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of Black Children

Joint Center for Political Studies

Perspective

On October 31, Dr. Richard Arrington became the first black to be elected mayor of Birmingham, Alabama. Of all the gains by blacks in winning public office, Dr. Arrington's victory most dramatically symbolizes the changes that political participation has made in the South over the past 15 years.

Birmingham in the early 1960's was a city dominated by segregation and racism.

In the spring of 1963, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., led a series of demonstrations in Birmingham that led to his arrest. It was during his imprisonment that he wrote his now famous "Letter From a Birmingham Jail." In this letter, he replied to white clergymen who had criticized his role in leading the demonstrations. In the process, he wrote an eloquent rationale for civil disobedience as a means to oppose oppression, and he also accurately described the political plight then faced by Alabama blacks.

"A law is unjust if it is inflicted on a minority that, as a result of being denied the right to vote, had no part in enacting or devising the law. Who can say that the legislature of Alabama which set up that state's segregation laws was democratically elected? Throughout Alabama, all sorts of devious methods are used to prevent Negroes from becoming registered voters, and there are some counties in which, even though Negroes constitute a majority of the population, not a single Negro is registered."

In September 1963, as public schools in Alabama were desegregated, violence in Birmingham reached a climax with the bombing of a black church in which four young girls attending Sunday school were killed.

All of this, of course, was sixteen years ago. In the interval, a civil rights bill and a voting rights bill have been enacted. School desegregation has accelerated. Federal programs to improve the economic conditions of the nation's poor and minorities have been enacted and, to some degree, have achieved their purposes.

But what changed Birmingham? The answer lies in the October 31 election returns. Mayor-elect Arrington won with 51.1 percent of the vote. Voter turnout was estimated to be 71 percent among blacks and 66 percent among whites. Arrington's support among blacks was virtually unanimous.

His victory, of course, does not mean an end to all of Birmingham's problems of race. The city was polarized by a campaign in which a white opponent made subtle, and sometimes overt racial appeals. It will take patience, understanding and good will among leaders of both races in the months ahead to overcome this division.

The election holds significance beyond Birmingham. To those who have come to doubt whether the political process can bring about change, the answer is that it can—and has.

Other evidence of this fact can be seen in the release of figures from the Joint Center's 1979 *National Roster of Black Elected Officials,* which shows that the number of black elected officials in the nation has increased four-fold since 1970. Moreover, on November 7, 17 blacks were elected to the Mississippi Legislature, where only six are now seated.

As encouraging as these figures are, and as encouraging as Dr. Arrington's election is, our reactions to them must be tempered by some sobering realities. Blacks represent 11 percent of the nation's population, but black elected officials make up less than one percent of all elected officeholders. There is still voter apathy among far too many blacks. In a recent Atlanta, Georgia, municipal election in which a black was defeated for county-wide office, black voter turnout was dismally low—4.5 percent in one precinct, 7 percent in another.

As the 1980 elections come closer, one point becomes clearer. Blacks have the potential to make their political power felt in many cities and states throughout the land, but we have got to work harder at converting that potential into real power.

What happened in Birmingham and in Mississippi was not just a demonstration of the potential of the black vote—but also a demonstration of the kind of power blacks can wield when they are registered and organized to get out and vote.

Eddie N. Williams
President

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The 1979 JCPS Roster

The number of black elected officials in the United States increased by only 2 percent between July 1978 and July 1979, according to the Joint Center's *1979 National Roster of Black Elected Officials.*

This is the smallest annual increase since 1970 when the Joint Center's survey was initiated. Between 1977 and 1978 there was a 4 percent increase in the number of black elected officials.

The 1979 edition of the Joint Center's annual Roster lists 4,607 officials in 43 states, the District of Columbia and the Virgin Islands. The total represents an annual net increase of 104 officials. The gains occurred mainly in states with sizable black populations.

The increase also reflects the addition of 23 officials from the Virgin Islands which was included in the Roster this year for the first time. The gain over 1978 would have been 81 (or only 1.9 percent) had data comparable to previous years been used.

In 1970 there were 1,469 black elected officials. Despite an increase of 314 percent over the past nine years, the total number of black elected officials today still represents less than 1 percent of the 490,265 elected officials in the nation. Blacks comprise 11 percent of the nation's total population. There are only 18 black elected officials for every 100,000 blacks in the population, while there are 253 non-black officials for every 100,000 non-blacks.

The regional distribution of black elected officials reflects the distribution of the nation's black population. The South contains 54 percent of the black population and 60 percent (2,768) of all elected black officeholders. By category, the South has 46 percent of black state legislators, 79 percent of all black county officials, 68 percent of all black municipal officials, 49 percent of all black education officials and 47 percent of all black judicial and law enforcement officials. Overall, there was an increase of 35 black elected officials in the South in 1979.

In North Central states, which contain approximately 20 percent of the nation's black population, there are now 985 or 21.5 percent of all black elected officials. There are 19 more black elected officials in the North Central states than there were in 1978.

The Northeast, with 18 percent of the total black population, now has 541 or 11.7 percent of all black elected officials. Black elected officials in the Northeast increased by 12 during the past year.

The West, which has 9 percent of the black population, has 290 or 6.3 percent of all black elected officials. There was an increase of 15 black officeholders in this region since 1978.

As was the case in 1978, Louisiana leads all states in the total number of black elected officials with 334. Mississippi is second with 327 and Illinois is third with 276. Michigan has 272 black elected officials. The District of Columbia has 247. Other states with significant numbers of black elected officials include: North Carolina (240); Georgia (237); California (227); Arkansas (226); South Carolina (222); Alabama (208); New York (195); Ohio (177); Texas (174); and New Jersey (143).

By category of office held, black officials are more numerous at the municipal level. There are now 2,235 blacks holding a variety of municipal offices, 65 more than in 1978. This represents 48 percent of all black elected officeholders. Of the total number of black municipal officials, 191 are mayors. (176 were elected as mayors and 15 were designated as such by city governing bodies.) Sixty-six percent of these mayors are from the South and 70 percent are from communities with populations of 5,000 or less.

The second largest proportion of black elected officials serve in education positions. Last year, 1,138 or 26 percent of all blacks holding elective office served at this level. In 1979, there are 1,144 blacks in educational positions. They are 25 percent of all black elected officeholders.

At the judicial and law enforcement level, blacks continue to make small but consistent gains. In 1977, there were 447 blacks in judicial and law enforcement positions. In 1978, this figure rose to 454, and in 1979 it increased to 486, a 7 percent gain.

At the county level, the number of black elected officials is 402. This is down slightly from 1978 when the figure was 410.

Other categories registered small changes. The number of elected blacks on regional governing bodies decreased from 26 in 1978 to 25 in 1979. The number of black state legislators rose from 294 in 1978 to 307 in 1979. The increase reflected the inclusion of 13 legislators from the Virgin Islands.

The number of blacks in Congress in 1979 is 17, the same as it was in 1978. However, new black House members were added from California, Illinois, Pennsylvania, and Texas to replace black incumbents who either retired from Congress, were defeated in primary elections, or died in office. In addition, Sen. Edward Brooke (R-Mass.) was defeated in his bid for re-election, and Dr. Melvin Evans, a Republican, became the first black representative to Congress from the Virgin Islands.

The number of black elected administrators and directors of state agencies increased by one during the past year, but many of the incumbents and positions changed. George Brown, Lieutenant Governor of Colorado, chose not to seek re-election, while Mervyn Dymally, Lieutenant Governor of California, was defeated in his bid for re-election. Newcomers to top state positions included Roland Burris, who became Illinois' first black Comptroller; Vel Phillips, who was elected Wisconsin's first black Secretary of State; and Henry A. Millin, who was elected Lieutenant Governor of the Virgin Islands.

The Joint Center's 1979 Roster shows that 882 black women now hold elective office. This constitutes 19 percent of all black elected officials. In some categories, black female officials comprise a larger percentage of black elected officials than white females do or white elected officials. For example, 18 percent of black state legislators are women, while only 10 percent of white state legislators are women.

Those interested in obtaining copies of the 1979 Roster may write: Office of Publications, Joint Center for Political Studies, 1426 "H" Street, N.W., Suite 539, Washington, D.C. The purchase price of $19.50 per copy must be paid in advance for orders of a single copy.

The Needs of Black Children

by Marian Wright Edelman

(This article is adapted with permission by Ms. Edelman from a speech before the Congressional Black Caucus in September and also from an October speech before the Reformed Church in America. Ms. Edelman is the president of the Children's Defense Fund, a national non-profit organization created to provide long-range and systematic advocacy on behalf of children).

This is the International Year of the Child, the twentieth anniversary of a Bill of Rights for Children which the United Nations adopted as the essential ingredients children needed to grow up into healthy and productive adults.

The year 1979 also marks another anniversary. It has been 25 years since the landmark Supreme Court decision, *Brown v. Board of Education,* which made racial segregation in public schools illegal and the equality of educational opportunity a more tangible promise for black children.

We can look at the progress made due to this legal victory and note that it is substantial, but when we examine the statistics about the lives of black children today—alone or in relation to white children—the arithmetic of inequality is still appalling.

From birth through childhood and adolescence, black children suffer more from health problems and fewer health services than white children.

- Black women receive less prenatal care—and receive it later in their pregnancies—than white women. At every stage of pregnancy, twice as many black women lack prenatal care. Prenatal care has been shown to be one of the most important factors influencing infant mortality and health.

- One out of every 43 non-white infants dies each year. A black American baby today has almost twice the chance of dying within the first year of life as a white baby.

- Black children and teenagers die from illnesses at rates 25 percent or higher than the rates for white children and teenagers.

- Black children are twice as likely to have no regular source of medical care as are white children. Of those black children who do have regular medical care, they are five times more likely to depend upon hospital outpatient emergency room services than white children.

- A black child is twice as likely to grow up in a family whose head did not finish high school as is a white child. A black child's chance of having a college graduate as a parent is only one-fourth that of a white child.

- A young black college graduate has the same chance of being unemployed as a white high school dropout; a young black high school graduate has the same chance of being unemployed as a white *grade* school dropout.

Why do these problems exist and why don't families do something? After all, it is their responsibility to see that their children go to school, or see a doctor. Most families want and often try to do something, but they frequently lack the access, confidence, know-how and power to affect the range of institutions they need help from in raising their children. Too many of our own attitudes reflected in our public policies deny children and families their most basic survival needs under the mistaken belief that families are self-sufficient and able to take care of their children alone.

We have too long held the romantic and outmoded notion of the "typical" American family being two parents, with a male wage earner and a mother who stays at home to care for two normal children. This family stereotype represents only one out of every 16 American families today. It ignores the reality of the 28.2-million children whose mothers worked outside the home in 1976, only 10 percent of whom have decent day-care slots available; it ignores the children growing up in single families; it ignores the five-million families who have at least one child with a physical, mental or emotional handicap. It ignores many families' lack of money to buy the health and day-care services that some of us take for granted. It also ignores those hundreds of thousands of children without their own homes at all, and the millions of young teenage parents, themselves merely children, struggling to raise another generation of our young. And it ignores the shackles of poverty that stacks the deck against tens of millions of American children.

Children's issues pose a new and effective way to redefine the concept of minority and to build new and broader coalitions for change to supplement or extend the work of civil rights and church groups to other areas. The Children's Defense Fund has shown in area after area how the problems of poor and black children also affect non-poor and white children, thus, broadening the potential base for social change. Our work shows that poor and minority children bear the brunt of school, health, welfare, child welfare and juvenile justice system failures. But, equally important, it shows that the problems black and poor parents have been complaining and fighting about for years are not just theirs but affect children of all races and classes. We have found that if a child is not white, or is white but not middle class, does not speak English, is poor, needs special help with seeing, hearing, walking, learning, adjusting, growing up, is pregnant or married at age 15, is not smart enough, or is too smart, then, in too many places, officials exclude or discriminate against him—frequently with impunity.

Children who are different for a variety of reasons are the real minority in this country. They span race and class and language. We must find the common thread of self-interest between and among them, understand when common remedies may be appropriate, and begin to make common cause for their welfare. This requires careful analysis, issue and geographic targeting, as well as targeted remedies when appropriate.

It is easier, more humane, and cheaper to avoid or prevent problems in childhood than correct them

in adulthood. So much work in job training and unemployment stems from the institutional neglect and abuse of black children within our school, health care and social service systems. This nation must understand that education is less expensive than ignorance; that preventive health care is cheaper than treating illness; that jobs and decent incomes are far less burdensome to taxpayers than unemployment and welfare dependency.

Children's needs are urgent and cannot wait. Black parents know this and have sacrificed themselves so that their children could have a better chance than they had. Their often silent and lonely struggles must now be elevated to the level of public policy so that government can enhance families' options and increase their ability to act effectively on behalf of their own children. Every minority and non-minority child must be ensured a floor of decency upon which to grow.

The day after Martin King was shot ten years ago, my sister asked me to come talk with and hopefully calm down a group of her students in a ghetto school in Washington, D.C. After talking about what Martin's life of nonviolence meant and why they should not join in the burning and looting that was taking place because, among other things, it would hurt their future if they got caught, an 11-year-old boy looked up at me and said: "What the hell difference does it make? My life's already ruined. It's not going to get any better, don't you know that? You can't stand there and tell me it is. Can you?"

At that moment I couldn't. And for too many like him, I am honestly forced to say the odds are heavily stacked against them.

In the United States, as elsewhere, it is a penalty to be born poor. It is a further penalty to be born to parents who experience frequent unemployment or whose employment opportunities are limited to relatively uninteresting, dead-end jobs. These penalties are compounded among children who are born black, brown or red. Some of the penalties are immediate: the physical deprivations of poor nutrition, poor health, poor housing, and inadequate medical care. Some accumulate slowly. Together they produce results that skew the futures of millions of minority children.

The 96th Congress has before it two pieces of legislation that could help improve living conditions for black children.

One is CHAP (Child Health Assurance Program). CHAP which would strengthen a law that has been on the books for more than 10 years. This is the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment program of Medicaid. This law says poor children in this country have a right to basic medical care—to screening for problems, and to diagnosis and treatment for those problems. The law has never been adequately enforced, and today nearly 10-million American children still have no known regular source of primary health care.

A Children's Defense Fund study identified several reasons that the existing system has failed to deliver the services that are so desperately needed. One serious problem was lack of outreach—a failure to encourage community level efforts to identify eligible families and assist them in getting their children in for screening. Another problem was lack of follow-up. In many cases, children with medical problems were not getting the treatment required.

The CHAP legislation is a package of amendments that would address these problems and expand eligibility to additional children whose families cannot afford basic health care. The bill has made significant progress in both houses of Congress, but as of early November, it had not yet been enacted into law.

A second legislative proposal (H.R. 3434) would reform the child welfare system. More than half a million children—thousands of them black—live away from their families in facilities ranging from individual foster family and group homes to large institutions.

Far too many of these children are unnecessarily or prematurely removed from their homes before attempts have been made to work with or to provide preventive services to their families. Far too many are placed in inappropriate facilities to languish in a twilight area, neither returned home nor provided a permanent new family through adoption.

We provide federal funding for room and board costs of children in foster care. But we provide virtually nothing to prevent a child from leaving home, or to make reunification of the child with a family possible.

H.R. 3434 would help us get our priorities in order. It would provide additional funds for preventive and restorative services and adoption subsidies for children with special needs; and it would establish procedures that would assure that the case of every child in foster care is reviewed regularly and an appropriate decision is made about the child's placement within a reasonable period of time.

The bill has passed the House, but only after a vote to delete the entitlement that would have assured that funding would be available for these desperately needed services.

The Senate on October 29 approved an amended version of the bill, which contains provisions opposed by child advocates. These include a ceiling on foster care spending and reductions in welfare recipients benefits. A House-Senate conference committee must now resolve differences between the two versions of the bill.

I believe that we are in a time for laying a firm foundation for the next stages of major change. The long overdue public policy debate about the needs and proper national response to the needs of children and their families should grow with the United Nation's International Year of the Child in 1979 and the White House Conferences on Children and Families in 1980 and 1981. We must help to shape this debate; as well as create a sensitivity and a policy process within government and corporations that begin to ask questions about the impact of key budget and policy decisions on children and families.

Elections—1979

The year 1979—though not as politically exciting as a presidential or congressional campaign year—did have important political results for black Americans.

Almost 30 percent of the nation's 4,600 black elected officials faced re-election. Black candidates mounted campaigns for major municipal offices in some of the nation's largest cities. Southern states with large and politically active black populations held state legislative elections. While numerical gains resulting from these elections were not great, black candidates in many areas served as catalysts for increased black political participation—a fact which neither political party can afford to ignore in 1980.

In Mississippi the total number of blacks holding seats in the Mississippi legislature will increase from six to 17 as a result of the November 6 elections. Fifteen of these are state representatives and two are state senators. The gains resulted primarily from implementation of a court-ordered redistricting plan.

Mississippi blacks also registered gains in other offices. Five new black county supervisors were elected, bringing the total number of Mississippi blacks holding this office to 21.

For the first time since Reconstruction, Mississippi voters elected blacks to the office of county sheriff. Blacks won this office in Marshall County, Clairborne County and Holmes County.

In addition, Ms. Reecy Latham Dickson became the first black ever elected to the post of Superintendent of Education in Noxubee County. She will also be the first black woman in Mississippi to hold this position.

Statewide legislative races in Virginia and Kentucky produced no change in the number of black representatives. Virginia continues to have five and Kentucky, four.

In Florida, Iowa, and Georgia where statewide legislative elections will not be held until 1980, blacks ran in special elections. Carrie Meek was elected in Florida's Senate District 106 to replace another black, the late Gwen Cherry. Thomas Mann was defeated in his bid for the District 131 Senate seat in Iowa, and Clinton Deveaux was defeated for the District 43 House seat in Georgia.

In New Jersey there will be an increase of one black state legislator with the election of Remay Pearce of the 28th House District to the remainder of a term of office which expires in January, 1980.

Fourteen blacks—eight running unopposed—are seeking legislative seats in Louisiana's general election to be held on December 8. There are presently 10 blacks in Louisiana's legislature.

In municipal elections, which occur not only in November but throughout the year, black candidates and black voters played significant roles. Black winners of municipal elections included: Richard Arrington, who was elected mayor of Birmingham, Ala.; Richard Hatcher, who was re-elected to an unprecedented fourth term as mayor of Gary, Ind.; Eugene Newport, who was elected mayor of Berkeley, California; and Cecil Partee, who won election as city treasurer of Chicago.

Blacks lost mayoral races in Philadelphia, Pa.; Charlotte, N.C.; Boston, Mass.; New Haven, Conn.; and Kansas City, Mo. They also lost races for comptroller in Baltimore, Md.; city clerk in Chicago; and borough president in the Bronx, N.Y.

As has been true in the past, the majority of blacks seeking office in medium and large sized cities was at the municipal governing body level. Preliminary returns show that Baltimore and Houston both gained one black city councilmember and Cleveland gained two.

In Inkster and Highland Park, Michigan, blacks ran successful campaigns for mayor, but a black was defeated in his bid for mayor of Chester, Pa.

Even where blacks are not candidates for citywide office, black voters play a pivotal role in the outcome of municipal elections. For example, in Chicago, black voters were a crucial part of Jane Byrne's upset victory earlier this year over Mayor Michael Bilandic. Blacks gave 56 percent of their vote to Ms. Byrne. In Cleveland, Democratic Mayor Dennis Kucinich drew only 43 percent of the traditionally Democratic black vote in the November general election. This small black vote was a major factor in Kucinich's defeat.

Throughout the nation, black school board candidates ran for election and re-election. In Los Angeles, two black candidates ran unsuccessfully in a special school board election called because of the inability of a badly polarized Los Angeles school board to fill a vacancy.

Blacks also cast ballots on a number of important referenda. In Baltimore, black voters were part of a coalition which engineered a surprise victory for city-wide rent control. In Atlanta, black voters contributed to the defeat of a proposed increase in the city sales tax. Earlier this year, black voters in Cleveland split equally on the issue of selling the municipal light plant. They also voted to increase the city income tax.

Overall, 1979 was an active election year for black candidates and black voters. Despite a growing conventional wisdom to the effect that apathy is widespread among black voters, there was evidence in 1979 to suggest that this is not universally the case. In cities where particular campaigns and issues were perceived by blacks to be of crucial importance, registration increased over figures of three years ago and black turnout exceeded average overall turnout.

In Birmingham, for instance, black registration in 1979 was up 9.6 percent over 1976 and black turnout in the recent mayoral election was 72 percent, compared to a 68 percent turnout citywide. In Kansas City, Mo., black voter registration this year was up 7.2 percent since 1976. Black voter turnout in that city's mayoral race was 66 percent. Citywide it was 57 percent.

Thus, in 1979, significant numbers of black voters played critical roles in the American electoral process. Some important groundwork has been laid for 1980.

—JCPS Staff

Telescope

Richard Arrington Elected Mayor of Birmingham

In a bitterly fought run-off campaign, Birmingham, Alabama, voters on November 6 elected Councilman Richard Arrington as the city's first black mayor. He defeated white businessman Frank Parsons.

In the first primary on October 9, Arrington led a field of seven candidates which in addition to Parsons included an incumbent mayor, two other city councilmen, and the Grand Dragon of the Ku Klux Klan.

Both the initial primary and the run-off were influenced by an incident which occurred earlier in the year when a white policeman shot and killed a black woman whom he allegedly mistook for a gunman fleeing the scene of a downtown shooting. Blacks called for the policeman's firing, but Mayor David Vann refused. Police-community relations thus became a major issue in the campaign. Vann, a white moderate, had been strongly supported by blacks when he ran for mayor in 1975, but his failure to take action against the policeman turned much of the city's black leadership against him. He ran fifth in the initial primary.

In the run-off, Parsons appealed to white fears of a black take-over of city hall and charged that Arrington's election would result in the appointment of a black police chief.

Arrington won with 51.1 percent of the vote, edging Parsons by less than 2,000 votes.

Arrington rejects the notion that Birmingham was completely polarized by the intensity of the run-off campaign.

"I could not have won without the white vote I received," he says. "And I had considerable financial support from the white business community."

In final returns, Arrington estimates his white support at between 10 and 15 percent. His support in the black community was virtually unanimous.

Arrington's campaign leaders worked hard to turn out the black vote and their success was evident at the polls. Some 72 percent of registered blacks voted. White voter turnout was estimated at 66 percent.

Arrington recognizes that many whites are still apprehensive about having a black mayor. "My first job," he says, "is to reassure people that I am going to deal with the city as a whole, that I am going to be mayor of all the people."

He took a step in this direction immediately after the election by meeting with white leaders from sections of the city which voted heavily against him. He will appoint a biracial staff and does not plan to appoint a black police chief.

Arrington's election has attracted nationwide publicity. Overnight he finds himself giving interviews to reporters from around the country. It surprises him.

"I didn't fully realize the poor image Birmingham has had," he says, "nor the kind of spotlight this election would put me in."

Despite the attention he has received, however, Arrington does not yet see himself in a national leadership role. "My first job is to mayor of Birmingham," he says, "to do the best I can here."

Birmingham, he feels, has no administrative problems that are not common to other major cities in the South and the nation. "Downtown revitalization will be a top priority in my administration," he says, "also community development. These are items on the agendas of most big cities."

Mayor-elect Arrington's business-as-usual attitude toward his election, however, does not keep outside observers from drawing pointed lessons from the election results.

The *Chicago Sun Times* put it this way: "In Birmingham, 72 percent of black voters turned out for the mayoral election. In Chicago's hotly contested mayoral primary last February, the turnout in several black wards was less than 50 percent. Birmingham's blacks sent a message to their brothers and sisters in Chicago. The power is there for the taking—at the polls."

—Robert E. Anderson, Jr.

60 Organizations Launch Operation Big Vote

Representatives of some 60 national organizations last month announced a goal of increasing black voter registration by at least 20 percent in selected areas before the upcoming 1980 congressional and presidential elections.

This goal was set by the National Coalition on Black Voter Participation at a Washington, D.C. press conference called to kick off OPERATION BIG VOTE: CRUSADE '80, a black voter registration and voter education drive. The National Coalition on Black Voter Participation includes major civil rights, fraternal, labor, business, women's, religious, civic and public interest groups. OPERATION BIG VOTE began in May of 1976 and is credited with doing more to get blacks registered and to the polls, on a non-partisan basis, than any other factor in the last presidential election.

Black leaders representing OPERATION BIG VOTE at the press conference included: Mrs. Mona Bailey, national president, Delta Sigma Theta, Inc.; Mrs. Margaret Bush-Wilson, chairperson, NAACP; U.S. Rep. Walter E. Fauntroy, (Dem.-D.C.); Willie Felder, community actions representative, United Auto Workers; Mayor Richard Hatcher of Gary, Indiana; Mrs. Dorothy Height, president, National Council on Negro Women; Norm Hill, executive director, A. Philip Randolph Institute; M. Carl Holman, president, National Urban Coalition; Vernon Jordan, president, National Urban League; Mrs. Coretta Scott King, president, Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Social Change; and Eddie N. Williams, president, Joint Center for Political Studies.

Blacks represent approximately 10 percent of the electorate. The U.S. Census Bureau has projected that roughly 16-million blacks will be of voting age by November, 1980. In 1976, 9-million blacks were registered to vote and only 6-million voted.

"We know that the decade of the Eighties will not be an easy time for motivating and mobilizing those who feel that their needs were not met in the past and will probably not be met in the future," said Eddie N. Williams, chairman of the OBV Steering Committee. "However," continued Williams, "it is clear that we ourselves have not done enough to

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Telescope

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maximize our political potential. We must continue to increase our rates of political participation, especially at a time characterized by widespread economic troubles and calls for belt-tightening."

In 1980, OBV will not only seek to increase black registration by at least 20 percent in identified major areas in key states, but will also seek to achieve a turnout rate of at least 75 percent of registered voters in the target areas. Forty-one target areas have been identified in the following 15 states: Alabama, California, Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Louisiana, Michigan, Mississippi, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas and Virginia.

"Through OPERATION BIG VOTE. CRUSADE '80," Williams commented, "we hope to supplement existing national and local voter participation programs as well as to encourage the development of new ones, so that we can pull in the same direction at the same time." Williams further noted that the NAACP, National Urban League, A. Philip Randolph Institute and PUSH are among a handful of organizations whose programs include voter participation components.

The NAACP's Voter Education Department is placing special emphasis on registering black youth. Benjamin L. Hooks, executive director of the NAACP, has stated, "As urgent as the need is to increase black voter registration in this country in all age categories, there is an even greater need to put emphasis on black youth registration. Plagued by high unemployment and declining expectations in this country, black youth clearly have the most to gain from aggressive participation in the political arena. We literally want them to grasp their future in their hands."

Vernon Jordan, president of the National Urban League, stated, "It is the responsibility of the black community to maximize black registration and voter turnout. We don't have the wealth. We don't have the power. But we do have the numbers. Those numbers won't count unless we register and vote. The black agenda for the 1980's, with its emphasis on such vital issues as full employment and affirmative action, depends on that."

OPERATION BIG VOTE: CRUSADE '80 will be particularly intense in those target areas that could swing a total of 304 electoral votes in a presidential election, 34 more electoral votes than needed to elect a President.

For information on Operation Big Vote, contact Ms. Gracia Hillman, Joint Center for Political Studies, 1426 H St., Room 539, Washington, D.C. 20036.

Hispanic Feminist Conference Will Hold First National Meeting in March, 1980

The National Hispanic Feminist Conference will hold its first national meeting March 28-31, 1980 in San Jose, California.

Among topics to be discussed are: research literature and the Hispanic woman; bilingual education; guidance and counseling; political action and educational equity; feminism and the Hispanic woman; and higher education and the Hispanic woman.

Individuals and groups that wish to participate in this conference are asked to send a letter describing their interests to: Dr. Sylvia Gonzales, Project Director, Business Tower 456, San Jose State University, San Jose, California 95192.

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