



FOCUS[®]

THE MAGAZINE OF THE JOINT CENTER FOR POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC STUDIES

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT & GOVERNANCE



Joint Center Launches a New Institute, page 3; Voter Suppression and the 2012 Election, page 7

Creating Pathways to a More Robust Citizen Engagement



This edition of FOCUS heralds the launch of the Joint Center's Civic Engagement and Governance Institute.

This is not a departure for us

but rather a way to expand on our organization's proud tradition and legacy of building a better America by guiding African Americans toward higher levels of civic and political participation. In addition to the synergies that will be created with our other centers of excellence on health care and media and technology, this Institute will bring greater focus and urgency to the task of connecting people with our system of governance—and broaden opportunities for them to both contribute to and benefit from our democracy.

Recent events and the state of our union have made abundantly clear the need for this initiative.

While some speak of a new era of "post-racial" politics, communities of color are seeing enduring disparities in areas such as housing, employment, health, income and criminal justice.

Despite the momentous sacrifices that were made by African Americans to secure the franchise—and the value that greater participation would bring to problem-solving in our communities—our voting registration and turnout is lagging that of the general population. On top of this, there is a movement in some states to disenfranchise voters by making it more difficult for them to cast their ballots.

Across America I see growing numbers losing hope that they will ever be able to work their way into a middle class lifestyle.

Whether frustrations are expressed through Occupy Wall Street or the Tea Party, or via the apathy that is now palpable in many quarters, we need to do something to address growing feeling that the deck is stacked, that their voice does not matter and that our system no longer works the way it should. We need to bring people back into the process and show them how the system will work best when everyone participates.

Howard University School of Law Dean Kurt Schmoke has it right when he says, within these pages of FOCUS, "economic empowerment and political empowerment are so closely aligned that there's got to be a way of ... making sure that people turn out on a consistent basis and recognize that participating politically will also affect the economics of the community."

There are also positive developments upon which to build out our efforts. The numbers of young, educated African American adults is growing. Polls show that despite the state of the economy their optimism is on the upswing, with most of them saying they are better off than their parents, and that their children will be better off than they themselves are now. The new online technologies—which are revolutionizing how people receive information, interact with each other and take part in civic and political dialogue—offer exceptional potential for enabling more people of color to participate and to engage in our civic and political life. And young African Americans are adopting broadband and mobile Internet technologies at among the highest rates of any group.

It all adds up to a set of building blocks that can lead to a more intense citizen engagement, as well as a stronger understanding of how economic and social issues affect our communities. To help pull it all together, our Civic Engagement and Governance Institute will work to bridge the gaps on research regarding the quality and quantity of the interaction between citizens and their government, and to provide space for analysis, ideas and dialogue aimed at bringing more people into the process—and ultimately driving the solutions that will improve lives and build futures.

I urge you to take the word "engagement" to heart. Help us find ways to collaborate with this new Institute in its quest to help build a better America for every citizen. Be a part of the Joint Center's new Civic Engagement and Governance Institute.

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FOCUS is published by the Office of Communications at the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies. FOCUS welcomes submissions. E-mail articles to focuseditor@jointcenter.org. Copyright 2011. Opinions expressed in FOCUS are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the staff or governing board of the Joint Center.

Printed in the United States of America.

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A Conversation with New Institute Co-Chairs

Advancing Policy Solutions: Research, Empowerment, Engagement

Building upon the Joint Center's record of leadership in encouraging black participation in public affairs and supporting networks of black elected and appointed officials—as well as in monitoring, tracking and analyzing the views and voting habits of African Americans—this new Civic Engagement and Governance Institute will serve as a key source of information and analysis regarding civic and political participation among people of color. To that end, it will conduct research on issues of inequality, provide expert analysis and advance policy solutions through published research papers, issue briefings and public forums.

The Institute blends the Joint Center's historic mission with a renewed political and economic research agenda to address current issues and to ultimately leverage synergies between our existing "centers of excellence"—the Health Policy Institute and the Media and Technology Institute.

We envision that the Institute will also serve as a platform to expand the Joint Center's work with the National Policy Alliance (NPA) (see page 14), comprised of key membership organizations representing more than 11,000 black elected and appointed officials across every level of government, with the goal of expanding the NPA's profile in policy development and strengthening its influence in promoting civic engagement in the black community. The following

interview with the Civic Engagement and Governance Institute Co-Chairs provides more insight on the vision and what is being planned.

*In preparation for the launch of the Joint Center's Civic Engagement and Governance Institute, Gina E. Wood, Director of Policy and Planning, interviewed the Institute's National Advisory Committee Co-Chairs **Dianne M. Pinderhughes, Ph.D.**, Professor, Department of Africana Studies and Department of Political Science, University of Notre Dame, and **The Honorable Kurt L. Schmoke, Esq.**, Dean, Howard University School of Law and Former Mayor, City of Baltimore, Maryland. The following is an excerpt from the interview.*

Q: What has been your past experience working with the Joint Center? When did you first become aware of or involved with it?

Dr. Pinderhughes: In the late 1960s, when the first non-voting delegate to Congress from the District of Columbia, Reverend Walter E. Fauntroy, was elected, I decided I wanted to work for him. The Joint Center had a summer internship program and through it, I became an intern in Congressman Fauntroy's office. (Later on) I was also a Fellow for a number of years, served on the Board of Governors for two terms and was Vice Chair of the Board of Governors of the Joint Center.

But more importantly, the Joint Center has always been an important resource for me as a political scientist in the sense that its *Roster of Black Elected Officials* was published for a significant number of years. I used (this) when working with a group of scholars on a comparative study of black, Latino, Asian, and Native American elected officials. In terms of African American elected officials, the Joint Center has the most detailed information of any organization when it comes to the representation of African Americans by their elected officials.

Dean Schmoke: My experience goes back more than 20 years from the time that I was a young lawyer considering running for political office. I would read publications of the Joint Center to help educate me about political issues, but more particularly to help me understand some of the major political trends in the country and in the African American community.

Although I made a decision to run for office at the local level and not the national level, the work of the Joint Center was just as helpful to me as if I had decided to run for Congress or some other (national) position. It helped me network with others, particularly other elected officials, and with some scholars who were interested in the same types of problems that I was facing on a day-to-day basis. So the Joint Center has been very helpful to me as an elected official, and now that I'm a "recovering" politician

and in the academic area I use the material for my classes.

Q: Why did you each agree to Co-Chair the Institute?

Dr. Pinderhughes: I see the core issue for the Joint Center being politics and political representation. So the *Roster of Black Elected Officials* gathering information about the representation of African Americans is part of that role and responsibility. And for a variety of reasons, the challenges of funding (and managing that research) in the last 15 years or so, the Roster has not been published in the same way. But it needs to be restored and other types of information also need to be gathered.

The Joint Center needs more funding in order to facilitate these activities. And to be perfectly honest, it's in my own self-interest as a scholar who has students who are by now themselves graduates, on faculty and they need and use that data.

Dean Schmoke: The issue that I'm very concerned about at this time is best summarized with the term(s) "sustained community involvement" and "sustained community empowerment." It troubles me to see the decline in voting participation, in the country generally, but particularly in the African American community in elections that are non-Presidential elections. I mean, people continue to come out and vote in the Presidential elections, but to exercise the power to vote in other elections seems to be a failing.

Economic empowerment and political empowerment are so closely aligned that there's got to be a way of conveying that message and making sure that people turn out on a consistent basis and recognize that participating politically will also affect the economics of the community.

And also along those lines, I have been concerned with the increase in techniques to try to deny people the right to vote. You know, we've got Constitutional amendments and the Voting Rights Act, but we still see all kinds of clever ways of denying the franchise and minimizing the franchise, and people

have to be aware of that so we can combat those efforts.

Q: Why do you think inequality remains a problem in our society and what is the nature of the problem, in your opinion?

Dr. Pinderhughes: Inequality remains a problem because we've never finished addressing all the dimensions of inequality. Our society was able, in the 19th century, in the years after the Civil War, to address political participation of African Americans. But when it came to thinking about the economic status, of thinking about the economic consequences of having been enslaved for 150 to 200 years, and not having gotten any pay, the society wasn't willing to address it.

We get to the 20th Century (and) we're able to generate the Voting Rights Act. There was a little bit of an effort at addressing economic status with the War on Poverty, with housing policy, but really the United States has not ever addressed the reparations of the status of African Americans for the last 200 to 300 years. I'm not suggesting that the first priority for the Joint Center should be reparations. But I am stating that economic issues are a core part of the political standing of African Americans and of being a citizen in the country.

Dean Schmoke: As the Occupy Wall Street group and many others have pointed out, the disparity of the distribution of wealth is one of the problems, and we still have to deal with the existence of racial discrimination, whether it relates to the Latino community and the issues they're facing, or African American community and the ongoing struggle that we have. So when you've got the economic disparities as well as racial discrimination, that's a volatile mix that leads to continuing disparities.

Q: Thank you. I'd like to follow up on how you have framed the issues around inequality, both economic and political. However, can you first share your vision for the Institute?

Dean Schmoke: I'd like the Institute to not only frame the issues that are problems for the 21st Century, but I'd also like us to

present solutions. I'd like this particular effort to be far more solution-oriented than problem identification-oriented.

Dr. Pinderhughes: I've also been thinking about the need to have younger academics, policymakers (and) people who have ideas and are able to use some of the new technologies. We'll have to have some people who can do quantitative analysis, modeling and different methods of analyzing information so that we can have the ability to communicate with some of the other types of think tanks in Washington. So I'm thinking about a place with energy, with young scholars, and with smart public officials who are use to new kinds of ways of thinking and doing.

Q: What will be unique about the Institute when compared to other organizations working on civic engagement and governance issues?

Dr. Pinderhughes: I'm not sure that there's another organization at the national level that would have the combination of responsibilities. You know, with the Health Policy, Media and Technology, (climate change focus) and the Civic Engagement and Governance Institute coming online in a fully developed way, and the interaction with the existing programs that the Joint Center has, there are many different ways that you could experiment with and run programs now that weren't the case even 15 years ago.

Dean Schmoke: I think the multi-disciplinary approach that the Joint Center brings to these problems is unique and brings some distinctive voices that are not always heard in other forums. And I think the legacy of the Joint Center in dealing with these issues adds a certain weight to what's produced by the Institute that will help affect policy in the way that some other groups might not be able to do.

Q: Can you share your thoughts about why you think the timing of the Institute launch is critical?

Dean Schmoke: We've just been through kind of a perfect storm of economic and political crises. Actually, we're not through—we are seemingly emerging from the perfect

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Bold Policies to Achieve Economic Justice

by William Darity, Jr., Ph.D., and Darrick Hamilton, Ph.D.

The U.S. is characterized by a long-standing pattern of structural racial inequality that deepens further as a result of the economic downturn.

For example, in 2008, the median hourly wage for black male full-time workers was \$14.90, while the median for white male counterparts was nearly \$6 higher, at \$20.84. Disparities persist even when one looks at workers within the same educational categories. Among workers with a high school diploma or a bachelor's degree, black males earned only 74 percent of what white males earned. Among high school dropouts, black males earned only 61 percent of what their white male counterparts earned. Also, nearly 90 percent of U.S. occupations can be classified as racially segregated even after accounting for educational differences. Occupations are distributed such that black males are more likely to be crowded into occupations with wages 74 percent lower

than the higher earning occupations, from which they are largely excluded (Hamilton, Algonon, and Darity, 2011).

Although there have been some improvements in the income gap up until around the mid 1970s, the employment gap, and the racial wealth gap—two dramatic indicators of economic security—remain exorbitant and stubbornly persistent.

The September 2011 white unemployment rate was eight percent, while the black rate was twice as high at 16 percent. The eight percent unemployment rate for whites is indicative of a crisis in employment at the national level. Yet, over the past 40 years, there has been only one year in which the black rate has been below eight percent; in contrast, there have been fewer than five years in which the white rate has been at or exceeded eight percent. Thus, if we are to view blacks as equal to whites, we would consider blacks in a perpetual state of employment

crisis that deepens astronomically during national economic downturns.

Another indicator of economic security is wealth, and, like the unemployment rate, it is an indicator of stark racial difference. Before the Great Recession, the typical black family had a little less than \$0.10 for every dollar in wealth of the typical white family. After the recession, that gap had nearly doubled, with the typical black family now having about a nickel for every dollar in wealth of the typical white family (Taylor, Fry and Kochhar, 2011).

The absolute racial wealth gap exceeds \$100,000. Regardless of age, household structure, education, occupation or income, black households typically have less than a quarter of the wealth of otherwise comparable white households. Perhaps even more disturbing, the median wealth of black families whose head of household graduated from college is less than the median wealth of white families whose head of household dropped out of high school (Gittleman and Wolfe, 2004). The disparity is so pronounced that the median Latino and black household would have to save 100 percent of their income for close to three consecutive years to close the gap. Furthermore, 85 percent of black and Latino households have a net worth below the median white household (Kochhar, 2004).

Despite these glaring and persistent racial disparities, the growing “post racial” rhetoric has led to a political environment that makes it increasingly difficult for race-specific policies to address these inequities. The post-racial rhetoric is a narrative that our society has transcended the racial divide and that the remaining racial disparities are due primarily to self-sabotaging attitudes and behaviors on the part of blacks themselves. In sum, the post-racial ideology represents a shift from a public acknowledgement of a social responsibility for the condition of black America to a position where individual blacks need to “get over it” and “take personal responsibility.” Discrimination and other social barriers are deemed largely things of the past. Moreover, blacks are enjoined to stop making particularistic claims of injustice (Hamilton and Darity, 2009).

*The ideas in this essay are related to those expressed by the authors in testimony before the Congressional Black Caucus (January, 2011), a webinar for the Joint Center for Economic and Political Studies (August, 2011), and in Darity (2010) and Hamilton and Darity (2010).

We offer two race-neutral programs that could help to eliminate racial inequality, while at the same time providing economic security, mobility and sustainability for all Americans. The first program, a federal job guarantee, would provide the economic security of a job and the removal of the threat of unemployment for all Americans (Darity, 2010). The second program, a substantial child development account that rises progressively based on the familial asset positioning of the child's parents, would provide a pathway toward asset security for all Americans regardless of their economic position at birth (Hamilton and Darity, 2010).

The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that about 14 million Americans remained in the ranks of the unemployed in September 2011. January 2011 represented 21 consecutive months in which the jobless rate was at least nine percent. February and March offered very mild and temporary rays of hope when the unemployment rate dipped slightly to 8.9 and 8.8 percent, respectively. Since then, the rate has crept back up to at least nine percent, and in September 2011 it stood at 9.1 percent. We have not seen a span of unemployment this high since the Great Depression. Furthermore, these numbers do not fully capture the relationship between joblessness and "discouraged workers," who drop out of the labor force altogether. The employment-population ratio in September 2011 was only at 58.3 percent. Having Americans out of work does immense damage to the human spirit, imposes extensive costs to individuals and society as a whole.

A federal government job guarantee program for all adult citizens would address this crisis. The federal government should establish a National Investment Employment Corps offering all citizens 18 years of age and above an employment guarantee at a minimum salary of \$20,000 with \$10,000 in benefits, including medical coverage and retirement support. An upper bound estimate of the expense of the program can be established by putting all 15 million persons unemployed at the peak of this crisis at a mean salary of \$40,000, inclusive of materials and equipment per worker, with \$10,000 in benefits. The total compensation package would amount to \$750 billion,

which is less than the first \$787 billion stimulus package and considerably less than the first phase of the bailout of the investment banks estimated at \$1.3 trillion. This initiative would be far superior to the indirect incentive effects of stimulus measures, because it would constitute a direct mechanism for job creation and it would trigger a multiplier stimulus effect across a wide panoply of activities that take place in the economy.

Correspondingly, the net expenses of the job guarantee program would be reduced because of a wide array of cost savings from other social programs that either could be reduced or eliminated. With the federal government acting as employer of last resort, unemployment compensation funding could be slashed and antipoverty program funding—including free and reduced lunch subsidies and food stamps, could be reduced greatly. Furthermore, the income paid to the employees of the National Investment Employment Corps would restore tax bases at the state and municipal levels, helping to alleviate their current budget crises. The federal job guarantee also would moderate significantly the home foreclosure crisis, and the medical coverage provided as a job benefit of the federal job guarantee would provide an implicit "public option" leading to the coverage of millions of uninsured Americans.

States and municipalities can conduct an inventory of their needs and develop a job bank of tasks. The program could give priority to the most urgent projects to aid the most distressed communities. The work to be done by employees of the National Investment Employment Corps would address the nation's human and physical infrastructure requirements. This could include the construction, staffing and provision of high quality preschools, computer repair, upgrade and maintenance, sanitation workers, flood and other disaster service workers in hospitals and schools, and the extension, repair and maintenance of the public transportation infrastructure, e.g. roads, bridges, and dams. In 2009 the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) gave the country a grade of D on its physical infrastructure; one in four rural bridges were characterized as structurally deficient. ASCE reported that in Texas alone there were only seven engineers and

a budget of \$435,000 to oversee more than 7,400 dams.

The proposal advanced here is not meant to act as a temporary program contingent upon emergency conditions; rather, it is to function as an automatic stabilizer in good and bad times. The number of persons put to work in the National Investment Employment Corps will rise during downturns and fall during upswings. Thus, the program will expand and contract counter-cyclically. Moreover, the program would structurally move the U.S. economy away from low wage jobs—a sector in which an increasingly global economy is making the U.S. less competitive—toward more moderate and high wage jobs.

The program also would provide assurance of employment for members of stigmatized populations who are subjected to discriminatory exclusion. For example, Princeton sociologist Devah Pager's audit study in Milwaukee, Wisconsin demonstrates that among males of comparable ages and education, whites with criminal records were more likely to get call backs for jobs than black males with no criminal record (Pager, 2003). Indeed, even among white males only, having a criminal record reduced the odds of receiving an employment callback by half. This is particularly alarming since the analysis took place in Wisconsin, a state that outlaws employer use of a criminal record as a criterion of employment for most jobs. Furthermore, Bureau of Labor Statistics data indicate that among 18-25 year olds, white high school dropouts have an unemployment rate 10 to 12 points lower than blacks who have completed some college. The program envisioned here would provide employment for all—black or white, male or female, with or without a criminal record.

In addition, a guaranteed federal jobs program would mitigate the personal and familial costs of damaged mental health and other stressors faced by the unemployed. The unemployed themselves often say that they would rather be paid to work than receive unemployment compensation. A Huffington Post article by Delaney and Nasripour dated February 24, 2010 sums up these sentiments with a quote from a 45 year old former casino worker, Glenn Blackburn, "Put me to

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Voter Suppression and the Assault on Minority Voting Rights

by David Bositis, Ph.D.

In the aftermath of the conservative Republicans gaining control of several state legislatures in 2010, there have been strong efforts in those states to disenfranchise poor, young and minority voters. These efforts have focused on the enactment of voter identification laws—particularly those requiring voters to present government issued photo identification in order to cast their ballots—together with restrictions on voter registration campaigns and reductions in early voting opportunities. Minority group members, the poor and young people are significantly less likely to have government issued photo identification than non-Hispanic whites.

The U.S. Supreme Court, with the most conservative make-up in several generations, blessed these strict photo identification laws in 2008 in a pair of cases from Indiana, *Crawford v. Marion County Election Board* and *Indiana Democratic Party v. Rokita*. There are now seven states, five of which have substantial black populations (Georgia, Indiana, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas), that have strict voter identification laws requiring voters to present government issued photo identification. In an additional two states with substantial black populations, Missouri and North Carolina, strict voter ID laws were passed, but were vetoed by Democratic governors. There are an additional seven states with photo ID laws, but with alternative procedures available for those who do not have a government issued photo ID. Four of these states have substantial black populations—Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, and Michigan. In addition, Mississippi voters approved a ballot initiative on

election day 2011 that mandates a photo ID in order to vote.

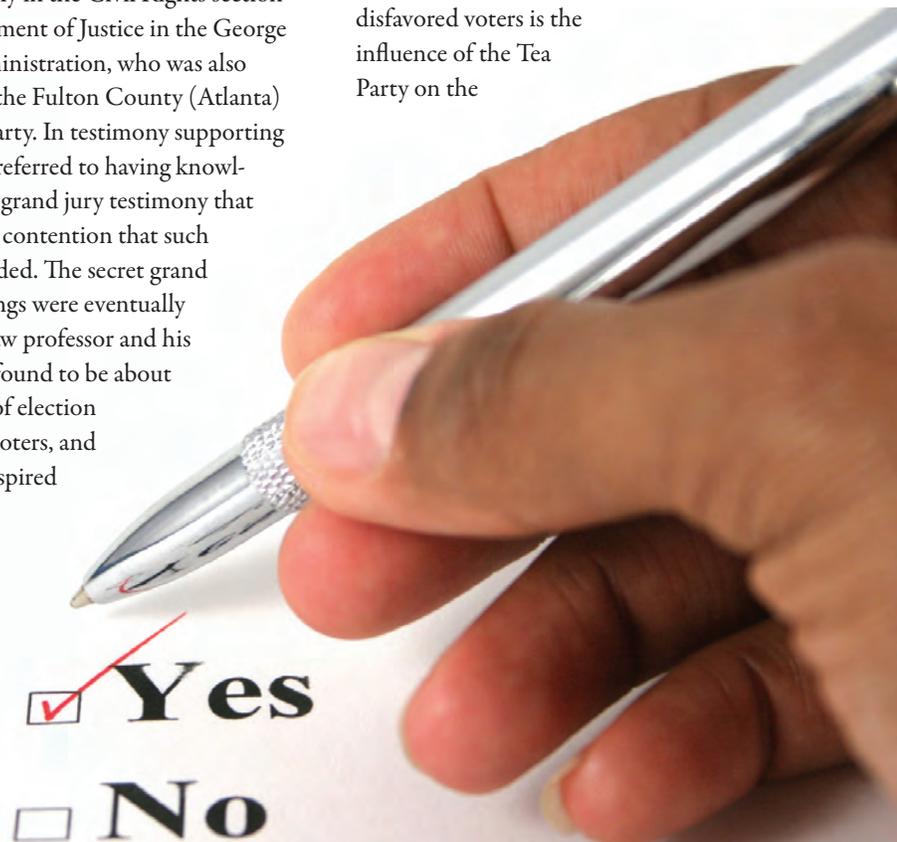
There are several reasons to believe that these new laws were intentionally enacted with the purpose of diminishing the political influence of minority and other disadvantaged voters, which may end up hurting President Obama's 2012 re-election effort.

First, there is no demonstrable problem with unqualified voters attempting to cast ballots. Numerous studies have identified almost no circumstances where unqualified voters have cast ballots. The conservative Republicans' point man on this issue is Hans Von Spakowsky, formerly in the Civil Rights section of the Department of Justice in the George W. Bush Administration, who was also Chairman of the Fulton County (Atlanta) Republican party. In testimony supporting such laws, he referred to having knowledge of secret grand jury testimony that supported his contention that such laws were needed. The secret grand jury proceedings were eventually located by a law professor and his students and found to be about the activities of election officials, not voters, and that they transpired in 1984—27 years ago.

On the contrary, the problem

with voting in the United States is that too few people participate in elections. In 2010, the year that Tea Party-inspired conservatives gained control of the U.S. House of Representatives and numerous state legislative chambers, there were only 11.5 million black voters out of an eligible voting-age population of 26.6 million; in other words, 15.1 million eligible African American voters stayed home on election day. In 2008, an historic year, when a black candidate for president was a major party nominee for the first time, 9.1 million African American eligible voters stayed home—36 percent of all eligible black voters. Thus, in reality, any problem with a stray, unqualified voter is dwarfed by the problem of lack of political participation. And, without question, these laws represent added barriers. In addition to registering, identifying one's polling place, and arranging a time (and maybe transportation) to vote, for many people there is now the additional time, travel and expense of going to a government office with required documentation (and usually an additional cost) to obtain government issued photo identification.

The second reason to believe that these laws are aimed at diminishing the political influence of minorities and other disfavored voters is the influence of the Tea Party on the



state legislative efforts to enact such laws. There have been two major academic studies released in the last six months that have identified Tea Party supporters as anti-black and anti-immigrant. David Campbell and Robert Putnam conducted a large panel survey (over-time) starting in 2006, before the Tea Party existed. Their findings as reported in *The New York Times*:

So what do Tea Partiers have in common? They are overwhelmingly white, but even compared to other white Republicans, they had a low regard for immigrants and blacks long before Barack Obama was president, and they still do.

The motivating force, i.e. the Tea Party, behind the legislative majorities elected in 2010 is hostile to minority groups, and so it should come as no surprise that they would support efforts to diminish minority political power.

The third reason to believe these laws are aimed at diminishing minority voter influence is because their authors are aware of the growing demographic tidal wave that has the potential to reshape America into a more equitable, multiracial, and multiethnic union. Between 2000 and 2010, the Hispanic and Asian-American populations increased by 43 percent, the African American population by 12 percent, and the non-Hispanic white population by only one percent. Looking at 2010 Census figures for a few key states shows the significance of these national numbers. Texas is now a majority-minority state, and between 2000 and 2010, the Hispanic population there increased by 42 percent and the African American population by 24 percent. Florida's Hispanic population increased by 57 percent, and its African American population increased by 28 percent. Georgia's small Hispanic population almost doubled, but more important, its large African American population increased by about 26 percent. Non-Hispanic whites are now a smaller proportion of Georgia's population than is the case in Florida. These demographic shifts are not going to cause a dramatic political shift in the short term, largely due to the youth of the minority population. But in the intermediate term,

these changes will dramatically reshape the politics in the country.

The Tea Party conservatives aim to delay the day when minority group members in the United States can effectively shape the policymaking process in such a way as to achieve a more equitable society. If they cannot achieve their goals through popular support, they will seek to disenfranchise those who don't support their views. And they cannot achieve their goals through popular support, as Campbell and Putnam point out (August 2011), "in data we have recently collected, the Tea Party ranks lower than any of the 23 other groups we asked about, lower than both Republicans and Democrats. It is even less popular than much maligned groups like 'atheists' and 'Muslims.'"

On the redistricting front, the same forces that are advancing voter suppression laws are working to draw district boundaries that diminish the influence of black voters. In this area, the strategy being pursued is to 'pack,' i.e., concentrate, minority voters in the smallest number of districts possible, such that the surrounding districts are more Republican. Virginia's legislature nicely illustrates this strategy. In the Republican controlled House of Delegates, they proposed a map for U.S. Congressional districts where the state's third congressional district is 59.5 percent African American

and the adjacent fourth district is 32.4 percent black. This map would give VA-3, represented by Congressional Black Caucus member Rep. Bobby Scott, additional black voters despite the fact that he has not had a competitive election in over a dozen years. The 32.4 percent of black voters in VA-4, represented by Republican Randy Forbes, would be in a reliably GOP district where their votes would have no effect on the election outcome. In the Virginia Senate, which Democrats control, their proposed map has VA-3 45 percent black, and VA-4 53 percent black. In both districts, black voters would be well positioned to determine their U.S. representative.

This 'packing' strategy reduces the number of districts where minority voters can elect representatives attentive to their needs, and it also serves to help secure Republican control of legislative bodies, such that black elected representatives and senators (who are 99 percent Democratic) serve in the minority. This is especially harmful to minority interests in the South, where a preponderance of black state legislators now serve in the minority and lack legislative influence. Following the 2010 elections, 82.1 percent of black state representatives and senators in the South now serve in the minority. Further, Mississippi has not had elections for their lower chamber, and almost certainly that 82.1 percent will rise above 90 percent after those elections are held.

Former President Clinton has called this attack on voting rights the worst since Jim Crow days. It is without question an open attack on minority voting rights. There is absolutely no public policy reason to be advancing these laws since there is no evidence of any problem with people trying to vote illegally; on the contrary, the problem is getting people to vote. These voter suppression activities are clearly a Tea Party inspired partisan power grab to disenfranchise their opponents' supporters, i.e., minority voters, the poor, and young people, who are disproportionately minority group members.

David Bositis, Ph.D. is a Senior Research Associate with the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies.



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Separate Spaces, Risky Places: A Price the Nation Can't Afford

by Brian D. Smedley, Ph.D.

The spaces and places where people live, work, and play powerfully shape the opportunities that individuals have to achieve good health, and therefore, they are critically important considerations in the effort to improve the nation's health. This is the conclusion of a large and growing body of research, including new research released by the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies last month on the relationship between neighborhood poverty, segregation, and health.

Community conditions can overwhelm even the most persistent and determined efforts of individuals to take steps to improve their health. Neighborhoods characterized by high rates of poverty are

disproportionately burdened by health risks, such as environmental degradation often brought about by a high density of polluting industries. It's harder to eat right in these communities, because there are fewer grocery stores offering fresh fruits and vegetables.

These same communities typically have poorer quality housing and transportation options, and are hit hardest by the home-mortgage lending crisis, which crushed wealth opportunities and disproportionately affected communities of color. Many of these neighborhoods also experience high rates of crime and violence, which affect even those who are not directly victimized, as a result of stress and an inability to exercise or play outside.

At the same time, too many of these neighborhoods lack access to health-enhancing resources, such as safe places to play and exercise. Even healthcare providers, hospitals, and clinics are harder to find in these neighborhoods.

People of color disproportionately live, work, and play in unhealthy communities, and therefore, differences in neighborhood characteristics are a major factor that explain the poorer health of many minority groups relative to national averages.

New research released by the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, working in collaboration with the Poverty and Race Research Action Council, finds that concentrated poverty has risen substantially since 2000. About one in 11 residents of American metropolitan areas, or 22.3 million people, now live in a neighborhood where 30 percent or more of their neighbors live in poverty—the very communities beset with multiple problems of the kind described above.

This report — entitled *A Lost Decade: Neighborhood Poverty and the Urban Crisis of the 2000s*, and available at www.jointcenter.org/research—examines trends in poverty concentration in the nation's 360 largest metropolitan areas, utilizing a unique data set that allows for comparisons of communities since 1970.

The report finds that African Americans, Hispanic Americans, and American Indians are substantially more likely to live in high-poverty neighborhoods than white non-Hispanics. One in four African Americans, one in six Hispanic Americans, and one in eight American Indians in metropolitan America lives in a census tract in which 30 percent or more of the population is in poverty. These rates starkly contrast with the estimated one in 25 non-Hispanic whites who live in one of these tracts.

But the high proportion of people of color in high-poverty communities is not solely the result of well-documented class differences: even middle- and higher-income minorities are disproportionately in neighborhoods with high poverty.

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The Joint Center in Action



Place Matters National Conference

(top) Dr. Brian Smedley (left) and Joint Center President Ralph B. Everett present the Arc of History Award to the Honorable Donna Christensen (D-VI), Chair of the Congressional Black Caucus Health Braintrust.

(middle) Health Policy Institute Vice President and Director Dr. Brian Smedley (far right) with authors of two studies released by the Joint Center.

(bottom) Howard Koh, Assistant Secretary for Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, talks with Joint Center President Ralph B. Everett.



Dr. Nicol Turner-Lee, Vice President and Director of the Media and Technology Institute, (center) made a presentation on media and the digital age at Arizona State University in Phoenix.



Dr. Wilhelmina Leigh, Senior Research Associate at the Joint Center, makes a presentation about Social Security and African Americans at a Capitol Hill briefing.



President Ralph B. Everett and the Joint Center's 2011 fellows and interns.



Gina E. Wood talks with Lindsay Jonker, Executive Director, The Salvation Army's EnviReview, at a meeting of the Climate Change Commission in Washington.



Habremariam Abate, Executive Director for the Sustainable Land Use Forum in Ethiopia, addresses a Climate Change Commission meeting in Washington as Texas State Senator Rodney Ellis, the Commission's Co-chairman, looks on.

BRANDON QUENTER, CRONKITE NEWS SERVICE

The Joint Center In Action

The Health Policy Institute

The Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies Health Policy Institute (HPI) addresses persistent health inequities and provides a unique voice and policy vision for improving the health of communities of color.

HPI's activities and efforts successfully raised national policymakers' awareness of the need to address equity in the context of national health reform legislation, while at the same time aggressively elevating the Joint Center's visibility as a leading research and policy organization.

In September, HPI, with generous support of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, convened a major conference, *Place Matters for Health: Ensuring Equitable Opportunities for Good Health for All*, to highlight the importance of community-based primary prevention strategies for eliminating health inequities and to feature examples of successful strategies being employed in Place Matters (PM). More than 330 key stakeholders, including grassroots leaders, elected officials, researchers, public health practitioners, policymakers and community organizers, attended the conference. The conference served as a forum for the release of two research reports, *A Lost Decade: Neighborhood Poverty and the Urban Crisis of the 2000s*, which was produced in collaboration with the Poverty & Race Research Action Council, and *Segregated Spaces, Risky Places: The Effects of Racial Segregation on Health Inequalities*. The research examines the relationship between neighborhood poverty, segregation and health.

With a grant from the National Institutes of Health, HPI is delving more deeply into the

relationship between the health outcomes and life expectancies of a community's residents, as well as such factors as poverty, educational attainment, environmental hazards and accessibility of nutritious foods and medical care, which together comprise the social determinants of health.

As part of its PLACE MATTERS project, HPI convenes design labs to build the capacity of local leaders to identify and address social determinants of health in their communities. In March 2011, HPI convened its 14th PM Design Lab meeting in Boston, where teams from 24 jurisdictions learned from national experts about the impact of the economic downturn on health and health inequities. They also discussed strategies to combat problems such as high rates of home foreclosure as a means of addressing community conditions that negatively affect the health of residents.

HPI also conducted a Congressional briefing on the importance of place in determining health outcomes. Held on June 13, 2011 in the Rayburn House Office Building, the standing-room only event featured panelists Dr. Brian Smedley, Joint Center Vice President and HPI Director; Bruce Behringer, Executive Director of the Office of Rural and Community Health and Community Partnerships at East Tennessee State University; and Paul Lopez, a member of the City Council in Denver, CO. Among the recommendations of the panelists were the following:

- A focus on prevention, particularly with regard to the conditions in which people live, work, play, and study.
- Greater, more sustained and inter-related community investments that address existing conditions in a comprehensive manner, recognizing the interdependence of successful policies to address deficiencies in schools, housing, safety, the environment, and access to medical care, nutritious foods and exercise.
- More effective utilization of land use and zoning policies to regulate the presence of fast food and liquor stores, relocate bus depots/garages further from homes and schools, expand the availability of open



space, and reduce the concentration of health risks.

- Policies that expand housing mobility options.
- More effective use of funds through the Community Development Block Grant program and other Federal programs to address community conditions that create health risks.
- Implementation of Health Impact Assessments to determine the public health consequences of new housing, transportation, labor and education policies.
- Grassroots organizing and coalition-building to raise public awareness of health risks in communities and to spur public advocacy that addresses these risks in creative and constructive ways.

The Media and Technology Institute

Founded in 2008, the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies Media and Technology Institute ("MTI") focuses on how the media industry and emerging communications technologies can become avenues of advancement for people of color. MTI conducts research on technologies related to new media, the trend of media convergence and its implications across sectors, the impact of existing policy and regulation for the telecommunications and media industries, and the broader implications of media trends, including private equity ownership, participation, access and coverage of African Americans and other people of color.

To achieve this, MTI uses multiple methodologies to generate research, evaluation and policy papers that inform dialogue within this area, align with other

Joint Center interests and influence action on the part of policymakers, practitioners, providers and consumers. The Media and Technology Institute also engages in a series of outreach activities, such as press and legislative briefings, conferences and stakeholder trainings that promote its groundbreaking publications.

MTI has been a leading voice on how to encourage broadband adoption for African Americans, other people of color and vulnerable populations, i.e., low-income, older and less educated Americans. Since the release of its 2010 groundbreaking report, *National Minority Broadband: Comparative Trends in Broadband Adoption and Acceptance*, the Institute has continued to explore unique trends and online behaviors of people of color. Most recently, the Institute issued a policy paper outlining the consequences of a regressive tax regime on wireless services and digital goods on people of color and low-income populations who regularly rely on mobile broadband for Internet access.

In this same area, the Institute also released a paper, in conjunction with the release of the U.S. Department of Commerce's National Broadband Map, that explored the relationship between broadband availability and adoption in three distinct geographic regions- Chicago, Illinois, Los Angeles, California and the state of South Carolina. The findings from this study identified widespread wireline broadband availability, but low rates of broadband subscription in the high-minority, low income census tracts. The paper has been regularly cited by scholars and policymakers addressing broadband deployment and infrastructure concerns. Forthcoming work from the Institute will address online privacy, online job search and retention, and social media engagement among people of color.

While broadband consumption trends are at the core of MTI's research and policy work, the exploration of strategies that encourage minority inclusion as owners and innovators in the digital space is equally important. Through public legal filings, papers and presentations, Institute staff members raise awareness about the inequities that exist

in media ownership and representation on television and radio broadcast stations and the disproportionate production of online content and services (i.e. blogs, web sites and new media networks) by minority innovators. Researchers' assessment of these inequalities was captured in a forthcoming publication examining the difficulties of ensuring a more inclusive web platform in the absence of a civil rights framework.

Dr. Nicol Turner-Lee, Vice President and the first Director of the Institute, was recently recognized as one of 60 inspiring women in media by the Alliance for Women in Media, and appointed to the Federal Communications Commission re-chartered Diversity Committee.

Energy and Environment Program

The Joint Center's *Commission to Engage African Americans on Climate Change* held its annual meeting and other key events in conjunction with the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation's *Annual Legislative Conference*, September 20-21, 2011. In addition, we welcomed environmental activist, investor and rock musician Benjamin Bronfman to the Commission as we look to further engage younger Americans on issues related to global warming and its effects on communities.

Consensus Panel—The purpose of the panel was to update our federal agency partners on our research project, *Climate Change and Environmental Challenges for Vulnerable Communities: Assessing Legacies of the Past, Building Opportunities for the Future*. We were joined by representatives from the U.S. Forest Service, White House Council on Environmental Quality, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Departments of Labor and Transportation. The participants agreed to the site selection for the project, EPA Region Six (Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas, and 66 Tribal Nations) plus Arizona. Next steps will focus on developing the following:

- A regional methodology and analyzing peer-reviewed research, publications and publicly available data to identify and document site-specific social,

economic and health impacts of climate change among racially/ethnically diverse populations, as well as progress, challenges and opportunities for adaptation and mitigation.

- A regional compendium of research, resources and programs.
- An issue brief with regional findings on vulnerability, impacts and adaptation.

Commission Annual Meeting—In addition to regular business, there were two featured agenda items: Lindsay Jonker, Executive Director of The Salvation Army's EnviReview presented an update on "A Community-based Model for Long-term Recovery: Lessons from New Orleans." Following Mr. Jonker, the Joint Center hosted a luncheon roundtable with presidents of Historically Black Colleges and Universities participating in the *LEED® Buildings @ HBCUs* (additional information on this program is available at <http://www.campusgreenbuilder.org/node/691>) through the United Negro College Fund. **Julianne Malveaux, Ph.D.**, Bennett College for Women, and **Carlton E. Brown, Ed.D.**, Clark Atlanta University, were the featured speakers.

Global Climate Justice Roundtable—As we prepare for the upcoming United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 17/CMP 7) and the Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, we commissioned the development of a discussion paper, *Climate Disruption in the Global South: Key Issues, Frameworks, and Possibilities for Climate Justice*, authored by Dr. David N. Pellow, Professor, and Don A. Martindale, Endowed Chair of Sociology at the University of Minnesota. Dr. Pellow presented the discussion paper via Skype at the roundtable for input and a final executive summary will be published. The executive summary will be a resource for the delegates attending COP 17, which will take place November 28 through December 9, 2011 in Durban, South Africa. The Joint Center was admitted as a non-government organization to the Conference of the Parties (COP) in 2009, and six representatives will attend sessions of the Convention bodies as observers this year.

EPA Regulatory Engagement—The Joint Center launched a webinar series in July focused on EPA’s regulatory agenda with the inaugural topic of providing an overview and how to participate, followed by a discussion of the agency’s Utility Air Toxics Rule. In September, we hosted the second webinar with the discussion topic of “Performance Standards for New and Existing Power Plants” in partnership with Georgetown Climate Center. The next webinar is scheduled in December with the release of a white paper highlighting the Joint Center’s poll of African Americans in three cities (Atlanta, Cleveland and Philadelphia) on their views of EPA regulations to address climate change and improve air quality.

Asset-Building Policy Initiative

Income and wealth disparities are pervasive across American society, as people of color face greater barriers to the types of asset accumulation that can enable them to bridge these divides. The Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies is committed to narrowing and ultimately closing the “wealth gap” in ways that help more working families in communities of color join and remain in the ranks of the middle and upper-middle class.

The Joint Center is one of several resource grantees funded by the Ford Foundation as part of a national initiative, *Building Economic Security Over a Lifetime*, that supports state-level asset-building coalitions in California, Illinois, Oklahoma and Texas, as well as in the Southeast region (Alabama, Florida, Louisiana and Mississippi). Specifically, the effort consists of policy education activities in which the Joint Center engages with the coalitions to increase their capacity in working with federal, state and local policymakers on core issues related to asset-building.

As part of this initiative, the Joint Center participated in the **Southern Regional Asset-Building Coalition’s (SRABC)** conference on *Building Family and Community Economic Success* on October 20-21, 2011 in Point Clear, AL. During the conference, the Joint Center provided a general session presentation on effectively

working with legislators to educate and inform on policy priorities related to asset-building. One of the priority issues identified by the SRABC is the reauthorization of the Farm Bill, and the Joint Center is planning a March 2012 convening in Washington, DC with relevant experts to update the SRABC with appropriate House and Senate Committee staff and Administration officials focused on sections of the Farm Bill that support asset-building.

Also, the Joint Center is supporting the **Florida Asset-Building Coalition (FABC)** in planning a statewide convening in the areas of microenterprise development, small business and economic development, and children’s savings accounts. The FABC convening is tentatively scheduled for February, 2012. We are also working with the **Oklahoma Asset-Building Coalition** in planning a webinar to determine their policy priorities and strategy for educating and informing state lawmakers.

A major component of the national initiative is the development of a policy communications infrastructure that integrates all aspect of the work, and to lead this endeavor the Joint Center is supporting PolicyLink, a national research and action institute focused on advancing economic and social equity. Specifically, the Joint Center has created the framework for an Asset-Building Policy Hub—an online interactive project management and resource tool. On November 8-11, 2011, we joined PolicyLink for an in-depth roundtable discussion with other resource grantees and coalitions to discuss the various components of the policy communication infrastructure and forthcoming activities to include usability tests to gather additional feedback from policymakers.

Also, recognizing that asset-building during one’s lifetime becomes critical at retirement to help meet living expenses, the Joint Center has analyzed issues related to retirement security, and with support from AARP produced *African Americans and Social Security: A Primer*. In addition, the Joint Center was represented by Wilhelmina Leigh, Ph.D., on the Commission to Modernize Social Security, whose report

Plan for a New Future: The Impact of Social Security Reform on People of Color features options that can eliminate the 75-year shortfall in the system by increasing revenue to the system, rather than decreasing benefits.

The Black Elected Officials Roster

Since its founding more than four decades ago, the Joint Center has regularly gathered and archived detailed information about Black Elected Officials (BEOs) at every level of government in every state, as well as the District of Columbia and the U.S. Virgin Islands. During this time, their numbers have increased from fewer than 1,500 to more than 11,000.

Media, academic researchers, nonprofit groups, government leaders, companies and trade associations have regularly accessed the BEO print roster books—now available in exclusively in electronic format—that include current and archived records of federal, state, sub-state regional, county, municipal, judicial, law enforcement, and educational representatives. For each official, information on his or her position, political party (when the party data is available), term expiration dates, current electoral status (newly elected, out of office, etc.), and roster years in office have been recorded. Compiled and updated by the Joint Center’s roster team, these data have been fully accessible to interested groups and researchers who monitor the number and offices of black elected officials, voting districts and levels of political representation by city, county, state and Congressional districts.

In 2011, the Joint Center received a generous in-kind donation from the Salesforce Foundation, which was established by a leading global supplier of content management applications. Leveraging this donation, the Joint Center will soon release the new online version of the “2011 Black Elected Official Roster,” containing more than 7,500 current elected legislators at the federal, state, county, municipal, and school-board levels. The new online roster will not only post current statistics for these BEOs, it also will allow subscribers to create unique

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The National Policy Alliance in Action

As the Presidential election year approaches, the National Policy Alliance (NPA), an alliance of the organizations representing black elected and appointed officials at every level of government, has been ramping up its activities. The NPA, which is convened by the Joint Center, met on September 20 and 21, 2011, in Washington, DC, to discuss the 2012 Presidential election, domestic issues of common concern, and ways in which black officials in the United States could be of assistance to the government of the newly-independent Republic of South Sudan

The meeting on September 21 focused on the 2012 Presidential election and domestic issues of common concern. Among the guests at the meeting were Michael Strautmanis, Chief of Staff to Presidential Advisor Valerie Jarrett, and Heather Foster of the White House Office of Engagement. Much of the morning discussion focused on health, education, and job-creation concerns. The keynote speaker during the working lunch was Robert Bailey from the Centers for Disease Control, who provided an update on the progress of the Act Against AIDS Leadership Initiative.

Among the resolutions adopted at the meeting were two that were offered by Joint

Center President and CEO Ralph B. Everett. One of the resolutions was in support of the program of the Congressional Black Caucus to create jobs in the United States. The second resolution was in support of the position taken by Blacks In Government to “end the racially-biased War on Drugs.”

The NPA plans to convene early in 2012 to discuss a policy agenda that will be presented to the newly elected President.

The meeting on the previous day focused on international issues. Speakers included Dr. Luka Biong Deng, an international expert in African affairs and the Executive Director of KUSH, Inc. a non-profit organization founded in 2003 to build bridges of solidarity between Americans and the people of Africa in support of economic, cultural, and social development. Dr. Deng received an enthusiastic response to his expressed interest in working with the NPA leadership to develop a meaningful partnership for assisting in developing the resources of the Republic of South Sudan. Other speakers included David Deng, who spoke on the need for sound policy development and improved community engagement in the new South Sudan, Ms. Cari Stinebower, who spoke about U.S. financial reinvestments into South Sudan, and Rep. Donald M. Payne (D-NJ), Chair of the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, who delivered a keynote

address at lunch on critical issues confronting Sudan, policy measures that are important to the stability of the Sudan region, and the importance to the United States of stability in the Sudan region.

NPA organizations represented at the meeting included:

- The Congressional Black Caucus Foundation—*Congressman Donald Payne*
- National Black Caucus of State Legislators—*State Senator Joe Armstrong*
- National Association of Black County Officials—*Councilmember Arlanda Williams*
- National Organization of Black County Officials—*Assessor Webster Guillory*
- National Conference of Black Mayors—*former Mayor Johnny Ford for Mayor Bowser*
- National Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials—*City Councilman Michael Johnson*
- National Caucus of Black School Board Members—*President Paul Chatman*
- Judicial Council of the National Bar Association—*Judge Yvette Alexander*
- World Conference of Mayors—*Mayor James Walls*
- Blacks In Government—*Past President Darlene Young*
- Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies—*President and CEO Ralph B. Everett*

Joint Center Board of Governors Elects New Chair, Adds Two New Members

Cynthia G. Marshall, President of AT&T North Carolina, is the new chair of the Joint Center’s Board of Governors. She succeeds Roderick D. Gillum, a Partner at Jackson Lewis LLP, who stepped down in May after two years as chair and eight years of service on the Board. Ms. Marshall is directly responsible for AT&T North Carolina’s regulatory, legislative and community affairs activities. She oversees all of AT&T’s operations and its 8,400 employees in the state.

The Board has also added two new members to its ranks, electing Barbara L. Johnson, a

partner at the international law firm of Paul, Hastings, Janofsky and Walker LLP, and Robert R. Hagans, Jr., Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer at AARP, to three-year terms. Ms. Johnson is a nationally known jury trial and class action lawyer who represents companies in a wide range of employment-related litigation, including matters involving employment discrimination, wage and hour claims and wrongful discharge. She also provides employment law advice and represents clients in administrative matters before state and federal agencies.

Mr. Hagans has more than 30 years of experience in financial management, largely in government and non-profit agencies. He directs a range of AARP’s financial, admin-

istrative and support services and provides strategic guidance and expertise in all areas of the association’s fiscal management, strategy implementation and policy formulation.

In addition to the chair position, the Board has elected other officers. They are Dwight L. Bush, Managing Director, D.L. Bush & Associates, Vice Chair; Marva Smalls, Executive Vice President of Global Inclusion Strategy, MTV Networks & Executive Vice President of Public Affairs, and Chief of Staff, Nickelodeon/MTVN Kids & Family Group, Vice Chair; Earl W. Stafford, Chief Executive Officer, the Wentworth Group, LLC, Secretary; and David C. Chavern, Esq., Chief Operating Officer and Executive Vice President, United States Chamber of Commerce, Treasurer.

America Healing 'Anchored' with Leading Social Change Organizations

by *Kathy Reincke and
Alice Warner-Mehlhorn*

TWENTY-NINE MILLION. According to the National Center for Children in Poverty's 1998-2008 "Low-income Children in the United States National and State Trend Data," this is the number of low-income children in America, and their educational achievement, economic security, and health are under ever-increasing pressure. These vulnerable children are less likely to attend high-quality schools, live in healthy neighborhoods, have access to health care, and live in secure families. They often reside in areas of concentrated poverty and are disproportionately children of color.

It was against this backdrop that in 2007 the W.K. Kellogg Foundation adopted a new strategic framework that recognizes that the active pursuit of racial equity is

essential in fulfilling its mission of improving the lives of vulnerable children and their families. This framework led to the creation of America Healing, a five-year, \$75 million initiative supporting programs that promote both the healing of historical racial wounds and the end of structural racism. Our two-pronged approach has included providing support for 119 community-based healing efforts, along with an even greater number of grants to address structural racism across the country.



**AMERICA
HEALING**

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation has long held racial equity as a core value, which has brought us to a more explicit programmatic focus on bringing healing to racially-divided communities while bridging racial gaps in the areas of education, health, juvenile justice, and economic success. The necessity to address these areas has driven us to identify partners who would anchor this work across the national landscape, and within diverse communities and perspectives. In looking for these partners, we sought groups that had national networks of engaged citizens and leaders at the federal, tribal, state and local levels and that could leverage these networks in pursuit of social change.

Our search for partners led us to several leading traditional civil rights organizations that would become known as our "Anchors." These include groups like the Joint Center for Political & Economic Studies, the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF) with the National Coalition of Asian Pacific Americans (NCAPA), and the Poverty and Race Research Action Council (PRRAC), all of which provide insightful research on specific public policy questions as they pertain to people of color. In addition, the National Council of La Raza (NCLR), the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the National Urban League (NUL) all have active civic networks in hundreds of local communities and tribal nations. We have also identified other groups, such as the Advancement Project and the Applied Research Center (ARC), that combine strategic communications and media strategies with grassroots activism.

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation wanted to make sure that America Healing reflected and honored the leadership, innovation and courage of these anchor institutions and the perspectives they represent. More importantly, we have explored opportunities to connect the work of our grantees with the capacities of these anchor institutions, and for anchors to learn about communities. For example, conversations started at a convening of our grantees and anchors in May 2011,

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storm of economic and political crisis—and so it's time to think about where we're going in the future and it will be good for the Joint Center to be involved in helping to set the direction. I would hope that this group is really future-oriented, and not just replaying or redoing the issues of the past.

Q: Speaking of the future, the country has some critical elections coming up in the next year. How should the Institute view this opportunity?

Dr. Pinderhughes: Obviously we don't know what the full development of the presidential campaign is going to look like, but let's say President Barack Obama is re-elected. The whole debate about a black agenda and agenda-setting that's becoming increasingly conflictual in the African American community or with certain types of African American leaders, I think that's an important opportunity for the Joint Center to help participate in agenda-setting for a second term.

I feel very strongly that no president of the United States is going to respond to a specific black agenda. The agenda's got to be a national agenda that has specific concerns for African Americans, and it will also have concerns for some parts of the Latino community, Asians and Native American community, as well as some parts of the white community. The Institute will have a tremendous impact at the national level both at the presidential level, mid-term elections, helping officials at a variety of levels nationally participate in redistricting issues; health care legislation (and more).

If President Obama is not re-elected, the Joint Center through the Civic Engagement and Governance Institute still has a vital role in shaping the agenda, and commenting on policy proposals in a new administration.

Dean Schmoke: I want to add that I also have a particular interest in the involvement of our community in policy setting at the state and local level, because a lot of what's going on, particularly with the Republicans, is to try to push more and more of these decisions down to the state level.

Federalism is alive and well, with at least with one of our political parties, and so there needs to really be a lot of thought about policy development at that level, and not just at the national level. The national level is clearly essential and important, but it's also important to get people involved on a sustained basis at the state and local level.

Q: You have both shared insights and thoughts on some significant issues the Institute should address. How do you see the Institute making progress on these issues?

Dean Schmoke: I'm pleased that we're going to have an intergenerational group on the National Advisory Committee (because) I'm very interested in how young people use new technologies to convey messages to our community about political and economic issues. We should explore creative ways of conveying policy ideas to the community, hopefully stimulating action, not only by the elected officials but by citizens in general.

Dr. Pinderhughes: Dean Schmoke's comment made me think about Occupy Wall Street. The Joint Center will want to be open to hearing from communities and make sure we have an open, clear channel of communication as well, so that we can perhaps do a better job of listening to what African American communities at the local level say about these issues.

I think—in terms of strategies or tactics, for example, another thing might be, in terms of wealth, there are really a lot of people who have done research. The Federal Reserve tracks wealth of the national population, although their data tends not to include as much detail about groups by race and ethnicity. It might be that we could request some federal agencies—the U.S. Census Bureau, the Federal Reserve—to actually get more detailed about their surveys on this topic.

But in general, referring back to the existing research, it might be appropriate for the Joint Center to convene a meeting of people who have conducted that kind of research, and see what they have to say to each other and then also to start talking about how you

address changing the economic status of communities.

At the close of the interview, the Co-Chairs were invited to share additional thoughts:

Dean Schmoke: On a personal note I was honored by the invitation to participate in this effort. But I was really re-energized after the unveiling of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial. It just reminded me of the need to constantly build on the legacy of the great Civil Rights leaders in the past; because you know, the work's not done and that this effort can just contribute to building on the work that was started so many years ago.

Dr. Pinderhughes: I was there in Washington recently, and my sister and I took my parents down to see (the MLK Memorial). I was struck by the number of people that were there. This was well after the unveiling. But there were just really large numbers. There were a lot of black people, but there were lots of white people, lots of Asians. And it gave me a really strong feeling that I hadn't had very often in Washington.

One man was there from Texas. He said, "You know, I never really was excited about coming down here to see these things before, but now, yes. I'm here." And I wasn't surprised to hear that, but it was—at the same time, it was really chilling to hear people voice my analysis, which is (that) African Americans haven't seen the U.S. government as something that they could associate with. But they are now beginning to see it in that way.

JOINT CENTER IN ACTION continued

profiles and alerts, and receive real time updates to available data.

No other organization has this type of comprehensive, statistically valid dataset covering all offices and states where Black Elected Officials are represented. As the number of these elected officials continues to grow, the Joint Center will continue to be the leader in the collection, aggregation and publication of information on those leaders that represent the black electorate.

SEPARATE SPACES *continued*

They're more likely to live in high-poverty neighborhoods because of a host of historic and contemporary factors that facilitate segregation, such as the ripple effects of Jim Crow segregation, "redlining"—the now-banned but persistent practice of disinvestment and economic discrimination against communities of color—and contemporary discrimination such as steering of minority potential home-buyers or renters away from majority white communities.

Federal laws that prohibit housing discrimination effectively helped to promote integration in many American cities, and the nation saw a slight decline in residential segregation by race between 2000 and 2010. But segregation continues to be a predictor of significant health disparities, as measured by divergent rates of infant mortality, in comparisons between African Americans and white Americans, as well as between Hispanic Americans and white Americans. Research released by the Joint Center, prepared by researchers Thomas LaVeist, Darrell Gaskin, and Antonio Trujillo at the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health, powerfully illustrates this point: their simulation of how varying levels of segregation affect racial gaps in rates of infant mortality showed that complete black-white residential integration would have averted more than 2,800 black infant deaths in 2008. With full integration, Hispanic Americans would have a lower rate of infant mortality rate than whites.

This report, entitled *Segregated Spaces, Risky Places*, is also available for download at www.jointcenter.org/research.

Segregated communities in the U.S. tend to be environments that produce poor health outcomes. The research literature documents that places which are racially segregated with high concentrations of blacks or Hispanics tend to be places with limited opportunities and failing infrastructure, resulting from a lack of investment in social and economic development. The result is a community that produces bad health outcomes.

These health inequities are not sustainable—they are both the byproduct of and contribute to economic disadvantage—and, given the

demographic growth of communities of color, can significantly slow the U.S. economic recovery.

Federal, state, and local governments find themselves faced with difficult budget decisions in the coming years. But investments in vulnerable communities, as well as efforts to help people move out of distressed communities, may be among the most effective strategies to close the health gap and improve the health of the nation. Some of the most promising policy strategies include:

Housing Mobility Strategies — Evidence suggests that housing mobility strategies have significant effects on public health. Rent assistance to qualified individuals is a common form of governmental aid designed to improve housing mobility, but significant gains in housing mobility have also come as the direct result of advocates who challenge the legality of residential segregation in state and federal court, and force governments to actively desegregate neighborhoods and schools. Additionally, antidiscrimination and equal opportunity laws must be rigorously enforced to continue the fight against discrimination in lending and redlining.

Improving Community Resources for Health and Reducing Environmental Risks — Several strategies can improve the health of communities, such as: improving coordination of relevant federal and state agencies that should address social determinants of health (e.g., education, housing, employment), creating incentives for better food resources in underserved communities (e.g., major grocery chains, "farmer's markets"), developing community-level interventions for the promotion of healthy behavior (e.g., smoking cessation, exercise), and addressing environmental health threats (e.g., aggressive monitoring, enforcement of environmental degradation laws).

Reclaiming Integration as a Moral Obligation and Call to Civic Engagement—Researchers and advocates must acknowledge and emphasize the moral dimension of the fight against segregation, in addition to its legal and market-driven dimensions. Further, in promoting integration, activists and advocates should emphasize that integration

does not end with geographic relocation. In order to build truly inclusive, democratic communities, residents must be able to engage in civic processes with their neighbors and public servants.

Dialogue and Coalition Building Between Local Governments — Mayors and other elected officials should conceptualize the challenge of integration as a collective and collaborative endeavor. Integrating disadvantaged residents into more stable and privileged communities necessitates an adjustment period for the institutions (schools, health clinics) and citizenry of a given locale. Often, small municipal governments are ill equipped to handle these adjustments on their own. Civil services may be stretched beyond previous capacity, and managing racial tensions in a newly integrated community can be difficult and intimidating. Whether residents are relocated from a city to a suburb or from one suburb to another, all communities must make adjustments to sustain themselves during times of transition. If tax reform for the sake of public education and health is in the best interest of both an integrated suburb and a segregated city, the legislative bodies of each should band together and exert pressure on the state to make necessary changes. Similarly, if a recently integrated suburb needs help managing its changing race relations, its government should look to other suburbs that faced and conquered similar problems through diversity and inclusion programming.

Racial and ethnic health disparities are real and persistent. They are not a problem of the past, although their origins are deeply rooted in America's history of racial inequality and discrimination. While the nation has made great strides toward the elimination of racial inequality, this work is unfinished. Until it is completed, many people of color will suffer from poorer health and shortened life spans relative to white Americans. Importantly, we have the power to change these trends—they are not immutable. Doing so will not only improve the health of minority Americans, it will make the nation as a whole fairer and more equitable for all.

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BOLD POLICIES continued

work digging ditches or helping build roads. Anything is preferable to sitting on my butt. This would give those of us on unemployment back our pride and actually accomplish something with the money being spent. There is a work force of a million people just sitting idle waiting for something to do. That is a massive amount of lost labor that could be fixing America's infrastructure. Instead of unemployment hire me to do that."



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The second program we propose is a substantial child development account (or "baby bond" program as coined by the recently deceased Manning Marable). It is designed to provide an opportunity for asset development for all newborns regardless of the financial position of the family into which they are born. The advantages of wealth in our society are clear. Wealthier families are far better positioned to finance elite independent school and college education, access capital to start a business, finance expensive medical procedures, reside in higher amenity neighborhoods, exert political influence through campaign financing, purchase better counsel if confronted with the legal system, leave a bequest, and/or withstand financial hardship resulting from any number of emergencies. Yet, even among only white families, less than 10 percent of families hold more than 50 percent of white wealth. Since about 85 percent of black families have a net worth below the median household, it is clear that vast majority of the nation's wealth, along with the associated opportunities stemming from this wealth are skewed heavily toward a relative few who are predominantly white.

Given this strikingly uneven distribution of wealth and the importance of wealth in

providing economic security and enhanced life-chances, a baby bonds program would represent a needed shift in public policy that could provide asset-building opportunities for all Americans. Indeed, with wealth so unevenly distributed along racial lines, the baby bonds proposal could go a long way toward eliminating the racial wealth gap.

The baby bonds would set up trusts for 50-75 percent of all newborns with an average account of \$20,000 that progressively rises to \$60,000 for newborns born into the most wealth-poor families. The accounts would grow at a federally guaranteed annual interest rate of 1.5-2 percent. The accounts could be accessed when the child becomes an adult and be used for some asset-enhancing endeavor, such as purchasing a home or starting a new business.

Program concerns around measuring financial assets can be alleviated by modern electronic recording of financial data, which facilitates our ability to identify financial assets. Financial monitoring advances made by IRS and law enforcement agencies serve as examples of the public sector's ability to measure financial assets, and many localities are already engaged in home value assessments. To avoid savings crowd-out, the transfer program could be structured in a manner similar to the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) program, which uses a phase out schedule to avoid work disincentives. Finally, there may be concerns that the program will influence the timing in which parents, grandparents or other relatives (or friends) might make transfers to their offspring, so that the children of these offspring can increase the federal bond support in which they qualify. To address this moral hazard concern, the federal government could reserve the right to tax future transfers to baby bond recipients.

If three-quarters of the roughly 4 million babies born per year were eligible for the program, a crude estimate of the cost of the program would be about \$60 billion a year. This cost could be fully funded based on a fraction of what the federal government already spends on asset-enhancing activities. A 2004 report by the Corporation for Enterprise Development (CFED 2004) estimates that the federal government allocated \$335 billion

of its 2003 budget in the form of tax subsidies and savings to promote asset development policies. The bulk of this allocation comes from items like mortgage interest deductions, exclusion of investment income on life insurance and annuity contracts, reduced rates of tax on dividends and long-term capital gains, and exclusion of capital gains at death. The total allocation, which is about 15 times higher than what is spent by the Department of Education, does not include subsidies or tax breaks given to corporations nor funds from state and local level policies. An updated version of this report estimates the asset-building allocation at close to \$400 billion, with more than half of the benefits going to the top 5 percent of earners.

At issue is not the amount that was allocated, but to whom the allocation is distributed.

The top 1 percent of earners, those typically earning over \$1 million dollars a year, received about one-third of the entire allocation, while the bottom 60 percent of earners received only five percent. If the federal asset promotion budget were allocated in a more progressive manner, federal policies could be transformative for low income Americans (see Sherraden 1991, for a discussion on *Assets and the Poor*). The baby bonds proposal provides a far more progressive, opportunity-enhancing, and less expensive program than many of the asset tax policies already in existence.

Ultimately, public provision of a substantial trust fund for newborns from families that are wealth-poor and the passage of a federal job guarantee would go a long way toward achieving what the American ideal should be—a race-fair America that provides economic security and asset building opportunities for all its citizens.

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AMERICA HEALING continued

which identified the tenth anniversary of September 11 has a chance to focus national attention on healing and structural racism. Leveraging each organization's social media networks, we launched, as part of America Healing, a campaign that asked everyday Americans to write letters to their daughters and sons in which they reflected on the need to heal divisions caused by increased religious and ethnic intolerance. The positive engagement from more than 10,000 Americans via Facebook proved that collaborative actions can spark an expansive conversation centered on racial equity.

We believe that a national conversation on equitable outcomes for all races is particularly crucial at this time, when 29 million vulnerable children and their families face a stagnant economic environment of rising unemployment and dramatic cuts to education, health care and community support programs nationwide. When this reality is coupled with mounting evidence of increased racial bias, discrimination and the slow realization that the recent recession has effectively erased many of the socioeconomic gains made by families of color since the 1960s, the need for collaborative action across communities is made all the more clear.

"Some think it is impossible to transcend differences and work collaboratively for a common purpose," notes Dr. Gail Christopher, vice president for program strategy at the Kellogg Foundation, who leads America Healing. "When it comes to assuring a viable future for our nations' children, these diverse anchor institutions are proving that the 'impossible' just takes leadership and more focus."

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation, its America Healing grantees and anchor institutions invite you to focus your leadership on this collaborative work by visiting us at www.AmericaHealing.org or at www.Facebook.com/americahealing.

Kathy Reincke and Alice Warner-Mehlhorn are members of the Racial Equity Team at the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

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