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A New Era for U.S.-African Relations

President Clinton's historic 11-day visit to six sub-Saharan African states has focused national attention on a region of the world too often ignored by occupants of the White House. Yet 35 million Americans, along with tens of millions in Latin America and Europe, trace their origins to this enormous continent. Instead of coups or civil strife, news cameras following the Presidential party focused on the things that are right about black Africa—the success of democracy in South Africa and Botswana, the economic growth of Ghana, and the cultural richness of the region. The six countries visited by the President and First Lady—Botswana, Ghana, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, and Uganda—demonstrate the diversity of the 48 black African states.

Black Africa is not a monolith. Each state has its own unique history, multiple ethnic groups, and different forms of governance. Democracy has become firmly established in a growing number of countries, and the seeds of democracy are taking root in others. Much of the region's natural wealth is still coveted on world markets—petroleum, diamonds, hard woods, copper, coal, and other minerals. Some of the world's biggest producers of coffee, tea, cocoa, and other agricultural produce also are located in the region.

Africa is not without its problems, however. Over the last decade, Liberia has been torn apart by a particularly vicious internal war. Its neighbor, Sierra Leone, has been politically unstable for practically as long. A military dictator controls Nigeria. Other African states are similarly ruled. It is the people who suffer from the brutality and denial of human rights wrought by autocratic rulers. Add to this the desperate poverty of millions, even in countries with benign governments.

For too long, the United States government has looked away from these problems. President Clinton's trip to the region offers hope that a reversal of that neglect is underway. His understated recognition that "the United States has not always done the right thing by Africa" gives us grounds for that hope. He acknowledged a shameful legacy that includes the wrongs of slavery that predate the establishment of the United States as a nation. He also expressed regret for U.S. support of ruthless dictators during the Cold War in the name of containing communism. "But perhaps the worst sin America ever committed about Africa," the President said, "was the sin of neglect and ignorance. We have never been as involved with you, in working together for our mutual benefit, for your children and for ours, as we should have been." He stated that the United States and other members of the international community must share blame for not acting quickly enough to halt the genocidal slaughter of half a million people in Rwanda.

We hope that the President's trip and his remarks have put sub-Saharan Africa on the proverbial policy map of our national government, something for which African Americans have been striving for decades. For our part, the Joint Center has been providing assistance in the process of democratization since the mid-1980s. The Joint Center's program in South Africa is aimed at promoting community participation in the democratic process by conducting governance training for local government officials and policy advocacy training for the staff of community-based organizations (see "Building Grassroots Democracy in South Africa" in this issue of *FOCUS*). In Benin, we are helping to develop a policy research institution. Other nongovernmental organizations also are working toward the social, economic, and political development of the continent. Through both public and private efforts, we hope that relations between the United States and Africa are entering a new era of partnership and prosperity. ■



PRESIDENT

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No Need to Wait for a Miracle

A Successful Education Program Is Exploding the Myth That Black Low-Income Urban Youth Can't Achieve Excellence in Public Schools

by James P. Comer

I am often told that America will reduce its social problems through better education. My work and experience over more than 30 years suggest that if we are waiting for schooling to do this, we are "waiting for a miracle." Poor schools are a reflection of problems in the culture—the larger American culture, not just African American culture as Dinesh D'Souza indicated in *The End of Racism*. But schools can be a part of the solution if we first understand the myths that keep us from realizing progress in better education for black children.

The first myth—intelligence and will. A deep-seated, pervasive, but outmoded and harmful belief in our culture holds that the success of an individual is due almost entirely to genetically determined intelligence and to will. I call this belief our "First Myth." This central belief flows from and contributes to the individualism that is so much a part of the American character. Not coincidentally, this belief is fundamental to our "trickle down" economic system, in which the brightest and the best create and manage economic enterprises while others fit into the system as they are able.

The reality is that a threshold level of intelligence is needed. But the genetic potential we are born with, and even will or motivation, cannot be fully realized without a good developmental experience, and cannot be expressed adequately without structures to provide that opportunity—health care, child care, employment, education—both for children and their parents. And luck affects us all.

The second myth—winners and losers. The universal human task is to find personal adequacy and meaning in life. These are found most often through pride in work, in care for self and family, and in being a valued, contributing citizen of society—a winner. For a variety of reasons both personal and societal, some people do not experience these conditions adequately and then endure the difficult consequences. The myth holds that they have brought this outcome on themselves—that they are losers.

The winner-loser mindset creates a need for those of modest accomplishments to identify with those of great achievement and to identify and scapegoat "losers." As a result, rather than creating political, economic, and social structures that enable most communities and families to help themselves, America scapegoats its most vulnerable citizens. In the process, it fails to invest in education and the other human development programs needed for it to survive and flourish in the twenty-first century.

In this nation of poor immigrants, there has always been a vulnerable scapegoat group. But most groups were able to use their cultural cohesion to achieve significant access to the society's primary political, economic, and social structures in one generation, thus limiting the scapegoating. Because of the peculiar experience of African Americans, it was not possible for them to do this, and the group became locked in permanently as the scapegoat. The result has been what I call the "Second Myth"—all whites are successful, and all blacks are not.

These Kids Can!

My experience at transforming public schools into effective learning centers debunks both myths. In 1968, I led a Yale University Child Study Center team in a pilot program in partnership with the New Haven Public School System. The School Development Program worked with two pilot schools that were 99 percent black and poor. In 1969, they ranked last and next to last among 33 schools in language arts and mathematics, had the worst attendance record, and experienced serious behavior problems.

Three years later the social climate had improved dramatically. And by 1984, with no change in the socioeconomic makeup of the community, the two schools were tied for the third and fourth highest levels of achievement in the city in language arts and mathematics. One school placed more than a year above grade level, the other, seven months above; both had the best attendance records in the city and no serious behavior problems.

My team achieved these results by working in the school with both parents and staff to help them develop a framework for collaboration. In turn, they were able to create a climate that allowed the students to identify with them and the school program. In short, we used our knowledge of child development and behavior as well as management practices to create the sense of community that had once existed in families and neighborhoods for the nurturing and support of children. We took what we learned from these experiments and created the School Development Program.

The program is now used by more than 650 public schools in more than 20 states. Yet, despite impressive academic gains—a school in Virginia using the model moved in just a few years from 24th to first place in achievement; one in New Jersey moved from 32nd to first place in achievement—we noticed a disturbing attitude, the notion that "these kids can't," particularly in a public school setting.

Dr. Comer, the Maurice Falk Professor of Child Psychiatry at the Yale University Child Study Center, is an internationally renowned psychiatrist and educator.

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One principal serving a similar population just two miles from the pilot schools declared that such gains were not possible at his school. He pointed out that while our children were poor, they lived in single-family homes; his students lived in a housing project. When I replied that one of our schools served a housing project, he countered that our students lived in a low-rise project, while his students lived in a high-rise project. His attitude changed, however, once his school became involved in our program, and the performance of his students improved significantly.

Even so, the "these kids can't" attitude has persisted. Despite the media's interest in the faults of urban schools, they showed little interest in those schools that achieved dramatic improvement. Until we pointed to this lack of interest, only one story about each of the schools had appeared in the local press.

The Black Experience—Devastating Shocks

Black Americans have experienced four devastating shocks, the effects of which are even now not fully understood. The first was the disruption of a close-knit African kinship structure that was at the core of all political, economic, and social functioning. The second shock was the middle passage and the brutality of the slave trade. The third shock was two-and-a half centuries of slavery with its imposed dependency, inferior status, and no opportunity for improvement. The fourth—release of slaves into a hostile environment in both the North and the South—stripped African Americans of what little protection slave masters provided them as valued property, leaving them neither slaves nor citizens.

Even after the Fourteenth Amendment in 1866 made blacks citizens, private and public institutions and individuals denied blacks rights and opportunities. Efforts to enter the political and economic mainstream were blocked through violence and subterfuge. Without cultural cohesion and access to society's primary political, economic, and social structures, African Americans remained a despised caste group and permanent scapegoats. Blacks were denied the knowledge, skills, contacts, power, and information that could only be gained through interaction with mainstream political and economic networks.

As a result, huge disparities in investment in black and white education took place at every level—as much as 25 times more was spent on primary and secondary education for whites. Through such devices as local tax-based school funding, huge disparities still exist. Today's post-industrial information economy requires a higher level of education and social development. Because of past underinvestment in black education, blacks have suffered first and most.

Since effective civil rights legislation was not enacted until the mid-1960s, it has been necessary to move from uneducated and unskilled to highly educated and highly skilled in just one generation rather the three generations available to other immigrant groups. African Americans whose experiences supported adequate development and who were prepared to handle racial antagonisms without behaving self-destructively were able to make the transition and now have more opportunity than ever. The most marginalized group of blacks, however, is on a downhill course that accelerates each new generation.

The argument that these many complex structural forces could be overcome by school integration and other civil rights legislation in 30 years—with no significant economic power—is patently unrealistic. It is simply an effort to avoid taking responsibility for the illegal, irresponsible, and immoral acts imposed on African Americans in the past and the present and their effects. The United States is a corporate entity, and for present-day citizens to deny responsibility for past acts, is like inheriting a fortune from a late uncle but denying responsibility for his debts.

The historical inequities and abuse—and the attempt to rationalize them—damage the confidence and even the competence of too many black children, students, and adults. Normally, one would expect many fair-minded, middle-class Americans to acknowledge the unique situation caused by past conditions and a changed economy, particularly the effects of past underfunding of black education, and to play a major role in countering current efforts to limit black opportunity. But continuing changes in the economy—globalization, downsizing, outsourcing, and other factors—have created anxiety among the middle-class about their own future. African American self-help and leadership—historically the impetus for improving group opportunity—must therefore become even more effective than in the past.

To Create the Good Society

Because the problem is rooted in deeply held cultural beliefs and entrenched economic interests, change will not be easy. First, the black community must reduce its own vulnerability to scapegoating. Second, it must become a part of the growing movement to improve opportunities for all children—the only way our nation can survive and flourish in the twenty-first century.

Change will require an economic thrust within the black community and a focus on its children. Numerous organizations are already working to promote the development of black children, but their efforts must be coordinated and targeted. Further, blacks must find a way to use their enormous power as consumers to promote educational opportunities and to enlarge economic ownership and related political power. We cannot maintain the gains of the past 30 years and give most African Americans access to mainstream opportunity structures without doing so.

If we can limit the scapegoating of blacks and the denial of their ability, what is needed to improve education will become less of a mystery. Good public schools can be produced by adequate tax bases and staff trained to create effective organizations that support the development of children and promote learning. Under improved educational conditions, more black students can be prepared to become adequate workers, family members, and citizens. However, to expect the schools to do this alone is indeed "waiting for a miracle." ■

Building Grassroots Democracy in South Africa

Government Must Extend Social Services and Infrastructure to the Disadvantaged So All Citizens May Enjoy the Fruits of Democracy

by Eve A. Thompson

While such terms as "capacity-building," "institutional development," "delivery," and "empowerment" may seem overused, they are indispensable for describing the process of democratization in South Africa. These terms are mantras in a country that, nearly four years after its first racially integrated elections and the inauguration of majority rule, still struggles to bridge the enormous gap between a privileged white minority and a historically deprived black majority. In 1998, little more than a year before the country's first winner-take-all elections, South Africa's political leadership faces the task of converting these oft-used concepts into practical strategies for meaningful change.

The most elusive goals in the effort to achieve real, lasting democracy in South Africa may be widespread political awareness and empowerment. One legacy of apartheid rule is that the majority of citizens have become accustomed to subordination and second-class citizenship. For many who see themselves as spectators in the political life of the country, active first-class citizenship is beyond the realm of contemplation. During the 1994 national elections and the 1995–96 local government elections, the emphasis on voting led many to view voting as the end rather than the beginning of their participation in democratic processes. If active political involvement is the key to a healthier, organically developed democracy, the challenge is to transform the way ordinary black South Africans view their role in their own development. However, in a sort of "Catch-22," accelerating the pace of change may hinge upon the extent to which ordinary citizens become involved.

Given the difficulty of changing attitudes, the current government of South Africa has focused more squarely on meeting basic needs in the hope that this will create a physical environment more conducive to active citizenship. To that end, the government has established a number of targets for social and economic progress to be met by the year 1999.

Meeting Basic Social and Economic Needs

One of the greatest impediments to political participation for many black South Africans, particularly in rural areas, is illiteracy. Nearly a quarter of the South African population is illiterate. The Northern Province, one of the three in which the Joint Center currently conducts programs to encourage popular participation in government, was recently cited as having the worst literacy rate in the country—about 64 percent. Although the government has identified combating adult illiteracy as a priority, the budget for such activities is small. Consequently, the task of addressing this problem falls mainly to nonprofit organizations.

Another major concern for both rural and urban South Africans is the high crime rate. Sensational cases of highjackings, rape, and murder have been prominent news stories. These high visibility incidents serve to heighten the levels of fear and further erode confidence in the country's law enforcement and criminal justice systems.

Underlying many problems is widespread poverty. About half of all households in South Africa have incomes that fall below the current minimum monthly subsistence level of R1,072 (about $200) according to government statistics. Housing is a monumental problem among the poor, with two to three million households in South Africa living without adequate shelter. In 1994, the government promised to provide one million subsidized houses by 1999. However, as of November 1996, less than 15 percent of this promised housing had been built or was even under construction, but the government maintains that it can make the target.

Infrastructure problems, such as the lack of access to clean water, electricity, and telephones, are widespread and serious in areas where black South Africans are concentrated. These problems will take time to remedy. By the end of 1996, approximately 700,000 of the estimated 12 million South Africans without clean water had been provided with a convenient source of potable water. The government estimates that access to drinking water would be provided to an additional 2.1 million people by 1999.

Another target is for 72 percent of South African households to have electricity by 1999. While more than three-quarters of all urban households have electrical service, only about one in five rural households do. By 1999, rural areas are slated to receive enough solar-generated electricity to supply 16,000 schools, 2,000 clinics, and 2.5 million homes.

As of 1995, only half the population in urban areas had direct access to a telephone and in rural areas only 7.5 percent of the population had access. The difference in access by race is even more dramatic. The government estimated that areas with majority black populations had only one line per 100 people, while predominantly white areas had 60 lines per 100 people. Over 40 percent of all rural residents had to travel at least 3 miles to reach a telephone. To reach established goals for improving access, the telephone company (Telkom) will need to install 550,000 phones a year until the year 2000.

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Eve Thompson is Director of the Joint Center Africa Program.

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Civic Participation

These social and economic problems inhibit the efforts of local and provincial governments to implement legislative mandates that encourage public participation in policy-making. Illiteracy in rural areas, for example, makes it difficult for citizens to express their concerns to the government. High crime rates and limited access to transportation discourage the population from attending public meetings held in the evening. The inaccessibility of telephones, especially in rural areas, dampens development in many ways. Educators need telephone lines for proposed distance learning programs. Medical practitioners based in remote areas require telephone lines to respond to emergencies. Moreover, proposals to use enhance citizen involvement through "community hotlines" and related schemes have been stalled as a result of the limited infrastructure.

The availability and use of electricity and telecomunications technology in urban and white areas is by far the most sophisticated in Africa. Nevertheless, their absence for many other South Africans has led nonprofit and governmental organizations in rural areas to center their activities on meeting the most basic needs.

Another challenge to nation-building is to ensure the widespread acceptance of democratic principles and the rule of law. Most South African citizens are abiding by the usual rules governing a democratic society. Major exceptions, however, have been derailing democratic progress. For instance, in KwaZulu/Natal (KZN), ongoing feuds between the African National Congress (ANC) and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) and more recently between the ANC and the United Democratic Movement (UDM) have created a climate of violence and intolerance. In one of the most extreme examples, two newly elected local government councilors from the ANC were killed execution-style in July 1997 in KZN, just days after special by-elections to fill vacant seats. Those killings followed closely the killing of a prominent ANC councilor who refused to defect from the ANC to join the UDM.

In other parts of the country, most notably the Western Cape, the high incidence of gang violence has led to the rise of vigilantism. Battles between armed gangs and anti-gang forces have become commonplace. Vigilantism threatens to break out in areas plagued by a rash of murders of local farmers.

A death penalty is often imposed by vigilante groups. After being subjected to kangaroo courts, called "people's courts," persons deemed guilty of crimes such as stealing or marital infidelity are severely beaten and sometimes killed. In some of the more isolated rural communities, individuals are still accused of practicing witchcraft and executed for it.

Even though vigilantism has its roots in culture and tradition, it also is used by some as a means of eliminating political enemies. According to the South African Institute of Race Relations, during the 1996-97 period, many witchcraft-related killings were apparently motivated by social or political differences. The institute also suggested that civic associations and political activists sometimes use accusations of witchcraft to maintain control over communities. Here again, government has done little to address this problem. Rather, it is left almost entirely up to nonprofit organizations to devise and put in place programs to combat "instant justice" and witchcraft-related violence.

Governmental Capacity and Effectiveness

A recent analysis by the Johannesburg-based Centre for Policy Studies of the extent of democratic consolidation in South Africa reaches a positive conclusion—that the current state of social service delivery exceeds earlier expectations. However, the problem of limited government effectiveness in key areas remains. The problem is further exacerbated by the continued breakdown of the social contract between the state and its citizens, shown by the refusal of many citizens to pay for utility services such as water, electricity, and trash removal. The practice of non-payment for services is a legacy of rent and utility payment boycotts that black communities carried out before 1994 as a protest against black local authorities installed by the apartheid regime. In the post-apartheid era, the democratically elected government still struggles to reverse this non-payment culture. This is partly due to the failure of the current government to gain the public's full confidence that it will manage these revenues responsibly.

A very candid report recently issued by the Minister of Public Service Administration points to irregularities and inefficiencies among the public service institutions nationally and provincially. Some highlights from that report:

- National government departments neither provide adequate support for provincial departments in the performance of their tasks nor do they coordinate effectively with them.
- Current public service regulations work against excellence in service delivery instead of encouraging it.
- Strategic planning at the provincial level is often weak and poorly implemented.
- Misconduct and lack of discipline among service provider staff are major problems in many departments and provincial administrations. Ineffective procedures for managing misconduct cases in turn cause service delays and excessive costs, as well as diminishing morale among personnel who see that misconduct goes unpunished on a regular basis.
- Voluntary severance packages offered on an unrestricted basis are taken by the most skilled workers, the very people that departments cannot afford to lose. Those who remain are often overwhelmed by the workload.

The consequences of these lapses in efficiency and good governance are far-reaching and immediate. The lack of coordination and support between the national and provincial governments has led to the failure to implement national mandates at the provincial level. In one instance, in one province, all the senior citizens failed to receive their monthly pension for the month of December 1997, a

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From Aid to Trade for Africa

House Bill Shifts Focus of U.S. Aid to Africa, Draws Opposition of Labor, Environmental Groups, and Some Black Policymakers

by Winston J. Allen

On March 11, 1998, the U.S. House of Representatives passed "The Africa Growth and Opportunity Act" (H.R. 1432), a controversial measure that may change the direction of U.S. policy toward Africa. The bill, which passed by a bipartisan vote of 233 to 186, would give the countries of sub-Saharan Africa greater access to U.S. markets. The bill's main sponsors are Phil Crane (R–Ill.) and black representative Charles Rangel (D–N.Y.). No action has been taken on the bill in the Senate.

H.R. 1432 marks a policy shift away from the provisions of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, which emphasized aid as the primary strategy for promoting economic and social development in Africa. The premise of the bill is that increased trade and investment can promote economic growth in Africa in ways that aid cannot. While not discounting the importance of aid, for the first time in U.S./Africa relations, the act would make trade the primary vehicle for U.S. support of economic growth in the 48 countries of the sub-Saharan portion of the continent.

This measure has been introduced at a time when significant post-Cold War economic and political changes have been sweeping across Africa. In 1996 and 1997, for the first time in decades, the economies of sub-Saharan African countries grew faster, on average, than their populations. According to the World Bank, average economic growth was 3.5 percent, while population growth was 3 percent. Eleven countries had economic growth rates greater than 6 percent. Nevertheless, 31 of the 48 countries in sub-Saharan Africa suffer from crippling national debt and widespread poverty.

H.R. 1432 outlines a number of strategies to help these countries achieve economic self-reliance. These include strengthening and expanding the private sector, with an emphasis on women-owned businesses; encouraging increased trade and investment with the United States; reducing tariffs and other barriers to free trade; negotiating free trade areas; establishing a U.S./sub-Saharan Africa trade and investment partnership; focusing on those countries that are committed to accountable government, economic reform, and eradication of poverty; establishing a United States/sub-Saharan Africa economic cooperation forum.

Although trade is at the center of the legislation, the bill also encourages better governance and more stable civil societies. To participate, countries must refrain from violating the human rights of their citizens and must establish market-based economic systems or make progress toward that end. The bill links Africa's economic problems not only to faulty economic strategies, but also to the more fundamental causes of national peace, security, and stability. The bill is expected to encourage African countries to make meaningful investments in education and infrastructure necessary to attract direct foreign investment.

Opponents of the trade bill can be divided into two camps: those who think that it will hurt American jobs, especially in the textile and apparel industry, and those who fear that it will replace traditional aid to African countries when they need it most. The fear that African countries might lose aid from the United States unless they adopt economic reforms was expressed by Rep. Jesse Jackson (D–Ill.) in the House debate. To allay this fear, Rep. Donald Payne (D–N.J.) emphasized that the bill is a separate entity and will not interfere with traditional foreign aid programs. However, Randall Robinson, president of TransAfrica, the black foreign affairs lobby, suggests that the bill be amended to commit the United States to debt relief for African states, investment in human capital, and the provision of foreign aid. The environmental group, Friends of the Earth, also opposed the bill on the grounds that it would accelerate logging and mining operations that are already threatening Africa's diverse ecosystems.

Though the bill's provisions are completely different from those of NAFTA and the African continent is not near the United States, Rep. Ron Klink (D–Pa.), an opponent of the bill, compared it to NAFTA. "I don't care if it is Africa or Pluto, we do not need any more 'free trade' areas like those created by NAFTA," he said. He further added that he considered NAFTA a job-losing failure.

Others are concerned that countries such as China might take advantage of the bill's provisions to ship goods to the United States through Africa. Rep. Dan Burton (R–Ind.) pointed out that the bill allows goods to be sold to the United States as African-made even when only the final 35 percent of the products are completed in Africa.

Although points raised by opponents have some validity, the bill is merely the first step to opening U.S. markets to African products. Current trade between the United States and Africa is quite small. According to the Congressional Research Service, two thirds of all U.S. exports to the region go to two countries: South Africa (49 percent) and Nigeria (13 percent). In 1997, 85 percent of U.S. imports from Africa came primarily in the form of petroleum. This trade relationship is not likely to be transformed rapidly. It is hoped that the bill will strengthen the traditional informal trade networks between African craftsmen and U.S. vendors so that Americans can continue to enjoy African products, while Africans benefit from an improved standard of living. ■

Dr. Allen is a research associate at the Joint Center.

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crucial period for holiday expenditures and other end-of-the-year financial obligations.

Moreover, the inadequacy of provincial departments to handle the funding process for services and supplies has led to disruptions in service delivery. At a hospital in another province, premature babies had to be wrapped in cotton wool, placed in the backseat of a car, and driven 100 kilometers to the nearest hospital with incubation facilities because the purchase of incubators had been delayed by paperwork.

At the local level, these problems are aggravated by the movement of the most skilled local government officials up to positions at the national and provincial levels. To make matters worse, it is increasingly difficult for local governments to access funds from provincial and national governments. Local governments also are being hindered by their own constituents who according to stories in the newspapers *Mail* and *Guardian*, owe them R6 billion in unpaid taxes. Discontentment with local government is widespread. In a poll recently conducted in two communities in the Northern Province by Joint Center staff, over 70 percent of the 2,000 respondents said they would not vote for their local representative again.

Reasons for Hope

Despite these threats to democratic stability in South Africa, there are reasons to hope. The threats to democratic processes are mostly isolated, and a wealth of resources is being deployed to boost citizen participation in development and policy formulation and to aid politicians and civil servants in redressing apartheid wrongs. In particular, incorporated into much of the development-related legislation passed in the last three years are requirements that public participation programs be included in development-related decision-making at all levels of government.

In addition, a campaign launched in January 1995 called Masakhane (Zulu for "Let's build together") is a popular mobilization program aimed at normalizing governance, providing services at the local level, and persuading communities to pay for services and otherwise contributing to their own development. As part of the Masakhane campaign, communities and provinces compete for awards that recognize significant achievements and innovations in community-building and development. The Joint Center's program in South Africa is dedicated to providing support to those processes in the hope that South Africa can accelerate its progress toward a healthy and sustainable democracy. ■

The Joint Center's program in South Africa is aimed at strengthening democracy in that country by promoting community participation in democratic processes; encouraging effective governance at the local level; and building capacity for policy research and formulation. To these ends, the program conducts effective governance training for local government officials, research training for staff at historically black universities and policy research institutions, and policy advocacy training for staff of community-based organizations.

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TRENDLETTER

POLITICAL REPORT

by David C. Ruffin and Mary K. Garber

Lee Wins Dellums' Seat

On April 7, black Democratic State Senator Barbara Lee, 48, won a special election to fill the unexpired term of California Congressman Ron Dellums, who resigned his seat on February 6 after 27 years in Congress. By garnering 67 percent of the vote, Lee defeated two other Democrats and a Republican and won the right to represent the 9th congressional district, which includes Oakland and Berkeley. The remainder of Dellums' term expires in January 1999.

More experienced politically than her opponents, Lee, who also had more money, higher name recognition and Dellum's endorsement, was favored to win from the beginning. Democrat Greg Harper, 49, an environmental attorney and Emeryville City Council member for 11 years, won 16 percent of the vote, while Democrat Randal Stewart, 44, the director of the Family Service Agency of San Francisco and a resident of East Oakland, won just 5 percent. Republican Claiborne "Clay" Sanders, 66, an East Bay realty consultant, won 12 percent.

Lee represented Oakland for three terms in the California State Assembly. She was first elected in 1990 with a whopping 80 percent of the vote.

Lee already knows the ropes, having served as a senior advisor and chief of staff to Dellums from 1975 to 1987. She holds a bachelors degree from Mills College and a masters degree in social welfare from the University of California, Berkeley.

Lee was sworn in to her new office on April 21 and is expected to carry forward much of the agenda that Ron Dellums stood for. Dellums, elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1970, was a tireless advocate for social justice and peace as well as an unyielding critic of the Pentagon. He introduced the bill to impose economic sanctions against South Africa and pressed President Clinton to pursue a policy to reestablish democracy in Haiti.

For Lee, holding down military spending and continuing the conversion of military bases to civilian uses will be high priorities, as they were for Dellums. In Congress, Lee also intends to advocate greater investment in education, universal health care, job creation, and economic development. She also plans to oppose the further resegregation of American universities brought on by Proposition 209 in California and the *Hopwood* v *The State of Texas* decision in Texas.

Locally, Lee is concerned about improving the Port of Oakland so that it can accommodate ocean-going vessels and compete with other West Coast ports.

Two Black Candidates Seek to Replace Parker

Two black candidates are running to succeed Democrat-turned-Republican Rep. Mike Parker in Mississippi's 4th congressional district in the June 2 primary election. The 4th district is 37 percent black. Parker, a five-term congressman, announced in January of this year that he would not seek reelection. Joyce Arceneaux is a first-term alderwoman in Natchez and was president from 1991 to 1995 of the Mississippi Association of Education, the state affiliate of the National Education Association. Her leadership in the local teachers' union could form a base of support with both black and white voters.

Carroll Rhodes is a practicing attorney in Jackson. Both Arceneaux and Rhodes will have a fight on their hands to beat Democratic front-runner Ronnie Shows, one of the state's three transportation commissioners.

Four Republicans are expected to lead the pack of nine candidates for the GOP nomination. Delbert Hosemann, a Jackson tax attorney, has the backing of the Republican party along with the money and support that go with it. Art Rhodes, Parker's chief of staff in Washington, has the congressman's endorsement, but will be running with the disadvantage of having lived outside the state for the last 10 years. Heath Hall, the former press secretary to Republican Governor Kirk Fordice, is running on such issues as school prayer

and the abolition of the Internal Revenue Service in an ideologically conservative campaign. Also among the top runners is State Representative Ken Stribling.

The Libertarian, Reform, and Taxpayers parties have also fielded candidates. A June 23 party runoff to decide at least one of the nominations is virtually assured.

The incumbent, Mike Parker, was first elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1988 as a Democrat. His conservative voting record was frequently at odds with the interests of his African American constituents. For example, he voted against an increase in the minimum wage, against minority broadcast ownership incentives, for the prosecution of 13-year-olds as adults, and for increased funding for prisons. In 1995, he switched to the Republican party.

Parker was challenged in 1996 by Kevin Antoine, a black urban planner and former Air Force captain. Antoine had defeated Margaret Barrett, a white 11-year Jackson city councilwoman, in the Democratic primary that year despite Barrett's backing by the Democratic establishment. But in the general election, Antoine garnered only 36 percent of the vote in a losing effort to Parker.

While the 4th district encompasses most of Jackson and Natchez, more than half of its area consists of small towns and rural counties. The campaign for the 4th district will not only decide who will win the congressional seat, it will also give a clear indication of whether 4th district voters are leaning toward the Republicans or the Democrats.

Philadelphia Seat Likely to Remain in White Hands

When Thomas Foglietta resigned as the representative of Pennsylvania's 1st congressional district on November 11, 1997, it looked as though the last majority-black district to have a white representative in the U.S. House of Representatives might elect a black congressman. Blacks constitute 52 percent of the population of the 1st district. But despite the entry of several black candidates in the May 19 special election to serve the unfilled portion of Foglietta's term, Bob Brady, the white chairman of Philadelphia's Democratic party, will be the likely winner. Brady, who has been the local party chair for the past 12 years, has an extensive network, party organization, and funding sources to draw upon.

Brady secured a lock on the race after black former city councilman and one-time congressman Lucien Blackwell announced that he would not be a candidate for the seat and threw his support behind Brady. Many observers believe Blackwell could have mounted a viable challenge. Blackwell represented the 2nd district, which covers West Philadelphia, in the U.S. House of Representative from 1991 to 1995. He initially won the seat in a special election in November 1991 to fill the vacancy left by Bill Gray, who resigned from Congress to head the United Negro College Fund. Blackwell was elected to a full term the following year but lost in the 1994 election.

Brady is favored to win, and no African American is given much of a chance partly because of Brady's excellent relations with the black community and partly because no strong, high-profile black candidate has remained in the race to galvanize the black vote. Andrew J. Carn, a state representative from predominantly black North Philadelphia and the most prominent black candidate in the contest, is given little chance of beating Brady because he has little money and little name recognition.

Terry Sanford: Statesman and Educator

On April 20, former North Carolina governor and U.S. Senator Terry Sanford, 80, succumbed to complications from cancer in his Durham home. Described in a 1981 Harvard study as one of the nation's 10 best governors of this century, Sanford is remembered as one of the chief architects of the New South as he led his state on a path away from Jim Crow and segregation in the 1960s. He also revolutionized the state's education system during his tenure as governor from 1961 to 1965. Sanford's advocacy of integration and racial harmony during the turbulent days of the sixties contrasted sharply with the positions of other southern politicians who were promising "segregation forever" and leading efforts to obstruct racial inclusion.

As president of Duke University from 1969 to 1985, Sanford presided over the school's rise to become one of the finest academic institutions in the country. After losing his bids for the Democratic presidential nomination in 1972 and 1976, he came back and won a seat in the U.S. Senate in 1986 at the age of 69. During his six-year Senate term, he was noted for his vehement opposition to the nomination of Robert Bork to the U.S. Supreme Court and to the Gulf War. The latter stance, along with heart-valve surgery during his reelection campaign, contributed to his defeat in 1992 by conservative Republican Lauch Faircloth.

In a statement released by the White House, President Clinton said of Sanford, "His work and his influence literally changed the face and future of the South, making him one of the most influential Americans of the last 50 years." ■

ECONOMIC REPORT

by Cecilia Conrad and Malinda Lindquist

Prosperity and Inequality on the Rise

Can a rising tide lift all boats? During the Reagan era, when economic expansion was accompanied by sharp increases in economic inequality between the rich and the poor, many observers concluded that the goals of economic growth and greater equality were incompatible. However, the recent economic expansion has been different. The 1997 Economic Report of the President found that households in the bottom fifth of the income distribution enjoyed the fastest growth in real incomes, increasing by 2.2 percent between 1993 and 1996. Poverty rates also decreased. For black families, the poverty rate reached a historic low—26.1 percent compared to a high of 33.9 percent in 1967.

Nevertheless, the current economic prosperity has not succeeded in reversing the long-term trend towards rising inequality. The income gap between rich and poor remains wide, and the ratio of black to white median family incomes (.56) was as low in 1996 as in 1972.

The Gap Between Rich and Poor

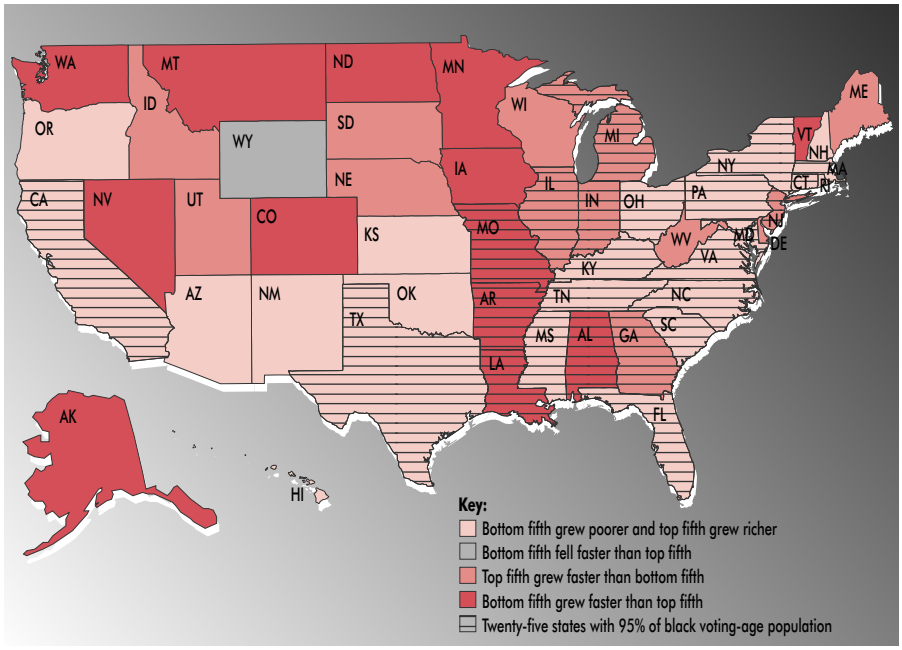
The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities' (CBPP) report, "Pulling Apart," documents the growing inequality between high-income families with children and middle- and low-income families with children. While the incomes of poor families rose during the latest recovery, the gains have not offset the losses suffered during the previous recession. Thus, over the last decade families in the bottom fifth of the income distribution experienced a 3 percent decline in incomes while families in the top fifth enjoyed a 19 percent increase.

The widening gulf between income groups is more striking at the state level. In the 1990s, nearly two-thirds of the states reported that their richest fifth of families had incomes 10 times greater than those of their poorest fifth. In the 1970s, not a single state reported such a gap. Of the 25 states where 95 percent of the black population reside, between 1985–87 and 1994–96, 21 states saw the income gap between the richest and poorest grow. Only in Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Missouri did the income growth of the bottom fifth of families eclipse those of high-income families. (See figure.)

During this same period, the income gap between middle- and high-income families also increased in each of the 25 states with a significant number of black residents. The District of Columbia, Indiana, New York, California, Tennessee, Pennsylvania, and Georgia were among the top 10 jurisdictions with the largest widening of the income gap between high- and middle-income families.

The authors of the CBPP study attribute the overall increases in income inequality to a variety of trends and government policies. Over the past 20 years, tens of thousands of high-paying manufacturing jobs have been replaced by low-paying service-sector jobs. The subsequent plummet in the number of workers represented by unions, along with the varying degrees of states' support for collective bargaining, has also contributed to the lack of wage growth among low- and middle-income workers since these activities can provide workers with the numerical clout and support necessary to ensure wage growth. Moreover, rapid technological change and international trade have increased the demand for—and the incomes of—highly skilled workers, while rising immigration and overseas competition have effectively reduced the wages of low-skilled workers.

Changes in income, 1985–87 to 1994–96



Note: The figure compares "pooled" data from the mid-1980s to "pooled" data from the mid-1990s. This method increases the sample size and accuracy of the data.
Source: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 1997.

Federal and state policies have done little to offset these trends. The minimum wage, in adjusted December 1997 dollars, dropped from $6.52 in 1979 to $4.11 in 1989. Despite recent legislation, the 1994 to 1996 value of the minimum wage has ranged between $4.75 and $5.15, appreciably lower than its earlier worth. Furthermore, recent welfare reforms have reduced economic security for the most vulnerable families.

The combined result of government policy and economic restructuring is that the gap between our society's upper echelons and its lower tiers has widened. Kathy Larin, a co-author of "Pulling Apart" concludes, "Robust economic growth in recent years has done little to turn around the long-term trend toward increasing inequality."

Racial Income Inequality

A similar conclusion can be drawn concerning racial inequality in incomes. Despite recent increases in median black family income, substantial racial disparities persist. These differences are due to a variety of factors, including family composition, educational and occupational attainment, and discrimination.

According to the 1997 Economic Report of the President, although black family incomes have grown faster since 1993 than non-Hispanic white family incomes, as of 1996 they were still only 56 percent of the value of white family incomes—the same percentage as in 1972. In 1996, median income for black families was $26,522 and for white families $44,756, reflecting a 13.9 percent increase for blacks and a 4.8 percent for whites since 1993.

Part of this gap can be explained by the rise of single-parent families in the black community. In 1972, 61 percent of black families were married-couple families and 35 percent were female-headed. By 1996, black families were equally as likely to be headed by married couples (46 percent) as to be headed by single females (47 percent). Although married-couple families tend to earn more than female-headed families, economists only attribute one-fifth of the income gap between blacks and whites to family composition. A closer analysis of the economic condition of black men and women compared to white men and women highlights continuing and even growing inequalities.

Particularly disturbing is the widening gap between white and black women. Although many black women have entered managerial and professional occupations since the 1980s, the occupational gap between black and white women has widened. The earnings gap between white and black full-time female workers, which had nearly closed by the mid-1970s, increased to 17 percentage points by 1997.

At least some of this gap stems from income inequality brought about by differing educational attainment. In particular, the increase in the wage premiums paid to workers with college degrees has exacerbated this trend. While the percentage of blacks with college degrees has increased, it still lags behind that of whites. Among black women, the percentage with college degrees has changed little since 1993, while among white women this percentage has increased by nearly 5 percentage points. Today, more than twice as many white women ages 25 to 29 have college degrees as black women in the same age group.

Differences in occupational and educational attainment do not fully explain the racial difference in wages. Even after controlling for differences in skill, the persistence of wage disparities underscores the role of discrimination. The black to white wage ratio was 0.74 among men with college degrees, only slightly lower than the wage ratio among black and white high school graduates. For women, it was .90 for college graduates and .85 for high school graduates. Furthermore, the Economic Report cites evidence that even after differences in schooling, age, location, and unmeasured skills are taken into account, young, college-educated black men experienced at least a 13 percent drop in wages relative to their white counterparts since the 1980s.

Issues for Public Policy

Because discrimination remains a factor, the debate over the most effective policy response is likely to continue. In a Martin Luther King Day address, Vice President Al Gore announced a new civil rights initiative emphasizing prevention and nonlitigation remedies for discrimination, as well as increased enforcement of antidiscrimination laws. In his 1999 budget, President Clinton has also proposed increasing the budgets of civil rights enforcement agencies and offices by more than 16 percent over the 1998 funding.

While increased enforcement of civil right laws is critical to reducing the racial occupational gap, it may not eliminate the income gap. Other strategies are also needed. As the income premium of college graduates increases, access to higher education becomes increasingly important to the economic progress of African Americans. While the Economic Report does discuss affirmative action, it falls short of a resounding endorsement of such measures. The end of affirmative action programs in university admissions may foreshadow further increases in the income gap. ■