


FOCUS

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A Mighty Oak Has Fallen

With the passing of Reverend Leon Howard Sullivan April 24, we lost a visionary giant whose moral strength and empowering faith transformed the lives of the poor and disenfranchised around the world. Rev. Sullivan was a dear friend of the Joint Center, and I was privileged to work with him on the National Black Leadership Forum and the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation.

Born in poverty and raised in the climate of racism and injustice that characterized Charleston, West Virginia, in the '20s and '30s, Sullivan determined not only to transcend these barriers, but to fight against them on behalf of others. Sullivan's early acquaintance with social, racial, and economic inequality shaped moral imperatives that would affect the conduct of giant corporations as well as the lives of the world's poor.

After graduating from West Virginia State College, he became pastor of Zion Baptist Church in Philadelphia. Under his guidance, spanning nearly four decades, the church's membership grew from 600 to 6,000 members. "The Lion of Zion," as he came to be known, organized a successful boycott of establishments in Philadelphia that refused to hire blacks. "Don't buy where you can't work" became the rallying cry for what he dubbed "selective patronage."

Balanced, strategic, and long-term in approach, Sullivan founded in 1964 what became the largest training program on the globe—the Opportunities Industrialization Centers (OIC). At the time, the civil rights movement had opened up new opportunities for African American workers, but they lacked the skills to fill many of these positions. Sullivan's new organization sought to remedy this. Today, OIC has 76 training centers in the United States and 33 more in 18 different countries.

Sullivan has received the most acclaim, however, for his critical role in the demise of apartheid in South Africa. As the first African American to sit on the board of directors of General Motors Corporation, Sullivan used the prestige and power of his position to help tear down South Africa's entrenched institution of racial separation and brutality. He developed the "Sullivan Principles," a code of conduct for corporations engaged in business in South Africa. Corporations that failed to meet the requirements of the code were subject to calls for divestment. In 1985, Sullivan exhorted the white South African government to extend the right to vote to black South Africans and to free Nelson Mandela within two years. When the deadline was not met, he pushed nations to join a boycott against the white government.

After apartheid came to an end, Sullivan continued his commitment to ensure civil rights and economic opportunity for the newly enfranchised black citizens of South Africa. He encouraged businesses to invest in the new South Africa. As president of the International Foundation for Education and Self-Help (IFESH), Sullivan founded programs to help improve the lives of Africans and develop better collaboration between Africans and African Americans.

In 1999, the United Nations adopted "Global Principles for Corporate Social Responsibility," based on the Sullivan

Principles. These principles are now the standard for how companies around the world should meet their responsibilities for human rights and social and economic justice.

A mighty oak has fallen, but his legacy lives on. We will honor Rev. Sullivan's memory by continuing the work to which he dedicated his life. The Joint Center's programs in South Africa help teach newly enfranchised black citizens how to exercise their civic rights and responsibilities and build the nongovernmental institutions that support democracy. We believe that an enduring commitment to the principles that bear his name is the best memorial we can create to Leon Sullivan. We will miss this principled man and his unfaltering commitment to uplifting disadvantaged men, women, and children everywhere. ■

PRESIDENT



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Taking America's Pulse

A Nationwide Survey Shows Prejudice and Discrimination Against Minority Americans Continue but Finds Encouraging Trends

by Sanford Cloud, Jr.

Almost 150 years after President Lincoln said this nation was “conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal,” the struggle to achieve equality continues. Hate crimes, racial profiling, use of Native American names for mascots, and bias based on sexual orientation are still front-page news. The 2000 Census makes it plain that the country is quickly becoming more diverse. But despite this increasing racial and ethnic mix, a new survey of intergroup attitudes confirms that America’s minority citizens still face prejudice and discrimination in their daily lives.

Released just prior to the new data from the 2000 Census, *Taking America's Pulse II (TAP II): NCCJ's 2000 Survey of Intergroup Relations in the United States* reports on a national study of intergroup attitudes. Sponsored by the National Conference for Community and Justice and funded by the Bank of America, the study was conducted under the guidance of Tom W. Smith, director of the General Social Survey at the well-known National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago.

This second major nationwide survey of racial attitudes sponsored by NCCJ provides important insights regarding the experiences—often very disturbing—of people of color and others in realizing President Lincoln’s vision of the United States.

Some 2,580 Americans participated in the TAP II survey carried out between January and March 2000. The findings are distinctive in a number of ways. First, it is one of the most comprehensive surveys of intergroup relations ever fielded, covering a wide range of racial, religious, ethnic, and other social-class groups. Second, its oversampling of a number of key racial and ethnic groups (blacks, Hispanics, Asian Americans) allows for an examination of intergroup relations from the perspective of a variety of groups rather than solely from the perspective of the country as a whole. Third, because the survey examined both behavior and attitudes, it gives a more complete picture than many opinion surveys. Finally, TAP II provides information on how intergroup relations have changed over time.

According to Smith’s analysis, the survey conveys just how complex and challenging intergroup relations are in contemporary American society. But several broad themes did emerge from the analysis.

Recognition of the Problem

Respondents were well aware that intergroup relations are a problem. Only about 3 in 10 respondents (29 percent) said they were satisfied with “how well different groups in society get along with each other,” while nearly 8 in 10 felt that “racial, religious, or ethnic tension” is a very serious or somewhat serious problem in the country. Despite this expressed belief in the seriousness of the situation, respondents saw these tensions as existing mainly outside their personal lives and gave intergroup relations only moderate priority compared to other social problems.

A plurality of Americans believed that at least some discrimination is experienced by all major American racial and ethnic groups except whites. They believed that the greatest discrimination is against blacks (83 percent), gays and lesbians (83 percent), and the poor (80 percent).

Across important life domains—education, housing, promotions, access to equal justice, treatment by the police, and fair media attention—survey respondents believed that racial and ethnic groups do not have opportunities equal to those of whites. Only about 40 percent felt that blacks, Hispanics, and American Indians have parity with whites in these areas. Although Asian Americans were perceived to fare much better than other minority groups in these domains, only 57 percent believed that Asian Americans, nevertheless, have the same opportunities as whites. The area seen as offering the most equal opportunity was education: more than half said that racial and ethnic minorities have the same chances here as whites do. The least equitable area was treatment by the police, with little more than a third (36 percent) saying that treatment is equal.

Negative Perceptions Confirmed

These perceptions of prejudice and discrimination by minority persons were substantiated by the self-reports of respondents, who indicated that discrimination is a common part of their everyday lives. Further, the data also supported the perception that while minorities experience high levels of discrimination, whites do not. Blacks were more than three times as likely as whites to report that they had experienced unfair treatment in the 30 days before the survey (41.5 percent vs. 13 percent). Asian Americans were more than twice as likely as whites to report such unfair treatment (29 percent vs. 13 percent). In contrast, Hispanics (who may be of any race) were only slightly more likely than whites to

Mr. Cloud is the president and CEO of The National Conference for Community and Justice.

claim unfair treatment in that period (16 percent vs. 13 percent). Discrimination most often occurred in shopping situations, followed by incidents in restaurants, bars, theaters, or other entertainment places and at work.

The attitudes of the respondents themselves reflected prejudice and discriminatory behavior. Over a third (36 percent) agreed that "It's okay to have a country where the races are basically separate from one another, as long as they have equal opportunity." More than half (54 percent) placed the blame for racial problems on minorities, agreeing with the statement "Until racial minorities shape up and realize that they can't get a free ride, there will be little improvement in race relations in America."

Different racial and ethnic groups had fundamentally different views on the state of intergroup relations in America that seem to reflect their own experience with discrimination. Blacks, who reported experiencing the highest levels of discrimination, not surprisingly saw relatively high conflict and tension, much discrimination, little opportunity, and a lack of influence by minority groups. In contrast, whites, who reported experiencing the least discrimination, were the most optimistic and saw fewer tensions, less discrimination, and more opportunity. Asian Americans felt relatively isolated from other groups in society, saw the least amount of discrimination, and fell somewhere between whites and blacks in their evaluation of influence, opportunity, and tensions. The views of Hispanics were generally in the middle on each of the topics covered.

This disparity between groups in experiencing and perceiving discrimination was reflected in the level of satisfaction that persons from the various groups experience across five life domains—income, housing, work, education, and health care. In these areas, whites reported the greatest

satisfaction (82 percent), followed by Asians (81 percent), Hispanics (73 percent), and blacks (68 percent).

Despite the increasing diversity in the country shown by the 2000 Census, many Americans are unfamiliar with some of the cultural groups that exist in our society, and the majority do not feel close to most of these groups. More people said they were far away from, rather than close to, atheists, Muslims, and gays and lesbians. More were neutral toward or far away from Asians, Jews, immigrants, the illiterate, Hispanics, American Indians, fundamentalist Christians, and people on welfare. But more felt close to, rather than neutral to or far away from, blacks, the poor, people with disabilities, the elderly, and whites. Over one-third of respondents (36 percent) did not know enough about Muslims to form an opinion about them on this issue.

Optimistic Trends

Despite the gloomy news about continuing discrimination, the data indicate strong improvement. In 2000, the public felt much closer to all groups than it did in 1996. The percent of TAP II respondents who felt close or very close to blacks rose by 55 percent, from 38 percent in 1996 to 59 percent in 2000. Those who indicated they felt close to Hispanics rose by a similar percentage (57 percent), from 28 percent to 44 percent. The percent of TAP II respondents who said they felt close to Asian Americans more than doubled, from 15 percent to 32 percent. The percent who felt close to fundamentalist Christians increased 50 percent, from 22 percent in 1996 to 33 percent in 2000.

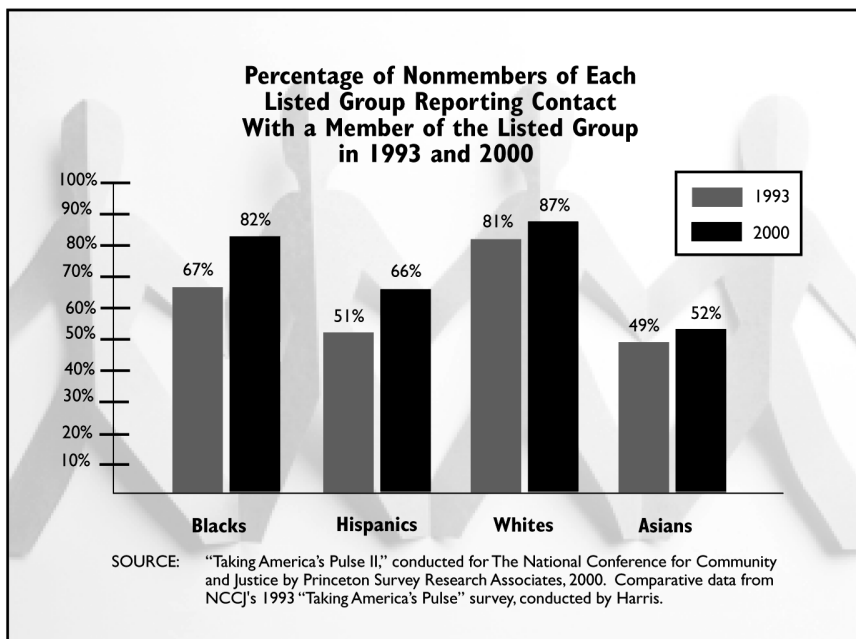
Another encouraging trend was the increase in interracial/interethnic contact since 1993, the date of the first TAP survey. (See graph.) Reported contact by nonwhites with whites was up by 6 percentage points, from 81 percent to 87 percent. Reported contact with blacks by nonblacks increased by 15 percentage points, from 67 percent to 82 percent. Contact by non-Hispanics with Hispanics rose by 15 percentage points, from 51 percent to 66 percent, and contact by non-Asians with Asians was up by 3 percentage points, from 49 to 52 percent.

As might be expected, increased intergroup contact turns out to have a positive effect on intergroup relations, that is, those with greater contact with racial and ethnic groups are more likely to rate intergroup relations as a priority. They also had greater feelings of closeness, thought that discrimination was high, and saw minority groups as lacking enough influence.

Single copies of the full report of the TAP II survey, *Taking America's Pulse II: NCCJ's 2000 Survey of Intergroup Relations in the United States*, are available from NCCJ.

About the National Conference for Community and Justice

For nearly three-quarters of a century, NCCJ has dedicated itself to fighting bias, bigotry, and



Continued on back cover

The Blessings of Diversity

Diversity Can Enrich Our Lives If We Seek Out and Learn From People Different from Ourselves

by Michael R. Wenger

I awoke with a start, bathed in perspiration. We were visiting my mother-in-law on Easter weekend in North Carolina. My then-wife and I had been out late the night before, and we were trying to sleep off a modest overindulgence in alcohol. But my mother-in-law had other ideas. She had warned us as we departed for our Saturday night out that she expected us to accompany her to church on Easter Sunday. Ignorant of her world, I grossly underestimated her determination. She knew we had gotten in at about 4 a.m. and were not likely to arise on our own much before noon. So, at about 7 a.m. she began stoking the wood-burning stove in the room in which we were sleeping. It was a 70-degree North Carolina morning, and the fully fired stove probably pushed it over 100 in our room. Headaches and sleepiness notwithstanding, the two of us were virtually “roasted” out of bed. Needless to say, we accompanied my mother-in-law to church.

Recently, a good friend, an African American man, asked me what I have learned as a result of the unique diversity that has permeated my life. His question reminded me of how startling my mother-in-law’s behavior was to me at the time. First, let me describe my background—I am of Polish-Russian heritage, raised culturally, though not religiously, Jewish. I grew up in a working-class immigrant family that achieved a fair measure of financial security by the time my parents retired. I was married for 11 years to an African American woman who grew up in a Baptist church-going family on the lower end of the economic ladder in a segregated Southern town. I have three relatively dark-skinned children—a son who combines my European heritage with his mother’s African American heritage and two adopted daughters who are African American. My current wife is an Irish-French woman who grew up in a devoutly Catholic home and has become a born-again Christian. My two daughters have bestowed on me and my current wife two granddaughters and a new grandson.

Yet, my friend’s question caught me off-guard. I had not spent much time thinking about what I’ve learned from the racial diversity in my life. I’ve just ingested it all, and it’s become a part of who I am. So, my immediate answer was that “I’ve learned we’re all the same.”

In fact, we are much the same in many essential ways. We all cherish common values freedom, fairness, justice, hard work. We all possess common aspirations—a decent and affordable home, a fulfilling job, healthy and educated

children. We all feel the same emotions—joy at the birth of a child, sadness at the death of a loved one, love for our family, anger at people who disrespect us, hope for the future, frustration at the daily barriers we encounter.

However, as I reflect further, “we’re all the same” seems too glib. We are all, in fact, also different, shaped by our unique experiences in the environment—racial, religious, economic, cultural—in which we’ve grown up. My mother-in-law could not imagine that we would not go to church, especially on Easter Sunday. My wife, having grown up in that environment, understood. I, having grown up in a totally different environment, was clueless. What that Easter Sunday experience began to teach me, in retrospect, is how much we can teach to and learn from those with backgrounds different from our own.

I write this because the current demographic revolution will force most of us to function in more diverse environments in which understanding the unique beliefs, qualities, and expectations of people from diverse backgrounds will become increasingly important. It will be more difficult for people to live their lives insulated from those who are not just like them, to escape from living, working, and going to school among those who are different. Stroll down the street of any big city, stride through any major airport, scan the employment ranks of most big companies, and the diversity already is inescapable.

Many of us talk with great sincerity about the value of this growing diversity. But we usually talk about it in abstract terms—music, food, art, literature, and the like. Stymied by institutions—schools, media, houses of worship—that continue to allow race and ethnicity to divide us, we find it difficult to develop the kinds of relationships that would allow us to better understand our common values and aspirations, appreciate the unique strengths and attributes each of us possesses, and recognize the important lessons and insights we can learn from each other.

Visiting my mother-in-law on that Easter weekend and on many subsequent occasions opened for me a window to a different world—a world that I had been only vaguely aware of. The world revealed to me through that window has made my journey through life richer, deeper, and livelier in many ways. I have witnessed a level of strength and perseverance to which most white Americans I know can only aspire. I’ve seen how, for many of my older African American friends and family, the pain of growing up in the cruel and segregated South has not dissipated simply because access to

Mr. Wenger is director of the Network of Alliances Bridging Race and Ethnicity (NABRE) at the Joint Center.

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Diversity

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voting booths, lunch counters, and the front of the bus is now relatively secure. I have seen the strength it takes to get through every day, carrying, in the words of author and journalist Sam Fulwood, “a boulder of racial attitudes on my back,” born of frustration and anger in dealing with ignorant, arrogant, and condescending white people. I’ve observed how much harder it remains for African Americans, no matter how smart, to negotiate a college education, a good job, and a settled life in an essentially white, often hostile world. Neither I nor any white American can fully understand the “boulder” that Sam Fulwood describes nor the trials that create it, nor have many of us faced circumstances requiring such strength and perseverance to survive and succeed.

The flip side of this strength and perseverance is self-control, almost unimaginable at times, in the face of provocation. One of the first times my then-fiancee and I went to a restaurant, we were completely ignored. The waitress never looked in our direction despite my repeated, initially polite efforts to gain her attention. I fumed and eventually lost control. My spouse-to-be never lost control and led me out of the restaurant before I got myself into serious trouble. Similarly, when racism denied us the opportunity to buy the house we wanted, I raged while she looked for solutions. That level of purposeful self-control is not a part of the makeup of most whites I know.

In my experience, much of this strength, perseverance, and self-control comes from the depth of family ties. I came to love visiting my in-laws in North Carolina because of the supportive and intense relationships I developed. We would spend our days going from house to house in the community, sampling the food on the stove, laughing at the day’s events, and debating about everything from politics to sports. I quickly became part of the family. On one of my early visits, my brother-in-law took us to the local club for some music and dancing. Before we left the house, he called me aside to tell me in no uncertain terms that if there was any trouble, I could count on him: “You’re part of my family now, and nobody messes with my family.” Fortunately, we had no trouble at the club. But I have always remembered and appreciated his embrace of me as family. I’ve often wondered if, had the situation had been reversed, I would have been willing to embrace him with equal fervor.

All of these qualities—strength, perseverance, self-control, depth of family ties—seem to me to be grounded in faith. As my exposure to this faith increased, I found myself launched on my own spiritual journey a journey that continues today. Wherever this journey finally takes me, I am grateful for the day it began in the heat of that Easter morning more than 30 years ago.

During the 11 years my first wife and I were married, we lived in a middle-class, moderately diverse neighborhood in Charleston, West Virginia. Most of our closest friends were African American, and my most enduring impressions of our days in Charleston revolve around our friends of color.

Virtually all of our African American friends were members of fraternities or sororities. To support the community work they did, each of these organizations held an annual formal fund-raising ball. These events were a fun-filled mix of elegant dress, good music, bountiful food and drink, dancing, and lively conversation that renewed spirit and soul. On other Saturday nights, we could be found at the homes of an assortment of friends, replicating the behavior at these balls, but without the formal dress. These Saturday nights were exhilarating and enlivening experiences and, for me, a lesson in how to put an exclamation point on the week just concluded and lay the groundwork for the week ahead.

None of this is meant to disparage my own growing-up experiences. After all, it was these experiences that made me open to the more diverse experiences of my adulthood. Nor is it meant to generalize about an entire community based on my experiences. The black community, like every community, is widely diverse. I simply want to share how enriching the diversity in my life has been. The diversity in my professional life has been equally enriching, and my current marriage has revealed still new perspectives that have magnified the richness of my life and the lives of my children and grandchildren.

The bottom line is that we are shaped by our environment, particularly in our early years. What we learn early in life becomes normal to us. But our society is a mosaic of experiences and cultures that have much to offer us that will enrich our lives if we are open to receiving them. Of course, you don’t necessarily need to marry someone of a different faith, culture, or racial or ethnic heritage to experience different perspectives. Through friendships, club memberships, attendance at cultural events, participation in interracial activities, and the like, one can seek out the types of experiences that I have enjoyed. What is important, if our diversity is to be truly our nation’s greatest strength, is for all of us to move beyond the barriers created by society and intentionally seek to learn about and from people who are different from us. It’s a lifelong journey, but only this way can we realize the true potential of our nation’s diversity.

Every Friday evening our two granddaughters, ages 8 and 6, share a pizza dinner with my wife and me while our infant grandson watches from the lap of one of us, waiting impatiently for the day when he can graduate from formula to pizza. My wife teaches them about the variety of birds that visit the bird feeders just outside our kitchen window. We talk about their experiences of the week, and they try to teach us songs they have learned, mostly songs of faith they’ve learned at the Baptist school they attend. We are learning from each other, and there are no barriers. How fortunate we are. How fortunate others would be if they shared the blessings of diversity. ■



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Polls Closed to Many Black Men

Felony Convictions Deny Vote to 13 Percent of African American Men

by Marc Mauer

Thomas Johnson was not among the thousands of voters who experienced problems at the polls in Florida last November. Johnson, the director of a nonprofit Christian residential program for ex-offenders, could not even go to the polls because he is one of several hundred thousand Floridians with a criminal record and as such is excluded from registering to vote. Johnson was convicted of selling cocaine and carrying a firearm in New York in 1992 and moved to Florida after serving his sentence. But though he is in every sense rehabilitated, he remains a political exile.

The disenfranchisement of felons and ex-felons is one of many aspects of the seamy underside of American electoral practice that has become exposed in Florida and elsewhere. In the case of felon disenfranchisement laws, we see the combined impact of policies that began to be enacted in the eighteenth century along with the modern day “get tough” movement. The effect has been disastrous.

At the founding of the nation, the framers of the Constitution elected to grant the vote only to white male property holders, thereby excluding women, African Americans, and illiterates, as well as felons. All these other groups have long since received the vote (albeit after an embarrassingly long period), while felons and ex-felons remain the only significant bloc of citizens excluded from the voting booth.

In the post-Reconstruction period in the old Confederacy, a number of states tailored their disenfranchisement policies specifically to exclude the newly freed blacks. Not coincidentally, these policies emerged at the same time as the imposition of the poll tax and literacy requirements. States such as Alabama and South Carolina, for example, crafted their laws such that the crimes believed to be committed most commonly by blacks would result in disenfranchisement while those offenses assumed to be committed by whites would not.

These explicitly racist policies have since been struck down, but the combined impact of these laws and the vast expansion of the criminal justice system has produced results reminiscent of the poll tax era. Over the past 30 years, the number of Americans behind bars has increased fivefold to a record 2 million today. In recent years much of this increase has been fueled by the “war on drugs,” a social policy that has resulted in blacks and Latinos comprising 79 percent of all state prison drug offenders. Overall, two-thirds of all inmates are black or Latino, and a black male born today has a 29 percent chance of serving a felony sentence in a state or federal prison.

Whether intended or not, disenfranchisement laws are now having a substantial impact on the voting pool and disproportionately on communities of color. An estimated 3.9 million Americans were ineligible to vote in the 2000 election as a result of a felony conviction; of these, 1.4 million were black men, representing 13 percent of the African American adult population. According to figures from the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, about 200,000 ex-felons—persons who had already “paid their debt to society”—in that state were ineligible to vote.

New research by sociologists Christopher Uggen and Jeffrey Manza demonstrates that the impact of disenfranchisement clearly is affecting electoral outcomes. Given expected voter turnout and preferences among disenfranchised felons, they conclude that in seven senatorial races since 1970, the disenfranchisement of felons was decisive in electing Republicans to the U.S. Senate.

Legislative activity and litigation challenging these policies have captured the imagination of many grassroots leaders in the past several years. A broad coalition in Delaware last year successfully scaled back that state’s lifetime ban on voting by ex-felons to a five-year post-prison period. In Pennsylvania, a lawsuit brought by the Brennan Center of the New York University Law School and the Philadelphia chapter of the NAACP was successful in eliminating a five-year post-prison ban on registration. During the 2001 legislative session, bills to limit the scope of disenfranchisement are being considered in Alabama, Connecticut, Florida, Maryland, Nevada, and other states.

At the federal level, Rep. John Conyers (D-Mich.) and others have sponsored legislation designed to ensure uniformity in federal elections. Conyers’ proposal aims to reform the anomaly whereby an ex-offender in West Virginia can vote for President but an ex-offender in Virginia cannot. Under the terms of this bill, any non-imprisoned person could vote in a federal election even if barred from voting in state elections.

In broad terms, disenfranchisement policies in the United States are quite extreme in comparison with those of other democratic nations. No other democracy banishes ex-felons from voting for life, as happens in 13 states in the United States. In many nations, prisoners themselves are granted voting rights. Two states—Maine and Vermont—currently permit inmates to vote, with no reported problems.

The silver lining in the cloud of the Florida election may be the renewed scrutiny that is being brought to a broad range of electoral problems. Prominent among these are both antiquated felony disenfranchisement laws and modern

Dr. Mauer is assistant director of The Sentencing Project and author of *Race to Incarcerate*.

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America's Pulse

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racism through advocacy, conflict resolution, and education. Founded in 1927 as the National Conference of Christians and Jews, its core work is to empower leaders to transform communities through institutional change, based on programming and public policy initiatives informed by research. NCCJ undertook these TAP surveys to learn more about the attitudes and experiences that define and contribute to the state of intergroup relations today. NCCJ will continue to pursue public policy and programmatic strategies to support leaders and institutions in their work to achieve an inclusive society. For more information about NCCJ's position on human relations, public policy, and programmatic strategies, visit its web site at www.nccj.org. ■

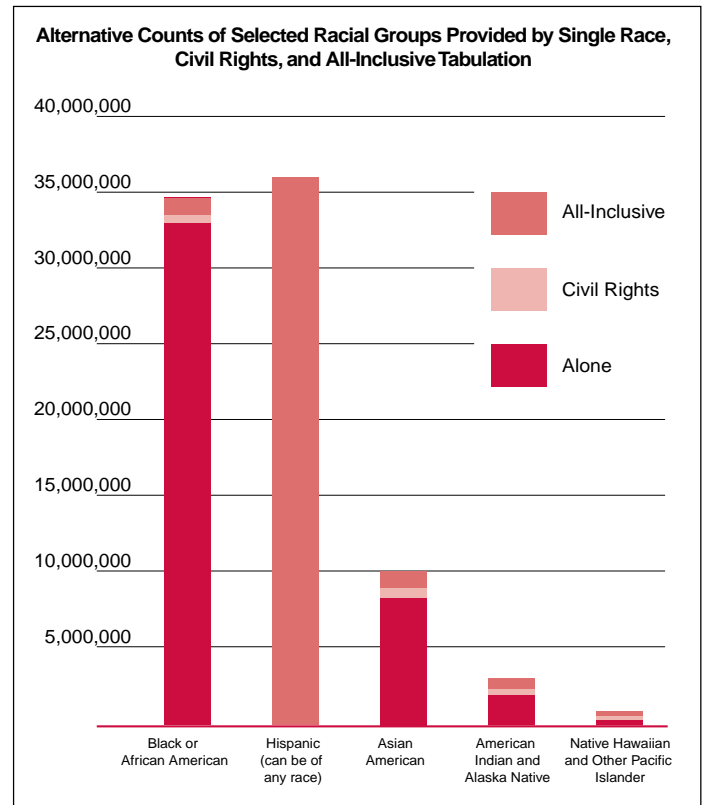
Polls Closed to Many

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"get tough" criminal justice policies. Both policymakers and the public would be well served by a fresh look at the impact of these policies and consideration of more effective and inclusive alternatives. ■

Correction

The graph that appeared with the article "The Question of Race" in the April issue of *FOCUS* incorrectly represented the number of Hispanics. The correct graph appears below.



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TRENDLETTER

POLITICAL REPORT

Racial Bias in Special Education

By Mary K. Garber

Educators, parents, and civil rights advocates have long suspected that minority children are overidentified as mentally retarded and that racial bias plays a role in their labeling. Reports recently released by the Civil Rights Project at Harvard University confirm these suspicions. Nationwide, black children, especially boys, are much more likely than their white peers to be diagnosed as mentally retarded and put into restrictive special education classes. Even more disturbing is the finding that black boys who go to predominantly white schools in middle-class neighborhoods are more likely to be placed in special education classes than black boys in predominantly black schools in low-income neighborhoods. Nationally, black children are three times more likely than their white peers to be labeled mentally retarded and nearly twice as likely as their white counterparts to be labeled as having emotional problems. In five states, black children are at least *four times* more likely to be identified as mentally retarded: Connecticut, Mississippi, Nebraska, North Carolina, and South Carolina.

The reports released in March provide evidence that these differences in assignment to special education are

the result of racial bias and poor training rather than genuinely higher rates of disability that might result from social conditions (although the evidence suggests that the latter also play a role). Teachers and others misinterpret cultural differences in behavior as evidence of mental deficiency. The studies noted that assessments often had no objective basis but instead relied on subjective factors such as cultural bias and local school politics.

Being inappropriately placed in special education classes means that these students are denied equal opportunity since these classes typically offer fewer services than regular classes and are associated with much worse outcomes for students. Moreover, outcomes for disabled minority students are consistently worse than for their white peers. Two years after leaving secondary school, 75 percent of minority disabled students remain unemployed, compared to 47 percent of disabled white students. The arrest rate, three to five years post-high school, is 40 percent for black disabled youth, compared to 27 percent for white disabled youth.

The Harvard reports also revealed that minority children placed in restrictive special education classes are less likely to reenter regular classrooms than are white children in these settings. Further, minority children were less likely to receive early intervention and support services for emotional problems, contributing to the likelihood of expulsion, suspen-

sion, or dropping out as well as involvement with the juvenile justice system.

Overall, the reports found that as a minority group's percentage of the population in a locality increases, so do its chances of being overrepresented in special education classes and of remaining segregated from regular students. While standardized testing for promotion or graduation is known to be problematic for all disabled students, it was shown to be even more so for minority students, who may not have an equal opportunity to learn the tested material. This finding has particular relevance for the current education reforms being promoted by the Bush administration, which rely heavily on the use of standardized testing. The reports also noted differences in racial impact by method of funding. Where state funding is allocated according to degree of disability, African American students have an increased chance of being labeled retarded and placed in restrictive settings. These programs also spend less money per student.

Researchers offered a number of recommendations for improving the assessment and placement of special education students. They recommend that schools use more objective means of identifying students who require special education and pursue better training for evaluators so that cultural bias can be eliminated. They further urge that schools become less bureaucratic, compartmentalized, and hierarchical in both special and regular

education and instead strive to become more democratic and collaborative in providing services to children. Schools need to provide better early intervention and support, they argue, in order to prevent problems from mushrooming into conflicts with the legal system. Because high-stakes testing creates special problems for disabled students, researchers recommend that states be sure that students are given adequate opportunities to learn the tested material.

The full text of the reports and other related materials are available from the Civil Rights Project of Harvard University at www.law.harvard.edu/civilrights.

North Carolina's 12th Ruled Constitutional

On April 18, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that North Carolina's 12th district was legally constructed and not an unconstitutional racial gerrymander, bringing closure to a case that had been bouncing around the courts for the better part of a decade. In another narrow 5-to-4 decision that featured the same alignment of justices as previous redistricting cases, the High Court decided that race had not been the predominant factor in the district's construction; rather, that political affiliation, a traditional districting concern, had played a large part in its delineation. However, in the majority decision, Justice Stephen G. Breyer noted that political affiliation in this case is strongly associated with race. It is permissible to consider race in the drawing of district lines; in fact, it must be considered in order for states to comply with the Voting Rights Act, which forbids dilution of minority voting strength. But race must not be the controlling concern, overriding all others.

Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, who has been the swing vote in previous redistricting decisions, again joined

the court's more liberal wing—Justices Breyer, John Paul Stevens, David H. Souter, and Ruth Bader Ginsburg—to form the majority. Voting in the minority were Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist and Justices Antonin Scalia, Anthony M. Kennedy, and Clarence Thomas. Justice Thomas crafted the minority opinion, which principally objected to the lack of deference to the lower court ruling against the district.

North Carolina's 12th district is represented by Congressman Melvin Watt, one of two African Americans elected to Congress from North Carolina as a result of the construction of majority-minority districts after the 1990 census. The earlier district, which was 57 percent black, was ruled unconstitutional and redrawn to contain a 46 percent black voting age population. The 71-mile-long district encompasses the cities of Charlotte, Winston-Salem, and Greensboro, all of which have substantial black populations. The state's lawyers successfully argued that the district was constructed to ensure reelection of its Democratic incumbent and to keep an even partisan split in the state delegation.

The culmination of this protracted case (*Hunt v. Cromartie*) comes in time for the newest round of redistricting (see April 2001 *FOCUS*) just beginning this month in state legislatures around the country. State legislators and other concerned parties will now have a better idea of the extent to which race can be considered in drawing new district lines. They also are assured that partisan concerns and protection of incumbents will be recognized by the courts as traditional, and therefore acceptable, redistricting practices.

Reading Gap Widens

As the U.S. Congress considers the new administration's education budget, a report released by the

Department of Education shows alarming disparities in students' reading ability by race, ethnicity, gender, and region. Most alarming was the report's finding that the performance gap between the best and the worst readers was widening. *The Nation's Report Card: Fourth Grade Reading 2000*, released by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), an agency of the U.S. Department of Education, reported that while the average reading score for the nation's fourth graders has remained unchanged over the last eight years, the performance gap between the best and the worst students has progressively widened.

In 2000, students at the higher percentiles (75th and 90th percentiles) scored higher than in previous years, but students at the lower percentile (10th percentile) had lower scores. NAEP achievement levels, which measure students' performance levels relative to standards, found a similar pattern. Students at or above the "proficient" level increased from 29 to 32 percent; those at the "advanced" level increased from 6 to 8 percent. But no significant change was found in the percentage of students at the "below basic" level—37 percent in 2000.

The only minorities to show an overall improvement in average scores over the period 1992 to 2000 were Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders. The racial/ethnic gap in reading scores persisted, with white and Asian American fourth graders continuing to have higher average reading scores than black, Hispanic, and American Indian students. Female students continued to have higher scores than their male counterparts. Regional comparisons showed that students in the Northeast and Central parts of the United States did better than students in the Southeast and West. Students in central city schools had a lower average score than those in rural or suburban locations. ■

ECONOMIC REPORT

President Presents Budget for FY 2002

By Margaret C. Simms

On April 9, President George W. Bush released his proposed budget for fiscal year (FY) 2002, which begins October 1, 2001. While the consensus was that the budget is more evolutionary than revolutionary, there was little agreement on the actual increase in spending included in the President's budget proposals. In his budget message, President Bush indicated that the FY 2002 budget included a 4 percent increase in discretionary spending.

However, other budget analysts believe that the proposed budget will increase as much as 5.8 percent (*New York Times*) or by only 1.5 percent, not adjusting for inflation (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities). Part of the difference in estimates is due to the base that is being examined—overall budget, domestic budget, or discretionary spending—and part is due to a few unusual items in the FY 2002 appropriations.

The budget proposals for FY 2002 total \$1.96 trillion, with \$1.08 trillion (55%) of total outlays in mandatory spending and \$188 billion (9.6%) in net interest payments. The remaining \$692 billion is discretionary spending. In nominal terms, this represents a 5.7 percent increase in overall spending and a 6.6 percent increase in discretionary spending. However, the Congressional Budget Office baseline budget calls for outlays of \$1.92 trillion just to maintain the program level in place prior to this year. That would suggest that the budget proposed by President Bush is only a 2 percent increase over what is

necessary to maintain the program activity already in place.

In the short run, discretionary spending is where the President has his greatest impact because the executive branch (with appropriate Congressional authorization) can dictate who gets the funding and how much they get. Within this category, the President's budget includes both increases and decreases. Many of them reflect the priorities that Bush emphasized in his election campaign.

The departments and program areas showing an increase in spending are Education (11.5%), Housing and Urban Development (6.7%), International Affairs (5.5%), Health and Human Services (5.2%), Treasury (5.0%), Defense (4.8%), and Veterans Affairs (4.5%). Those with decreases include Transportation (-11.4%), Agriculture (-7.3%), Environmental Protection Agency (-6.4%), Commerce (-5.9%), Labor (-5.0%), Interior (-3.9%), and Energy (-2.5%). The Justice Department was held steady.

In an earlier Economic Report (January 2001), the expected impact of some of the Bush proposals on African Americans was discussed. This issue reviews some of the budget proposals that incorporate campaign promises of special interest to African Americans.

Education

One of the main pillars of the Bush campaign was his promise to reform the educational system so that all children will have the opportunity to prepare "for productive lives in the 21st century." His budget sets forth a spending plan in the context of a reauthorized Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Included among the features and funding in the budget proposal is extra funding for Title I grants for students most at risk of not meeting state standards for

improved achievement. For low-performing schools, the President is seeking an additional \$178 million, a 78 percent increase over funding in FY 2001. Also included is a provision for students attending low-performing schools to transfer to a better public school if their school does not improve within a specified period.

Requests for increased or new funding include \$900 million for the Reading First initiative and \$2.6 billion for teacher quality. A proposal to consolidate 10 programs into a \$472 million "Choice and Innovation Fund" would allow states flexibility to try out education reforms, including school choice. The post-secondary budget includes additional aid for historically black colleges and universities and Hispanic-serving institutions.

While the Education Department would appear to have the largest increase, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities' analysis indicates that approximately 45 percent of the increase is the result of a one-time adjustment in forward funding of payments to local educational agencies (LEAs). This results from a congressional effort to spread the effects of its fall 2000 approval of increased education funding for the 2002–2003 school year over two fiscal years. In other words, these funds have already been approved by Congress and their inclusion in this budget is just a matter of accounting. Once these funds are excluded, the increase for education drops to \$2.5 billion, for a 5.9 percent increase in funding requested for FY 2002.

Health and Human Services

Among the social services programs, special attention is given to programs to support families and children. Among the new initiatives is a \$67 million program that would provide assistance to faith- and community-based groups for efforts to assist

children of prisoners. Since an estimated 7 percent of all African American children have a parent in prison, this could be of disproportionate benefit to the African American community. Funds are also provided for competitive grant awards to various fatherhood initiatives.

A major new health proposal is the Immediate Helping Hand initiative. This would provide assistance to senior citizens for prescription drug coverage. The request is for \$46 billion over five years to help low-income Medicare beneficiaries. Costs would be fully covered for individuals with incomes under \$11,700 and married couples with incomes under \$15,700.

Partial subsidies would be available for individuals with incomes between \$11,700 and \$15,000 and couples with incomes between \$15,700 and \$20,300.

The health budget also includes a funding request for an additional 100 Community and Migrant Health Centers, an increase of 3 percent. These centers are designed to provide culturally competent health care to uninsured and underserved individuals. The administration estimates that this expansion will increase the number of people who can be served by nearly 1 million.

Social Security

As indicated earlier, the bulk of the Social Security budget is set by existing law and by the number of recipients drawing benefits from the system. The FY 2002 budget includes an estimated \$455 billion for more than 46 million beneficiaries, including retirees and their families, eligible survivors of deceased workers, and disabled workers and their families.

The budget includes a statement indicating that President Bush will form a commission on Social Security that will review options for ensuring

long-term financial solvency. The principles that the commission will be asked to use in their deliberations are (1) maintaining existing benefits for retirees and those near retirement; (2) preserving disability and survivors' benefit programs; (3) keeping the Social Security surplus for the program only; (4) capping the Social Security payroll tax rate at its current level; and (5) providing opportunities for individually controlled retirement accounts to supplement Social Security. The commission also is requested to not consider government investment of Social Security funds in the private economy.

Just the Beginning

The President's budget proposals represent the first step in the process of enacting the FY 2002 budget. Congress has already begun the review and disposal process. Tentative agreement has been reached in terms of a \$1.25 trillion tax cut over 10 years, which will be a constraint on overall spending. In the education area, intensive debate has ensued over the level of funding for Title I grants and over the specific achievement tests that will be used for accountability purposes. How these debates and

individual items are finally resolved in the new ESEA legislation is extremely important because both the framework and the spending levels will determine whether children and young adults in low-income urban and rural communities are able to get the education they need to be competitive in the 21st century economy.

The President has also selected members for the new Social Security Commission, including Joint Center Minority Business RoundTable member Robert Johnson. All of the newly selected commissioners seem inclined toward some form of privatization. Their deliberations will be of interest to those who expect to rely at least partially on Social Security for retirement income. The Joint Center will keep readers informed of major developments through Economic Report and our web site.

For further information on the budget, go to www.whitehouse.gov. Outside analysis of the budget can be found at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities web site, www.ccbp.org, and the Congressional Budget Office web site, www.cbo.gov. ■

Federal Budget for FY 2001, 2002 and Summary of President's Proposed Ten Year Budget

In billions of dollars

	2001	2002	2002-2011
Outlays			
Discretionary	649	692	7,816
Mandatory			
Social Security	430	452	5,801
Medicare	216	226	3,100
Medicaid	129	142	2,109
Other	226	260	2,981
Subtotal, mandatory	1,001	1,081	13,991
Net interest	206	188	1,130
Total outlays	1,856	1,961	22,938
Receipts	2,137	2,192	26,370
Unified surplus	281	231	3,433
On-budget surplus			
contingency	125	59	841
Off-budget surplus	156	172	2,591

Source: Office of Management and Budget