

**NLWJC - Kagan**

**DPC - Box 038 - Folder 011**

**Race Commission [2]**

Race meeting 3/11

Ann Walker - Another study! Reacti - last time asked  
Kumiki - Endgame? What's the product? Can't say anything  
That will satisfy anyone.

Week at the Helsinki - race speech announcing commission  
April 4/6

*Race  
Comm'n*

James A. Dorskind  
03/27/97 04:00:22 PM

Record Type: Record

To: Sylvia M. Mathews/WHO/EOP

cc: Todd Stern/WHO/EOP, Phillip Caplan/WHO/EOP, Elena Kagan/OPD/EOP, Robert B. Johnson/WHO/EOP

Subject: 3.27.97 letter from Mary Frances Berry

Ben just handed me the original of this letter, which addresses the issue of possible initiatives "to address problems of race and ethnic relations in our nation."

Ben told me that you are coordinating the issue and that Elena is much involved, as well. Should my staff begin work on a response, in cooperation with Elena, or do you (or one of your co-addressees on this letter) wish us to handle this differently or have it handled elsewhere?  
Thanks.

Jim

## The Kerner Commission

### Conclusion of the Kerner Report:

- “Our nation is moving towards two societies, one black, one white -- separate and unequal”
- “White racism is essentially responsible for the explosive mixture which has been accumulating in our cities since the end of World War II.”
- Requested call to action imbued with a grand sense of possibility

### Actions Taken as a Result of the Report:

- Initially, the report made progress in every regard, the progress slowed in the mid 70's and were entirely eliminated in the Reagan administration.
- The report centered on jobs, housing, education, and welfare.
- It led to a major increase in Federal housing and helped produce the open housing legislation of 1968.
- It helped spur a series of public employment programs

### Analysis of the Success of the Commission:

- “Served as a monument to a more optimistic era when the nation felt it had the will and the ability to heal its urban ills” (NYT, 5/8/92)
- “To many critics, liberals and conservatives, the main failing in the report and the era was an inability to foresee negative consequences of welfare dependency” (NYT, 5/8/92)
- Another opinion .... “rather than a profligate rush to throw money at urban problems, the report helped produce a relatively modest array of programs targeted at the urban poor that in the end did not go far enough to satisfy their proponents and provided targets for their critics.” (NYT, 5/8/92)
- The report helped some black individuals rise out of poverty into the middle class, but for all those left behind, the chasm has deepened.
- “If anything our situation is far worse than it was in 1968, for the promise that was held out by the Kerner Report and the country’s positive response to it have been repudiated by our failure to act effectively on the commission’s recommendations and insights.” (WP, 11/27/88)
- “Life for inner city blacks has worsened as the races have grown further apart socially and economically (20 years later)” (NYT, 3/1/88)
- “We have made opportunity for the blacks for whom it was easy to provide opportunities. We haven’t come close to dealing with the problems of the most burdened legatees of our racist past, the poor and the unemployed” (NYT, 3/1/88)
- The problems of racial inequality and polarization were rapidly intensifying.... The warnings were ignored. No major new federal efforts to attack poverty or segregation were launched after the report was published.” (LAT, 3/22/88)
- Twenty years later.... “It gave America a much more accurate picture of where we were and where we might be heading than anyone could reasonably have expected from what many had thought to be a pretty middle-of-the-road group of commissioners. The report was a measure of America’s failure of vision up to then -- and sadly, it is a measure of

- our failure of will in recent years” (WP, 11/27/88)
- “In the twenty years since the Kerner report, legislative protections against racial discrimination have diminished, but not erased, the problems of poverty suffered by this underclass” (CSM, 5/10/88)
  - “While there have been some gains since the 1960s in attacking the social ills that underlay the riots, many were undone by “federal disinvestments of the 1980s” reports the Eisenhower Foundation 25 years later. (LAT, 2/28/93)
  - “We conclude that the famous prophesy of the Kerner Commission, of two societies, one black, one white -- separate and unequal -- is more relevant today than in 1968, and more complex, with the emergence of multiracial disparities and growing income segregation”

**Overall Conclusion:**

- The overall analysis I pick up from these articles is that the Report was accurate in describing what was happening and was somewhat accurate in blaming it on racism. However, little has been done to solve this problem and as a result the problem is worse than ever. Critics believe that at this point race is less of a factor rather than class. The Report spurred the growth of some programs which were able to help some African Americans rise from poverty to the middle class. The programs which were initially started to address these problems have all been abandoned. The major result has been inaction and our two societies are as separate and unequal as ever.

LEVEL 2 - 13 OF 28 STORIES

Copyright 1992 The New York Times Company  
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May 8, 1992, Friday, Late Edition - Final

SECTION: Section A; Page 19; Column 1; National Desk

LENGTH: 1892 words

HEADLINE: AFTER THE RIOTS;

From Riots of 60's to Riots of the 90's, a Frustrating Search to Heal a Nation

BYLINE: By PETER APPLEBOME, Special to The New York Times

DATELINE: ATLANTA, May 7

BODY:

The battles in the streets of Los Angeles have ended, and the political battles have begun. At their core is the nation's most famous report on urban violence, which looked at burning cities a quarter century ago and called for a major Government effort to heal them.

"Only a greatly enlarged commitment to national action -- compassionate, massive and sustained, backed by the will and resources of the most powerful nation on this earth -- can shape a future that is compatible with the historic ideals of American society," concluded the **Kerner Commission**, convened by President Lyndon B. Johnson to examine the causes of riots that shook more than 150 American cities in 1967.

Since then everything has changed, and nothing has changed. Today, the Kerner Commission serves as a monument to a more optimistic era when the nation felt it had the will and the ability to heal its urban ills.

Era of Optimism Is Just a Memory

"There's a fundamental difference in the attitude of the nation," said Anthony Downs, a Brookings Institution fellow who was one of the authors of the report. "The report was written at a time of rapidly rising living standards when people believed almost anything was possible. We no longer have the optimism we had then, and the kind of commitment to improving America's domestic life is totally absent from the present leadership."

In the wake of the riots in Los Angeles, President Bush and his spokesman Marlin Fitzwater have set the tone for the political aftermath by attributing the riots in part to the social programs of the 1960's and 1970's. But a quarter century later, a larger question looms about the **Kerner Commission** report: If that era of optimism, prosperity and commitment has left the nation with cities mired in poverty, violence and despair, what is the current environment likely to produce?

Headed by Gov. Otto **Kerner** of Illinois, the 11-member panel, officially known as the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, was appointed by



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The New York Times, May 8, 1992

President Johnson July 27, 1967, after major riots in Newark and Detroit.

#### Panel's Warning On Split Society

The report found that "white racism" was the underlying cause of the problems of the ghettos. And, in its most famous line, it warned that the United States ran the risk of becoming "two societies, one black, one white -- separate but unequal."

"For a good while we made progress on virtually every front in regard to the report," said former Senator Fred Harris, an Oklahoma Democrat who was on the commission. "But the progress slowed in the mid-70's and then stopped, and now we've begun to go backward in many ways. And I think there are very serious consequences for the path we've taken."

Richard P. Nathan, director of the Rockefeller Institute of Government at the State University of New York at Albany, and the commission's associate director for program research, said the report was essentially an endorsement of the social activism of the Great Society. Its policy recommendations centered on four areas: jobs, housing, education and welfare.

President Johnson, suspicious the commission was being critical of him, declined to endorse its findings.

The report called for building six million housing units for low- and moderate-income people within five years. The nation did not meet that goal, but the report did lead to a major increase in Federal housing that produced 1.6 million units from 1970 and 1973.

~~The report also helped produce the landmark open housing legislation of 1968.~~ There was also momentum for subsidized housing for low-income tenants, under which Federal funds were used to help them pay for privately owned housing. The momentum continued until the Reagan Administration worked to reverse it in the 1980's.

In jobs, the commission called for the creation of 2 million jobs over three years, half in Government and half in the private sector. The recommendations helped spur a series of public employment programs. By the peak under the Carter Administration in 1978, programs such as the Public Service Employment (PSE) program of the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) were providing 750,000 jobs.

~~The programs, which were at times dogged by allegations of waste, were entirely eliminated in the Reagan Administration.~~

The report also advocated spending for urban schools, remedial and adult education and school desegregation. And it provided proposals for welfare, most of which supported greater availability of benefits. It did not address the potential problems of welfare dependency.

#### Push for Cutbacks In Reagan Years

Over all, the tide for urban aid began to turn in 1978 when President Jimmy Carter's proposed three-year, \$30 billion urban plan was rejected by Congress. The mood changed completely in 1980 when the Reagan Administration cut real



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The New York Times, May 8, 1992

spending for grants and aid to local and state government by 11 percent. Since 1980, Federal direct aid to cities has been slashed by 60 percent.

To many critics, liberals and conservatives, the main failing in the report and the era was an inability to foresee negative consequences of welfare dependency.

"There was an explosion of the welfare rolls during this period and that coincided with the emergence of the underclass," said Mickey Kaus, a senior editor at The New Republic, who is completing a book on welfare and social policy.

But Christopher Jencks, a sociologist at Northwestern University, whose book "Rethinking Social Policy: Race, Poverty and the Underclass (Harvard University Press, 1992), said welfare policies, while deeply flawed, cannot be blamed for the riots in Los Angeles.

"You've got to remember, Watts occurred before all these things happened," he said. "Detroit erupted in 1919. Racial and ethnic conflict in the U.S. wasn't invented along with the welfare state."

He said, rather than a profligate rush to throw money at urban problems, the report helped produce a relatively modest array of programs targeted at the urban poor that in the end did not go far enough to satisfy their proponents and provided targets for their critics.

#### The Racial Division Obscures Answers

One of the report's most famous and controversial findings was its conclusion that: "White racism is essentially responsible for the explosive mixture which has been accumulating in our cities since the end of World War II."

To some critics, the emphasis on racism, in both the report and the national civil rights debate, has obscured the degree to which the answers to the problems of the ghettos must come from within.

"The assumption was that white America was the problem and therefore white America was the solution," said Robert Woodson, a black who heads the National Center for Neighborhood Enterprise in Washington, which calls for conservative, self-help solutions to inner-city problems. "It set up the proposition that the destiny of black America rested with what white America did."

Representative Gary Franks of Connecticut, the only black Republican in Congress, said welfare dependency, crime and drugs are far more of a threat to the urban poor than white racism.

But civil rights leaders say the case of Rodney G. King shows how pervasive and how misunderstood racism remains.

Earl Shinhoster, southeast regional director of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, said the commission was not talking about whites as bigots but of an institutionalized system content to allow all the economic, social and educational advantages factors that produce success to flow away from the ghettos.



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The New York Times, May 8, 1992

"Rather than an individual in a sheet and hood, we're dealing with a system that places a value and a value system on individuals and on groups," he said.

In 1968, President Lyndon Johnson appointed the head of the N.A.A.C.P., Roy Wilkins, to the commission.

This week, after Mr. Fitzwater blamed the social policies of the 1960's and '70's for the riots in Los Angeles, the current N.A.A.C.P. president, Benjamin Hooks, responded: "That's just a cavalier, irresponsible, irrational, right-wing, Republican no-answer to a serious problem. It's beneath the dignity of the White House to do that."

The exchange reflects the degree to which race has become perhaps the most explosive weapon in electoral politics.

"I don't think politics has dealt honestly with race in 25 years," said Senator Bill Bradley, Democrat of New Jersey. "Republicans have used race in a divisive way to get votes, speaking in code words to targeted audiences. Democrats have essentially ignored self-destructive behavior of parts of the minority population and covered that self-destructive behavior in a cloak of silence and self-denial."

#### Urban Problems Back Into Politics

Since the report came out, the status of many blacks has changed for the better. In households headed by a married couple, the median income for blacks has gone from 68 percent of whites in 1967 to 84 percent in 1990. But, reflecting the breakdown of the black family, for all blacks, the median family income was 59 percent of the white family income in 1966 and was 56 percent in 1989.

Experts say the disparity reflects one way in which the commission's most famous line fails to describe fully the reality of American life today.

"The great line about the two nations, that's not what happened," said Professor Nathan. "Instead, there's been a bifurcation and trifurcation and fragmentation of the black and Hispanic communities which has left the underclass behind."

Many analysts say that instead of the two nations talked of in the report, the past two decades have seen substantial progress by many blacks and an increasingly visible and troubled, but numerically shrinking remnant left behind.

~~For those left behind in the inner cities, nearly all the changes since the Kerner report have been for the worse.~~ More jobs and influence have moved out to the suburbs, which now provide the largest group of voters in a Presidential race. From 1970 to 1990 more than four million whites left the nation's big cities.

Drugs, gangs and guns are a factor in ghetto life to a degree that no one imagined 25 years ago. In 1960, 20 percent of all black children were living in fatherless families; now the figure is 60 percent. Economic growth under the Bush Administration will be lower than at any time since World War II.



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The New York Times, May 8, 1992

**A New Approach Is Called For**

Mr. Bradley said that what is needed is a new approach to problems of the inner city that borrow ideas from the left and right.

"There are some elements of what was begun in the late '60's and early '70's that clearly work," he said. "There are some that haven't worked. If we're serious about dealing with these problems we have to take that which works, both liberal ideas and conservative ones, and invest them with their full potential. We have to be clear that the answer to injustice is not mob violence. But the answer to injustice is not ignoring the conditions."

Representative John Lewis, Democrat of George, one of the leaders of the civil rights movement of the 1960's, said what the nation does not need is another **Kerner** report for the 90's.

"We've been down that road," he said. "We need to take actions that will give people hope. If we don't, I fear for our future."

GRAPHIC: Photo: President Lyndon B. Johnson and Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey with the **Kerner** Commission in 1967. Seated from left were Roy Wilkins, head of the N.A.A.C.P., Gov. Otto **Kerner** of Illinois, chairman, President Johnson, Mayor John V. Lindsay of New York, I. W. Abel, president of the United Steelworkers. Standing were Charles Thornton, James Corman, William McCulloch, Fred Harris, Vice President Humphrey, Katherine Peden, Herbert Jenkins, Edward Brooke, Cyrus Vance and Ramsey Clark. (United Press International, 1967)

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: May 8, 1992



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November 27, 1988, Sunday, Final Edition

SECTION: BOOK WORLD; PAGE X3; JONATHAN YARDLEY

LENGTH: 1055 words

HEADLINE: Twenty Years of Despair In the Heart of Our Cities

BYLINE: Jonathan Yardley

BODY:

QUIET RIOTS Race and Poverty In the United States

Edited by Fred R. Harris And Roger W. Wilkins Pantheon. 223 pp. \$ 19.95

TWO DECADES ago the black ghettos of many great cities of the United States were torn by a succession of nightmarish riots, the cumulative effect of which moved Lyndon Johnson to establish a presidential commission charged with answering three questions: "What happened? Why did it happen? What can be done to prevent it from happening again and again?" Under the chairmanship of the governor of Illinois, Otto Kerner, the commission reached the dire conclusion that "our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white -- separate and unequal." As the editors of the present volume write:

"The Kerner Report -- dated March 1, 1968 -- looked beyond the riots, as members of the commission immediately found they had to do, to racism and poverty and the other terrible, underlying conditions out of which the riots had mushroomed. The report called for great new efforts to combat American poverty, unemployment and racism. It gave America a much more accurate picture of where we were and where we might be heading than anyone could reasonably have expected from what many had thought to be a pretty middle-of-the-road group of commissioners. The report was a measure of America's failure of vision up to then -- and, sadly, it is a measure of our failure of will in recent years."

This last is the conclusion reached in February of this year at a conference in Wisconsin called "The Kerner Report: Twenty Years Later." The co-chairmen were Fred R. Harris, former senator from Oklahoma, and Roger W. Wilkins, the distinguished journalist; the participants included a number of noted authorities on social matters, urban ones in particular, and represented a fairly broad spectrum of political opinion. This new book is the result of their labors: a slender but pointed and depressing volume that confirms nothing so much as the inability of this country's political, economic and social institutions to respond to the urgent messages that were sent out of the ghettos in the uprisings of the 1960s.

Quiet Riots is not, it should be said, a report on the overall condition of black America in the late 1980s. It barely mentions the astonishing growth of the black middle class and the equally astonishing improvement in the lives of its members, and it pays only passing attention to the remarkable amelioration



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of racial tensions among Americans who have the good fortune to be educated, employed and comfortably housed; a real revolution has taken place over a quarter-century in the American middle class, and some readers may well feel that its invisibility in these pages diminishes the credibility of this report.

But the purpose of the editors and their contributors is not to congratulate us or to encourage us in the complacency of the Reagan years; it is to force our attention away from those black Americans who have done so well and onto those millions of others who still live in deprivation and despair. These are not the residents of the suburbs, but the rural poor and, more to the point, the poor of the city ghettos. The condition in which they live is described by Gary Orfield, in words that summarize the bleak picture painted by this report:

"To a considerable extent the residents of city ghettos are now living in separate and deteriorating societies, with separate economies, diverging family structures and basic institutions, and even growing linguistic separation within the core ghettos. The scale of their isolation by race, class and economic situation is much greater than it was in the 1960s, impoverishment, joblessness, educational inequality and housing insufficiency even more severe."

RACE, CLASS and economics: these remain, two decades after the Kerner Report, the controlling conditions of ghetto life. The notion that racial discrimination is no longer a factor in the lives of black Americans is a fiction, and nowhere is it more fanciful than in the urban neighborhoods where segregation in housing, schooling and job opportunities is as implacably de facto as it ever was de jure; the persistence of class distinctions is abetted and intensified by the concentration of poverty in the ghettos; and the restricted economic opportunities open to ghetto residents are made all the narrower by the decline of the manufacturing base upon which the old cities were built.

If anything, the situation in the cities is far worse than it was in 1968, for the promise that was held out by the Kerner Report and the country's positive response to it have been repudiated by our failure to act effectively on the commission's recommendations and insights. The poor of the ghettos have been swept under the rug -- out of sight, out of mind -- in the orgy of middle-class indulgence that has been the predominant characteristic of the Reagan years. In light of this it is amazing that the ghetto has not produced a reprise of the 1960s' riots, but a central point of this book is that its "riots" have been of a different character: "unemployment, poverty, social disorganization, segregation, family disintegration, housing and school deterioration, and crime."

That these intolerable conditions have not produced more violence against the larger society than they have is something of a mystery, though a recurrent theme in these essays is the hopelessness with which the ghetto is suffused; "hopeless and despairing people are less likely to cause trouble" is the way Fred Harris puts it. The result is that the rest of us are allowed to look the other way as "a massive and growing ghetto underclass, highly concentrated in the nation's largest central cities," becomes ever more deeply entrenched and ever less capable of escape.

"These 'quiet riots' are not as alarming as the violent riots of twenty years ago," the editors write, "or as noticeable to outsiders. But they are even more destructive of human life." They are no less destructive of our national



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character, of the conviction we so proudly maintain that ours is a compassionate country committed to the development of each individual life; that we maintain this conviction in the face of the misery of the cities is either massive self-delusion or unspeakable callousness.

GRAPHIC: PHOTO, A BOY IN HARLEM, NEW YORK, UPI

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH



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## LEVEL 2 - 21 OF 28 STORIES

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March 1, 1988, Tuesday, Final Edition

SECTION: FIRST SECTION; PAGE A1

LENGTH: 1323 words

HEADLINE: Racial Gulf Still Wide, Experts Say;  
Kerner Update Urges Action on Inequality

BYLINE: Barbara Vobejda, Washington Post Staff Writer

DATELINE: RACINE, Wis., Feb. 29, 1988

BODY:

The warning was urgent and unambiguous: "Our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white -- separate and unequal."

Accompanying that pronouncement, issued March 1, 1968, by the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, known as the Kerner Commission, was a call to action, imbued with a grand sense of possibility. The racial chasm illustrated so graphically by the urban riots the previous summer could be bridged, the panel said, by a change in attitudes and the commitment "of the most powerful and richest nation on this earth."

Today, a group of experts on race and urban affairs, some of whom had worked on the Kerner Commission report, said that the problems the commission set out to erase two decades ago persist. While great strides have been made in some areas of race relations, the plight of poor, inner-city blacks, they concluded, is more dismal now than it was 20 years ago.

"The Kerner report warning is coming true," the group said in its update of the original report. "America is again becoming two separate societies . . . ."

Tearing the nation apart today, the new document said, are "quiet riots," in the form of unemployment, poverty, housing and school segregation and crime. "These quiet riots are not as noticeable to outsiders . . . but they are more destructive of human life than the violent riots of 20 years ago."

Much like their counterparts two decades ago, members of the group called for public job and housing programs and urged that affirmative action be enforced and the minimum wage be raised.

The panelists, organized by former Oklahoma senator Fred R. Harris (D), one of the Kerner Commission's 11 members, spent the weekend assessing the state of black America on the 20th anniversary of the landmark report. They pointed to gains, primarily the emergence of a black middle class, the election of black political leaders and the integration of police forces, newsrooms, corporate offices and other previously segregated workplaces.



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The Washington Post, March 1, 1988

But those improvements, they argued, have been overwhelmed by problems that have grown more intractable: the increasing concentration of poverty in an isolated, urban underclass from which it is increasingly difficult to escape.

Moreover, the gap between the rich and the poor has widened and difficulties previously associated with blacks now extend to many Hispanics, they said.

"We're disappointed now, 20 years after Kerner, because the country isn't as different as we thought it would be," said Roger W. Wilkins, assistant attorney general at the time of the commission report and now a professor at George Mason University.

"Even the most pessimistic observers of the social scene in the late 1960s," said University of Chicago sociologist William Julius Wilson, "probably did not foresee or anticipate the sharp increases in the rates of social dislocation and the massive breakdown of social institutions in ghetto areas."

Ironically, Wilson said, one of society's gains has created a new problem: the migration of middle-class blacks out of the inner city has left those areas without role models, economically and socially segregated and devoid of stabilizing influences, such as strong churches, schools and businesses.

The commission, appointed by President Lyndon B. Johnson, got its name from its chairman, Illinois governor Otto Kerner. Its members included Mayor John V. Lindsay of New York; the late Roy Wilkins, executive director of the NAACP, and then-Sen. Edward W. Brooke (R-Mass.).

The group operated in an atmosphere of national trauma, brought on by devastating riots in Detroit and other northern cities. It toured the burned-out, violence-torn communities and worked feverishly to produce a 400-page report months ahead of schedule, trying to head off what was feared would be another long, hot summer of riots.

The group assembled over the weekend met in a bucolic retreat on Lake Michigan, and there was more agreement than there was on the Kerner Commission. And this time, it was an intellectual exercise, less urgent and removed from crisis.

But for some who were here, the exercise was more sobering than their work on the presidential panel -- the sense of promise dulled by two decades of experience.

When the Kerner Commission report was released, columnist Joseph Kraft wrote: "The message it conveys charts the course for the next historic achievement in the American epic."

But the epic, charted in stacks of academic papers compiled for this conference, has unfolded with a menacing twist. While civil rights legislation and Great Society programs enabled middle- and working-class families to leave the inner cities, their departure, in combination with economic and other factors, has created urban ghettos far worse than those of the late 1960s, Wilson said.

Greg J. Duncan, program director at the University of Michigan's Survey Research Center, presented evidence of another troubling development, an



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The Washington Post, March 1, 1988

increase in the "persistence" of poverty, particularly among blacks. In the late 1960s, he said, about 35 percent of the urban poor were found to escape poverty the following year. But that figure is now about 25 percent, he said, an indication that the prospect of long-term poverty has increased.

In part, he said, this is a result of economic conditions, the loss of jobs available to unskilled workers, for example. But it is also due to a "deepening" of poverty. In 1970, half of those in poverty were very poor, or lived on incomes at three-quarters of the poverty line. By 1983, according to Duncan, 63 percent of the poor were living that deeply in poverty.

Such research, argued Donna Shalala, chancellor of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, permits a much more sophisticated understanding of race and poverty than was possible 20 years ago.

"The problem of the Kerner Commission was that it was too focused on blacks," she said. "What we have now, it's not two worlds, one white and one black. It may be two or three worlds," including the long-term poor, the working poor and those who have escaped poverty. Minority groups and whites cross over each of those divisions, she said.

"To pretend that nothing has happened in 20 years is just dead wrong," Shalala said.

Her statement hinted at the academic debate that engaged the participants in the conference, most of them scholars who have studied the issue.

The document written by Harris and adopted by the participants recommends primarily federal action, greater spending for targeted social programs, economic development and tax reform to help the working poor.

"Most of what we tried has worked," said Harris. "We haven't tried hard enough."

One of the most controversial findings of the 1968 report was its conclusion that the exploding racial strife was the result not of a conspiracy, as many suspected, but of deeply imbedded racism.

While there was consensus here that racism still remains a critical national problem, there was less agreement over its importance.

"Racism is no longer the key issue," said Ronald Mincy, a visiting scholar at the Urban Institute, citing the growth of the black middle class. "There is something more complex going on."

He urged that the issue be generalized beyond race, so that policy proposals be aimed at poverty and the underclass, regardless of race.

But University of Chicago professor Gary Orfield disagreed: "We can't just deal with the economic conditions. We must deal with the racial conditions in the inner cities."

The panelists, some of them carrying their dog-eared copies of the original report, were clearly proud of the work they had done 20 years ago. But the tone of this weekend was not celebratory.



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"There surely are a lot of people in this world who think we solved the problems in 1968," said Wilkins. "If we don't do anything here but tell people there's a lot more work to be done, we would have done something."

GRAPHIC: CHART, LOOKING BACK AT THE KERNER COMMISSION: MICHAEL DREW; PHOTO

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH



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## LEVEL 2 - 20 OF 28 STORIES

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March 1, 1988, Tuesday, Late City Final Edition

SECTION: Section A; Page 12, Column 2; National Desk

LENGTH: 847 words

HEADLINE: 2 Decades of Decline Chronicled by Kerner Follow-Up Report

BYLINE: By ISABEL WILKERSON, Special to the New York Times

DATELINE: RACINE, Wis., Feb. 29

BODY:

In the 20 years since the Kerner commission described a nation racially divided, life for inner city blacks has worsened as the races have grown further apart socially and economically, according to scholars who gathered here this weekend to follow up the original report.

The scholars concluded that with the decline in manufacturing jobs in the central cities, poverty has deepened and become more persistent for a growing underclass, despite legal and political gains made by blacks and other minorities. Their study is to be released Tuesday in Washington.

Continued segregation of housing and inner city schools "breeds further inequality for blacks and other minorities - including lessened opportunities for work and the greater likelihood of inferior education," a draft off the study says. "The result is a persistent, large and growing American economic underclass."

Concentrated Urban Poverty

These impoverished Americans live in "separate and deteriorating societies, with separate economies, increasingly divergent family structures and basic institutions, and even growing linguistic separation," Gary Orfield, a professor of political science at the University of Chicago, said in the report.

William Julius Wilson, professor of sociology at the University of Chicago, said that concentrated poverty in the inner cities has led to "sharp increases in joblessness, poverty and the related problems of single-parent households, welfare dependency, housing deterioration, educational failure and crime."

The Kerner commission, known formally as the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, was appointed by President Johnson in 1967 to examine race relations and the problems of the central cities after the race riots of the mid-1960's. It delivered its report on Feb. 29, 1968.

Now, according to the new study, "quiet riots" are occurring in the nation's major cities. "These quiet riots may not be as alarming or as noticeable to outsiders - unless they are among the high percentage of Americans



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The New York Times, March 1, 1988

who are victimized by crime -but they are even more destructive of human life than the violent riots of 20 years ago,' the report said.

#### Isolation in the Cities

The report is based on the findings of 14 urban affairs specialists and the eight-member Commission on the Cities, led by former Senator Fred R. Harris of Oklahoma, a member of the Kerner commission who is now a political science professor at the University of New Mexico, and Roger W. Wilkins, senior fellow at the Institute for Policy Studies. The findings were presented here at a national conference sponsored by the Institute for Public Policy at the University of New Mexico and the Johnson Foundation.

In the past 20 years, the growing concentration and isolation of the underclass has occurred as working- and middle-class people left the cities and more of the black and Hispanic poor fell farther below the poverty line, Professor Wilson reported in a paper presented at the conference here.

Despite a decline in the population of many of the nation's largest cities, the number of impoverished people rose by nearly 20 percent between 1970 and 1980, Professor Wilson said. The number of poor blacks rose by 24 percent, from 1.4 million to 1.8 million, and the number of the Hispanic poor rose by 73 percent, from 500,000 to 900,000. By contrast, the number of poor whites fell by 20 percent, from 1.6 million to 1.3 million, over the same period.

In Chicago 1 white person in 10 was poor in 1980, as against 1 in 4 Hispanic people and 1 in 3 blacks.

#### Black America Divided

In its draft, The new commission reports that class divisions within black America have grown more pronounced in the previous 20 years. A growing black middle class has prospered because of the educational and employment opportunities that blossomed after the Kerner report, while the poorest blacks became poorer and more isolated than before.

'We've done the easy part - we have made opportunity for the blacks for whom it was easy to provide opportunities,' Mr. Wilkins said. 'We haven't come close to dealing with the problems of the most burdened legacies of our racist past, the poor and the unemployed.'

Richard P. Nathan, a Kerner commission staff member who is now professor of public and international affairs at Princeton University, said: 'When people call me 20 years after the Kerner commission and ask me if they are better or worse, I say both. For the people who are stuck in the cities with the hardened problems of the underclass, it's worse. And for the people who've moved out because opportunities opened up for minorities, it's better, but that makes the inner city problems tougher and different.'

The report makes these recommendations:

\* An increase in the Federal minimum wage, a strong public jobs program and increased employment training.



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- \* An improved day care system for mothers who want to work.
- \* Stronger fair housing laws and the vigorous enforcement of equal employment laws.
- \* More large-scale desegregation of schools.

GRAPHIC: photos of Prof. William J. Wilson (NYT/Steve Kagan); Roger W. Wilkins

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH



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LEVEL 2 - 18 OF 28 STORIES

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March 22, 1988, Tuesday, Home Edition

SECTION: Metro; Part 2; Page 7; Column 2; Op-Ed Desk

LENGTH: 1420 words

HEADLINE: WELL ALONG TOWARD SEPARATE AND UNEQUAL SOCIETIES;  
20 YEARS LATER, KERNER PANEL'S WARNING HAS BECOME A SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECY

BYLINE: By GARY ORFIELD, Gary Orfield, a professor of political science at the University of Chicago, was appointed to advise the courts in the 1970s school desegregation case in Los Angeles.

BODY:

Twenty years ago the presidential commission studying the ghetto riots of the 1960s predicted that urban America would fragment into separate and unequal societies unless two basic goals were pursued with the greatest urgency -- breaking the exclusion of blacks from opportunities outside the ghetto and upgrading the collapsing inner-city communities. Its voluminous examination of the causes of the riots showed strong trends toward racial fragmentation in metropolitan America. The warning from a commission of moderate national leaders shocked the country.

Even in the great economic boom of the 1960s the **Kerner Commission** warned that the problems of racial inequality and polarization were rapidly intensifying. National unemployment then was one-third its rate now, but many inner-city communities were in economic depression and social collapse.

The warnings were ignored. No major new federal efforts to attack poverty or segregation were launched after the report was published in the spring of 1968. Discussions of new initiatives on civil rights and urban poverty disappeared from politics. Surveys show these issues consistently near the bottom of white priorities. Whites think that discrimination problems have been solved and that any remaining inequalities show minority failure to take advantage of opportunities. A Business Week/Harris Poll survey this year shows, for example, that 70% of whites think that "blacks have the same opportunity to live a middle-class life as whites."

Our presidential politics also polarized on racial grounds. Four of the five elections since the Kerner report have been won by the candidate receiving virtually no black votes. All four of those elections were won by candidates with roots in suburban Southern California, where there has been a particularly fervent desire to deny the changing nature of society and to insist that government be limited to a few basic functions like building freeways and managing zoning to keep low- and moderate-income people somewhere else.

At the national level during the past two decades, one party ran on platforms appealing to white fears while the other took the minority vote for granted and avoided racial issues. The last major presidential speech on the urban race



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question was in 1965.

Even as the issue disappeared from politics, the underlying economic conditions deteriorated sharply. Inner cities came out of each of a series of recessions in a relatively worse position as a growing number of the old employers failed and the new jobs located elsewhere. Many riot areas were never rebuilt, and the communities around them have been in steady decline. The shutdown of industrial facilities knocked out the first step of economic mobility traditionally available to central city youth with limited education.

Housing segregation for blacks in big cities now is only slightly better. Though many fewer areas exclude blacks, the ghetto system still determines housing patterns for poor and working-class blacks as well as a substantial section of the middle class.

An Urban Institute study of 64 metropolitan areas showed that almost two-thirds of blacks lived in low-income census tracts in 1980. The overall, small increase in residential integration was caused primarily by the movement of some blacks into higher income areas. Suburbanization of middle-class blacks increased, and there was a growing income gap between blacks in cities and suburbs.

Looking closely at the 15 cities that the Kerner Commission chose for concentrated analysis, housing segregation is virtually unchanged today. Ghetto isolation has become even more extreme in several. The largest cities, older Midwest cities and cities with relatively little recent residential growth are the most segregated. Half of the U.S. black population resides in just 25 metropolitan areas. The most segregated of those areas also had the greatest racial inequality in job status, wealth and level of education.

Among blacks the segregation score for families in the \$50,000-and-over range "was just as high as the score for poverty-level families," according to a University of Michigan study.

Studies in the 1980s have found strong evidence of continuing discrimination by sales and rental agents in housing markets and of lack of mortgage financing in black, Latino and rapidly changing areas. The history of segregation continues to restrict choices and successful integration in many respects, including the limited market knowledge and fears of resistance that minority families bring into their search for housing.

Segregation has very important consequences. Housing segregation produces segregated schools and segregated schools are worse on every outcome measured. Segregated minority areas experience disinvestment of businesses and jobs and do not receive a fair share of housing finance.

The cities studied by the Kerner Commission, which contained about one-fourth of the nation's black students, all had predominantly minority school districts by 1980. Only three of the systems had more than 40% white students left then, and most were more than three-fourths non-white. By 1980 there were very few large city systems with white majorities left, and virtually all cities were continuing to experience ongoing declines in the numbers of white students -- whether or not they had any desegregation plan.

The Supreme Court's 1974 Detroit decision, Milliken vs. Bradley, blocked



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Los Angeles Times, March 22, 1988

desegregation of city and suburban children in one of the nation's largest metropolitan areas in spite of findings by the lower federal courts that the segregation was the result of constitutional violations and the courts' conclusion that no real desegregation remedy was possible within the overwhelmingly black central city.

According to the statistics for the school year of 1984-85, metropolitan Detroit schools are now among the nation's most segregated. The 9% white enrollment in the school attended by the typical black student compares to 60% or more in some Southern metropolitan areas that have had city-suburban busing plans since 1971. There has been no progress in school desegregation on a national level since the Supreme Court's decision in the Detroit case.

California's equivalent of the Detroit decision came when the state court that was supervising the school desegregation plan in Los Angeles received reports in 1978 indicating that city-suburban desegregation would be necessary for any substantial lasting integration. The California Constitution was rapidly amended to make such a plan virtually impossible, and the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the change. Even the small mandatory integration plan in the city was dismantled in 1981.

Recent studies of schools in the city and suburbs of metropolitan Chicago, Los Angeles, Atlanta and Milwaukee show fundamental differences between minority and white schools; they also show extremely high relationships between the percentage of students who are minority and the percentage who are poor. Race and class are so intertwined in these schools that it makes little sense to talk about them in isolation from one another.

The relationship between race and class and achievement scores is powerful. White schools are almost always middle-class schools, and they have dramatically higher achievement levels. These statistical relationships are extremely strong. There are also clear relationships between race and dropout levels, attendance levels, college-entrance test taking and many other aspects of schooling. Most of the few significant exceptions to this in the cities studied are the magnet schools, where the race-class linkage is often broken by screening out most low-income children. In spite of the fine work of many minority educators, black and Latino schools remain radically different from white schools in ways that are extremely important in preparing students for work and college.

The increasing isolation of inner-city minority families from new centers of job growth shows that the agenda of the Kerner Commission still needs to be addressed. Two decades have moved us well along toward the creation of separate and unequal societies. In his last book, Martin Luther King Jr. asked whether we were heading toward "chaos or community," and reflected pessimistically about what he had learned about white resistance to change in urban society. If we want a workable urban society we must reopen a discussion that has been closed for a generation.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

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LEVEL 2 - 17 OF 28 STORIES

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The Christian Science Monitor

May 10, 1988, Tuesday

SECTION: Opinion; Pg. 14

LENGTH: 955 words

HEADLINE: Race is now a class issue

BYLINE: John V. Lindsay; John V. Lindsay, former mayor of New York and member of Congress, was vice-chairman of the Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, known as the **Kerner** Commission. He is now a lawyer with Webster & Sheffield in New York.

BODY:

MOST reports by presidential commissions lie forgotten, gathering dust in the Library of Congress. Yet, Americans who hope their country will practice what its Constitution preaches still invoke the report presented to President Lyndon Johnson 20 years ago by the Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, the so-called **Kerner Commission**.

This 800-page document accused the United States of having become "two societies, one black, one white, separate and unequal." Following the "long hot summer" of racial discord and urban riots in 1967, this accusation rang true. Our report was unanimous. Whether liberal, conservative, or moderate, every commission member acknowledged incontrovertible evidence of a racially polarized body politic.

Two decades later that polarization has taken a new form. The US now confronts a new crisis in race relations which the **Kerner** Commission could hardly have anticipated and which better leadership in recent years might have prevented.

America's nonwhite middle class has expanded significantly; that is partly because of the **Kerner** report and to citizens and political leaders who took the findings seriously. Also, a growing number of blacks and Hispanics occupy leadership positions in city halls and statehouses across the country, as well as in Congress.

While such changes are hallmarks of greater decency and maturity in our national life, many of the poorest of minority citizens have been left far behind in a losing struggle for survival. Backsliding at the federal level on commitments to equal opportunity in employment, job training, low-income housing, and medical care have had devastating results.

Rising crime rates, more homelessness, ascending teen-age birthrates, lower school dropout ages, and heavier traffic in illegal drugs describe the effect on behavior and the tragic circumstances of a growing portion of the population that is disconnected from society as we have known it. What were once regarded as issues of race have become, increasingly, issues of "class," a word never



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heard in our country before.

~~In the 20 years since the Kerner report, legislative protections against racial discrimination have diminished, but not erased the problems of poverty suffered by this "underclass."~~ A new commission examining the difficulties that the Kerner panel investigated would find two societies: divided these days more along lines of economic conditions and personal conduct than of race. Worse, racial polarization has become further exacerbated by the widening gulf between social classes.

This problem, caused by a climate set at the highest levels of government, can only be solved by leadership that reflects the US Constitution's highest principles.

During the last eight years, federal social programs have been indiscriminately slashed. Meanwhile, defense spending has soared extravagantly, and vast tax cuts have taken effect. Pointing to the record budget deficits that its own senior officials created, Washington now cries poor when the poor cry for help. Then, exploiting backlash fears generated by those cries, some political leaders discredit expenditures designed to ease the problem as "throwing tax dollars down the drain."

The result has been a national disaster. Demagogic appeals by self-anointed "law and order" advocates unleash the very lawlessness and amoral behavior that further polarize society between race and class. And political leaders must cease using code words that thinly disguise appeals to racism.

It is essential that America's leadership sets a healing tone in domestic politics. As the Kerner Commission noted, the plight of the disenfranchised casts a long shadow of uncertainty over every American's future. Anarchy in the streets caused by the rootless young who have no stake in society imperils our neighborhoods. We must deal with their pain and anger and protect ourselves from its consequences.

A new presidential commission could identify such malicious political activity for what it is, recommend more enlightened budget priorities, and help the press locate flash points in neighborhoods and in halls of government where racial tensions are at work. The lives of all Americans are blighted by these social conflicts; each of us must contribute to their resolution. How well we face up to this challenge defines our character as a nation.

The task is not an easy one. The longtime neglect of the inner city will not be quickly repaired. Several of this year's presidential candidates have displayed authentic compassion for the underprivileged; yet they come up short on specific solutions to their troubles. More money is necessary, but money will not do the job alone. We need skilled, knowledgeable, and committed men and women to build education, employment, housing, language, job training, antipoverty, and drug programs - and to deal effectively with crime, the most menacing effect of neglect in these areas. The present climate has driven many such able people out of the fold.

Our nation is trying increasingly hard to become more productive industrially, to correct trade imbalances, and to establish better commercial relations with nonwhite nations around the world. At the same time, this country's minorities make up an increasing percentage of the US's total



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population. We will not be able to move ahead economically on the global stage unless we address the concerns of those minorities here at home.

It is time for another presidential commission to look anew at our divided society and point the way toward the style and substance of leadership that once again can summon the generous, enlightened, and honorable impulses that exist in the American people.

GRAPHIC: Illustration, no caption, NO CREDIT

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH



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## LEVEL 2 - 8 OF 28 STORIES

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February 28, 1993, Sunday, Home Edition

SECTION: Part A; Page 23; Column 1; National Desk

LENGTH: 1003 words

HEADLINE: NEW REPORT ECHOES 'TWO SOCIETIES' WARNING OF 1968 KERNER COMMISSION;  
POVERTY: EISENHOWER FOUNDATION SAYS TO COUNTER THE SLIDE TOWARD A DIVIDED  
NATION, FUNDS ARE NEEDED TO AID THE HARD-CORE INNER-CITY POOR.

BYLINE: By RONALD J. OSTROW, TIMES STAFF WRITER

DATELINE: WASHINGTON

BODY:

A presidential commission's conclusion 25 years ago that America was moving toward "two societies, one black, one white" has grown more relevant in the wake of last year's Los Angeles riots and the failure of government to respond, a national foundation warned Saturday.

As a remedy, the Milton S. Eisenhower Foundation called for the nation to focus on improving the lot of the urban hard-core poor, "the roughly 10% of the population who live in urban areas of concentrated long-term poverty, and whose violence and suffering has a disproportionate effect on American life, class tension and race tension."

The report recommended that federal officials scrap or reform a number of unsuccessful high-profile programs and move away from experimental efforts in favor of programs that have demonstrated success. The foundation estimated that at least \$300 billion would be needed over 10 years to carry out its recommendations.

The recommendations are being made on the 25th anniversary of a 1968 report by the Kerner Riot Commission, which was created by former President Lyndon B. Johnson after racial disorder struck Newark, N.J., Detroit and other cities in the summer of 1967, two years after the Watts riots in Los Angeles. The commission was headed by former Illinois Gov. Otto Kerner.

While there had been some gains since the 1960s in attacking the social ills that underlay the riots, many were undone by "federal disinvestments of the 1980s," said the foundation. The foundation was named for former President Dwight D. Eisenhower's youngest brother. It was created by members and staff of the Kerner Commission and two other presidential panels from the late 1960s.

"We conclude that the famous prophesy of the Kerner Commission, of two societies, one black, one white -- separate and unequal -- is more relevant today than in 1968, and more complex, with the emergence of multiracial disparities and growing income segregation."



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Los Angeles Times, February 28, 1993

After April's riots in Los Angeles, Congress enacted and then-President George Bush signed a \$1.3-billion aid package that included small-business loans for Los Angeles and a \$500-million program for creating summer jobs for youths throughout the country, the report noted.

Congress then passed a long-term aid package, which included urban enterprise zones and "weed and seed" initiatives to weed out criminal elements and then seed areas with social renewal programs.

The report questioned the value of both approaches.

"The day after the 1992 election, the President vetoed the bill," the report stated. "So ended the federal response to the riot, at least for the 102nd Congress.

"The contents of the vetoed bill and the motivations of Congress and the White House over the spring, summer and fall of 1992 raised grave doubts about whether the gridlocked American federal political process would or could ever enact informed solutions to the problems of the inner cities and the persons who live in them," the foundation report said.

The report identified Head Start preschools as an example of the kind of program that merits sharply stepped-up support, citing evaluations that Head Start is "perhaps the most cost-effective, across-the-board inner-city prevention strategy ever developed."

While more than half of those families earning \$35,000 and above send their 3-year-olds to preschool, the enrollment rate is only 17% for lower-income families, according to the report.

Calling for extending Head Start to all eligible children, the report said that "it is noteworthy, if frustrating, that the Kerner Commission called for 'building on the successes of Head Start' more than 25 years ago." President Clinton has proposed full funding of Head Start.

As an example of the need to scrap programs that don't work, the report cited the current major federal job-training system -- the Job Training Partnership Act, launched in the early 1980s. While the program shows "marginally positive" results for disadvantaged adults, high-risk youth "actually did worse than comparable youth not in the program," evaluations showed.

Job training and placement should focus entirely on "the truly disadvantaged" and be handled mostly through private, nonprofit community development corporations, the report said.

Among its other proposals, the foundation called for:

-- Reversing the current federal spending formula so that 70% of anti-drug funds are devoted to prevention and treatment, while law enforcement and interdiction draw only 30%. The Clinton Administration appears to be leaning in that direction.

-- Encouraging already established methods of successfully rehabilitating housing through nonprofit organizations but in a way that avoids "the infamous



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red tape" of the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

-- Making public housing work better through resident management of public housing properties. "Where tenants are well organized and exercise real power, conditions improve, based on demonstration programs to date."

-- Supporting so-called innovative policing and community-based policing so they are the model for the 100,000 new police officers Clinton has pledged to put on the streets of America.

-- Treating handguns, like tobacco, as "a broad-based public health problem," making them the target of a campaign waged by high federal officials, including the surgeon general of the United States.

The report, while estimating that its recommendations would require \$300 billion over 10 years, noted that reducing the federal budget deficit will be a high priority during the 1990s.

But some of the reform could begin as part of the economic stimulus program, the foundation said. In addition, defense spending cuts, higher taxes on the wealthy and the proposed energy tax could be used partly to expand Head Start and reform job training and placement, the report said.

Carrying out all of the proposals "may take in the neighborhood of 15 to 16 years -- almost a full inner-city generation," the foundation said.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH



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LEVEL 2 - 9 OF 28 STORIES

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February 28, 1993, Sunday, Final Edition

SECTION: FIRST SECTION; PAGE A18

LENGTH: 871 words

HEADLINE: Little Progress Is Seen On Urban Ills Since 1968;  
Group Urges \$ 300 Billion to 'Reconstruct' Cities

SERIES: Occasional

BYLINE: Barbara Vobejda, Washington Post Staff Writer

BODY:

A quarter century ago this week, after devastating urban riots, a presidentially appointed panel known as the **Kerner commission** issued an ominous warning: "Our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white -- separate and unequal."

Today, another report argues that despite some gains, the **Kerner commission's** warning "is more relevant . . . than in 1968." Moreover, the problems of urban America have been further complicated since then by new<sup>7</sup> multiracial disparities and growing income segregation, according to the Milton S. Eisenhower Foundation, which has continued the work of the **Kerner commission**.

"Yes, there have been some improvements," said Lynn A. Curtis, Eisenhower Foundation president and author of a massive report updating the work of the commission. "But, in spite of that, the downside is considerably worse."

The foundation, which was created with the help of the younger brother of former president Dwight D. Eisenhower, calls for expenditures of \$ 300 billion over 10 years to invest in children and youth and to "reconstruct" American cities with funding for housing and infrastructure.

The document also recommends scrapping the Job Training Partnership Act and avoiding investment in enterprise zones, arguing that neither have been effective.

Underlying the foundation's policy recommendations is the bleak conclusion that, while some elements of the problem have changed, the basic social and economic disparities that were at the root of urban riots in the past clearly have not been erased.

The same frustration was evident 25 years ago when the **Kerner commission**, named after its chairman, Illinois Gov. Otto **Kerner**, issued its report. In that document, scholar Kenneth B. Clark referred to similar investigations of the 1919 riot in Chicago, the Harlem riot of 1935, the Harlem riot of 1943 and the Watts riot of 1965.



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"It is a kind of Alice in Wonderland -- with the same moving picture reshown over and over again, the same analysis, the same recommendations, and the same inaction," Clark said.

In its report today, the Eisenhower Foundation pointed to the riots in south-central Los Angeles last spring. "We can reflect again on the same moving picture," the report said.

The failure to make progress, the foundation said, can be tied to the "federal disinvestments" of the 1980s, when "the rich got richer and the poor got poorer."

The report cites several statistics to make its case: one in five American children lives in poverty; over the 1980s, average hourly wages fell more than 9 percent; infant mortality rates for children living in some big cities, including Detroit and Washington, were comparable to those in China and the former Soviet Union, and by 1992, one in four African-American males was in prison, on probation or on parole at any one time.

Curtis pointed to some positive developments since the 1960s, including the emergence of a solid black middle class, improved high school graduation rates among blacks and increasing numbers of black and Latino elected officials.

But conditions have worsened among the lower socioeconomic ranks, where there is deeper and more persistent poverty among the residents of isolated, problem-ridden ghettos.

In 1968, the Kerner commission laid out an extensive list of policy recommendations, including improved police-community relations, job creation, early childhood education, improved vocational education and creation of low-income housing outside ghetto areas.

Many of the proposals set out by the Eisenhower Foundation are similar: full funding for Head Start, a goal shared by the Clinton administration; education reform; job training and placement for inner-city youth; new emphasis on drug prevention and treatment; health care coverage for the working poor and expanded Medicaid; federal funding for housing initiatives through local community development corporations; tenant management of public housing, and stricter gun control laws.

The goal, the foundation said, should be to build on programs that have been proven to work and eliminate those that do not.

Overall, the foundation said, the initiatives would require \$ 150 billion in investment for children and youth and another \$ 150 billion for housing, infrastructure and investment in technology to rebuild cities.

The report said that level of funding, to be spent over 10 years, could be largely financed by savings in military spending, reductions in funding for the Agency for International Development, taxes on the very rich and a gasoline tax offset by credits for low-income groups.

Curtis argued that the funding also could be phased in, with some early



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improvements made simply by reorganizing. He cited as an example restructuring the Job Training Partnership Act so it is more focused on training disadvantaged youth.

Margaret Weir, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, said that some of these recommendations, including job creation and training, also are contained in President Clinton's economic stimulus package and may find public backing.

But for some of the other recommendations, particularly those targeted specifically at poor people, "it would be tough to get support," she said.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

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LEVEL 2 - 6 OF 28 STORIES

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March 1, 1993, Monday, Late Edition - Final

SECTION: Section A; Page 10; Column 4; National Desk

LENGTH: 354 words

HEADLINE: REPORT FAULTS U.S. IN HANDLING RIOTS

BYLINE: AP

DATELINE: WASHINGTON, Feb. 28

BODY:

A new study says that despite a history of urban riots the United States has not learned how to improve inner cities and stop the cycle of upheaval.

The riots in Los Angeles last spring underscored the lack of Federal efforts to erase the racial and economic discrimination that led to riots as far back as 1919, said the report, released Saturday by the Milton S. Eisenhower Foundation to coincide with the 25th anniversary of a widely publicized report by the Kerner Commission.

In 1968, the commission concluded that the United States was "moving toward two societies, one black, one white -- separate and unequal."

In its report, the Eisenhower Foundation, a Washington organization that maintains anticrime programs in several cities, said: "We can reflect, again, on the same moving picture -- now the April 1992 riots in South-Central Los Angeles. Congress and the White House misunderstood the problem. They then constructed a solution that flew in the face of what really did work."

After the Los Angeles riots, Congress passed a \$1.3 billion package of small-business loans and summer jobs. Another plan, vetoed by President George Bush, focused on urban enterprise zones and drug-enforcement efforts.

Instead, said Dr. Lynn A. Curtis, author of the Eisenhower report, the Government should focus on training for high-technology jobs, affordable housing and community development banks that can finance inner-city projects.

The foundation also urged the Government to make these changes:

- \*Focus on drug treatment and prevention, rather than interdiction.
- \*Reorganize the Job Training Partnership Act to focus more on unemployed inner-city youths.
- \*Turn responsibility for building low-income housing over to nonprofit organizations, rather than profit-seeking developers.



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The New York Times, March 1, 1993

\*Spend \$15 billion more a year in programs for inner-city youths, and an extra \$15 billion in inner-city infrastructure, for 10 years.

The Kerner panel, also known as the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, was convened by President Lyndon B. Johnson to find what caused urban riots in the late 1960's.

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## LEVEL 2 - 4 OF 28 STORIES

Copyright 1993 The Washington Post  
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March 7, 1993, Sunday, Final Edition

SECTION: OPINION EDITORIAL; PAGE C6

LENGTH: 683 words

HEADLINE: A Lot Done, a Lot to Do

SERIES: Occasional

BODY:

TWENTY-FIVE years ago this month, the **Kerner Commission**, which studied the causes of the '60s racial explosions in American big cities, concluded that the United States was becoming two societies, one black, one white, separate and unequal. The report's anniversary has occasioned much commentary on a central question: Is the country better off now?

Many come close to saying no. A commemorative report issued by the Milton S. Eisenhower Foundation, for example, declared that **Kerner's** conclusions are "more relevant today than in 1968, and more complex, with the emergence of multi-racial disparities and growing income segregation." The new report is surely right about complexity, and it contains some useful policy suggestions. But it's a large mistake to let the negative obscure the achievements made possible by the civil rights movement and by the individual struggles of millions of African Americans.

There is no denying that the legacy of racism, slavery and segregation still haunts America -- often in unexpected ways. While the last quarter-century has seen growth in the black middle class and the expansion of black entrepreneurship, many studies show that blacks hold far less wealth than whites do. This is clearly the product of past discrimination -- wealth is accumulated over generations -- and it makes black progress precarious.

And on some matters, the country has clearly moved in the wrong direction since 1968. The inner-city poor are, if anything, more isolated, more trapped by poverty, more threatened by violence. The misery faced by a large percentage of the nation's black children is a cause for national alarm and shame.

Their fate, however, often calls forth little more than sloganeering. Conservatives blame social breakdown in the cities on "the failure of liberal Democratic programs," liberals berate "12 years of conservative Republican indifference." There were liberal failures, and there surely was conservative indifference. But one would like to think that in 25 years, we had learned more than that. Racism plays a role here; so, too, do changes in the urban labor market that often work against the inner-city poor, and so does the much-discussed rise of the single-parent family. If we want to overcome, we have to understand that economic and social forces are now larger obstacles to progress than personal bigotry.



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The Washington Post, March 7, 1993

And failure is by no means the whole story of the last quarter-century. Anyone who was forced to live under the oppression of segregation and the exclusion of discrimination knows that in most ways, ours is a more racially open society today than it has been at any point in our history. The end of Jim Crow was no trifling matter. For friends of civil rights, there is a grave danger in saying that nothing good has happened since the '60s. To say this is to say that the huge accomplishments represented by the civil rights and voting rights laws had no effect on our society. It is to deny the power of the achievement ethic among African Americans. It is to play into the hands of the enemies of civil rights.

It is also a mistake to see all our social problems in racial terms. It is true that blacks as a group are substantially less well off than whites. But the fact remains that most blacks are not poor, and most poor people are not black.

The point here is that many of the most promising solutions to the problems of poverty have nothing to do with race. President Clinton, while rightly calling for full and vigorous enforcement of civil rights laws, has also proposed large spending increases for programs for pregnant mothers, infants and child immunizations. He has also called for a big increase in the earned income tax credit, which lifts the incomes of the working poor.

Because a disproportionate number of African Americans find themselves trapped in poverty, these programs will be of particular benefit to them. But they will help alongside whites, Hispanics, Asians, Native Americans and all others who are poor. This is more than smart politics; it is a real step toward justice.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

COUNTRY: UNITED STATES;

LOAD-DATE: October 14, 1993



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## LEVEL 2 - 1 OF 28 STORIES

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May 31, 1993

SECTION: NATIONAL REPORT; Pg. 12

LENGTH: 1401 words

HEADLINE: 25 Years Later: Is White Racism Still Dividing America Into Black And White Races -- Separate And Unequal?

BODY:

Twenty-five years after President Lyndon B. Johnson's **Kerner Commission** issued a report saying that America was being ripped apart by White racism, only a little has changed, says the recent Milton S. Eisenhower Foundation report that commemorates the **Kerner Report**.

In riot-torn cities like Detroit, Los Angeles, New York, Philadelphia and Chicago, homeless people peddle newspapers, huddle in overcrowded shelters or beg for money or meals on busy streets. Tired, old Black women wearily wait for buses in Chicago that take them to the suburbs where they are being rapidly replaced by illegal immigrants or ethnic minorities who work for less money. Some Black youths who dare to dream of "having a good day" are robbed of expensive designer basketball shoes and jackets by bullies brandishing guns. Some Black youths who dare not dream of designer clothes and fancy cars still stand in long lines seeking employment.

In many respects, life in the inner cities is virtually the same as painted in 1968 when Illinois Gov. Otto **Kerner**, chairman of the 11-member interracial National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, released the long-awaited riot report to President Johnson. The commission revealed that America is divided into two societies -- one Black, one White -- both separate and unequal.

The report's conclusion was grim: ". . . certain fundamental matters are clear. Of these, the most fundamental is the racial attitude and behavior of White Americans toward Black Americans. Race prejudice has shaped our history decisively; it now threatens to affect our future. White racism is essentially responsible for the explosive mixture which has been accumulating in our cities since the end of World War II."

Two weeks after publication of the report which cost \$ 1 million to find out why riots and rebellions exploded in 40 cities in the late '60s, President Johnson commented on the report in an exclusive taped interview (JET, March 23, 1968). Johnson said of the **Kerner Report**:

"I think it's the most important report that has been made to me since I've been President. I think that the most important thing in the report is the conclusion that it reaches about the cause of our problems in the country evolving primarily from White racism."

In its current 350-page report to observe the 25th anniversary of the



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Kerner Report, The Milton S. Eisenhower Foundation concludes: "Overall, in spite of some gains since the 1960s but especially because of the federal disinvestment of the 1980s, the famous prophesy of the Kerner Commission, of two societies, one Black, one White -- separate and unequal -- is more relevant today than in 1968, and more complex, with the emergence of multiracial disparities and growing income segregation."

The national Foundation asks that the nation invest in its children, youth and urban infrastructure at a level that catches up with countries like France, Germany and Japan.

"We just propose old-fashioned American common sense," suggests Dr. Lynn A. Curtis, president of the Foundation and principal author of the report. "Based on scientific evaluations since the Kerner Commission, we need to replicate what works and toss out what doesn't."

The Eisenhower Foundation, created by members and staff of the Kerner Commission and two other presidential commissions from the late 1960s, includes Yale Professor James Comer, creator of the successful inner-city Comer School Development Plan.

The Comer plan and many community-based strategies that are already working in inner cities across the nation are highlighted in the Foundation's report.

The urgency for leadership is stressed in the Foundation Report. "America found the money to fight the Persian Gulf War, and it found the hundreds of billions of dollars needed to bail out the failed, deregulated savings and loan industry," the Report notes. "American can find the money for a true strategy of child investment, youth investment and community reconstruction if there is the right leadership at the very top. We now have that leadership," the Report added, referring to President Clinton.

Foundation President Curtis is especially concerned about reorganizing the failed federal job training program to function more like Job Corps. "And it means housing built by non-profit developers," he added.

"The truly disadvantaged also should have a real stake in the President's economic strategy, with employment opportunities in public works projects and in emerging high-tech industries," Curtis suggested, pointing out a program in France that trains jobless North African youth in computer repair.

As the economy begins to recover and the debt reduction proceeds, the report asks that "the federal government build to a level of \$ 15 billion more per year to invest in children and youth who are disadvantaged and \$ 15 billion more per year to invest in reconstruction of the inner city. This level is the 'scale equal to the dimension of the problem,' to recall the Kerner Commission's recommendation, and should be sustained for at least 10 years, according to the plan."

The Eisenhower Foundation is also aware of the gridlock in passing legislation to support Clinton's economic plan. "A national summit on Replicating What Works for Children, Youth and the Inner City is needed," Curtis said, "just as the Clinton administration successfully set the tone for its economic policy with the economic summit last December."



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With the **Kerner Report's** grim conclusion that "our nation is moving toward two societies, one Black, one White -- separate and unequal -- The Eisenhower Foundation devotes considerable attention to the current status of Blacks. It notes qualifications and countercurrents abound.

"For example," the Report says, "It is true that, in households headed by a married couple, median income for African Americans has gone from 68 percent of Whites in 1968 to 84 percent in 1990. But, reflecting the breakdown of the family in the inner city, for all African-American households, the median family income was 59 percent of Whites in 1966 and 56 percent in 1989.

In 1960, twenty percent of all African-American children were living in fatherless families. Today, the figure is an astounding 60 percent. In 1960, the ratio of African-American to White unemployment rates for young adults aged 20-24 was 1.6; in 1989 the ratio was 2.3."

Elaborating further upon the status of Blacks, Prof. Andrew Hacker puts another coat of paint on the grim and complicated picture of racial interaction. In his recent book, *Two Nations, Black and White Separate, Hostile, And Unequal*, Professor Hacker says White superiority still haunts America. He concludes:

"There remains an unarticulated suspicion might there be something about the Black race that suited them for slavery? This is not to say anyone argues that humna bondage was justified. Still, the facts that slavery existed for so long and was so taken for granted cannot be erased from American minds."

The Foundation Reports notes that New Jersey Senator Bill Bradley, one of the few White members of Congress who has talked honestly and openly about race relations, adds: "I don't think politics has dealt honestly with race in 25 years . . . Republicans have used race in a divisive way to get votes, speaking in code words to targeted audiences. Democrats have essentially ignore self-destructive behavior of parts of the minority population and covered self-destruction behavior in a cloak of silence and self denial."

The general reaction of Blacks to the Eishenhower Foundation Report 25 years after the **Kerner Commission Report** is, perhaps, best summarized by Dr. Kenneth B. Clark, renowned psychologist who was invited to appear before the 1968 **Kerner Commission**.

Referring to reports of earlier riot commissions, Dr. Clark said: "I read the report . . . of the 1919 riot in Chicago, and it is as if I were reading the report of the investigating committee on the Harlem riot of '35, the report of the investigating committee on the Harlem riot of '43, the report of the McCone Commission on the Watts riot. I must again in candor say to you members of this Commission -- it is a kind of Alice in Wonderland -- with the same moving picture reshown over and over again, the same analysis, the same recommendations, and the same inaction."

GRAPHIC: Picture 1, Racism and poverty provided the sparks that fed flames which flared in Detroit's inner city in July 1967. The toll left 33 Blacks and 10 Whites fatally wounded and 7,200 persons arrested during the rioting and looting.; Picture 2, The deepening racial division in Chicago, described as "the most segregated city in America" by then Urban League chief Edwin C. "Bill"



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Berry, was the fuel that ignited an explosion on the West Side of the Windy City.; Picture 3, President Lyndon Johnson discusses 1968 Kerner Report with Black publishers in his White House Oval Office. He asked the Kerner commission researchers to answer three basic questions: What happened? Why did it happen? What can be done to prevent it from happening again?; Picture 4, President Johnson hands a pen to Rep. W. M. McCulloch (R., Ohio) after signing 1967 order that named commission members Charles B. Thornton, Rep. James C. Corman (D., Calif.), McCulloch, Sen. Fred Harris (D., Okla.), Vice President Hubert Humphrey, Katherine Graham Peden, Atlanta Police Chief Herbert T. Jenkins, Sen. Edward W. Brooke, Cyrus Vance and Atty. Gen. Ramsey Clark. Roy Wilkins, Otto Kerner, President Johnson, New York Mayor John Lindsay and I. W. Abel.; Picture 5, Rioting in Tampa, Fla., brought in heavy law enforcement. The Kerner Report made this stinging indictment: ". . . what Negroes can never forget is that White society is deeply implicated in the ghetto. White institutions created it, White institutions maintain it and White society condones it."; Picture 6, Following civil disorders in Cambridge, Md., 9-year-old Deborah Ann Sharp passes National Guardsmen on duty at a dividing line between the city's Blacks and Whites.; Pictures 7 through 9, Dr. Lynn A. Curtis authors report named for late Milton S. Eisenhower, who served on the 1968 Kerner Commission that invited Dr. Kenneth B. Clark, noted psychologist, to comment on the urban riots study.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH



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Diff later 1/22/24  
center  
(Name) 7/14/20  
Dies ill. 1902  
real people  
When - no wait  
a year.  
(action)

File -  
Race Commission

Day - Part of the fabric of what he does for next term. Lots of false choices.

Kenner Comm'n / not Johnson comm'n

- Who - control

nominati-

Pres involvement

Integrati- into governing real people

when - do now / don't wait a year

as serious - can make it so.

Council at end, charged w/ pursuing recs contained in President's report.

need to get P. of US engaged in this

3-5 Council partly, but only further with later - it has b.v. comm'n have to wait first not operate

1 briefly describe opt. let

3 school. capacity policy interpret. report - solution - just as serious lastingly

KEY: 4 (Bycatchment) - real people - make own bill - make

Process - Pres speaking to Amer people / keeping the govt + its policy making processes

tail on the dog - not going to do much it has blue ribbon comm'n piping up in a year.

system + deliberative

membership - truly national issue -

transcending all

mandate - research / findings / recs -

sometimes probs more clear than solutions

independence - wisdom vary / enhances credib.

willingness to be challenged

Comm's report could rep a turning point

- wouldn't be at expense of other  
- could be still be ongoing involvement of Pres.

drive for policy  
war for policy  
All related to experience

school comm'n policy report

**MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT**

**FROM:                   ERSKINE BOWLES, SYLVIA MATHEWS  
                              AND THE RECONCILIATION GROUP**

**SUBJECT:                ACTION ON RECONCILIATION**

**PURPOSE**

This memorandum is to prepare you for Tuesday's meeting on proposals for combating discrimination and intolerance and promoting racial understanding and reconciliation. The memorandum is an informational memorandum for preparation for our discussion. Therefore, we have not included any recommendations.

What follows is a discussion on background, scope and two proposals for your consideration. Attached to the memorandum are the following items: 1) a memorandum on the Kerner Commission; 2) excerpts from editorials on a race commission; 3) a list of the core reconciliation group members; and 4) funding options.

**BACKGROUND**

In examining whether or not to have a race commission, we considered how to address your concerns, as articulated in the State of the Union Address, that America must become "One America" and must confront unresolved issues of race and bigotry. Over the last few weeks, we have convened a number of meetings (list of participants attached) to devise a proposal that would enable you to take steps to improve race relations, lessen intolerance and capitalize on the nation's diversity as a strength.

In order to achieve the difficult balance between study and action, we have concluded that any proposal must include two elements: 1) an ability to provide immediate action on this issue, which includes creating a greater dialogue between the races in this country; and 2) the means to examine the difficult policy issues involved and to provide recommendations for addressing them. This memo lays out two options for pursuing these goals: 1) a commission with an action entity and a study entity; and 2) a series of town meetings, a national conference and a report from the President to the American people.

This undertaking is not without risks. A candid discussion of race and discrimination is bound to stir passions, cause controversy and give offense across the political spectrum. Specific remedial prescriptions are sure to spark controversy. For example, we might receive recommendations on affirmative action that do not align with our position. Also, choosing participants will present a challenge in balancing the twin goals of reaching a consensus and including a diverse opinions.

Yet, along with the risks is the opportunity to provide leadership that may change the national environment concerning race and discrimination. While any President is in a special position to use the moral authority of the office to promote healing of racial divides and an appreciation of our diversity as a nation, you are unique because of your deep commitment to racial justice and reconciliation and your ability to talk about race and unity in a way that moves the American people. Moreover, we believe that your leading the country towards racial reconciliation and tolerance could be a central element of the legacy you leave as President.

## **SCOPE**

A threshold question that you need to confront is how broad or narrow this initiative should be. Three options to consider are the following: 1) an initiative that addresses racial issues exclusively; 2) a "unity" initiative which broadly encompasses minorities affected by bigotry and intolerance, including racial groups, women, the disabled, and gays and lesbians; or 3) an initiative that would be dominated by race issues, but also generally address other, often inter-related types of discrimination. This concept might be titled "race and intolerance" or "race and unity."

The argument for focusing specifically on racial intolerance is that the long history of racial struggle for civil rights has forged a consensus on the principle of racial equality. Precisely because that consensus has become fragile--witness the attacks on affirmative action and the anti-immigrant rhetoric--your initiative must focus solely on racial discrimination in order to reinforce and strengthen our country's commitment to equality. Another reason for focusing on racial intolerance is the argument that a commission or conference about everything will, in the end, be about nothing. Also, the issue of race is in itself a very difficult, complex, broad-ranging problem that touches everyone.

The argument for a broad "unity" focus is the fulfillment of your call for "One America." Many of the problems of discrimination and hatred are experienced just as strongly by groups other than racial minorities. Narrowing the initiative's charter may yield discord among key constituencies, and we may find ourselves responding to highly visible and vocal criticism from certain constituencies from the onset of our effort. Gays may argue that their struggle for civil rights is now coming of age and that to not include them in a reconciliation initiative and may be characterized as a lack of commitment of broad inclusion in the Administration's initiatives.

The argument for a "race and intolerance" or "race and unity" initiative is that it recognizes that it is race which continues to be "The American Dilemma," without dismissing others who face intolerance and bigotry, which are somewhat intertwined with issues of race.

## **OPTION I: RACE COMMISSION**

One option is for you to create and appoint a race commission by Executive Order. The commission would have two components: 1) an action task force which would conduct a sustained and intensive campaign to build a national environment receptive to addressing the divisions within our country; and 2) an academic task force which would conduct an effort to develop a deeper understanding and provide recommendations to overcome the differential treatment accorded various groups. The commission would thus be both action-oriented and academic.

**Membership / Executive Director:** The commission would be composed of approximately twenty to twenty-five members and would be national, diverse (geographically, racially and professionally) and bi-partisan. We believe that limiting the commission's size is important to creating a group that can actually achieve something. The members would be former elected public officials, former judges, educators, business and religious leaders, sports and entertainment notables, scholars, foundation and other non-profit officials, and civil rights and community advocates. Due to the commission's size limitations, currently serving elected officials would not be included because inclusion would lead to a demand that could not be met. The commission would be administered by an executive director. This position will be a key to the success or failure of the commission. The selection of the members and the executive director will communicate how serious, bold and creative you consider this project.

**Action Task Force:** To pursue an action agenda, the commission would have a task force that heightens awareness, promotes reconciliation, confronts negative stereotypes and encourages rational discourse on divisive issues. The action task force would pursue these objectives through various initiatives, including: 1) hold town meetings and debates which feature state and local leadership; 2) survey local and community groups for ideas that already work and disseminate best practices to a wider range of community and governmental bodies (e.g. ministerial groups, U.S. Conference on Mayors and National League of Cities); 3) reach out to youth in schools and on campuses through meetings and youth-oriented media; 4) nominate people and groups for a Presidential Award; 5) initiate a nation-wide theme campaign; and 6) create Public Service Announcements. Also, the action task force could sponsor a White House Conference on Hate Crimes, which would unequivocally signal the Administration's opposition to and abhorrence of violence against those who may be different from others, and bring affected groups together to identify commonalities and possible solutions.

**Academic Task Force:** A scholarly task force created by the Commission would undertake an inquiry that would draw upon the nation's best minds on this subject. This task force would organize working groups to review existing research, pursue original research and recommend action. The group could focus on the following specific areas: judicial system, education, housing, employment and health care.

**Timing:** The action task force would be at work over the next year. The academic task force would deliver a report to you in one year. Under current assumptions, which includes time for selecting and appointing the members, a realistic timeframe would probably indicate an initiation date between July - September 1997 and a report date between November - December 1998.

*Variant: A variant of the commission option splits the action and study entities (described above) into two separate organizations: a Commission on Race and a Council on Unity. Ideally, the commission and council would be well coordinated, but one would not have formal authority over the other. The commission would be a scholarly endeavor and focus on the policy issues of racial discrimination. The council would be action-oriented and broadly focused to include issues of discrimination against women, the disabled, gays and lesbians. The council would do all those things that the action task force would do (e.g., youth outreach, town meetings, etc.). This commission/council option may simplify participant selection with academics and experts on the commission and public figures on the council. However, this option has its drawbacks in that the broader public may be confused about the role and purpose of the two entities, especially if the council is more broadly defined. Furthermore, a dual-entity option could set up a jurisdictional dispute between the council and the commission.*

### Pros and Cons on Commission

#### Pros

- If successful, the commission's report will be a living document that guides the nation's thought on race relations and frames the debate and solutions for a long time to come (e.g. Kerner report and Nation at Risk).
- A commission could provide a flexible tool for utilizing your strengths whereby your participation with the action task force would be strategically scheduled. Thus, your schedule would include public service announcements, town halls, or meetings with the commissioners.
- A commission provides your Presidential imprimatur which lends the authority and high-profile of your office to this important initiative, while it also provides some distance from a hot-button, high-risk issue.
- Establishing an independent bi-partisan commission widens the range of advice received and issues considered, enhances the credibility of the commission's findings and recommendations, and shows that to promote the long-term public good, you are willing you are willing to run the risk of receiving recommendations that may not be fully consistent with your own views.

- There are a number of areas (e.g. restoring the legitimacy of the criminal justice system for all Americans) in which the problems are clearer than the solutions. The commission would address the need for more policy research in areas that need it. By harnessing the research of the nation's top thinkers, it could enhance policy-making at all levels and provide guidance on non-governmental actions. (This can be accomplished less directly in the second option.)
- Through its action component, the commission could overcome the "study means delay rather than action" criticism and provide a base for reaching out to the American people.
- It addresses the need for more research in areas that need it, and leverages the Administration's resources by the policy work taking place outside your Administration.
- A commission provides a broad base from reaching out to the Nation.

### Cons

- Depending on the membership of the commission, it could <sup>seize</sup> ~~ease~~ control over large aspects of your domestic agenda -- involving, for example, welfare, education, and criminal justice -- to an outside body that may or may not agree with your priorities or accept the constraints of your budget. Of course, you could reject all or part of the commission's eventual recommendations, but that could present a difficult situation.
- Appointing a commission will pose a number of difficult questions. Does Jesse Jackson have a place on the Commission? Colin Powell? How wide or narrow should be the spectrum of ideological views represented on the Commission? The size of a commission is necessarily limited, hence the membership is often drawn largely from academics and economic elites. Also, selecting appropriate members to fulfill the action *and* scholarly functions further complicates the selection process. However, participation in any proposal on this issue will be difficult.
- If there is an emphasis on balancing the commission across the ideological spectrum, it may make civil rights advocates in the community nervous about potential outcomes.
- The use of a "commission" to address this issue subjects you to criticism that you are foregoing action on the issue of race and discrimination only to study a problem which has been studied long enough.
- A commission may not take full advantage of your unique talents on this issue. Any President could appoint a commission and respond to its proposals. You have the unprecedented ability to talk about race in a way that the American people respond to and to construct your *own* agenda for racial reconciliation.

- Commissions are often “top-down” exercises rather than “bottom-up.” Many of the important ways to improve race relations may not lie within the ambit of the federal government. The problem is national, but many of the solutions may be local. State and local governments, religious institutions, charities, private enterprise and individual citizens must participate.
- An independent commission opens the possibility of stalemate from a divided commission (e.g. Advisory Council on Social Security, which split into three factions on privatization recommendations, and the U.S. Civil Rights Commission).
- A commission with scholarly and action task forces may confuse the public, and lead to ongoing jurisdictional fights and substantive disagreements between the two groups.

## **OPTION II: TOWN MEETINGS, NATIONAL CONFERENCE AND REPORT**

Under this proposal, you would convene a series of town hall meetings, a national conference at the White House, and deliver a report from the President to the American people. The following proposal was devised with specific details so that you may envision the positive and negative aspects that might result from this concept. The details would be refined and modified if you select this proposal. The concept includes the following components:

**Town Meetings:** A series of four “town halls” on specific race-related issues would be held: two meetings led by you, one by the Vice President and one by the First Lady.

**Subject/Location:** These events would occur in different areas of the country among different kinds of communities (rural/urban): judicial system in Los Angeles, California; employment in Detroit, Michigan; education in rural south; housing in Chicago, Illinois or Santa Fe, New Mexico. (These locations are illustrative only.)

**Participants:** The participants would consist of mostly people from the community, a few experts in the field, and you. The experts could contribute empirical evidence and exacting analysis to the discussion and listen to citizens for input into the Presidential report to the American people.

**Timing:** At the earliest, the town meetings would start in the early part of summer. One town meeting per month could follow with the conference in the fifth month and the report following the conference.

**Action:** The town halls would be part of our policy development where certain policy ideas could be tested. For example, affirmative action could be a topic of the discussion on the judicial system where we elicit the community’s views and reflect on our policy decisions. To develop these policies, we could put into place a broad process, led by the White House, involving all the agencies. This group could also reach out to public policy

experts outside the government. This process, with the events described above serving as action-forcing mechanisms, would produce a wide range of actions and proposals -- both large and small, executive and legislative. Also, you would produce a report to the Nation with specific proposals based on the town meetings and outreach to scholars and other experts in the field. Furthermore, papers and essays, which may provide a valuable resource for communities, might be commissioned and released in conjunction with the town hall meetings and the conference.

You could encourage local officials to have preparatory, parallel and/or follow-up sessions. Also, you could ask participants in these sessions to convene further meetings on their own to try to agree on, or at least identify, key problems and solutions. If these meetings are successful, they may become regularized forums in the communities and proliferate to other communities. Ideally, these meetings would be the seeds of organizations that live on and promote interracial dialogue in the local communities. We may even explore ways in which the Administration could provide encouragement or support to sustain this dialogue.

**Conference:** Following these town meetings, a multi-day conference would be held.

**Subject/Location:** The conference would be at the White House, and would consist of a number of segments (e.g. panels and roundtables). For example, the conference could include the following segments: 1) judicial system; 2) employment; 3) education; 4) housing; 5) hate crimes; 6) best practices for local communities; 7) families; 8) government's role; and 9) differing perceptions of racial groups.

**Participants:** Participants would vary segment to segment. They would include all the people who would be candidates for the commission (former elected officials, former judges, educators, business and religious leaders, civil rights advocates, and scholars). The conference would include elected officials (e.g., Members of Congress, mayors and governors). It also would include the participation of the town hall communities so that they could share their experience with the other conference participants.

**Timing:** At the earliest, this conference could be held in early fall.

**Action:** The conference would provide a forum for a national articulation of the existing problems and solutions as presented by everyday people, experts and leaders. Policy announcements could accompany and/or follow the conference through the broad policy development process led by the White House. A wide range of actions and proposals could result-- both large and small, executive and legislative. The conference would be included in the report by the President to the American people. Cabinet Secretaries could prepare materials to help focus and guide discussions on topics relevant to their missions.

**President's Report to the American People:** Following the town hall meetings and conference, a report "from the President to the American People" would be developed for you.

**Participants:** The report would include input by the communities, the agencies and experts in the field. The White House would work with an informal outside group to draft the report.

**Timing:** The anniversaries of the birth or death of Martin Luther King, Jr. have been suggested as dates for delivery of the report.

**Action:** The report would be a thoughtful, comprehensive description of the existing problems, and a presentation of action items to address those problems. It would include the following items: 1) an update on the state of race relations and discrimination in the U.S. today, including a report on our progress since the Kerner Commission; 2) a description of those events that have occurred through your initiative - your town halls, others' town halls and the conference; 3) recommendations for moving the country forward; and 4) a selection of realistic action items which you could pledge to pursue.

#### Pros and Cons of Town Meetings, National Conference and Report

##### Pros

- This option fully draws upon your unique talents on this issue. It places you in the forefront of the issue where you have exhibited an ability to talk about race in a way that moves the American people, and it allows you to more fully demonstrate the power of moral leadership.
- It addresses several needs: 1) bringing people in communities together to talk to each other about these issues; 2) forcing policy development on this issue in the government; 3) creating a comprehensive and inclusive report through the town halls and conference; 4) initiating broad-based action on this issue.
- It would allow you to maintain control over the long term, and allow you, with input from the people most affected, to create your *own* agenda for unity and reconciliation that is consistent with your priorities and within the constraints of your budget.
- This initiative increases our ability to actively include more national and community leaders.
- It directly confronts the broad-scale policy issues of criminal justice, and education that are central to achieving progress in this area.

- The process of this initiative has the potential to improve race relations and promote tolerance through broad-scale, community-based dialogue, as well as generate innovative solutions to old and new problems alike.

### Cons

- Town halls may be perceived as a shallow exercise of talk without serious action. Many people think we have studied and discussed the questions involving race long enough and that it is past time to put that study to practical use.
- We may receive a "not another White House conference" response.
- The town halls and a conference bring this hot, divisive issue literally to your front door. If the town halls and the White House conference are to be a real discussion of the issues, principals may be in a position to receive strong criticism directly.

### Attachments

Memorandum on the Kerner Commission  
Excerpts from Editorials on Race Commissions  
Listeconciliation Working Group  
Future Options

March 20, 1997

MEMORANDUM FOR ERSKINE BOWLES  
SYLVIA MATHEWS

FROM: BRUCE REED  
ELENA KAGAN

SUBJECT: RACE COMMISSION/COUNCIL

We are concerned that the two pending proposals for a race commission or council have serious flaws. This memo presents a third alternative.

The proposal to establish a full-fledged Presidential commission on race has four weaknesses.

- First, it could cede control over large aspects of the President's domestic agenda -- involving, for example, welfare, education, and criminal justice -- to an outside body that may or may not agree with the President's priorities or accept the constraints of the President's budget. Of course, the President could reject all or part of the commission's eventual recommendations, but we should think twice before putting ourselves in the position of having to do so.
- Second, it will involve the President in a morass of difficult appointments questions. Does Jesse Jackson have a place on the Commission? Colin Powell? How wide or narrow should be the spectrum of ideological views represented on the Commission?
- Third, it subjects the President to criticism that he is not doing anything. Many people think we have studied questions involving race long enough and that it is past time to put that study to practical use.
- 4th - real people.
- 3th Fourth, and perhaps most important, it fails to take advantage of the President's unique talents on this issue. Any President could appoint a commission and respond to its proposals. This President has the unprecedented ability to talk about race in a way that the American people respond to and to construct his own agenda for racial reconciliation.

The proposal to establish an action-oriented Council, along the lines of the Council on Physical Fitness, also raises significant concerns, at least as described so far.

- First, it is subject to characterization as a "do-good," "touchy-feely," essentially unrigorous and unserious response to the most intractable of America's social problems.

- Second and relatedly, it would not in fact deal with the broadscale policy issues of welfare, criminal justice, education, and so forth that are central to achieving progress in this area.
- Third, it too would be removed from the President (though potentially somewhat less so than the commission) and so would fail to take advantage of his ability to spur reconciliation and progress.

A third alternative makes the President central to a second-term effort on racial issues, at the same time as it combines intellectual rigor with an action orientation. It would include the following components:

- A major multi-day conference on racial issues to take place at the White House, perhaps in early summer. Participants in this conference would include all the people who would be candidates for the commission: political figures (e.g., Jesse Jackson, Pat Moynihan); business, civil rights, and religious leaders; scholars and public intellectuals (e.g., William Julius Wilson, Skip Gates, Randy Kennedy). It also could include events or discussions involving the participation of “non-elites,” in order to widen the range of views considered and command the attention of the broadest possible audience.
- A series of “town halls” led by the President on race-related issues. These events would occur in different areas of the country among different kinds of communities. They would focus on particular subjects, such as race and criminal justice. They would involve both “ordinary Americans” and experts in the field, who would contribute empirical evidence and rigorous analysis.
- Policy announcements to precede, accompany, and follow the conference and town halls. We would put into place a broad policy development process, led by the White House, involving all the agencies, and reaching out to public policy experts outside the government. This process (with the events described above serving as action-forcing mechanisms) would produce a wide range of actions and proposals -- both large and small, executive and legislative.

It should be noted that this proposal easily can accommodate some attention to issues of intolerance generally, involving not only racial minorities, but also women, religious minorities, and gays and lesbians. Although we would not like to see the conference, town halls, and policy process focus exclusively (or even mainly) on this area, nothing would be easier than to have, for example, one panel of the conference or a single town hall address these issues.

**PREVIOUS PRESIDENTIAL COMMISSIONS DEALING  
WITH RACE RELATIONS**

**OVERVIEW**

Previously, two Presidential Commissions dealt with the subject of race relations. President Truman established the *President's Committee on Civil Rights* in December 1946, to investigate racial violence and recommend remedial measures. The second commission was *the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders*, widely known as the Kerner Commission. President Johnson appointed it on July 27, 1967, following riots in the mid 1960s.

In addition, two other historical gatherings dealing with race have occurred that have a bearing on the current proposal. President Lyndon B. Johnson convened the *White House Conference To Fulfill These Rights*, on June 1-2, 1966. Its purpose was to "seek a solution of the Negro Problem since the Civil War," and to figure out how to best translate the promise of racial equality into reality. Finally, the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library at the University of Texas in Austin, sponsored a symposium on civil rights. *Equal Opportunity in the United States*, December 11-12, 1972. Its primary purpose was to honor Johnson's contributions to civil rights, but it also dealt with the unfinished agenda with respect to racial justice for blacks.

**PRESIDENT'S COMMITTEE ON CIVIL RIGHTS**

President Truman established the *President's Committee on Civil Rights* in December 1946, in response to an impending racial crisis between blacks and whites. With the return of hundreds of thousands of black soldiers who had fought overseas in World War II, and the migration north of thousands more searching for economic betterment, a new age of black aspiration had been ushered in. Simultaneously, a violent white backlash persisted in the south, which relied on Jim Crow segregation, poll taxes and literacy tests, and lynching to dissuade black advancement. Eventually, tensions between blacks and whites erupted into race riots in several major cities.

Guided by Charles Wilson, President of the General Electric Corporation, the Committee thoroughly examined the issue of civil rights. in both public and private forums. On October 29, 1947, the Committee issued its report. *To Secure These Rights*. The report concluded that there was a large gap between what the country stood for and the reality for millions of blacks. It recommended the enactment of many civil rights laws. including:

- Providing federal protection against lynching;
- Banning poll taxes and protecting the right to vote;
- Establishment of a permanent Fair Employment Practices Commission;
- Expanding the Justice Department's civil rights section;
- Desegregating the military;
- Home rule for the District of Columbia;
- Resolving the evacuation claims of Japanese-Americans interned during World War II; and
- Proposals attacking segregation in education, housing, and interstate transportation.

Truman enthusiastically endorsed *To Secure These Rights*, calling it “an American charter of human freedom.” On February 2, 1948, he sent Congress a message on civil rights followed by specific legislation to dismantle segregation and ensure black voting rights. Noting that not “all groups are free to live and work where they please or to improve their conditions of life by their own efforts,” he urged Congress to enact into law the Committee’s recommendations.

Most African-American leaders, the NAACP, and the black press embraced the president’s efforts, as did white liberal organizations such as Americans for Democratic Action. Ultimately, Truman failed to get any of his legislative program enacted because of strong congressional opposition. However, when his initiatives stalled on capitol hill, he issued executive orders to: 1) desegregate the Armed Forces and 2) to fight discriminatory hiring practices by Federal agencies. In the end, opposition to Truman’s proposals was so great that he made only modest progress in fighting segregation over the next two years of his term.

## **KERNER COMMISSION**

This presidential commission was headed by Illinois Governor Otto Kerner. The Commission’s official title is the *National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders*, however, it is widely known as the *Kerner Commission*. It was appointed by President Johnson on July 27, 1967, following a series of riots in dozens of American cities in the mid 1960s. The worst riots occurred in Newark, New Jersey, and in Detroit, Michigan during the summer of 1967. In the wake of the Detroit Riots, hundreds of black and white businesses were destroyed, forty-three people lost their lives, and over 7,200 people were arrested.

President Johnson appointed the Commission to find out whether any subversive or conspiratorial elements were involved and to determine how future riots could be avoided. The Commission was also charged with examining the reasons why ghettos persisted. It also explored the problems of unemployment, family structure, and social disorganization in the ghettos, and the experiences of other immigrants with those of blacks. In addressing the nation on the racial disturbances sweeping the country, Johnson said, “[t]he only genuine, long-range solution for what has happened lies in an attack -- mounted at every level -- upon the conditions that breed despair and violence. All of us know what those conditions are: ignorance, slums, poverty, disease, not enough jobs. We should attack these conditions -- not because we are frightened by conflict, but because we are fired by conscience. We should attack them because there is simply no other way to achieve a decent and orderly society in America.”

On March 1, 1968, the *Kerner Commission* issued its report, stating that the United States was “moving toward two societies, one black, one white -- separate and unequal.” The report warned that racism and hatred were growing deeper and that communication between the two communities was breaking down. Unlike the earlier Truman commission that largely focused on civil and legal rights, the *Kerner Commission* pointed out the growing economic inequality among the races.

Many civil disturbances in 1960s occurred in northern cities where the most oppressive vestiges of segregation had not existed. There, African Americans were confronted with substandard housing, meager job possibilities, and the absence of economic and political power.

The Commission recommended a massive government assault on the economic inequality between the races, which would have cost billions of public dollars to implement in its entirety. The Commission's key recommendations called for:

- Creating public and private sector jobs in the inner cities aimed at the hard-core unemployed;
- Eliminating desegregation in both secondary and higher education;
- Improving the quality education in inner city schools;
- Overhauling public welfare programs, including providing "a national system of income supplementation," for the working poor; and
- Eradicating inner city slums, including building low and moderate income housing units.

Although the Commission uncovered no seditious or conspiratorial ingredients, many did not like the report, possibly owing to the culpability it attributed to the white community. Generally, white liberals applauded it; conservatives felt that its assessment was prejudiced and unfair; and blacks regarded it simply as another report. Beyond this, critics say all levels of government largely ignored the report. Reportedly, Johnson was deeply suspicious of the Commission's recommendations, and refused to comment on the report, or allow the Commission to present it to him, or even sign form letters thanking the members for their work. Johnson was convinced that there was a conspiracy behind the riots.

Although critics charge that the Commission's recommendations were not immediately adopted, others argue that the report significantly altered public opinion on racial matters and helped pave the way for later successes. For example, *de jure* segregation was eliminated by 1960's civil rights legislation and affirmative action and other programs were started to help close the economic gap between blacks and whites. Also, in 1969, the Supreme Court ordered cities to desegregate their schools immediately and in 1971, they approved the use of busing to accomplish this aim. Moreover, Charles Evers was elected Mayor of a Mississippi city. Additional electoral victories soon followed in Detroit, Cleveland, Los Angeles, Chicago, Gary, Indiana, and other cities. Thus, most experts say that we have made progress, but that much remains to be done.

## **WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE FULFILL THESE RIGHTS**

On June 1-2, 1966, President Lyndon B. Johnson convened the *White House Conference To Fulfill these Rights*. Its purpose was to "seek a solution of the Negro Problem since the Civil War," and to "move beyond opportunity to achievement." President Johnson announced his intentions to hold this conference at a speech he gave at Howard University, on June 4, 1965.

Leading up the conference, the White House held a national planning session November 17-18, 1965. Attending was more than 200 scholars and practitioners from the civil rights, labor, business, education, religious, and social welfare community who met for intensive working sessions on eight subjects of concern. The result was a comprehensive set of recommendations dealing with four areas: economic security and welfare, education, housing, and administration of justice.

In February 1966, the President appointed a 30-member Council to oversee the Conference. In addition, White House and agency staff, and various consultants collected extensive background materials and prepared background papers for the conference itself. The published proceedings distilled the background materials and previously prepared recommendations for each area. According to reports, more than 2,500 people participated in the conference. In retrospect, many Conference's recommendations were later reflected in the programs of the Great Society.

### **CIVIL RIGHTS SYMPOSIUM PROGRAM: EQUAL OPPORTUNITY IN THE UNITED STATES**

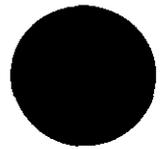
The LBJ School of Public Affairs in Austin, Texas, held a civil rights symposium on December 11-12, 1972, *Equal Opportunity in the United States*, in which all the major civil rights and other leaders at the time attended. Many of these leaders have since died, but other surviving participants include Vernon Jordan, Roger Wilkins, Julian Bond, Gary Hatcher, Yvonne Brathwaite Burke among others. Besides honoring LBJ, the main purpose of the symposium was to discuss what should be done in the future with respect to civil rights. It was felt that we had already taken all of the required legislative actions, and that the next steps were purely economic opportunity.

Chief Justice Earl Warren was the keynote speaker at the conference. Hubert Humphrey, Barbara Johnson, Louis Stokes, and Henry Gonzalez, were among the other speakers. In addition, in what was his last address before dying shortly after the conference, Johnson summed up the progress that we had made with respect to civil rights over the years saying, "that it's time to leave aside legalisms and euphemisms and eloquent evasions. It's time we get down to the business of trying to stand black and white on level ground." He went on to ask the participants a series of questions:

- Are the federal government and the state government, the foundations, the churches, the universities, all doing what they can do to assure enough scholarships for young blacks?
- Are our professions such as law, medicine, accounting, etc., sounding the call to make sure that Blacks are taking the leadership courses to avail themselves of leadership opportunities in professional careers?
- Are our trade unions and those concern with vocational occupations do the same with regard to apprenticeship and training programs?
- Are employers who have already opened their doors to Blacks making sure that they are

providing advancement opportunities up the career ladder?

Johnson concluded his remarks, saying “[w]e know there’s injustice. We know there’s intolerance. We know there’s discrimination and hate and suspicion. And we know there’s division between us. But there is a larger truth. We have proved that great progress is possible. We know how much still remains to be done. And if our efforts continue and our will strong and if our hearts are right and if courage remains our constant companion, then, my fellow Americans, I am confident we shall overcome.”



**MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT**

**FROM:                    ERSKINE BOWLES, SYLVIA MATHEWS  
                                 AND THE RECONCILIATION GROUP**

**SUBJECT:                ACTION ON RECONCILIATION**

**PURPOSE**

This memorandum is to prepare you for Tuesday's meeting on proposals for combating discrimination and intolerance and promoting racial understanding and reconciliation. The memorandum is an informational memorandum for preparation for our discussion. Therefore, we have not included any recommendations.

What follows is a discussion on background, scope and two proposals for your consideration. Attached to the memorandum are the following items: 1) a memorandum on the Kerner Commission; 2) excerpts from editorials on a race commission; 3) a list of the core reconciliation group members; and 4) funding options.

**BACKGROUND**

In examining whether or not to have a race commission, we considered how to address your concerns, as articulated in the State of the Union Address, that America must become "One America" and must confront unresolved issues of race and bigotry. Over the last few weeks, we have convened a number of meetings (list of participants attached) to devise a proposal that would enable you to take steps to improve race relations, lessen intolerance and capitalize on the nation's diversity as a strength.

In order to achieve the difficult balance between study and action, we have concluded that any proposal must include two elements: 1) an ability to provide immediate action on this issue, which includes creating a greater dialogue between the races in this country; and 2) the means to examine the difficult policy issues involved and to provide recommendations for addressing them. This memo lays out two options for pursuing these goals: 1) a commission with an action entity and a study entity; and 2) a series of town meetings, a national conference and a report from the President to the American people.

This undertaking is not without risks. A candid discussion of race and discrimination is bound to stir passions, cause controversy and give offense across the political spectrum. Specific remedial prescriptions are sure to spark controversy. For example, we might receive recommendations on affirmative action that do not align with our position. Also, choosing participants will present a challenge in balancing the twin goals of reaching a consensus and including a diverse opinions.

Yet, along with the risks is the opportunity to provide leadership that may change the national environment concerning race and discrimination. While any President is in a special position to use the moral authority of the office to promote healing of racial divides and an appreciation of our diversity as a nation, you are unique because of your deep commitment to racial justice and reconciliation and your ability to talk about race and unity in a way that moves the American people. Moreover, we believe that your leading the country towards racial reconciliation and tolerance could be a central element of the legacy you leave as President.

## SCOPE

A threshold question that you need to confront is how broad or narrow this initiative should be. Three options to consider are the following: 1) an initiative that addresses racial issues exclusively; 2) a "unity" initiative which broadly encompasses minorities affected by bigotry and intolerance, including racial groups, women, the disabled, and gays and lesbians; or 3) an initiative that would be dominated by race issues, but also generally address other, often inter-related types of discrimination. This concept might be titled "race and intolerance" or "race and unity."

The argument for focusing specifically on racial intolerance is that the long history of racial struggle for civil rights has forged a consensus on the principle of racial equality. Precisely because that consensus has become fragile--witness the attacks on affirmative action and the anti-immigrant rhetoric--your initiative must focus solely on racial discrimination in order to reinforce and strengthen our country's commitment to equality. Another reason for focusing on racial intolerance is the argument that a commission or conference about everything will, in the end, be about nothing. Also, the issue of race is in itself a very difficult, complex, broad-ranging problem that touches everyone.

The argument for a broad "unity" focus is the fulfillment of your call for "One America." Many of the problems of discrimination and hatred are experienced just as strongly by groups other than racial minorities. Narrowing the initiative's charter may yield discord among key constituencies, and we may find ourselves responding to highly visible and vocal criticism from certain constituencies from the onset of our effort. Gays may argue that their struggle for civil rights is now coming of age and that to not include them in a reconciliation initiative and may be characterized as a lack of commitment of broad inclusion in the Administration's initiatives.

The argument for a "race and intolerance" or "race and unity" initiative is that it recognizes that it is race which continues to be "The American Dilemma," without dismissing others who face intolerance and bigotry, which are somewhat intertwined with issues of race.

## OPTION I: RACE COMMISSION

One option is for you to create and appoint a race commission by Executive Order. The commission would have two components: 1) an action task force which would conduct a sustained and intensive campaign to build a national environment receptive to addressing the divisions within our country; and 2) an academic task force which would conduct an effort to develop a deeper understanding and provide recommendations to overcome the differential treatment accorded various groups. The commission would thus be both action-oriented and academic.

**Membership / Executive Director:** The commission would be composed of approximately twenty to twenty-five members and would be national, diverse (geographically, racially and professionally) and bi-partisan. We believe that limiting the commission's size is important to creating a group that can actually achieve something. The members would be former elected public officials, former judges, educators, business and religious leaders, sports and entertainment notables, scholars, foundation and other non-profit officials, and civil rights and community advocates. Due to the commission's size limitations, currently serving elected officials would not be included because inclusion would lead to a demand that could not be met. The commission would be administered by an executive director. This position will be a key to the success or failure of the commission. The selection of the members and the executive director will communicate how serious, bold and creative you consider this project.

**Action Task Force:** To pursue an action agenda, the commission would have a task force that heightens awareness, promotes reconciliation, confronts negative stereotypes and encourages rational discourse on divisive issues. The action task force would pursue these objectives through various initiatives, including: 1) hold town meetings and debates which feature state and local leadership; 2) survey local and community groups for ideas that already work and disseminate best practices to a wider range of community and governmental bodies (e.g. ministerial groups, U.S. Conference on Mayors and National League of Cities); 3) reach out to youth in schools and on campuses through meetings and youth-oriented media; 4) nominate people and groups for a Presidential Award; 5) initiate a nation-wide theme campaign; and 6) create Public Service Announcements. Also, the action task force could sponsor a White House Conference on Hate Crimes, which would unequivocally signal the Administration's opposition to and abhorrence of violence against those who may be different from others, and bring affected groups together to identify commonalities and possible solutions.

**Academic Task Force:** A scholarly task force created by the Commission would undertake an inquiry that would draw upon the nation's best minds on this subject. This task force would organize working groups to review existing research, pursue original research and recommend action. The group could focus on the following specific areas: judicial system, education, housing, employment and health care.

**Timing:** The action task force would be at work over the next year. The academic task force would deliver a report to you in one year. Under current assumptions, which includes time for selecting and appointing the members, a realistic timeframe would probably indicate an initiation date between July - September 1997 and a report date between November - December 1998.

*Variant: A variant of the commission option splits the action and study entities (described above) into two separate organizations: a Commission on Race and a Council on Unity. Ideally, the commission and council would be well coordinated, but one would not have formal authority over the other. The commission would be a scholarly endeavor and focus on the policy issues of racial discrimination. The council would be action-oriented and broadly focused to include issues of discrimination against women, the disabled, gays and lesbians. The council would do all those things that the action task force would do (e.g., youth outreach, town meetings, etc.). This commission/council option may simplify participant selection with academics and experts on the commission and public figures on the council. However, this option has its drawbacks in that the broader public may be confused about the role and purpose of the two entities, especially if the council is more broadly defined. Furthermore, a dual-entity option could set up a jurisdictional dispute between the council and the commission.*

### **Pros and Cons on Commission**

#### **Pros**

- If successful, the commission's report will be a living document that guides the nation's thought on race relations and frames the debate and solutions for a long time to come (e.g. Kerner report and Nation at Risk).
- A commission could provide a flexible tool for utilizing your strengths whereby your participation with the action task force would be strategically scheduled. Thus, your schedule would include public service announcements, town halls, or meetings with the commissioners.
- A commission provides your Presidential imprimatur which lends the authority and high-profile of your office to this important initiative, while it also provides some distance from a hot-button, high-risk issue.
- Establishing an independent bi-partisan commission widens the range of advice received and issues considered, enhances the credibility of the commission's findings and recommendations, and shows that to promote the long-term public good, you are willing you are willing to run the risk of receiving recommendations that may not be fully consistent with your own views.

- There are a number of areas (e.g. restoring the legitimacy of the criminal justice system for all Americans) in which the problems are clearer than the solutions. The commission would address the need for more policy research in areas that need it. By harnessing the research of the nation's top thinkers, it could enhance policy-making at all levels and provide guidance on non-governmental actions. (This can be accomplished less directly in the second option.)
- Through its action component, the commission could overcome the "study means delay rather than action" criticism and provide a base for reaching out to the American people.
- It addresses the need for more research in areas that need it, and leverages the Administration's resources by the policy work taking place outside your Administration.
- A commission provides a broad base from reaching out to the Nation.

### Cons

- Depending on the membership of the commission, it could <sup>seize</sup>~~lose~~ control over large aspects of your domestic agenda -- involving, for example, welfare, education, and criminal justice -- to an outside body that may or may not agree with your priorities or accept the constraints of your budget. Of course, you could reject all or part of the commission's eventual recommendations, but that could present a difficult situation.
- Appointing a commission will pose a number of difficult questions. Does Jesse Jackson have a place on the Commission? Colin Powell? How wide or narrow should be the spectrum of ideological views represented on the Commission? The size of a commission is necessarily limited, hence the membership is often drawn largely from academics and economic elites. Also, selecting appropriate members to fulfill the action *and* scholarly functions further complicates the selection process. However, participation in any proposal on this issue will be difficult.
- If there is an emphasis on balancing the commission across the ideological spectrum, it may make civil rights advocates in the community nervous about potential outcomes.
- The use of a "commission" to address this issue subjects you to criticism that you are foregoing action on the issue of race and discrimination only to study a problem which has been studied long enough.
- A commission may not take full advantage of your unique talents on this issue. Any President could appoint a commission and respond to its proposals. You have the unprecedented ability to talk about race in a way that the American people respond to and to construct your *own* agenda for racial reconciliation.

- Commissions are often “top-down” exercises rather than “bottom-up.” Many of the important ways to improve race relations may not lie within the ambit of the federal government. The problem is national, but many of the solutions may be local. State and local governments, religious institutions, charities, private enterprise and individual citizens must participate.
- An independent commission opens the possibility of stalemate from a divided commission (e.g. Advisory Council on Social Security, which split into three factions on privatization recommendations, and the U.S. Civil Rights Commission).
- A commission with scholarly and action task forces may confuse the public, and lead to ongoing jurisdictional fights and substantive disagreements between the two groups.

## **OPTION II: TOWN MEETINGS, NATIONAL CONFERENCE AND REPORT**

Under this proposal, you would convene a series of town hall meetings, a national conference at the White House, and deliver a report from the President to the American people. The following proposal was devised with specific details so that you may envision the positive and negative aspects that might result from this concept. The details would be refined and modified if you select this proposal. The concept includes the following components:

**Town Meetings:** A series of four “town halls” on specific race-related issues would be held: two meetings led by you, one by the Vice President and one by the First Lady.

**Subject/Location:** These events would occur in different areas of the country among different kinds of communities (rural/urban): judicial system in Los Angeles, California; employment in Detroit, Michigan; education in rural south; housing in Chicago, Illinois or Santa Fe, New Mexico. (These locations are illustrative only.)

**Participants:** The participants would consist of mostly people from the community, a few experts in the field, and you. The experts could contribute empirical evidence and exacting analysis to the discussion and listen to citizens for input into the Presidential report to the American people.

**Timing:** At the earliest, the town meetings would start in the early part of summer. One town meeting per month could follow with the conference in the fifth month and the report following the conference.

**Action:** The town halls would be part of our policy development where certain policy ideas could be tested. For example, affirmative action could be a topic of the discussion on the judicial system where we elicit the community’s views and reflect on our policy decisions. To develop these policies, we could put into place a broad process, led by the White House, involving all the agencies. This group could also reach out to public policy

experts outside the government. This process, with the events described above serving as action-forcing mechanisms, would produce a wide range of actions and proposals -- both large and small, executive and legislative. Also, you would produce a report to the Nation with specific proposals based on the town meetings and outreach to scholars and other experts in the field. Furthermore, papers and essays, which may provide a valuable resource for communities, might be commissioned and released in conjunction with the town hall meetings and the conference.

You could encourage local officials to have preparatory, parallel and/or follow-up sessions. Also, you could ask participants in these sessions to convene further meetings on their own to try to agree on, or at least identify, key problems and solutions. If these meetings are successful, they may become regularized forums in the communities and proliferate to other communities. Ideally, these meetings would be the seeds of organizations that live on and promote interracial dialogue in the local communities. We may even explore ways in which the Administration could provide encouragement or support to sustain this dialogue.

**Conference:** Following these town meetings, a multi-day conference would be held.

**Subject/Location:** The conference would be at the White House, and would consist of a number of segments (e.g. panels and roundtables). For example, the conference could include the following segments: 1) judicial system; 2) employment; 3) education; 4) housing; 5) hate crimes; 6) best practices for local communities; 7) families; 8) government's role; and 9) differing perceptions of racial groups.

**Participants:** Participants would vary segment to segment. They would include all the people who would be candidates for the commission (former elected officials, former judges, educators, business and religious leaders, civil rights advocates, and scholars). The conference would include elected officials (e.g., Members of Congress, mayors and governors). It also would include the participation of the town hall communities so that they could share their experience with the other conference participants.

**Timing:** At the earliest, this conference could be held in early fall.

**Action:** The conference would provide a forum for a national articulation of the existing problems and solutions as presented by everyday people, experts and leaders. Policy announcements could accompany and/or follow the conference through the broad policy development process led by the White House. A wide range of actions and proposals could result-- both large and small, executive and legislative. The conference would be included in the report by the President to the American people. Cabinet Secretaries could prepare materials to help focus and guide discussions on topics relevant to their missions.

**President's Report to the American People:** Following the town hall meetings and conference, a report "from the President to the American People" would be developed for you.

**Participants:** The report would include input by the communities, the agencies and experts in the field. The White House would work with an informal outside group to draft the report.

**Timing:** The anniversaries of the birth or death of Martin Luther King, Jr. have been suggested as dates for delivery of the report.

**Action:** The report would be a thoughtful, comprehensive description of the existing problems, and a presentation of action items to address those problems. It would include the following items: 1) an update on the state of race relations and discrimination in the U.S. today, including a report on our progress since the Kerner Commission; 2) a description of those events that have occurred through your initiative - your town halls, others' town halls and the conference; 3) recommendations for moving the country forward; and 4) a selection of realistic action items which you could pledge to pursue.

#### Pros and Cons of Town Meetings, National Conference and Report

##### Pros

- This option fully draws upon your unique talents on this issue. It places you in the forefront of the issue where you have exhibited an ability to talk about race in a way that moves the American people, and it allows you to more fully demonstrate the power of moral leadership.
- It addresses several needs: 1) bringing people in communities together to talk to each other about these issues; 2) forcing policy development on this issue in the government; 3) creating a comprehensive and inclusive report through the town halls and conference; 4) initiating broad-based action on this issue.
- It would allow you to maintain control over the long term, and allow you, with input from the people most affected, to create your *own* agenda for unity and reconciliation that is consistent with your priorities and within the constraints of your budget.
- This initiative increases our ability to actively include more national and community leaders.
- It directly confronts the broad-scale policy issues of criminal justice, and education that are central to achieving progress in this area.

- The process of this initiative has the potential to improve race relations and promote tolerance through broad-scale, community-based dialogue, as well as generate innovative solutions to old and new problems alike.

### Cons

- Town halls may be perceived as a shallow exercise of talk without serious action. Many people think we have studied and discussed the questions involving race long enough and that it is past time to put that study to practical use.
- We may receive a “not another White House conference” response.
- The town halls and a conference bring this hot, divisive issue literally to your front door. If the town halls and the White House conference are to be a real discussion of the issues, principals may be in a position to receive strong criticism directly.

### **Attachments**

Memorandum on the Kerner Commission  
Excerpts from Editorials on Race Commissions  
List of Reconciliation Working Group  
Funding Options

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

March 20, 1997

MEMORANDUM FOR ERSKINE BOWLES  
SYLVIA MATHEWS

FROM: BRUCE REED *BR/ek*  
ELENA KAGAN *EK*

SUBJECT: RACE COMMISSION/COUNCIL

We are concerned that the two pending proposals for a race commission or council have serious flaws. This memo presents a third alternative.

The proposal to establish a full-fledged Presidential commission on race has four weaknesses.

- First, it could cede control over large aspects of the President's domestic agenda -- involving, for example, welfare, education, and criminal justice -- to an outside body that may or may not agree with the President's priorities or accept the constraints of the President's budget. Of course, the President could reject all or part of the commission's eventual recommendations, but we should think twice before putting ourselves in the position of having to do so.
- Second, it will involve the President in a morass of difficult appointments questions. Does Jesse Jackson have a place on the Commission? Colin Powell? How wide or narrow should be the spectrum of ideological views represented on the Commission?
- Third, it subjects the President to criticism that he is not doing anything. Many people think we have studied questions involving race long enough and that it is past time to put that study to practical use.
- Fourth, and perhaps most important, it fails to take advantage of the President's unique talents on this issue. Any President could appoint a commission and respond to its proposals. This President has the unprecedented ability to talk about race in a way that the American people respond to and to construct his own agenda for racial reconciliation.

The proposal to establish an action-oriented Council, along the lines of the Council on Physical Fitness, also raises significant concerns, at least as described so far.

- First, it is subject to characterization as a "do-good," "touchy-feely," essentially unrigorous and unserious response to the most intractable of America's social problems.

- Second and relatedly, it would not in fact deal with the broadscale policy issues of welfare, criminal justice, education, and so forth that are central to achieving progress in this area.
- Third, it too would be removed from the President (though potentially somewhat less so than the commission) and so would fail to take advantage of his ability to spur reconciliation and progress.

A third alternative makes the President central to a second-term effort on racial issues, at the same time as it combines intellectual rigor with an action orientation. It would include the following components:

- A major multi-day conference on racial issues to take place at the White House, perhaps in early summer. Participants in this conference would include all the people who would be candidates for the commission: political figures (e.g., Jesse Jackson, Pat Moynihan); business, civil rights, and religious leaders; scholars and public intellectuals (e.g., William Julius Wilson, Skip Gates, Randy Kennedy). It also could include events or discussions involving the participation of "non-elites," in order to widen the range of views considered and command the attention of the broadest possible audience.
- A series of "town halls" led by the President on race-related issues. These events would occur in different areas of the country among different kinds of communities. They would focus on particular subjects, such as race and criminal justice. They would involve both "ordinary Americans" and experts in the field, who would contribute empirical evidence and rigorous analysis.
- Policy announcements to precede, accompany, and follow the conference and town halls. We would put into place a broad policy development process, led by the White House, involving all the agencies, and reaching out to public policy experts outside the government. This process (with the events described above serving as action-forcing mechanisms) would produce a wide range of actions and proposals -- both large and small, executive and legislative.

It should be noted that this proposal easily can accommodate some attention to issues of intolerance generally, involving not only racial minorities, but also women, religious minorities, and gays and lesbians. Although we would not like to see the conference, town halls, and policy process focus exclusively (or even mainly) on this area, nothing would be easier than to have, for example, one panel of the conference or a single town hall address these issues.

March 19, 1997

**MEMORANDUM FOR SYLVIA MATHEWS**

**FROM:** Robert N. Weiner

**RE:** Commission on Race and Intolerance in America

The President would like to take steps to improve race relations and lessen intolerance in the United States. The goal is critically important. There is no greater imperative than pulling down the barriers that divide people of different races and backgrounds. A Commission on Race and Intolerance in America is one option. But in structuring such a commission, we should focus on several issues:

1. Deja Vu. Commissions, academics, Congress, and others have studied and re-studied the racial divide in the U.S. Many people may not perceive a commission that just studies the problem again as useful. This commission must do more.
2. Passivity. The President wants to do something tangible to improve race relations and to capitalize on our diversity as a strength. At least as traditionally structured, a commission is not, by itself, an affirmative solution to the dilemmas we face, but merely an intermediate step. It may propose action, after a year or two of study, but is not itself action directed to the problem.
3. Federalism. Many of the most important ways to improve race relations may not lie within the ambit of the federal government. The problem is national, but many of the solutions may be local. State and local governments, religious institutions, charities, private enterprise, and individual citizens must participate.
4. Usual Suspects. The size of a commission is necessarily limited, and the membership is often drawn largely from academics and economic elites. Although a commission can hold public hearings, it is difficult to create a commission that is "of the people." In other words, commissions are often a "top-down" rather than a "bottom-up" approach to the problem. We need to design a commission that overcomes this problem.
5. Pre-defined Agenda. As traditionally structured, a commission addresses a limited set of issues determined at its birth. In this case, issues of race in America are intertwined with issues of economics, women's rights, intolerance based on sexual preference and religion, hate crimes, and a host of others. How these issues intersect should not be prejudged, with a set definition of the commission's agenda, before it even starts to work. The important question is the interplay of all these subjects in the lives of individuals and communities, and we should look to them to answer that question and help define the agenda of the commission.

These points present no reason to retreat from the goal of creating a commission to address concretely and productively the problem of race and intolerance in America. But they do suggest that we need to break out of the traditional structures for commissions and to think creatively about how best to make a lasting contribution in this area.

Two propositions should guide that thinking:

1. We need greater dialogue between the races in this country. Many white Americans may not fully appreciate the problems and the perspectives of minority communities. Many do not believe that discrimination persists, and they may not understand or credit the lingering effects of generations of inequality. People of different races and backgrounds do not often discuss with one another their fears and concerns, or their hopes and dreams. All in all, the lack of communication contributes to misunderstanding and insensitivity. Getting people to talk to each other would be a positive contribution.

2. Dialogue alone is not enough. Public education and understanding are critical, but they must lead to action to create equal opportunity for all Americans.

### PROPOSAL

With these principles in mind, I propose the following:

1. There should be a series of forums or town meetings, perhaps six preliminarily, around the country, focusing on intolerance, discrimination, and diversity. The President should run some of the meetings. The Vice President could run others. The meetings should be racially and economically diverse. At least one should involve just teenagers. The first meeting could be held at the White House. After a few trial meetings, we might decide to convene more, led by others from the Administration.

2. The President should ask the participants in these sessions to convene further meetings of the group on their own (perhaps with a facilitator like the Keystone Group) and to try to agree on, or at least identify, the key problems and solutions.

3. If these meetings are successful, nothing would prevent them from becoming regularized forums in the communities, nor from proliferating to other communities. Ideally, these meetings would be the seeds of organizations that live on and promote interracial dialogue in the local communities.

4. The President should appoint a commission to prepare a report, with specific proposals, based on these forums and the agendas for action that the meetings generate. The President might want to appoint the commission before the meetings, so that its members can attend and observe. Or he might wait until the meetings are done, so that the commission would not direct them or treat them as hearings. Again, the point is that the identification of problems and solutions should be a "bottom-up" process. The President might also encourage governors and mayors to set up their own structures to follow up on the town meetings.

\* \* \*

This proposal contemplates an exercise in dialogue and an experiment in democracy. The goal is that the process itself improve race relations and promote tolerance, as well as generate innovative new solutions to old problems.

**CORE RECONCILIATION GROUP**

Don Baer  
Maria Echaveste  
Chris Edley  
Bill Galston  
Richard Hayes  
Ben Johnson  
Elena Kagan  
Ann Lewis  
Sylvia Mathews  
Andrew Mayock  
Minyon Moore  
Bob Nash  
Rodney Slater  
Richard Socarides  
Rob Weiner  
Michael Wenger  
Governor Winter

March 24, 1997

RECONCILIATION AND UNITY MEETING

DATE: March 25, 1997

LOCATION: Cabinet Room

TIME: 5:00pm - 6:30pm

CONTACT: Sylvia M. Mathews

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this meeting is to consider proposals for combating discrimination and intolerance and promoting racial understanding and reconciliation.

II. BACKGROUND

Over the last few weeks, the reconciliation working group has been meeting to devise a proposal that would enable you to take steps to improve race relations, lessen intolerance and capitalize on the nation's diversity as a strength. Attached is an informational memorandum on the group's proposals and background materials including: 1) a memorandum on the previous presidential commissions dealing with race relations 2) excerpts from editorials on race commissions; 3) a list of the core reconciliation group members; and 4) funding options.

III. PARTICIPANTS

See Attached List

IV. PRESS PLAN

Closed Press

V. SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

N/A

VI. REMARKS

None required

## List of Attendees

### Agencies and Other non-White House staff

Secretary Pena

Secretary Slater

Chris Edley

Bill Galston

David Ogden

Department of Justice

Michael Wenger

Appalachian Regional Commission

Governor Winter

### White House Staff

Don Baer

Erskine Bowles

Dawn Chirwa

Carolyn Curiel

Michael Deich

Maria Echaveste

Terry Edmonds

Rahm Emanuel

Richard Hayes

Alexis Herman

Ben Johnson

Elena Kagan

Ron Klain

Ann Lewis

Sylvia Mathews

Doris Matsui

Andrew Mayock

Cheryl Mills

Minyon Moore

Janet Murgia

Bob Nash

John Podesta

Bruce Reed

Richard Socarides

Doug Sosnick

Tracey Thornton

Melanne Verveer

Ann Walker

Rob Weiner

March 25, 1997

**MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT**

**FROM:                   ERSKINE BOWLES, SYLVIA MATHEWS  
                              AND THE RECONCILIATION GROUP**

**SUBJECT:               ACTION ON RECONCILIATION**

**PURPOSE**

This memorandum is to prepare you for Tuesday's meeting on proposals for combating discrimination and intolerance and promoting racial understanding and reconciliation. The memorandum is an informational memorandum for our discussion. Therefore, we have not included any recommendations.

What follows is a discussion on background, scope and two proposals for your consideration. Attached to the memorandum are the following background items: 1) a memorandum on the previous presidential commissions dealing with race relations; 2) excerpts from editorials on a race commission; 3) a list of the core reconciliation group members; and 4) funding options.

**BACKGROUND**

In examining whether to form a race commission, we considered how to address your concerns, as articulated in the State of the Union Address, that America must become "One America" and must confront unresolved issues of race and bigotry. Over the last few weeks, we have convened a number of meetings (list of participants, attachment #3) to devise a proposal that would enable you to take steps to improve race relations, lessen intolerance and capitalize on the nation's diversity as a strength.

In order to achieve the difficult balance between study and action, we have concluded that any proposal must include two elements: 1) an ability to provide immediate action on this issue, which includes creating a greater dialogue between the races in this country; and 2) the means to examine the difficult policy issues involved and to provide recommendations for addressing them. This memo lays out two options for pursuing these goals: 1) a commission with an action entity and a study entity; and 2) a series of town meetings, a national conference and a report from the President to the American people.

Either undertaking is not without risks. A candid discussion of race and discrimination is bound to stir passions, cause controversy and give offense across the political spectrum. Specific remedial prescriptions are sure to spark controversy. For example, if you appoint a commission, we might receive recommendations on affirmative action that do not align with our position.

Also, choosing participants for such a commission would present a challenge in balancing the twin goals of reaching a consensus and including diverse opinions.

Yet, along with the risks is the opportunity to provide leadership that may change the national environment concerning race and discrimination. While any President is in a special position to use the moral authority of the office to promote healing of the racial divides and an appreciation of our diversity as a nation, you are unique because of your deep commitment to racial justice and reconciliation and your ability to talk about race and unity in a way that moves the American people. Moreover, we believe that leading the country towards racial reconciliation and tolerance could be a central element of the legacy you leave as President.

## SCOPE

A threshold question that you need to confront is how broad or narrow this initiative should be. Three options to consider are the following: 1) an initiative that addresses racial issues exclusively; 2) a "unity" initiative which broadly encompasses minorities affected by bigotry and intolerance, including racial groups, women, the disabled, gays and lesbians; or 3) an initiative that would be dominated by race issues, but also generally address other, often inter-related types of discrimination. This concept might be titled "race and intolerance" or "race and unity."

The argument for focusing specifically on racial intolerance is that the long history of racial struggle for civil rights has led to a consensus on the principle of racial equality. Precisely because that consensus has become fragile--witness the attacks on affirmative action and the anti-immigrant rhetoric--your initiative must focus solely on racial discrimination in order to reinforce and strengthen our country's commitment to equality. Another reason for focusing on racial intolerance is that a commission or conference about everything will, in the end, be about nothing. Also, the issue of race is in itself a very difficult, complex, broad-ranging problem that touches everyone.

The argument for a broad "unity" focus is the fulfillment of your call for "One America." Many of the problems of discrimination and hatred are experienced just as strongly by groups other than racial minorities. Narrowing the initiative's charter may yield discord among key constituencies, and we may find ourselves responding to highly visible and vocal criticism from certain constituencies from the onset of our effort. Gays and lesbians may argue that their struggle for civil rights is now coming of age and that to not include them in a reconciliation initiative may be characterized as a lack of commitment to broad inclusion in the Administration's initiatives.

The argument for a "race and intolerance" or "race and unity" initiative is that it recognizes that it is race which continues to be "The American Dilemma," without dismissing others who face intolerance and bigotry.

## **OPTION I: RACE COMMISSION**

One option is for you to create and appoint a race commission by Executive Order. The commission would have two components: 1) an action task force which would conduct a sustained and intensive campaign to build a national environment receptive to addressing the divisions within our country; and 2) an academic task force which would conduct an effort to develop a deeper understanding and provide recommendations to overcome the differential treatment accorded various groups. The commission would thus be both action-oriented and academic.

**Membership / Executive Director:** The commission would be composed of approximately twenty to twenty-five members and would be national, diverse (geographically, racially and professionally) and bi-partisan. We believe that limiting the commission's size is important to create a group that can actually achieve something. The members would be former elected public officials, former judges, educators, business and religious leaders, sports and entertainment notables, scholars, foundation and other non-profit officials, and civil rights and community advocates. Due to the commission's size limitations, currently serving elected officials may not be included because inclusion would lead to a demand that could not be met. The commission would be administered by an executive director. This position will be a key to the success or failure of the commission. The selection of the members and the executive director will communicate how serious, bold and creative you consider this project.

**Action Task Force:** To pursue an action agenda, the commission would have a task force that heightens awareness, promotes reconciliation, confronts negative stereotypes and encourages rational discourse on divisive issues. The action task force would pursue these objectives through various initiatives, including: 1) holding town meetings and debates which include state and local leadership; 2) surveying local and community groups for ideas that already work and disseminate best practices to a wider range of community and governmental bodies (e.g. ministerial groups, U.S. Conference on Mayors and National League of Cities); 3) reaching out to youth in schools and on campuses through meetings and youth-oriented media; 4) nominating people and groups for a Presidential Award; 5) initiating a nation-wide theme campaign; and 6) creating public service announcements. Also, the action task force could sponsor a White House Conference on Hate Crimes, which would unequivocally signal the Administration's opposition to and abhorrence of violence against those who may be different from others, and bring affected groups together to identify commonalities and possible solutions.

**Academic Task Force:** A scholarly task force created by the commission would undertake an inquiry that would draw upon the nation's best minds on this subject. This task force would organize working groups to review existing research, pursue original research and recommend action. Among others, the group could focus on the following specific areas: judicial system, education, housing, employment and health care.

**Timing:** The action task force would be at work over the next year. The academic task force would deliver a report to you one year from its inception. Under current assumptions, which include time for selecting and appointing the members, a realistic timeframe would probably indicate an initiation date between July - September 1997 and a report date between November - December 1998.

*Variant: A variant of the commission option splits the action and study entities (described above) into two separate organizations: a Commission on Race and a Council on Unity. Ideally, the commission and council would be well coordinated, but one would not have formal authority over the other. The commission would be a scholarly endeavor and focus on the policy issues of racial discrimination. The council would be action-oriented and broadly focused to include issues of discrimination against women, the disabled, gays and lesbians. The council would do all those things that the action task force would do (e.g., youth outreach, town meetings, etc.). This commission/council option may simplify participant selection with academics and experts on the commission and public figures on the council. However, this option has its drawbacks in that the broader public may be confused about the role and purpose of the two entities, especially if the council is more broadly defined. Furthermore, a dual-entity option could set up a jurisdictional dispute between the council and the commission.*

### **Pros and Cons on Commission**

#### **Pros**

- If successful, the commission's report will be a living document that guides the nation's thought on race relations and frames the debate and solutions for a long time to come (e.g. Kerner report and Nation at Risk).
- A commission could provide a flexible tool for utilizing your participation. This option would allow your time to be strategically scheduled. Thus, your schedule could include various events such as town halls, meetings with the commissioners and public service announcements.
- A commission provides your Presidential imprimatur which lends the authority and high-profile of your office to this important initiative, while it also provides some distance from a hot-button, high-risk issue.
- Establishing an independent bi-partisan commission widens the range of advice received and issues considered, enhances the credibility of the commission's findings and recommendations, and shows that to promote the long-term public good, you are willing to run the risk of receiving recommendations that may not be fully consistent with your own views.

- There are a number of areas (e.g. reinforcing the legitimacy of the criminal justice system for all Americans) in which the problems are clearer than the solutions. The commission would address the need for more policy research in areas that need it. By harnessing the research of the nation's top thinkers, it could enhance policy-making at all levels and provide guidance on non-governmental actions. (This can be accomplished less directly in the second option.)
- Through its action component, the commission could overcome the "study means delay rather than action" criticism and provide a base for reaching out to the American people.
- It addresses the need for more research in areas that need it and leverages the Administration's resources by placing the policy work outside your Administration.

### Cons

- Depending on the strength of the commission, you could cede control over large aspects of your domestic agenda -- for example, welfare, education, and criminal justice -- to an outside body that may or may not agree with your priorities or accept the constraints of your budget. Of course, you could reject all or part of the commission's eventual recommendations, but that could present a difficult situation.
- Appointing a commission will pose a number of difficult questions. Membership? How wide or narrow should be the spectrum of ideological views represented on the Commission? The size of a commission is necessarily limited, hence the membership is often drawn largely from academics and economic elites. Also, selecting appropriate members to fulfill the action *and* scholarly functions further complicates the selection process. (However, participation in any proposal on this issue will be difficult.)
- If there is an emphasis on balancing the commission across the ideological spectrum, it may make civil rights advocates in the community nervous about potential outcomes.
- The use of a "commission" to address this issue subjects you to criticism that you are foregoing action on the issue of race and discrimination only to study a problem which has been studied long enough.
- A commission may not take full advantage of your unique talents on this issue. Any President could appoint a commission and respond to its proposals. You have the unprecedented ability to talk about race in a way that the American people respond to and to construct your *own* agenda for racial reconciliation.
- Commissions are often "top-down" exercises rather than "bottom-up." Many of the important ways to improve race relations may not lie within the ambit of the federal government. The problem is national, but many of the solutions may be local. State and

local governments, religious institutions, charities, private enterprise and individual citizens must participate.

- An independent commission opens the possibility of stalemate from a divided commission (e.g. Advisory Council on Social Security, which split into three factions on privatization recommendations, and the U.S. Civil Rights Commission).
- A commission with scholarly and action task forces may confuse the public, and lead to ongoing jurisdictional fights and substantive disagreements between the two groups.

## **OPTION II: TOWN MEETINGS, NATIONAL CONFERENCE AND REPORT**

Under this proposal, you would convene a series of town hall meetings, host a national conference at the White House, and deliver a report from the President to the American people. The following proposal was devised with specific details so that you may envision the positive and negative aspects that might result from this concept. The details would be refined and modified, if you select this proposal. The concept includes the following components:

**Town Meetings:** A series of four “town halls” on specific race-related issues would be held: two meetings led by you, one by the Vice President and one by the First Lady.

**Subject/Location:** These events would occur in different areas of the country among different kinds of communities (rural/urban): judicial system in Los Angeles, California; employment in Detroit, Michigan; education in rural south; housing in Chicago, Illinois or Santa Fe, New Mexico. (These locations are illustrative only.)

**Participants:** The participants would consist of mostly people from the community, a few experts in the field and you. The experts could contribute empirical evidence and exacting analysis to the discussion and listen to citizens for input into the Presidential report to the American people.

**Timing:** At the earliest, the town meetings would start in the early part of summer. One town meeting per month could follow with the conference in the fifth month and the report following the conference.

**Action:** The town halls would be part of our policy development where certain policy ideas could be tested. For example, affirmative action could be a topic of the discussion on the judicial system where we elicit the community’s views and reflect on our policy decisions. To develop these policies, we could put into place a broad process that is led by the White House and involves all the agencies. This group could also reach out to public policy experts outside the government. This process, with the events described above serving as action-forcing mechanisms, would produce a wide range of actions and proposals -- both large and small, executive and legislative. Also, this process would

feed into a report to the Nation with specific proposals based on the town meetings and outreach to scholars and other experts in the field. Furthermore, papers and essays, which may provide a valuable resource for communities, might be commissioned and released in conjunction with the town hall meetings and the conference.

You could encourage local officials to have preparatory, parallel and/or follow-up sessions on their own to try to agree on, or at least identify, key problems and solutions. If these meetings are successful, they may become regularized forums in the communities and proliferate to other communities. Ideally, these meetings would be the seeds of organizations that live on and promote interracial dialogue in the local communities. We may even explore ways in which the Administration could provide encouragement or support to sustain this dialogue.

**Conference:** Following these town meetings, a multi-day conference would be held.

**Subject/Location:** The conference would be at the White House and would consist of a number of segments (e.g. panels and roundtables). For example, the conference could include the following segments: 1) judicial system; 2) employment; 3) education; 4) housing; 5) hate crimes; 6) best practices for local communities; 7) families; 8) government's role; and 9) racial groups differing perceptions.

**Participants:** Participants would vary segment to segment. They would include all the people who would be candidates for the commission (former elected officials, former judges, educators, business and religious leaders, civil rights advocates, and scholars). The conference would include elected officials (e.g., Members of Congress, mayors and governors). It also would include the participation of the town hall communities so that they could share their experience with the other conference participants.

**Timing:** At the earliest, this conference could be held in early fall.

**Action:** The conference would provide a forum for a national articulation of the existing problems and solutions as presented by everyday people, experts and leaders. Cabinet Secretaries could prepare materials to help focus and guide discussions on topics relevant to their missions. As with the town meetings, policy announcements could accompany and/or follow the conference. The conference results would be included in the report by the President to the American people.

**President's Report to the American People:** Following the town hall meetings and conference, a report "from the President to the American People" would be developed for you.

**Participants:** The report would include input by the communities, the agencies and experts in the field. The White House would work with an informal outside group to draft the report.

**Timing:** The anniversaries of the birth or death of Martin Luther King, Jr. have been suggested as dates for delivery of the report.

**Action:** The report would be a thoughtful, comprehensive description of the existing problems and a presentation of action items to address those problems. It would include the following items: 1) an update on the state of race relations and discrimination in the U.S. today, including a report on our progress since the Kerner Commission; 2) a description of those events that have occurred through your initiative - your town halls, others' town halls and the conference; 3) recommendations for moving the country forward; and 4) a selection of realistic action items which you could pledge to pursue.

### **Pros and Cons of Town Meetings, National Conference and Report**

#### **Pros**

- This option fully draws upon your unique talents on this issue. It places you in the forefront of the issue that you have exhibited an ability to talk about race in a way that moves the American people. It allows you to more fully demonstrate the power of moral leadership.
- It addresses several needs: 1) bringing people in communities together to talk to each other about these issues; 2) forcing policy development on this issue in the government; 3) creating a comprehensive and inclusive report through the town halls and conference; 4) initiating broad-based action on this issue.
- It would allow you to maintain control over the long term and allow you, with input from the people most affected, to create your *own* agenda for unity and reconciliation that is consistent with your priorities and within the constraints of your budget.
- This initiative increases our ability to actively include more national and community leaders.
- It directly confronts the broad-scale policy issues of criminal justice and education that are central to achieving progress in this area.
- The process of this initiative has the potential to improve race relations and promote tolerance through broad-scale, community-based dialogue, as well as generate innovative solutions to old and new problems alike.

## **Cons**

- Town halls may be perceived as a shallow exercise of talk without serious action. Many people think we have studied and discussed the questions involving race long enough and that it is past time to put that study to practical use.
- We may receive a “not another White House conference” response.
- The town halls and a conference bring this hot, divisive issue literally to your front door. If the town halls and the White House conference are to be a real discussion of the issues, principals may be in a position to receive strong criticism directly.

## **Attachments**

Memorandum on the Previous Presidential Commissions Dealing with  
Race Relations  
Excerpts from Editorials on Race Commissions  
List of Reconciliation Working Group  
Funding Options

## EXCERPTS FROM EDITORIALS ON RACE COMMISSION

### ANTI-COMMISSION:

**"Nation Doesn't Need a Kerner II," Editorial, *The Tampa Tribune*, 10/30/95**

The dilemma of rough-edged race relations has been commissioned, studied and talk-showed with small result. But better race relations will come from sincere efforts at the local level, not from another Washington-based government commission. [The Kerner report] ignores the fact that there are other groups in this nation besides Americans of European and African descent. We are a multiracial society, more so than when that report was written. The report devoted 70 pages to the education, housing, job training and welfare programs that the authors thought would bring blacks into the national mainstream. The only real obstacle the commissioners foresaw was some resistance in raising the necessary taxes. We now know that too much faith was put in Washington. There is no reason to believe that lawmakers and bureaucrats are any better equipped this time around. Improved race relations will come from the dedicated efforts of churches, community organizations, employers and individuals at the local level. That is where people interact with each other every day. It is through personal contact and open, honest dialogue that real improvement will take place.

### ANTI-COMMISSION:

**"One Study of Race Echoes Another," by Alan Lupo, *Boston Globe*, 11/5/95**

In Washington, they are talking about another study of race relations, another commission - a "blue-ribbon" commission of course, not some run-of-the-mill gathering of alleged experts, but one with ribbons. So the big boys down in D.C. are talking studies again. One of the first witnesses was Dr. Kenneth Clark, a noted scholar and African-American, testified that he had read the report "of the 1919 riot in Chicago, and it is as if I were reading the report of the investigating committee on the Harlem riot of '35, the report of the investigating committee on the Harlem riot of '43, the report of the McCone Commission on the Watts riot. I must again in candor say to you members of this commission - it is a kind of Alice in Wonderland - with the same moving picture re-shown, over and over again, the same analysis, the same recommendations, and the same inaction." The report noted, "We have learned much, but we have uncovered no startling truths, no unique insights, no simple solutions. The destruction and the bitterness of racial disorder, the harsh polemics of black revolt and white repression have been seen and heard before in this country. It is time now to end the destruction and the violence, not only in the streets of the ghetto but in the lives of people." And now they're talking about another commission? Another study? Forget the commission. Forget the study. Save a pile of buckaroones by simply reprinting the 1968 report, which, in paperback form, contained more than 600 pages of explanation, testimony, history, perspective and proposals. In the wake of the... right-wing political blitzkrieg of the past two decades on both common sense and compassion,

perhaps a few more quotes are in order. The commission argued that the alternative to a divided America would require "a commitment to national action - compassionate, massive and sustained, backed by the resources of the most powerful and the richest nation on the earth. . . . The vital needs of the nation must be met; hard choices must be made, and, if necessary, new taxes enacted."

So the commission proposed programs for everything from job training, to criminal justice reform, to better education. It suggested, for example, more public housing "with emphasis on small units." Sound familiar today? It suggested consolidating existing job-training programs to avoid duplication? Hey, have we heard that recently? Aha, conservatives now mutter. You see? We spent all that money, and the poor are still poor and having poor babies. And liberals answer: What money? We started, but we never finished. The money went south, really south, to wage not a war on poverty but a war on Southeast Asians. So, by all means, then, let us have another study. It's a traditional cop out. Pols in both parties can claim they are doing something about the divisive issues of race and class. And Bill Clinton and Newt Gingrich might especially like it, because it's such a neat baby boomer exercise - to talk, and talk, and talk, without ever having to take the shot to the face by making an unpopular commitment, such as raising taxes. They can have neat hearings in those alabaster conference rooms for which D.C. is so famous. And the media will converge breathlessly to report on the best sound bites. And some of us will wonder how many in the media and how many testifying will even know what Kenneth Clark said in 1967. "I read that report . . . the 1919 riot in Chicago, and it is as if I were reading the report of the investigating committee on the Harlem riot of '35 . . ."

### **PRO-COMMISSION:**

#### **"Do We Need Another Blue-Ribbon Investigation?" Editorial, *The Dallas Morning News*, 10/23/95**

Not since the 1960s has our country been so wracked by the divisiveness of race. Without a true assessment of how we as a nation are doing to provide each citizen an equal opportunity to reach his or her full potential, misperceptions on the effort will continue to fuel racial tensions. A report can help bridge racial divide. Given how high racial tensions have been running, something has to be done, even if only symbolically. Another commission to give America an up-to-date report card on civil rights could be useful in sorting out statistics and perceptions. Some studies indicate that middle-class blacks have made enormous progress in recent years. At the same time, rates of illegitimacy have gone up, and record numbers of black men have been incarcerated. A carefully selected commission could dispel some perceptions and affirm others. It would give the nation a new empirical base from which to move forward. But no report is worth the paper it is written on if there is no serious political will to act on its conclusions. Thus, a commission must have strong support from the president and Congress. There must be a commitment at the local level to improving race relations that goes far beyond enforcement of equal-opportunity laws. Laws can change people's actions but not their attitudes. "Do we need another blue-ribbon investigation?"

**PRO-COMMISSION, ACTION ENCOURAGED:**

**"It Can't Hurt: Any New Commission on Race Relations Should Propose Solutions, Not Pin Blame," Viewpoint, *Nassau and Suffolk Edition*, 10/19/95**

Despite the desperate need to defuse tensions between blacks and whites, it's hard to get excited about a national commission on race relations. The creation of blue-ribbon panels, however, is often a convenient, even cynical, way to duck tough issues. Washington is famous for that. There's a slim possibility on a problem so volatile as race that the commission could actually increase divisiveness, by squabbling over its membership, leadership and scope. [W]hile there have been changes for the good - the emergence of a black middle class and some gains in education and in the professional ranks for people of color - the continuing divisions were easy to see in the racially polarized reactions to the O.J. Simpson verdict and other recent flash points. Jesse Jackson said, in calling for a White House conference on urban policy, economic development and equal opportunity, "We don't need to be studied; we need to be employed." If the panel is to be of real value, however, it must be more than merely a starting point for frank discussion and fresh ideas - although those are needed. It must not get bogged down on the issue of who's to blame - there's plenty on all sides of the racial divide - but instead come up with specific ideas for action. And not just for government.

**PRO-COMMISSION, ACTION ENCOURAGED:**

**"A Commission, and More," Editorial, *The Christian Science Monitor*, 10/19/95**

[I]t has been nearly 30 years since the last hard, public look at race in America, the 1968 Kerner Commission. Things may no longer be as simple as "two societies ... separate and unequal." Another examination - of a country whose racial and ethnic mix is rapidly changing - would be useful. But only if it's joined to the kind of individual and community changes urged by Monday's marchers. The building of a more perfect union remains America's central task, and it has to be tackled through the prayers, actions, and thoughtful attention of everyone. No one need wait for a definitive study.

**COMMISSION FOR COMMON GROUND:**

**"The Search for Common Ground," Editorial, *The Fresno Bee*, 10/22/95**

The divisions are deeply drawn between the races in America. Efforts at the highest level could help bridge that dangerous gap. Presidential commissions are often disparaged as a way to avoid difficult issues, and their reports dismissed as collections of pieties that make a day's headlines and are then quickly forgotten. But given everything that's occurred in this country in the past few years, President Clinton can hardly refuse the proposal, endorsed by members of Congress of both parties, to name a commission on the state of race relations in America. The

need for such a statement on race relations from a respected panel is even more necessary now. For rarely, if ever, have even the perceptions of the nation's racial divide been as divided. Most troubling...is how differently whites and African-Americans view the criminal justice system, a fundamental institution of a civilized society. Unfortunately much of the nation still fails to recognize the nature of such social dynamite. That failure by itself is reason enough for a commission. Our divided perceptions cry out for a new, serious attempt to find the common ground from which all people of good will, white and black, can proceed.

### **PUBLIC DIALOGUE:**

**"America Has a Race Crisis That Americans Have to Discuss," by David Broder,  
*International Herald Tribune, 10/12/95***

In the last few days, The Washington Post has been publishing polls dramatizing the gulf in perceptions on a wide range of subjects. Whites predominantly and mistakenly believe that blacks have achieved parity with whites in income, jobs, education, housing and other measures of well-being. As a consequence, few whites but most blacks believe racial discrimination is a continuing problem. The gap is so wide, said Robert J. Blendon, the Harvard professor who analyzed the poll, that "blacks and whites may as well be on two different planets." The danger in that situation cannot be reduced without honestly confronting it, nor will it be helped by an inherently exclusionary march of a million black men in Washington on Monday. Now is the time, while the Simpson case is still echoing, for President Clinton to take the lead in organizing a public dialogue among Americans of different races about where we are and where we are going, as he suggested Tuesday he might do. The television and press, which gave so much attention to the trial, ought to make comparable time available for this conversation. Of course it is risky for leaders to step forward. But the president could do no greater service to the nation than convening the first such group and inviting the nation to join in - while there is still time.

## ADDENDUM

### INSTRUCTIVE EXERCISE:

**"'Nightline' Series Confronts Hard Realities of Racial Gulf," by Tom Walter,  
*The Commercial Appeal (Memphis), 5/24/96***

One of Nightline's most instructive exercises this week was asking those white Philadelphians whether they favored affirmative action. None did. But then anchor Ted Koppel put it another way. Say there's an organization that determines race. Say it made a mistake when it had you born white and was changing your color to black tomorrow. Would you accept payment in return? Many of the whites did - up to \$ 50 million to help ease the pain of being black in this society. These white people clearly believed being black made it harder to make your way in America. Twenty-eight years after the Kerner Commission Report, many white people want to throw their hands in the air and say: Two separate, unequal societies? Sure. Things will never change. But at least Nightline assumes things must change if America is to fulfill its promise to everyone.

### KERNER REPORT AT 20 YEARS:

**By Barbara Vobedja, *The Washington Post*, 3/1/88**

Today, a group of experts on race and urban affairs, some of whom had worked on the Kerner Commission report, said that the problems the commission set out to erase two decades ago persist. While great strides have been made in some areas of race relations, the plight of poor, inner-city blacks, they concluded, is more dismal now than it was 20 years ago. The panelists, organized by former Oklahoma senator Fred R. Harris (D), one of the Kerner Commission's 11 members, spent the weekend assessing the state of black America on the 20th anniversary of the landmark report. They pointed to gains, primarily the emergence of a black middle class, the election of black political leaders and the integration of police forces, newsrooms, corporate offices and other previously segregated workplaces. "The Kerner report warning is coming true," the group said in its update of the original report. "America is again becoming two separate societies . . . ." Tearing the nation apart today, the new document said, are "quiet riots," in the form of unemployment, poverty, housing and school segregation and crime. "These quiet riots are not as noticeable to outsiders . . . but they are more destructive of human life than the violent riots of 20 years ago." Much like their counterparts two decades ago, members of the group called for public job and housing programs and urged that affirmative action be enforced and the minimum wage be raised. But for some who were here, the exercise was more sobering than their work on the presidential panel -- the sense of promise dulled by two decades of experience. But the epic, charted in stacks of academic papers compiled for this conference, has unfolded with a menacing twist. While civil rights legislation and Great Society programs enabled middle- and working-class families to leave the inner cities, their departure,

in combination with economic and other factors, has created urban ghettos far worse than those of the late 1960s, Wilson said.

### **KERNER REPORT AT 25 YEARS:**

**By Chris Reidy, *The Boston Globe*, 4/4/93**

A Democrat from Oklahoma who ran for president in 1976, Harris says there was much progress between 1968 and 1978. But then the economy slumped and President Reagan cut federal aid. Between 1981 and 1991, urban aid declined by 50 percent, says the National League of Cities. With subsidies slashed, Harris notes, cities experienced "quiet riots" of despair and poverty, riots far more destructive in human terms than the fires of the 1960s. "It's a myth of the Reagan administration that nothing the government tries works," Harris says. "What we tried largely worked. Either we quit trying or we're not trying hard enough. As a result, all major cities are re-segregating. They're just as bad as 25 years ago. Gaps that had narrowed are widening again - infant mortality, life expectancy, the number of people going to college. We have to focus again on people: job training, child development, education." Last month, the Milton S. Eisenhower Foundation reached a similar conclusion, issuing a silver anniversary update on the Kerner Commission report. The foundation urges Congress to enact a 10-year plan that would allocate \$ 30 billion annually to job training and education, says the foundation's Vesta Kimble. The 29-page summary may have "captured headlines," Lemann says, but it was "unrepresentative" of the commission's 609-page report. In any case, the general perception was that Lindsay's words represented a solid consensus. That such a harsh indictment could seemingly come from a group of 11 mainstream moderates gave the report added impact. The perception of police brutality in the Rodney King case provoked riots in Los Angeles last spring. In response, the California Legislature formed a committee on the "Los Angeles crisis." Its conclusions were similar to those of the Kerner Commission. In Washington, President Bush fashioned his own response to the LA crisis. Congress approved his emergency aid package, but Bush vetoed it the day after he lost the election, the Eisenhower Report notes. Earlier, Bush and his advisers had decided against appointing a Kerner-like commission. Says Lemann, "They figured, 'Why give critics a platform to beat up on Bush in an election year?'"

### **FORMER KERNER COMMISSIONER'S VIEWS:**

**"Race Relation Commission Vital to Review Today's Issues,"  
*All Things Considered*, NPR, 10/18/95**

Judge Nathaniel Jones, U.S. Court of Appeals, 6th Circuit: "My first reaction is similar to the reaction that Dr. Kenneth Clarke, the very eminent social scientist, expressed in testimony before the Kerner Commission in 1968...[t]hat this is sort of like Alice in Wonderland with the same moving picture reshowed over and over again, the same analysis, the same recommendations, and the same inaction. That was my initial reaction. Now, on reflection, though, I feel that a

commission of national stature would be very timely because it appears to me that one of the great problems we have is a severe case of national amnesia. We do not, as a society, seem to be able to recall with precision and with accuracy the racial history that we as a country have had and why it's necessary for various steps to be taken to redress vestiges of that past. I would suggest that people even go back beyond the Kerner Commission. There was a report issued in 1946 by a committee appointed by President Truman which was a very significant document. It was called To Secure These Rights, and very few people are familiar with that report, but the recommendations that were contained in that report were revolutionary, and they certainly laid the groundwork for much progress of really a dramatic nature that took place with regard to military, particularly at a time when we now are talking about a presidential candidate who was a four-star general, a person of color. He is a direct result of the very bold programs and the very bold step that President Truman took back in 1947 or '48 when he ordered the military integrated. I think what we have to be mindful of is the nature of the crisis today, whereas in '68 and the mid '60s, it was- the Commission was the result of the civil disturbances in major cities. But today the crisis is of a divisiveness and a return to a separate society. The Kerner Commission attempted to warn us that we were going down that path - two societies, separate, black, white, separate and unequal. And the only way I see us stemming it is for our national leadership to re-examine this racial history and to inform the American people of the role that government played, that law played in creating these inequities and because the progress toward correcting them has not been as rapid as it should be, the frustration is causing people to withdraw in anger into racial and ethnic and color enclaves. And this kind of re-segregation, a return to the separateness, is a frightening prospect for many. Time for serious discussion about race."

## PREVIOUS PRESIDENTIAL COMMISSIONS DEALING WITH RACE RELATIONS

### OVERVIEW

Previously, two Presidential Commissions dealt with the subject of race relations. President Truman established the *President's Committee on Civil Rights* in December 1946, to investigate racial violence and recommend remedial measures. The second commission was *the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders*, widely known as the Kerner Commission. President Johnson appointed it on July 27, 1967, following riots in the mid 1960s.

In addition, two other historical gatherings dealing with race have occurred that have a bearing on the current proposal. President Lyndon B. Johnson convened the *White House Conference To Fulfill These Rights*, on June 1-2, 1966. Its purpose was to "seek a solution of the Negro Problem since the Civil War," and to figure out how to best translate the promise of racial equality into reality. Finally, the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library at the University of Texas in Austin, sponsored a symposium on civil rights, *Equal Opportunity in the United States*, December 11-12, 1972. Its primary purpose was to honor Johnson's contributions to civil rights, but it also dealt with the unfinished agenda with respect to racial justice for blacks.

### PRESIDENT'S COMMITTEE ON CIVIL RIGHTS

President Truman established the *President's Committee on Civil Rights* in December 1946, in response to an impending racial crisis between blacks and whites. With the return of hundreds of thousands of black soldiers who had fought overseas in World War II, and the migration north of thousands more searching for economic betterment, a new age of black aspiration had been ushered in. Simultaneously, a violent white backlash persisted in the south, which relied on Jim Crow segregation, poll taxes and literacy tests, and lynching to dissuade black advancement. Eventually, tensions between blacks and whites erupted into race riots in several major cities.

Guided by Charles Wilson, President of the General Electric Corporation, the Committee thoroughly examined the issue of civil rights, in both public and private forums. On October 29, 1947, the Committee issued its report, *To Secure These Rights*. The report concluded that there was a large gap between what the country stood for and the reality for millions of blacks. It recommended the enactment of many civil rights laws, including:

- Providing federal protection against lynching;
- Banning poll taxes and protecting the right to vote;
- Establishment of a permanent Fair Employment Practices Commission;
- Expanding the Justice Department's civil rights section;
- Desegregating the military;
- Home rule for the District of Columbia;
- Resolving the evacuation claims of Japanese-Americans interned during World War II; and
- Proposals attacking segregation in education, housing, and interstate transportation.

Truman enthusiastically endorsed *To Secure These Rights*, calling it “an American charter of human freedom.” On February 2, 1948, he sent Congress a message on civil rights followed by specific legislation to dismantle segregation and ensure black voting rights. Noting that not “all groups are free to live and work where they please or to improve their conditions of life by their own efforts,” he urged Congress to enact into law the Committee’s recommendations.

Most African-American leaders, the NAACP, and the black press embraced the president's efforts, as did white liberal organizations such as Americans for Democratic Action. Ultimately, Truman failed to get any of his legislative program enacted because of strong congressional opposition. However, when his initiatives stalled on capitol hill, he issued executive orders to: 1) desegregate the Armed Forces and 2) to fight discriminatory hiring practices by Federal agencies. In the end, opposition to Truman’s proposals was so great that he made only modest progress in fighting segregation over the next two years of his term.

## KERNER COMMISSION

This presidential commission was headed by Illinois Governor Otto Kerner. The Commission’s official title is the *National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders*, however, it is widely known as the *Kerner Commission*. It was appointed by President Johnson on July 27, 1967, following a series of riots in dozens of American cities in the mid 1960s. The worst riots occurred in Newark, New Jersey, and in Detroit, Michigan during the summer of 1967. In the wake of the Detroit Riots, hundreds of black and white businesses were destroyed, forty-three people lost their lives, and over 7,200 people were arrested.

President Johnson appointed the Commission to find out whether any subversive or conspiratorial elements were involved and to determine how future riots could be avoided. The Commission was also charged with examining the reasons why ghettos persisted. It also explored the problems of unemployment, family structure, and social disorganization in the ghettos, and the experiences of other immigrants with those of blacks. In addressing the nation on the racial disturbances sweeping the country, Johnson said, “[t]he only genuine, long-range solution for what has happened lies in an attack -- mounted at every level -- upon the conditions that breed despair and violence. All of us know what those conditions are: ignorance, slums, poverty, disease, not enough jobs. We should attack these conditions -- not because we are frightened by conflict, but because we are fired by conscience. We should attack them because there is simply no other way to achieve a decent and orderly society in America.”

On March 1, 1968, the *Kerner Commission* issued its report, stating that the United States was “moving toward two societies, one black, one white -- separate and unequal.” The report warned that racism and hatred were growing deeper and that communication between the two communities was breaking down. Unlike the earlier Truman commission that largely focused on civil and legal rights, the *Kerner Commission* pointed out the growing economic inequality among the races.

Many civil disturbances in 1960s occurred in northern cities where the most oppressive vestiges of segregation had not existed. There, African Americans were confronted with substandard housing, meager job possibilities, and the absence of economic and political power.

The Commission recommended a massive government assault on the economic inequality between the races, which would have cost billions of public dollars to implement in its entirety. The Commission's key recommendations called for:

- Creating public and private sector jobs in the inner cities aimed at the hard-core unemployed;
- Eliminating desegregation in both secondary and higher education;
- Improving the quality education in inner city schools;
- Overhauling public welfare programs, including providing "a national system of income supplementation." for the working poor; and
- Eradicating inner city slums, including building low and moderate income housing units.

Although the Commission uncovered no seditious or conspiratorial ingredients, many did not like the report, possibly owing to the culpability it attributed to the white community. Generally, white liberals applauded it; conservatives felt that its assessment was prejudiced and unfair; and blacks regarded it simply as another report. Beyond this, critics say all levels of government largely ignored the report. Reportedly, Johnson was deeply suspicious of the Commission's recommendations, and refused to comment on the report, or allow the Commission to present it to him, or even sign form letters thanking the members for their work. Johnson was convinced that there was a conspiracy behind the riots.

Although critics charge that the Commission's recommendations were not immediately adopted, others argue that the report significantly altered public opinion on racial matters and helped pave the way for later successes. For example, *de jure* segregation was eliminated by 1960's civil rights legislation and affirmative action and other programs were started to help close the economic gap between blacks and whites. Also, in 1969, the Supreme Court ordered cities to desegregate their schools immediately and in 1971, they approved the use of busing to accomplish this aim. Moreover, Charles Evers was elected Mayor of a Mississippi city. Additional electoral victories soon followed in Detroit, Cleveland, Los Angeles, Chicago, Gary, Indiana, and other cities. Thus, most experts say that we have made progress, but that much remains to be done.

#### WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE FULFILL THESE RIGHTS

On June 1-2, 1966, President Lyndon B. Johnson convened the *White House Conference To Fulfill these Rights*. Its purpose was to "seek a solution of the Negro Problem since the Civil War," and to "move beyond opportunity to achievement." President Johnson announced his intentions to hold this conference at a speech he gave at Howard University, on June 4, 1965.

Leading up to the conference, the White House held a national planning session November 17-18, 1965. Attending was more than 200 scholars and practitioners from the civil rights, labor, business, education, religious, and social welfare community who met for intensive working sessions on eight subjects of concern. The result was a comprehensive set of recommendations dealing with four areas: economic security and welfare, education, housing, and administration of justice.

In February 1966, the President appointed a 30-member Council to oversee the Conference. In addition, White House and agency staff, and various consultants collected extensive background materials and prepared background papers for the conference itself. The published proceedings distilled the background materials and previously prepared recommendations for each area. According to reports, more than 2,500 people participated in the conference. In retrospect, many Conference's recommendations were later reflected in the programs of the Great Society.

### **CIVIL RIGHTS SYMPOSIUM PROGRAM: EQUAL OPPORTUNITY IN THE UNITED STATES**

The LBJ School of Public Affairs in Austin, Texas, held a civil rights symposium on December 11-12, 1972, *Equal Opportunity in the United States*, in which all the major civil rights and other leaders at the time attended. Many of these leaders have since died, but other surviving participants include Vernon Jordan, Roger Wilkins, Julian Bond, Gary Hatcher, Yvonne Brathwaite Burke among others. Besides honoring LBJ, the main purpose of the symposium was to discuss what should be done in the future with respect to civil rights. It was felt that we had already taken all of the required legislative actions, and that the next steps were purely economic opportunity.

Chief Justice Earl Warren was the keynote speaker at the conference. Hubert Humphrey, Barbara Johnson, Louis Stokes, and Henry Gonzalez, were among the other speakers. In addition, in what was his last address before dying shortly after the conference, Johnson summed up the progress that we had made with respect to civil rights over the years saying, "that it's time to leave aside legalisms and euphemisms and eloquent evasions. It's time we get down to the business of trying to stand black and white on level ground." He went on to ask the participants a series of questions:

- Are the federal government and the state government, the foundations, the churches, the universities, all doing what they can do to assure enough scholarships for young blacks?
- Are our professions such as law, medicine, accounting, etc., sounding the call to make sure that Blacks are taking the leadership courses to avail themselves of leadership opportunities in professional careers?
- Are our trade unions and those concerned with vocational occupations doing the same with regard to apprenticeship and training programs?
- Are employers who have already opened their doors to Blacks making sure that they are

providing advancement opportunities up the career ladder?

Johnson concluded his remarks, saying "[w]e know there's injustice. We know there's intolerance. We know there's discrimination and hate and suspicion. And we know there's division between us. But there is a larger truth. We have proved that great progress is possible. We know how much still remains to be done. And if our efforts continue and our will strong and if our hearts are right and if courage remains our constant companion, then, my fellow Americans, I am confident we shall overcome."