



# The United States

## Not Yet “E Pluribus Unum”: Racism, America’s Achilles’ Heel

By Charles V. Hamilton

### Introduction

“E pluribus unum” – out of many, one. Americans are proud of this motto. It signifies an aspiration, an ideal of a united society committed to a common set of principles and goals. Americans imprint this motto on their currency and display it on public buildings. It represents the noble sentiments of the Preamble to the Constitution of the United States: to establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, secure the blessings of liberty. Indeed, American pride in this motto is as much a part of the essence of “Americanism” as the pledge of allegiance to the flag, which enunciates “one nation, under God, with liberty and justice for all.” Americans have a propensity for the grand declaration, the articulation of high societal purposes, even as they constantly recognize that such pronouncements reflect predilections, not necessarily realities.

Certainly this disjunction between pronouncement and reality has been manifested throughout American history in the glaring failure to fully incorporate peoples of African descent under the banner of “e pluribus unum.” Slavery, human peonage, legal racial segregation, *de facto* discrimination have served to undermine achievement of the “unum.” “Racism” has been and remains America’s Achilles’ heel, its vulnerable spot in its profession of a society dedicated to the protection and prosperity of all.

But the motto persists. To some it is a reminder of what the society at least formally strives to achieve, even if it falls painfully and embarrassingly short much of the time. It is an expression of the best instincts *and intents* of the society as a whole. To others it is a kind of weapon to point up the hypocrisy, weakness and venality of a society whose entire history is fraught with *calculated and intended* contradictions of the motto.

In any case, one can expect to be reminded of the motto at every turn. It greeted waves of immigrants from Europe in the 19th century and served as a guide for subsequent upward mobility for many of those from that continent who came seeking religious freedom and, above all, opportunity to acquire property and a decent livelihood. The deal was, for many, readily acceptable – namely, subscribe to certain precepts of “Americanism”: self-reliance, loyalty to their new country, respect for individual rights and private property. To many immigrants, this was a bargain worth entering, and, without question, to many it was a contract reasonably fulfilled. One political scientist described the experience as follows:

*... for the immigrants, becoming an American could mean accepting and identifying with American social, economic, and political values and institutions – whose appeal had, of course, been a principal reason for their immigration in the first place. In effect, a bargain was struck: ethnic groups retained so long as they wished their ethnic identity, but they converted to American political values, ideals, and symbols. Adherence to the latter was the test of how “American” one was, and it was perfectly compatible with the maintenance of ethnic culture and traditions. The primordial or organic ties remained in large part ethnic; the political or ideological ties were American.<sup>1</sup>*

To say the bargain was struck does not, by any means, suggest that there was no breach of the agreement. Ethnic historical experience in the United States is replete with accounts of overt segregation and discrimination. Employment signs at factory gates in the 19th century advised: “No Irish Need Apply.” Resorts and recreational facilities advertised: “No dogs or Jews

Allowed." "Gentiles Only" signs were common in rental and employment ads. In some instances, these anti-ethnic acts simply went unchallenged and were tacitly accepted until a burgeoning civil rights movement for protection of African Americans was launched. In other instances, the ethnic groups formed their own socioeconomic, communal associations that helped them negotiate the worst practices of a prejudicial society. In addition, one historian noted: "However prejudiced White Anglo-Saxons were in practice, they were ashamed to endorse nativism [anti-foreign, anti-Catholic, anti-Semitic, anti-Negro] in principle. Equally important, an expanding economy in an under-populated country required a steady influx of new hands. Immigration alleviated the labor shortage, and economic need overpowered moral and aesthetic repugnance." <sup>2</sup>

All of this, obviously, was a delicate, subtle process. No one assumed that national identities would disappear immediately, but such identities should not be a hindrance to success through individual enterprise and capitalist competition. The delicacy was magnified by the fact that African descendants in this new land of opportunity were at the same time experiencing precisely different circumstances. They and their forebears came as property, not seeking property. They were not expected to be self-reliant. Rather, dependency was a requirement of their residence. The open, competitive market—either their accumulation of assets or their ability to market their skills in fair competition—never applied to them.

Needless to say, immigrants from Asian countries were closer to African descendants than European in terms of their legal and economic conditions. What remained distinctive about the African Americans, of course, was the mode of entry. They came as property and had to spend centuries establishing their sheer humanity as a matter of law before they could begin to function as citizens.

Little wonder that a society with such a fractured, differential history of group relations and experiences would have a serious problem dealing with such a lofty motto as "e pluribus unum." Various groups view that phrase from their own experiential vantagepoint. To some it is a reasonable reflection of reality, not quite complete, but in time will likely become so. To others, it is a source of understandable cynicism and frustration, especially when counseled by the more privileged—White and Black—to behave with patience, perseverance and forgiveness.

One lesson learned is that America's Achilles' heel is not so easily dispatched.

## What's To Be Done and How: The Necessity for Coalitions

Discussions and actions on race, racism and race relations continue in the United States as the country moves into the 21st century. "The problem of the color line," aptly described by W.E.B. Du Bois in 1903, appears to be no less intense now as it was when he wrote those words over 90 years ago.<sup>3</sup> Americans of all races and ethnic identities continue to grapple with seemingly interminable problems, albeit different now in many significant ways—politically, socially and economically. Even as debates persist over how to identify racial groups (or, indeed, whether race *per se* is a relevant category or simply a "socially constructed" one with no scientific justification), the causes of racial disparities and the remedies to be pursued in overcoming those inequalities,

the country has seen a plethora of conferences, studies, reports and calls for constructive action. All this is taking place even as there is evidence (cited later) that most Americans do not see race relations as a top priority. A familiar mantra accompanying these activities asserts that on the one hand progress has been made, but on the other hand "there is more to be done."

It is precisely what constitutes this future action ("what's to be done") that bedevils and dominates the current status of race, racism and race relations in the United States. No one denies the more than 300 years of legally sanctioned slavery, segregation, and discrimination of Blacks. A crucial debate, however, is how important that legacy is or should be. No one denies that Blacks in the United States were deliberately subordinated and denied opportunities to advance. The people who perpetrated these acts were openly explicit and unapologetic in their intent. A critical debate now centers around at least two current themes. First, since there are no longer constitutional and legal restrictions requiring or permitting such restrictions, why is there a continuing need to give protection to the former "victims?" Second, the current discussions include far more groups than occupied attention until only a few decades ago. What about non-Black groups (e.g., immigrants from places other than Africa); women who were also denied constitutional and legal rights; homosexuals; senior citizens; and the physically handicapped?

Thus, the current situation in the United States has seen the growing arena of groups, in addition to African Americans, who have come forth to claim their status as legitimate beneficiaries of a civil rights movement started essentially in the name and interest of Blacks. In a sense, this move-

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ment unleashed a host of frustrations and indignities experienced by other groups in the society. As logical as this development might seem, it has not been without its opponents.<sup>4</sup> And, important to understanding how the future is likely to unfold, this new dimension of expanded claimants significantly affects the development and success of political movements attempting to combat continued racial discrimination. In other words, there is little prospect in the near future of successful efforts to deal with race without corresponding efforts to deal with sexism and socioeconomic inequalities that cross racial and ethnic boundaries. A recent survey published by the Southern Regional Council concluded:

*Americans are more supportive of public policies designed to offer help based on economic status than those targeted at racial minorities. The class versus race edge prevails regarding government spending priorities, affirmative action programs, and general policies to improve socioeconomic conditions.*<sup>5</sup>

... virtually everyone mouthed "e pluribus unum," but they also winked. The "unum" really meant only under certain, quietly understood circumstances.

This latter point has been a bone of contention for some time. Earlier, some observers fervently argued (even in the worst years of legal oppression) that the main problem was "not race but class." Put simply, race was a camouflage, a disguise to hide an intent to wage a carefully crafted "class war" against all of the poor. Thus, if the White poor could see Blacks as their enemy, they would divert their focus away from the real cause of their own lowly plight, namely the White affluent. This argument persists today, but its progressive proponents are currently more sophisticated in conceding the independent role of racism in this complex situation, notwithstanding the passage of laws prohibiting overt discrimination. At least, the current analyses— from across the political spectrum— tend to recognize that race and socioeconomic status are simultaneously important factors in dealing with existing economic disparities in the society.

The urge to subordinate race to class was also motivated (even if ever so subtly) by the notion that if race/racism was given a prominent position, the matter would likely not be sufficiently treated. Antagonistic racial feelings (historically intertwined with sexual relations) were so deeply embedded that many people simply felt such issues were beyond the bounds of rational public discourse. Racial fears were not what "polite" company talked about openly, as Gunnar Myrdal observed in his study of this country's "dilemma."<sup>6</sup>

These were matters best left unprobed for fear of uncovering a hard core of animosity, fear, almost "innate" abhorrence of "the other," the different, and especially the "dark heathen" and the desire "to be with one's own kin and kind." Better then to avoid (if not to deny) the issue by clothing it in other forms such as economic conditions and the need for education. This way, society could more comfortably (and that is exactly the appropriate word) deal with policies aimed at helping all people afflicted with common problems (unemployment, poor health, bad education, etc.). These were acquired, not ascriptive problems. They did not require people to focus on things that seemed immutable (such as physical racial features). They also permitted another more comfortable mind-set— namely, a

focus on individual effort. If one applied oneself, worked hard, played by society's rules, did not dwell on racial discrimination based on a group's identity, but strove to improve one's own talents in a competitive society, the American system of egalitarianism and individual merit would reward

such behavior— in time.<sup>7</sup> Wasn't this, after all, one of the important lessons of other identifiable groups (especially the European immigrants) coming to this country and faced with dire conditions of discrimination? Was it not the lesson inspired by Jews, Asians (especially the "model minorities"), Irish, Italians and many others? They relied on tightly knit communal associations, complained little or not at all about overt discriminatory practices (in some cases adopting such practices to their own self-help endeavors), and slowly lifted themselves as individuals and as members of a group.

Whether this was a way to avoid (or deny) the centrality of the Black/White conundrum, this attitude very likely was a powerful one in influencing (in fact, politicizing) how Americans thought about racism and race relations. And equally as likely, still do. They extrapolated out— not from the idealistic words of the Declaration of Independence or Constitution— but from their own historical and current experiences. They were assimilating into the American way of receiving those different from themselves. And to a large extent, if this approach worked for them, then why not for others? To be sure, virtually everyone mouthed "e pluribus unum," but they also winked. The "unum" really meant only under certain, quietly understood circumstances. How was the process orchestrated? The answer: by not raising too loudly the obvious dominance of one element, while the various "many" took whatever opportunities they could get to improve their lot. This was America's pragmatic way



of coming to terms with its internal contradictions— with its Achilles' heel.

Precisely because of this persistent proclivity to dodge issues of racism and prejudice, no useful discussion should proceed without recognizing the need to address how issues are framed and organizations mobilized to confront the multiple problems of racial, economic and gender inequities still plaguing society. In other words, what is to be done will be determined by a serious consideration of how to articulate the "solutions."

This current reality will be complicated by the different historical experiences of the various groups and, particularly important, the differential political power of the groups. The latter point speaks to the crucial matter of forming political alliances so necessary for building effective strategies in policy-making circles. Needless to say, the finite resources available in attempts to ameliorate unequal conditions aggravate this problem.<sup>8</sup> Under any configuration of political-economic power, African Americans are a clear minority and as a group are likely to remain so. Unlike South Africa or even Brazil, sheer numbers cannot be a particularly encouraging factor in the African-American calculus of what is to be done. Thus, they must seek to form coalitions with others who have similar interests and needs or who have a need to seek support from the group at any given time for their own special interests. This will be difficult for a variety of reasons. Except under the most unusual circumstances will those who have more give up willingly even a portion of what they have to those who have much less. Moral, philosophical arguments in the face of entrenched self-interests are valuable but should not be taken as inevitably controlling.

The rest of this essay attempts to respond to these complex, difficult and perennial matters.

### What Has Been Done and Why: Pressure at Home and International Vulnerability

What have been the primary historical developments that have shaped the current reality? This question obviously focuses attention on the accelerating struggle against racism over the last half century. It is impossible to overlook or underestimate the rising protest movements— in the courts, legislatures, and executive branches— that raised the society's consciousness of and receptivity to the demand of justice and opportunity. These efforts were tedious, halting, at times violent, and in many important instances successful. They successfully ended de jure segregation, greatly extended voting rights to places (especially in the South) correctly described as "closed societies," and opened up

several arenas of socioeconomic activity previously off-limits— in the public and private sectors. The stories of these developments have been told often and well. To be sure, accounts disagree on the relative weight given to various forms of protest action. Hardly surprising. Some accounts lean heavily toward the efficacy of the constitutional/legal challenges pursued through the courts, noting the significance of redefining and overturning long-held constitutional precedents (such as the "separate but equal" doctrine allowing legal segregation).

This period represented perhaps the greatest display of liberal coalition politics in modern American history. The civil rights movement activated not only Black Americans but liberal religious, labor, youth (especially on college campuses) and multi-racial civic organizations as well. Many conducted protest campaigns in their own local communities, raised funds for support of voter registration drives and other anti-segregation efforts, joined important lobbying in Congress, and were a viable presence in tense areas of conflict. Organized labor was an important source for support funds and providing numbers for protest marches and other activities. Many local unions in the North were especially helpful, but some were also part of the problem. Many local craft unions practiced racial discrimination well into the 1960s in apprenticeship programs and in various other ways. This caused a constant battle between civil rights leaders and national labor leaders. The latter were officially on record in support of civil rights but maintained that they could not (and would not attempt to) expel locals who pursued discriminatory practices and openly excluded Blacks. This punishment was a test of commitment called for by civil rights leaders, but without success. The coalition of labor and civil rights forces was a crucial one, but one constantly characterized by friction between "friendly allies."

Civil rights groups always supported the basic aims and policies of organized labor— the right to organize and bargain collectively, union shops, minimum wage, improved working conditions, and broader benefits— and they clearly recognized the value of the labor movement, politically and economically. At the same time, several very important union affiliates were unapologetically segregated. (This was truer of the craft unions than of the industrial unions). Roy Wilkins of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) summed up the reality:

*It must be understood that all organized bodies have their primary and secondary purposes. The primary purpose of the NAACP is to combat discrimination against Negroes. The primary purpose of labor organizations is to protect the wages, hours, and working*

*conditions of its members. Civil rights activity for them is desirable but must be secondary. Inevitably these differences in emphasis will produce tensions in greater or less degree.*<sup>9</sup>

And so they did, but no one misunderstood that organized labor and civil rights forces were essentially in the same liberal/progressive camp. Their main common constituencies came from the working classes— Black and White.

Another major force was the religious community. The Black church had always been important in organizing and leading protests as far back as the struggle for the abolition of slavery. The church was a central (in many instances the only) meeting place for civil rights groups, and Black ministers were natural leaders to turn to. If a large part of the civil rights struggle was the moral argument supporting universal human rights and dignity, one could expect religious institutions to be key participants in making that case. Especially important were prominent white leaders — Christians and Jews— who joined nationally and locally. All the religious activity symbolized the prospect of interracial harmony, non-violent protest, and the ultimate possibility of achieving what was frequently called “the beloved community.”<sup>10</sup> This religious imprimatur gave the struggle not only a strong moral stance but also a kind of “softer,” more forgiving, more reconciling, less antagonistic edge than could be found in a sheer politico-economic power struggle. It spoke of loving one’s enemy, not of permanent anger. It served to remind the larger society of the basic humanness of the goals sought. Not that these arguments were always readily or universally accepted or believed by racist opponents who often had their own religious interpretations justifying separation of the races.

In the final analysis, the religious/moral component of the civil rights struggle in the United States, at its peak in the 1960s, was a crucial factor on the national and international scene.

Some observers note the critical role played by mass protest movements, which provided not only the issues but the drama that brought into sharper focus the injustices frequently talked about in quasi-private, polite forums or courtrooms. This view is quick to emphasize the importance of mass media in communicating these dramas.

In 1963, President John F. Kennedy was candidly, if cryptically, admitting as much in commenting on the effects of the violent reactions of the Birmingham, Alabama, police to the peaceful civil rights demonstrations in that city. After the Commissioner of Safety, Eugene “Bull” Connor, ordered dogs and fire hoses turned loose on marching protesters, media pictures were on front pages and television screens throughout the world. In a meeting a few weeks later at the

White House with civil rights leaders, Kennedy commented that opinion of Connor should not be too harsh because, in his own way, he had done a lot for civil rights that spring. The moral outrage that erupted nationwide provided a more receptive atmosphere for the President to submit a stronger civil rights bill to Congress (which later passed as the Civil Rights Law of 1964). A vast national and international audience was getting, really for the first time, constant living-room exposure to the depths of feelings, frustrations and aspirations of thousands (who very likely represented millions more) who were no longer prepared to suffer the indignities of American apartheid quietly.

These were definitely dynamic events, accompanied by stimulating oratory calling on the country to live up to its high ideals of freedom, justice and opportunity. All these phenomena helped politicize and mobilize a major national constituency for changing the old order. Even the “long hot summers” of urban rioting in the 1960s served to highlight the growing frustrations, notwithstanding the possibility, as some commentators asserted, that many of the rioters were likely as motivated by criminal opportunities for looting and personal gain as they were by the chance to make a political statement. Strongly condemned as lawless, the riots certainly found voices of understanding among policymakers and opinion leaders who, while calling for an end to the rioting, knew that something more than promises had to be delivered. Indeed, laws were passed— good ones. Changes did occur— important ones. Study commissions were appointed (nationally and locally) and, invariably, acknowledged that “more needs to be done” to redress legitimate grievances.

The early to mid-1960s was a period of enormous socioeconomic political change in the country. Major civil rights laws and social policies were enacted. In a sense, this period was more liberal and progressive than the New Deal of the 1930s. The 1960s not only dealt with economic issues; it provided the legislative framework for dismantling legal apartheid and extending political rights that the New Deal left intact. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 were seminal pieces of legislation for this country.

In addition, in the wake of the trauma from the assassination of President Kennedy, President Lyndon B. Johnson announced a new thrust at reducing poverty in the country. This War on Poverty (Economic Opportunity Act of 1964) was accompanied by a prolific output of liberal legislation. In the 89th Congress— 1965 to 1967— 181 bills of the 200 Johnson requested were passed. There were major new health care provisions attached to Social Security (Medicare) and for the poor (Medicaid), aid to elementary and secondary education with provisions for additional

grant money to poorer school districts, work-study grants for college students, model cities funds for community development projects, rent supplements for needy tenants, aid to urban mass transit systems, support for the arts and humanities and environmental protection laws.

The Johnson administration labeled this bevy of liberal public policy activity as policies in pursuit of "The Great Society." And, indeed, for a brief time, there was enthusiastic and spirited activity in desolated, isolated communities—North and South. The most public attention focused on the "community action" programs of the War on Poverty. The law promised to have "the maximum feasible participation" of persons in the communities to be served; that is, participation in decision-making on how the incoming federal funds would be spent. Several problems quickly developed, which were not entirely unpredictable. First, political control of the local organizations planning and implementing the programs (budget-making, hiring personnel, designing programs) would be an issue in many places. These local battles were not always racial, but were also power struggles between groups and individuals eager to reap the spoils of the incoming federal largess. Second, the programs mostly emphasized providing social services to the poor, whereas some policy-makers wanted a War on Poverty that put far more emphasis on creating real public sector jobs for people in the poor communities. This issue was connected to a third problem: money. The national budget for the endeavor was annual, subject to approval each year, which made long-term planning and attracting first-rate officials precarious at best. And, of course, complaints were made that too little money was appropriated for the task, given the enormous socioeconomic problems throughout the country.<sup>11</sup>

However, a number of successful individual programs resulted from this burst of liberal activity. "Head Start," early education programs for poor preschoolers, proved to be very beneficial overall. Health programs for poor mothers and infants helped many young people get a healthy start in life. School lunch programs fed many children who came to school hungry through no fault of their own. Job Corps programs for the young gave work experience. These successes were easily overlooked or undermined, however, by the more glaring internecine fights and charges of fraud and corruption. And as in most ambitious undertakings, there were just enough proven cases of fraud and ineptness to arm conservatives who never agreed with the basic philosophy of governmental assistance in the first place.

Whatever the faults and weaknesses of particular anti-poverty programs, those programs acknowledged that society was committed to helping provide opportunity to the less fortunate. On both fronts—civil rights and social wel-

fare—the Great Society, if only for a brief time, made more than salutary efforts to doing something tangible in the struggle to achieve "e pluribus unum."

It was also a time, unfortunately, when the country was becoming increasingly involved in the Vietnam War, competing not only for federal budget funds, but for attention from social activists who had been helpful in the anti-segregation movement. As the country seemed to be, if ever so painfully, coming to grips with its racial anxieties at home, it was beginning to unravel over a questionable venture in Southeast Asia that would prove as demoralizing and confrontational at home as any phenomenon since the Civil War.

These developments culminated in the 1960s, and that heightened period of social protest movements has not reappeared since. In fact, a perceptible backlash began in the late 1960s. Many people concluded that reforms had gone too far, too fast. Now that laws were on the books clearly prohibiting segregation and discrimination, individuals now needed to spend time less time protesting and more time preparing themselves to take advantage of the opportunities these laws opened up. The past was behind us; those horrible days were over. No longer would society have to contend with decisions (public or private) made on the basis of racial identity. If before, people were treated as members of subordinated groups, this would and should now give way to treatment of people on the basis of individual merit—all people.

Therefore, in the midst of the dynamic decade of the 1960s, when some civil rights proponents suggested what they meant by "more needs to be done," their ideas met a wall of resistance that persists three decades later in debates over affirmative action. Looking at the history of segregation and continuing racism, Whitney M. Young Jr. of the National Urban League proposed in 1963 a limited period of five years for paying special attention to those subject to past American apartheid. He envisioned an effort in the United States similar to the post-World War II U.S. Marshall Plan to help rebuild war-torn Europe. Thus, he called for a "Domestic Marshall Plan." He argued that this was fair and sound policy. Otherwise, how else could the nation overcome centuries of deliberate and successful policies of deprivation and denial? To him, this was a stark reality.<sup>12</sup> It was as real as the need to deal with the consequences of weakened European countries. He emphasized the need for "better housing (and) more jobs," stating:

*If we embark upon a five-year program to end slum conditions, for example, people would see visible signs of change after the first year, and they would believe that the nation really means to end slums and they know that they too will have decent housing in a mea-*



*surable and short period of time. Only such a timetable will convince the ghetto population that conditions are changing and riots can only retard advances.*<sup>13</sup>

Young and the National Urban League were not then (or now) perceived as one of the more "militant" or "radical" protest groups. Far from it. The organization had an established reputation of working with corporate and government authorities on a cooperative, almost conciliatory, basis. Coming from such a "respectable" source, the Domestic Marshall Plan idea could not be labeled as the "extremist" position of an "irresponsible" source. In the summer of 1967, following riots in Newark, Detroit and several other urban areas, Time magazine carried a picture of Young on its cover. Many commentators noted the helpless, almost irrelevant role of most established civil rights leaders like Young. A caption over Young's picture virtually conceded this conclusion. It quoted Young as saying: "You got to give us some victories."<sup>14</sup>

It was an agonizing plea of recognition that Black leaders who were attempting to serve as a bridge between the impoverished and the establishment were in an unenviable position. They were unable to respond to the needs of the poor without the cooperation of the establishment who had resources to legitimate their leadership roles.

Notwithstanding the pleas and the precariousness of some Black leadership, the response to Young's Marshall Plan was quick and predictable. Neither was its rejection only from racial bigots but from some people otherwise sympathetic to the civil rights cause. A White civil rights supporter strongly disagreed with Young in language familiar in today's affirmative action debates:

*Compensation for Negroes is a subtle but pernicious form of racism. It requires that men be dealt with by society on the basis of race and color rather than on the basis of their humanity. It would therefore as a public policy legalize, deepen, and perpetuate the abominable racial cleavage that has ostracized and crippled the American Negro.*<sup>15</sup>

*Neither did this person think it was fair to penalize those Whites for the sins of their forefathers:*

*It leaves the descendants of the exploiters a guilt they cannot cancel and with the descendants of the exploited a debt they cannot collect... Slavery corrupts ambition and self-reliance; so too does patronizing social status.*<sup>16</sup>

While recognizing the importance of social movements, one should also consider two other critical phenomena in thinking about developments that have shaped the current reality: 1) the World War II fight against Nazism and fas-

cism and 2) the Cold War struggle between communism and American democratic capitalism. Causal connections in such analyses should be made cautiously, but it is reasonable to assume that these events provided an international context that facilitated the argument and activism against American apartheid and racism.

As to the first— the fight against Nazism and fascism— the United States entered the war against dictatorial regimes that were avowedly at variance with any semblance of respect for democratic ideals. Germany was blatantly anti-Semitic and racist. It made no attempt to hide its views on these issues.

At the same time, civil rights advocates lost no opportunity in pointing out the irony of the United States proclaiming a doctrine of Four Freedoms and denouncing dictatorships while maintaining a rigidly segregated society on its own soil. There could be no escape from the embarrassing contradictions. African American newspapers kept up a steady attack on segregated U.S. military units, lynchings and all other vestiges of American racism. The banner of the "Double V" (victory abroad and victory at home) was raised in every possible circumstance— editorials, speeches, war bond rallies, letters to public officials, cartoons (depicting Adolf Hitler and segregationist Senator Theodore Bilbo of Mississippi as two of a kind). Civil rights protesters against discrimination in hiring at defense plants marched in picket lines with placards that read: "Hitler Must Run This Plant— They Don't Employ Negroes." In one instance, the FBI sought advice from the Department of Justice regarding letters from Black soldiers printed in *The People's Voice*, a New York City Black newspaper owned and edited by the Rev. Adam Clayton Powell Jr. The soldiers complained bitterly of racist treatment overseas. The FBI wanted to know if publication of such letters constituted seditious acts.<sup>17</sup> Many civil rights activists were not deterred, however, in their criticisms. Reporting to a meeting of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1944, Executive Secretary Walter White told of his visits to military installations overseas:

*I wish it were possible for me to tell you truthfully that the alchemy of war and fighting to destroy Nazism had transformed the racial behavior in the armed services overseas. I cannot do so. We have merely transplanted to other lands the American pattern, both good and bad ... Basically, the root of all our difficulties overseas is in insistence on racial segregation.*

*As long as our government insists on segregation in an army and navy allegedly fighting for democracy, the chasm between the races will be perpetuated and broadened with resultant bitterness on both sides.*<sup>18</sup>



America's official responses were, at best, tortured and uncomfortable. Understandably so. Racial bigotry in Nazi Germany or segregated America could not be defended in a society that put great stock in distinguishing itself from its enemy on the grounds of freedom, justice and respect for integrity of individuals. At the least, the war heightened the dilemma of the American Creed, and it was not surprising that Black military personnel returned from the war even more determined to pursue the second "V."

The onset of the Cold War presented yet another international context for the struggle against racism. The United States and the Soviet Union became locked in an ideological struggle for the next 45 years. In the United States, communism replaced Nazism/fascism as the premier enemy. Newly independent nations, especially in Asia and Africa, became targets of persuasion to adopt one ideological regime or the other. (This competition had strategic as well as moral, philosophical consequences.) But as long as the United States presented the democratic/capitalist face with a disfiguring racist blot, it could hardly go into that struggle fully armed. There remained too many imperfections to legitimate its claim of moral and socioeconomic superiority. A nation that trumpeted the desirability of a free-market society but maintained closed labor and housing markets based on race was vulnerable to charges of hypocrisy at the least. Again, few American officials could honestly deny this, and some did not try. In 1946, as the Cold War battle lines were becoming increasingly apparent, then Acting Secretary of State Dean Acheson stated:

*... the existence of discrimination against minority groups in this country has an adverse effect upon our relations with other countries. We are reminded over and over by some foreign newspapers and spokesmen that our treatment of various minorities leaves much to be desired. While sometimes these pronouncements are exaggerated and unjustified, they all too frequently point with accuracy to some form of discrimination because of race, creed, color, or national origin. Frequently, we find it next to impossible to formulate a satisfactory answer to our critics in other countries; the gap between the things we stand for in principle and the facts of a particular situation may be too wide to be bridged. An atmosphere of suspicion and resentment in*

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*a country over the way a minority is being treated in the United States is a formidable obstacle to the development of mutual understanding and trust between the two countries. We will have better international relations when these reasons for suspicion and resentment have been removed.*<sup>19</sup>

Such statements from important sources are matters of record. Precisely how influential they were in any given instance is difficult to establish. But it is reasonable to assume that the ideological fight against communism was compromised in some ways by existing racism in the United States. This was so even during the McCarthy period of the 1950s when some civil rights advocates took

great pains to convince others that they had no affinity for communism. The real targets of the struggle were the minds of people of other countries who were potential military allies (with strategic bases) or political allies or friendly economic markets. Several incidents occurred involving African diplomats traveling from the United Nations in New York to Washington, D.C. They often were openly discriminated against by segregationists owners of public accommodations. Such confrontations always brought anguished apologies from

American officials, but the embarrassing experiences (for the Africans and the Americans) were not overlooked in the ideological atmosphere of the Cold War. Whatever its relative advantage vis-a-vis the Soviet Union in terms of military power and economic growth, the United States was more than mildly compromised by its own internal racial problems. Such moral discomfort could hardly be mitigated by the argument, frequently made in this country, that communist countries were surely no better in extending freedom to their own citizens. The point was to be different from— and better than— the communists in significant, substantive ways, not to be less racist and less oppressive.

These historical developments had a cumulative effect on the character and nature of the civil rights struggle. In the earlier years, many important campaigns had quite definitive, universally shared benefits. Victories over de jure segregation in most places saw "colored" and "white" signs come down immediately or at least instantly ignored. Victories in court over the discriminatory practices of local voter registrars in some instances but not all resulted in literally thousands of Black citizens lining up to register and to vote. Segregated interstate travel changed virtually

overnight. These were visible, tangible pieces of evidence that “progress” was being made. And, importantly, all—who ate in public restaurants, rode local buses, were of voting age—could immediately change their daily habits of living. (There were variations, of course, but earlier victories often were defining moments in the lives of millions of people.)

Later, after the seminal decade of the 1960s, victories often were more elusive and individually experienced. Achieving certain goals, especially in the economic sphere, resulted in improvements but did not immediately impact the lives of masses of people. This is especially evident when examining socioeconomic indicators of change. Ending employment discrimination, desegregating colleges and universities, achieving real open housing laws— all are absolutely important. But all Blacks, for a variety of reasons, have not experienced the benefits and certainly not to the same degree. Those who cannot afford homes in new neighborhoods or pass the entrance tests to schools of higher learning or possess the job skills to take advantage of new employment opportunities— these Blacks (and there are many) seemingly have little over which to rejoice. Victories— yes; universally and immediately shared— no.

Unfortunately, this inevitable consequence, given the different levels of economic and educational achievements of Blacks under legal segregation, spawned a mistaken notion that the successes of the earlier civil rights struggle benefited only a middle-class Black cadre— not the masses. Legal segregation and discrimination held down all Blacks in one form or another, irrespective of economic status. Once those legal barriers were lowered, one would expect a more-than-qualified segment to compete successfully on the open market sooner than many others. Thus, instead contributing to a growing class schism in the Black community, the Civil Rights Movement has successfully exposed what was always known— that many Blacks could and would compete in the larger society if given the chance. According to another mistaken notion, major civil rights organizations failed to address this situation in their earlier struggles. Knowledge of the history of major organizations’ efforts to deal with the economic problems of lower class Blacks as well as the civil rights issues would dispel this inaccurate conclusion.<sup>20</sup> The challenge, then, was to continue the struggle to broaden the base of those capable of competing. In a sense, this task would be much more difficult than overcoming segregation laws on the books. It would certainly mean less than universal rejoicing at the achievement of every “breakthrough.”

## Encouraging Trends, and Disturbing Developments

This section highlights three general areas of concern: some socioeconomic data; developments on the civil rights front; and the ascendance of an ideologically conservative mood in responding to issues of race, racism, and race relations.

Any assessment of “progress” or changes in the complicated arena of American race relations is a mixture of good and bad news. Regarding socioeconomic indicators— looking specifically at key health data, housing conditions, employment, education and family income— hard numbers over recent decades give a good sense of what has happened when comparing Whites, Blacks and frequently Hispanics. In most instances, the data show steady progress in absolute terms for Blacks. Yet there remains in some cases a major gap between Blacks and Whites that suggests much must be done in moving toward “e pluribus unum.”

Life expectancy for Black females since 1970 has increased by six years and by four years for Black males. Note the persistent gap with their White counterparts.

**Table 41: Life Expectancy at Birth - Number of Years by Race and Gender**

Birth year	White Male	White Female	Black Male	Black Female
1970	68.0	75.6	60.0	68.3
1994	73.2	79.6	64.9	74.1
2000 (projected)	74.2	80.1	64.6	74.7
2005 (projected)	74.7	81.0	64.5	75.0

Source: Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1997, The National Data Book, 88.

Infant mortality has decreased but is still more than double for Blacks than Whites.

**Table 42: Infant Mortality**

Birth year	White	Black & Other	Black
1980	10.9	20.2	22.2
1985	9.2	16.8	19.0
1990	7.6	15.5	18.0
1994	6.6	13.5	15.8

Source: Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1997, The National Data Book, 22; per 1000 live births.

**Table 43: Reported AIDS Cases, 1981-1996**

1981-1996	1990	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
Non Hispanic White 268,746	22,302	22,446	47,597	32,808	29,500	26,324
Non-Hispanic Black 203,025	13,205	16,052	38,025	30,972	29,195	28,764
Hispanic 84,443	5,672	6,766	15,443	12,577	11,569	10,865

Source: Statistical Abstract 1997, 142; persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race.

**Table 44: Conditions of Housing Units, 1995 (1,000s)**

	Tenure		Black		Hispanic	
Total Units	Owner 63,544	Renter 34,150	Owner 5,137	Renter 6,637	Owner 3,245	Renter 4,512
2 or More Living Rooms or Recreation Rooms	26,179	2,762	1,659	355	925	197
Signs of Rats in Last 3 Months	2,219	1,489	230	555	193	463
Holes in Floors	503	571	106	177	71	125
Exposed Wiring	873	887	88	240	80	175
Rooms Without Electric Outlet	891	925	130	269	44	147
Open Cracks or Holes	1,943	2,584	356	750	168	426

Source: Statistical Abstract 1997, 728; by householder characteristic.

Reported AIDS cases have increased considerably for Blacks, more than doubling from 1981 to 1996. The same is true for Hispanics. In spite of the much smaller population size, Blacks have a higher absolute number of AIDS reported cases than Whites.

Employment data by occupation over a recent 13-year period show increasing numbers for females, Blacks and Hispanics in most job categories. There are no exceptionally large gains, but the trend lines move upward (except for Blacks in the farming category).

Educational attainment data over three-plus decades show substantial improvements, but a big gap persists by race and sex.

**Table 45: Employed Civilians by Occupation, Gender, Race and Hispanic Origin**

	Total Employed (1,000)	% of Total			Total Employed (1,000)	% of Total		
		Fem	Blk	Hisp		Fem	Blk	Hisp
Occupational Total	100,834	43.7	9.3	5.3	126,708	46.2	10.7	9.2
Managerial and Professional	23,592	40.9	5.6	2.6	36,497	48.6	7.4	4.5
Technical, Sales & Administrative Support	31,265	64.6	7.6	4.3	37,683	64.2	10.3	7.6
Service Occupations	13,857	60.1	16.6	6.8	17,177	59.4	17.2	13.7
Precision Production, Craft, and Repair	12,328	8.1	6.8	6.2	13,587	9.0	7.9	11.0
Operators, Fabricators and Laborers	16,091	26.6	14.0	8.3	18,197	24.4	15.3	14.3
Farming, Forestry and Fishing	3,700	16.0	7.5	8.2	3,566	19.0	3.9	19.2

Source: Statistical Abstract 1997, 410-412.

**Table 46: Educational Attainment by Race, Hispanic Origin and Gender**

Year	White		Black		Hispanic	
Completed 4 Years of of High School or More	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1960	41.6	44.7	18.2	21.8	N/A	N/A
1970	54.0	55.0	30.1	32.5	37.9	34.2
1980	69.6	68.1	50.8	51.5	67.3	65.8
1990	79.1	79.0	65.8	66.5	50.3	51.3
1996	82.7	82.8	74.3	74.2	53.0	53.3
Completed 4 Years of College or More						
1960	10.3	6.0	2.8	3.3	N/A	N/A
1970	14.4	8.4	4.2	4.6	7.8	4.3
1980	21.3	13.3	8.4	8.3	9.4	6.0
1990	25.3	19.0	11.9	10.8	9.8	8.7
1996	26.9	21.8	12.4	14.6	10.3	8.3

Source: Statistical Abstract 1997, 159; Percentage of persons 25 years old and over.



Table 47: Earnings by Highest Degree Earned, 1996

Characteristic	Total Persons	Not a HS Graduate	HS Graduate	Some College	Associate's	Bachelor's	Master's	Professional
Mean Earnings (Dollars)								
All Persons	26,792	14,013	21,431	22,392	27,780	36,980	47,609	85,322
Age: 18-24 Years	10,173	6,837	11,376	8,852	13,774	16,145	22,770	20,262
25-34	23,956	13,742	20,243	21,422	24,288	31,658	37,033	50,019
35-44	31,949	17,313	23,926	28,347	31,230	42,056	51,184	111,026
45-54	34,914	17,197	25,661	32,761	32,238	44,115	54,508	93,517
55-64	30,949	18,692	24,766	29,065	33,474	45,055	44,443	89,158
65+	19,612	10,803	16,443	17,528	16,004	26,442	31,258	58,844
Sex: Male	33,251	16,748	26,333	28,458	33,881	46,111	58,302	101,730
Female	19,414	9,790	15,970	16,152	22,429	26,841	34,911	47,959
White	27,556	14,234	22,154	22,898	28,137	37,711	48,029	85,229
Male	34,276	17,032	27,467	29,206	34,286	47,016	58,817	100,856
Female	19,647	9,582	16,196	16,215	22,547	26,916	35,125	48,562
Black	20,537	12,956	17,072	20,275	26,818	29,666	38,294	(B)
Male	23,876	14,877	19,514	24,894	33,674	36,026	41,777	(B)
Female	17,485	10,739	14,473	16,627	22,113	25,577	35,222	(B)
Hispanic	18,262	13,068	18,333	18,903	23,406	30,602	36,633	(B)
Male	20,312	14,774	20,882	21,705	24,021	35,109	38,539	(B)
Female	15,310	9,809	14,989	15,699	22,883	25,338	33,390	(B)

Source: Statistical Abstract 1997, p. 160; persons of hispanic origin may be of any race; (B) Base figure too small to meet statistical standards for reliability of derived figure; for persons over 18 years old and over with earnings; persons as of March; earnings for prior year.

Clearly, there is a positive correlation between education and earnings, but where level of education is constant, Whites earn more than Blacks or Hispanics. Interestingly, as for females, race/ethnicity shows little difference in earnings. This is decidedly not the case with males, where White males at all levels outearn Black and Hispanic males.

**Table 48: Money Income of Families - Percent Distribution by Income Level, Race and Hispanic Origin in Constant 1995 Dollars, 1970-1995**

Year	No. of Families (Thousands)	Under \$10,000	\$10- 14,999	\$15- 24,999	\$25- 34,999	\$35- 49,999	\$50- 74,999	\$75,000 +
All Families								
1970	52,227	7.7	6.7	15.4	18.0	25.4	19.0	8.8
1980	60,309	7.3	6.7	15.2	14.9	21.9	21.3	12.8
1985	63,558	8.3	6.4	14.7	14.6	19.8	20.8	15.5
1990	66,322	7.7	6.1	13.7	14.2	19.4	21.0	18.0
1992	68,216	8.8	6.5	14.4	14.3	18.5	20.6	16.8
1993	68,506	9.1	6.7	14.6	14.5	17.6	20.0	17.4
1994	69,313	8.5	6.7	14.6	14.1	17.9	20.0	18.3
1995	69,597	7.5	6.5	14.4	14.1	18.5	20.4	18.6
White								
1970	46,535	6.5	6.1	14.6	18.1	25.4	20.0	9.4
1980	52,710	5.8	5.9	14.5	15.1	22.7	22.4	13.8
1990	56,803	5.7	5.4	13.2	14.3	19.9	22.2	19.1
1994	58,444	6.6	6.0	14.2	14.2	18.4	21.0	19.6
1995	58,872	5.8	5.8	13.9	14.2	18.8	21.4	20.0
Black								
1970	4,928	18.6	12.6	23.0	16.9	16.5	9.8	2.6
1980	6,317	19.1	13.4	21.2	14.0	15.8	12.3	4.3
1990	7,471	21.4	11.2	17.5	13.7	15.6	12.8	7.8
1994	8,093	20.7	10.9	17.9	13.8	14.8	13.4	8.5
1995	8,055	19.4	10.9	18.3	14.3	15.9	13.3	8.0
Hispanic Origin								
1980	3,235	13.2	11.5	21.2	17.1	18.4	13.4	5.3

Source: Statistical Abstract 1997, percent of active workforce.

The gap between Whites, Blacks and Hispanics in family income remains substantial. The percentage of Black families earning between \$10,000 and \$49,000 has dropped, while the percentage earning \$50,000 and over has increased. The difference in family median income among Whites, Blacks and Hispanics is still in the double-digits.

Table 49: Unemployment Rates by Education, Race and Hispanic Origin

Year	Total	Less Than HS Diploma	High School Graduate	Less Than Bachelors	College Graduate
Total	%	%	%	%	%
1992	5.7	11.4	6.5	5.3	2.5
1994	5.4	12.4	6.2	4.7	2.9
1995	4.4	8.6	4.6	4.5	2.4
1996	4.1	10.7	4.4	3.8	2.1
White					
1992	6.0	12.9	6.8	5.3	2.7
1993	5.8	12.4	6.5	5.0	3.1
1994	5.2	11.7	5.8	4.5	2.6
1996	4.2	10.2	4.6	3.7	2.1
Black					
1992	12.4	17.2	14.1	10.7	4.8
1994	10.6	14.4	12.2	8.3	4.9
1995	7.7	13.7	8.4	6.3	4.1
1996	8.9	15.3	10.8	6.9	3.3
Hispanic					
1992	9.8	13.6	9.6	5.9	4.2
1994	9.7	13.4	8.3	7.2	5.2
1995	8.0	10.9	8.1	5.2	3.7
1996	8.5	12.3	7.3	5.7	4.0

Source: Statistical Abstract 1997, percent of active workforce.

One of the most encouraging developments in recent years has been the steady decline in unemployment rates for Blacks and women.

Since publication of the official report in Table 49, more positive information has been released. By the end of 1998, the U.S. Department of Labor reported the unemployment rate for African Americans reached an all-time low of 7.9 percent. A combination of factors has contributed to this: overall expanding economy, greater job skills and educational training of Blacks, and enforcement of anti-discrimination laws on employment and voluntary implementation of fair employment practices by private industries and public agencies.

**Table 50: Homicide Rate by Race and Sex, 1970-1994**

Year	Total	White		Black	
		Male	Female	Male	Female
1970	8.3	6.8	2.1	67.6	13.3
1980	10.7	10.9	3.2	66.6	13.5
1981	10.3	10.4	3.1	64.8	12.7
1982	9.6	9.6	3.1	59.1	12.0
1983	8.6	8.6	2.8	51.4	11.3
1984	8.4	8.3	2.9	48.7	11.2
1985	8.3	8.2	2.9	48.4	11.0
1986	9.0	8.6	3.0	55.0	12.1
1987	8.7	7.9	3.0	53.3	12.6
1988	9.0	7.9	2.9	58.9	13.2
1989	9.2	8.2	2.8	61.1	12.9
1990	10.0	9.0	2.8	69.2	13.5
1991	10.5	9.3	3.0	72.0	14.2
1992	10.0	9.1	2.8	67.5	13.1
1993	10.1	8.6	3.0	69.7	13.6
1994	9.6	8.5	2.6	65.1	12.4

Source: Statistical Abstract, 1997, 204; victim rates per 100,000 resident population in specified group.

Crime, the criminal justice system, and the racial breakdown of victims and inmates are all disturbing parts of any project examining racism in the United States. There can never be any semblance of "e pluribus unum" as long as criminal statistics and the law enforcement system reflect any bias based on race. Blacks, as the data show, are clearly in a distressed situation.

A government report in 1998 concluded:

*Blacks represented 43 percent of arrests, 54 percent of convictions, and 59 percent of prison admissions for violent crimes in 1994, indicating that arrested blacks are more likely to be convicted, and convicted blacks are more likely to be imprisoned, compared with whites.<sup>21</sup>*

The homicide rate for Black males (per 100,000) was 65.1 in 1994. The numbers in Table 50 are ominous, to say the least.

The death penalty is a volatile issue in American society, infused with moral arguments (pro and con) and racial overtones. Some opponents who do not raise the immorality point (i.e., it is morally wrong for the government to take

a person's life as punishment) argue that Blacks have been disproportionately subject to death by state execution because of a racist law enforcement system. This argument pervades discussions of the discriminatory nature of the criminal justice system. It points to evidence of "racial profiling" whereby law enforcement officers operating on stereotypical prejudices tend to stop, search and arrest Blacks (for suspicion of creating a crime or resembling the profile of wanted criminals) more so than Whites. Denied as a prevalent practice for some time, more recently state and local authorities are candidly admitting that such behavior is more prevalent among law enforcement officials than previously admitted.<sup>22</sup>

Recent trends in the struggle against racial discrimination are characterized by increased pronouncements from virtually all quarters condemning such practices but growing difficulties in the evidence needed to prove that such practices still exist. It takes rather concrete evidence or outright admission to finally convince authorities of a serious problem. To be sure, there is no socially acceptable defense today of blatant racism or discriminatory acts. But when civil rights advocates attempt to establish the existence of discrimination and seek remedies to alleviate such practice, they are met with increasingly high standards of proof of actual harm experienced by identifiable individuals. At the same time, there is a clear trend away from according legitimacy to the lingering effects (legacy) of past discrimination. To establish such a connection, more than a historical account of the past frequently is necessary. In fact, it is very likely that such accounts will be met with unapologetic concession accompanied by an admonition that the legacy of a racist past is not relevant for future action.

No clearer illustration of this is found than in the words of former U.S. Sen. Allan Simpson (R-Wyo). The occasion was a Senate confirmation hearing in 1987 on Judge Robert H. Bork. President Ronald Reagan had nominated Bork for appointment as Associate Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. Bork's judicial and scholarly record did not please civil rights advocates, who strongly testified against his confirmation. One witness, Professor John Hope Franklin,<sup>23</sup> gave a concise history of racial segregation and discrimination laws since World War II (including his own experiences in being forced to use segregated trains traveling interstate). He noted how Bork had been on the opposite side of legal struggles against a de jure segregated system. Such a past record, according to Franklin and many others, should disqualify Bork from a seat on the highest Court of the land. But Simpson, a Bork supporter, was not convinced. While complimenting Professor Franklin on his "eloquent" presentation, ("You make the Constitution live for your students. There's no question about that.



I'm certain of that.") he made it clear that he did not see the relevance of that historical lesson to the task at hand. He stated:

*The issue is that was a different time. Indeed, it was. So that's the way it is. And the extraordinary poignancy of your remarks, and the story about going back to the Negro coach, those things happened. ... If we are going to feel guilt about what we did in this country in 1964, we'll never get anywhere in this country. ... How long are we going to pick old scabs in this country? It stalls us from progress. Those things happened. They were repugnant. They were repulsive. We've made tremendous strides.<sup>24</sup>*

This clearly reflects the thinking of more than a small segment of the society on how it intends not to hold itself accountable for past racism. (This sentiment is reminiscent of the argument made in the 1960s against Whitney Young's Domestic Marshall Plan discussed earlier.)

The trend today is to treat the use of race as an allowable policy concern only after "strict scrutiny" reveals there is no other way to remedy the complaint, and if it can be shown there is a compelling state interest to be served by using racial classification. Neither should one assume that arguments pushing for "diversity"—in the workplace, in schools, in neighborhood housing—will necessarily be accepted as meeting the "compelling state interest" test.

There is also a trend toward permitting states to exercise more power, especially regarding "social programs," and removing the federal government as much as possible from responsibility. The importance of this trend lies in the fact that civil rights forces have historically relied on national government, not the states, in the battle for racial justice and economic opportunity. "States' Rights" have traditionally meant that some states (especially earlier in the South) would be less receptive to calls for racial justice. With pressing economic issues facing African Americans, there is little cause for optimism from many other states and regions in dealing not only with race but with social welfare issues.

The current trend toward "devolution" of more power and responsibility to state/local levels would suggest that Blacks will have a more difficult time convincing their non-urban state legislatures to respond to their needs of justice and opportunity. In competition with each other for resources, states inevitably seek to attract industries of economic growth. Therefore, they want to provide as low a tax base as possible, which means less state expenditures for health,

welfare and even education for the state poor and needy. States are concerned about giving tax rebates and other infrastructural incentives, and these matters take priority in the long run. Some states are more affluent than others and will deal with these problems more easily. However, the nature of interstate competitiveness does not augur well for how the least among state citizens will have a reasonable advantage in their bid for state resources. In this regard, the "devolution" trend is an ominous one.

A third element, flowing from the second, is a decided conservative mood. (Less national government involvement is part of this trend.) More reliance on market forces and private self-help efforts are also aspects of this trend. An

The very vocabulary of popular political discourse is further evidence of a conservative mood.

important dimension is a much more visible, if not discernibly larger, cadre of Black conservative voices challenging the pre-eminence of traditional civil rights advocates. These voices have always been around, but they are more voluble today and are accorded more public attention. They take positions

against affirmative action and favor privatized solutions (for example, school vouchers and even privatizing Social Security), fewer government programs for alleviating poverty and unfettered market economy measures.

Like their White counterparts, Black conservatives are not a monolithic voice, but they take positions that directly challenge the views of traditional civil rights advocates on both anti-discrimination remedies and efforts to provide economic opportunity. While Black conservatives by no means voice the majority sentiment in Black communities—as consistently demonstrated by voting behavior and opinion polls—their views nonetheless provide a strong counter to the traditional ideological stance of civil rights advocates.<sup>25</sup> Such voices operate to legitimize a White majority conservative mood. Although they hardly represent more than 10 percent of Black voters nationally, they still keep conservative hope alive that more Blacks will hear and heed their arguments and join them.

Again, their main utility lies not in a broad base among the Black masses, but in the credence they give White conservatives. Now, the latter can have less fear of being branded racist if Black conservatives have agreed with them. This imputation of legitimacy extends to race issues and to economic policy. But it is the latter area that is especially significant to the ideological conservatives. The race issue (affirmative action, mainly) is not as important as the fundamental principles of a maximum market economy unburdened by government regulation. Race relations, as will be noted later, is simply not a top priority on the

national agenda, voluminous public pronouncements notwithstanding. But control and direction of the economy is and always will be the central concern. To have prominent African Americans (members of a minority group with obvious economic disadvantages) articulating strong anti-statist, pro capitalist views reaffirms the conservative stance— among Whites, who after, all are in the majority.

The very vocabulary of popular political discourse is further evidence of a conservative mood. One of the most insidious terms to slip into social relations dialogue is "politically correct." If one demonstrates by word or deed sensitivity to racial, ethnic, gender, or physical identities and disabilities, one is being "politically correct." Frequently, this has the pejorative implication of overreacting or responding to a "fad," done only to curry favor from a special group. The sensitivity is seen as pandering, much as a politician does for voter support. Why such demonstrated sensitivity is labeled "politically" correct— instead of being perceived as acting responsibly civil in a multi-racial, ethnic, plural society— is seldom, if ever, raised.

Yet we know that language, words and images are important in mass societies. This is particularly true in political democracies where appeals to voters must be made. Political office seekers today virtually eschew the "L" word— liberal— and have no hesitancy in labeling themselves as some form of "conservative": fiscal conservative, compassionate conservative, pragmatic conservative, fiscal conservative/social moderate, etc. Since the Ronald Reagan years of the 1980s, the ideological pendulum has moved, if not to the far right, to a more moderate/centrist/conservative position. Such perceptions are frequently documented not only in opinion surveys but in careful analyses of voting records of Congressional members by various national interest groups and the ratings those groups, liberal and conservative, give the legislators for home district consumption. Of course, they take as their reference base the peak years of civil rights and socioeconomic activism of the 1960s. Then, especially under President Johnson, the country experienced its last days of political liberalism— The Great Society. (In actual terms, as noted earlier, it was a rather short period from 1963 to 1968, with the decline beginning in 1967.) Those years are gone, and even President Clinton proclaimed "the end of big government" in his 1995 State of the Union Address.

Thus the conservative mood today essentially means little likelihood for consideration of a "full employment" bill, universal health care for all, or serious federal resources for strapped local school districts. Where public sector budgets show a surplus, conservatives opt to cut taxes rather than increase expenditures for the needy. Any serious conversation about the future struggle against current racism and its

legacy in the United States, along with expanding economic opportunity, must be conducted in the context of a society that basically prefers its national government to be less, not more, active in socioeconomic matters. And if these topics are raised when the private sector economy is performing well for a vast number of ordinary, working class people, one will find how quickly the conversation can become muted.

## Opportunities and Strategies

In such an environment, one would be justified in having little optimism about great leaps forward in the near term. And yet, the United States is a fortunate country. Even though it has not achieved the 'e pluribus unum' to which it aspires, the country in 1999 enjoys a decidedly more optimistic mood among Black Americans than one might expect. This suggests that Blacks might well be more realistic about the present and future on racial matters than even some Whites. (This point will be covered in the concluding section.) Except in rare episodic moments, the American system seldom responds other than in slow, prodding, incremental ways. In a sense, the 1960s spoiled many liberals by leading them to feel that decade would become the rule (in terms of the pace and direction of race and race relations, at least) rather than the exception. Another incontrovertible fact is that certain absolutely crucial things did happen and societal attitudes underwent fundamental changes. Most politicians can no longer engage in the kind of race-baiting politics that supported American apartheid in an earlier time. In 1999, Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott (R-Miss.) was put in the awkward position of having to explain his association with Council of Conservative Citizens. The national organization is an outgrowth of the old pro-segregation White Citizens Council formed in the 1950s to resist school desegregation. Now, at least, prominent politicians must seek to distance themselves from such associations and are forced to give tortured explanations denying agreement with many of the groups' more outspoken racist views.<sup>26</sup> Likewise, corporations can no longer openly defy laws on equal employment practices. Real estate agents must now be most clever and inventive in practicing racial discrimination in the sale and rental housing markets. Without question, many are up to the task, but now at least the efforts have to be made on penalty of legal repercussions.

## What Are Some Opportunities?

According to a scientific study conducted by the Southern Regional Council (SRC) in 1996, a majority of Americans

are, in fact, receptive to certain efforts to reduce racial inequality. But they are also concerned about the costs of government programs to achieve this goal. The report was candid in pointing out that racial inequality was not an issue uppermost in the minds of most White Americans.<sup>27</sup> "It found significant White support for such measures as more resources for education, strong enforcement of anti-discrimination laws, and even affirmative action where "quotas" or "preferential treatment" were not part of the equation. Part of the problem, the report concluded, was confusion over the meaning of "affirmative action." And if more time was spent educating the public in this regard, positive results might be forthcoming. Likewise, there was genuine hope that liberal forces could be mobilized around an enlightened race relations agenda.

Importantly, the SRC report concluded:

*Americans are more supportive of public policies designed to offer help based on economic status than those targeted at racial minorities. This class versus race edge prevails regarding government spending priorities, affirmative action programs, and general policies to improve socio-economic conditions.*<sup>28</sup>

There can be a political campaign for "universal" social policies, which, if enacted, cannot legally discriminate.

This report is essentially encouraging, but there are important cautionary observations. First, the fact that "class" has an edge over "race" as an approach is not a revelation to long-struggling civil rights groups.<sup>29</sup> Those groups have always understood the political problems of raising the race issue in American policy-making. Thus, going back to the New Deal, they supported "universal" social programs fully aware that many Blacks would not benefit from those programs on a nondiscriminatory basis, but they compromised and did not raise this race issue in many instances. They adopted a Social Welfare Agenda that clearly recognized the social and political wisdom of such a strategy. Therefore, they supported "full employment" even though they knew this did not mean "fair employment." They supported universal health care for all, even though they knew that health care would be allocated on a discriminatory and segregated basis.

The same was true with public housing legislation and educational resources, such as teacher salaries. Fighting these realities meant a continued, vigilant "Civil Rights Agenda." That is, the struggle to obtain "fair" (non-discriminatory) employment should not be abandoned; it simply was not politically wise to link it to the effort to obtain "full" employment. Thus, a "dual agenda" strategy had to be pursued, and over the years this very fact of race,

racism, and race relations in the United States has characterized the civil rights struggle. Very often, civil rights groups were advised not to raise the race issue out of fear of losing broader support for class issues. At times, they followed this advice and strategy but at a cost. Importantly, the civil rights forces tried repeatedly to seek allies among the White liberal forces. They were sometimes successful but often were rebuffed precisely because of the preference of class over race.

Only the brief, liberal burst of activism in the 1960s saw a breakthrough that provided the opportunity for important gains on both agendas simultaneously. In other words, the SRC finding of preference for class over race in the 1990s is an old story known all too well to civil rights groups faced with hard political realities. And as the report honest-

ly records, these realities are no less important now as they were decades ago. The opportunity today, however, lies in the fact that there are anti-discrimination laws in place. Now, a decision does not have to be made between advocating one agenda at the political expense of the other. There can be a political campaign for "universal" social policies, which, if

enacted, cannot legally discriminate. And there can be simultaneously vigorous efforts to overcome de facto discrimination. Theoretically, the two struggles ought not be in conflict, but there is an additional political caveat here that will be explained in the concluding section.

The data in the SRC report (and it is not the only encouraging one) have to be understood in another important political context. Aggregate national survey results can (and do) show encouraging possibilities for liberal policy-making. But the decision-making institutions in the United States are far more complex entities. Congress, for instance, is composed of 435 separate House of Representative districts and 50 Senate seats (two per state). Legislators listen as often as not to their distinct and locally based constituents, who, in fact, elect them to national office and to whom they are beholden for tenure. Built-in checks and balances in the governmental process complicate policy-making even more. No one political institution (the House of Representatives, the Senate or the Presidency) can act without the concurrence of the others or only on certain occasions with a "super," two-thirds majority vote.

This system of internal controls and checks was put in place at the drafting of the U.S. Constitution in 1787. The purpose was to limit the likelihood of a tyrannical majority. In addition, intricate rules of policy-making give considerable power to entrenched, resourceful interest groups. A

process of bargaining, negotiating and compromise is the rule. Survey data cannot capture all the intricacies involved in moving an issue from general agreement to final outcome. What happens in the final stage when vested interests (that might well not represent a national majority view) craft a final piece of legislation may not look anything like survey results in a national poll— which understandably cannot probe and reflect all the vital interests sitting at the table determining what the legislation ultimately will be.

This is a frustrating aspect of American politics in a federalist, pluralist system, but it is the way Americans define and pursue their version of political democracy. National survey respondents are not at the bargaining table. Less visible, but more powerful, numerically smaller interests are. But this conclusion does not counsel giving up on efforts to build broad opinion support. It is simply an admonition that American democratic politics involves much more in pluralist policy-making than meets the eye— or gets reflected in an opinion survey.

Another recent phenomenon demonstrating changing times and the conundrum of race and democratic politics involved the reelection of a Black Democratic Congressman from a predominantly White district in Georgia. (This also illustrates some of the substantive policy accommodations that have to be made to be “successful” in the electoral arena.) U.S. Rep. Sanford D. Bishop Jr. previously represented a predominantly Black constituency until Congressional district lines were redrawn. Now he represents Georgia’s 2nd Congressional District in southwest Georgia. The population is 60 percent White, 39 percent Black, and 1 percent other. Per capita income is \$12,602 for Whites and \$5,529 for Blacks. Twelve percent of Whites and 43 percent of Blacks live below the poverty line. Seventy-one percent of White adults over 25 years of age have a high school degree compared with 44 percent of Blacks. In this setting, some were apprehensive that Whites would not vote for this NAACP veteran of the Civil Rights Movement who was an admirer of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. But they did. Bishop beat his White Republican opponent by 57 percent to 43 percent in 1998.

To some observers, this proved that Whites in a Southern state with a long history of segregation and discrimination could set aside race and vote on other basis. It was proof that Congressional districts need not be drawn to favor Blacks. White support validated the legal and political arguments that it was not necessary to create minority/majority districts to get Blacks elected to Congress. White voters could rise above racial prejudice after all. As one citizen stated: “Sanford actually represents people without regard to race, and when he does that people forget his race.”<sup>30</sup> But there is more to the story.

Bishop was doing what American politicians are at times required to do to get elected. He changed his views to appeal to the majority in his district. One reporter wrote:

*Mr. Bishop has earned the fealty of white constituents through his aggressive advocacy for federal farm programs, balanced budgets, welfare reform, school prayer and gun ownership. To suit his district, he has switched positions on issues like the assault weapons ban, which he first supported and later opposed. He advertises himself as a conservative and reinforced that claim by becoming the only black member of the right leaning Democratic caucus known as the Blue Dogs.<sup>31</sup>*

In the racial head count in Congress, official records accurately show a Black Congressman occupying the seat from Georgia’s 2nd Congressional District. It remains to be seen, given the economic disparities between Whites and Blacks in his district, whether the latter will benefit in any significant way from his holding office. In the final analysis, the Representative’s concrete stand on policy issues will tell whether the “color blind” political action of his White supporters translates into economic benefits for masses of his Black constituents as well as Whites. In this instance, being “color blind” for one group of voters could result in negative economic consequences for another group. No one will ever have to mention race overtly to explain this result. They simply will be politicians in a democratic society doing the will of a majority of constituents.

### Are There Promising Strategies?

There are hardly any eureka-type revelations here. There is no hidden silver bullet that, if only discovered, would end racism with neat dispatch. America has been at this process and these issues for quite some time. But times do change. It is difficult to foresee the importance of a new international dimension intruding to facilitate positive change as was seen with World War II and the Cold War. Neither is a “crisis” (a widespread economic depression or a burst of mass 1960s-style protests) likely to serve as a catalyst for moving the lack of popular concern or low priority of race to a much higher position on the public agenda. Certainly not in the near term.

The more effective strategies will likely include (as unsatisfying and relatively unrewarding as these might seem) more of the same tedious efforts at coalition building, taking advantage of the egalitarian ethos (as opposed to an earlier permissive race-baiting atmosphere). In the legal realm, the Civil Rights Movement has developed its longest and most substantively adept leadership strategies, which remain promising. They lie not so much in constitutional or



statutory interpretation but in the realm of acceptable proof of existing discrimination. Given the covert, subtle nature of much discrimination, this means careful gathering of evidence leading to hard-to-refute allegations.

One approach is described as “auditing research.”<sup>32</sup> Teams of job applicants or housing seekers are sent to answer ads: a Black team and a White team. The White team follows the Black team. Results have shown clear instances where the minorities have been denied at much higher rates than Whites. These experiments have been criticized on methodological and ethical grounds, but their results have been quite useful in exposing the racism lying comfortably beneath the surface in American society. Perfecting these strategies for use in law enforcement should be a major priority. Once discrimination is established, the penalties (revocation of licenses, stiff fines, publication of abuses) should be as stringent as possible to match the rhetoric of public indignation at continued discrimination. Weak punishment will be of little, if any, value and might well aggravate the problem because it would provide a relatively painless, permissive way to continue old behavior. Another approach could involve a carefully constructed argument to demonstrate the ingenious nature of the “color-blind” stance. Here, instances such as Georgia’s 2nd

Congressional district could serve to pierce the defense that race is not involved in otherwise seemingly acceptable political behavior. This is very difficult, since racial discrimination and not poor economic condition per se is constitutionally prohibited. But if a relationship can be established between race, economic condition and representative conduct, the “strict scrutiny” test might be met. There are no certainties here, but social scientists, economists and lawyers ought to explore this territory. There is more to the vagaries of this subject than the simplistic, misleading sobriquet for justice called “color blindness.” Considerable evidence will turn up regarding “auditing research” and the race/economic areas. The point is to persuade decision-makers (legislators and jurists) of the probative value of this evidence.

### Conclusion: “E Pluribus Justitia”

At the beginning of the preceding section, reference was made to encouraging signs of an optimistic mood among Blacks in the United States. Given the constant public exposure of conditions and incidents with racist implications—racially motivated crimes, educational achievement gaps, episodic flare-ups in the criminal justice system and

**Table 51: What Do You Think Is the Single Most Important Problem Facing the Country Today (1998)?**

	Population		
	Black %	White %	General %
Topic			
Crime, Violence, Drugs	21.7	10.3	11.7
Employment (Jobs, Good-paying Jobs, Poverty, Homelessness)	17.3	5.8	7.6
Education	15.7	17.2	15.8
Moral Crisis (Morals, Family Values, Clinton Scandal)	10.2	20.6	19.4
Economy	8.4	9.8	11.6
Health Care	7.6	6.3	5.5
World Affairs (Foreign Policy, Terrorism, World Economy, Lack of Leadership)	5.2	16.9	16.0
Race Relations	3.8	0.8	0.8
None/Don't Know	10.4	11.3	11.9
Numbers Surveyed * Includes 94 Blacks	850	709	850*

Source: Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, Public Opinion 1998: Political Attitudes by David Bositis, October 1998.

blatant discriminatory acts by corporate and public officials— a recent survey by the major think tank devoted to African American interests, the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, should be of interest to policy makers.

Table 51 shows Blacks and Whites still differ significantly on the single most important problem facing the country in 1998. The most troubling topics: crime, violence and drugs among 21.7 percent of Blacks (compared with 10.3 percent of Whites) versus the moral crisis for 20.6 percent of Whites (compared with 10.2 percent of Blacks). While a

big gap exists between the races on “race relations,” this problem ranks low on the list of concerns for both groups. Unfortunately, the survey gives no information specifying the meaning of “race relations,” as was done with some other broad categorical topics.

In Table 52, the survey noted that for the first time in a Joint Center survey, Blacks responded more favorably than the general population when asked whether they are financially better or worse off than a year ago. It is interesting that younger Blacks (18–25; 26–35) show very high “better” response percentages over “same.” Only among those

**Table 52: Would You Say That You Are Financially Better Off, Worse Off, or About the Same Now As You Were a Year Ago?**

	Black Population					General Population		
	Better %	Same %	Worse %	D/K %	(N)	Better %	Same %	Worse %
Total	51.0	38.0	9.2	1.8	850	36.5	47.1	1
White	-	-	-	-	-	31.5	50.9	1
Men	49.0	37.3	13.7	-	400	37.4	42.0	2
Women	52.7	38.7	5.2	3.4	450	35.6	50.8	1
18-25 Years	46.9	29.5	19.3	4.3	127	43.8	30.3	2
26-35	65.3	27.3	6.8	0.5	168	49.4	45.2	
36-50	47.4	40.8	11.8	-	257	38.5	41.2	2
51-64	36.6	55.0	4.3	4.1	175	31.3	47.0	2
65+	77.7	21.0	1.3	-	88	16.4	75.9	
Northeast	57.1	31.9	6.9	4.1	153	40.1	49.4	1
Midwest	43.5	46.5	9.5	0.6	156	33.2	48.8	1
South	50.8	37.1	10.3	1.8	452	36.5	49.0	1
West	54.3	38.8	6.9	-	88	36.7	39.5	2
Liberal	55.0	36.0	6.9	2.2	333	42.8	36.7	2
Moderate	46.6	44.7	10.7	-	354	41.6	47.5	1
Secular Conservative	7.6	58.0	34.4	-	24	34.8	41.7	2
Christian Conservative	70.3	27.8	2.0	-	115	22.4	65.8	1
Less Than HS	43.1	47.1	9.8	-	97	23.5	52.9	2
HS Graduate	54.5	31.8	10.8	2.9	277	36.0	40.4	2
Some College/Tech	53.3	41.8	5.0	-	184	34.7	54.4	1
College Degree +	49.2	40.5	7.5	2.8	259	38.7	46.7	1
Less Than \$15,000	16.9	59.9	23.2	-	75	17.8	35.6	4
\$15-35,000	51.9	48.1	-	-	129	36.3	53.5	1

Source: Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, Public Opinion 1998: Political Attitudes by David Bositis, October 1998.

51–64 years is there a smaller percentage of “better” to “same.” Note also the responses by income category. Only the lowest (less than \$15,000) and the \$75,000–\$90,000 register higher for “same” over “better.” Given the importance of education, the educational cohorts in this table should be monitored carefully. In fact, in light of the relative economic boom in the country, these data suggest that Blacks in 16 demographic categories perceive themselves doing “better” than the previous year and doing the “same” in seven categories. Whereas, for the general population, the numbers are five (better) and 18 (same.)

Such results, then, should lead one not to be too surprised about the result revealed in Table 53. A majority of Blacks (51.0 percent) feel the country is going in the right direction. But only 43.3 percent of the general population share this view. The demographic categories for Blacks indicate a general consensus on this view, with only six categories registering a negative feeling: 18–25 years, 36–50 years, secular conservatives by the widest margin, less than \$15,000 or \$75,000–\$90,000 by substantial margin, and more than \$90,000. Thus, the poorest and the most affluent Blacks are inclined to view the country as going in the wrong direction.

**Table 53: Do You Feel Things In the Country Are Generally Going In the Right Direction, Or Do You Feel Things have Pretty Seriously Gotten Off On the Wrong Track?**

	Black Population				General Population			
	Right Direction %	Wrong Track %	D/K %	(N)	Right Direction %	Wrong Track %	D/K %	(N)
Total	51.0	42.3	6.7	850	46.0	46.1	7.9	850
White	-	-	-	-	43.3	48.5	8.2	709
Men	51.3	44.2	4.6	400	51.9	42.5	5.6	412
Women	50.7	40.7	8.6	450	40.4	49.5	10.0	438
18-25 Years	43.3	54.4	2.3	127	44.9	43.8	11.2	89
26-35	51.3	44.4	4.3	168	42.2	48.2	9.6	166
36-50	44.5	46.0	9.5	257	50.5	44.9	4.7	301
51-64	57.2	30.0	12.8	175	41.6	49.4	9.0	166
65+	77.5	22.5	-	88	49.1	43.1	7.8	116
Northeast	47.5	41.5	11.1	153	50.0	42.4	6.4	172
Midwest	50.1	40.4	9.5	156	51.2	45.4	6.3	205
South	51.5	43.7	4.8	452	48.3	50.0	6.8	296
West	55.8	40.1	4.1	88	43.2	44.1	13.0	177
Liberal	50.3	37.4	12.3	333	52.8	31.9	15.3	229
Moderate	54.5	43.2	2.3	354	43.1	50.2	6.7	255
Secular Conservative	19.3	80.7	-	24	61.4	37.1	1.5	132
Christian Conservative	52.5	47.5	-	115	37.2	56.1	6.6	196
Less Than HS	81.8	18.2	-	97	39.2	43.1	17.6	51
HS Graduate	46.7	44.1	9.2	277	36.4	57.0	6.6	228
Some College/Tech	45.4	42.4	12.2	184	53.1	40.6	6.3	239
College Degree +	48.7	47.8	3.5	259	48.3	45.4	6.3	315
Less Than \$15,000	45.6	54.4	-	75	24.4	66.7	8.9	45
\$15-35,000	56.5	30.8	12.6	129	45.2	52.2	2.5	157

Source: Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, Public Opinion 1998: Political Attitudes by David Bositis, October 1998.

On balance, one should be encouraged by these opinion data, even though survey experts point out that such results are at best snapshots at a particular moment and can be countermanded by new, negative events. While they indicate wide racial differences in some instances, they do not augur dire omens against continued progress and consequential optimism. In fact, the opposite could be gleaned from the data. Namely, with persistent diligent pursuit of both the Civil Rights Agenda and the Social Welfare/Economic Agenda, more positive results could be forthcoming in a reasonable time. One must always add here the absolute importance of a continuing healthy, growing economy.

Little has been said in this essay about the impact of immigration on the topic of racism in America. But this is a development that must be recognized and used.

Immigration of non-European groups, particularly Hispanic and Asian, will continue at great rates. This will obviously have consequences for the indigenous American population. It always has. But now and in the future, these new immigrants will be vibrant competitors in the economic market. Unlike an earlier time, they cannot be subjugated, discriminated against or legally exploited. They will further challenge the goal of "e pluribus unum" and they ought to be allies for any coalitions aimed at vigorous enforcement of anti-discrimination laws. All groups must be protected. These newer immigrants will less likely be persuaded to shed their cultural habits and "assimilate," if only because the old "melting pot" thesis has, fortunately, been discredited. The "unum" envisioned is not necessarily one ultimate homogeneous cultural canvas but a situation where many groups can live respectfully not as "one" but in "justice." More vibrant, truly competitive immigrant groups could contribute to the development of a more cosmopolitan society.

So much of America's coming to grips with its Achilles' heel is factored through the prism of anguish, fear and guilt regarding the country's history of slavery and sanction of segregation, its treatment of indigenous peoples who were already here and its earlier racist/exclusionist immigration laws. Newer, added groups arriving on different terms should help the country transform itself into a truly international beacon—truly unprecedented in modern history—where many different peoples can live and prosper without the undemocratic and racist rules of an earlier time. Of course, as racial, ethnic and gender barriers fall, the country will face with a totally new situation: for the first time in its history, all the citizens will have a chance to compete in a truly open and fair economic market. If increased immigration can speed this process, it will serve a historic purpose.

Finally, whatever the signs of a hopeful, optimistic mood among Blacks, a willingness by Whites to accept some class-based remedies, and, indeed, encouraging socioeconomic trends, one should not be sanguine that these phenomena will be self-fulfilling. A "truly open and fair economic market" will not emerge without conscious public initiatives not only to permit people to participate but to prepare them to do so. In this regard, the data on "Disturbing Developments" reported earlier should be given careful attention. The country is not yet at *e pluribus unum*.

Thus, one of the most important and difficult tasks is to stem the pendulum swing toward "less government" by continuing to make the argument for national responsibility. Whatever else is known about the story of America's engagement of these issues, this country has only progressed when the national community (especially through the lead of the national government) has been actively involved. This does not mean to the exclusion of state/local entities or the private sector. But the best vehicle for orchestrating and representing a collective will to deal with collective problems is a national democratic system. This is not an easy proposition to push at a time when there is less inclination to spend sufficient resources on new programs. It is certainly a difficult posture to take at a time of economic boom, and there is a mood to give more leeway (and less regulatory restrictions) to the private sector. Likewise, if the Joint Center survey data hold up, opponents of more activist government can point to the generally optimistic feelings of African Americans about the future. But these feelings should reflect a mood to build on, not to rest on. There are needy groups in the society that still suffer from racial and economic obstacles.

It has ever been the case that those who need public protection the most are those who have the least private resources to protect themselves and provide for their families. Whether on the civil rights front (struggle against racism) or on the social policy front (universal social programs), the country has not reached the stage where all its citizens are free to compete in the open market on anything resembling an equitable playing field.

Making this case and pursuing it vigorously remains the challenge.



## END NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *American Politics, The Promise of Disharmony*, (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1981), 27.
- <sup>2</sup> Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., *The Disuniting of America, Reflections on A Multicultural Society*, (Knoxville, TN: Whittle Books, 1991), 9.
- <sup>3</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, *Souls of Black Folk* (1903).
- <sup>4</sup> See Nathan Glazer, *We Are All Multiculturalists Now* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997). "There were significant differences in the ways European immigrant groups assimilated. But there are orders of magnitude in difference. The differences between the rate of assimilation of Irish and Germans, or Italians and Jews become quite small when we contrast them with the differences over time between white European immigrants of any group and American blacks. These differences create different perspectives, on our historic past, on our present, on the shape of our culture" (155). And "... we also cannot ignore the remarkable and unique degree of separation between blacks and others. The caste characteristic still holds, and one evidence of it is either black or not—partial degrees of blackness, despite the reality of a very mixed genetic inheritance, will not be recognized, not by our Census, not by our society. We do not recognize partial or loose affiliation with the group, or none at all, for blacks, as we do for all other ethnic and racial groups" (158).
- <sup>5</sup> Seeking an America as Good as Its Promise, Remedies for Racial Inequality, The Public's Views, (Atlanta, Ga.: Southern Regional Council, 1998), 15.
- <sup>6</sup> See Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1944). Writing more than 50 years ago and about the American South (no less applicable I would suggest today and about the entire country) Myrdal noted: "Criticisms and even factual statements should be phrased in such a manner that they do not 'offend' or create 'embarrassment.' I have come to understand how a whole system of moral escape has become polite form in the South. ... This form is applicable even to scientific writings and, definitely, to public discussion and teaching on all levels. It is sometimes developed into an exquisite and absorbing art. ... There is nearly common agreement in the South that reforms in interracial relations should be introduced with as little discussion about them as possible. It is a half-dormant, but easily awakened, beast. It is a complex which is irrational and uncontrollable, laden with emotions, and to be touched as little as possible" (36-37).
- <sup>7</sup> One is tempted here to draw attention to the Brazilian preference, as described by the Nascimentos in this volume. That is, the preference, by some, to refer to "the social question" as opposed to "the racial question." Likewise, Wilmot James, in this volume, discusses the "reality" and "near-term inevitability" of racial consciousness in the South African context. There appears to be in that country a recognition of this stage of development, even if it is attacked as a "re-racialization" of South Africa. (The American equivalent response is "reverse discrimination.")
- <sup>8</sup> This is a problem clearly common to all three countries in this project. But, in the United States, it is certainly one of political will to allocate existing sufficient resources, not so much whether the economy can afford the cost.
- <sup>9</sup> Donna Cooper Hamilton and Charles V. Hamilton, *The Dual Agenda, The African American Struggle for Civil and Economic Equality* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 109.
- <sup>10</sup> John Lewis with Michael D'Orso, *Walking with the Wind* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998), 13, 73-75, 82-87, 475.
- <sup>11</sup> In 1966, a huge consortium of civil rights, liberal, labor, religious and a variety of civic-minded individuals signed what was called "The Freedom Budget for All Americans." Calling for \$185 billion over a 10-year period, the economic plan represented the most idealistic and sincere thinking of the liberal community at that time about what was needed to achieve the "unum" the country had been espousing for centuries. It emphasized a full-employment economy, universal health care, full educational opportunity programs and much more. Many people observed that one important aspect of the plan was that it was "for all," not only for Black Americans. (In a sense, this grandiose proposal parallels The Freedom Charter issued by the ANC in South Africa several years earlier, at least in terms of hopes and aspirations.) Needless to say, the Freedom Budget received a polite but negative reception in the corridors of power in Washington, D.C. It was never really taken seriously.
- <sup>12</sup> Whitney M. Young Jr., *To Be Equal* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964).
- <sup>13</sup> Testimony of Whitney Young prepared for the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, October 1967, LBJ Papers, Lyndon Baines Johnson Library (LBJL), Executive SP/JL, box 48, University of Texas, Austin.
- <sup>14</sup> *Time*, August 11, 1967.
- <sup>15</sup> Kyle Haselden, "Should There Be Compensation for Negroes? No," *The New York Times Magazine*, October 8, 1963, 43.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>17</sup> Files of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. Memo from J. Edgar Hoover to the Assistant Attorney General, July 1, 1943.
- <sup>18</sup> Walter White, "White Supremacy and World War II," *A Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States, 1933-1945*, Herbert A. Aptheker, ed., (The Citadel Press: Secaucus, N.J., 1974), 482-483.
- <sup>19</sup> Letter from Dean Acheson to the Fair Employment Practice Committee, May 8, 1946. Cited in *To Secure These Rights, The Report of the President's Committee on Civil Rights* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1947), 146.
- <sup>20</sup> See Hamilton and Hamilton, *The Dual Agenda, The African American Struggle for Civil and Economic Equality*.
- <sup>21</sup> *Changing America, Indicators of Social and Economic Well Being, by Race and Hispanic Origin*, Council of Economic Advisers, for the President's Initiative on Race. September 1998, 51.
- <sup>22</sup> See "Racial Profiling in New Jersey," *The New York Times*, April 22, 1999, A30. An investigation revealed "that 46 percent of those stopped by the police on a southern stretch of the Turnpike were black, even though only 13.5 percent of the motorists on that stretch were black. The new report found that although minority drivers made up less than half the motorists stopped, they represented 77 percent of those searched." The State of New Jersey indicted two officers accused of falsifying

the race of drivers they had stopped in an effort to cover up illegal targeting of minorities.

- 23 Professor Franklin in 1997 was selected by President Bill Clinton to chair the President's Initiative on Race. Clinton's charge stated: "Today, I ask the American people to join me in a great national effort to perfect the promise of America for this new time as we seek to build our more perfect union. ... That is the unfinished work of our time, to lift the burden of race and redeem the promise of America." *New York Times*, June 14, 1997.
- 24 Nomination of Robert H. Bork to be Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States. Hearings before the Committee on the Judiciary, United States Senate. First Session, 100th Congress, September 23, 1987, 736.
- 25 See "A Collection of Views of Black Conservatives on Affirmative Action," *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, Summer 1998, No. 20: 9 and Joseph G. Conti and Brad Stetson, *Challenging the Civil Rights Establishment, Profiles of a New Black Vanguard*, (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1993).
- 26 John Kifner, "Lott, and Shadow of a Pro-White Group," *The New York Times*, January 14, 1999: A8. The senator initially stated that he had "no firsthand knowledge" of the organization's views, although he had addressed the group and met with the members. The senator's uncle called him an "honorary member." Predictably, Senator Lott issued a statement saying: "I

have made my condemnation of the white supremacist and racist view of this group, or any group, clear. Any use of my name to publicize their view is not only unauthorized- it's wrong."

- 27 Seeking an America as Good as Its Promise, Remedies for Racial Inequality, The Public's Views (Atlanta, Ga.: Southern Regional Council, 1998).
- 28 Ibid., 15.
- 29 See Hamilton and Hamilton, *The Dual Agenda, The African American Struggle for Civil and Economic Equality*.
- 30 Kevin Sack, "In the Rural White South, Seeds of a Biracial Politics," *The New York Times*, December 30, 1998: A1.
- 31 Ibid., A12.
- 32 See Michael Fix and Raymond Struyk, eds., *Clear and Convincing Evidence* (Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute Press, 1993); H. Cross, *Employer Hiring Practices: Different Treatment of Hispanic and Anglo Job Seekers* (Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute, 1990); James Heckman and Peter Siegelman, "The Urban Institute Audit Studies: Their Methods and Findings," *Clear and Convincing Evidence*; Marc Bendick, "Measuring Employment Discrimination Through Controlled Experiments," *The Review of Black Political Economy*, Summer, 1994: 25-48.

