

NLWJC - KAGAN

WHORM - BOX 001 - FOLDER 040

FG006-21 243490SS

FOIA MARKER

This is not a textual record. This is used as an administrative marker by the William J. Clinton Presidential Library Staff.

Collection/Record Group: Clinton Presidential Records
Subgroup/Office of Origin: Records Management - SUBJECT FILE
Series/Staff Member:
Subseries:

OA/ID Number: 21748
Scan ID: 243490SS
Document Number:

Folder Title:
FG006-21

Stack:	Row:	Section:	Shelf:	Position:
S	84	1	2	3

243490 SL
FG006-21

Nov. 21, 1997 - DPC Weekly Report

PHOTOCOPY
HANDWRITING

THE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE

12-1-97

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

PHOTOCOPY
WJC HANDWRITING

November 21, 1997

copied
Reed
Kagan
COS

'97 NOV 25 AM 11:25

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Bruce Reed
Elena Kagan

SUBJECT: DPC Weekly Report

1. Health -- Quality Commission Bill of Rights: Your endorsement of the Quality Commission's bill of rights was well received. Many groups representing consumers, providers, and labor stated strong support for these consumer protections. In addition, Congressional Democrats are pleased with your position; Sen. Daschle and Rep. Gephardt both indicated strong interest in working with the Administration on this issue. The business community's response was relatively muted; only the National Federation of Independent Business came out strongly against the proposals, on the ground that they would raise health care costs and impose an intolerable burden on small businesses. As Chris mentioned in his memo to you, a recent analysis by Lewin and Associates concluded that the cost of these consumer protections would be modest --about 1/2 percent to 1 percent of premiums. We will continue our work with moderate Republicans and Democrats in Congress to develop legislation that you can endorse early next year.

2. Health -- Mental Health Parity Regulation: As you know, the Administration is currently considering how to implement the provision in last year's mental health parity legislation that exempts health plans from complying with the parity requirement if they can show that the cost of doing so would increase premiums by more than 1 percent. Two options are under discussion. The first would allow health plans to claim an exemption only after they have complied with the parity requirement for at least six months. The second would allow health plans to claim an exemption even before complying with the parity requirement, based on projections from their most recent cost data. Some of the lawyers believe that the second option represents the more natural reading of the legislative language, although all agree that both options are legally defensible. DPC, HHS, and the mental health community favor the first approach; OMB, Treasury, and the business community favor the second. The involved agencies plan to meet with Erskine this week to review the options and try to arrive at a consensus; we will give you a recommendation after the Thanksgiving holiday.

3. Crime -- Police-Public Contact Survey: The Justice Department released a survey on Saturday showing that an estimated 45 million Americans -- roughly 1 in 5 -- have face-to-face contact with police officers each year. The survey shows that police initiate a bit less than a third of these contacts; most of the others occur when citizens report a crime, seek other assistance, or offer information to police officers. About 1 percent of those who came in contact with police reported that the police threatened or used force against them. Half of these individuals were black

Handwritten notes:
This released
full 20
was a show
will work
to [unclear]
[unclear]

or Hispanic; almost two-thirds reported that their own actions -- such as threatening the police or resisting arrest -- may have provoked the police action. According to the survey, persons in their twenties are most likely to have contacts with police, while the elderly (aged 60 and older) are least likely. Males are slightly more likely than females to have police contacts (23 percent of males vs. 19 percent of females), and whites are somewhat more likely than blacks or Hispanics (22 percent of whites vs. 16 percent of blacks and 15 percent of Hispanics). Only teenagers and Hispanics reported that police officers initiated the contacts more often than they did.

4. Welfare -- U.S. Conference of Mayors Report: The U.S. Conference of Mayors released a 34-city survey on Friday regarding implementation of the welfare law. The survey found that states have failed to consult appropriately with cities about welfare reform. The survey also concluded that although local private sector employers are willing to hire welfare recipients, many cities do not have enough low-skill jobs to meet the welfare law's work requirements. This finding rests on cities' unsubstantiated estimates of the number of low-skill jobs available and the number of city residents applying for them; it also conflicts with several other recent studies, including one by former OMB Program Associate Director Isabelle Sawhill. In any event, our new \$3 billion welfare-to-work program will give cities additional resources to hire or place welfare recipients.

5. Race -- Attached Materials: We are attaching to this memo a recent article by William Julius Wilson on strategies for achieving racial equality. In a recent memo, we quoted this article's thesis that the best way to make racial progress today is to focus on "issues and programs that concern families of all racial and ethnic groups, so that individuals in these groups can honestly perceive mutual interests and join in a multiracial coalition to move America forward." As you know, we believe that you should make this insight central to the Race Initiative and the President's Report that will conclude it. We thought you would like to read the entire article. We are also attaching a recent article by Harvard professor Orlando Patterson, who largely agrees with Wilson's views.

Laguz

Mathews
from DPC
wee by report



Sid / Beqala / B Reed
lager w/ M

THE PRESIDENT HAS BEEN
12-3-97

The New Social Inequality and Affirmative Opportunity

William Julius Wilson

BC

PHOTOCOPY
WJC HANDWRITING

Copied
COS
Blumenthal
Beqala
Reed

A

As the turn of the century approaches, the movement for racial equality needs a new political strategy. That strategy must appeal to America's broad multi-

ethnic population, while addressing the many problems that afflict disadvantaged minorities and redressing the legacy of historical racism in America.

The nation seems to have become more divided on issues pertaining to race, especially since the first O. J. Simpson murder trial. And affirmative action programs are under heavy assault. Americans' understanding of the meaning and significance of race has become more confused. Many Americans are puzzled by complex racial changes—not only the growth of socioeconomic inequality among African-Americans, but also the sharp increase in joblessness, concentrated poverty, and welfare receipt among the black poor living in ghettos. Such changes have unfolded in the aftermath of the passage of comprehensive civil rights legislation in the 1960s and the subsequent enactment of affirmative action programs and the antipoverty efforts of the Great Society. By now, some three decades later, not only have many changes transpired for African-Americans and for American race relations. In addition, broad public sympathy for those minority individuals who have suffered the most from racial exclusion has waned.

by itself.
e nation's
and edu-
on which
aining the
or engage-
n partner-
e past), or

challenge.
nent is ca-
cities and
; thinking
. Progress-
can pros-
a rapidly

Indeed, many white Americans have turned against public programs widely perceived as benefiting only racial minorities. Several decades ago, efforts to raise the public's awareness and conscience about the plight of African-Americans helped the enactment of civil rights legislation and affirmative action programs. By the 1980s, however, black leaders' assertions that black progress was a "myth"—rhetoric used to reinforce arguments for stronger race-based programs—ironically played into the hands of conservative critics. Although this strategy may have increased sympathy among some whites for the plight of black Americans, it also created the erroneous impression that federal antidiscrimination efforts had failed. And it overlooked the significance of the complex racial changes that had been unfolding since the mid-1960s. Perhaps most pernicious of all, arguments for more and more race-based programs to help blacks fed growing white concerns, aroused by demagogic messages, that any special efforts by politicians to deal with black needs and complaints were coming at the expense of the white majority.

While these developments happened in politics, Americans confronted jarring new economic conditions. National and international economic transformations have placed new stresses on families and communities—stresses that are hardly confined to blacks. Along with African-Americans, large segments of the white, Latino, and Asian populations are also plagued by growing economic insecurities, family breakups, and community stresses. Such conditions are breeding grounds for racial and ethnic tensions. In this social climate, conservatives have attempted to unite white Americans around anger at the government and racial minorities. Their political message seems plausible to many white taxpayers, who see themselves as being forced to pay for programs that primarily benefit racial minorities.

In this essay I suggest how progressives can redefine the issues so that the concerns of both the larger American population and the racial minority population are simultaneously addressed. Progressives can pursue policies that unite rather than divide racial groups, thus opening the way for the formation of a multiracial progressive coalition in national politics.

The Changing Climate for Race-Based Programs

When affirmative action programs were first discussed in the 1960s, the economy was expanding, and incomes were rising. It was a time of optimism, a time when most Americans believed that their children would have better

lives than
eration

In t
rienced
lift all be
est quin
come, "S
and abs
began to
inflation
income
rate cons
est quint
riod. Wa
figure 2)
wages of
at the bo

The
lowered
compani
that their
reassure
wage ine
earnings
high sch
rapidly g
bounded
were crea
an hour
much op

In su
tion) hav
college d
Americar
dards of l
jobs and

lives than they had. During such times a generosity of spirit permits consideration of sharing an expanding pie.

In the decades immediately after World War II, all income groups experienced economic advancement, including the poor. A rising tide did indeed lift all boats. In fact, as revealed in figure 1, between 1947 and 1973 the lowest quintile in family income experienced the highest growth in annual income, "which meant that the poor were becoming less poor in both relative and absolute terms" (Bronfenbrenner et al. 1996, p. 14). But this pattern began to change in the early 1970s. Growth slowed, and the distribution of inflation-adjusted income started to become more unequal. Whereas average income gains from 1973 to 1992 continued for the higher quintiles (but at a rate considerably slower than that of the previous two decades), the two lowest quintiles actually experienced annual declines in income during this period. Wage data since 1979, based on percentiles instead of quintiles (see figure 2), show a pattern quite similar to the trends in family income. The wages of those at the top have continued to climb in recent years, while those at the bottom have fallen steadily.

Thus the downward trend in wages during the past two decades has lowered the incomes of the least well-off citizens. This trend has been accompanied by a growing sense among an increasing number of Americans that their long-term economic prospects are bleaker. And they would not be reassured to learn that the United States has had the most rapid growth of wage inequality in the Western world. In the 1950s and 1960s the average earnings of college graduates was only about 20 percent higher than that of high school graduates. By 1979, it had increased to 49 percent, and then it rapidly grew to 83 percent by 1992. "When the American economy rebounded from a recession in the early 1990s, roughly 2 million new jobs were created per year, but a large percentage of these offered wages below \$8 an hour (or about \$16,000 a year), with few if any health benefits and not much opportunity for advancement" (Bronfenbrenner et al. 1996, p. 117).

In sum, since the late 1970s, real wages (that is, wages adjusted for inflation) have fallen in the United States. Wage disparities between those with college degrees and those without have widened considerably. Working-class Americans feel economically pinched, barely able to maintain current standards of living even on two incomes. Many are insecure about keeping their jobs and fear that they will never be able to afford to send their children to

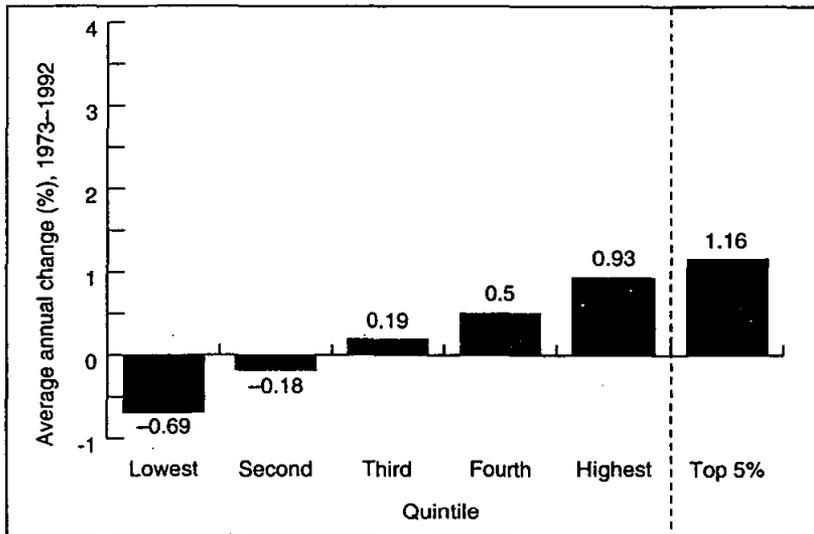
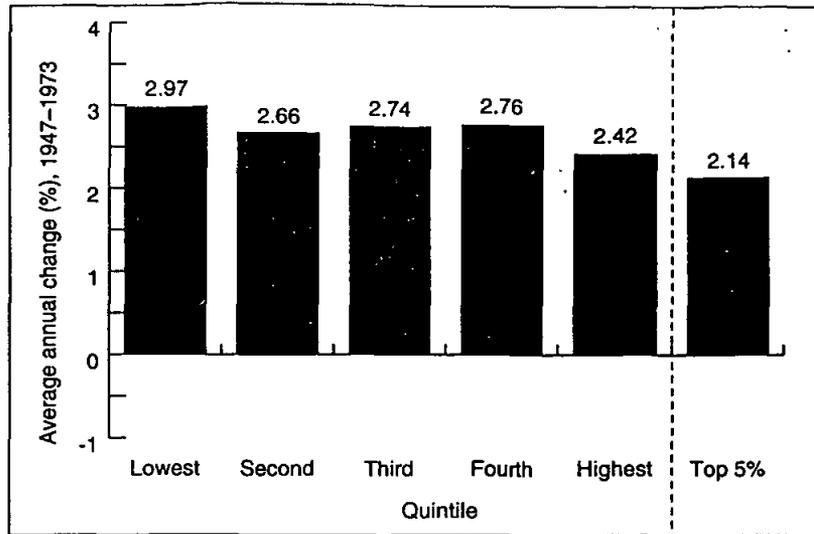
programs
ades ago,
plight of
and affir-
tions that
nents for
conserva-
ong some
eous im-
verlooked
ling since
afd more
roused by
with black
ority.

onfronted
mic trans-
—stresses
large seg-
by grow-
ses. Such
this social
und anger
ems plau-
to pay for

es so that
l minority
e policies
or the for-

960s, the
optimism,
ave better

Figure 1. Family Income in the United States



Source: Adapted from Bronfenbrenner et al. (1996). The 1947 figures are from *The Statistical History of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970*. The 1969 and 1992 figures are from the Bureau of the Census, *Income of Families and Persons in the United States, 1990*. Figures are adjusted for inflation based on constant 1992 dollars.

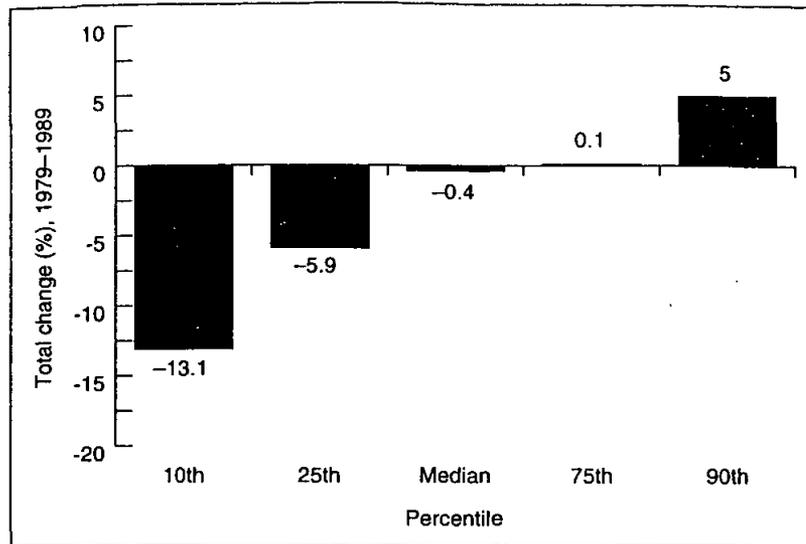
Figure

Total change (%), 1979-1989

Source:
Econ
1982-1

college
worse
Week,
have a
can dr
three-
next te
U
of econ
affirm:
emplo
creasi
highly
with e
messa
their

Figure 2. Wage Growth in the United States



Source: Adapted from Bronfenbrenner et al. (1996). Data reported in the Council of Economic Advisors, *Economic Report of the President, 1995*. Wages are in constant 1982-1984 CPI-U-X1 dollars.

college. Many believe that for all their hard work, their children's lives will be worse than theirs. For example, a 1995 Harris poll, conducted for *Business Week*, revealed that only one-half of all parents expected their children to have a better life than theirs; nearly seven out of ten believed that the American dream has been more difficult to achieve during the past ten years; and three-quarters felt that the dream will be even harder to achieve during the next ten years (cited in Bronfenbrenner et al. 1996).

Unfortunately for those who support race-based programs, this period of economic hard times has not been an ideal climate for a national debate on affirmative action. Despite the recent economic recovery and low rates of unemployment, most families continue to struggle with declining real wages, increasing job displacement, and job insecurity in a highly integrated and highly technological global economy. During periods when people are beset with economic anxiety, they become more receptive to simplistic ideological messages that deflect attention away from the real and complex sources of their problems, and it is vitally important that political leaders channel

PHOTOCOPY
WJC HANDWRITING

Research by social scientists, however, reveals that between 1962 and 1973, class began to affect career and generational mobility for blacks as it had regularly done for whites (Wilson 1980; Featherman and Hauser 1978; Hout 1984). In particular, blacks from the most advantaged backgrounds experienced the greatest upward mobility. For the first time in American history, more advantaged blacks could expect their success to persist and cumulate. These trends have continued since 1973 but at a slower rate (Hochschild 1995, p. 44). On the other hand, among the disadvantaged segments of the black population, especially the ghetto poor, many dire problems—joblessness, concentrated poverty, family breakup, and the receipt of welfare—were getting even worse between 1973 and 1980.

The differential rates of progress in the black community have continued through the 1980s and early 1990s. Family incomes among the poorest of the poor reveal the pattern. From 1977 to 1993, the percentage of blacks with incomes below 50 percent of the amount designated as the poverty line, what we call the poorest of the poor, increased from 9 percent of the total black population in 1977 to 17 percent in 1993. In 1977, fewer than one of every three poor blacks fell below one-half of the poverty-line amount, but by 1993 the proportion rose to more than one-half (these figures and those that follow have been adjusted for inflation). In 1993 the average poor black family slipped further below the poverty level than in any year since 1967, when the Census Bureau started collecting such data (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1994).

From 1975 to 1992, while the average income of the lowest quintile of black families in the United States declined by one-third and that of the second-lowest quintile declined by 13 percent, the average income of the highest quintile of black families climbed by 23 percent and that of the top 5 percent by 35 percent. Although income inequality between whites and blacks is substantial and the financial gap is even greater between the two races when wealth is considered—total financial assets, not just income (Oliver and Shapiro 1995; Wolff 1995)—in 1992 the highest fifth of black families nonetheless secured a record 49 percent of the total income among black families, compared to the 44 percent share of the total income received by the highest fifth of white families, also a record. So while income inequality has widened generally in America since 1975, the divide is even more dramatic among black Americans. If we are to fashion remedies for black

poverty, we need to understand the origins and dynamics of inequality in the African-American community. Without disavowing the accomplishments of the civil rights movement, black leaders and policymakers now need to give more attention to remedies that will make a concrete difference in the lives of the poor.

The Achievements and Limits of Affirmative Action

The demands of the civil rights movement reflected a general assumption on the part of black leaders in the 1960s that the government could best protect the rights of individual members of minority groups, not by formally bestowing rewards and punishments based on racial group membership, but by using antidiscrimination legislation to enhance individual freedom. The movement was particularly concerned about access to education, employment, voting, and public accommodations. From the 1950s to 1970, the emphasis was on freedom of choice; the role of the state was to prevent the formal categorization of people on the basis of race. Antibias legislation was designed to eliminate racial discrimination without considering the proportion of minorities in certain positions. The underlying principle was that individual merit should be the sole determining factor in choosing candidates for desired positions. Because civil rights protests against racial discrimination clearly upheld a fundamental American principle, they carried a degree of moral authority that leaders like Martin Luther King, Jr., were able to repeatedly and effectively emphasize.

It would have been ideal if programs based on the principle of freedom of individual opportunity were sufficient to remedy racial inequality in our society. But long periods of racial oppression can result in a system of inequality that lingers even after racial barriers come down. The most disadvantaged minority individuals, crippled by the cumulative effects of both race and class subjugation, disproportionately lack the resources to compete effectively in a free and open market.

Eliminating racial barriers creates the greatest opportunities for the better-trained, most talented, and best-educated members of minority groups because these members possess the resources to compete most effectively. These resources reflect a variety of advantages—family stability, financial means, positive peer groups, good schooling—provided or made possible by their parents (Fishkin 1983).

By
Noveml
starkly
percent
mained
barriers
son pu
erased
and ec
(Hende
Ac
the nee
effects
vidual
Act of
uals on
sought
sure ac
lic proj
Bu
portior
opport
cies ba
indivic
repres
status,
Thus
cioeco
positic
Ti
more
rector
of mu
jobs, b
tion in
ties ha

PHOTOCOPY
WJC HANDWRITING

Affirmative Opportunity 65

By the late 1960s, a number of black leaders began to recognize this. In November 1967, Kenneth B. Clark said, "The masses of Negroes are now starkly aware of the fact that recent civil rights victories benefited a very small percentage of middle-class Negroes while [poorer blacks'] predicament remained the same or worsened" (Clark 1967, p. 8). Simply eliminating racial barriers was not going to be enough. As the black economist Vivian Henderson put it, "If all racial prejudice and discrimination and all racism were erased today, all the ills brought by the process of economic class distinction and economic depression of the masses of black people would remain" (Henderson 1975, p. 54).

Accordingly, black leaders and liberal policymakers began to emphasize the need not only to eliminate active discrimination but also to counteract the effects of past racial oppression. Instead of seeking remedies only for individual complaints of discrimination, as specified in Title 7 of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (which prohibits employers from discriminating against individuals on the grounds of race, color, religion, gender, or national origin), they sought government-mandated affirmative action programs designed to ensure adequate minority representation in employment, education, and public programs.

But if the more advantaged members of minority groups benefit disproportionately from policies that embody the principle of equality of individual opportunity, they also profit disproportionately from affirmative action policies based solely on their racial group membership (Fishkin 1983). Minority individuals from the most advantaged families tend to be disproportionately represented among those of their racial group most qualified for preferred status, such as college admissions, higher-paying jobs, and promotions. Thus policies of affirmative action are much more likely to enhance the socioeconomic positions of the more advantaged minority individuals than the positions of the truly disadvantaged (Loury 1984 and 1995).

To be sure, affirmative action was not intended mainly to benefit the more advantaged minority individuals. As William L. Taylor, the former director of the United States Civil Rights Commission, has stated, "The focus of much of the [affirmative action] effort has been not just on white-collar jobs, but also on law enforcement, construction work, and craft and production in large companies—all areas in which the extension of new opportunities has provided upward mobility for less advantaged minority workers"

(Taylor 1986, p. 1714). As Taylor also notes, studies show that many minority students entering medical schools during the 1970s were from low-income families.

Affirmative action policies, however, did not really open up broad avenues of upward mobility for the masses of disadvantaged blacks. Like other forms of "creaming," they provided opportunities for those individuals from low socioeconomic background with the greatest educational and social resources. A careful analysis of data on income, employment, and educational attainment would probably reveal that only a few individuals who reside in the inner-city ghettos have benefited from affirmative action.

Since the early 1970s urban minorities have been highly vulnerable to structural changes in the economy, such as the shift from goods-producing to service-producing industries, the increasing polarization of the labor market into low-wage and high-wage sectors, the destabilizing innovations in technology, and the relocation of manufacturing industries outside the central city. These shifts have led to sharp increases in joblessness and the related problems of highly concentrated poverty, welfare receipt, and family breakup, despite the passage of antidiscrimination legislation to correct discriminatory patterns through litigation and the creation of affirmative action programs that mandate goals and timetables for the employment of minorities (Wilson 1987, 1995).

On the other hand, affirmative action programs have helped to bring about sharp increases in the number of blacks entering higher education and gaining professional and managerial positions. Moreover, as long as minorities are underrepresented in high-paying, desirable positions in society, affirmative action programs will be needed. Nonetheless, in response to cries from conservatives to abolish affirmative action altogether, some liberals have argued for a shift from affirmative action based on race to one based on economic class or need (Kahlenberg 1995).

The major distinguishing characteristic of affirmative action based on need is the recognition that the problems of the disadvantaged—low income, crime-ridden neighborhoods, broken homes, inadequate housing, poor education, cultural and linguistic differences—are not always clearly related to previous racial discrimination. Children who grow up in homes plagued by these disadvantages are more likely to be denied an equal chance in life because the development of their aspirations and talents is hindered by their en-

vironment, regardless from affirmative oppor-
tunities because they suffer
from, but the problem

An affirmative act
systematic exclusion o
because the standard c
tive to the cumulative
limited by race, regan
gated neighborhoods
the particular skills th
the quality of de facto
parents whose experi
ultimately affects the
(Heckman 1995).

Thus if we were
sion, like SAT scores,
would be denied ad
weighed down by the
strictions and who th
sures. An affirmative
could create a situat
Harvard represent th
black community, wh
cause they are not e
would therefore be
who are not burdene
conventional tests re

The extent to v
for promoting polic
real potential to suc
flexible criteria of
numerical guideline
ground handicaps,
potential to succeec
test scores may co

vironment, regardless of race. Minorities would benefit disproportionately from affirmative opportunity programs designed to address these disadvantages because they suffer disproportionately from the effects of such environments, but the problems of disadvantaged whites would be addressed as well.

An affirmative action based solely on need, however, would result in the systematic exclusion of many middle-income blacks from desirable positions because the standard or conventional measures of performance are not sensitive to the cumulative effects of race. By this I mean having one's life choices limited by race, regardless of class, because of the effects of living in segregated neighborhoods (that is, being exposed to styles of behavior, habits, and the particular skills that emerge from patterns of racial exclusion), because of the quality of de facto segregated schooling, and because of the nurturing by parents whose experiences have also been shaped and limited by race, which ultimately affects the resources they are able to pass on to their children (Heckman 1995).

Thus if we were to rely solely on the standard criteria for college admission, like SAT scores, even many children from black middle-class families would be denied admission in favor of middle-class whites who are not weighed down by the accumulation of disadvantages that stem from racial restrictions and who therefore tend to score higher on these conventional measures. An affirmative action based solely on need or economic class position could create a situation in which African-Americans who are admitted to Harvard represent the bottom half of the socioeconomic continuum in the black community, while those who are in the top half tend to be excluded because they are not eligible for consideration under affirmative action. They would therefore be left to compete with middle- and upper-income whites who are not burdened by the handicaps of race—as their higher scores on the conventional tests reflect.

The extent to which standard aptitude tests like the SAT and tests used for promoting police officers are measuring not privilege but real merit or the real potential to succeed is not readily apparent. Ideally, we should develop flexible criteria of evaluation or performance measures, as opposed to numerical guidelines or quotas, that would not exclude people with background handicaps, including minority racial background, who have as much potential to succeed as those admitted without those handicaps. While some test scores may correlate well with performance, they do not necessarily

measure important attributes that also determine performance, such as perseverance, motivation, interpersonal skills, reliability, and leadership qualities. Accordingly, since race is one of the components of being disadvantaged in this society, the ideal affirmative action program would emphasize flexible criteria of evaluation based on both need and race.

The cumulative effects of historical discrimination and racial segregation are reflected in many subtle ways that result in the underrepresentation of blacks in positions of high status and their overrepresentation in positions of low status. Some of these problems can be easily addressed with affirmative action programs that are at least in part based on race; others have to be combated by means of race-neutral strategies. As indicated earlier, less-advantaged blacks are extremely vulnerable to changes in our modern industrial society, and their problems are difficult to solve by means of race-based strategies alone—either those that support equality of individual opportunity, such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964, or those that represent affirmative action. Now more than ever, we need broader solutions than those we have employed in the past.

From Preference to Affirmative Opportunity

Given the current political climate and the new social inequality, any program designed to significantly improve the life chances of disadvantaged minorities, including increased employment opportunities, would have to be broadly applicable. That is, it would have to address the concerns of wide segments of the U.S. population, not just those of minority citizens.

Almost two decades ago, Vivian Henderson argued that “the economic future of blacks in the United States is bound up with that of the rest of the nation. Politics designed in the future to cope with the problems of the poor and victimized will also yield benefits to blacks. In contrast, any efforts to treat blacks separately from the rest of the nation are likely to lead to frustration, heightened racial animosities, and a waste of the country’s resources and the precious resources of black people” (Henderson 1975, p. 54).

Henderson’s warning seems to be especially appropriate in periods of economic stagnation, when public support for programs targeted to minorities—or associated with real or imagined material sacrifice on the part of whites—tends to wane. The economy was strong when affirmative action programs were introduced during the Johnson administration. When the

economy turned down, public support increasingly soured.

Furthermore, in political affairs, observed whites “only as a token and economic mainstay in giving such preference for an era without.” They also are changes in society.

The Democrats increasingly were virtually separate public services became whites. In an era of seemed to constitute saw themselves as public services that many of

White reaction Over the past fifty years, desegregation. For Americans supported to 95 percent. In the past five years of public accommodations (1994).

Nonetheless, racial segregation programs to aggressive roll blacks in instance blacks in high-level polls, whites over blacks. Whereas government is not so than one-third of government “has a s

economy turned down in the 1970s, the public's view of affirmative action increasingly soured.

Furthermore, as Joseph A. Califano, Johnson's staff assistant for domestic affairs, observed in 1988, such programs were generally acceptable to whites "only as a temporary expedient to speed blacks' entry into the social and economic mainstream." But as years passed, many whites "saw continuing such preferences as an unjust insistence by Democrats that they do penance for an era of slavery and discrimination they had nothing to do with." They also associated the decline in public schools not with broader changes in society but with "forced integration" (Califano 1988, p. 29).

The Democrats also came under fire for their support for programs that increasingly were misrepresented as being intended for poor blacks alone. Virtually separate medical and legal systems developed in many cities. Public services became identified mainly with blacks, private services mainly with whites. In an era of ostensible racial justice, many public programs ironically seemed to constitute a new and costlier form of segregation. White taxpayers saw themselves as being forced through taxes to pay for medical and legal services that many of them could not afford to purchase for their own families.

White reaction to race-based problems has several dimensions, however. Over the past fifty years, there has been a steep rise in white support for racial desegregation. For example, although in 1942 only 42 percent of white Americans supported integrated schooling, by 1993 that figure had skyrocketed to 95 percent. Public opinion polls reveal similar patterns of change during the past five decades in white support for integration with regard to public accommodations, mass transportation, and housing (Bobo and Smith 1994).

Nonetheless, the virtual disappearance of Jim Crow attitudes toward racial segregation has not resulted in strong backing for government programs to aggressively combat discrimination, increase further integration, enroll blacks in institutions of higher learning, or enlarge the proportion of blacks in high-level occupations. Indeed, as evidenced in the public opinion polls, whites overwhelmingly object to government assistance targeted to blacks. Whereas eight of every ten African-Americans believe that the government is not spending enough to assist blacks today, only slightly more than one-third of white Americans feel this way. The idea that the federal government "has a special obligation to help improve the living standard of

blacks" because they "have been discriminated against so long" was supported by only one in five whites in 1991 and has never exceeded more than one in four since 1975 (Bobo and Kluegel 1994). And the lack of white support for this idea is unrelated to such background factors as age and education level.

Of course, the most widely discussed racial policy issue in recent years has been affirmative action. Despite a slight decrease in opposition to affirmative action programs in education and employment between 1986 and 1990, sentiments against these programs remain strong. In 1990, almost seven in ten white Americans opposed quotas to admit black students in colleges and universities, and more than eight in ten objected to the idea of preferential hiring and promotion of blacks.

Such strong white opposition to quotas and preferential hiring and promotion should not lead us to overlook the fact that there are some affirmative action policies that are supported by wide segments of the white population, regardless of racial attitudes. Recent studies reveal that, while opposing such "preferential" racial policies as college admission quotas or job hiring and promotion strategies designed to achieve equal outcomes, most white Americans approve of such "compensatory" affirmative action policies as race-targeted programs for job training, special education, and recruitment (Bobo and Smith 1994; Bobo and Kluegel 1993; Lipset and Schneider 1978; Kluegel and Smith 1986; Kinder and Sanders 1987). For example, in the 1990 General Social Survey, 68 percent of all whites favored spending more money on schools in black neighborhoods, especially for preschool and early education programs. And 70 percent favored granting special college scholarships to black children who maintain good grades (Bobo and Smith 1994).

Accordingly, programs that enable blacks to take advantage of opportunities, such as race-targeted early education programs and job training, are less likely to be "perceived as challenging the values of individualism and the work ethic." In other words, compensatory or opportunity-enhancing affirmative action programs are supported because they reinforce the belief that the allocation of jobs and economic rewards should be based on individual effort, training, and talent. As sociologists Larry Bobo and James Kluegel (1993) put it: "Opportunity-enhancing programs receive greater support because they are consistent with the norm of helping people help themselves. In addition, opportunity-enhancing programs do not challenge principles of

equity
effort
sition:

U

popul

and S

affirm:

from r

to opp

tive of

"affirm

of resu

It echo

most /

(fairly

lowerin

detest.

Hi

notatio

to over

also ha

burden

tion, an

tion's c

other at

In this

sity cor

by black

To

mative :

not of t

*M:

with Noe

Chicago.

White H

X X

equity. Indeed, requirements that beneficiaries of such programs make the effort to acquire the training and skills needed to improve their economic positions are fully consistent with reward on the basis of individual effort."

Unlike preferential racial policies, opportunity-enhancing programs have popular support and a relatively weak connection to antiblack attitudes (Bobo and Smith 1994). For all these reasons, to make the most effective case for affirmative action programs in a period when such programs are under attack from many quarters, emphasis should be shifted from numerical guidelines to opportunity. The concept that I would use to signal this shift is "affirmative opportunity."* By substituting "opportunity" for "action," the concept "affirmative opportunity" draws the focus away from a guarantee of equality of results, which is how "affirmative action" has come to be understood. It echoes the phrase "equal opportunity," which connotes a principle that most Americans still support, while avoiding connotations now associated (fairly or not) with the idea of affirmative action—connotations like quotas, lowering of standards, and reverse discrimination, which most Americans detest.

However, by retaining the term "affirmative," the concept keeps the connotation that something more than offering formal, legal equality is required to overcome the legacy of slavery and Jim Crow segregation. As a society, we also have the continuing moral obligation to compensate for the enduring burdens—the social and psychological damage—of segregation, discrimination, and bigotry. To practice affirmative opportunity means to renew the nation's commitment to enable all Americans, regardless of income, race, or other attributes, to achieve to the highest level that their abilities will permit. In this sense, the phrase echoes President Johnson's 1965 Howard University commencement speech on human rights, which was uniformly praised by black civil rights leaders.

To repeat, polling data suggest that Americans support the idea of affirmative action programs to enable people to overcome disadvantages that are not of their own making. This should be done, however, by using flexible

*My views on affirmative opportunity have greatly benefited from my discussions with Noel Salinger of the Irving B. Harris School of Public Policy at the University of Chicago. Salinger helped me to draft several memoranda on affirmative action for the White House, and my views here were initially developed in those memoranda.

criteria of evaluation, not numerical guidelines or quotas. The obvious rejoinder is that "using flexible criteria" is another way of saying that lower standards will be permitted. On the contrary, using flexible criteria of evaluation will ensure that we are measuring merit or potential to succeed rather than privilege. In other words, we want to use criteria that would not exclude people who have as much potential to succeed as those admitted who have more privileged backgrounds.

The differences in average test scores, touted by some opponents to compensatory social programs and affirmative action, are largely measures of differences in opportunities between the advantaged and the disadvantaged, especially in equal access to high-quality child care and good schooling (Heckman 1995; Neal and Johnson 1995). Flexible criteria accommodate the need to design metrics of ability that predict success and that are not captured by such tests. Indications of these attributes may be obtained from letters of recommendation, past performance, or other measures. Mayor Richard Daley's use of merit promotions in the Chicago Police Department, which are based on such factors as job performance and leadership ability, is an example of how such criteria can be used.

Relying on flexible criteria may be a way of replacing the goals and timetables currently used by government agencies and contractors. Having said that, I should also note that it will be extremely important to calibrate the use of flexible criteria in practice. They must be presented as a way of expanding the pool of qualified applicants by making attributes other than raw test scores count more. Flexible criteria must be applied in thoughtful ways, based on the experience of what works in certain situations and particular institutions. Otherwise, the practice will be infected with arbitrariness, which would quickly undermine public support.

New Social Rights for All Americans

Affirmative opportunity efforts remain vital to a progressive strategy and central to the continuing quest for racial justice in America. But affirmative opportunity programs alone are not enough. They ought to be combined with appropriate race-neutral public policies in order to address economic insecurities that now affect many groups in an era of rising social inequality.

In thinking about social rights today, we must appreciate that the poor and the working classes of all racial groups struggle to make ends meet and

that even the middle Americans across race and job security, despite the availability of a quality of public education in the inner city neighborhoods.

Not surprisingly, surveys. For the last strong public backing for training efforts, to indicate that almost an increase to pay for a cutout of ten million Americans from the system of the United States the eve of President Clinton's nearly two-thirds of the "so that all Americans what." Finally, recent Center at the University of Americans want to see more system and on halting Survey 1988-94).

Despite being one of these concerns—providing skills training, improving care, and reducing need to disproportionately benefit the especially poor minorities provided that they are better off.

A comprehensive inequality should be an opportunity-enhancing inequality. To repeat, criteria of evaluation in education should be based on

that even the middle class has experienced a decline in its living standard. Americans across racial and class boundaries worry about unemployment and job security, declining real wages, escalating medical and housing costs, the availability of affordable child care programs, the sharp decline in the quality of public education, and crime and drug trafficking in their neighborhoods.

Not surprisingly, these concerns are clearly reflected in public opinion surveys. For the last several years, national opinion polls consistently reveal strong public backing for government labor-market strategies, including training efforts, to increase employment opportunities. A 1988 Harris poll indicated that almost three-quarters of its respondents would support a tax increase to pay for child care. A 1989 Harris poll reported that almost nine out of ten Americans would like to see fundamental changes in the health care system of the United States. A September 1993 *New York Times*-CBS poll, on the eve of President Clinton's health care address to the nation, revealed that nearly two-thirds of the nation's citizens would be willing to pay higher taxes "so that all Americans have health insurance that they can't lose no matter what." Finally, recent surveys conducted by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago reveal that a substantial majority of Americans want to see more money spent on improving the nation's educational system and on halting the rise in crime and drug addiction (General Social Survey 1988-94).

Despite being officially race-neutral, programs created in response to these concerns—programs that increase employment opportunities and job skills training, improve public education, promote better child and health care, and reduce neighborhood crime and drug abuse—would disproportionately benefit the most disadvantaged segments of the population, especially poor minorities. Social programs, too, can further racial justice, provided that they are designed to include the needy as well as the somewhat better off.

A comprehensive race-neutral initiative to address economic and social inequality should be viewed as an extension of—not a replacement for—opportunity-enhancing programs that include race-based criteria to fight social inequality. To repeat, I feel that such programs should employ flexible criteria of evaluation in college admission, hiring, job promotion, and so on, and should be based on a broad definition of disadvantage that incorporates

notions of both need and race. Although recent public opinion polls indicate that most Americans would support race-based programs intended to enhance opportunities, mobilizing and sustaining the political support for such programs will be much more difficult if they are not designed to reach broader segments of the American population.

Other programs that can be accurately described as purely race-neutral—national health care, school reform, and job training based on need—would greatly benefit not only racial minority populations but large segments of the dominant white population as well. National opinion poll results suggest the possibility of a new alignment in support of a comprehensive social rights initiative that would include such programs. If such an alignment is attempted, perhaps it ought to feature a new public rhetoric that would do two things: focus on problems that afflict not only the poor but the working and middle classes as well; and emphasize integrative programs that would promote the social and economic improvement of all groups in society, not just the truly disadvantaged segments of the population.

In the new, highly integrated global economy, an increasing number of Americans across racial, ethnic, and income groups are experiencing declining real incomes, increasing job displacement, and growing economic insecurity. The unprecedented level of inner-city joblessness represents one important aspect of the broader economic dislocations that cut across racial and ethnic groups in the United States (Wilson 1996). Accordingly, where economic and social reforms are concerned, it hardly seems politically wise to focus mainly on the most disadvantaged groups while ignoring other segments of the population that have also been adversely affected by global economic changes.

Unfortunately, just when bold new comprehensive initiatives are urgently needed to address these problems, the U.S. Congress has retreated from using public policy as an instrument with which to fight social inequality. Failure to deal with this growing social inequality, including the rise of joblessness in U.S. inner cities, could seriously worsen the economic lives of urban families and neighborhoods.

Groups ranging from the inner-city poor to the working- and middle-class Americans who are struggling to make ends meet will have to be effectively mobilized in order for the current course taken by policymakers to be changed. Perhaps the best way to accomplish this is through coalition poli-

tics that promotes ration of the earned income child care programs, coalition is needed to process.

Because an effective solution to be addressed need for economic assistance for the minority poor. (Social inequality and social inequality and social inequality may become allies in social problems perceived.

In the absence of a comprehensive program could find themselves in the center of proposals in the face of posed spending cuts from programs targeted for reduction represent only one-fifth of even more clear-cut cuts. Unless progressives can win, they will ever vote to finance new social inequality. Social programs.

Instead of recognizing the realities that have led to economic inequality, they seek to assign blame to individuals alike with economic, ethnic, or motivational differences. financing any social programs with a limited number of welfare checks. Consistent with this sighted retreat from public policy directing that progress in public policy direction is being intimidated and paralyzed.

tics that promotes race-neutral efforts—such as jobs creation, further expansion of the earned income tax credit, public school reform, access to excellent child care programs, and universal health insurance. A broad-based political coalition is needed to successfully push such programs through the political process.

Because an effective political coalition in part depends upon how the issues to be addressed are defined, it is imperative for leaders to underscore the need for economic and social reform that benefits all groups, not just America's minority poor. Changes in the global economy are creating growing social inequality and situations which intensify antagonisms between different racial and ethnic groups. Yet groups who often see themselves as antagonists may become allies in a reform coalition to redress common problems—especially problems perceived as caused by forces outside their own control.

In the absence of a broad, effective coalition, disadvantaged groups could find themselves in a very vulnerable political position. According to recent proposals in the House of Representatives, more than two-thirds of proposed spending cuts from the federal budget for the year 2000 would come from programs targeted for low-income citizens, even though these programs represent only one-fifth of the current federal budget. And the situation is even more clear-cut when we consider possibilities for new social programs. Unless progressives can build broad coalitions, it is unlikely that Congress will ever vote to finance the kinds of reforms that are needed to combat the new social inequality. The momentum is away from, not toward, adequate social programs.

Instead of recognizing and dealing with the complex and changing realities that have led to economic distress for so many Americans, policymakers seek to assign blame and associate the economic problems of families and individuals alike with such personal shortcomings as lack of initiative, work ethic, or motivation. Consequently, there is very little support in favor of financing any social programs, even the creation of public service jobs for the limited number of welfare recipients who reach a time limit for the receipt of welfare checks. Considering the deleterious consequences that this shortsighted retreat from public policy will have for so many Americans, it is distressing that progressive groups, far from being energized to reverse the public policy direction in which the country is now moving, at times appear intimidated and paralyzed by today's racially charged political rhetoric.

Comprehensive solutions for the new social inequality stand little chance of being adopted or even seriously considered if no new political coalition begins pressing for economic and social reform. Political leaders concerned about the current shift in public policy will have to develop a unifying rhetoric, a progressive message that both resonates with broad segments of the American population and enables groups to recognize that it is in their interest to join a reform coalition dedicated to moving America forward.

Bridging the Racial Divide

Given America's tense racial situation, especially in urban areas, the formation of a multi-ethnic reform coalition will not be easy. Our nation's response to racial discord in the central city and to the growing racial divide between the city and the suburbs has been disappointing. In discussing these problems we have a tendency to engage in the kind of rhetoric that exacerbates, rather than alleviates, urban and metropolitan racial tensions. Ever since the 1992 Los Angeles riot, the media has focused heavily on the factors that divide rather than unite racial groups. Emphasis on racial division peaked in 1995 following the jury's verdict in the O. J. Simpson murder trial. Before the verdict was announced, opinion polls revealed, whites overwhelmingly thought that Mr. Simpson was guilty, while a substantial majority of blacks felt that he was innocent. The media clips showing public reaction to the verdict dramatized the racial contrasts: blacks appeared elated and jubilant; whites appeared stunned, angry, and somber. America's racial divide, as depicted in the media, seemed wider than ever.

The country's deep racial divisions certainly should not be underestimated, but the unremitting emphasis on these gaps has obscured the fact that African-Americans, whites, and other ethnic groups share many concerns, are beset by many similar problems, and have important values, aspirations, and hopes in common.

For example, if inner-city blacks are experiencing the greatest problems of joblessness, their situation is nevertheless a more extreme form of economic difficulties that have affected many Americans since 1980. Solutions to the broader problems of economic marginality in this country, including those that stem from changes in the global economy, can go a long way toward addressing the problems of inner-city joblessness, especially if the applica-

tion of resources included (Wilson 1996). Discriminatory problems promote a severity in the problems that separates the races together, not a tension.

Because the problem is pervasive, a vision of interdependence is more important than that promoted by all leaders.

A new democracy is so divisive that we must work together in a coalition to realize that if a political system draws back, just as minority audiences discern families of all groups can honestly contribute to move America forward.

Despite legacies of past events, a politics that includes all racial groups is very important above all popular interests and work to fashion a progressive new majority.

tion of resources includes wise targeting of the groups most in need of help (Wilson 1996). Discussions that emphasize common solutions to shared problems promote a sense of unity, regardless of the different degrees of severity in the problems afflicting different groups. Such messages bring races together, not apart, and are especially important during periods of racial tension.

Because the problems of the new social inequality are growing more severe, a vision of interracial unity that acknowledges racially distinct problems but at the same time emphasizes transracial solutions to shared problems is more important than ever. Such a vision should be developed, shared, and promoted by all leaders in this country, but especially by political leaders.

A new democratic vision must reject the commonly held view that race is so divisive that whites, blacks, Latinos, and other ethnic groups cannot work together in a common cause. Those articulating the new vision must realize that if a political message is tailored to a white audience, racial minorities draw back, just as whites draw back when a message is tailored to minority audiences. The challenge is to find issues and programs that concern families of all racial and ethnic groups, so that individuals in these groups can honestly perceive mutual interests and join in a multiracial coalition to move America forward.

Despite legacies of racial domination and obstacles thrown up by recent events, a politics about problems and solutions relevant for people across racial groups is very possible in the United States today. Political leaders—above all popular Democrats—should forcefully articulate such a message and work to fashion the multiracial coalitions that must be at the heart of any progressive new majority in American democracy.