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# FOCUS

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## Perspective

*The Sacred Ballot: 1994 and 2000*

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## Presidential Candidates: Not Look-a-Likes

*Judicial and Cabinet Appointments, Equality in the Administration of Justice Are Among Issues Voters Must Consider*

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## The Fourth Circuit—America's Segregated Court

*The Republican-Controlled Senate Has Obstructed or Refused to Confirm Many of Clinton's Nominees to Federal Courts, Especially Minorities and Women*

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## Banning Child Soldiers

*A UN Protocol Calls for an End to Using Anyone Under the Age of 18 in Armed Conflicts, But Thousands of Youngsters Continue to Be Brutalized in Wars Around the World*

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## TrendLetter

*Political Report: Who Will Rule the House?*  
*Economic Report: Prosperity at Home, Poverty Abroad*

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# The Sacred Ballot: 1994 and 2000

In April 1994, millions of black South Africans walked miles to polling places and sometimes waited hours in the baking sun to cast their ballots. It was the first time South African citizens of all races could vote in their national elections. The struggle to overthrow the brutal apartheid regime and secure the franchise for blacks had been a long time coming and had been won at great cost at Sharpeville in 1960, in Soweto in 1976, and under the harsh marshal law policies of President P.W. Botha in the 1980s. Yet through persistence and faith in the rightness of their cause, South African freedom fighters prevailed, and on May 10, 1994, African National Congress leader Nelson Mandela took office as the president of his country.

It's useful to think of the South African experience in this season of our own elections in the United States. We need to be reminded of how sacred the ballot is. It was not so long ago that African Americans were fighting their own battles for the ballot. Those who struggled for voting rights in places like Philadelphia, Mississippi, and Marion, Alabama, paid dearly for the right to vote for presidents and school board members, senators and mayors, governors and sheriffs. Many Americans living today either weren't born yet or were very young when the Voting Rights Act of 1965 was signed into law. The televised images of state troopers in Selma, Alabama, beating marchers who were demanding the Act's passage are not ingrained in the memories of most people under the age of 45. But most Americans do remember the first stunning broadcasts of Mandela mobbed by adoring followers that historic February morning in 1990, just after his release from 27 years of imprisonment.

The point here, on the eve of our general elections, is that the right to vote is sacred. In most cases, it has been purchased by struggle and bloodshed. To acknowledge this is to understand that to squander the right to vote is a virtual sacrilege.

What do we have to lose on election day, November 7, 2000? An insensitive president could douse the fires of our hopes and aspirations. A conservative or reactionary Congress could turn back the civil rights gains of the past three and a half decades. And these reversals could be replicated at the state and local levels as well.

In 2000, the beginning of a new century and a new millennium, the clarion call to "get out and vote" takes on an urgent meaning for all Americans, especially minorities and others seeking to level the public policy playing field. With most predictions indicating a growth of voter apathy in the American electorate, we must rise to the challenge of turning out to vote in massive numbers, voting like our lives depended on it—in many respects, this is literally the case.

There is a great distance between Soweto and Selma, but there is little difference between the goals of blacks in South Africa in 1994 and the goals of African Americans in 2000. We demand the right to be counted, to be heard, and to be valued in the governance of our society. And in pursuit of these demands we must invest the "sweat equity" of active participation in the political process. This investment begins with our votes on election day. ■

PRESIDENT



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# Presidential Candidates: Not Look-a-Likes

## *Judicial and Cabinet Appointments, Equality in the Administration of Justice Are Among Issues Voters Must Consider*

by David C. Ruffin

Some in the media have characterized the major presidential candidates, Democratic Vice President Al Gore and Republican Governor George W. Bush, as uninspired and, by extension, two versions of the same song. While it is true that the nation has seen more charismatic contestants for the White House, no one should mistakenly assume that there would be little difference between a Gore and Bush presidency. In the context of their philosophies of governance, each takes a dramatically different stand on issues of concern to low-income Americans, people of color, and women. On civil rights, reproductive choice, education, healthcare, Social Security, gun control, and justice concerns, the candidates are not look-a-likes.

How open the candidates are to their interests is another factor that black voters should consider as they decide who to pick on November 7. One may look at the records of the Clinton and Reagan administrations as models of how differently minority access might fare under the next administration. Part of President Clinton's legacy will be the fact that he made good on his promise to establish an administration that "looks like America." His appointments to cabinet departments, regulatory commissions, and independent agencies have been the most diverse in history with respect to race, gender, and ethnicity. The commitment to diversity was also reflected in Clinton's judicial appointments. Reagan set the tone for how his administration would relate to African Americans by refusing to meet with the Congressional Black Caucus early in his presidency, stating that they were not legitimate black leaders. The black legal and civil rights communities were deeply disappointed that African Americans made up less than two percent of Reagan's judicial appointments.

Over the course of one four-year term, the next president will have an opportunity to appoint about 200 federal judges, including, quite likely, several Supreme Court justices. The next president will also name 3,500 to 4,000 high-level officials to fill out his administration. Since all of these appointees will influence the execution of federal law and public policy, who they are (and what their life experiences are) matters very much. Certainly this will be true of the assistant attorney general for civil rights, the assistant secretary for elementary and secondary education, the administrator of the Minority Business Development Agency, the assistant secretary of the Employment and Training Administration, the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, and the head of the Environmental Protection Agency.

Many of these appointed posts have been mandated by the Constitution or established by Congress. But other positions in an administration, while not mandated by legislation, carry with them a great deal of power, including the president's chief of staff, domestic policy adviser, and inner circle of key White House aides. These are people who enjoy the president's confidence and have his ear on a broad range of issues. Most of these aides have a "gatekeeper" function as well. That is, they screen and filter information, requests for assistance, and expressions of concern intended for the president, and in many cases they even act on his behalf. The question is, will the next president surround himself with advisers who have the background, experience, and sensitivity to address issues of concern to African Americans?

### U.S. Judicial Appointments by Race, Gender, and Disability

Article III Federal Judges\*

	Total	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Native Amer.	Women	Disabled
Jimmy Carter	265	38 (14.3%)	16 (6.0%)	0	0	41 (15.5%)	NA
Ronald Reagan	385	7 (1.8%)	15 (3.9%)	2 **	0	32 (8.3%)	NA
George Bush	195	13 (6.6%)	8 (4.1%)	1 **	0	37 (18.9%)	2 (1.0%)
Bill Clinton	379	62 (16.3%)	26 (6.9%)	5 (1.3%)	2 -	115 (30.3%)	5 (1.3%)

Source: U.S. Department of Justice

\*Article III federal judges are district, circuit, and U.S. Supreme Court judgeships.

\*\* Equals less than one percent.

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## Look-a-Like

Continued from page 3

### Hate Groups and Out-of-Control Cops

Perhaps topping the list of issues the next presidential administration must address are racial fairness and equal justice. Despite the gains won through the marches, demonstrations, and other forms of peaceful protest in the 1960s, discrimination remains a serious problem. Thirty-six years after the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, affirmative action is still needed to address past and present bias in the society. Affirmative action was codified in the 1970s as part of the Nixon Administration's response to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972. But the battle for full access to colleges and universities continues. And every year, tens of thousands of employment discrimination complaints are filed in courts and with the government. Minorities do not receive their fair share of contracts from local, state, and federal government agencies.

Despite studies like *The Shape of the River*, which shows that race-sensitive college admissions policies are successful and benefit society as a whole, there has been a constant assault on affirmative action in federal courts and on ballot initiatives in states like California and Washington. *The Shape of the River* was coauthored by William G. Bowen, a former president of Princeton University, and Derek Bok, a former president of Harvard University.

The most dangerous form of discrimination is violence. Reports of racially motivated attacks against minorities have bloodied the front pages of newspapers across the nation. The memories are still fresh of the 1999 murder by dragging of James Byrd Jr. in Jasper, Texas, and the shooting death of black former Northwestern University basketball coach Ricky Byrdson and Asian American graduate student Won Joon Yoon at the hands of white supremacist Benjamin Smith. A member of the World Church of the Creator, a neo-Nazi group, Smith also wounded six Jewish people and an Asian American in a two-state killing rampage. Just as alarming was the July 4th murder of Arthur "J.R." Carl Warren, Jr., the gay black resident of Grant Town, West Virginia, who was brutally beaten to death in his small hometown by two 17-year-old youths.

The personal safety of people of color, however, is not only threatened by individuals and groups motivated by hate. In many parts of the nation, black, Latino, and poor citizens have needed to be protected from the police. In New York, two unarmed black men totally innocent of any wrongdoing, Amadou Diallo and Patrick Dorismond, were shot to death by police. Their names have been added to the growing roll of law-abiding black people who have been killed by law enforcement officers. The nation has been shocked by revelations that in the last decade, the Los Angeles Police Department's CRASH anti-gang unit framed scores of residents of that city's northwest Rampart neighborhood, resulting in numerous false convictions. Police from the CRASH unit beat suspects, planted evidence on innocent people, doctored crime scenes, provided perjured testimony, used deportation to eliminate troublesome witnesses, and covered up unjustified shootings. Dozens of

Los Angeles police officers were involved and more than a hundred convictions have been overturned.

Racial profiling is perhaps more commonly used by law enforcement officials. Untold thousands of citizens are stopped and harassed by police officers on the nation's highways merely because they fit a police profile, also known as "driving while black or brown." People who appear to be from the Middle East are stopped at airports for no other reason than that they fit the "profile" of an Arab/Islamic terrorist. Women of color are strip-searched routinely as suspected drug couriers.

### Two Million Behind Bars and Counting

Closely linked to civil rights is the concern that African Americans are not equitably treated in the American system of justice beyond the level of the cop on the beat. The failure of our society to guarantee racial justice is most pronounced in the War on Drugs. Because of the racially disparate impact of the nation's drug laws, the sword of justice falls most keenly on African Americans and the poor as they encounter the criminal justice system. Legislation passed by Congress in the mid-1980s requires mandatory minimum prison sentences of five years or more for the possession of five grams of crack cocaine. But in order to receive a similar sentence for possessing powder cocaine, one must have 100 times the amount of the substance, 500 grams or more. This disparity in sentencing has resulted in sending hundreds of thousands of African Americans to prison for long terms on nonviolent drug convictions.

That the policy in pursuing the War on Drugs has placed a higher priority on enforcement than treatment has skewed justice. The practical effect of allocating two-thirds of the "War's" resources to enforcement and one-third to treatment is a high incarceration rate for low-income, mostly black, poorly educated, inner-city drug offenders. The televised documentary series, *Drug Wars*, which aired on the Corporation for Public Broadcasting television magazine FRONTLINE, reported that the typical drug user is white and employed. But the majority of white middle-class drug users escape imprisonment because they have greater access to legal representation and drug treatment.

A 1997 Department of Health and Human Services study found that illicit drug use among African Americans was about 13 percent, or approximately their proportion of the U.S. population. Whites represented 74 percent of all drug users and Hispanics 9 percent. However, African Americans were dramatically overrepresented among those arrested, convicted, and imprisoned for non-violent drug possession. Blacks were 35 percent of those arrested for drug possession, 55 percent of those convicted, and 74 percent of those sentenced to prison. According to the Department of Justice, on a typical day in 1985, 310,000 black men were in prison or jail. The figure for incarcerated black men more than doubled by 1996 to 714,000. Today, about two million Americans are behind bars and more prisons are being built.

Continued on back page

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# The Fourth Circuit—America’s Segregated Court

*The Republican-Controlled Senate Has Obstructed or Refused to Confirm Many of Clinton’s Nominees to Federal Courts, Especially Minorities and Women*

*by David C. Ruffin*

**B**y refusing to confirm any of President Clinton’s black nominees for judgeships to the Fourth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, the Republican-controlled Senate has preserved that panel as the nation’s only all-white federal appeals court. Over the course of his two terms, Clinton has sent the Senate a total of nine nominations to fill vacancies on the Fourth Circuit— five whites and four African Americans. While four of the white nominees were confirmed by the Senate quickly and with relative ease, each of the black nominations died in the Senate Judiciary Committee. Although the Fourth Circuit has never had a non-white judge in its history, the population within its jurisdiction has a higher percentage of African Americans than any other circuit (22.6 percent). The court’s jurisdiction encompasses Maryland, West Virginia, Virginia, and North and South Carolina. Currently, there are five vacancies on the court, constituting one-third of its 15 authorized seats. The man most responsible for blocking the appointments of blacks to the court has been North Carolina Republican Senator Jesse Helms.

The first African American Clinton named to the court was James A. Beaty, Jr., a U.S. district court judge, a former North Carolina superior court judge, and a graduate of the University of North Carolina School of Law. He was nominated in December 1995. But the Senate, which came under GOP control at the beginning of the 104th Congress in January of that year, refused to act on the nomination.

Article II, Section 2 of the U.S. Constitution requires that federal judges nominated by the President be confirmed by the Senate. In the first step of the confirmation process, the White House sends nominees for federal judgeships to the Senate, which refers the nominations to the Senate Judiciary Committee. The committee’s consideration of a nomination entails a hearing and a committee vote on whether or not the nomination should be sent on to the full Senate for approval or rejection. But before the Committee takes any of these steps, by custom the Senators representing the state where the nominee resides are provided a “blue slip” on which the senators may indicate their approval or disapproval, or they may return the slip with no comment. The Judiciary Committee also issues blue slips for U.S. attorneys and U.S. marshals as state-based federal posts.

## Standing in the Court House Door

While the blue slip is not a constitutional requirement, it is a time-honored courtesy that has its origins in the beginnings of the United States Congress. Senator Helms abused

this courtesy by refusing to return the blue slip on the Beaty nomination. Without a blue slip from Helms, Orrin Hatch (R-Utah), who chairs the Judiciary Committee, declined to move the confirmation process forward, and the nomination was returned to the White House when the 104th Congress adjourned in the fall of 1996. President Clinton resubmitted Beaty’s name at the beginning of the next Congress, but again, no action was taken on the nomination during the 105th Congress (1997 to 1998). Beaty was not renominated in the 106th Congress in 1999.

Helms has also successfully blocked the nomination of James A. Wynn, Jr., another African American from North Carolina, to the Fourth Circuit. Wynn was named to the court by President Clinton on August 5, 1999, but Helms has yet to return the blue slip on that nomination. John Edwards, the Democratic Senator from North Carolina, returned a blue slip with his approval. A graduate of the University of North Carolina, Wynn is well qualified to be a circuit court judge. He received a law degree from Marquette University and a masters of law from the University of Virginia and served with the rank of captain as an attorney in the U.S. Army’s Judge Advocate General’s Corps. Wynn conducted a private law practice in North Carolina from 1984 to 1990. And from 1990 to the present he has served as an associate judge on the North Carolina Court of Appeals. But because Helms never returned the blue slip on his nomination, no action has been taken by the Judiciary Committee to confirm him for more than a year. By obstructing the process, Helms has ultimately prevented the full Senate from taking an up or down vote on the nominations of Beaty and Wynn based on their merits.

By contrast, four of President Clinton’s white appointees to the Fourth Circuit breezed through the process, taking no longer than five months to be confirmed. Two of them, Diana Motz from Maryland and Blane Michael from West Virginia, were confirmed while the Democrats controlled the Senate. Robert King from West Virginia and William Traxler from South Carolina were both confirmed in 1998 under a Republican-controlled Senate. Traxler was nominated on July 10 and confirmed by the Senate in relative short order on September 28 of that year.

Helms did not obstruct the nominations of African Americans single-handedly. Since the GOP won a majority in Congress in 1994, the Judiciary Committee has been notorious for delaying the confirmations of minorities and women of all races. The most recent case in point is the nomination of Roger L. Gregory. On June 30 this year,

## *Segregated Court*

*Continued from page 5*

President Clinton named Gregory, a Virginian, to fill a seat on the Fourth Circuit that was established by Congress in 1990. With former Virginia Governor L. Douglas Wilder, Gregory is a founding partner of the Richmond-based law firm Wilder & Gregory. Earlier, he had been an associate at two other major firms. From 1981 to 1985, he was an adjunct professor at Virginia State University. Both Virginia senators, Republican John Warner and Democrat Chuck Robb, have supported his nomination.

Despite Gregory's qualifications and support from his state's senators, Judiciary Committee Chairman Hatch has refused to act on the nomination. He justifies his refusal with a strangely circular argument that hands ultimate power over the nomination of Gregory, although he's from Virginia, to Senator Jesse Helms from North Carolina. Hatch argues that since President Clinton originally nominated white North Carolinian Rich J. Leonard for the seat in December 1995, it should go to someone from North Carolina. But Leonard's confirmation was blocked by none other than Jesse Helms, who, as in the case of Beaty and Wynn, refused to return the blue slip on his nomination. So while Chairman Hatch charges that the seat should be reserved for someone from North Carolina, Senator Helms has steadfastly refused to endorse any candidate for the Fourth Circuit from his state who has been nominated by President Clinton. Together, Senators Hatch and Helms have effectively made it impossible for anyone to be confirmed to fill the vacancy.

The President and Senate Democrats reject the notion that the seat is earmarked for a resident of North Carolina. Virginia Democratic Senator Chuck Robb asserted, "In failing to provide Mr. Gregory with a hearing, the Judiciary Committee is abdicating its Constitutional responsibility and is effectively standing in the courthouse door to block this nomination." Robb was alluding to Governor George Wallace who stood in the "schoolhouse door" of the University of Alabama to prevent its racial integration in 1963.

### **Blind to Diversity**

By obstructing the nominations of these well-qualified African Americans, the Republican-controlled Senate has sustained the Fourth Circuit as the only defacto segregated appeals court in the nation. Referring to the monochromatic makeup of the court, President Clinton said in June, "It is long past time to right that wrong. Justice may be blind, but we all know that diversity in the courts, as in all aspects of society, sharpens our vision and makes us a stronger nation." Every federal appeals court, except the Fourth Circuit, has at least one judge from a minority group—African American, Latino, or Asian American. Ten of the 12 circuit courts have at least one black judge, seven have at least one Latino judge, and the Ninth Circuit has an Asian American judge. Each federal circuit bench is supposed to include judges from each state within its jurisdiction. Because of Helms' obstinance, no judge from North Carolina sits on the Fourth Circuit. Hawaii is the only other state that is not represented on an appeals court.

Several other circuit judge nominations of minorities and women of all races have been held up for lengthy periods of time. The nomination of Richard A. Paez, a Latino nominee to the Ninth Circuit Court, is a good example. He had to wait four years to be confirmed. The nomination of Marsha L. Berzon, also Latino and nominated for the Ninth Circuit, took two years. Helene White, who is white, and Kathleen McCree Lewis, an African American, were nominated for judgeships to the Sixth Circuit Court. They were among 16 of Clinton's appeals court nominees still pending in the Senate when Congress adjourned in October. White, along with seven others, was first named for a judgeship before the beginning of this Congress in 1999.

Vermont Senator Patrick Leahy, the ranking Democrat on the Judiciary Committee, said in the waning days of the Congress, "I am troubled... by the fact that women and minorities, if they are nominated for judgeships, have taken longer to go through this Republican-controlled Senate than others, if they are allowed to go through at all."

There has been a struggle over racial diversity in federal judicial appointments since President Harry S Truman named William Hastie, an African American former dean of Howard University's Law School, to the Third Circuit (Delaware, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and the Virgin Islands) in 1949. Presidents Kennedy and Johnson gave priority to black judicial appointments in their administrations. Johnson made history by appointing Thurgood Marshall to the Supreme Court and A. Leon Higginbotham to the Third Circuit Court. The racial diversity of the federal bench was not a priority of President Nixon. But in his one term in office, President Carter named to federal circuit and district courts 38 African Americans, who made up more than 14 percent of his 265 judicial appointments.

Black appointments to federal courts diminished drastically under Republican Presidents Reagan and Bush. In his two terms, Reagan named only seven African Americans to the bench, a mere 2 percent of 385 appointments. Bush did a little better, with 13 black appointments in one term. But acting on his promise to make the federal courts look like America, Bill Clinton has appointed a total of 62 blacks to circuit and district courts, exceeding appointments by Carter, Reagan, and Bush combined. Altogether, about 25 percent of Clinton's judicial appointments were minorities, and 30 percent were women of all races.

Looking ahead, who is elected to the White House and which party controls the Senate will determine what judicial nominations look like for the next four or eight years. The next president may appoint from two to four Supreme Court justices and he will probably appoint 200 circuit and district judges during each term. Who is elected to serve at each end of Pennsylvania Avenue will also determine whether the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals will retain its dubious distinction as the nation's only segregated circuit court. ■

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# Banning Child Soldiers

*A UN Protocol Calls for an End to Using Anyone Under the Age of 18 in Armed Conflicts, But Thousands of Youngsters Continue to Be Brutalized in Wars Around the World*

by Mary K. Garber

**T**o commemorate the Joint Center's 30th anniversary, *FOCUS* is re-examining many of the important social, political, and economic issues covered by the magazine over the last three decades. A year and a half ago, in the May 1999 issue, we looked at the escalating use of children in armed conflicts. Today, conditions remain very nearly the same—an estimated 300,000 of the world's children under the age of 18 are fighting in armies or guerrilla bands in countries across the world. But there is reason for hope as the United Nations begins implementing a newly ratified agreement to end military service by children under the age of 18.

Last month, at the United Nations Millennium Summit, representatives from more than 40 nations added their names to a new international agreement banning the participation of children under the age of 18 in armed conflicts. The protocol, which is attached to the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child, raises the minimum age from 15 to 18 years for direct participation in armed conflicts, as well as for compulsory conscription into military service. Nations are allowed to accept volunteers for military service as young as age 16, as long as they put in place such safeguards as parental permission and proof of age. Governments are also required to assist in efforts to remove all children already in military service and to assist in their reintegration into society.

The signing marked the culmination of a two-year campaign by international human rights organizations to stop the increasingly widespread use of children as pawns of war. Today, as many as 300,000 children under the age of 18 are engaged in military combat in 30 countries around the world—120,000 of those children are in Africa. Thousands of boys and girls, as young as seven and eight, have been abducted from their homes and forced to join armies and guerrilla bands. Some children, particularly those from poor families or already orphaned by war, have been lured into armies by promises of food and security.

Once pressed into these fighting forces, many children face constant brutality. Beatings, intimidation, and rape keep them in line, and they are often drugged to dull their senses and make them easier to control. Children who resist, become sick, or otherwise prove unsuitable are executed, often by other children. Many are forced to commit atrocities against their own families, neighbors, and villages. Young lives are seen by their commanders as expendable. In Colombia, paramilitaries refer to the children as "little bells," because they are sent to march in front to clear

minefields, warn of ambushes, or draw enemy fire away from the adult soldiers.

Even when children manage to escape, they often find they are no longer welcomed by their families and communities to return to the lives they had before they were soldiers. Without education, skills, or social support, these children are nearly certain to turn to crime. And beyond the countless numbers of children killed and physically maimed are those who have suffered enduring psychological trauma. Children who have been exposed to systematic violence and brutality lose the ability to sympathize with others.

To date, a total of 70 member nations have endorsed the protocol. In spite of the United States' previous opposition to it, President Clinton signed the protocol in July, making the United States one of eight member nations to ratify the agreement at the summit. The United States had originally opposed the treaty because about 3,000 of our 1.3 million troops were then 17 years old. Under the terms of the new treaty, the United States will agree to refrain from placing 17-year-olds in combat situations. Although this may seem a rather minor inconvenience, it is a groundbreaking concession, since it marks the first time that the U.S. armed forces have agreed to make any change in its regulations or laws in order to conform with a human rights standard set by the United Nations. Because the protocol is attached to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, it normally would be available for signature only by those states that are parties to the convention. Somalia and the United States are the only two member nations that have refused to sign the convention. In deference to the United States' important role, the rules have been amended to allow it to sign the protocol without implying any endorsement of the convention.

Members of The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers are pleased by this initial victory, but see it only as a first step. The organization continues to push for states to agree to an even higher standard what it calls a "straight 18" ban that prohibits children under the age of 18, regardless of whether they are conscripts or volunteers, from serving in any capacity in the armed forces of nations or rebel groups. The group has also succeeded in having the recruitment of children under the age of 15 (whether compulsory or voluntary) included in the definition of war crimes and crimes against humanity, which are covered by the statutes of the International Criminal Court. The new International Labour Organization Convention 182 also includes military recruitment of children under age 18 among its list of the worst forms of child labor.

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## Look-a-Like

Continued from page 4

Other issues should be taken into account as citizens go to the polls on November 7— extending healthcare coverage to 44 million uninsured Americans, expanding child immunization, and supporting AIDS treatment and education programs. And since about 90 percent of the nation's children of all colors go to public schools, we need to make critical investments in public education for more teachers and new and upgraded facilities.

Whether the issue is federal judges, the minimum wage, or inequitable drug laws, voters should understand that each major candidate for president will treat these critical issues differently. It is therefore vital that everyone participate in the election of the next president, and elect the candidate they believe will put together an administration that can address these concerns. ■

## Child Soldiers

Continued from page 7

While the adoption of the new protocol marks progress toward protection of the rights of the world's children, its exact impact remains uncertain. Much depends on how rigorously and responsibly nations follow the new rules and impose sanctions against those who fail to comply. Rory Mungoven, coordinator of the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, suggests that nations with clout, such as the United States, can help ensure the measure's success by linking military assistance and arms sales to compliance with the protocol.

The importance of protecting the world's children can hardly be overstated. For many developing nations already devastated by the horrors of war, any hopes for breaking their cycles of violence and instability rest with the next generation. If that generation has experienced only violence, chances are diminished that they will be up to the difficult task of bringing the peace and stability that have eluded their countries. ■

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October 2000

# TRENDLETTER

## POLITICAL REPORT

by Mary K. Garber

### Who Will Rule the House?

On November 7, some pivotal congressional elections to watch involve black candidates. With the GOP holding only a six-seat majority in the U.S. House of Representatives, every one of the 435 House races will count in determining which party wins control. Profiles of three races with black candidates follow. They include a black female Republican, the son of a retiring incumbent, and the challenger to a celebrity widow.

### Another First for Black Women?

On November 7, Joan B. Johnson could make history by becoming the first black Republican woman elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. The 66-year-old town clerk of Islip, New York (on Long Island), is running for the 2nd Congressional District seat being vacated by Republican Rick Lazio. Lazio is running in a nationally publicized race against Democrat Hillary Rodham Clinton for New York's open U.S. Senate seat. Johnson won her party's nomination on September 12 by beating financial advisor Robert T. Walsh in the GOP primary.

A moderate Republican, Johnson supports gun control legislation and

reproductive choice for women. She has been elected to her position as town clerk of Islip five times, by increasingly larger margins. As town clerk, she maintains the records, books, and papers of the town where about 50 percent of the congressional district's population resides. A long-time resident of Islip, Johnson has also been elected twice to the school board and served as its vice president. A former teacher, she holds a master's degree in social welfare from the State University of New York at Stony Brook. She was recognized last year by the State Senate as one of New York's most distinguished women.

Her chances in the general election are improved by the split in the local Democratic Party. In the Democratic primary in September, Steven B. Israel, majority leader of the Huntington Town Board, narrowly defeated his opponent, Suffolk County legislator David Bishop, by 400 votes to become the Democratic nominee. But Bishop remains on the ballot as the candidate of the Independence, Working Families, and Green parties and may siphon off Democratic votes from Israel. About 56 percent of the registered voters in the 2nd District are Republicans, giving Johnson an edge.

But Johnson faces a split in her own party as well. Her Republican primary opponent, Robert Walsh, has also opted to stay on the ballot as the Right to Life candidate even though Johnson defeated him by a vote of 61 percent to 39 percent in the primary.

The 2nd District, which is ethnically and economically diverse, is generally considered a moderate Republican stronghold. While it has one of the highest per capita incomes in the country, it also contains substantial blue-collar and middle-class areas and the state's largest population of Latinos outside of New York City. And the district has a history of surprises. In 1974, voters there unexpectedly elected Tom Downey, who was not only a Democrat but only 25 years old at the time. After he had served 18 years in Congress, the district voted Downey out in 1992 in favor of Lazio. With several candidates on this year's ballot, it remains to be seen if Johnson can carve out a winning number of votes from the middle.

### Another Political Progeny

William Lacy Clay, Jr., is seeking to follow in his father's footsteps, running for Missouri's 1st District congressional seat, which has been held by the elder Clay since 1968. William L. Clay, Sr., formally announced his retirement on May 24, but it had been long expected (see TrendLetter, August 1999). Also as expected, the younger Clay (who goes by the name of Lacy) officially entered the race two weeks after his father's announcement.

Once considered a radical, William L. Clay, Sr., was one of the founders of the Congressional Black Caucus. He became the House of Representatives' third longest serving member

and the ranking Democrat on the Education and the Workforce Committee. During his 32 years on Capitol Hill, Clay Sr. remained true to his liberal principles. He was a strong supporter of labor, civil rights, education, health care, and women's reproductive rights. He nearly always voted with the Clinton administration against the GOP majority. His legislative achievements include passage of the Family and Medical Leave Act and changes to the Hatch Act, which permits federal employees and postal workers to participate in political campaigns on their own time.

Lacy Clay plans to focus on education, protecting Social Security and Medicare, workers' rights, and tax relief for working families, all issues that suggest similarities between son and father. But the 43-year-old Lacy Clay doesn't need to run on his father's record, he has one of his own. For 16 years, he has served in the Missouri state legislature, first in the House and then in the Senate, where he has been a member of the Appropriations Committee for eight years. His major achievements at the state level include raising the amount of money that welfare recipients are allowed to earn without losing their benefits as they make the transition from welfare to work; allowing families to establish family development accounts to save money for education, job training, home ownership, or starting a small business; and sponsoring a state hate-crimes-law, and subsequently expanding the law to cover crimes against persons based on their sexual orientation, gender, or disability. He also sponsored the Youth Opportunities and Violence Prevention Act, establishing YouthBuild, which offers job training to youth.

Lacy Clay was born in St. Louis and attended public schools first in St. Louis and then in Silver Spring, Maryland, after his father's election to

the U.S. House of Representatives. He holds a bachelor of science degree in government and politics from the University of Maryland.

Missouri's 1st District covers the majority of downtown St. Louis and the eastern portion of St. Louis County. African Americans comprise the majority of the district's population (52 percent) while whites constitute 46 percent. (Asians and Latinos together make up another 2 percent). The district consists largely of poor inner-city neighborhoods and middle-class suburbs. Lacy Clay won the August 8 Democratic primary by a margin of two-to-one and is likely to win the general election against black Republican Z. Dwight Billingsly, a former St. Louis deputy comptroller.

### **California Long Shot**

In a campaign that hasn't received much national attention, black Democrat Ron Oden is hoping to unseat Mary Bono in California's 44th Congressional District. Bono holds the seat previously held by her late husband Sonny Bono, who became famous as half of the 1960s duo Sonny and Cher. After Sonny Bono was killed in a skiing accident in January 1998, Mary Bono, a former cocktail waitress and a partner in her husband's restaurant business, was appointed to the seat and, four months later, won the special election to continue as the district's representative. The district is located in East Riverside County and includes the city of Palm Springs.

Mary Bono's legislative record has generally mirrored that of her GOP colleagues in the House. As a member of the judiciary committee, she voted to impeach President Clinton. She voted against affirmative action in education admissions, against the city of San Francisco's use of federal funds to enforce its domestic partners benefit law, and against campaign finance

reform. She opposes federal funding of abortions and supports privatizing Social Security and using public money to fund private school vouchers.

Oden's campaign focuses on education issues, which is not surprising since he has served for the last decade as an instructor and administrator at the College of the Desert in the district. His political experience includes five years as a member of the Palm Springs City Council and one year as mayor pro tem of the city. Among his top achievements, he lists the founding of the Palm Springs Human Rights Commission, which he chaired, and the creation of the Recapture Our Neighborhoods (RON) program, a private-public partnership involving community leaders, local officials, and law enforcement in an effort to improve neighborhood safety. Oden also serves on the boards of a number of community organizations, including the Coachella Valley Housing Coalition, Riverside County Community Action Commission, and Riverside Workforce Development.

Oden's educational background is diverse. He holds a bachelor's degree in history, sociology, and theology from Oakwood College in Huntsville, Alabama, and completed graduate work in ethnic studies at the State University of New York in Albany. He went on to receive a degree in theology at Andrews University in Michigan. He also studied Marriage, family, and child counseling at Loma Linda University.

Although Bono is not considered a political heavyweight, Oden will have a tough time trying to defeat her. The district is only 5 percent black, 3 percent Asian American, and 28 percent Hispanic. Bono also has the twin advantages of incumbency and name recognition. ■

# ECONOMIC REPORT

by Margaret C. Simms

## Prosperity at Home, Poverty Abroad

In September, the U.S. Bureau of the Census issued two reports showing that in 1999 economic growth continued to be reflected in higher money income and lower poverty rates for all segments of the U.S. population. There was more good news in another Census report released in September, which showed a decline in the proportion of the population without health insurance coverage, the first decrease in over a decade. In contrast, a report from the World Bank indicates that poverty in non-industrialized countries remains extremely high, despite a move toward free markets among many countries.

## Lower Poverty and More Health Insurance

The Census Bureau's reports indicate that in 1999 median household income reached record highs for most population groups, including African Americans. For the U.S. population as a whole, it was \$40,816, up 2.7 percent from 1998. African American households had a median income of \$27,910, somewhat lower than that of Hispanics (\$30,735). While the median for African Americans was only 63 percent of the median for white households (\$44,366), it was 10 percent higher than in 1998 (\$25,351). The median household income for Asian Americans was \$51,205. For the first time, the Census Bureau included household income for American Indian and

Alaska Native populations in their annual income report (\$30,784). However, because of the small sample size in the Current Population Survey for these last two groups, a three-year average was used.

Poverty rates declined substantially during 1999, reaching historic lows among all major racial and ethnic groups except whites. The overall poverty rate of 11.8 was the lowest since 1979 and nearly one percentage point below the rate of 12.7 a year earlier. The poverty rate for children (16.9) was also the lowest in 20 years. For African Americans the poverty rate was 23.6 percent, which meant that approximately 700,000 fewer African Americans were in poverty than the year before. There are significant differences in poverty rates depending on family type (see table). For example, African American families headed by women without husbands had the highest rates, with nearly 4 in 10 such families living in poverty. The poverty rate for black children under age 18, a majority of

whom live in single-headed families, was 33.1 percent— twice the rate for all children.

Another report released by the Census Bureau revealed that 42.6 million or 15.5 percent of the population went without health insurance during the entire year of 1999. This is a decline from 16.3 percent in 1998 and the first decrease since 1987. The actual number without insurance went down by 1.7 million between 1998 and 1999. The rates of uninsured fell significantly from 1998 to 1999, for non-Hispanic whites (11.9 to 11.0 percent) and for Hispanics (35.3 to 33.4 percent). For African Americans the rate declined from 22.2 to 21.1 percent, but this difference was not significant.

For the most part, the rates of insurance coverage rose because of higher employment rates. Nearly 63 percent of the population received health insurance through their employers. The poor and near-poor (including many under the poverty

**People and Families in Poverty, by Race and Family Type: 1999**

	Non-Hispanic White	Black	Asian and Pacific Islander	Hispanic*
Individuals	7.7%	23.6%	10.7%	22.8%
All Families	5.5	21.9	10.3	20.2
Married Couples	3.3	7.1	8.1	14.2
Female-Headed Households	18.6	39.3	23.1	38.8
Male-Headed Households	9.3	14.7	11.3	16.8

\*Hispanics may be of any race  
Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

level with jobs) were more likely to be without insurance, even though government programs focus on these groups. However, in 1999, health insurance coverage was extended to include more children, a reflection of the expansion of the federally funded Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). For black children, the uninsurance rate dropped from 17.9 percent in 1998 to 16.7 percent.

### Attacking Poverty Worldwide

In early September, the World Bank released *World Development Report 2000/2001: Attacking Poverty*. According to the organization's president, James D. Wolfensohn, this report "seeks to expand the understanding of poverty and its causes and sets out actions to create a world free of poverty in all its dimensions." The report points to reductions in poverty and acknowledges that the existence of a free market system alone is not enough to ensure that economic gains are shared by all. It identifies three areas for concerted action: promoting opportunity, facilitating empowerment, and enhancing security.

The report states that nearly half (2.8 billion) of the six billion people in the world live on less than the equivalent of \$2 a day; over one billion live on less than the equivalent of \$1. While the number living on only \$1 declined in East Asia between 1987 and 1998, during the same period it grew in Latin America, South Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa (see figure). The numbers of people in such dire conditions also rose in parts of Europe and Asia that have been categorized as "in transition to market economies," that is, places emerging from economies under former communist rule.

In many poor countries, the report notes, half of all children may be malnourished. Infant mortality is highest in Sub-Saharan Africa, where

the rate per 1,000 live births is over ten times higher than in high-income countries. Continuing conflicts and the spread of HIV/AIDS are cited as major reasons why there is so little social and economic progress in this part of the world.

After reviewing the grim statistics, the report sets forth a comprehensive agenda for action. The authors acknowledge that reducing poverty requires far more complicated strategies than those set forth by the World Bank in prior decades. They also note that their blueprint will have to be adapted to national and local circumstances. Among the strategies offered are the following:

*Promoting Opportunity:* Expanding access to the Internet so entrepreneurs can reach export markets at lower cost; fostering schooling by involving parents and communities and by developing stay-in-school programs.

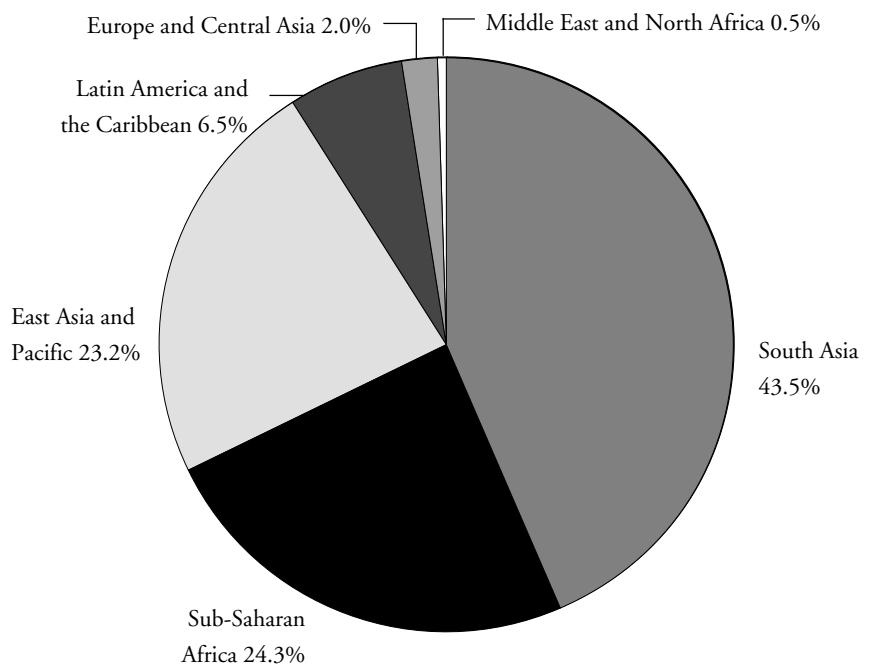
*Empowerment:* Decentralizing public-service delivery to foster community-driven choices for resource allocation; promoting gender equity through increased education, legal reform, and micro-enterprise development.

*Security:* Moderating the impact of financial and economic reversals with programs to insure loans and maintain social programs in recession; addressing civil conflict.

Examples of successful efforts in all areas are offered throughout the report, along with statements from poor people around the world.

For more information, go to [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov) (U.S. Money Income and Poverty, Health Insurance Coverage: 1999) and [www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org) (World Development). On the Joint Center website, [www.jointcenter.org](http://www.jointcenter.org), see Databank and factsheets. ■

**Where the developing world's poor live, 1998**  
Distribution of world's population living on less than a dollar a day



Source: World Bank