who ran unsuccessfully for the Democratic nomination for governor of South Carolina in 1990, is currently seeking his party's nomination for lieutenant governor. (Mitchell received 31 percent of the vote in the Democratic gubernatorial primary four years ago.) Three white candidates will also be in the August 9 Democratic primary. They are former Congresswoman **LIZ PATTERSON** from Spartanburg, **INEZ TENENBAUM**, an attorney from Columbia, and political consultant **PHIL NOBLE** from Charleston. A recent survey conducted by Mason-Dixon Political/Media Research, Inc., placed Patterson and Mitchell first and second, respectively, among the voters. While the other candidates have raised far more money than Mitchell, his high name recognition and strong support among South Carolina's black voters (about 30 percent of the state's total but a higher percentage of Democratic voters), are likely to propel him into a runoff election among the top two vote-getters.

Senator Mitchell has been an outspoken critic of national welfare reform legislation, calling President Clinton's two-year cutoff proposal "politically expedient." He has also been a forceful advocate of environmental protection, leading a fight against extending a state permit for a nuclear waste site at Barnwell, a community located in the Southwest part of the state. A 10-year veteran of the South Carolina Senate, Mitchell formerly served in the state house of representatives for five terms.

TEXAS: Republican **TERESA DOGGETT**, an Austin businesswoman, will attempt to become the first African American to be elected to a statewide office in Texas when she faces Democratic incumbent Comptroller **JOHN SHARP** in November. The comptroller collects state revenues. A self-described conservative who ran unopposed in her party's March 8 primary, Doggett has hired GOP political consultant **EDWARD ROLLINS** as an advisor to her campaign, and she claims Senate Minority Leader **BOB DOLE**, former Republican National Chairman **CLAYTON YEUTTER**, and former Attorney General **ED MEESE** as honorary advisors.

Doggett was a staff attorney in the Office of the General Counsel at the U.S. Department of Agriculture and an official in the Department's Office of International Programs and University Affairs during the Carter administration. She is currently president of a marketing firm that advises clients who sell turboprop and corporate jet aircraft, among other products, in the international marketplace.

Doggett is not the only African American Republican woman seeking high office in Texas this year. **LUCY CAIN**, an AT&T employee who lost a bid for Congress in 1992, will challenge first-term Democratic Congresswoman **EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON** in a rematch for the majority-black 30th district in Dallas. Two years ago, Johnson defeated Cain with 72 percent of the vote. Both candidates were renominated by their respective parties this year without opposition.

In the April 12 runoff, **JO BAYLOR** won the Republican nomination for the 10th congressional district. The Austin district has been represented by Democrat **J.J. "JAKE" PICKLE** for the past 31 years. His retirement drew prominent Democrats into the race, with the nomination going to Texas Supreme Court Justice **LLOYD DOGGETT** who is white. Baylor, the president of a financial management firm, is considered a long shot in this overwhelmingly Democratic district that is 10 percent black.

Former Houston City Councilwoman **BEVERLEY CLARK**, who ran as a conservative Democrat, failed in her attempt to win the party's nomination for the 25th congressional district, losing a runoff election to **KEN BENTSEN**, a nephew of Treasury Secretary **LLOYD BENTSEN**. Clark had outpaced Bentsen by 37 percent to 29 percent of the vote in the March 8 primary, but he won the runoff by a 63 percent to 37 percent margin after getting the endorsement of incumbent **MIKE ANDREWS**, who ran unsuccessfully for the U.S. Senate. Clark's defeat was blamed in large part on her anti-abortion position and on her attempts to paint Bentsen as too liberal—this despite the fact that Clinton carried the 25th district in the 1992 presidential elections by a margin of 47 to 36 percent over then-President **GEORGE BUSH** who has a residence in Houston.

And finally, Dallas lawyer **RONALD KIRK** took the oath of office April 4, becoming the second African American to be appointed secretary of state in Texas. Kirk, sworn in on the anniversary of the assassination of Dr. **MARTIN LUTHER KING**, remarked that Dr. King's struggle for the right to vote is honored by placing an African American in an administrative position which oversees the Texas election laws. The first African American secretary of state in Texas was **MYRA McDANIEL** who served from 1983 to 1986.

Reinventing HUD

From Public Housing to Emergency Relief, Housing and Urban Development's Number Two Man Discusses the Department's Mission

On March 16, the Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Deputy Secretary Terrence R. Duvernay was guest speaker at the Joint Center. Mr. Duvernay's professional background is extensive. He has been: Executive Director, Georgia Housing and Finance Authority, (1991-1993); Executive Director, Michigan State Housing Development Authority, (1983-1991); Deputy Regional Administrator, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Seattle, (1981-1983); Area Manager, New Orleans Area Office, Department of Housing and Urban Development, (1978-1981); Chief of Staff, Department of Housing and Urban Development, late 1970s.

I came to HUD knowing what it used to be, but it's different now. It's a smaller HUD in terms of resources. We had a budget of about $33 billion dollars and a staff of 13,000 when I left in 1983. Last year we were lucky to receive about $25 billion, and the staff has been reduced. At the same time, we have more programs today than we did before, despite the fact that we have fewer dollars and fewer people. To respond to these conditions, we've had to become more focused.

At the beginning of this administration, when President Clinton and HUD Secretary Henry Cisneros first came into office, they realized that HUD was one department that needed remaking and rebuilding. So we spent a year reinventing the department. Never was reinventing more needed than at HUD. It needed to be reinvigorated and turned on its head just to shake the cobwebs out. We had systems problems that the General Accounting Office talked about. We had problems that the Inspector General talked about. We had studies that talked about the major problems at HUD. Part of what we did was make people happy to work there again, but the other part was to make the place work.

Former HUD Secretary Jack Kemp had told Henry Cisneros that the worst thing that he was going to have to contend with during his four years as secretary was the employee labor union. So we went out and talked to employees and created a new management-labor relationship that preceded the Vice President's Labor Management Council Agreement.

Regarding the department's mission, we've created a new set of priorities geared to turning the department around. Our focus is on HUD's customers, those who use the agency's programs. We are consumer-oriented and are driven by the need to provide effective service. We are also trying to create partnerships with local and state governments, as well as state housing finance authorities.

To be more effective and avoid duplicated effort, we in the government have to talk to each other a lot more. We are separated by more than the buildings that we work in. The President has put several coordinating mechanisms in place with the creation of the Domestic Policy Council, which meets every Monday, to force a dialogue among major federal agencies. We have been cooperating with the departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, Agriculture, and Commerce on a variety of projects. We are also working with the Attorney General and financial regulatory agencies to develop fair lending practices and fair housing opportunities, an effort that affects all of us.

Public Housing

We have a new mission that says we have to turn around public housing, as we know it today, by the year 2000. To do that, we have formed a new office for severely distressed public housing developments and have earmarked a pot of money to begin to do something about it. The President promised in his presidential campaign to do just that. He promised empowerment zones and enterprise communities—all geared to try and reinvigorate inner-city communities. We want to be a little better at economic integration in public housing. But we also want to enable people to own their own homes.

Public housing was not envisioned to be the last stop that a family makes. We want public housing developments to be communities—we don't want them to be projects—we don't want them to be stigmatized. At the same time, we shouldn't assume that a family which starts in public housing should stay there forever. You want people to move out. I think we recognize the need to create opportunities for people who want to move to actually do so.

Preparing for Disasters

Our first summer at HUD (1993) we were faced with the Midwest flood. We learned from that experience how to react during a crisis. So, by the time we got to Los Angeles in the aftermath of the February earthquake, I think we had learned a lot about what it takes to respond to disaster and about disaster preparedness. When the earthquake hit, Secretary Cisneros was in Washington, making an announcement at a local university. Once he was informed about the earthquake, he went straight to Andrews Air Force Base, got on a plane, and flew to L.A. where he directed the relief effort. ■

Mr. Duvernay is a member of the steering committee for the Joint Center's Executive Leadership Seminar, a program established for African American appointees in the Clinton administration.

Change Welfare With Compassion

A Survey of Black Attitudes on Welfare Reform Revealed Skepticism About Time Limits and Support for Public Employment

by Katherine McFate

Perhaps no public policy program pushes as many emotional buttons with Americans as welfare, specifically Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), the primary mechanism for providing support to poor families with children. Attitudes on the current welfare system and appropriate directions of reform are intimately tied to an individual's views about family, work, and the proper role of government. Moreover, welfare has a strong racial subtext: Although the majority of all welfare recipients are white and Hispanic, most long-term users and unmarried teenage mothers (the group that most people think of when they visualize a welfare recipient) are black. In short, attitudes toward welfare and welfare reform are grounded in views on race, as well as deeply held opinions based on people's own value systems. Unfortunately, these "value systems" often obscure the complicated practical questions that are involved in redesigning income support for the poor.

This was one of the observations that emerged from a set of focus groups conducted in the fall of 1993. The focus groups were commissioned as part of a project on public attitudes toward welfare and welfare reform in which the Joint Center collaborated with four other organizations: the National Council of La Raza, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, the Children's Defense Fund, and the Center on Law and Social Policy. Results from the eight focus groups (two were comprised exclusively of blacks), revealed that voters had strong negative feelings about the welfare system and initially felt that just about any kind of change would be an improvement on the current system.

This critical view changed, however, when participants were offered real scenarios involving people in a variety of circumstances. After they had been asked to formulate policies for each scenario, the focus groups began to recognize that the welfare system needs to be reformed to take into account people's different needs and resources. Although they wanted everyone who received assistance to try their best to improve their situations, they realized that individual capabilities and life circumstances varied greatly. The black focus groups tended to reach this position more quickly than the white focus groups, but, by the end of each focus group session, most of the participants concluded that redesigning the welfare system would be a much harder task than they had initially believed.

The focus groups were followed by an in-depth telephone survey of 1,020 registered voters (102 blacks, 824 non-Hispanic whites, 63 Hispanics, 5 Asians, and 26 "other" or "no response") in November, 1993. As with the focus groups, the vast majority of both black and white respondents were extremely critical of the current system. However, most of this group felt that the biggest problem with welfare is not that the government spends too much money, but that it spends it the wrong way. And three quarters of both blacks and whites favored redesigning the welfare system to help people move into the labor force, even if it costs a lot more money in the short run.

Indeed, about 50 percent of both blacks and whites in the telephone survey said that helping people get off the welfare rolls and into the work force should be one of the most important goals of reform. This is by far the most popular response of both groups: People believe that welfare reform should be about getting people into work. The second most important goal listed by blacks was making sure that poor children received the support that they needed. Over a third listed this as an important goal of welfare reform, and a quarter listed "strengthening families and family values" as an important goal.

Since the majority of whites believe that the family breakdown is the major cause of poverty, it is not surprising that they, too, support "strengthening families" as a welfare reform goal. However, whites were more likely to choose two other reform goals—"ending long-term dependence on welfare as a way of life" and "eliminating fraud and abuse"—before mentioning children.

There was a surprising degree of consensus among black and white respondents regarding the problems with the current system, the goals of reform, and the importance of work (See box at end of article).

Poverty Caused by Economic Circumstances

Where blacks and whites differed greatly was in their perceptions of the causes of poverty and the state of the economy in general. Blacks were much more likely than whites to strongly agree with the survey statement "many working people are just a paycheck away from poverty" (66 percent of blacks compared to 43 percent of whites), and "it's harder today than it used to be for people to work their way out of poverty" (57 percent of blacks compared to 45 percent of whites). Many of the black voters who were surveyed (56 percent) felt that poverty is caused more often by circumstances beyond people's control than by individuals not doing enough to help themselves. By contrast, whites were more likely to attribute poverty to a

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Welfare

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lack of individual effort.

When asked which factors were very important in causing poverty, the most common response among blacks was the shortage of jobs. Over two-thirds of the African American respondents listed this as a very important cause of poverty. Over half also cited the following factors: too many jobs are part-time or low wage; poor people receiving an inadequate education; the breakdown of families and family values; absent parents not paying child support.

By contrast, the only factor that most white respondents thought was an important cause of poverty was family breakdown. Blacks clearly have a more economically oriented analysis of the root causes of poverty while whites are more likely to think poverty is the result of "bad values" or a lack of motivation. [A 1988 Joint Center survey of 643 blacks and over 700 whites paralleled these differing perceptions. When black respondents were asked the primary reason poor blacks are poor, the most common response was 'job discrimination' (30 percent), followed by 'not enough education' (21 percent), and 'shortage of jobs.' The most common response among white respondents was 'lack of motivation' (35 percent), followed by 'not enough education' (32 percent).]

Make Work Pay

A concern with economic conditions and a heightened sense of the difficulty of negotiating the labor market make blacks strong supporters of reform options aimed at improving the low-wage labor market. While a majority of all voters favored raising the minimum wage (from $4.25 to $5.00 an hour), support among black voters was more widespread and stronger: 77 percent of blacks and 51 percent of whites strongly favored raising the minimum wage. (Overall, 91 percent of blacks and 73 percent of whites favored welfare reform.)

There was also widespread support for creating public service jobs—86 percent of both blacks and whites supported the idea that "the government (should) provide public service jobs to poor people who want to work but can't find private sector jobs." Here again, blacks felt more strongly about job creation—73 percent strongly favored providing public service jobs compared with only 56 percent of whites.

Both blacks and whites agreed that removing any existing policies that would deter a person from seeking employment is a very important part of welfare reform. For example, about 90 percent of both groups wanted to guarantee that welfare recipients could not lose their health insurance once they left the welfare program and got a job. A majority of the respondents would pay for welfare recipients' transportation to work. Ninety-five percent of both races also favored providing subsidized child care to poor mothers who want to work, and over 80 percent supported allowing poor mothers to use welfare benefits to subsidize their low wages. In other words, Americans are soundly in favor of proposals that encourage and reward the poor who are trying to work.

Time Limits

One of the most controversial welfare reform proposals concerns limiting the length of time a family can receive benefits. There was a broad disparity among blacks and whites on this issue. When voters were asked whether or not they favored a two-year limit on welfare benefits, 68 percent of whites replied that they do; only 48 percent of blacks favored a two-year time limit, and 28 percent of blacks strongly opposed such a proposal.

Respondents were also presented with two different time-limit proposals. The first stated: "After two years, benefits would be ended for all able-bodied recipients, and the government would not provide a job." Almost 75 percent of black respondents opposed this plan, while 59 percent of whites favored it. Respondents were then asked whether a plan that cut people off welfare after two years and did not allow them to receive welfare for the next three years is too harsh. Almost 70 percent of black respondents considered the plan too harsh, compared to less than 50 percent of whites. Over two-thirds of blacks thought that only "some" or "a few" of the individuals whose benefits would be cut under this plan would be able to find employment. Only 51 percent of whites had this view. In fact, 44 percent of whites thought "nearly all" or "most" of those who lose their benefits after two years would be able to find private-sector employment.

If the government provides public-service employment to those unable to find work after two years, time limits were viewed as acceptable to survey participants. Over 90 percent of both blacks and whites favored a two-year limit on welfare benefits if recipients are offered a job at the end of this time. And, when asked to choose between either two years and no benefits or two years and a public-service job, 91 percent of blacks and 83 percent of whites chose the public-service alternative.

Overall, black and white respondents shared many of the same criticisms of the current welfare system, and both groups agree that welfare should be reformed to encourage the poor to work. However, blacks did not believe that everyone who wants to work will be able to find employment. They recognized that many poor people have a difficult time competing in today's labor market and that they may require large investments in education and training to become "employable." These investments may have to be made for longer than two years.

But even with large doses of training and educational assistance, blacks were skeptical of the private sector's ability to provide jobs for welfare recipients. Blacks were much more pessimistic about the quantity and quality of jobs that will be available to welfare recipients, and believe that racial discrimination continues to restrict employment opportunities for minorities. As a result, they believe the government will have to create jobs if all welfare recipients are required to work as a result of reforms. ■

(See box on back page)

Summary of Attitudes on Welfare

A majority of both blacks and whites agree that . . .

• the welfare system is not working (78% of blacks, 86% of whites).

• the majority of recipients "do not deserve" to be on welfare, and the majority "never get off welfare" (approximately 75% of blacks and whites alike).

• the biggest problem with welfare is not that the government spends too much money but that it spends it the wrong way.

• the goal of welfare reform should be to get people off welfare rolls and into the workforce, including improving and expanding education and job-training programs.

• time limits on welfare are a good idea if recipients receive job training and, once cut off from benefits, are required to work at a government service job (90%-plus of both blacks and whites)

• time limits should not apply to recipients who are . . .
— mothers working parttime at a low-wage job (83% blacks, 77% whites).
— mothers with preschool children (81% blacks, 71% whites).

• welfare reform should include the following:
— the government should provide more and better education and job training for welfare recipients (55% of blacks, 41% of whites).
— the minimum wage should be raised to $5.00 an hour (favored by 91% of blacks, 73% of whites).
— welfare payments should not increase for mothers who bear children while on welfare (58% of blacks, 70% of whites).
— subsidized child care should be provided for mothers who want to work (95% of both blacks and whites).
— tougher measures are needed to collect child support from absentee fathers (86% of blacks, 96% of whites).

Blacks and whites are likely to disagree over whether . . .

• the most important cause of poverty is a "shortage of jobs" (most often cited cause among blacks) or "family breakdown" (most often cited among whites).

• many people on welfare would like to work (53% of blacks agree, 22% of whites).

• people need more job opportunities in order to get off welfare (18% of blacks agree, 10% of whites).

• most welfare mothers would take jobs if they could find child care (53% of blacks agree; 32% of whites).

•time limits would be harmful because:
— there aren't enough jobs for all the people who would be cut off (61% of blacks vs. 24% of whites strongly agree).
— homelessness would grow worse among families with children (60% of blacks vs. 25% of whites strongly agree).
— it's not fair to cut off benefits without guaranteeing a job (53% of blacks vs. 16% of whites strongly agree).

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