


FOCUS

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A Decent Home for All

Millard Fuller, the president and founder of Habitat for Humanity International, is calling for the elimination of "poverty housing" across the nation. This is certainly an ambitious goal, but the need is great. According to U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) data, about five million people are precariously housed, some living in dwellings without hot water, electricity, or basic sanitary facilities that most Americans take for granted. Ironically, in many cases, the booming economy has not helped. In April this year, HUD Secretary Andrew Cuomo said, "The rising economic tide is lifting many boats, but it is also drowning many others. As an unintended consequence of this amazingly strong economy, there is less affordable housing stock, and the prices are beyond the reach of those at the bottom of the income spectrum." An estimated 10 million families live on incomes that are below 30 percent of the median income in the areas where they live, and they pay between 30 and 50 percent of their incomes for housing. Many of these families face a month-to-month choice of paying rent or meeting basic needs such as food, clothing, and health care. The most affected are the elderly and families with children. And the problem affects all races.

Some might say that solving this problem on a national scale is like reaching for the moon. Those folks might be reminded that we did reach the moon 30 years ago. We had the material resources to accomplish that feat, but most important were the intangible ingredients: vision, leadership, and national will. We were also motivated by our rivalry with the then Soviet Union. The Cold War is over and America today is unrivaled militarily. But we still have adversaries—poverty housing is one of them.

It is shocking therefore that a recent Congressional proposal seeks to reduce the HUD budget. That is a step in the wrong direction. HUD programs such as Section 8 housing vouchers that provide rent subsidies, the HOME Investment Partnerships that support the rehabilitation of thousands of dwellings, as well as the department's equal housing opportunity program, all should be fully funded. These programs expand the available housing stock and make it possible for more people to live in decent homes.

Millard Fuller's remedy is Habitat for Humanity, a nonprofit community-based home ownership program which he founded in 1976 with his wife Linda. Each year, tens of thousands of volunteers in Habitat affiliates across the country build simple, decent, affordable houses for low-income families. The families who buy the homes contribute 500 hours of sweat equity, and receive a no-interest loan and an affordable monthly mortgage payment. This model works in 1,500 American affiliates across the nation and in 64 foreign countries, including Zimbabwe, Northern Ireland, India, El Salvador, and the Philippines. So far, Habitat has built more than 80,000 homes around the world.

With the help of former President and First Lady Jimmy and Rosalyn Carter, Fuller plans a week-long Habitat build-a-thon to put up 35 homes in September 2000 in Sumter County, Georgia, where his organization is headquartered. When the last nail is driven home at the end of that project, poverty housing will be eliminated in that rural southwestern Georgia county.

Habitat isn't the only model for eliminating poverty housing, but America would be a better place if private builders, nonprofit organizations, and governments at all levels followed its example. House by house, neighborhood by neighborhood, this problem can be solved. What is required is vision, leadership, and will. ■



PRESIDENT



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Cyber Revolution Bypassing Many

Experts at a Joint Center Forum Agree That the Internet's Global Web Is Creating Wealth and Jobs, But Not for All

by David C. Ruffin

By a fascinating coincidence, Silicon Valley, generally perceived as the epicenter of the nation's technology revolution, is just a few miles from Sutter's Mill, where the discovery of gold in 1848 sparked the California Gold Rush. When news of that find became known, people from all over the world flocked to Northern California with hopes of getting rich. The gold fields did make millionaires out of some, and the small settlements of San Francisco and Sacramento began to grow into great cities.

Now, 150 years later, the Internet and information technology are seen as a new gold rush, only of much greater economic significance. New companies producing innovative computer applications are being formed virtually every week. Twenty-eight-year-old multimillionaires are becoming commonplace in a cyberworld that, in addition to Silicon Valley, includes other major computer industry centers—Seattle, Washington; Austin, Texas; Washington, D.C.'s Beltway; and Boston's I-28 Corridor.

But millions of the nation's poor—especially black and Latino Americans—are not benefitting from this technology boom. The nation's technology haves and have-nots are being separated along a "digital divide" which, unfortunately, conforms to the color and income lines that traditionally have polarized Americans.

The Exploding IT Revolution

On October 19, the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies convened a forum, entitled "Resolving the Digital Divide: Information, Access, and Opportunity," in association with the President's Information Technology Advisory Committee (PITAC) and the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. One of the key participants was Dr. Irving Wladawsky-Berger, general manager of IBM's Internet Division and PITAC co-chair, who set out the challenge of the forum with these questions: "Will all the blessings of access to information and high-speed communications come to Washington Heights in Manhattan, South Central LA, and all the underserved communities in between? Or will the digital divide persist, deepen, and eventually become a fault line running through our society?"

Eddie N. Williams, president of the Joint Center, opened the forum. He observed, "In the past half century, technological advanced have been especially rapid, and they have had dramatic effects on societies everywhere and will influence the shape of the future. Technology is the force

that drives the pace of globalization and the Internet provides the glue for the global village. The IT revolution is creating opportunities hitherto unimagined, extending the reach of individuals and empowering communities. If we are to be in the mainstream of this exploding IT revolution, we must make a cultural accommodation to technology."

According to Larry Irving, president of the Irving Information Group, a telecommunications and information technology consulting firm in Washington, D.C., the Internet and information technology account for one-third of U.S. economic growth since 1992, creating millions of jobs and showering huge profits on industry suppliers and financial services institutions. Irving, who is the former Assistant Secretary for Communications and Information at the U.S. Department of Commerce, said, "Last year, \$8 billion was invested in the information technology industry, twice the total of the previous year. And e-commerce generated \$300 billion in revenues in 1998. The projections are that by 2003, e-commerce revenues will jump to \$1.5 trillion."

Some are calling the Internet the greatest wealth creation machine in human history. And there is general consensus that its full potential, and that of information technology (IT) in general, have so far only been glimpsed. All this is good news for those who are "wired," "on-line," or "connected" in the parlance of cyberspeak. That includes 59 percent of the people living in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. Washington is one of five U.S. cities in which more than 55 percent of their residents have access to the Internet. But, as Lee H. Hamilton, director of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, said, "While the nation has the greatest standard of living in years, the standard of living for those on the bottom is dropping. Information technologies are key to bringing the least served Americans into the digital economy."

Closing the digital divide isn't simply a racial issue, it's in the broadest national interest to do so, in the view of Congressman Charles B. Rangel (D-N.Y.), ranking Democrat on the House Ways and Means Committee. Rangel said that America must pay attention to poor communities across the nation where a disproportionate number of schools remain disconnected from the Internet, where a disproportionate number of children are computer illiterate, and where teachers are too often unqualified to equip their students with computer skills. Just as one should repair a roof while the sun is shining, Rangel said, the time

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Cyber Revolution

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to address these problems is now, while the U.S. economy is booming. Rangel is a strong supporter of the federal e-rate program established by the Clinton Administration to provide Internet service to schools and libraries at discount rates.

Digital Fault Line

The National Telecommunications and Information Administration's (NTIA) report on the digital divide shows that African Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans have the least exposure to information technology of any segment of our society. Unless this divide is bridged, those least connected Americans will not fully share the jobs, productivity, and rising standard of living generated by the IT revolution.

But viewed another way, together these groups make up a large potential market that IT firms have so far been unable to fully penetrate. For example, while 74.5 percent of Latino homes receive cable or satellite television service, and 84.7 percent of Latino homes have VCRs, few Latinos have access to computers or the Internet at home or at work, according to the Tomas Rivera Policy Institute, a California-based think tank that focuses on public policy issues of concern to the Latino community. Residents of communities with large immigrant populations are often impeded from attaining basic computer user literacy because of low English language proficiency. There is a need for more culturally and linguistically friendly classrooms, libraries, and Internet content.

Many of the barriers to access to information technology for Native Americans center around economic and infrastructure issues, especially among those who live on reservations. James A. Casey, an attorney with the Washington, D.C., law firm Morrison & Forester, said that fewer than 50 percent of all Native Americans on reservations own telephones. The reason for this is that the costs of wiring reservations is often prohibitive. Few telecommunications companies are willing to invest in the expense of extending communications lines out to a remote community that has only 2,000 residents.

For many low-income African Americans and Latinos, the lack of IT access is as problematic as their inability to afford computers for their homes. In addition, many of them live in inner city neighborhoods with less public access (schools, libraries, and community organizations) to the Internet than more affluent communities have.

There is an alarming disparity in IT access even among institutions of higher learning. Larry Irving expressed concern that academically talented students at many minority serving universities are not being equipped with the Internet and computer skills they will need to thrive in increasingly digitized professional environments. He offered the example of a distinguished black journalist who convinced the managers of her newspaper to institute a minority intern program. Top students were recruited from

colleges across the nation, and the program enjoyed great success in its early years. But recently, the performance of some interns, particularly those from minority serving universities, has dropped off. It turned out that students with 3.8 and 3.9 grade point averages were performing poorly in the news room because they were unable to use the Internet as a research tool, a skill they hadn't acquired at their colleges. They were competing against students from Columbia, the University of Missouri, and Georgetown—all with equally stellar academic credentials but who used the Internet every day.

No one has compiled a comprehensive analysis of the technology capabilities of minority serving colleges and universities, he said, but there is strong anecdotal evidence that suggests that students' access to computers and the Internet at these institutions does not compare with that at predominantly white schools. "We are perpetrating a fraud on our youth," said an impassioned Irving. "We're graduating young people with BA's and BS's from schools with great reputations from across this nation that don't have the computing and technology skills they need. It's like telling kids that they need reading and writing, but not arithmetic. You need reading, writing, arithmetic, Internet, and computer skills if you are going to compete in graduate school and in this economy."

IT Tools for Local Communities

The President's Information Technology Advisory Committee has recommended to President Clinton that the federal government support initiatives designed to increase information technology literacy, education and access. Several such initiatives are currently under way. Dr. Paula Y. Bagasao, director of Information Technology Research at The Tomas Rivera Policy Institute, outlined her organization's Digital Steppingstones Project. A three-year effort supported by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, this project aims to identify successful programs that make information technology accessible to low-income communities. The goal is to determine how public access points such as schools, libraries, and community-based organizations can be better used to bridge the digital divide. In most poor communities, libraries and schools are the primary points of online access for people unable to connect with the Internet through other means.

About 26.7 percent of the 16,000 public library branches nationwide do not provide public access to the Internet. And approximately two-thirds of connected libraries offer only one or two public access computer workstations. The project embraces a broad commitment to making information technologies accessible to all. IT should not, however, be seen as an end in itself, but as a tool for serving local community needs, such as improving student learning and providing job training, convenient health care, and citizenship education.

A critical ingredient for sustaining a successful community IT access program is having the capacity to attract,

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Commitment to an Accurate Census

Commerce Under Secretary Stresses Importance of the Census to Civil Rights Enforcement But Acknowledges Past Problems of Undercounting

At the Census Summit Conference of the National Coalition on Black Voter Participation in Washington, D.C., on October 21, Robert J. Shapiro, Department of Commerce Under Secretary for Economic Affairs, declared that the Clinton Administration will commit the resources to make the 2000 Census accurate. He said the Census Bureau will launch a massive advertising campaign and will mobilize 600,000 enumerators to make next year's census count as effective as possible. Shapiro, whose full conference statement follows, is the senior economic advisor at the U.S. Department of Commerce and oversees the nation's major statistical agencies, the Census Bureau and the Bureau of Economic Analysis.

Marcus Garvey said, "The only protection against injustice in man is power—physical, financial and scientific." The Census uses the power of science to lay the foundation for the just exercise of political power.

Census 2000, the largest civilian operation in America, constructs the only detailed portrait of the American people that we have. A key part of this enterprise is collecting and organizing the data that measure the strength of minority communities, to provide everyone full and proper recognition. In the first place, the Census determines how representation in Congress is allocated among the 50 states and lays the basis, within each state, for legislatures to draw the district lines for most state and local elected offices.

Census information is also the basis for the enforcement of anti-discrimination laws. As the only source of reliable information on the racial make-up of voting-age Americans in their precise locations, the decennial Census is crucial for carrying out the Supreme Court rulings on "one person, one vote," to implement the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and to assess the fairness of employment practices under the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The Census also provides government agencies—and everyone else—with data on racial and income disparities in health, housing, and lending. It provides local and state planners with the information they need to plan schools and job training centers and where to build new medical facilities, shopping centers and roads.

There's a lot of money at stake. Nearly \$200 billion a year in federal funds are allocated based, at least in part, on census information. The Census also tells us how we're doing, as a society, in particular, how we're doing in terms of equality, and provides the baseline for the next 10 years of population surveys. For example, earlier this month, the Census Bureau announced some good news. The inequality of African Americans and other minorities in income and education is diminishing. The percentage of African

American families living below the poverty line is now lower than at any time since the Census Bureau first began tracking poverty rates by race in 1967. The incomes and employment rates of African Americans are also up, and more African Americans attend college today than ever before.

Census data also tell us that substantial gaps persist between whites and African Americans in terms of earnings, education, home ownership, and access to health care. For instance, while the household incomes of African American families hit a record high in 1998, the poverty rate among African Americans was still 26.1 percent—the lowest rate since 1959, but statistically unchanged from 1997.

Millions Undercounted and Overcounted

But now let me tell you what's wrong with the Census. In the past, minority Americans haven't been counted as accurately as white Americans. The 1990 Census missed 8.4 million people and double-counted 4.4 million others. Those missed were not distributed randomly. While the 1990 Census missed less than one percent of non-Hispanic whites, the undercount rate for African Americans was 4.4 percent—more than five times as great. Other communities of color also had disproportionately high undercount rates in 1990—2.3 percent for Asians and Pacific Islanders, 5 percent for Latinos and people of Hispanic origin, and 12.2 percent for American Indians living on reservations. Because African Americans are the country's largest minority group, in sheer numbers Census 1990 missed more African Americans than any other group.

When we consider how important Census data are for school and health care planning, it is disturbing that the 1990 Census disproportionately missed children. Children make up one-quarter of our population, but half of those missed in the 1990 Census were children. Also disproportionately missed were city dwellers, the poor, and people living in rural rental homes. These undercounts have injected a systematic bias into the way we apportion seats in the House of Representatives, how states draw the boundary lines for legislative districts, how we allocate hundreds of billions of dollars in federal funds, and how cities, states, and the federal government plan, execute and evaluate most of their vital social services. A Census that misses greater proportions of African Americans and other minority groups than the rest of America denies those communities their full and rightful voice in government. It attenuates the basic American values of one-person-one vote and equality before the law.

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Census

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Partnering With the Census Bureau

For the 2000 Census, President Clinton and Vice President Gore have been committed to eliminating these unintended biases. We have a sound strategy for doing that. This time out, the Census Bureau has built more than 10,000 partnerships with local civic organizations, churches, businesses, and governments, in order to reach everyone and mobilize them for the Census. The Bureau is already partnering, to name a few, with the NAACP, the National Urban League, the Leadership Conference for Civil Rights, the Lawyer's Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, and the Children's Defense Fund.

The Census will send three separate mailings to every household in the country—first a letter announcing that the Census is coming, then the Census form itself, and third a postcard to remind everyone to send back the form. Census forms also will be available in many public places such as convenience stores, libraries, and post offices. Forms will be available in six languages, and there will be language guides to help people fill them out in more than 50 languages. We also will open 15,000 walk-in assistance centers around the country targeted to communities with high undercounts.

The Census Bureau will conduct a \$166 million national advertising campaign on TV, radio, print, and billboards. This will include separate targeted campaigns on all media for the African American community, the Asian community, Hispanics, and American Indians. We will send out more than 600,000 people to visit every household that doesn't return a form, and as much as possible hire these enumerators from the neighborhoods they will visit.

Finally, the President, the Vice President, and Secretary of Commerce William Daley all fought hard with Congress for three years, to make sure that the Census Bureau will be able to use the power of science to determine who was missed in the count, and then adjust raw data to eliminate all undercounts. This will involve their conducting the largest scientific sample in history—roughly one million people—and it will produce the most accurate census data ever compiled by anyone.

What we want you to do is spread the word about how important the Census is to African Americans and all communities. The census form that most people will receive asks just seven questions and will take most people only about 10 minutes to complete. Filling out the form completely is very important. Some two-thirds of those missed in 1990 lived in houses that responded to the Census. But because many people live in "non-traditional" situations, they sometimes don't include everyone living in the household.

Everyone can help in this effort by endorsing Census 2000 in their communities, churches and workplaces, and reassuring people that census information is kept absolutely confidential. It's a criminal offense for anyone to disclose census information to anyone else, including to

the Internal Revenue Service, the Immigration and Naturalization Service, the police, landlords, or anybody.

We also need help forming partnerships with the Census Bureau and with local governments to make sure that everyone knows how important it is to return census forms. The Census Bureau also needs assistance recruiting people from a variety of communities for the hundreds of thousands of temporary jobs in Census 2000.

This is a great cause, because the values the Census serves are important and so dear to equality and freedom. I'm proud to be part of it, and I hope you'll be proud to help it succeed. ■

New Census Race Question Creates Tabulation Challenges

The new race question on the 2000 Census form will instruct respondents to "mark |X| one or more races to indicate what this person considers himself/herself to be." Prior censuses asked respondents to mark only one race. The challenge now confronting federal agencies is how to tabulate multiple responses to the race question in a wide variety of contexts. For purposes of redistricting and enforcing the Voting Rights Act, the Census Bureau will tabulate the counts for 63 official race categories, representing all possible combinations of the following 6 categories: White; Black or African American; American Indian or Alaska Native; Asian; Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander; and Some Other Race.

Providing data for all 63 possible race categories is not likely to work for most other tabulations of data from the census or other federal collections, because the number of people reporting most combinations would be too small to provide statistically reliable education, housing, income, or disability characteristics for the category. Another problem is that the data from self-identified multi-racial people may be inadequate or of dubious meaning in critical applications of data on race. For example, would federal agencies argue that in assessing possible discrimination against a "black and white" race group, one should count employees or mortgagees who have one black and one white parent only if they identify with both races, and not if they identify as white or as black?

The "Draft Provisional Guidance on the Implementation of the 1997 Standards for Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity" that the OMB issued earlier this year neither poses nor addresses such questions. In the Dress Rehearsal test that the Census Bureau conducted for the 2000 Census in Sacramento, California, the number who reported themselves as black in combination with one or more other races was significant—about 10 percent of the number who reported only as black. This suggests that multiracial issues may require much more serious attention before OMB issues the Provisional Guidance later this year.

— Roderick J. Harrison

Linking Leaders, Research, and Technology

The Joint Center Launches the Black Leadership Information Exchange and DataBank to Form a Policy Information Network

The Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies has a rich history of providing timely, credible information and analyses to policy influentials and opinion leaders. A diverse group of leaders as well as the media rely on the Joint Center for its unique, independent research documenting and analyzing the political and economic status of African Americans and other minorities. Last month, the Joint Center broke new ground in this area.

On October 13, the Joint Center launched two new products that combine the best of technology with the institution's vast information resources: the Black Leadership Information Exchange (BLIE) and DataBank. In tandem with the Joint Center's Internet capabilities, they comprise the first interactive policy network for traditional and emerging black leaders. BLIE is a membership network that provides participants with easy access to Joint Center data and information on contemporary issues and their impact on African Americans. With membership comes special VIP invitations to the Joint Center's Public Policy Forum series, Corporate Forums, conferences, and other events. Significantly, BLIE members also have exclusive access to private Internet chat sessions and to on-line leadership surveys.

In addition to BLIE, the Joint Center unveiled DataBank, a unique, centralized on-line clearinghouse of data, statistics, and tabulations on a wide range of subjects originating from the Joint Center as well as various agencies including the Census Bureau. DataBank will be one of the largest repositories of information on African Americans anywhere, and can be publicly accessed through the Joint Center's website, www.jointcenter.org.

"DataBank removes many of the obstacles researchers, students, marketing specialists and others have encountered in gathering data on African Americans," said Andrew Brimmer, chair of the Joint Center's board of governors. "Now they only need to go to one site where they can find both the data and analyses of the data."

In keeping with the Joint Center's mission to expand effective participation in the political and public policy arenas, the goal of BLIE is to strengthen the influence of today's black leaders by providing them with a common database of in-depth research and analyses on a variety of issues affecting black communities. BLIE also provides an avenue for collaborative activities and linkages to fellow member organizations. Eddie N. Williams, president of the Joint Center says, "The launch of BLIE is both an exciting and momentous challenge for the institution. We are applying the research capabilities of the Joint Center to create a common information resource around which black

leaders can craft solutions to problems affecting the African American community." CEO's of national organizations from business, civic, civil rights, labor, media, governmental, professional, religious, fraternal, and academic sectors are being invited to become members of the Black Leadership Information Exchange. Prospective members will join an elite group of VIP Charter Members that includes, the Black Leadership Forum, Blacks in Government, the Congress of National Black Churches, the NAACP, the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, the National Council of Negro Women, and the National Urban League.

Providing black leaders with tools for leadership through information technology is consistent with programs the Joint Center has offered since its beginning. Immediately after the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, millions of newly enfranchised African Americans, especially in the South, elected hundreds of blacks to public offices. Many of these new officials had no previous experience in public office. But as a result of Joint Center programs, black elected officials had direct access to the resources and tools they needed to be effective leaders at that time. Today, in response to both the advances in technology and the changing needs of leadership, Joint Center programs take advantage of the speed and efficiency of the Internet to meet the informational needs of its audiences and provide tools for effective leadership.

BLIE is being rolled out in three phases. In recognition of the Joint Center's founding purpose and of its core audience, during phase one BLIE membership is open to the black leaders of national organizations committed to improving the social and economic status of African Americans. Phase two will expand the BLIE network to include the regional and local leadership levels of phase one organizations. And in phase three, the CEO's of other national minority organizations will be invited to join, including Hispanic, Asian American, and Native American organizations.

"The launch of BLIE and DataBank comes at a very appropriate time," Williams says. "We are in the midst of an information revolution. Experts estimate that the IT industry has contributed to approximately one third of total economic growth in the United States since 1992. This revolution is not just about access and information. It's about economics. And it's about empowerment."

Throughout its history, the Joint Center has illuminated public policy issues that affect African Americans and the nation at large. By combining research, technology, and collaboration to create the Black Leadership Information Exchange, the Joint Center continues this tradition ■

Cyber Revolution

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develop, and retain teachers, librarians, and staff who have experience using the Internet and information technology. In many disadvantaged communities, the cost of hiring, training, and retaining such qualified personnel is prohibitive.

The National Urban League is instituting an approach to community-focused IT access similar to that contemplated by the Tomas Rivera Policy Institute. The Urban League's Office of Technology Programs and Policy, headed by B. Keith Fulton, is establishing state-of-the-art technology education and access centers in each of the Urban League's 115 affiliates nationwide. Five model programs will be organized initially in Roxbury, Massachusetts; Binghamton, New York; Newark, New Jersey; White Plains, New York; and Baltimore, Maryland.

Dr. George Campbell, Jr., the CEO of the National Action Council for Minorities in Engineering, Inc. (NACME), and moderator of one of the forum's panels, called for a dramatic expansion of the pool of minority engineers. He said that \$300 million a year should be spent over the next half decade to graduate a critical

mass of 14,000 black, Latino, and Native American engineers. Campbell says that the return on such an investment would be tremendous and it would attack the problem from another direction. It would increase the participation of minorities in IT industries and plant the seeds for a crop of minority cyber entrepreneurs. NACME is the largest privately funded source of scholarships for engineering education directed to minority students.

A Fork in the Road

"We are at a fork in the road," said Irving Wladawsky-Berger. "One path leads to more division between digital haves and have-nots. The other can lead us all to a stronger, more unified nation, one that supports vibrant communities and empowered individuals all across our land. Fortunately, unlike past technology-based transformations, we are capable of ensuring that all who wish, will have the opportunity to benefit in our emerging information society.

"We must do the right thing and leave no one behind. Everyone must have the opportunity to benefit from the profound, empowering transformation that is in process even now." ■

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TRENDLETTER

POLITICAL REPORT

Black Elected Officials, 1998

By David A. Bositis

Since last year, when the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies published *Black Elected Officials, 1993-1997*, the number of black elected officials (BEOs) in the United States increased by 212, from 8,656 to 8,868, a 2.4 percent increase over the previous year (see table).

The 1998 figures, which will be released in full later this month, show that most of these gains took place in the South, where the majority of BEOs are, more than half of the growth was due to elected women.

In 1970, the first year in which the Joint Center collected data on these officials, there were 1,469 BEOs. The 1998 total represents a historic high. Whether the ranks of BEOs will continue to expand depends in part on how state legislatures draw political district lines after the 2000 Census.

The largest categorical increase in BEOs was at the municipal level (such as mayors and numbers of city councils), where there was an increase of 162 positions, a 3.9 percent rise. The other category where increases occurred was in education (such as members of boards of education and college

boards), with 55 more positions (a 2.8 percent rise).

More than half of the overall increase in BEOs came from five of the 11 states of the Old Confederacy, which contributed 123 new BEOs. There also were substantial increases in Illinois (81) and Missouri (21), so that these states gained 225 new BEOs during the period. However, the remaining states collectively had a net decline of 13 BEOs.

The 10 states with the largest number of black elected officials in 1998 were: Mississippi (849), Alabama (733), Louisiana (666), Illinois (626), Georgia (597), South Carolina (554), North Carolina (513), Arkansas (482), Texas (474), Michigan (348), and Virginia (333).

Between 1997 and 1998, Illinois moved from the fifth to the fourth ranking on the list, and Michigan moved ahead of Virginia to the ninth spot (Michigan and Virginia were tied last year).

The states that experienced the largest percentage growth in the number of black elected officials were Illinois (14.5 percent), Missouri (11.2 percent), Texas (5.8 percent), and Mississippi (5.7 percent). In 1998, as in 1997, five states had no BEOs: Hawaii, Montana, North and South Dakota, and Wyoming.

Women. Since 1970, the number of female BEOs has grown dramatically. Of the 212 additional BEOs added to the total between 1997 and 1998, 115 (or 54 percent) were

women. The total number of female BEOs in the U.S. has grown from 160 in 1970 to 2,924 in 1998.

In four categories of office, the proportion of female BEOs roughly approximates the overall average of 33 percent: federal (35.0 percent), state level (31.3 percent), municipal (32.9 percent), and judicial/law enforcement (30.4 percent). Yet the proportion of black women holding county-level office (19.2 percent) is substantially lower than the average for the offices.

The District of Columbia had the highest female percentage (51 percent) and in fact is the only jurisdiction where female BEOs outnumbered their male counterparts. Among the top 10 states in number of BEOs, female representation ranged from a high of 42.7 percent of all BEOs in Illinois to a low of 19.4 percent in Louisiana. In both states, these percentages are higher than they were the previous year.

Black Mayors. Between 1997 and 1998, the number of black mayors nationwide increased from 387 to 445, a 15 percent rise. The number of black mayors of cities with at least 50,000 persons totaled 40 (this is a 1999 figure).

Congressional Black Caucus. There are currently 39 black federal officeholders, all members of the U.S. House of Representatives (Senator Carol Moseley-Braun, an Illinois Democrat, was defeated in her bid for reelection in November 1998).

The 1990s have been a remarkable period of volatility in the membership of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC). Of the 39 African Americans presently serving in the U.S. House of Representatives, 31 have been elected since 1990. There are 14 women in the CBC today, accounting for 36 percent of the total.

Regional Distribution of BEOs. There continue to be significant regional differences in the distribution of black elected officials. The South was the region with the largest number of BEOs (6,119); this number represents 69.3 percent of all BEOs nationwide. There were 817 BEOs in the Northeast, 1,570 in the Midwest, and 324 in the West.

A Look Ahead to 2000. Future increases in the number of BEOs in the U.S. will be affected by the results of the 2000 Census and the redistricting process that follows. The preponderance of BEOs are elected from black-majority or majority-minority districts, so significant shifts in the boundaries of these districts are likely to alter the number of BEOs. Following the 1990 redistricting, when many new majority-minority districts were created, the number of black state legislators increased from 415 to 567 (36 percent). Black membership in the U.S. House of Representatives increased from 24 to 39. Therefore, future increases in the number of BEOs will depend on how state legislatures and federal courts draw district lines over the 2000-2002 time period. ■

Black Elected Officials by State: 1998 Totals and Net Change Since 1997

State	Elected Officials				
	Blacks as Percent of 1998 Voting Age Population	All Elected Officials (Number)	Black Elected Officials (Number)	Black Percent of Total	Net Change 1997-1998 (Number)
Alabama	23.9	4,385	733	16.7	7
Alaska	3.7	1,929	1	0.1	0
Arizona	3.4	3,289	16	0.5	-1
Arkansas	14.3	8,408	482	5.7	-2
California	7.1	18,925	240	1.3	-15
Colorado	4.1	8,605	19	0.2	-1
Connecticut	8.4	9,147	68	0.7	5
Delaware	18.0	1,171	24	2.0	-1
District of Columbia	57.5	348	148	42.5	1
Florida	13.4	5,588	212	3.8	-4
Georgia	26.5	6,529	597	9.1	18
Hawaii	3.1	183	0	0.0	0
Idaho	0.6	4,775	1	0.0	0
Illinois	13.9	42,336	626	1.5	81
Indiana	7.6	11,624	82	0.7	2
Iowa	1.8	16,479	12	0.1	1
Kansas	5.5	18,895	20	0.1	-1
Kentucky	6.8	7,060	62	0.9	4
Louisiana	29.6	5,051	666	13.2	21
Maine	0.5	6,556	1	0.0	-2
Maryland	26.6	2,123	183	8.6	-12
Massachusetts	5.5	22,173	31	0.1	-2
Michigan	13.2	18,704	348	1.9	15
Minnesota	2.5	18,870	17	0.1	3
Mississippi	33.3	4,754	849	17.9	46
Missouri	10.1	17,281	209	1.2	21
Montana	0.3	5,106	0	0.0	0
Nebraska	3.7	13,899	3	0.0	-1
Nevada	7.0	1,218	13	1.1	-3
New Hampshire	0.8	7,347	2	0.0	0
New Jersey	13.6	9,042	232	2.6	10
New Mexico	2.6	2,201	5	0.2	0
New York	16.8	25,932	311	1.2	0
North Carolina	20.5	5,820	513	8.8	7
North Dakota	0.6	15,482	0	0.0	0
Ohio	10.5	19,366	220	1.1	-11
Oklahoma	7.0	8,989	104	1.2	2
Oregon	1.7	7,833	7	0.1	0
Pennsylvania	8.8	30,476	161	0.5	-1
Rhode Island	4.4	1,138	10	0.9	0
South Carolina	27.8	3,943	554	14.1	12
South Dakota	0.7	9,684	0	0.0	0
Tennessee	15.0	6,950	167	2.4	-7
Texas	11.8	27,628	474	1.7	26
Utah	0.9	2,711	1	0.0	0
Vermont	0.7	8,534	1	0.0	0
Virgin Islands	61.4	41	38	92.7	-1
Virginia	19.0	3,104	333	10.7	0
Washington	3.4	7,724	21	0.3	-2
West Virginia	3.1	2,772	18	0.6	-1
Wisconsin	4.8	17,829	33	0.2	-2
Wyoming	0.8	2,742	0	0.0	0
TOTAL	11.8	512,699	8,868*	1.7	212

* Total includes one statehood senator and one statehood representative from the District of Columbia.

ECONOMIC REPORT

Incomes Reach Another Record High in 1998

by Margaret C. Simms

At the end of September, the Census Bureau released its annual reports on income and poverty. The figures for 1998 show that economic growth continues to enhance the economic well-being of American households. Real median household income increased for the fourth year in a row, with impressive gains for all types of households and all regions of the country. Median household income rose to \$38,885, the highest earnings recorded since the Bureau first compiled income estimates in 1967.

Last year, incomes increased for Hispanic households and for non-Hispanic whites. For blacks and Asians, 1998 real median household income was not significantly different from income in 1997, though it was considerably higher than in 1989, the previous high. Per capita income for all major race/ethnic groups was also substantially higher than in 1989.

For whites, 1998 per capita income of \$21,394 was 10.4 percent higher than in 1989. Blacks experienced a 13.6 percent hike in per capita income, from \$11,406 to \$12,957. The increase for Hispanics was only half as great as that for African Americans. (Comparable figures for Asians are not available.)

Continued economic prosperity also contributed to further declines in the poverty rate. The overall poverty rate dropped just over one-half of a percent to 12.7 percent. The principal declines were among Hispanics (from 27.1 to 25.6%) and non-Hispanic whites (from 8.6 to 8.2%). The black poverty rate in 1998

(26.1%) was the same as in 1997. The poverty rate for Asians, at 12.5 percent, was lower than in 1997 but the difference was not statistically significant.

Poverty among children dropped to 18.9 percent, the first time it has been appreciably below 20 percent since 1980. The rates declined for all children, but poverty rates for African American (36.7%) and Hispanic (34.6%) children were three and a half times the rate for non-Hispanic white children (10.6%). The rate for Asian American children was 17.5%.

Regional Differences

Median household income grew in all regions of the country during 1998. Median incomes in the South (\$35,797) and the Midwest (\$40,609) were higher than their previous peaks in 1989. The median in the West (\$40,983) approximates its level in 1989, but, income in the Northeast (\$40,634) lags behind its 1989 level by 5 percent.

Among the 25 states with the largest black populations, several in the Northeast (Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania) had median household incomes at or above the U.S. median and poverty rates at or below the national average. This was also true of several key states in the Midwest (Illinois, Michigan, Indiana, Ohio, and Missouri) and the Mid-Atlantic (Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia) regions.

In contrast, many states in the South remained at or below the national median household income and above national poverty levels. These included Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas. North Carolina, Georgia, and Florida had median household incomes and poverty rates comparable to the U.S. median. Household incomes in New York and California

were respectively at and above the U.S. median, but both had poverty rates higher than the U.S. average.

Several of the southern and midwestern states with large black populations—Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Missouri, Ohio, and Pennsylvania—were among the 16 states that had notable elevations in median household income, based on two-year averages for income (1996-97 versus 1997-98).

No Substitute for Full-time Work

More people were working full-time (35 hours or more per week), year-round (50 weeks or more) in 1998 than in 1997. The proportion of male workers who were employed full-time, year-round was up one percentage point (to 73.7%). The expansion among female workers was just over one-half of a percentage point (from 55.6 to 56.3%).

Among men, white workers (74.1%) were more likely to be full-time workers than African Americans (70.2%) or Hispanics (72.8%). Among women, African American workers were the most likely to be employed full-time, year-round (61.2%) and Hispanic women were the least likely (55.7%). White women were in between, with 55.4 percent working full-time, year-round.

As might be expected, those who were able to work full-time, year-round experienced a growth in their median earnings and had much lower poverty rates than other workers. Women benefitted the most from full-time work. Black women who worked full-time had median earnings that were one-third higher than all black women workers. The gains were even greater for white and Hispanic women around 50 percent more than other workers in their race/gender category.

For males, the earnings gains were about 20 percent. The effect of full-time work on reducing poverty was somewhat different. It had the greatest impact on reducing poverty among black men and the least impact on reducing poverty among Hispanic men. The low impact on Hispanic males might be due to low hourly wages. This explanation is supported by the fact that Hispanic males and black and Hispanic females who worked full-time had higher poverty rates than other full-time workers.

The Distribution of Income

Economic progress over the years has expanded the proportion of African American households with incomes at the upper end of the income scale. In 1998, 22.8 percent of black households had incomes of over \$50,000, up from 9.1 percent with the same income (in 1998-adjusted dollars) in 1967. While the proportion of black households with incomes over \$50,000 has increased about one-third since 1992, the proportion with incomes over \$100,000 has grown nearly 50 percent. (See figures)

However, these gains have not substantially altered the comparative relationship of black households to white and Asian households. Blacks were only one-half as likely to have incomes over \$50,000 as compared to either white or Asian households. They are only one-third as likely as white households and only one-fourth as likely as Asian households to have incomes over \$100,000.

The growth in the proportion of black households with incomes above \$50,000 has contributed to a widening disparity between upper- and lower-income African Americans over time. One measure of income disparity is obtained by dividing all households into fifths and examining

the proportion of income within each fifth. If income were equally distributed, each fifth (20%) of households would have one fifth (20%) of the income. The more income going to the top fifth and the less going to the lowest fifth, the more unequal the income distribution.

For the United States as a whole, the top fifth of households had nearly one-half of the income while the bottom fifth had only 3.6 percent. Among African American households, the proportion going to the top fifth was very similar but the bottom fifth had somewhat less, only 3.1 percent of the income within the total African American community. In 1967, the top fifth of African American households had 46.7 percent of the income and the bottom 20 percent had 3.8 percent.

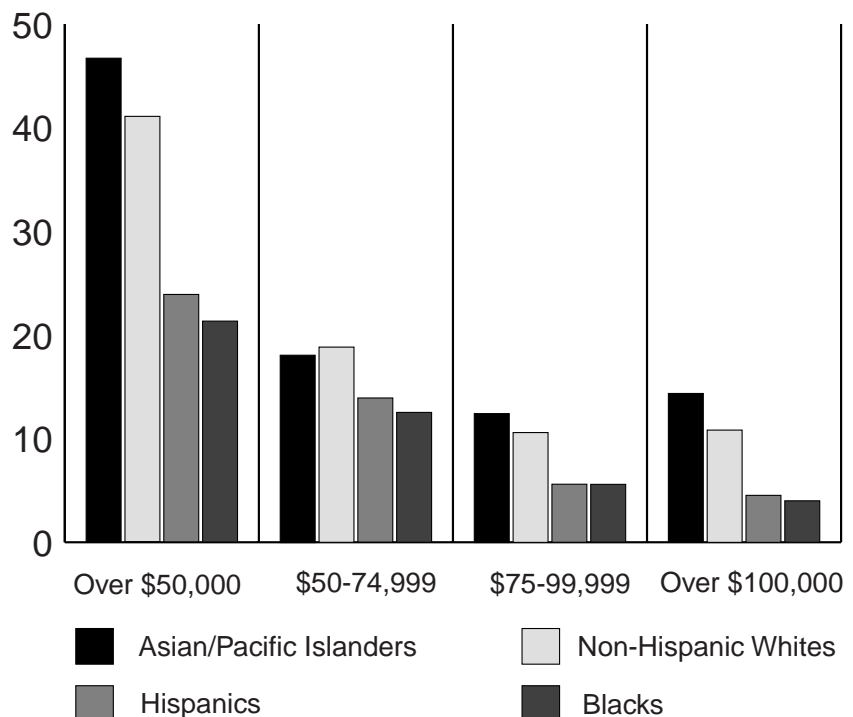
A Glass More Than Half Full?

The income and poverty figures show that the strength of the economy is improving the economic situation of many households regardless of the race or gender of the household head or the region of the country in which he or she lives. But since the progress of households is so closely tied to work, and full-time work in particular, those households without workers are being left further and further behind.

The complete report on Money Income in the United States: 1998 can be found on the Census website at <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/income98.html>. The report on Poverty in the United States: 1998 can be found at <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/povty98.html>. ■



Proportion of Households with Incomes Over \$50,000 in 1998



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Money Income in the United States, 1998.