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# FOCUS

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

## Liberals Stand Up

*Americans for Democratic Action Joins With Members of Congress and Progressive Groups to Draft a Liberal Platform for the 21st Century*

## Setting the Record Straight on Black Soldiers

*A Recent Study May Restore the Combat Reputation of the All-Black 24th Infantry Regiment That Fought in the Korean War*

## Nigeria—Blood and Oil

*A Broad Coalition of Groups Stage Human Rights and Environmental Protests Against the Nigerian Military Government and Shell Oil*

POLITICAL TRENDLETTER

PERSPECTIVE

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# Counting Everyone in 2000

Undercounting minority populations has plagued the government for a very long time, perhaps since the first census in 1790. For at the last two decades, the Joint Center and many statisticians have argued that the Census Bureau could statistically adjust the population count to compensate for the undercount. But the Bureau stubbornly refused to make such an adjustment until now.

For the year 2000 Census, the Bureau has decided to use statistical sampling techniques to reduce the large undercount of minorities. Having finally come to its senses, the Bureau now finds that an adjusted census, once rejected as being impossible and unconstitutional, is not only doable and fair but will cost nearly $1 billion less to boot.

The Census Bureau's recent decision is in stark contrast to the policy attendant to the 1990 census, which grossly undercounted minorities. Much of that undercount could have been prevented. In February 1989, the Joint Center brought together 70 statisticians, researchers, policymakers, community leaders, and Census Bureau officials for a day-long conference which predicted yet another undercount in 1990 and which proposed expanded outreach to minority communities and statistical adjustments as compensatory steps to assure a more equitable head count.

As predicted, the undercount did occur. Bush administration Commerce Secretary Robert Mosbacher acknowledged that African Americans were undercounted by 4.8 percent. But despite protests and lawsuits by cities and civil rights groups, Mosbacher refused to make any adjustment in the count even though the technology to do so was available. As a result, minorities and cities were shortchanged tens of billions of dollars annually in Federal funding allocations. They were also shortchanged in the apportionment of seats in Congress and state and local legislative bodies.

The Joint Center began protesting the disproportionate and disastrous undercount in 1972. In an article that appeared in the May 1973 issue of *FOCUS*, entitled "Census Undercount Hurts Blacks," we reported: "The U.S. Bureau of the Census has acknowledged that its 1970 census failed to count at least 1.88 million black people in the United States. But the Bureau declared it has no intention of applying its corrected figures to the formulas by which the government decides how much money from revenue-sharing and other programs goes to each locality." That year, I wrote a letter to then Treasury secretary George Shultz requesting that he revise the general revenue-sharing allocations to communities with large numbers of black people. He declined. In subsequent issues, *FOCUS* reported that the 1980 Census missed 1.7 million black people, almost 6 percent of the total black population.

We trust that nothing like that will happen after the next count. By employing the "Integrated Coverage Measurement," increased sampling will be used to gather information on minority households that don't return census surveys sent out in the mail or that are missed by census-takers who make personal visits. This method will be fairer and will avoid the confusion involved in releasing both adjusted and unadjusted population figures. In addition, by using the new method, the cost of conducting the 2000 census is expected to be cheaper than the 1990 tally ($3.9 billion vs. $4.8 billion).

The process of determining the size and composition of the U.S. population should be fair and accurate, yielding figures in which everyone can have confidence. The Bureau's commitment to counting everyone in this country is overdue but welcome. The Joint Center is proud to have played a small part in its conversion. ■



PRESIDENT

FOCUS
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# Liberals Stand Up

## *Americans for Democratic Action Joins With Members of Congress and Progressive Groups to Draft a Liberal Platform for the 21st Century*

*by David C. Ruffin*

On April 25, under the auspices of the Americans for Democratic Action (ADA), a collection of men and women who unabashedly call themselves liberals participated in a special hearing on Capitol Hill to formulate a "Liberal Platform for the 21st Century." The testimony of the witnesses will be used to draft a liberal agenda the ADA will adopt at its national convention on June 22 in Washington. Armed with that agenda, ADA officials hope to influence the platform of the Democratic National Convention in August and focus the campaign debates on progressive issues before the fall elections. The ADA, an independent Washington-based political organization founded in 1947, is dedicated to promoting social and economic justice. Founders included Eleanor Roosevelt and former Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey.

The conveners of the April 25 hearing comprised a who's who of progressive members of Congress and veterans of liberal causes, including Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) members Louis Stokes (D–Ohio), Maxine Waters (D–Cal.), Cynthia McKinney (D–Ga.), and newcomer Jesse Jackson, Jr. (D-Ill.), as well as representatives Barney Frank (D–Mass.), Esteban Torres (D–Cal.), Patsy Mink (D–Haw.), and Bernard Sanders of Vermont, the House's only independent member. Also among the conveners were venerable political figures acclaimed for their statesmanship in past decades: former Congressmen Augustus F. Hawkins (a past member of the CBC) and Don Edwards from California, both of whom successfully championed civil rights legislation from the early 1960s through the 1980s; Don Fraser, also a former congressman and recently retired mayor of Minneapolis; and former Missouri state senator Harriet Woods, whose close but unsuccessful bids for the U.S. Senate in 1982 and 1986 helped lead the way for the Democratic women who have recently been elected to the Senate.

Since its founding, the ADA has been an ardent advocate for civil rights and civil liberties, nuclear arms control, a higher minimum wage, and reordered federal budget priorities. It is famous for its Annual Voting Record, which grades members of Congress based on a liberal quotient.

ADA president Jack Sheinkman, chairman of the Amalgamated Bank of New York, presided over the hearing and said the organization stands for a "social compact that provides a safety net for the most vulnerable—the young, the poor, the sick, the old, and the unemployed." But Sheinkman, past president of the Amalgamated Clothing & Textile Workers Union, warned that the stakes involving governance in this country are as critical as those in 1932 during the Depression "because the Republican Party is led by a radical conservative extreme that wants to turn the clock back to a laissez-faire era in which corporate America ruled and a limited few benefitted and most other Americans were left to fend for themselves."

### Fear of Losing Jobs

The management of the economy was a major focus of the hearing. Lee Price, Democratic staff director of the Joint Economic Committee of Congress, asserted that the last three years show that the idea that Republicans are better at managing the economy than Democrats is a myth. "Using any measure—industrial output, unemployment, deficit reduction, inflation," he said, "the economy has performed better during the Clinton administration than under Presidents Bush or Reagan."

But Price also said that the economy needs improvement. Wages among middle-income Americans have been stagnant for two decades, while wages among low-income workers have been falling. While incomes have declined among middle- and low-end wage earners, those who benefit from investments have increased their wealth dramatically as the stock market has experienced record growth in the last two years.

Recently, better-educated white-collar and older workers have been laid off at higher rates. The fear of losing one's job is higher than at any other time in recent memory, and with it comes a fear of asking for a raise. Price said that downsizing and layoffs by major corporations are unchecked because of the decline of traditional countervailing forces such as labor unions, community organizations, and a government committed to protecting working Americans. Former Congressman Augustus Hawkins said that if one counts Americans out of work, those who have given up looking for work, part-time workers who want full-time jobs, and the temporarily employed, the true rate of unemployed and underemployed is two to three times higher than the official rate (of 5.4 percent in April).

### Full Employment Over a Balanced Budget

Lee Price called upon the government to implement policies that improve education and job training. He said that there are numerous benefits to increasing the job skills in the workforce—it contributes to a decline of job loss, more workers are prepared to take new jobs, and involuntary unemployment is less traumatic. Furthermore, better

*Continued on page 4*

Mr. Ruffin is the editor of *FOCUS*.

## *Liberals*

*Continued from page 3*

trained workers are able to acquire better health and retirement benefits. John Dodds, director of the Philadelphia Unemployment Project, also called for the expansion in the number of public service jobs in the areas of transportation, day-care, education, and health services. But he distinguished these jobs from workfare, or the exchange of work for welfare benefits, which he called involuntary servitude. Tom Schlesinger, director of the Southern Finance Project, said the government should use its authority to adopt policies that enhance investment in people, such as investments in pensions, communities, and home-grown economic development.

While a great deal has been made of balancing the federal budget by the year 2002, Dean Baker, an economist at the Washington-based Economic Policy Institute, testified that reducing unemployment was far more important. Congressional Budget Office figures show that balancing the budget would yield an estimated gain of $200 billion in the gross domestic product over seven years, but Baker projects that a 1 percent reduction in the rate of unemployment would reduce the federal deficit by $400 billion over the same period. It would also result in a 2 percent drop in the rate of unemployment among African Americans and a 6 percent decrease in joblessness among black teens.

Former Congressman Hawkins, the driving force behind the Full Employment Act of 1978, also known as the Humphrey-Hawkins Act, demanded that the Act's provisions be enforced by the federal government. The measure requires the government to promulgate fiscal and monetary policies that reduce unemployment to an interim rate of 3 percent. Ultimately, in order to achieve that goal, the government should be an employer of last resort.

The measure was modelled after President Harry Truman's Employment Act of 1946. But the former congressman said that the Hawkins-Humphrey Act has been essentially ignored by federal institutions. Rep. Jerrold Nadler (D-N.Y.) charged that the Federal Reserve Board has routinely undercut growth in employment by raising interest rates to hold down inflation. Hawkins said that the Federal Reserve Board increased interest rates seven times in 1994 to slow down the economy, a practice which the Full Employment Act prohibits as a trade-off for reducing unemployment. Hawkins said the government should look back to Truman's economic stimulus measures of four decades ago. They resulted in a 5 percent growth in the economy, with a reduction of unemployment to 3 percent with just 3 percent inflation.

### Needed: A Code of Conduct for Arms Sales

Another issue of concern to the hearing conveners was post-Cold War national security priorities and prudent use of defense dollars. Gordon Clark of the Washington-based Pentagon monitoring group Peace Action was alarmed at what he described as a "wasteful Pentagon bureaucracy, corrupt defense contractors, and out-of-control arms sales that continue to breed international conflict."

He also charged that despite reductions in the defense budget from the Reagan years, the United States still spends too much on the military in this post-Cold War era when the armed forces of potential adversaries are no match for those of the United States and their military budgets are minuscule by comparison. To illustrate his point, Clark placed a chart on an easel with a thick black bar to represent the spending of each of the following potential adversaries: North Korea at $6 billion, Cuba, Iraq, and Syria at $3 billion each, Iran at $2 billion, and Libya at $1 billion (the source of these figure is the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies). To represent the Pentagon's 1996 defense authorization of $267 billion in the same graph measure, Clark had to extend a piece of black tape the length of the room. What is more, according to Clark, billions are wasted on corrupt procurement transactions since the Defense Department has not been subject to the same fiscal scrutiny and legislative oversight as other government agencies. "Over the past 15 years, the Pentagon made $30 billion in payouts with no record of where the money went," he said. "One can only imagine how House Speaker Newt Gingrich would react if the Environmental Protection Agency had misplaced $30 billion and had no record of where it went."

Much of the spending is the result of growing trade in American arms. Although the Gulf War proved that American combat aircraft are without peer, the Pentagon plans to spend an estimated $70 billion in coming years on the development of the F-22, a new generation high-performance fighter plane that would incorporate stealth technology. Clark said one of the ways the F-22 project is being rationalized is that it would neutralize an arms race the United States has "waged against itself" by selling advanced fighters to countries like Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Egypt, Pakistan, and Turkey that, in the future, may have a change in government that could be hostile to this country. U.S. arms sales to friendly Third World countries have also induced some of their hostile neighbors to secure advanced combat aircraft from other sources, making the regions more militarily ominous. In either scenario, because of an arms trade policy that conflicts with American security interests, U.S. military forces could one day take casualties inflicted by an adversary equipped with advanced fighter planes supplied by the United States.

Cynthia McKinney denied that the focus on the Defense Department was aimed at weakening American defenses. "We have international commitments and we cannot retreat from the world, but our probe of the Defense Department is a question of priorities," she said. McKinney is the sponsor of the Code of Conduct for Arms Transfers Act, which would prohibit U.S. arms sales to countries that are undemocratic, guilty of major human rights abuses, or at war with their neighbors or their own people.

Economic equity and post-Cold War defense policy are certain to be thorny issues for any candidate running for office this year. Whether the ADA will succeed in getting its concerns about these issues into the Democratic platform and onto campaign debate agendas remains to be seen. ■

May 1996

# POLITICAL TRENDLETTER

## Inside this issue:

- Harvey Gantt wins the North Carolina Democratic primary and the right to face Republican Senate incumbent Jesse Helms in the fall.
- A black political action committee helps fatten Harvey Gantt's campaign war chest.
- Former state legislator Julia Carson wins the Democratic nomination in Indiana's majority-white 10th district to succeed retiring U.S. Rep. Andy Jacobs.
- Juanita McDonald, the former mayor of Carson, California, is elected to replace Congressman Walter Tucker, who was convicted of bribery.
- Rep. Cardiss Collins' retirement completes a changing of the guard among Chicago's black members of the U.S. House of Representatives.

## Harvey Gantt Wins North Carolina Primary

On May 7, black former Charlotte mayor **HARVEY GANTT** won a second shot at unseating four-term U.S. Senator **JESSE HELMS** by defeating **CHARLIE SANDERS** in North Carolina's Democratic senatorial primary. Gantt, an architect and Charlotte's first black mayor, narrowly lost to Helms in 1990 after a campaign dominated by Helms' use of widely condemned racial appeals. Sanders, the former CEO of Glaxo, a multinational pharmaceutical company based in North Carolina, has vowed to support Gantt in the general election.

Gantt beat Sanders handily, by a margin of 53 to 42 percent, even though just days before the primary vote a Mason-Dixon poll gave Gantt only a slight lead (45 to 39 percent) and showed 16 percent of the populace undecided. Early on, Gantt had led by as much as 30 points. Although Sanders and Gantt had similar stands on many issues, Sanders, who poured hundreds of thousands of dollars of his own money into the race, campaigned on his "electability," suggesting that being white would give him a better chance against Helms in the general election (North Carolina's population is 22 percent black).

Helms' use of racially divisive and misleading advertising in the final weeks of the 1990 campaign destroyed Gantt's lead in the polls and won Helms reelection. Despite this fact, Gantt has always rejected the idea that race should be a factor in deciding the Democratic nomination. This year he has conducted a campaign based on economic populism, appealing to working- and middle-class families and senior citizens. Gantt has emphasized assistance for families with college tuition expenses, protection of Medicare and Head Start, and opposition to corporate policies and mergers that result in job losses for workers. Gantt's broad statewide support among Democratic voters, both black and white, indicates that he may be an even stronger candidate this year than in the last election.

In the primary, Gantt won in nearly every section of the state and carried a sizable percentage of the white vote, despite being outspent two to one by his wealthy opponent. Even more important, his percentage of the primary vote was substantially larger than in 1990, particularly in the eastern part of the state.

When asked about his chances against Helms, Gantt replied, "I'm six years older, six years wiser, six years grayer, and six years tougher." By all accounts, he will need all the experience he can muster to defeat Helms, who at age 74 has spent the last 24 years in the U.S. Senate and remains one of Congress's most visible and

controversial archconservatives. An undying supporter of the tobacco industry, a major industry in the Carolinas, Helms is nevertheless best known for what he's against: civil rights, foreign aid, the National Endowment for the Arts, and reproductive rights for women.

Gantt, 52, attended Iowa State University before returning to his native South Carolina in 1962 to become the first black student at Clemson University in South Carolina. He graduated with honors in 1965 and went on to earn a master's degree in city planning from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. In 1972, he founded Gantt Huberman Architects in Charlotte, North Carolina, a firm that has grown to become one of the most prominent design firms in the southeast. Gantt was elected twice to the Charlotte City Council and served as mayor for two terms from 1983 to 1987. He is a member of the Democratic National Committee and the North Carolina State Democratic Executive Council.

With the focus of his campaign shifting to the fall election, Gantt has challenged Helms to come home to North Carolina and debate him on the issues. Meanwhile, Gantt must continue to raise money if he is to keep up with Helms. Although he has done well in this area so far, raising over $2 million, he'll have to raise much more if the 1990 election is any indicator. Six years ago, he spent $7.8 million, but Jesse Helms spent $13.3 million. The battle that turned that election against Gantt at the end was fought entirely on the airwaves, a very expensive medium.

*For more information, contact: Harvey Gantt for Senate, Box 35555, Charlotte, North Carolina 28202, (704) 376-3293.*

## Raising a Bundle in Campaign Donations

On April 29, about 40 Washington professionals gathered at the National Democratic Club on Capitol Hill for a fundraising reception. Around 6:30 p.m., they put down their wine glasses as Harvey Gantt, the black candidate for the U.S. Senate from North Carolina, strode into the room. This was just one of several fundraising stops for Gantt that evening in a swing through Washington the last week before his May 7 Democratic primary election. What was unique about this reception was that it was organized by the African-American Leadership Coalition (AALC), a Washington-based black political action committee (PAC), and virtually all of the guests, bearing checks from $10 to $1,000, were African Americans as well. AALC, one of the nation's few black PACs, was formed in July 1995 to support the campaigns of minority and progressive candidates for Congress.

**KEVIN KIMBLE**, treasurer of AALC, said the PAC was formed as a response to the paucity of fund-raising vehicles to support progressive and minority candidates. "We're filling a niche," said Kimble, an attorney in private practice and a former aide to Congressman **MARTIN FROST** (D-Tex.). AALC will focus on Senate races in states with large black populations and House districts that are at least 10 percent black.

Black political action committees have not had a very good record for longevity or for having much of an impact on elections. That's not the kind of future Kimble and his associates want for AALC. They enlisted the counsel of **KIMBERLY PARKER**, an experienced Washington fundraiser who recently left the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to form her own company.

The 40 congressional aides, attorneys, officials from federal agencies, and professionals from area firms who showed up for the Washington event demonstrated that blacks are willing to contribute to political campaigns.

Using a technique perfected by EMILY's List, which supports pro-choice Democratic women candidates, AALC bundled the checks of those who came to the event, put the checks in an envelope, and sent them off to Gantt's Senate campaign headquarters. The PAC's efforts netted the Gantt campaign in excess of $5,500.

Before his primary victory, Gantt was concerned about Democratic opponent Charlie Sanders' ability to use his personal fortune to fund his campaign. Sanders, who is not a native of North Carolina and had never held

elected office, spent a great deal of money on TV ads to increase his visibility. "You can buy name recognition if you can reach into your own pocket and spend $1.5 million as Sanders has," said black North Carolina Congressman **MEL WATT**, a long-time Gantt supporter.

Lacking the personal wealth of an increasing number of candidates for the U.S. Senate, Gantt has to spend a lot of time at fundraisers around the country. The conventional wisdom is that few of the campaign contributions he receives will come from African Americans. But the financial support Gantt received from a group of African Americans on April 29 defies that notion.

## Julia Carson Vies for Indiana Congressional Seat

In another May 7 primary victory, former Indiana state legislator **JULIA CARSON**, 57, won the Democratic nomination for Indiana's 10th congressional district seat and thereby earned a chance to become the state's second black representative in Congress (**KATIE HALL**, from Gary, who served from 1982 to 1984, was the first). The 10th district, which encompasses Indianapolis, is currently represented by Democrat **ANDY JACOBS**, Carson's mentor for whom she worked as a congressional aide. Jacobs, a colorful congressman who has combined fiscal conservatism with a moderate record on social issues, has represented the district for 30 years and is retiring at the end of this term.

Garnering 47 percent of the primary vote, Carson easily defeated former Indiana Democratic Party Chairman **ANN DELANEY**, who finished second with 30 percent of the vote, and a field of five other candidates. With much less money to spend on the media than DeLaney had available, Carson concentrated on grassroots, street-to-street campaigning. She was helped by an endorsement from Jacobs and received the support of the Marion County Democratic Party.

Carson is a trustee of predominantly black Center Township in Indianapolis and a former member of the Indiana House and Senate. Born in poverty to a teenage mother, she managed to graduate from high school while supporting her family working a variety of jobs. In 1965, she was working as a secretary for the United Auto Workers local when the newly elected Congressman Jacobs offered her a position on his staff. In 1972, Carson was elected to the Indiana House of Representatives. The *Indianapolis Star* newspaper designated her "Woman of the Year" in 1974, and two years later she won election to the state senate. She became an executive with Cummins Engine and later operated her own dress shop in downtown Indianapolis.

However, Carson is primarily known for her accomplishments as Center Township trustee. When she was first elected to that position in 1990, the township had accumulated more than $20 million of debt. Under Carson's direction, the township became debt-free and has lowered property taxes several times. In the general election, Carson will face the victor of the Republican primary, conservative Republican **VIRGINIA BLANKENBAKER**, 63, a former state senator. By winning a considerable portion of the white vote in this 27 percent black district, Carson has demonstrated that, like Jacobs, she has a knack for inclusive politics.

## Juanita McDonald Replaces Tucker in Congress

In a special March 26 Los Angeles area primary, **JUANITA M. MCDONALD**, a black Democratic state representative and former mayor of Carson, California, was elected to the 37th congressional district vacated by Democratic Rep. **WALTER R. TUCKER III**, who resigned from Congress in December after a bribery conviction. The district, which is 34 percent black and 45 percent Hispanic, is located in the southern part of Los Angeles County.

McDonald, 57, not only has taken the seat for the remainder of the 104th Congress, she also has won the Democratic nomination to run for the 105th Congress in the November general election. Her primary victory entitled her to take office immediately because no Republicans filed for the primary. She was sworn in as a member of the U.S. House of Representatives on April 16.

With 27 percent of the vote, McDonald defeated eight other Democrats, including Tucker's wife, Robin, who finished sixth with 7 percent. Fellow state representative **WILLARD H. MURRAY JR.**, who outspent

McDonald, came in second with 21 percent. With financial help from EMILY's List, the group that supports female pro-choice Democratic political candidates, McDonald was able to compensate for Murray's lead in campaign revenues. Some of the other primary contenders were: Compton Mayor **OMAR BRADLEY**, Lynwood Mayor **PAUL H. RICHARDS**, and Compton City Clerk **CHARLES DAVIS**.

Walter Tucker, 39, who had been elected to Congress in 1992, was sentenced to 27 months in federal prison for extorting $30,000 in bribes and cheating on his income taxes in 1991 and 1992 while mayor of Compton. Tucker, an attorney and minister, resigned from Congress after being convicted on December 8.

McDonald, who started her career as a teacher, later served as a member of the Carson City Council from 1990 to 1992. A prolific legislator in the California Assembly, McDonald introduced measures on job creation, attracting high-tech manufacturing businesses to the Los Angeles area, workers' compensation reform, state employee retirement benefits, homeless voting rights, state tourism, graffiti abatement, child support, domestic violence insurance, child care for grandparents raising their grandchildren, and the availability of earthquake insurance and veterans benefits.

When she entered Congress this April, McDonald stated that she wanted to support legislation to assist seniors and low-income families, a substantial constituency in the district. She also wants to make sure a major connecting highway and mass transit project that would benefit the district are completed. In the November election, McDonald will face Republican contractor **MICHAEL E. VOETEE**.

## *Chicago's New Black Congressional Delegation*

In the space of four years, there has been a complete changing of the guard among Chicago's delegation to the U.S. House of Representatives. Veteran legislator **CARDISS COLLINS**, who decided not to run for reelection next November, is the last black member of the House from that city who has served for more than four years in Congress. She will, in all likelihood, be replaced by black Cook County Commissioner **DANNY K. DAVIS**, 54, who won the March 19 primary and the Democratic nomination to represent Illinois' 7th congressional district. The predominantly black 7th district includes Chicago's West Side and part of the city's western suburbs.

Davis, who ran for the seat on two previous occasions, beat nine other Democratic candidates with 33 percent of the vote. Elected to the Cook County Board in November 1990 after having served 11 years as a Chicago alderman, Davis was a close ally of deceased mayor **HAROLD WASHINGTON**, Chicago's only black chief executive. Collins was elected to the seat in 1973 in a special election after the death of her husband, Congressman **GEORGE COLLINS**, who died in an airplane crash.

On December 12, **JESSE JACKSON, JR.**, 31, won a special election to fill Illinois' 2nd congressional seat, left vacant by **MEL REYNOLDS**, an attorney and former university professor, who was elected in 1992. Reynolds resigned from Congress on October 1 after being convicted of crimes involving sexual misconduct. Jackson was sworn in on December 14. The 2nd district is 68 percent black and extends from Chicago's inner-city South Side to Cook County's southern suburbs.

Jackson, who had not held any prior elected office, has served as secretary of the Democratic National Committee's Black Caucus. He has also been vice president at-large of Operation PUSH (People United to Serve Humanity) and field director for the National Rainbow Coalition, both organizations founded by his father, Rev. **JESSE L. JACKSON, SR.**, the human rights activist and two-time Democratic presidential contender. The younger Jackson holds a bachelor's degree from North Carolina A&T University, a degree in divinity from Chicago Theological Seminary, and a law degree from the University of Illinois.

Congressman **BOBBY RUSH**, Chicago's other black member of the House, representing the 1st District, was elected in 1992 after defeating five-term black incumbent **CHARLES HAYES**.

# Setting the Record Straight on Black Soldiers

## *A Recent Study May Restore the Combat Reputation of the All-Black 24th Infantry Regiment That Fought in the Korean War*

*by William T. Bowers*

*The following article is based on a presentation by Mr. Bowers at the May 6 Joint Center forum, the Status of Minorities in a Changing Military.*

Forty-six years ago, when the Korean War broke out, the American army was unprepared to fight it. After about a month of combat, a team of high-ranking U.S. army officers travelled to Korea and visited every army regiment there to determine why the American forces were experiencing so many problems in combat. In its report, the team described the American force as poorly trained, led by inept officers, and fighting with defective equipment. However, in its assessment of the 24th Infantry Regiment, the only all-black regiment in Korea, the observation team reflected the army's racist attitude toward black soldiers by attributing their problems on the battlefield to their race and not to military factors.

The observation team painted a dismal but accurate picture of the condition of the American army in Korea as a whole:

> The troops were fighting under severe disadvantages, having been committed piecemeal, after incomplete training, and at reduced strength, with much of their equipment of marginal serviceability.... The troops were opposed by an enemy who vastly outnumbered them, and who was well trained, well equipped, skillfully led, and inspired by a fanatical determination to attack.
>
> Most disturbing was a noticeable absence of combat aggressiveness in many infantry units. The absolute discipline and automatic obedience to command that is vital for control in combat was lacking.... Like all green troops, they magnified the strength of the enemy and tended to become panicky and stampede when small hostile groups got in their rear.... Lack of leadership in regimental and subordinate echelons was often evident.

After interviewing the 24th Infantry Regiment's white officers (who generally had little combat experience) and after visiting briefly with only two of the nine rifle companies of the regiment, both commanded by white officers, the observation team identified the same problems that were being experienced by white units. But in the case of the 24th Infantry, the observers concluded that "the effectiveness of colored troops was about 80 percent [that] of white troops."

Race did affect the 24th Infantry Regiment, but certainly not in ways the observation team reported. Segregation, and the racial prejudice that accompanied it, was harmful to the regiment in at least three ways, all of them interrelated.

First, racial prejudice and the consequences of segregation affected unit cohesion, the glue that holds any unit together in good times and bad. On the battlefield, cohesion allows a unit to overcome adversity and prevail. A key component of this is mutual trust and confidence among soldiers and their leaders. In several companies and battalions within the regiment, racial prejudice ate away at the bonds holding those units together. This deterioration did not occur overnight but had been going on for years while the regiment served in Japan as part of the post–World War II occupation army.

Several of the regiment's white officers, who had heard accounts of failures of black units in World Wars I and II, simply did not trust their soldiers to do the job. The black soldiers sensed this attitude and in turn placed little confidence in their leaders. One white battalion commander in the regiment told white officers when they were first assigned to his command that they should watch their men carefully. He told these officers that if they were ever wounded, they would be on their own—that their black soldiers would leave them to be captured by the enemy. In another instance, a black staff officer overheard his white battalion commander at night talking to other white officers about black soldiers' failings and racial inferiority. Not all parts of the regiment had problems with cohesion, but several did, and it was often enough to make the difference between success or failure in combat, particularly when combined with the other problems faced by all the units in Korea.

The second area in which racial prejudice had an effect on the regiment was in its reputation. The regiment's failures were magnified and cited to support the idea that black troops were inferior. Military factors were frequently disregarded, and failures were attributed to supposed racial characteristics. Among white troops, the 24th Infantry Regiment became known as a "bug out" unit, one that fled under fire. It was never able to overcome that label, in spite of later combat success during the Korean War. Those successes were ignored or attributed to factors other than the hard fighting and courage of its soldiers.

*Continued on page 6*

Mr. Bowers is a retired colonel who served as an artillery officer in the U.S. Army. He is coauthor, with William Hammond and George MacGarrigle, of the soon-to-be-released book, *Black Soldier, White Army*, published by the Army.

## *Black Soldiers*

*Continued from page 5*

Like the white units, the 24th overcame its early problems. The weak were removed, capable leaders rose to command, and although prejudice continued, it was submerged by the need to survive and succeed in war. Like white units, it still suffered its share of misfortunes in that very difficult conflict, but after about 90 days in combat, the 24th Infantry Regiment was a solid unit.

The third way in which racial prejudice affected the 24th Infantry was in the morale of its individual soldiers. A white lieutenant in the regiment described an incident where its members were openly humiliated. In July 1951, the regiment was moving up to the front line to replace a white unit. Its men made the final leg of the journey on foot, walking up one side of a narrow dirt road while the soldiers they were relieving walked down the other. The whites hurled insults and racial slurs at the blacks without any interference from their officers. "In the end," the lieutenant said, "the only thing a man could do was tuck his chin down into the collar of his coat and keep on walking. It was ten hours of crap. "How could any soldier, subjected to such abuse time after time," he asked, "develop a good opinion of himself or summon up the resolve to fight for the country that permitted it to occur?"

### Racism and Military Policy

The soldiers in the 24th were not the only black troops who suffered the effects of racism and segregation. Nevertheless, during the 1940s and '50s, for many African Americans, military service offered far greater educational and occupational opportunities than the civilian society. Before the Korean War, the army never lacked for black recruits. But the number of black soldiers in the army was limited by a quota to 10 percent of its total strength.

Army policy regarding black soldiers between World War II and the Korean War was based on the belief that military efficiency required segregation and the quota system to avoid social unrest and maintain a dependable fighting force. Hence, within an infantry division of three regiments, each containing three battalions, one of the regiments might have a single black battalion. The 24th Infantry Regiment was an exception in that it was the only all-black regiment assigned to a combat division.

Because of these policies of quotas and segregation and the rationales upon which they were based, the army resisted the implementation of Executive Order 9981, issued by President Harry Truman in July 1948, which called for the racial integration of the armed forces. The Fahy Committee, which was appointed by Truman in 1949 to monitor compliance with his executive order, recommended that the army break up its all-black units and replace the quota system with one based principally on test scores rather than race. Initially, the army rejected these proposals. But it eventually responded to presidential pressure and replaced the quota system with one that relied on nonracial physical, mental, and psychological standards. The army, however, reserved the right to return to procedures based on race if the experiment failed.

### Integration—A Military Necessity

Eventually, efficiency and military necessity rendered segregation impractical. The phasing out of the quota system by April 1950, coupled with the beginning of the Korean War just two months later, marked the beginning of racial integration in the Army. When recruits began to arrive at Army training centers, military planners found it impossible to predict how many would be black and how many white. Lacking a firm numerical breakdown of the race of recruits, they could not provide separate facilities to accommodate each race and proposed the integration of training units as a solution. Later, as casualties mounted in Korea, and commanders were hard pressed to find replacements, soldiers were inserted into the front lines wherever they were needed without regard to race.

A case in point was the segregated 3rd Battalion of the 9th Infantry Regiment, which arrived in Korea from the United States in August 1950, about a month after the war began. During the fighting in the Pusan perimeter, the two white battalions of the regiment suffered high casualties, and replacements were assigned where they were needed within the regiment, regardless of race. One result was that a black officer took command of an all-white company, a situation the Army previously had worked assiduously to avoid. About 220 black soldiers joined formerly all-white companies and platoons, and several white enlisted men joined the formerly all-black 3rd Battalion.

The end result was a natural process in which mutual confidence and respect grew under the strains of combat. Overall, building on a host of similar experiences, commanders within the 9th Infantry Regiment had come to judge units and individuals solely on performance. Problems and setbacks suffered by the unit were not blamed on race but on tangible military considerations. The atmosphere prevalent within the 9th Infantry was quite different from that within the 24th Infantry, even though they were fighting in the same area, at the same time, and often side by side.

When the performance of black soldiers in integrated units was judged acceptable, and the mixing of races did not result in social unrest as feared, the Army proceeded slowly along the path toward integration. However, on July 1, 1951, General Matthew Ridgway, the Commander in the Far East during the latter part of the Korean War, forced the issue by formally requesting authority to abolish segregation within his command.

As part of the integration plan, smaller black battalions, such as the 3rd Battalion of the 9th Infantry, were integrated. Even when integration finally came to the Army, prejudice was still present as the great concern of top commanders was that integrated squads of about 12 soldiers should contain no more than two blacks each, since that was the number that was felt could be safely absorbed without diluting the effectiveness of the squad.

*Continued on back page*

# Nigeria—Blood and Oil

## *A Broad Coalition of Groups Stage Human Rights and Environmental Protests Against the Nigerian Military Government and Shell Oil*

*by David C. Ruffin*

On May 15, more than 100 demonstrators picketed outside Shell Oil Company's I Street offices in Washington, D.C., rattling soda cans filled with stones, beating drums, and chanting "No blood for oil!" For more than a year, a broad coalition of labor unions and environmental and human rights groups have been targeting both the Nigerian military government, headed by General Sani Abacha, and the Shell Oil Company, which has large drilling operations in eastern Nigeria. They charge that the drilling has fouled the homeland of the Ogoni people, a minority ethnic group who live in that region, and they say that the air and water have been poisoned and natural habitats destroyed. About 90 percent of Nigeria's economy is based on oil drilling, and Shell, the largest oil company there, produces half of the country's petroleum.

According to the Sierra Club, while Shell operates in more than 100 countries around the world, nearly 40 percent of the company's oil spills and leaks have occurred in Nigeria. The Sierra Club also charges that Shell's extensive network of aging pipelines has rendered large tracts of land useless for agriculture. Brent Blackwelder, president of Friends of the Earth, said during the demonstration, "Shell is an unethical company, and it has made life unlivable for the Ogoni people." Steve Kretzmann, a Greenpeace organizer in Washington, added that many other communities in the oil-rich Niger River delta face similar environmental problems because of Shell's operations. The protesters rejected the idea that there should be two environmental standards—one for the Third World and another for industrialized countries.

Don Cannon, general manager of the Shell Oil Company in New York, rejects the environmentalists' charges. He attributes most of the oil-related environmental damage in Ogoniland to two major spills that occurred during the Biafran War, a Nigerian civil conflict fought between 1967 and 1970. Cannon says that Shell made several attempts to clean up those spills, though he acknowledges that underground leakage continues and a great deal of oil has seeped into the ground. According to Cannon, Shell would place its pipelines underground and proposes to conduct an environmental cleanup if it were permitted to resume drilling. Shell stopped drilling in Ogoniland in 1993 in the midst of local violence and in the face of demands for compensation for environmental damages.

Shell offices around the world were targeted for demonstrations on May 15, the date of the shareholders' meeting of the Royal Dutch/Shell Group of Companies at its headquarters in London. Among the other groups represented at the Washington demonstration in May were TransAfrica, Amnesty International, the Teamsters International Union, Human Rights Watch, and the Service Employees International union. The groups plan to continue the protest by picketing Shell service stations.

### Calls for Boycott and Sanctions

Participants at the Washington rally have also charged that Shell colluded with Nigeria's military regime in the brutal repression of local Ogoni activists, who have been protesting the corporation's disregard for their land and the human rights of their people. One of the signs at the demonstration read, "Shell Drills—Abacha Kills!," a reference to last year's mass execution of anti-Shell protesters in Nigeria. On November 10, writer Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other Ogoni activists were executed by the Nigerian government stemming from their protests of Shell's drilling practices. The Abacha regime was condemned for this act by scores of nations. Nineteen other Ogoni activists are in detention. The demonstrators in Washington also charged that few of the billions of dollars in oil revenues that Shell transfers to Nigeria's government have been used for the development of the Ogoni people, whose region is deficient in social amenities including schools and hospitals.

The coalition is demanding that the Clinton administration announce a unilateral oil embargo against Nigeria. Sierra Club President Robbie Cox argues that, since nearly 50 percent of Nigerian oil is exported to the United States but represents only 3.5 percent of total U.S. oil consumption, "It is both economically possible and morally imperative that we stop our consumption of the oil that fuels the current [Nigerian] regime."

Street protests are not the only U.S. response to what's happening in Nigeria. While demonstrators marched outside Shell offices on May 15, the U.S. Senate held hearings on the Nigeria Democracy Act sponsored by Sen. Nancy Kassebaum (R-Kan.) and Rep. Donald Payne (D-N.J.). The legislation would freeze the personal assets of Nigerian citizens that are located in the United States and impose a ban on new investments in Nigeria. The measure also calls for the Clinton administration to support an international embargo of Nigerian oil and back a ban on arms sales to that country. The aim of the Nigeria Democracy Act is to pressure the dictatorial government to release political prisoners, respect human rights, and demonstrate a commitment to democracy. ■

Mr. Ruffin is the editor of *FOCUS*.

## *Black Soldiers*

*Continued from page 6*

The large 24th Infantry Regiment, with its 3,000 black soldiers, was deactivated, and its troops were reassigned to other units. Officially, it was judged to be too much of an administrative challenge to integrate the 24th Infantry in the middle of a war. And there were also some concerns about integrating a regiment that Congress had created specifically in 1869 as a black unit.

### Setting the Record Straight

The lessons to be drawn from the experience of black units in the Korean War should not be forgotten. Racial prejudice and ignorance can be pernicious, pervasive, and deep-seated. Combined with the pressures of combat, racism can have a crippling effect on a military organization. Time, education, and experience can reduce racial prejudice, though they may not fully eradicate it. Vigilance is always required.

Overall, the combat record of black soldiers throughout the nation's history has been remarkable. The experience of the black soldiers of the 9th Infantry and the 24th Infantry in Korea, as well as the record of African Americans in uniform in the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, the Spanish American War, World Wars I and II, and Vietnam, testify to the courage, resilience, and determination of those who chose to do their duty, to fight in the face of adversity, and to prevail. The Army's recently completed study of the 24th Infantry will, one hopes, set the record straight and help to restore this regiment's reputation.

The courage of soldiers takes on many forms other than the physical courage shown on the battlefield. Since the day of flintlocks, most African American soldiers have summoned up the resolve to do their duty despite racism in the army. Because black soldiers were like all other American soldiers, when properly trained and capably led, they have performed well, often with distinction, and on occasion magnificently. ■

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