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FOCUS

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Trendletter

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Economic Report: Converting Welfare Reform Into Self-Sufficiency

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Devolution, Voting, and Accountability

On November 3, Americans will go to the polls to elect 36 governors, 34 U.S. Senators, and all 435 members of the U.S. House of Representatives, as well as numerous other state and local officials. With so much at stake, it is tragic that only a little more than a third of eligible voters are expected to go to the polls. This is an especially dangerous situation for African Americans who have a big stake in who gets elected and what policies they are likely to pursue. This is certainly true at the congressional level and at the state level as well.

Most of the governors and state lawmakers elected this year will participate in redrawing legislative district lines after the 2000 census. Moreover, as federal funds and authority for administering federal programs are shifted to the state level, due to the "devolution revolution," state officials are gaining more control over programs that are vital to poor Americans. A case in point is welfare reform. Two years ago, Congress passed legislation that dramatically overhauled the nation's welfare system, "devolving" most of the responsibility for providing relief to the poor to states and localities. While welfare has been the most visible aspect of devolution, similar shifts in program operation have taken place in health care. Other such shifts are planned for employment and training programs.

The Joint Center's 1997 national opinion poll revealed that one-quarter of the American public did not know what devolution meant, and a significant proportion of the African American population (23%) had serious reservations about it. Regardless of our perceptions of devolution's impact on African Americans, the only way to make it work effectively and fairly is for all of us to become involved in the shaping and reshaping of devolved social programs operating in communities across the nation.

Accordingly, the Joint Center has combined with several other organizations in an initiative supported by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to provide the information citizens and state and local policymakers need to make good decisions about the social programs affecting the nation's most vulnerable citizens. To that end, *FOCUS* readers can provide valuable input to us. In the last section of this issue of *FOCUS*, you will find a survey that is designed to give us a better picture of our readers and the types of information that would give them the ammunition to develop and implement successful welfare, education, and other programs. We urge you to complete the survey and return it to the Joint Center before November 14. By participating, you are making an important contribution to the quality of information we are able to share with our readers, to public officials, and others who influence the public policy process.

We also urge you to vote, which is the first and most fundamental step to gaining influence over how devolved programs are implemented and managed. Only through a strong turnout at the polls—for local and state elections as well as those for con-gressional races—will we be able to elect public officials who will be responsive to our concerns.

Again, we thank you for your participation in our survey. It will help us fulfill our mission of promoting informed and effective involvement of African Americans in the governmental process. ■



PRESIDENT

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Black Success at Beating the Odds

The Elements Contributing to the Success of Black University Students in Math and the Sciences Are Presented in a Newly Published Book

by Wiley A. Hall, III

Few groups have been pinned to the laboratory table, peered at, poked, and prodded as often as African Americans. Too often, all of this poking and prying is done to validate theories of African American "dysfunction." Just as often, those engaged in these examinations infuse so many false assumptions into the process that their conclusions accomplish nothing more than to reinforce some of society's worst stereotypes and misconceptions.

But a growing number of researchers are taking a different tack. They look at African Americans as a group—burdened by a legacy of slavery, segregation, and discrimination and for centuries locked out of the mainstream by both law and social policy—and see an astonishing number of success stories. The question these researchers ask is "How?" What unique survival mechanisms have allowed African Americans, both as individuals and as a group, to thrive in such a hostile environment? What reservoirs of strength, resolve, and faith are required? And most important, are there lessons to be learned from their experiences?

Many of the answers to these questions are in a new book, *Beating the Odds: Raising Academically Successful African American Males,* published by Oxford University Press, which could rightly be called a recipe for black achievement. The book's authors are Freeman A. Hrabowski III, the black president of the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC) and a consultant to the National Science Foundation, the National Academy of Sciences, and the National Institutes of Health; Kenneth I. Maton, professor of psychology at UMBC; and Geoffrey L. Greif, associate dean and professor in the School of Social Work at the University of Maryland. Together, the trio examined a group of young men who are virtually invisible in our popular culture—they are not hoodlums or athletes but young African American men with long records of academic success in mathematics and the sciences.

"This book is unusual because rarely do we hear about large groups of high-achieving young African American males," write the authors. "In fact, when we ask audiences, black and white, adults and children, what black boy on television is known for his brains and intelligence, the response is usually Urkel, on the television show 'Family Matters.' This character, unfortunately, is the perfect example of a nerd, someone to be ridiculed and not to be taken seriously."

The authors stress that the people they write about are not freaks of nature, but well-rounded young men who also participate in sports, perform in the arts, and engage in the full range of intercollegiate activities. The authors looked at these young men, examined their values, investigated their family upbringing, and asked "Why?" Observing the success stories profiled in *Beating the Odds*, the rest of us may be prompted to look at other African American young men who are not performing at so high a level and ask, "Why not?"

Meyerhoff Scholars—10 Years of Success

The authors interviewed 60 young African American men who participated in the Meyerhoff Scholars Program at UMBC in 1995 and 1996 and their families. Established in 1988 with a major grant from the Robert and Jane Meyerhoff Foundation, the program's original goal was to address the troubling shortage of African American men with doctoral degrees in mathematics, the sciences, and engineering. The program grew out of a personal relationship between two men, Robert A. Meyerhoff, a Baltimore philanthropist, and Freeman Hrabowski, who was then vice president of UMBC, located just south of Baltimore. The two were disturbed that, although the percentage of black men with high school diplomas was nearly equal to that of white men, a significant gap remained between the percentages of black and white men seeking college degrees. And the gap between the two groups was even greater among those seeking advanced degrees in the sciences.

Many black students at the nation's top academic institutions either dropped out, transferred to less challenging institutions, or switched to nontechnical majors. Dr. Hrabowski found that this occurred for several reasons. First, even the best and brightest African American students typically arrived at college with less preparation than their white counterparts. Second, African American students tended to feel socially isolated on predominantly white campuses and often were reluctant to establish mentoring-type relationships with their professors. Finally, the families of African American students had fewer financial resources to finance their education.

The Meyerhoff Scholars Program, as originally conceived, aspired to address each of those issues. In essence, Meyerhoff and Hrabowski sought to establish at a predominantly white institution the nurturing environment and support typically found on historically black campuses, where the majority of the nation's black scientists and engineers have been trained. Meyerhoff Scholars were paired with mentors who not only served as role models but who demanded and consistently received high-quality work. In addition, the scholars were exposed to a broad array of cultural programs.

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Mr. Hall is a syndicated columnist. Dr. Hrabowski is a member of the Board of Governors of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies.

Black Success

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In 1990, the program was expanded to include high-achieving African American women from across the country. In the mid-1990s, in the wake of successful legal challenges to race-based scholarships, the Meyerhoff Scholars Program was opened to high achievers of all races, as long as they "demonstrated a commitment to working with minority communities." The program already has more than 100 graduates (all African Americans), most of whom are pursuing graduate or professional degrees.

The challenge addressed in *Beating the Odds* is to discover how individuals and their families can take charge of their futures. "This book looks at what families do together to produce successful African American male students, from reading and talking to their children and exposing them to educational toys to the various ways in which parents instill in their sons a sense of the importance of academic achievement and ambition.... The challenge facing black parents is to help their sons believe truly that in spite of racism and societal barriers their success will depend largely on their own efforts."

Education, Self-Help, and Service

The Meyerhoff scholars interviewed in *Beating the Odds* represent families from all walks of life. About 40 percent were raised in a single-parent household; the parents of a little over half were college-educated; most live in Maryland. The authors found that attitudes about such things as discipline varied depending on the family structure (single-parent or two parent); the level of the parents' education; and the rural, suburban, or urban location of the family. For example, they found that single mothers had been more apt to attend school programs when their sons were young than had married mothers, while married mothers maintained stricter rules about video game playing than did single mothers. They found through their interviews that mothers tended to "do things for their sons, while fathers either did things with their sons or offered advice from the sidelines."

At the same time, the Meyerhoff families exhibited several common characteristics: (1) a strong commitment to education that began when their sons were young; (2) a strong emphasis on self-help; (3) strong spiritual beliefs; (4) a strong network of support from extended families; and (5) a tradition of service to others. These common traits, say the authors, helped those families produce academically successful sons. "We also see a strong drive to overcome great hardships, including poverty, limited access to employment and education, and racism."

Among the Meyerhoff families, mothers generally assumed the central responsibility for their sons' education, particularly when their sons were young. Mothers served as educational advocates by working with schools (some would say fighting) to ensure appropriate placement, meeting with teachers, and working closely with their sons on homework. Most of the mothers, regardless of their own level of education, spoke of the importance of reading to their children beginning at an early age. Said one mother, "I ran into at least six incidents in first grade through high school where they tried to hold [my son] back. After one test they said I should lower my expectations of him, and I said, 'Oh no, I'm not.'"

Although about half of the fathers in the study were not involved with their sons, all of the Meyerhoff scholars could point to a strong male figure in their lives. Those fathers who were involved served as the family disciplinarian, establishing firm standards of behavior and clearly defined limits. Fathers also focused on preparing their sons for their unique role as black men in a hostile society. They stressed self-pride and cultural identity.

A major message to their sons was the recognition that they often would be called upon to work "twice as hard, for half the reward," as their white counterparts. Said one father, "One particularly hard time I had with him was in his junior year, when we were going over his report card like we always did, and he blew up. He said, 'Look Dad, get off of it! Leave me alone. I just want to be like everyone else.' I stood back and thought a minute and told him, 'But you're not average. You were never average and never will be. Even if you try to be average you won't be.'"

The young men themselves attribute much of their academic success to their parents. Most had internalized their parents' values and stressed the importance of learning to resist peer pressure. "If you are black and intelligent, you have to be better than the stereotype of a regular black person," said one Meyerhoff scholar.

The Meyerhoff Scholarship Program has been criticized in the past for focusing exclusively on the best and brightest African American students when those who underachieve appear to need the greatest support. Other critics have noted that the kind of institutional support and commitment offered by UMBC is rare.

The authors assert, however, that even the best and brightest African American students were falling short of their full potential in predominantly white institutions. And those tactics that prove successful for one group can be replicated with others. *Beating the Odds* also offers lessons to institutions and to society in general. Human services providers, for example, struggling to provide help to broken and disadvantaged African American families may find it useful to see how other families have coped successfully. It also is important for society to note how much energy even affluent black families must expend preparing their sons for the reality of racial discrimination. *Beating the Odds* is essentially a how-to primer in which parents who have successfully raised motivated, success-oriented children describe their experiences in their own voices. The book reads like a peer group session, which can be invigorating as well as enlightening to parents struggling with the daunting task of raising boys to be successful men. ■

The Invisible College

A Professor Connects Young Law Students With Civil Rights, Urban Affairs, and Public Policy Professionals for Mentoring and Frontline Experience

by Harold A. McDougall, III

Let me introduce you to the students of an Invisible College. One is Judy McLaughlin. This spring, Judy and more than a dozen other third-year law students went to work for top civil rights, urban affairs, and research organizations in our nation's capital. Their fellowships were part of an experimental course at Catholic University Law School entitled "Civil Rights Legislative Practice." The students made concrete contributions to the work of the organizations in which they were placed and, in return, received valuable training, experience, and contacts.

Judy's assignment was to work with *FOCUS* magazine editor David Ruffin at the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies. After three months of supervised research, Judy's article about current attacks on affirmative action was published in the June issue of *FOCUS.* Through the article, which examines a major pending civil rights issue, she was able to address a national leadership audience.

"This is an important article that I would have attempted myself," Ruffin commented, "but I didn't have the time to conduct the interviews or do the other research necessary to produce it. Judy put together an excellent article on the anti-affirmative action initiative underway in Washington State. I'm sure many civil rights activists have used the piece already." Judy, who graduated from law school this summer, has expressed her desire to maintain a continuing relationship with the Joint Center, and Ruffin says she is welcome.

What about the other students? Darwin Bolden, Jr., was assigned to Dr. Yvonne Scruggs-Leftwich, executive director of the Black Leadership Forum. He is currently working with Scruggs-Leftwich on get-out-the-vote strategies for this November's elections. Jenebah Jalloh, from Sierra Leone, worked for Dr. Paul Vance, the first African American superintendent of schools in Montgomery County, Maryland, a suburb of Washington, D.C. Jenebah wrote an extraordinary narrative profiling the family cultures of different minority groups and assessing the impact of family cultural background on the ability of the children to succeed in the public school system. The piece promises to be a useful tool in diversity training exercises for teachers.

Anthony Archeval, a Puerto Rican student from New Jersey, worked for Greg Stewart, the general counsel of the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Anthony produced a brochure entitled *Know Your Rights.* This easy-to-read layman's summary of legal remedies for victims of employment discrimination, housing discrimination, and hate crimes will be of great help to thousands of citizens.

Another student of the Invisible College, Alexia Bowie, worked with Donald Temple, the lawyer who successfully sued clothing retailer Eddie Bauer, Inc., for $1 million for "consumer racism." In her journal, Alexia recorded her impressions of her first day with Temple:

> Beautiful African prints adorned the walls, and small sculptures embellished the bookshelves of Mr. Temple's office. Everything about the office affirmed me as a person of color. I immediately felt at home. As I waited to meet with the lawyer I'd heard so much about, I reflected on how much he personified what I had always wanted to become—an independent lawyer, established in his practice, making a difference in a world in such desperate need of it.

Hands-On, Hands-Off

A distinction should be made between undergraduate interns and Invisible College fellows who are a loosely knit group of law and graduate students who support and influence the work of civil rights, urban affairs, and public policy organizations while receiving invaluable experience and exposure to major issues and policymakers. The Invisible College not only extends the effectiveness of some of our most influential organizations, but also serves as a base from which to recruit, train, and launch new ranks of leadership.

When it works as it should, the Invisible College does not squeeze student newcomers into an office meat-grinder, but rather gives them the means to become independent resources, doing focused research, framed under the guidance of a mentor. The Invisible College helps meet our community's need to build a cadre of young people who are exposed to the major concerns confronting black Americans and gain real experience in those areas. These research fellows are not only receiving important training and academic credit but making tangible contributions to these organizations' missions.

In this respect, the Invisible College is very much an information-age model for professional development that is easily duplicated. It is an elastic, open network rather than a top-down, command-and-control operation. We are not producing look-alike, think-alike workers, but flexible freelancers who are tempered by frontline work in civil rights or urban policy and who can adjust to different environments. This kind of experience gives life and fire to an academic curriculum. Fellows feel connected to the mission of an organization and have wide latitude to succeed or fail. At the same time, they are free of the burdens of office politics and distracting minutiae.

Mr. McDougall is a professor at the Columbus School of Law at The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., and was recently the National Legislative Director of the NAACP.

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Invisible College

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The mentor also has the opportunity to engage a young person who may well be a leader of tomorrow, without having to "file off their rough edges" so they can fit into an institutional setting. Through such "hands-on, hands-off" experiences, many civil rights, urban affairs, and policy leaders at all levels can pass on their knowledge and share the exhilaration of the intellectual and activist exchange that may have started them on their own career paths. These are the reasons for the Invisible College—to broaden the impact of activist and policy organizations, to expand the pool of knowledgeable, capable practitioners, and to prepare the next generation for leadership.

Seeding Students to Colleagues

I have energy and passion for this approach because this is how I was trained and developed. I did not attend a historically black college or university (HBCU), and so missed out on the mentoring for which the best of our HBCUs, their faculty and administration, are famous. However, I did get excellent mentoring and training from both African and African American students at Harvard as well as from my seniors in the civil rights movement. When I entered Harvard as a freshman in 1963, there were four field secretaries of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) among the student body.

I began to look forward to mentoring others who came after me, not only to give something back but also to relive the camaraderie and collegiality of these kinds of relationships. Those qualities that my mentors initially saw in me—eagerness, motivation, a quick study—I soon found were stimulated as much by passing on information as by receiving it, in a reprise of the old adage about Christmas being as much about giving as receiving.

In my third year at Yale Law School I set up an urban internship program that placed members of the Black Law Students' Union in a variety of professional settings in the black community of New Haven—an inner-city health clinic here, a community development corporation there. This was the beginning of a career of placing students in "real life" learning contexts, helping them learn from their experiences in the field, and developing ongoing professional and collegial relationships with the people to whom the students were assigned, invariably people I had met through the civil rights movement or through community organizing.

When I graduated from law school, I was mentored again, largely by Yale "big brothers and sisters" like Hugh Price, now president of the National Urban League, Eleanor Holmes Norton, now D.C. Delegate to Congress, and the late Haywood Burns, founder of the National Conference of Black Lawyers. Today, at 53, I can reflect on decades of being mentored as well as mentoring, right up to the present day—it was not long ago that my "big brother" Roscoe Nix encouraged me to join an alumni chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha (SNCC had been my fraternity) and brought me into the NAACP.

As director of the Law and Public Policy Program at Catholic University, for 10 years I placed law students all over the nation's capital as legislative aides to senators and representatives on Capitol Hill, lawyers working for government agencies, public interest attorneys and lobbyists. Then, with Roscoe's encouragement, I took a leave of absence from Catholic University to run the NAACP's National Legislative Office, its Washington Bureau, following in the footsteps of Clarence Mitchell, Althea Simmons, and Wade Henderson. By the time I returned to Catholic, I had tripled my network of contacts. I set up the civil rights seminar that began the Invisible College, seeding out my students to my new colleagues in national civil rights offices and other organizations.

A Bridge Between Students and Professionals

For the Invisible College to work, two important things must happen. First, fellows must be given work to do which corresponds to their training and abilities. Second, they must be placed in a setting where they have an opportunity to make a contribution. Traditional fellowship arrangements often fail to deliver on one or both of these conditions, primarily because they often focus on teaching (or forcing) fellows to conform to the culture of an organization. The students often leave frustrated, not having made a contribution they can point to or build on. The administrators often feel just as frustrated, scratching their heads about why the youngsters "just didn't get it."

Teaching well requires a special gift and temperament. Many black leaders and professionals—not only civil rights or community development activists, but also doctors, lawyers, business people, architects, and politicians—are not natural-born teachers despite their excellence in other areas. For example, many lack the patience to make complex information accessible without patronizing less-experienced people. When a student intern does not respond as expected, such a professional may resort to ill-considered control strategies. Even those with a natural talent for passing on information to others are often too busy to give the students the attention they deserve.

As the facilitator of the Invisible College, I act as a bridge between the student and the professional to whom he or she is assigned. I help the professional present a research design that provides clear directions to the student, but also gives the student room to be creative. I supervise the student's execution of the project, suggesting sources and filling in historical gaps as well as reviewing interim drafts. In short, I ensure that the professionals respect the students and that the students are worthy of that respect.

I am now actively searching for a way to make the Invisible College my full-time occupation and help others replicate this model. I think it is more important work than anything else I can do. We need more networks of active, trustworthy, bright people who have had experience with issues and concerns of importance to African Americans. We need a framework in which our most energetic and brilliant activists are put in contact with committed young people, with facilitators to help both sides, on rare occasions, manage the rough spots. We need the Invisible College. ■

Fold Here

FOCUS Reader Survey

The Joint Center has a grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to disseminate information on changes in the social safety net since the devolution of programs to states and localities. To do that effectively, we are conducting a survey of our readers. Your responses to this questionnaire will be used to develop the types of information you want and need in the formats that you prefer. All answers will be kept confidential. **PLEASE USE BALL POINT PEN ONLY AND RETURN BY NOVEMBER 15, 1998.** For your convenience, the survey is a postage-paid self-mailer.

1. How long have you been on the mailing list for *FOCUS*?

_____ Less than a year _____ Two to five years _____ Five to ten years

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_____ Corporate

_____ Other (specify) _____

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_____ Other (specify) _____

5. Which section(s) of Focus do you rely on most? *(Rank from most = 1 to least = 4.)*

_____ Perspective
(by Eddie N. Williams)

_____ Feature articles

Trendletter:
_____ Political Report
_____ Economic Report

6. Are you familiar with the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies' website (http://www.jointctr.org)?

_____ Yes _____ No *(Go to Q. 8)*

7. If "yes," which features do you use when you visit our site?

	Always	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Mission and History	_____	_____	_____	_____
Factsheets	_____	_____	_____	_____
Publications	_____	_____	_____	_____
Selected papers	_____	_____	_____	_____
FOCUS magazine	_____	_____	_____	_____

Other (specify) _____

8. Rank the following sources you use for information about public policy issues as they affect black Americans. *(From most often = 1 to least often = 10.)*

_____ *FOCUS* magazine

_____ JCPES website (http://www.jointctr.org)

_____ Other websites (specify)

_____ National newspapers

_____ Local newspapers

_____ Magazines

_____ Network television

_____ Cable television

_____ Radio

_____ Other (specify) _____

9. How knowledgeable do you consider yourself about devolution— the transfer of funding and administration of social programs (such as welfare) to the state and local levels of government?

_____ Very knowledgeable _____ Somewhat knowledgeable _____ Not at all knowledgeable

10. Is devolution a subject of interest to you?

_____ Yes _____ No *(Go to Q. 12)*

11. If "Yes," what is your particular area of interest?

_____ Welfare reform

_____ Health care

_____ Racial differentials in program outcomes and experiences

_____ Other (specify) _____

12. If "No," what other public policy topics are of greatest interest to you? *(Name up to three.)*

_____

_____

_____

13. How would you most prefer to receive information from the Joint Center about devolution or any other public policy topic? *(Rank from most preferred = 1 to least preferred = 6.)*

_____ JCPES website (http://www.jointctr.org)

_____ E-mail, including the use of a ListServ

_____ FAX, including "FAX on demand"

_____ Other (specify) _____

_____ *FOCUS* magazine

_____ Mail (U.S. Postal Service)

14. Which formats for information do you use most? *(Rank from used most = 1 to used least = 5.)*

_____ Tables

_____ Executive summaries of longer documents

_____ Fact sheets

_____ Books or reports (including government reports)

_____ Other (specify) _____

15. Some information about devolution is being distributed by audio conference. This is a telephone conference call during which you listen to experts and practitioners discuss a specific topic. Each lasts about one hour, and cost $14 for a telephone line. Would this form of information dissemination be of interest to you?

_____ Yes _____ No *(Go to Q. 18)*

16. Would any of the following audio conference topics be of interest to you? *(Please check all that apply.)*

_____ Skills Training Under "Work First": Steps Towards Better Wages

_____ Work Retention: Holding On to the New and the Next Job

_____ Wage Advancement: Strategies Getting Tested

_____ Soft Skills Training for Work Readiness

_____ Other (specify) _____

17. Is 12:30 p.m. to 1:30 p.m. Eastern Standard Time (lunch hour) convenient for you to participate in an audio conference?

_____ Yes _____ Prefer evening hours _____ Prefer other daytime hours (specify time) _____

18. Do you have an e-mail address? _____ Yes _____ No

19. Would you like to be put on a list to receive materials about devolution?

_____ Yes _____ No

If "Yes," please provide the following, if available:

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Please review your mailing label (below) and make any necessary corrections to it. Go to page 7 and fold survey along dotted line, making sure that the self-mailing label is on the outside, and seal (do not staple). Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey!

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OCTOBER 1998

TRENDLETTER

POLITICAL REPORT

by Mary K. Garber

Justice Delayed, Justice Served

Nearly 33 years after Vernon Dahmer was murdered by the KKK, a racially mixed Mississippi jury has at last convicted the man who ordered the firebombing of the Dahmer house on January 10, 1966. On August 23, in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, 73-year-old Samuel Bowers, former Imperial Wizard of the White Knights of the Ku Klux Klan of Mississippi, was found guilty of ordering Klan subordinates to attack Dahmer to stop him from helping black residents of rural Forrest County to register to vote. Bowers was sentenced to life in prison.

Dahmer, a local black businessman and farmer, allowed other blacks to pay their two-dollar poll tax at his store, despite the risk to his own life. Although the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 had already been enacted by Congress, violent attacks by white supremacists against African American voters were still common in 1966. Bowers escaped conviction in four trials prior to this year's. In two of the trials, he was set free when all-white juries could not agree on a verdict.

Dahmer's wife Ellie and other members of the Dahmer family recalled how they were aroused around 2:00 a.m., that morning 33 years ago, by the honking of car horns as two carloads of Klansmen arrived in front of their house. The Klansmen, armed with shotguns, threw gasoline on the wooden farmhouse and set it afire. After helping his family escape from the back of the house, Dahmer took aim at the arsonists, firing repeatedly at his attackers even while the flames burned his arms. His family survived, but Vernon Dahmer died in the hospital 12 hours later.

The Dahmer family had long pressed for the case to be reopened. After the conviction in 1994 of white supremacist Byron de la Beckwith for the 1963 murder of NAACP field secretary Medgar Evers, which also occurred in Mississippi, the Dahmer family renewed their efforts to have the local district attorney reinstate the case against Bowers and other Klan members. Recently opened state records and FBI files offered new evidence that made the prospect of a conviction much more likely despite the passage of three decades. At the urging of Mississippi's attorney general, Mike Moore, the case was finally reopened.

Former Klansman and FBI informant Robert Earl Wilson testified for the prosecution. He stated that shortly after the firebombing he was with Bowers at the home of fellow Klan leader Burris Dunn, when Bowers claimed credit for the murder. According to Wilson, Bowers held up a copy of the newspaper containing the story and said: "Look at what my boys did to that Dahmer nigger for me."

Another former Klansman and FBI informant, Billy Roy Pitts, testified that Bowers ordered the murder at a 1965 meeting at a Mississippi farmhouse. Pitts, who confessed to his role in the crime, also testified against Bowers in a 1968 trial. Pitts described the KKK's code for referring to different kinds of attacks: a No. 1 was a cross burning; a No. 2, a whipping; a No. 3, a firebombing; and a No. 4, a killing. Pitts claimed that Bowers was the only man in the Mississippi KKK at the time of the crime who had the authority to order No. 3 and No. 4 attacks.

Although the KKK in Mississippi was behind countless terror attacks during the 1960s, Bowers' only time in jail has been six years on a federal conviction for his part in the infamous slayings of three civil rights workers in Philadelphia, Mississippi, in 1964—Andrew Goodman, Michael Schwerner, and James Chaney. Although these killings shocked the nation, the state of Mississippi never tried any suspects for the murders. Eight Klansman, including Bowers, were convicted on federal charges, but none served longer than six years.

CBC Cofounder Charles C. Diggs, Jr., Dies

The first black congressman from Michigan and cofounder of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC), Charles

C. Diggs, Jr., died on August 24 of a stroke in Prince Georges County, Maryland. Like his father before him, Diggs was a man of heroic accomplishments and tragic flaws. Born in Detroit in 1922, he was the only child of Charles Diggs, Sr., a wealthy mortician who achieved notable political power.

The senior Diggs, who was a Michigan state senator, was one of a trio of black activists in Detroit who worked assiduously under dangerous circumstances in the 1930s and 1940s to win labor union support for the rights of black workers. He authored the state's 1937 "Diggs Law," which outlawed racial discrimination in places serving the public. But in 1948, Charles Diggs, Sr., was convicted of taking a bribe while serving in the state legislature and sent to prison.

The junior Diggs followed in his father's footsteps in many ways, both good and bad. After attending the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor and Fisk University, he served a stint in the Army Air Corps during World War II. When he returned to Detroit, he earned his mortuary science degree from Wayne State University and took up the family business. In 1951, he began his political career by winning his father's old seat in the Michigan Senate as a Democrat.

He soon became known as a civil rights advocate, labor supporter, and promoter of black business development. Diggs sponsored Michigan's first Fair Employment Practices Law, which created the state's Fair Employment Practices Commission to eliminate racial and other forms of discrimination by both public and private entities. He was elected to Congress in 1954 in a landslide victory, becoming the first African American from Michigan to serve in the U.S. House of Representatives. He immediately became a vocal advocate for civil rights, demanding integration of public schools and public facilities and an end to discrimination in the armed forces and federal offices in the South.

In his 25 years in Congress, Diggs also developed a reputation as an authority on Africa. He was an early critic of apartheid in South Africa and championed U.S. aid to African nations emerging from colonialism. He was the first black member of Congress to head the subcommittee on Africa. As head of the House District Committee, Diggs was an architect of the Home Rule Charter for the District of Columbia, and he helped establish the University of the District of Columbia. In 1969, he was one of the founders of the Congressional Black Caucus, serving as its first chairman.

But like his father, Diggs was destined to fall precipitously from the pinnacle of power and acclaim. In 1978, he was convicted on 29 counts of fraud involving a payroll kickback scheme in his congressional office. Diggs himself, as well as many of his associates, charged that he was the victim of "selective persecution." His constituents in Michigan stood by him, reelecting him despite his conviction. In 1980, when the Supreme Court refused to hear his appeal, he resigned from the House of Representatives in disgrace and served seven months of a prison sentence.

After his release from prison, Diggs established a funeral home business in Prince Georges County, Maryland, and earned a political science degree from Howard University. ■

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ECONOMIC REPORT

Converting Welfare Reform Into Self-Sufficiency

by Margaret C. Simms

The Devolution Initiative: Shaping Policy Formation

In August 1996, President Clinton signed into law the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, thereby implementing the first official devolution initiative. Because it shifts responsibility for designing and administering social programs from the federal to state and local governments, devolution has raised concerns about the implications for vulnerable populations. With this in mind, the Joint Center, with the support of the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, has launched a devolution initiative that will provide important information on the implementation of the welfare reform initiative, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and other social programs.

In keeping with its mission, the Joint Center will concentrate on providing information to African American leaders and, where possible, highlight the impact of policy changes on the African American population. To do that job more effectively, the Joint Center is conducting a survey of its readers, which can be found in the last section of this issue of *FOCUS*. Your responses will help us better tailor *FOCUS* and our other publications to your needs.

When TANF replaced Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), many people predicted dire consequences for welfare recipients. Initial reports, however, are encouraging: the welfare rolls have shrunk, and many former welfare recipients have joined the labor force. But these events have taken place in the context of a strong economy. Furthermore, those who have left the rolls are better prepared and, in all likelihood, more motivated than those who remain.

An early report on the declining rolls, published in the *New York Times* on July 27, indicates that whites have left the rolls at greater rates than African Americans and Hispanics. Consequently, the welfare population is now majority-minority. According to national data, the number of white families on the rolls declined by 25 percent, while the number of black families fell by 17 percent and Hispanic families by 9 percent. The *New York Times* analysis was based on surveys of 14 states and New York City, which together account for 70 percent of the welfare population. Only in California was the decline greater among black families than white families. The report identifies many possible reasons for the uneven decline, including differences in work experience and education, problems with child care and transportation, lack of support from noncustodial parents, a dearth of jobs in minority communities, and discrimination.

These early reports from the welfare reform front leave several important questions only partially answered. Are those who have left welfare better off economically? Can they provide a decent life for their families? What will happen when time limits catch up with those who are harder to employ? What if this coincides with a period of slower economic growth, or even with a recession? How can state and local governments, along with private organizations, develop programs or support systems that increase the wage-earning capacity of former welfare recipients and make it possible for those left on the rolls to work toward self-sufficiency?

The Joint Center's Devolution Initiative aims to answer some of these questions so that policymakers and community activists can guide the devolution process in a positive direction. As part of this initiative, the Joint Center is collaborating with two other policy research organizations, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP) and the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP). During the two-year project, the three research organizations will address devolution-related issues through written reports and other materials, specially convened meetings and conferences, and some limited direct technical assistance to policymakers and community groups. In this *FOCUS* Economic Report, we summarize several recent publications from our devolution partners on the subject of economic self-sufficiency. In future issues of *FOCUS*, we will present summaries of the Joint Center's work on devolution-related issues.

Welfare Savings

The sharp decline in the welfare rolls has left most states with large surpluses, stemming from both their federal payments and state contributions. The welfare reform legislation provided federal funds on a formula basis that was related to the states' prior payments, rather than the number of their current recipients, which means that states with sharp declines in recipients will have funds left over. While states can reduce their own contributions, they are not allowed to go below 75 percent of their prior contribution. A recently released study by the U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) estimates that the combination of unused federal funds and state contributions amounts to a $4.7 billion windfall for states. Some states are using the unspent state portion of welfare funds for training and support services, while others are using it to reduce taxes. The federal portion for

24 states—$1.7 billion—remains in the federal treasury. Some are saving the money for a "rainy day," that is, when an economic decline reverses the downward trend in the welfare rolls.

To obtain the full GAO report, "Welfare Reform: Early Fiscal Effects of the TANF Block Grant" (GAO/AIMD-98-137) call the GAO at (202) 512-6000. Other GAO information is available via the internet at www.gao.gov.

A report from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities focuses on some of the more interesting and innovative state programs funded by welfare savings that aim to help needy families and strengthen state welfare reform efforts. These programs include community job creation, worker stipends, help with access to more stable and better-paying jobs, assistance for child care, increased cash assistance for some families, housing assistance for low-income working families, food and cash assistance for legal immigrants, alternative unemployment insurance, and child support pass-throughs and disregards. The report gives a brief summary of each program and highlights the rationale for state action, relevant design issues, and current state models. The full report, "Reinvesting Welfare Savings," is now available from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, either by calling 202-408-1080 or through their website at www.cbpp.org. The contact person at the Center is Clifford Johnson. A summary of the report should also be ready for distribution soon.

Welfare-to-Work Grants

While the first phase of federal legislation reshaped the framework for public assistance, subsequent legislation has aimed at helping states and localities develop new initiatives to improve economic outcomes for those moving off welfare. One such initiative is the federal Welfare-to-Work program, which makes $3 billion available through the U.S. Department of Labor over the next two years. Although three-quarters of the funds will be distributed by formula, the remaining quarter will be awarded on a competitive basis. The competitive grants can be awarded to nonprofit organizations that partner with Private Industry Councils or with local governments. Although the deadline for the second round of applications has passed, additional funds will be available during Fiscal Year 1999. For further information on welfare-to-work grants, contact the U.S. Department of Labor or check their website at www.doleta.gov. Detailed summaries of the welfare-to-work portion of the balanced budget legislation are also available through the Center for Law and Social Policy (202-328-5140; website www.clasp.org.).

Programs for Noncustodial Parents

The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities is urging state and local policymakers to consider including programs for noncustodial parents in their welfare-to-work programs. It has identified a demonstration project, Parents' Fair Share, as a possible model on which to build a program that would help former welfare recipients (usually the mother) support their families by strengthening the ability of the noncustodial parent (usually the father) to provide child support. Parents' Fair Share offers employment and training opportunities that might not otherwise be available to these noncustodial parents, along with peer support and mediation services. Further information on this option, as well as on the creation of publicly funded jobs, is detailed in the CBPP's June 1998 brief, "Federal Welfare-to-Work Grants: New Opportunities to Create Jobs and Assist Noncustodial Parents." Contact Clifford Johnson at CBPP for copies.

Work-Study Programs for Welfare Recipients

The early emphasis in welfare reform was on moving individuals directly into the work force, a strategy called "Work First." Under this approach, attachment to the work force took priority over education and training. In fact, the provisions of TANF make it increasingly difficult to combine work and training because of the number of hours they require individuals to be working. College education options are made even more difficult due to federal eligibility provisions that limit participation by welfare recipients.

The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities has identified three jurisdictions that are addressing this dilemma through new work-study initiatives for welfare recipients: California, Kentucky, and Philadelphia. In the past, many of California's welfare recipients were given access to its extensive community college system. California has now put $65 million in new money into a series of work-study programs. Kentucky is launching a competitive grant program to assist welfare recipients who want to go to college, and Philadelphia will use a competitive award from the Department of Labor to fund a program targeting teen parents. For further information on these proposals or to obtain copies of the summaries, contact the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. ■