

Can a Negro Study Law in Texas? (1946), by artist Charles White. In 1950, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that a Negro could. The decision in Sweatt v. Painter was one of a long series of rulings by the high court, beginning in the late 1930s, that chipped away at the legal foundations of segregation.

Blacks in America

On June 29, 1964, the United States Congress passed a sweeping Civil Rights Act, climaxing a decade of rising protest against the racial segregation that the Supreme Court had sought to end in *Brown v. Board of Education*. Since then, amid much turmoil, the condition of black Americans and notions of civil rights have vastly changed. Black leaders, notably the Reverend Jesse Jackson, have moved from protest into mainstream politics. The federal courts have begun to confront the thorny issue of "color-conscious" remedies for racial discrimination. Meanwhile, across the nation, seven million black Americans now live in households earning more than the white median income, many of them in integrated suburbs. Left behind is a large urban "underclass," victims of growing family instability, economic shifts, and mediocre schooling. Our contributors assess black gains and setbacks, many of them unpublicized, since the 1964 act was passed.

THE SECOND RECONSTRUCTION

by Harvard Sitkoff

"There comes a time," Lyndon Baines Johnson liked to say, quoting Cactus Jack Garner, "in poker and politics, when a man has to shove in all his stack."

For LBJ, the moment came on November 22, 1963. President Kennedy was dead. Few Americans knew what to make of his successor. To the press, the Texan was known as a wheeler-dealer with a cynical disdain for principle. He had stolen (it was rumored) his first election to the Senate. In Congress, he had frequently thwarted the aims of the Democratic Left. His dislike of the Kennedy family was plain. Now, as President, he needed to establish his legitimacy.

Less than 24 hours after taking the oath of office in Dallas aboard Air Force One, President Lyndon Johnson decided to "go for broke" on civil rights.

On November 27, five days after JFK's assassination, Johnson told a joint session of Congress that "no memorial, oration, or eulogy could more eloquently honor President Kennedy's memory than the earliest passage of the civil-rights bill for which he fought." In the months that followed, Johnson steered through the House and Senate an omnibus civil-rights statute, a bill even stronger than the one that Kennedy had submitted in June of 1963. It was no easy task.

The Strength of an Idea

In the Senate, a coalition of Southern Democrats and conservative Republicans had stood for decades as an impassable barrier to any significant civil-rights legislation. Led by Richard Russell (D.-Ga.), the Southerners mounted a filibuster to keep the bill from coming up for a vote. They counted on the civil-rights forces being unable, as they so often had been in the past, to muster the 67 votes needed to impose cloture. Winter turned to spring as Russell's stalwarts droned on and on. Finally, in May, after several "good long talks" at the White House, Senate minority leader Everett Dirksen (R.-Ill.) cast his lot with the President. With the help of Dirksen's moderate Republicans, cloture was invoked. The Senate approved Johnson's civil-rights bill, 73 to 27, on June 29.

It was the first major civil-rights legislation since the era of Reconstruction, and it represented the beginning of a belated effort by the executive and legislative branches of government to back up what the federal courts had been saying for more than a decade. Among other things, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibited racial discrimination by employers and labor unions, and in most places of public accommodation; authorized the government to withhold money from public programs practicing discrimination; created an Equal Employment Opportunity Commission; and gave the attorney general power to file suits against school districts that maintained segregated facilities.

What it did *not* do, as opponents of civil-rights legislation had feared that it might, was require employers to hire workers on the basis of race to correct some sort of racial imbalance.

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"No army," Everett Dirksen had said when announcing his support of the civil-rights bill, "can withstand the strength of an idea whose time has come." Legal equality for blacks had been a long time coming. That it finally arrived was due in part to economic and demographic changes that had brought blacks north and into the Democratic Party. The Kennedy assassination provided moral impetus.

But most important of all was the disciplined, organized pressure—in the form of sit-ins, marches, and boycotts that frightened many whites, hurt others economically, and focused national attention on the Negro's plight—by blacks who had grown tired of waiting. "For years now I have heard the word 'Wait,'" the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., declared in 1963. "It rings in the ear of every Negro with piercing familiarity. This 'Wait' has always meant 'Never.'"

Forging Alliances

During the final quarter of the 19th century, with the gains of Reconstruction beginning to recede, all three branches of the federal government had permitted the white South to reduce blacks to a state of peonage, to segregate them, and to disenfranchise them. Blacks did what they could to protest (or escape) the closed, rigid caste system that was the Southern way. Largely bereft of white allies, their successes were few.

For most blacks, life would not change until World War II. There were, nevertheless, a few glimmers of hope. Some stemmed from the mass migration of blacks to the urban North between 1910 and 1920. Few found the Promised Land, but most experienced some relief from the tenantry, poverty, and ignorance of the Black Belt. Northern blacks, moreover, could vote. Politically, the Negro began to command attention.

The New Deal gave blacks some economic assistance and considerable symbolic consolation, though Franklin Roosevelt made few concrete attempts to end de jure racial discrimination. Responding to the growth of the black vote in the North, and its pronounced shift away from the party of Lincoln after 1932, Roosevelt appointed more than 100 blacks to senior government posts and tripled the number of black federal employees. In the administration of relief programs, Roosevelt also made sure that blacks received a fair share of the pie, even in the segregated South. And the First Lady identified herself closely with civil-rights leaders and organizations. As *All in the Family's* Archie Bunker would later complain, "Eleanor Roosevelt discovered the colored. . . . We didn't know they were there."



Louisville flood victims, 1937, by Margaret Bourke-White. New Deal relief efforts meant more to Negroes than to whites. Differences in income, literacy, and life expectancy narrowed during the Roosevelt era but remained wide.

FDR's appointments to the Supreme Court (including Hugo Black, Felix Frankfurter, and William O. Douglas) also made a difference. The high court's favorable decisions in cases involving the exclusion of blacks from juries, the right to picket against racial discrimination in employment, disenfranchisement, discrimination in the pay of black teachers, and the admission of blacks to graduate education all helped make the Afro-American less a *freedman* and more a *free man*.

Inevitably, the rising expectations of American blacks began to exceed Washington's performance. The onset of World War II helped bring matters to a head. The ideological character of the struggle against fascism (and Nazi racism), along with the government's desperate need for men in both overalls and uniform, led many blacks to anticipate a better deal. The result, when this did not occur, was a new militancy in black communities.

In 1941, for example, A. Philip Randolph of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters threatened to mobilize an all-black march on Washington unless the President opened up jobs in defense industries to blacks. Roosevelt responded with Executive Order 8802, which created a Fair Employment Practices Commission and prohibited racial discrimination in companies and unions engaged in war-related work. This, combined with a

wartime labor shortage, created jobs for two million blacks. Another 200,000 entered the federal civil service. The number of black union members doubled, to 1,250,000.

The war created the preconditions for a successful black crusade on behalf of racial justice. By war's end, many blacks in the North held decent blue-collar jobs. They were, as a group, more self-confident than ever before. Membership in the biracial National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) had grown sevenfold (to 351,000) during the war years. Several strong alliances had been forged: with the liberal wing of the Democratic Party, for example, and with Big Labor. Meanwhile, the new prominence of the United States as a world power, and its claims to moral leadership in the Cold War, elevated the "race problem" into a national embarrassment.

Harry Truman became the first U.S. President to identify his office with the specific objectives of the civil-rights movement. He did so despite intense opposition from within his own party. The coalition of Southern Democrats (including freshman Sen. Lyndon B. Johnson of Texas) and conservative Republicans on Capitol Hill stymied Truman's efforts to create a permanent Fair Employment Practices Commission and killed his proposed anti-lynching and anti-poll tax laws. When the President endorsed the civil-rights plank written into the 1948 Democratic platform, Strom Thurmond (D.-S.C.) and other Southern delegates walked out of the convention and formed the splinter Dixiecrats, a split that nearly cost Truman the election.

Assault on Jim Crow

Truman rarely got his way in Congress on civil-rights issues, but he issued executive orders in 1948 ending segregation in the military and barring racial discrimination in federal employment and in work done under government contract. His Justice Department prepared *amicus curiae* briefs backing the positions taken by the NAACP as its lawyers argued major civil-rights cases before the Supreme Court. One such case, involving an eight-year-old in Topeka, Kansas, named Linda Brown—who had to travel a mile by bus to reach a black elementary school even though she lived only three blocks from a white elementary school—began its journey through the courts in 1951.

No issue in the immediate postwar years meant more to blacks than school desegregation, and the NAACP's Legal Defense and Education Fund, led by Thurgood Marshall, coordinated a series of lawsuits in several states charging that segregated education was discriminatory per se. Many blacks and liberal whites

TURMOIL AND PROGRESS: 1940-1984

1940 Census finds 12.9 million blacks in United States, 9.8 percent of population.

1941 President Roosevelt establishes Fair Employment Practices Commission.

1942 Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) founded by James Farmer.

1943 Race riots in Detroit, Mobile, New York (Harlem), and other cities; Army Air Force deploys first of two all-black fighter squadrons in Europe.

1946 President Truman creates Committee on Civil Rights.



NAACP lawyers (Thurgood Marshall, center) outside Supreme Court, 1954

1947 Jackie Robinson breaks major league baseball color barrier, joining Brooklyn Dodgers.

1948 After black threats to boycott revived Cold War draft, Truman ends segregation in armed forces; 35 Southern delegates reject civil-rights platform at Democratic presidential nominating convention, endorse Dixiecrat candidate Sen. Strom Thurmond (D-S.C.).

1950 Supreme Court desegregates University of Texas law school; blacks fight in Korea in racially mixed units.

1954 Supreme Court rules public school segregation unconstitutional; Southern White Citizens Councils formed in protest.

1955 Montgomery bus boycott organized by Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.

1956 Southern Manifesto signed by 101 members of U.S. Congress.

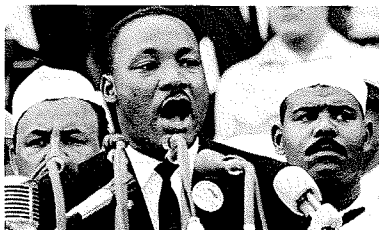
1957 Martin Luther King, Jr., organizes Southern Christian Leadership Conference; President Eisenhower dispatches 101st Airborne to Little Rock to enforce federal district court school desegregation order.



Integrating Central High, Little Rock, 1957

1960 Wave of sit-ins begins after four black students are denied service at Greensboro lunch counter; Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee formed.

1961 President Kennedy creates Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity; CORE Freedom Rides through South provoke white violence.



Martin Luther King, Jr., at massive March on Washington, 1963

1962 U.S. Marshals escort James Meredith to University of Mississippi to guarantee his court-ordered admission to the school; long-awaited JFK executive order forbids racial/religious discrimination in federally supported housing.

1963 Sit-in protesting discrimination in Birmingham met by harsh white resistance; estimated 250,000 people at March on Washington; JFK assassinated (Nov. 22).

1964 Congress passes Civil Rights Act; President Johnson signs Economic Opportunity Act creating Job Corps, Head Start, VISTA; LBJ issues executive order on affirmative action; Martin Luther King, Jr., receives Nobel Peace Prize.

Lyndon Johnson declares war on poverty, 1964.



1965 Malcolm X assassinated (Feb. 21); Voting Rights Act passed; massive civil-rights march from Selma to Montgomery; rioting and looting in Watts, Los Angeles, leaves 34 dead, 1,032 injured.

1966 Edward W. Brooke (R-Mass.) becomes first black elected to U.S. Senate since Reconstruction; Robert Weaver appointed U.S. Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, becoming first black cabinet member; looting and riots in Lansing, Omaha, Cleveland, and other cities.

1967 Thurgood Marshall is first black named to Supreme Court; 14,000 army paratroopers, National Guardsmen, and state and city police required to control disturbances in Detroit.



Antibusing protest, Boston, 1976

1968 Martin Luther King, Jr., assassinated in Memphis (April 4); rioting and looting ensue in Washington and 125 other U.S. cities, leaving 38 dead, 3,500 injured.

1969 President Nixon's Labor Department initiates Philadelphia Plan.

1971 Jesse Jackson founds Operation PUSH; Supreme Court upholds compulsory busing to achieve school desegregation.

1973 Supreme Court rules potential jurors can be questioned to detect racial prejudice.

1975 Violence in Louisville over first court-ordered cross-district school-busing program.

1976 Some 1,800 blacks hold elective office in Southern states.

Ronald Reagan signs King holiday bill, 1983.



1977 Representative Andrew E. Young (D-Ga.) becomes first black U.S. Ambassador to United Nations.

1978 Supreme Court rules minority quota in medical-school admission policy unconstitutional.

1980 Race riot in Miami leaves 16 dead.

1981 President Reagan curbs spending for Comprehensive Employment and Training Act programs, Aid to Families with Dependent Children, food stamps, and other social welfare programs.

1983 Supreme Court bans tax exemptions for schools with racial barriers; Rev. Jesse Jackson declares candidacy for Democratic presidential nomination; Congress approves a national holiday (third Monday in January) commemorating Martin Luther King, Jr.

1984 Census reports 28 million blacks in U.S., 12 percent of U.S. population; in shift, U.S. Civil Rights Commission opposes race quotas in hiring.

believed that a Supreme Court decision ruling "separate but equal" schooling unconstitutional would promptly spell the end of Jim Crow in every other area of life.

On May 17, 1954, in the case of *Oliver Brown et al. v. Board of Education of Topeka*, the Supreme Court, headed by former California Governor Earl Warren, ruled that separate educational facilities "are inherently unequal" and deprived blacks of the equal protection of the laws guaranteed under the Fourteenth Amendment. The landmark decision was greeted with hosannas by black leaders and hoots by Southern politicians. Sen. James Eastland (D.-Miss.) asserted that the South would neither "abide by nor obey this legislative decision by a political court."

Eastland was right, at least for a while.

For a decade after 1954, despite the Supreme Court's decision in *Brown* and its subsequent rulings against other forms of segregation, virtually nothing of consequence changed in the South. In 1960, fewer than one percent of Southern black children attended school with white children.

'Massive Resistance'

Part of the blame lay with the Supreme Court. A year after *Brown*, the court issued its so-called *Brown II* decision, rejecting the NAACP's plea to order instant and total school desegregation and adopting instead a "go slow" approach. The Court assigned responsibility for drawing up desegregation plans to (white) local school authorities, requiring only that desegregation proceed with "all deliberate speed," a tempo otherwise undefined.

For his part, President Dwight D. Eisenhower was not disposed to press the matter. He did not like the *Brown* ruling. He stated flatly once that "I do not believe you can change the hearts of men with laws or decisions." No bigot, but blind to the importance of ending racial injustice, Eisenhower had no intention of enforcing compliance with the high court's ruling in the South. He was under no pressure from Congress to do so.

Not surprisingly, Washington's indifference emboldened white supremacists in the South, who pursued a campaign of "massive resistance" to desegregation. State governors felt free to defy the President himself, as Orval Faubus demonstrated at Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1957. When Eisenhower intervened on that occasion with U.S. troops, it was less to ensure that nine black students safely took their seats in Central High School than to uphold the law and assert his authority as chief executive.

Eisenhower's failure to use his office as a "bully pulpit" to persuade whites that racial discrimination ran counter to both

law and morality was a lost opportunity. The costs would be high. Denied the fruits of the victories that they had won in court, and without support in Washington, blacks now looked to new tactics, organizations, and leaders. A battle that had been waged indoors, before the bench, now burst into the streets.

It began in Montgomery, Alabama, when Mrs. Rosa Parks, a black woman, said No to a bus driver on December 1, 1955. Her refusal to give up her seat to a white man on a crowded bus, and her subsequent arrest, sparked a bus boycott that would unite the city's 50,000 blacks and demonstrate the effectiveness of nonviolent mass protest. Led by 26-year-old Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., pastor of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, 90 percent of Montgomery's blacks shunned the Montgomery City Line beginning on Monday, December 5. Despite lawsuits, arrests, and bombings, they stayed off the buses for 381 days until vindicated by the Supreme Court.

The bus boycott won sympathetic coverage in the Northern news media. Blacks across the country took heart. More important, blacks now had a charismatic leader in the person of Martin Luther King, Jr. Not only had he fused the precepts of Christ, Gandhi, and Jefferson into a moral demand for racial justice; he had also displayed, in the course of a trying and dangerous year, a genius for organization. Eventually united in King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference, black ministers became a key element in the civil-rights struggle. (Today, 25 black Protestant denominations claim 17 million members; their churches remain local bulwarks of black social and political life.)

A Stroke of the Pen

Stirred by the example of Montgomery, black student activists began employing the "sit-in" at local restaurants throughout the South to demand the right to equal service. By the end of 1960, despite thousands of arrests, sit-ins had accomplished their purpose in 140 Southern towns and cities, and blacks were busily conducting wade-ins at beaches, kneel-ins at churches, sleep-ins at motels, and read-ins at public libraries. In 1961, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) stepped up its Freedom Ride campaign. To prod the White House, and its new occupant, John F. Kennedy, into enforcing Supreme Court desegregation orders, interracial groups of CORE members in May began boarding Greyhound and Trailways buses in Washington, D.C., and riding into the deep South.

The momentum of protest placed the new administration in a difficult position. As a senator, John F. Kennedy had seldom

raised his voice in support of racial justice. But needing the black vote (and the white liberal vote) to win the Presidency in 1960, he campaigned as a champion of racial equality. However, his narrow margin of victory—roughly 100,000 votes—gave him little room to maneuver. On the Hill, he faced the same coalition of Southern Democrats and conservative Republicans that had thwarted Harry Truman.

For most of his thousand days in the White House, Kennedy expediently balanced the conflicting claims of white and black, North and South, conservative and liberal. He appointed more blacks to high federal office than any previous president but deferred to James Eastland, chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, on the appointment of several outright segregationists to the federal bench. He intervened to desegregate the University of Mississippi when a crisis forced his hand but did little to push integration in the public schools of the old Confederacy. He procrastinated for two years before fulfilling his campaign pledge to end discrimination in federally financed housing with “a stroke of the presidential pen.”

On to Black Power

Unless the pressure became unbearable and relentless, Kennedy would not, or could not, act. Civil-rights leaders, tired once more of waiting—and worried, too, that lack of progress would strengthen the growing radical fringe of the movement—launched a new series of mass protests in April 1963.

The confrontation that King and his aides had plotted for Birmingham worked to perfection. Birmingham was more than just unyielding on segregation. It was, for Negroes, a dangerous city. Blacks called it “Bombingham” for the 18 racial bombings and more than 50 cross-burning incidents that had occurred there since 1957. Leading the vanguard of the last-ditch defenders of segregation was police commissioner Eugene (“Bull”) Connor. King counted on Connor’s vicious response to peaceful black demonstrations to awaken both the nation and the President.

He was not disappointed. The vivid, televised scenes of police dogs lunging at peaceful protestors, of surging nightsticks and electric cattle-prods, of high-pressure water-hoses ripping the clothes off black women, of thousands of hymn-singing children being hauled off to jail—all of this aroused the conscience of millions of Americans. It went on for two months.

“The sound of the explosion in Birmingham,” King observed, “reached all the way to Washington.” In June, when Alabama Governor George Wallace sought to bar two black

students from enrolling in the University of Alabama, the President decided that the time had come.

In an address to the nation on June 11, Kennedy asserted his leadership on what he called "a moral issue . . . as old as the Scriptures and . . . as clear as the American Constitution." He backed up his words with a deed, urging Congress to enact the most comprehensive civil-rights law in U.S. history. That August, some 250,000 Americans participated in the March on Washington, massing before the Lincoln Memorial to show their support for the legislation that Kennedy had sent to the Hill.

Yet, in the three months remaining to him, Kennedy had little more to say on civil rights, perhaps heeding opinion polls which indicated that white Americans thought he was moving too fast on integration. Congress took no action on the civil-rights bill. President Kennedy traveled to Dallas in November, apparently content to let future events create the sense of urgency necessary to vanquish the Southern foes of equal rights in Congress. Ironically, his assassination did just that.

A year after the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was signed into law, in the wake of renewed black protest demonstrations, this time in Selma, Congress passed a Voting Rights Act that President Johnson declared would "strike away the last major shackle" of the Negro's "ancient bonds." The act prohibited literacy tests and other devices long employed to deter black voters in the South. It authorized federal examiners to register qualified black voters directly. Within four years, the number of Southern blacks registered to vote would grow from one million to 3.1 million. The lock on the ballot box was broken.

But so, in some respects, was the civil-rights movement. The summer of 1965 brought an escalation of the war in Vietnam and a bloody race riot in Watts, Los Angeles. The Watts riot inaugurated a succession of "long hot summers" for a troubled nation and spelled the end of the era of nonviolence. Within a year, the civil-rights movement was hopelessly divided over strategy and tactics, over Black Power and black separatism. A resentful Lyndon Johnson, who believed himself betrayed by those he had sought to help, devoted only 45 words to civil rights in his 1967 State of the Union address. The Second Reconstruction had set much in motion, but it was over.



REDEFINING CIVIL RIGHTS

by Terry Eastland

On May 17, 1954, the Supreme Court launched the modern quest for racial equality in America when it struck down public school segregation in *Brown v. Board of Education*. That quest has developed slowly into a controversy about the meaning of civil rights and the idea of equality—a controversy that continues to inject itself into our politics today.

After the Civil War, black leaders and civil-rights advocates generally believed that the law should make no distinctions on the basis of race. As Richard Cain, a black who represented North Carolina in Congress, explained during the House debate on the Civil Rights Act of 1875: "We do not want any discriminations. I do not ask for any legislation for the colored people of this country that is not applied to the white people. All that we ask is equal laws. . . ."

In 1896, this position was eloquently defended by Supreme Court Justice John Harlan. In his dissent from the infamous decision (*Plessy v. Ferguson*) that upheld segregation, Harlan stated that "Our Constitution is colorblind, and neither knows nor tolerates classes among citizens. In respect of civil rights all citizens are equal before the law. . . . The law regards man as man, and takes no account of his surroundings or of his color when his civil rights are involved."

The *Brown* decision seemed to reflect Harlan's dissent. Over the next 20 years, however, many of those Americans united in the effort to eliminate racial discrimination either rejected or temporarily shelved the idea of colorblind justice, accepting the alternative view that the law should indeed make some major distinctions based on race. In time, the federal government itself promoted the notion that only "race-preferential" policies could ensure (or accelerate) black gains in education, employment, and politics. Not only in government but in many areas of business and education, the idea took hold that blacks—and, later, other groups that could point to present or historic deprivation—now deserved compensation, even if it came at the expense of other American citizens.

A new, revised, and enlarged dictionary of civil rights appeared. It included terms such as "busing," "set-asides," "available pools," and "goals and timetables." The philosophy

underlying race preference was well summarized by Justice Harry A. Blackmun in 1978: "To get beyond racism, we must first take account of race."

Ironically, the same *Brown* decision that struck the fatal blow to segregation helped bring about the race-conscious policies of the future. The 1954 ruling *seemed* to say that it is constitutionally impermissible for government to make any distinctions based on race. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) had urged the Court to adopt exactly this principle, arguing that no government anywhere should be allowed to "confer" or "deny" benefits on the basis of color or race.

But in fact, the *Brown* decision nowhere explicitly said that racial distinctions made by government are unconstitutional *per se*. Had it done so, a precedent would have been established that later courts would have found most difficult to overcome. Instead, *Brown* left the nation's courts a grant of flexibility in dealing with matters involving race.

Other features of *Brown* augured the future evolution of the idea of civil rights. In particular, the decision reflected the judiciary's growing interest in the findings of social science—an interest that in time spread to other branches of government. Chief Justice Earl Warren's unanimous opinion leaned heavily on social scientists' judgments about the effects of segregation on minority schoolchildren.

Making Haste Slowly

What were these effects? "A feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community"—a feeling "that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone." Maintaining that "this finding is amply supported by modern authority," Warren cited seven scholarly works in his famous Footnote 11, among them psychologist Kenneth B. Clark's *Effect of Prejudice and Discrimination on Personality Development* (1950). Footnote 11 disturbed constitutional scholars: After all, "modern authorities" could be found to support a contrary view. But the application of social science data, especially statistics, to legal questions involving race became a common exercise in subsequent years. As Jesse Jackson observed 25 years after *Brown*: "Equality can be measured. It can be turned into numbers."

No less a portent was the Warren Court's treatment of blacks as a *group*. Looking beyond the individual plaintiffs in the case, the Court saw a class of Americans—blacks—and undertook to address the problem of discrimination endured by so

many of them. Instead of enjoining the school districts involved from segregating on the basis of race and then ordering the victorious *Brown* plaintiffs admitted, the Court, concerned about the broad implications of its decision, asserted that the question of relief "presents problems of considerable complexity." It asked for further argument the following year, and even then it temporized. As Columbia's Louis Lusky observed a decade later, what the plaintiffs actually received was "a promise that, some time in the indefinite future, other people would be given the rights which the Court said [they] had."

Not Enough

Thus, while the Supreme Court in *Brown* erased the color line of school segregation, it failed to shake off the old habit of regarding blacks as members of a group needing different treatment. This group approach, applied later in an effort to *help* blacks, became the foundation of the race-preferential policies of the 1960s and '70s. In common with *Brown*, these policies sought less to give relief to specific individuals suffering from specific acts of discrimination than to improve the economic, political, and educational condition, in group terms, of blacks and other minorities.

In 1954, of course, none of this was foreseen. The issues seemed simpler then. Asked by Justice Felix Frankfurter to "spell out in concrete what would happen" if the Court ruled for the plaintiffs in *Brown*, NAACP special counsel Thurgood Marshall said that his hope was that school district boundaries everywhere would be drawn "on a natural basis, without regard to race or color."

To Marshall, assistant counsel Robert L. Carter, and other civil-rights leaders, overturning Jim Crow laws and advancing the principle that nondiscrimination was a *moral* as well as a constitutional imperative seemed to go hand-in-hand. That principle was also deemed essential to black advancement: Eliminating race-based distinctions would *in itself* lead to progress in education and employment that in time would bring blacks fully into the American mainstream.

Yet, before long, many blacks began to wonder whether this theory ever would receive a fair test. For in the absence of pres-

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Riot, U.S.A. (1968), by William Curtis. In a year marked by racial violence, poor people marched on Washington, athletes gave a Black Power salute at the Olympics, and Yale announced a new B.A. in Afro-American studies.

sure from the Supreme Court or the President, white Southern governors and state legislators successfully defied the *Brown* decision. Virtually all of the Southern states adopted “pupil-placement schemes” that were race-neutral on their face but in practice were employed to minimize desegregation if not keep blacks out of white schools entirely. By 1962, fewer than two percent of all black students in Texas, Georgia, Virginia, North Carolina, Arkansas, Louisiana, Tennessee, and Florida were enrolled in biracial schools. In Mississippi, South Carolina, and Alabama, there were no biracial schools at all.

As the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., assailed “institutionalized tokenism” in the South, the NAACP began taking aim at a different sort of problem in the North and West, where four million Southern blacks had taken up residence since World War II. There, school segregation existed not by law but because of residential segregation. In 1962, the NAACP launched its first successful attacks on de facto school segregation in a dozen communities, from Coatesville, Pennsylvania, to Eloy, Arizona.

Inevitably, some civil-rights leaders began to question

whether simply pulling down the color barriers would bring tangible educational gains in either North or South. In 1962, a group of blacks sued the Philadelphia school board, contending through its attorney that the city's race-neutral policy of pupil assignment was "not enough." The lawyer argued that the board "cannot be colorblind," but must make decisions "in such a way as to accomplish . . . integration."

Scaling New Peaks

The idea that colorblind policies might not be "enough" was seconded by social scientists in government and academe who, during the early 1960s, were beginning to produce reams of data showing that blacks as a group still lagged far behind whites, and not only in education. Blacks were less likely than whites to finish high school, more heavily concentrated in low-wage occupations, and afflicted with higher rates of joblessness. In 1964, the National Urban League's Whitney Young cited the "serious disabilities resulting from historic handicaps" when he spoke of the need for a "special effort" on behalf of American blacks.

Young did not call for hiring quotas, only the granting of preference in hiring situations where a black and a white were equally qualified. Others, however, were bolder, couching their arguments less in practical than in moral, almost theological, terms. Charles Silberman, for example, wrote in a 1962 *Fortune* article that past oppression of blacks was a "sin" for which "all Americans owe some act of atonement." In his 1964 book, *Crisis in White and Black*, Silberman maintained that "as soon as we agree that special measures are necessary, the question of numbers—of how many Negroes are to be hired in what job categories—inevitably arises." Calling them a "meaningful measure of change," Silberman became one of the first to endorse quotas for blacks, though his view was still that of a distinct minority.

On Capitol Hill, testifying on the 1964 Civil Rights Act, NAACP executive director Roy Wilkins emphasized that a quota system would be "unfair whether it is used for [blacks] or against [blacks]. . . . We feel people ought to be hired because of their ability, irrespective of their color." Most civil-rights spokesmen and congressional liberals were of the same opinion regarding employment quotas and race-conscious policies in general. As a result, the Civil Rights Act specified that no employer would be required to grant "preferential treatment to any group" because of an "imbalance in [his] work force" and also that desegregation "shall not mean the assignment of students to public schools in order to overcome racial imbalance."

The Civil Rights Act and the subsequent Voting Rights Act of 1965 were designed to outlaw all remaining legal barriers to schools, jobs, public facilities, and voting booths. Educational and economic opportunity were explicitly made independent of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. The two acts also granted the federal government broad enforcement powers, including the power to withhold funds and initiate lawsuits.

Having pushed the pivotal rights bills through Congress, President Lyndon Johnson looked for new peaks to scale. Drawing on Daniel Patrick Moynihan's observation that the next phase of "the Negro revolution" would include demands for jobs and income roughly comparable to those of whites, the President declared in his celebrated 1965 Howard University commencement address: "We seek not just freedom but opportunity—not just legal equity . . . but equality as *a fact and a result*." The Great Society programs, from Head Start to the Job Corps, were designed in part to help bring about this "equality as a result." So was a little-noticed executive order signed in 1965 by Lyndon Johnson—Executive Order 11246—which backed an as yet ill-defined concept called "affirmative action."

But 1965 also brought signs of trouble. The President committed major U.S. forces to the Vietnam War. In the predominantly black neighborhood of Watts, in Los Angeles, the National Guard had to be called in to quell a week of rioting and looting. Meanwhile, black leaders were increasingly divided over whether the movement should continue to endorse Martin Luther King, Jr.'s nonviolent means and integrationist ends, or join the militant proponents of Black Power in the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee and the Congress of Racial Equality. Black separatism, championed by Elijah Muhammad and Malcom X, revived as an ideology.

Numbers

Despite this turbulence—indeed, in part because of it—federal authorities continued to seek ways of integrating blacks into the American mainstream. The first big target was school segregation.

Brandishing the government's new power to withhold federal funds from public schools practicing racial discrimination, the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) in 1966 issued guidelines prohibiting "freedom-of-choice" plans and requiring school systems to bring about "some faculty integration" in each school and, as far as students were concerned,

BLACKS AND POLITICS: A NEW MATURITY

Politically, black Americans have entered Stage Three.

Stage One (1945–1964) was the postwar era of mobilization. New civil-rights groups such as CORE joined older ones such as the NAACP to make the condition of black citizens a *national* issue that Washington would be forced to address.

Stage Two (1964–1980) was the era of federalization. Passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 removed the crudest constraints on blacks' social and political participation in American life; the Great Society programs created jobs and a new middle class. The civil-rights movement was rent by fissures that would not close, even as a new generation of black leaders emerged on the scene via politics, not protest.

During the 1970s, Republican and Democratic administrations alike expanded affirmative action, enforced the voting rights laws, and appointed blacks to cabinet posts. Today, there are more than 5,500 black elected officials nationwide (versus fewer than 300 in 1965), including 247 mayors and 21 Congressmen.

Stage Three is the era of sophistication, as blacks improve the quality and extend the range of their political behavior. It is essential for blacks to diversify their political stands and their political strategies—and thereby expand the potential pool of political allies—if they are to avoid a repetition of the early Reagan years.

The Reagan administration has been at best indifferent to the concerns of black Americans. At its mindless worst, it has sought to weaken provisions of the Voting Rights Act and to allow tax exemptions for private schools that refuse to admit blacks. The administration's budget cuts have curbed programs (such as food stamps and Medicaid) on which millions of poor blacks depend. The black community received barely enough support in Congress and the courts to contain the damage.

Blacks need new friends. They will find new friends when their political opinions and behavior more closely match those of other Americans. Though largely unremarked in the press, this transformation is already under way. Consider the findings of a study conducted by Data Black, a polling firm, in 1980. Of the blacks surveyed, 50 percent answered "harmful" or "unsure" when asked about the effects of welfare programs; 51 percent answered "increase" or "unsure" when asked about defense spending. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, meanwhile, has reported that 41 percent of blacks favor the death penalty for murder, and 72 percent favor tuition tax credits; roughly 60 percent oppose abortion for married women. This sample of black opinion would probably surprise most Americans.

Increasingly, black voters are making up their own minds. In Alabama in 1982, one-third of all black voters defied Coretta Scott King and other civil-rights leaders (who supported a white liberal, George

McMillan, in his race for governor) and helped hand former Governor George Wallace a victory in the Democratic primary. After his triumph in the general election, Wallace rewarded blacks swiftly, appointing two blacks (Alabama's first) to his cabinet and backing four others for committee chairmanships in the legislature. There is a lesson here for the Republican Party, if it would only open its eyes.

There were other portents in 1982. In California, Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley fashioned a broad coalition of whites, blacks, Hispanics, and Orientals, and came within 100,000 votes (out of 7.9 million cast) of becoming America's first black governor. Ironically, rather than hailing Bradley's achievement, civil-rights leaders such as the National Urban Coalition's Carl Holman depicted the outcome as the result of "racism-as-usual." Holman would have done better to chastize the 600,000 black Californians who did not register to vote. He might also have leveled some criticism at the 5,000 members of Alpha Phi Alpha who attended the fraternity's annual convention in California during the summer of 1982 but never even contemplated financing perhaps 100 of their number to stay behind and help with voter registration.

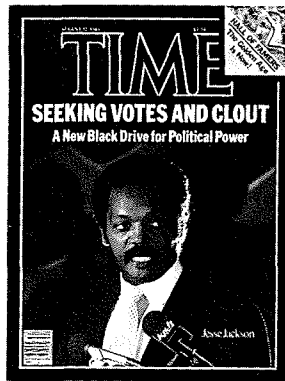
The fact is, political maturity demands self-criticism. Civil-rights leaders, who are no longer at the forefront of black politics but still wield considerable influence, need to understand this. Most black politicians already do.

Certainly Jesse Jackson does. Jackson is enough of a realist to know that he will not become the Democratic presidential nominee; he is intelligent enough to know that his candidacy can nevertheless accomplish a great deal. He has already jolted hundreds of thousands out of political apathy—like the many newly registered blacks in Chicago who helped elect Harold Washington mayor in April 1983. Some 41 percent of the 17.8 million eligible blacks are still not registered to vote. But, across the nation, efforts such as Operation Big Vote, now active in 50 cities, have already begun to reverse this situation. Jackson will provide new momentum.

"My running," he says, "will stimulate thousands to run [for elective office]; it will make millions register. If you can get your share of legislators, mayors, sheriffs, school-board members, tax assessors, and dogcatchers, you can live with whoever is in the White House."

—Martin Kilson

Professor Kilson teaches government at Harvard University.



Jesse Jackson, 1983

to meet "performance criteria."

Specifically, districts in which eight to nine percent of the community's black students were enrolled in integrated schools had to double this proportion within a year; those with only four to five percent had to triple it. The HEW guidelines, focused on (but not confined to) Southern schools, represented the first time that Washington had mandated percentage requirements as a measure of desegregation.

The guidelines upset Congress. The House of Representatives (but not the Senate) promptly passed legislation prohibiting the use of cross-town "busing" to achieve integration, the first of several antibusing amendments the House was to pass. But HEW's actions were immediately upheld by the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans. This same court subsequently declared that public school officials "have the affirmative duty . . . to bring about an integrated, unitary school system in which there are no Negro schools and no white schools—just schools." The Fifth Circuit rejected the view that the Constitution requires only that schools not discriminate. In the court's opinion, the Constitution requires actual integration. And integration has to be total—in terms of "students, faculties, facilities, and activities."

Zoning, Pairing, Busing

After 14 years of almost complete silence on the issue, the Supreme Court in 1968 finally declared its impatience with the slow pace of school desegregation. In a case arising in Virginia, *Green v. New Kent County School Board*, the Court ruled that public schools must not only eliminate discrimination "root and branch," but also devise a plan for doing so "that promises realistically to work, and promises realistically to work now."

The proportion of blacks attending biracial schools began to rise rapidly—to 32 percent in 1968, and 86 percent in 1970. Even as many whites were fleeing big-city public schools, federal judges used a variety of means to try to bring about school integration, including geographical zoning, school "pairing"—and, of course, compulsory busing of schoolchildren. In 1971, the Supreme Court, now headed by a Nixon appointee, Warren Burger, unanimously upheld the legality of such busing in *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education*. The path left open by *Brown* was now taken in *Swann*: The law may indeed take account of color. "Just as the race of students must be considered in determining whether a constitutional violation has occurred," said the Court, "so also must race be considered

in formulating a remedy."

Meanwhile, even as busing became a court-sanctioned school integration strategy, often amid considerable local conflict, other "race-conscious" policies were being devised and adopted. During the mid-1960s, many whites were worried about (and frightened by) both urban riots and the strident new emphasis on black separatism. As Theodore Draper noted in *The Rediscovery of Black Nationalism* (1970), only a few years earlier "the tendency [had been] overwhelmingly 'integrationist' within the black community and among black leaders." Now, however, integrationism "had become a bad word, and some form of 'separatism'—cultural, political, or both—was all the rage, especially in black intellectual and youthful circles."

What Is 'Affirmative Action'?

Intellectually, many highly placed whites, particularly those staffing foundations and teaching in universities, had also come to accept the militants' proposition that blacks deserved recompense; the legacy of past injuries, they believed, lingered on, preventing blacks from competing on equal terms with whites. "To treat our black students equally," said Vanderbilt University Chancellor Alexander Heard, "we have to treat them differently." Besides increasing black student enrollment and taking on more black faculty members, university officials agreed to create "black studies" programs and even separate black student centers. There was irony in this, for here the demands of young blacks bitterly denouncing integration were being granted by white academics who deeply believed in that very goal.

As hundreds of universities and some major corporations voluntarily opened their doors to more blacks, federal agencies began experimenting with Lyndon Johnson's executive order on "affirmative action."

LBJ's Executive Order 11246, amended in 1967, not only prohibited most businesses with more than 50 employees on the payroll or with government contracts worth more than \$50,000—a group that then included some 325,000 employers with a total of about 30 million workers—from discriminating "against any employee or applicant for employment because of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin." The order also required such businesses to "take affirmative action to ensure that applicants are employed and that employees are treated" without regard to those characteristics.

But what did "affirmative action" really mean?

In the Kennedy administration, the term had been used in directives calling for race-neutral actions: Recruit more widely; offer job training; rid employment tests of racial bias. While the U.S. Department of Labor did press contractors during the Johnson years to hire more minorities (defined as blacks, Hispanics, American Indians, and Asians and Pacific Islanders), it did not attempt to say *how many* more such people an employer should hire. It was the Nixon administration that first began to require hiring on the basis of numerical goals.

Thus, in 1969, the Nixon Labor Department drew up its "Philadelphia Plan," under which construction firms in that city were required to increase their percentage of minority craftsmen from the existing two percent to as much as 26 percent within four years. The Labor Department also began leaning on contractors in cities across the nation to hire more minorities, even when racial discrimination against identifiable individuals had not been demonstrated. The Labor Department's affirmative action effort aimed at gradually producing proportional minority representation. "Very few [contractors] are willing . . . to fight . . . through litigation," Under Secretary of Labor Laurence Silberman explained to Congress in 1971. "They usually come into compliance."

Pool and Goals

The Nixon administration's interest in more minority hiring in construction would fade as union opposition mounted. (Neither the Philadelphia Plan nor a similar program in Washington, D.C., ever met its goals.) But in other agencies, the drive for affirmative action remained strong. At HEW, for example, officials developed guidelines for achieving "equality as a result" in academe. Universities with government contracts were required to determine the "available pools" of labor, by race, qualified for each job, from janitor and secretary to professor and provost. The universities then had to compare the number of minorities working in each job category with their estimated "availability" in the "pools"—and hire more minorities if any "deficiencies" were apparent. Meeting such numerical "goals" was (and remains) an arduous task.*

*As administrators in academe, business, and the public sector have discovered, merely determining the proper "pool" can be tricky. In *Blacks and the Military* (1982), Martin Binkin listed some of the many yardsticks against which black representation in the armed forces (now about 20 percent) could theoretically be measured. They include the proportion of blacks among 1) all Americans (12 percent), 2) those from age 18 to 23 (13 to 14 percent), 3) high school graduates from age 18 to 22 (12 percent), 4) military-age people who would be expected to qualify for enlistment (five to eight percent), 5) noncollege males from age 18 to 23 (20 percent), 6) all blue-collar workers (14 percent).

During the early 1970s, HEW's Office of Civil Rights cited 20 universities—among them Harvard, the University of Michigan, Vanderbilt, New Mexico State, and the University of Texas—for falling short of their assigned goals. In a 1975 settlement with the University of California at Berkeley, hailed by Washington officials as a model for affirmative action in higher education, the institution was required to place at least 100 additional women and minorities in teaching positions over the next 30 years. The seemingly modest number of jobs involved under the Berkeley Plan reflected the proportion of women and minorities in various labor pools, which for some academic specialties is very small.

Many of the top officials at universities that had pioneered in adopting their own race-preferential admissions policies during the late 1960s, and had applauded the affirmative action requirements imposed by Washington on business, now lamented HEW intrusions into faculty hiring. They argued that the dissimilarity between higher education and industry, and the special need of institutions of learning for autonomy, should restrain government zeal. But Washington did not readily back off. Said Stanley Pottinger, director of HEW's Office of Civil Rights from 1970 to 1973: "We have a whale of a lot of power and we're prepared to use it if necessary."

An Uncertain Court

That same spirit animated yet another federal agency with muscle: the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), which was responsible for enforcing the provisions against job discrimination in the 1964 Civil Rights Act. As early as 1969, the EEOC took the position that private firms' equal employment opportunity programs must include consideration of their results—or lack of results—in terms of actual numbers of jobs for minorities and women.*

Does affirmative action of this sort violate the Constitution? The Supreme Court has strained to avoid answering this question. But its rulings have permitted educational and employment practices that *do* make distinctions on the basis of race.

The Court first addressed the issue in 1978 in *Bakke v. Regents of the University of California*. Allan Bakke, the white plain-

*The direct impact of federal affirmative action pressures on improved job opportunities for blacks is extremely difficult to reckon, especially in the private sector. The clearest gains have come in federal employment. Between 1970 and 1980, as the total of federal civilian employees rose by 13 percent, to 3,762,000, the number of blacks among them increased by 24 percent, to 693,000. Public sector employment now accounts for 53 percent of the jobs held by black managers and professionals.

tiff, had been denied admission to the University of California at Davis medical school in 1973, even though he was far more academically qualified than the minority candidates accepted under the school's quota program. The Court agreed that Bakke had been wronged and ordered him admitted to the medical school. But it refused to bar universities from considering race in admissions decisions.

A year later, the Court handed down its decision in *United Steelworkers of America v. Weber*. Brian Weber, the "blue-collar Bakke," had sued when his employer, Kaiser Aluminum & Chemical Corp., turned him down for an in-house training program in which half the places were reserved for minorities. The court ruled that the Civil Rights Act does not prohibit private employers from *voluntarily* giving job preference to minorities.

A Matter of Health

Subsequently, in *Fullilove v. Klutznick* (1980), the Supreme Court upheld the validity of a "set-aside" program, established by Congress in 1977, under which a fixed percentage of some federal public works funds was earmarked for minority-owned businesses. In a plurality opinion, the Court understood the program as being of benefit to minority businesses actually disadvantaged by previous discrimination in the award of public construction contracts.

More recently, in cases involving police and firemen in Boston (1983) and police in Detroit (1984), the Court has declined to render any decision at all. In Boston, the demands of affirmative action quota plans had collided with the seniority principle of "last hired, first fired"; veteran white employees were laid off in budget-cutting moves, while blacks and other minorities were retained, even though they had far less seniority. A similar case from Memphis, *Firefighters v. Stotts*, is still before the court.

Overall, despite the Court's air of uncertainty, the race-conscious policies set into place by the early 1970s have become more entrenched. They have also provoked increasing debate.

The controversy over busing has involved issues of educational quality, racial understanding, and "white flight" (and, now, even some "black flight") to suburbs and private schools. In the matter of voting rights, the argument has focused on whether the purpose of the Voting Rights Act was simply to ensure and increase minorities' access to the polls, thereby yielding an integrated vote; or, in fact, to create conditions, via redistricting, in which minorities can elect public officials in

rough proportion to their numbers in the general population. The dispute over affirmative action, in the form of "goals" or "quotas," has centered on issues of academic standards and job qualifications; on the socio-economic advancement of minorities; and on "reverse discrimination" against nonminorities.

The fact that the courts, not to mention labor unions, employers, academics, and politicians, feel uncomfortable grappling with the question of whether and how distinctions should be made on the basis of race suggests the degree to which the civil-rights movement's first principle—that of nondiscrimination—remains compelling. That principle routed the diehard segregationists in the South and gave the civil-rights movement its remarkable moral force nationwide.

The polls hint at Americans' underlying beliefs. Even in 1963, a National Opinion Research Center survey reported that 80 percent of whites believed that "Negroes should have as good a chance as whites to get any kind of job." But in 1977, when the widely publicized Bakke case was argued before the Supreme Court, a Gallup poll on the question of whether any groups in America should have "preferential treatment" in finding jobs or places in college found support for the idea among only 11 percent of all those in the sample—and, interestingly, among only 30 percent of black respondents. Polls since then have yielded similar results.

The three decades since *Brown* have, unfortunately, been filled with instances in which the principle of nondiscrimination was variously denied, honored in the breach, or rationalized away. Despite all that, Americans have made considerable progress in treating one another as individuals *without* regard to race, and in expanding the range of opportunities available to everyone.

But it is worth pondering whether the civic climate would be healthier today had the nation acted firmly and rapidly in accordance with the principle of nondiscrimination in 1954, and then stuck to the principle after its clear articulation in the Civil Rights Act of 1964.



MOVING UP

by Gary Puckrein

The past two decades have been good to a significant minority of the nation's blacks, the group referred to by the National Urban League as the "viable, albeit fragile, black middle class."

Thanks to the civil-rights legislation of the Lyndon Johnson era, the Great Society programs that opened up thousands of new government jobs to young blacks, the unprecedented economic boom of the 1960s, the uneven pressures of affirmative action, and, in general, a lessening of overt racial hostility, millions of black Americans today enjoy a level of education, political participation, and material well-being that is approaching that of the majority of whites. While the impact of four recessions since 1970 has slowed the pace of blacks' social and economic progress, sometimes dramatically, their gains are real.

Here is a progress report:

■ *Income.* At first glance, the Big Picture, so often publicized, is sobering—black median family income in 1982 (\$13,598) continued to lag far behind that of whites (\$24,603). But the median in this case is not the message, or at least not the whole of it. When statistics for the nation's total black population of 28 million are presented in the aggregate, the growing plight of the urban underclass tends to overpower some important distinctions.

In brief, black married couples are the "haves"; the "have-nots" are black single mothers and their offspring. Subtract the 2.9 million female-headed black households (now 42 percent of all black households) from the picture and the circumstances of blacks and whites in America appear far less divergent.

Thus, in 1982, the median annual income of all black *married-couple* families was \$20,586, compared to \$26,443 for white married-couple families. In households where both spouses were employed, the gap was even narrower—about \$5,000. And, in households where the husband and wife, both working, were between ages 24 and 35, the difference was less than \$3,000. With these young couples leading the way, the proportion of all black families earning \$25,000 or more (in 1982 dollars) grew from 10.4 to 24.5 percent between 1960 and 1982. In all, some seven million blacks today live in households whose yearly earnings *exceed* the white median family income.

■ *Education.* By some indices, progress here has been even more dramatic. Today, the median level of schooling completed by blacks *and* whites, male *and* female, is above the 12th grade, and blacks lag behind whites by less than one-half year of classroom instruction.

Again, aggregate numbers mask part of the story. The fact that one-quarter of black youths do not complete high school hides, statistically, the progress of those who have pursued their studies further and thereby raised the educational level of the whole group. Between 1970 and 1980, the number of blacks annually enrolled full-time at American colleges and universities nearly doubled (from 522,000 to over one million).

■ *Employment.* Thanks in great measure to educational advancement, as well as to the changing nature of the U.S. economy, the kinds of jobs typically held by blacks have changed dramatically. In 1940, the largest single bloc of black workers—30 percent of the total—was employed on farms, mostly in the South. That figure today is two percent.

The long-term shift away from the farm has been matched by a long-term shift toward the retail store and the office building. Few blacks held white-collar jobs when World War II began, but 40 percent did in 1980 (versus 52 percent of whites), with black women making greater gains than black men.

Many of these jobs, of course, are clerical and many are in the public sector. But blacks have also made gains in the professions. Since 1960, the number of black doctors has tripled and the number of black lawyers has increased sixfold (though blacks remain under-represented in both professions).

Meanwhile, the number of black-owned businesses continues to rise, growing from 163,000 companies in 1969 to more than 230,000 in 1977 (the last year for which data are available). In 1983, according to *Black Enterprise*, the top 100 black-owned businesses, led by Motown Industries of Los Angeles, had combined sales surpassing \$2 billion. While a plurality of these companies either were car dealerships or specialized in products aimed at blacks, half of the companies in the top 20 were involved in computers, communications, energy, or construction.

■ *Residence.* The big shift of the 1950s and '60s was the influx of blacks into the nation's cities. The untold story of the 1970s and '80s is the outflow of blacks to the suburbs. Between 1970 and 1980, the number of blacks living in suburban neighborhoods increased from 4.2 million to six million. To be sure, not all of these new residents are prosperous; some are slum-dwellers who have moved (or been forced) into fringe areas soon to be abandoned by whites—and thus resegregated. But fully

one-third of all black families earning \$25,000 or more now live in predominantly white suburban communities.

One could go on and on with statistics, but the data merely confirm the evidence of the senses. No analyst denies that many American blacks, almost half, live below, at, or near the poverty level as officially defined. But it is also true that millions of others no longer do. The ranks of what E. Franklin Frazier in 1957 disparagingly termed the "Black Bourgeoisie" have grown. And in the process, the character of that bourgeoisie has been profoundly altered, in many respects for the better.

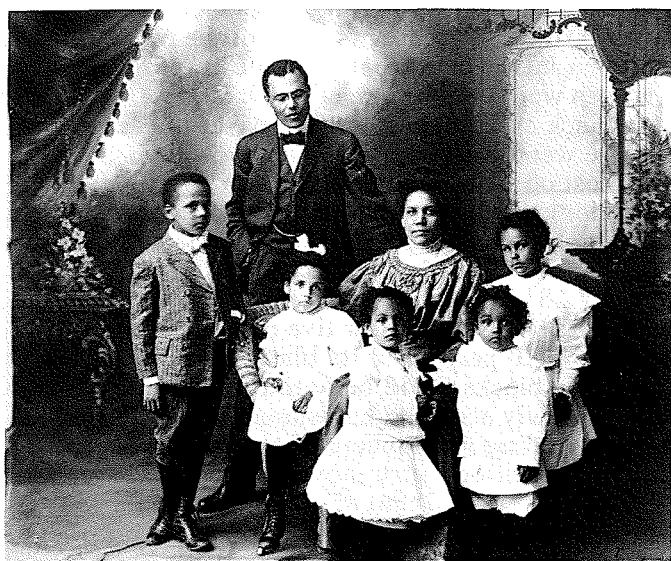
Blue-Chip Blacks

Alongside *Ebony* (circulation: 1.5 million) and other publications founded by earlier generations, there have emerged sophisticated new magazines such as *Essence* (circ.: 800,000), *Black Enterprise* (circ.: 250,000), and *Dollars and Sense* (circ.: 110,000) aimed at a very different sort of black audience. Across the country, the black middle-class groups and associations founded prior to World War II (e.g., the NAACP, the National Negro Business League, Alpha Kappa Alpha) have been joined or superseded by a proliferation of new groups that more accurately reflect the concerns and strategies of the 1980s: the National Association of Black Manufacturers, the Council of Concerned Black Executives, the National Black Caucus of State Legislators, and scores of others.

So many young blacks are now enrolled in mainstream colleges and universities—from Yale to the University of Alabama—that the 114 traditionally black colleges, mostly founded after the Civil War, now face a brain drain and an uncertain future. In 1980, according to a poll by *Black Enterprise*, 82 percent of the magazine's subscribers agreed that black colleges are "serving a purpose that cannot be met by other colleges." Only half of these people hoped that *their* children would attend one of these schools.

The gains of the past several decades, sometimes startling in retrospect and still often dimly perceived by most Americans,

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Emmett J. Scott and family in Tuskegee, Alabama, 1906. Scott, secretary to Booker T. Washington, typified the Negro elite of his era. His business interests included banking, insurance, and real estate, all for a Negro clientele.

should not be taken for granted. Nor should they obscure the fact that there were well-to-do blacks in the United States long before the 1950s and '60s. Indeed, there has always been a Negro elite of some kind. As America changed, so did this group's size and social role, along with the sources of its affluence, but most black leaders, and the ideas they espoused over the decades, originated within this class. Those ideas on how to better the lot of all blacks in America have changed with each generation.

We are in the midst of such a complicated change today, and young black leaders in politics, business, the media, and the professions—the “blue-chip blacks,” to use journalist Roger Wilkins's phrase—are grappling with its implications.

The first elite blacks appeared in the American South during the mid-17th century. Primarily West Indian-born or -bred, fluent in English and often baptized as Christians, they were brought to British North America as slaves or indentured servants. Most remained in servitude. But the severe labor shortage that afflicted Virginia and some other Southern colonies during these early years allowed some blacks to set the terms of their labor, establish families, obtain their freedom, buy farms, own

slaves themselves, even hold minor public office.

However, the 18th-century spread of the plantation system, and of the racial theories that justified it, ensured that these black yeomen would not become the self-sufficient precursors of a modern black middle class. On the eve of the American Revolution, there were an estimated 740,000 Negroes in the British colonies, most of them in bondage, and it was by then virtually impossible for a slave in the South to work his way to freedom.

The Revolution changed all that, briefly. Amid the chaos and confusion of the war years, thousands of slaves slipped their shackles. By 1810, some 100,000 free Negroes inhabited the Southern states, accounting for five percent of the South's free population and 10 percent of its black population. The largest clusters of free blacks could be found in Virginia, North Carolina, and the newly acquired Louisiana Territory, where the relatively freewheeling atmosphere of New Orleans attracted not only American Negroes but many from the Caribbean as well. The 1860 census revealed that 85 percent of the free black males in New Orleans were artisans, professionals, or proprietors.

Free blacks elsewhere in the South were not always so fortunate. Most endured dismal poverty and working conditions scarcely distinguishable from those of slaves. But some freedmen did manage to take advantage of the peculiar nature of the Southern economy, which depended on black craftsmen, and which required, among other things, a class of free black merchants, healers, lawyers, preachers, and teachers to meet the needs both of other free blacks and of slaves.

Intimacy in the North

Not all, nor even most, free Negroes stood aloof from white society and the white economy. In New Orleans, where most of the black population was of mixed blood, prosperous free Negroes identified with whites and distanced themselves from the mass of "uncultured" blacks. On a lesser scale, the same phenomenon could be found elsewhere. But, then as now, other blacks took a bolder stand. They nurtured a strong sense of race consciousness and eventually assumed a leadership position within the free black community. Men such as abolitionist Daniel Coker in Maryland or the members of South Carolina's Brown Fellowship Society were representative of this group.

In the North, of course, the circumstances were different from the outset. Not only were there always vastly fewer slaves than in the South, but a disproportionate number of them lived in cities and worked in close proximity with whites (as, for ex-

ample, domestic servants, stable keepers, or gardeners). Their relations with their masters were somewhat better as a result. A Southern visitor to Connecticut before the Revolution complained that slaveowners there were "too Indulgent (especially the farmers) to their slaves, suffering too great a familiarity from them, permitting them to sit at Table and eat with them (as they say to save time) and into the dish goes the black hoof as freely as the white hand."

Blacks used the intimacy gained at their masters' tables to press for additional privileges—the right to visit friends, live with their families, hire themselves out on their own time. Many learned to read and write. These black bondsmen were the ancestors of the free black middle class that appeared in the North during the 19th century, and to this group many middle-class blacks today can trace their roots.

Black Wealth in Philadelphia

The upheaval of the War of Independence not only exposed blacks to republican principles but also helped usher in an improved regime throughout the Northern states. "Prior to the great revolution," John Jay of New York observed in 1788, "the great majority . . . of our people had been so long accustomed to the practice and convenience of having slaves that very few among them even doubted the propriety and rectitude of it." The war (in which many blacks fought), and the principles of liberty and equality for which it was waged, changed many minds, though not by any means most. Yet, as Jay noted, the doctrine of the abolitionists "prevailed by almost insensible degrees, and was like the little lump of leaven which was put into three measures of meal." Massachusetts abolished slavery in 1783 and other Northern states soon followed.

To be sure, it was not long before harsh new restrictions on voting, holding property, education, employment, and travel were set into place. Race riots were frequent, and blacks in most Northern cities endured both poverty and scorn. But some free Negroes, often trading on skills learned in bondage, succeeded in achieving a degree of economic independence and even acquired modest fortunes. James Forten, as a child an errand boy around the docks of Philadelphia, became a sailmaker and left an estate valued at \$100,000 upon his death in 1842. Forten was one of many black leaders who in 1830 attended a Negro convention in Delaware to consider "ways and means for the bettering of our condition."

Philadelphia boasted the wealthiest free black population

SUCCESS STORY: BLACKS IN UNIFORM

Despite much pain and strain, ever since President Harry S Truman issued Executive Order 9981 desegregating the armed services in 1948, black Americans have advanced faster in the military environment of teamwork, earned rank, and command authority than anywhere else in U.S. society.

"The message was given," observed Jimmy Carter's Army Secretary, Clifford L. Alexander, Jr., who is black. "The message was carried out."

Today, a decade after the end of the draft, 390,000 blacks account for 20 percent of all four services' enlisted men and women, up from 10 percent in 1971, and from 9.7 percent in 1964, before U.S. deployments in Vietnam. Indeed, in 1981, roughly 42 percent of all "militarily qualified" black males, from age 19 to 24, had actually enlisted in the armed forces (versus 14 percent of comparable whites), according to Brookings analyst Martin Binkin's 1982 study of *Blacks in the Military*.

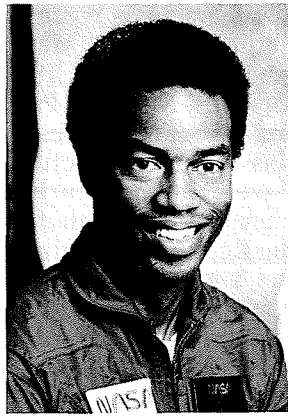
The Army is the favored service, with blacks making up 32 percent of its enlisted personnel, 25 percent of its senior sergeants, and nine percent of its officers in 1983. Last year, 22 percent of all Army volunteers were black, down from a record 37 percent in 1978. As a group, young black male enlistees still suffer from disproportionately high rates of semi-literacy, violent crime, disciplinary offenses, and brief, unauthorized absences (AWOL), but black first-term volunteers do not drop out any faster than do whites. In fact, they do slightly better. And they re-enlist at 150 percent of the white rate.

Surveys show that young blacks choose the service for the same reasons young whites do—"to better myself in life," "to get training for a civilian job," "to serve my country," etc. Few civilian jobs for 18- and 19-year-olds can match the supervision, training, or pay (\$573 a month, plus room and board) offered to new enlistees by the Pentagon.

The Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines have come a long way since the race-and-drugs turmoil of the Vietnam era. Racial clashes occurred among Marines at Camp Lejeune, N.C. (1969) and among airmen at Travis Air Force Base in California (1971). In one month,



October 1972, militants staged "black power" near-mutinies aboard two Navy carriers, the *Kitty Hawk* and the *Constellation*. Shaken, the Pentagon ordered investigations into blacks' grievances over military justice and promotion policy, quietly discharged the unfit, and assigned "equal opportunity" advisers to every base. Off-duty social self-segregation did not vanish, but discipline was restored; blacks encountered less "institutional" discrimination. Civil-rights leaders still see "cultural bias" in job placement tests that concentrate young blacks in nontechnical units (e.g., supply and food service, infantry, and artillery).



Lt. Col. Guion Bluford

Helpful to integration has been the rapid growth and slowly recognized competence of the black officer corps, now 16,400 strong, with the Army in the lead and the Navy far behind. (Today, 5.8 percent of all military officers are black—in line with the proportion of all U.S. college graduates in the relevant age group who are black.) In 1975, the Air Force produced the nation's first black four-star general, the late Daniel (Chappie) James, a much-decorated veteran of air combat in Korea and Vietnam who rose to head the North American Air Defense Command. In 1983, another Air Force Vietnam veteran, Lt. Col. Guion Bluford, became the first black astronaut in space.

During the 1970s, more black youths entered the service academies. Some quickly emerged as class leaders, but inferior public school educations still hurt others. At Annapolis, for example, roughly 38 percent of the 80 black men and women who entered as plebes with the class of '83 failed to graduate (versus 23 percent of whites). High attrition rates have plagued graduates of traditionally black colleges in Army basic officer courses. And improved civilian opportunities have diverted many bright black university graduates who otherwise might have been prime officer candidates.

Even so, black officers have made major advances. They have made them on merit. Since 1970, black commanders have led the Army's VII Corps in West Germany and seven of its 16 combat divisions, including the elite 82nd Airborne. Such assignments have helped two Army blacks achieve four-star rank. All in all, the Army now has 26 general officers who are black—gaining high-level management and leadership responsibilities that *Fortune 500* corporations or federal agencies have yet to offer.

in the North. The city's black gentry—led before the Civil War by such men as Forten and Bishop Richard Allen (founder of the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church)—organized schools, churches, literary circles, newspapers, and benevolent societies. Not only Philadelphia but other cities along the eastern seaboard witnessed the emergence of a group of middle-class black intellectuals and social activists who railed against slavery in the South and racial discrimination in the North. They saw one of their wishes granted when the Grand Army of the Republic prevailed in the War between the States.

The effect of the Civil War, Emancipation, and Reconstruction on middle-class blacks was, of course, profound. In the South particularly, where four million former slaves now became free men, the old patterns of race relations enjoyed by affluent free Negroes began to crumble. While the great majority of former slaves remained in the countryside—and remained poor—a “great mass of unbleached Americans” (as one Raleigh newspaper called them) sought work in the cities as petty tradesmen, artisans, and laborers. As a result, the number of black-owned businesses in the United States, almost all of them in the South, increased impressively, from about 2,000 in 1863 to 40,000 in 1913. When Southern whites boycotted black businesses, Negro leaders urged blacks to retaliate by “buying black.”

Welcome to Tuskegee

An urban middle class comprised of former slaves gradually displaced the older bourgeoisie, with various degrees of acrimony. In New Orleans, to cite the most extreme case, the old elite was virtually destroyed as a distinctive class. In Richmond, the ante-bellum mulatto upper crust of proprietors and entrepreneurs decided to close ranks with the upwardly mobile (and darker) newcomers; Jim Crowism and segregation combined in that city to nurture the development of a small but significant class of black businessmen and professionals that provided products and services to the black community (such as banking, undertaking, or cutting hair) when whites would not.

In Atlanta, the postwar economy likewise transplanted the economic base of the black middle class from the white to the Negro community. Prominent among the new businesses were the “cooperative” insurance and real estate concerns, many of them organized by new arrivals to the city who had no ties to Atlanta's venerable Negro elite, whose social supremacy they eventually assumed.

The middle-class Negroes in the South, despite political dis-

enfranchisement and social apartheid, were increasingly able to give their children the advantages of higher education at Tuskegee or Tougaloo or Fisk or one of the other new black institutions founded with the help of Northern philanthropists and missionaries. Prior to 1876, only 314 blacks in the United States had college degrees. By 1900, some 2,000 blacks held diplomas, and more than 28,000 black instructors were teaching 1.5 million black children in school. Up through the 1960s, the leaders of the black community in the South (and to some extent even the North), its intellectuals, ministers, and political activists, would be drawn overwhelmingly from the Negro middle class created after the Civil War. Booker T. Washington and Martin Luther King, Jr., are two prominent examples.

Good-bye to Dixie

Emancipation had little immediate impact in the North. What happened in Chicago is a good example of what happened to most Northern cities between the Civil War and World War II. Along the banks of the Chicago River, in the center of town, a small free black community had been growing since about 1840. When the guns fired on Fort Sumter, 1,000 blacks were living in Chicago. Social life centered on several small Baptist and Methodist churches, which also functioned as stations on the Underground Railroad. Abolitionists pointed with pride to this prosperous (but politically and socially subordinate) community of free blacks, at times hinting that certain portions of the white community, as one antislavery newspaper put it, might do well to emulate these "well-informed, and peaceable citizens [who] seldom see any of their brethren grace the police calendar." There was no great influx of Southern blacks to Chicago (or other Northern industrial cities) after the Civil War, nor for half a century. The federal census of 1910 showed nine out of 10 blacks living in the Southern states, with three out of four inhabiting rural areas.

World War I proved to be the turning point. Hundreds of thousands of young white men, many of them sons of immigrants or immigrants themselves, enlisted to fight the Kaiser in France. Northern industrialists who had depended on immigrants to man the slaughterhouses and steel mills now experienced a shortage of labor. From Chicago (and Cleveland, Detroit, Toledo, and many other places) recruiting agents traveled south, railway tickets in their pockets and promises on their lips, urging rural blacks to come north to earn big money. It was a propitious time: The recruiters arrived to find the Cot-

Despite special help from both Washington and City Hall, 60 percent of new black businesses fail within five years. Black entrepreneurs blame the recession and lack of adequate financing by private banks. "Suburbanization" of blacks has also dispersed a once concentrated market.

"Small businessmen are big in Metro Atlanta."
 Thomas O. Corby, President, AMC Mechanical Contractors, Inc.

When you start a small business in Metro Atlanta, you have to do a lot of things right from the start. You need a good location, a good product, a good service, a good price and a good reputation. You also need a good financing plan and a good marketing strategy. If you don't have these things, your business is likely to fail. That's why it's so important to get the help you need from the start. The Small Business Administration (SBA) can help you with all of these things. They can provide you with information, training and financial assistance. They can also help you find a good location, a good product, a good service, a good price and a good reputation. If you need help, call the SBA at 1-800-368-5848. They'll be glad to help you.

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ton Kingdom ravaged by famine, flood, and the depredations of the boll weevil. The great mass of caste-bound Negroes in the South was ready to stir. Between 1910 and 1920, the black population in Chicago alone increased by 50,000. Over the next five decades, wave after wave of migration would shift almost half of America's black population from the rural South to Northern cities. Today, 47 percent of U.S. blacks live outside the old Confederacy, and 81 percent of all blacks reside in metropolitan areas.

Up north, the black Old Settlers were of course appalled by the violent reactions of their white neighbors to the new arrivals. But they were far from enthusiastic themselves about the influx of Southern Negroes. In Chicago, established black homeowners were embarrassed by what they deemed the shiftlessness, vulgarity, and violence of their new neighbors, whom they blamed for reversing the trend toward an easing of race relations in the North. Genteel blacks of the "old Knickerbocker stamp" in New York, and their counterparts in Philadelphia and Boston, felt the same way.

Nevertheless, large numbers of the migrants "made it" in the North, at least when compared to the lives they had led as sharecroppers and tenant farmers. By 1930, as the Depression got under way, one out of five working blacks nationwide (and therefore a far higher proportion in the urban North) was em-

ployed in "manufacturing or mechanical" occupations, up from six percent in 1890. The expansion of the Negro urban population in the North offered countless opportunities in business and—a novelty to Southern blacks—in politics.

But blacks, particularly middle-class blacks whose daily concern was no longer simple economic survival, also began to feel more acutely the discrepancy between the promise of freedom and the realities of their own experience. The Northern cities became crucibles of group consciousness. There, the timorous, docile Negro of the white imagination acquired a more defiant and impatient personality. This transformation was reflected not only in the works produced during the 1920s by the writers and artists of the Harlem Renaissance but also in growing agitation for equality under the law, agitation that achieved many of its goals during the 1950s and '60s.

The new black middle class of the 1980s lives, as a result, in a very different world and is composed of a different kind of individual than the middle class of any previous generation. Not only is the contemporary black middle class growing in size, but most of the newcomers are young black men and women who are from poor or working-class families. The nature of their relationship to the larger U.S. economy has in many cases been transformed, to a degree that would have surprised earlier entrepreneurs, such as Madame C. J. Walker (inventor of a hair-straightening process known as the Walker System), whose fortunes were derived entirely from the parallel black economy. As Harvard's Martin Kilson pointed out recently in *Dissent*, "upper strata blacks are employed increasingly not in ghetto [enterprises] but in national job markets—in national (white) banks, insurance companies, retail firms, industries, universities, and government agencies."

Leaving the Men Behind

The problems that they face as American blacks have also changed. They have the law behind them now. The battle against legal discrimination was won by their elders. Many young, educated, and affluent blacks question the relevance of many of the institutional mainstays that supported an older generation. At the same time, the leaders of the black middle class are beginning to confront issues that have little to do with continued overt discrimination: for instance, the growing number of black female-headed households, teenage pregnancy, high black youth crime rates, illiteracy, drug abuse, and the relatively woeful state of blacks' health, especially that of black males.

Young, educated blacks are also concerned about several matters closer to their own daily experience—their high divorce rate (which is substantially higher than that of white counterparts); their continued low representation in the ranks of American entrepreneurs (black-owned companies, though increasing in number, still account for only two percent of all companies nationwide); their preference for jobs in the public sector (one out of five working blacks is on *some* government payroll).

Why have black women done so much better in the civilian job market than black men, especially when higher-status jobs are at stake? Between 1970 and 1980, the number of black women employed in the private sector as officials and managers, as professionals, as technicians, and as craft workers not only grew at a faster *rate* than that of black men but also exceeded in aggregate that of black men. Do broad affirmative action regulations on sex and race encourage a “two-for” syndrome? Do white employers feel less threatened by black women? Whatever the case, the phenomenon is striking, and its implications (for black men, for black families) are disturbing.

Gaining Confidence

Moreover, to a degree seldom appreciated by whites, the emotional strain on many successful young blacks can be intense. As Harvard’s Charles V. Willie has noted, psychologically, “the people who most severely experience the pain of dislocation due to the changing times are the racial minorities who are talented and educated and integrated, not those who are impoverished and isolated.” How does one properly adapt—and to what degree must one adapt—to the prevailing ethos of the white university, the white corporation, the white suburb?

And to what extent is one still responsible for the impoverished, underclass blacks who have remained behind? Journalist Orde Coombs, writing in *Black Enterprise* in 1978, probably spoke for many of his contemporaries when he wondered “what could we really *say* to them, now, except a murmured ‘How you doing, bro,’ as we hurried along to catch the train that would take us to another appointment, another conference, another step up our frenzied stair of upward mobility. Our eyes would pity them. Our palms would open to them and quickly shut again. And while we hated to talk about it, we knew that we had moved beyond them forever.” Yet, as Kenneth Clark, John Hope Franklin, and other black scholars have emphasized, a certain vertical solidarity remains essential—for political, economic, and social reasons, and for the sake of *all* classes of blacks.

None of the issues just cited can be addressed by federal regulation or resolved by the tactics employed during the civil-rights era. With what new strategies will the young black elite respond?

Many of them, of course, will simply take life as it comes, like a large proportion of their white fellow citizens, gleaning their satisfactions from material comfort, family progress, and social occasions, from the new car, the swimming pool, the second house.

Others are already building new kinds of networks—in business, in academe, in politics—based on somewhat different premises than those that stirred the generations of the 1940s and '50s. These networks range from organizations such as the National Action Council for Minorities in Engineering, which has been highly successful in attracting blacks into the engineering profession, to the small group of black students at the University of Michigan who volunteer to help the institution recruit more minority students. They include new self-help organizations such as Adopt a Family and the Black Student Fund. What all of these fledgling efforts have in common, to greater and lesser degrees, is the propagation of middle-class virtues, by example if not precept.

The struggle to acquire personal dignity and access to the polls and to the marketplace long preoccupied the traditional black elite in America. When circumstances permitted, some of these men and women doggedly tried to build institutions and promote community values that would help to uplift all blacks. More often, especially prior to 1954, the struggle for equal rights—or simple survival—sapped their energies and disheartened their peers. Mindful of past experience, the Afro-American elite today is extremely sensitive to any acts that might threaten its recent gains. But a feeling is also abroad that the civil-rights movement, as an all-embracing effort to change the nation's legal codes, is moving toward a successful conclusion. In time, the new black middle class should slowly gain confidence and a sense of security and hence be better able to assist the mass of less fortunate black Americans than was any of its predecessors.



THE BLACK UNDERCLASS

by William Julius Wilson

It is no secret that the social problems of urban life in the United States are, in great measure, associated with race.

While rising rates of crime, drug addiction, out-of-wedlock births, female-headed families, and welfare dependency have afflicted American society generally in recent years, the increases have been most dramatic among what has become a large and seemingly permanent black underclass inhabiting the cores of the nation's major cities.

And yet, liberal journalists, social scientists, policy-makers, and civil-rights leaders have for almost two decades been reluctant to face this fact. Often, analysts of such issues as violent crime or teenage pregnancy deliberately make no reference to race at all, unless perhaps to emphasize the deleterious consequences of racial discrimination or the institutionalized inequality of American society.

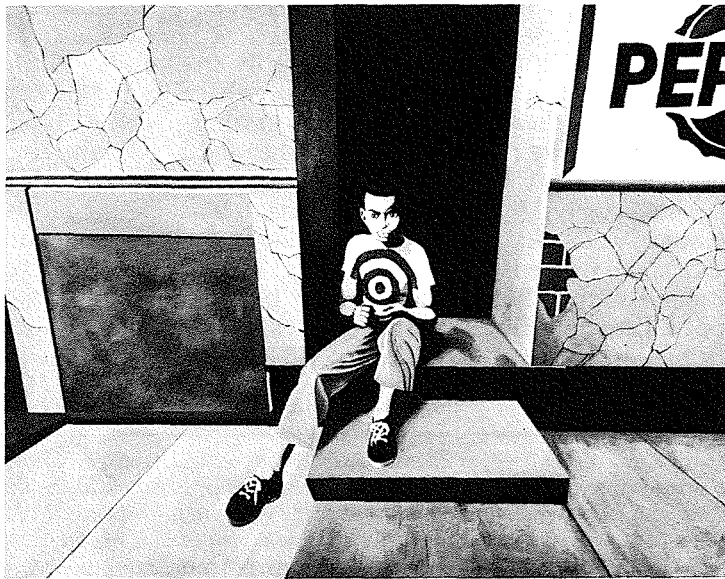
Some scholars, in an effort to avoid the appearance of "blaming the victim," or to protect their work from charges of racism, simply ignore patterns of behavior that might be construed as stigmatizing to particular racial minorities.

Such neglect is a relatively recent phenomenon. Twenty years ago, during the mid-1960s, social scientists such as Kenneth B. Clark (*Dark Ghetto*, 1965), Daniel Patrick Moynihan (*The Negro Family*, 1965), and Lee Rainwater (*Behind Ghetto Walls*, 1970) forthrightly examined the cumulative effects on inner-city blacks of racial isolation and class subordination. They vividly described aspects of ghetto life that, as Rainwater observed, "are usually forgotten or ignored in polite discussions." All of these studies attempted to show the connection between the economic and social environment into which many blacks are born and the creation of patterns of behavior that, in Clark's words, frequently amounted to a "self-perpetuating pathology."

Why have scholars lately shied away from this line of research? One reason has to do with the vitriolic attacks by many black leaders against Moynihan upon publication of his report in 1965—denunciations that generally focused on the author's unflattering depiction of the black family in the urban ghetto rather than on his proposed remedies or his historical analysis of the black family's special plight. The harsh reception accorded to *The Negro Family* undoubtedly dissuaded many social scientists from following in Moynihan's footsteps.

The “black solidarity” movement was also emerging during the mid-1960s. A new emphasis by young black scholars and intellectuals on the positive aspects of the black experience tended to crowd out older concerns. Indeed, certain forms of ghetto behavior labeled pathological in the studies of Clark et al. were redefined by some during the early 1970s as “functional” because, it was argued, blacks were displaying the ability to survive and in some cases flourish in an economically depressed environment. Scholars such as Andrew Billingsley (*Black Families in White America*, 1968), Joyce Ladner (*Tomorrow's Tomorrow*, 1971), and Robert Hill (*The Strengths of Black Families*, 1971) described the ghetto family as resilient and capable of adapting creatively to an oppressive, racist society.

In the end, the promising efforts of the early 1960s—to distinguish the socioeconomic characteristics of different groups within the black community, and to identify the structural problems of the U.S. economy that affected minorities—were cut short by calls for “reparations” or for “black control of institutions serving the black community.” In his 1977 book, *Ethnic Chauvinism*, sociologist Orlando Patterson lamented that black ethnicity had become “a form of mystification, diverting attention from the correct kinds of solutions to the ter-



Manchild in the Promised Land (1969), by Phillip Lindsay Mason.

rible economic condition of the group."

Meanwhile, throughout the 1970s, ghetto life across the nation continued to deteriorate. The situation is best seen against the backdrop of the family.

In 1965, when Moynihan pointed with alarm to the relative instability of the black family, one-quarter of all such families were headed by women; 15 years later, the figure was a staggering 42 percent. (By contrast, only 12 percent of white families and 22 percent of Hispanic families in 1980 were maintained by women.) Not surprisingly, the proportion of black children living with both their father and their mother declined from nearly two-thirds in 1970 to fewer than half in 1978.

In the inner city, the trend is more pronounced. For example, of the 27,178 families with children living in Chicago Housing Authority projects in 1980, only 2,982, or 11 percent, were husband-and-wife families.

Teenage Mothers

These figures are important because even if a woman is employed full-time, she almost always is paid less than a man. If she is not employed, or employed only part-time, and has children to support, the household's situation may be desperate. In 1980, the median income of families headed by black women (\$7,425) was only 40 percent of that of black families with both parents present (\$18,593). Today, roughly five out of 10 black children under the age of 18 live below the poverty level; the vast majority of these kids have only a mother to come home to.

The rise in the number of female-headed black families reflects, among other things, the increasing incidence of illegitimate births. Only 15 percent of all births to black women in 1959 were out of wedlock; the proportion today is well over one-half. In the cities, the figure is invariably higher: 67 percent in Chicago in 1978, for example. Black women today bear children out of wedlock at a rate nine times that for whites. In 1982, the number of black babies born out of wedlock (328,879) nearly matched the number of illegitimate white babies (337,050). White or black, the

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WHAT WENT WRONG?

W. E. B. Du Bois (*The Negro American Family*, 1908) and E. Franklin Frazier (*The Negro Family in the United States*, 1939) were among the first scholars to ask this question about poor black families. Both came up with essentially the same answer—slavery.

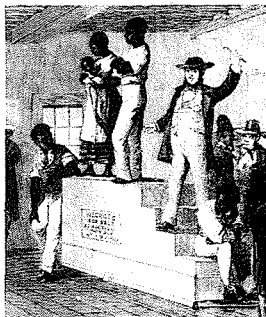
Slavery, they noted, often separated man from wife, parent from child. Slave “marriage” had no basis in law. Negroes thus entered Emancipation with a legacy of “sexual irregularity” (Du Bois) that fostered “delinquency, desertions, and broken homes” (Frazier). Discrimination and migration perpetuated such patterns.

The “slavery hypothesis” was challenged during the 1970s by the works of Eugene Genovese (*Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 1974) and Herbert Gutman (*The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom*, 1976). Genovese shows, for example, that blacks *did* establish strong families in slavery. And Gutman notes that as late as 1925, roughly 85 percent of black families in New York City were headed by a married couple.

If slavery did not undermine the black family, what did? Scholars as diverse as Jessie Bernard (*Marriage and Family among Negroes*, 1966), Elliot Liebow (*Tally's Corner*, 1967), William Julius Wilson (*The Declining Significance of Race*, 1978), and Stephen Steinberg (*The Ethnic Myth*, 1981) point the finger at economic hardship and urban unemployment. The rise of a “matriarchal family pattern” in the ghetto, Steinberg writes, was “an inevitable by-product of the inability of men to function as breadwinners for their families.” Joblessness, in turn, eroded the black male’s sense of manhood and family responsibility.

The disruptive impact of welfare on some black families is generally conceded but not easily quantified. Kristin A. Moore and Martha R. Burt (*Teenage Childbearing and Welfare*, 1981) suggest that Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) may influence a pregnant woman to bear and rear her child (and head up a new household) rather than marry the father, resort to adoption, or submit to abortion. Because AFDC is available only to single-parent families in half of the 50 states, the program may also encourage the break-up of married couples and deter unwed parents from marrying or remarrying.

Whatever its causes, the black family’s worsening plight has belatedly been acknowledged by black leaders. So has the need for remedies. A 1983 report by Washington’s Joint Center for Political Studies, *A Policy Framework for Racial Justice*, asserted flatly that “family reinforcement constitutes the single most important action the nation can take toward the elimination of black poverty and related social problems.”



women bearing these children are not always mature adults. Almost half of all illegitimate children born to blacks today will have a teenager for a mother.

The effect on the welfare rolls is not hard to imagine. A 1976 study by Kristin Moore and Steven B. Cardwell of Washington's Urban Institute estimated that, nationwide, about 60 percent of the children who are born outside of marriage and are not adopted receive welfare; furthermore, "more than half of all AFDC [Aid to Families with Dependent Children] assistance in 1975 was paid to women who were or had been teenage mothers." A 1979 study by the Department of City Planning in New York found that 75 percent of all children born out of wedlock in that city during the previous 18 years were recipients of AFDC.

Why No Progress?

I have concentrated on young, female-headed families and out-of-wedlock births among blacks because these indices have become inextricably connected with poverty and welfare dependency, as well as with other forms of social dislocation (including joblessness and crime).

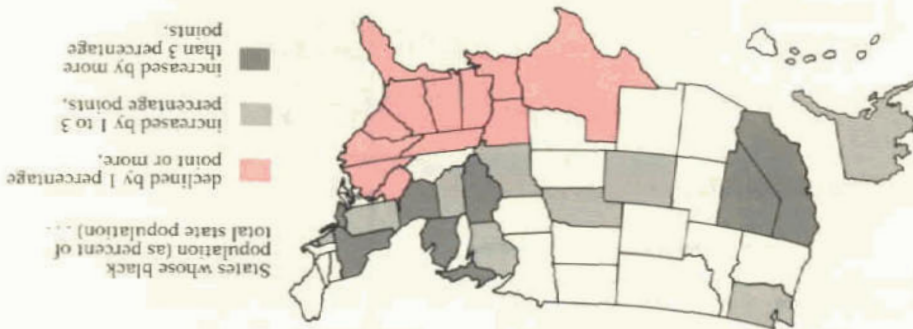
As James Q. Wilson observed in *Thinking About Crime* (1975), these problems are also associated with a "critical mass" of young people, often poorly supervised. When that mass is reached, or is increased suddenly and substantially, "a self-sustaining chain reaction is set off that creates an explosive increase in the amount of crime, addiction, and welfare dependency." The effect is magnified in densely populated ghetto neighborhoods, and further magnified in the massive public housing projects.

Consider Robert Taylor Homes, the largest such project in Chicago. In 1980, almost 20,000 people, all black, were officially registered there, but according to one report "there are an additional 5,000 to 7,000 who are not registered with the Housing Authority." Minors made up 72 percent of the population and the mother alone was present in 90 percent of the families with children. The unemployment rate was estimated at 47 percent in 1980, and some 70 percent of the project's 4,200 official households received AFDC. Although less than one-half of one percent of Chicago's population lived in Robert Taylor Homes, 11 percent of all the city's murders, nine percent of its rapes, and 10 percent of its aggravated assaults were committed in the project in 1980.

Why have the social conditions of the black underclass deteriorated so rapidly?

Racial discrimination is the most frequently invoked explana-

THE SECOND GREAT MIGRATION, 1940-1960



Millions of Southern blacks migrated northward after World War II, just as the industrial base of America's older cities began to erode. The declining industries (e.g., steel, textiles, automobiles) were those in which unskilled blacks most often sought employment.

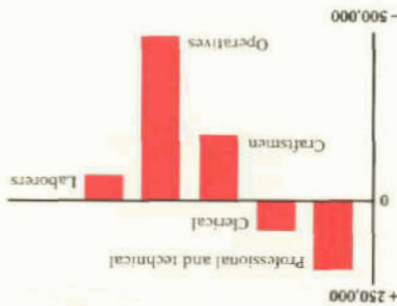
URBAN BLACK POPULATION GROWTH

Black population as percent of total city population

City	1920	1950	1980
Los Angeles	2.7	8.7	17.0
Chicago	4.1	13.6	39.8
New York	2.7	9.5	25.2
Washington, D.C.	25.1	35.0	70.3
Boston	2.2	5.0	22.4
Atlanta	31.3	36.6	66.6

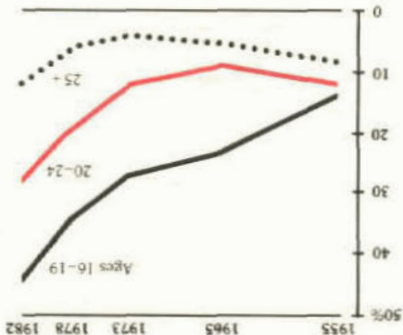
THE CHANGING JOB MARKET

Number of jobs gained or lost in 18 Northern U.S. cities, 1960-1970



UNEMPLOYMENT RATES

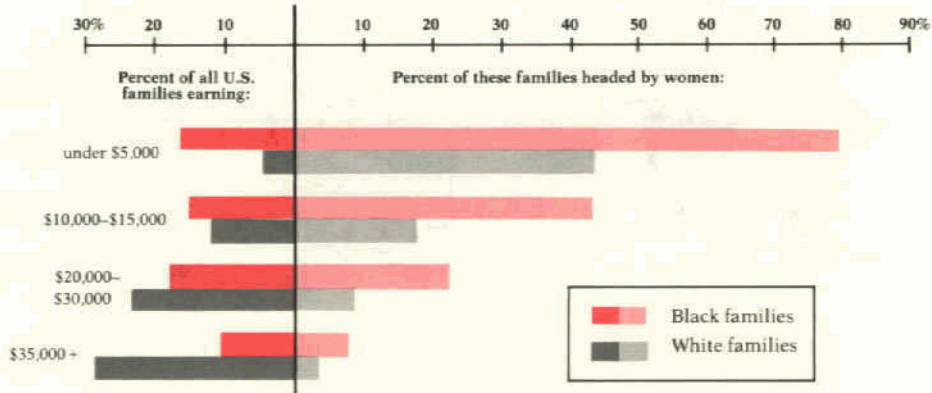
for nonwhite males, by age group



Source: U.S. Department of Labor; U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census; John D. Kasarda, "Urbanization, Community, and the Metropolitan Problem," in *Handbook of Contemporary Urban Life*, ed. by David Street.

THE FEMINIZATION OF POVERTY

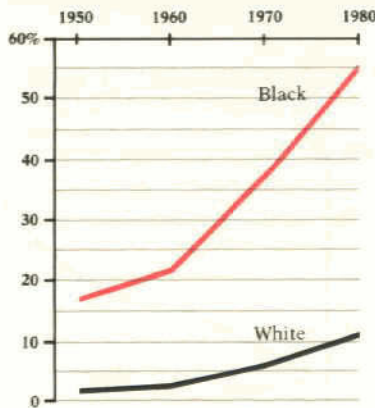
How income correlated with family status in 1982



The proportion of blacks living below the poverty line (\$9,862 for a family of four) grew to 35.6 percent in 1982. The number of black, female-headed households continued to rise. Some 49 percent of all black children today live with only one parent. One black child in 10 lives with neither.

ILLEGITIMATE BIRTHS

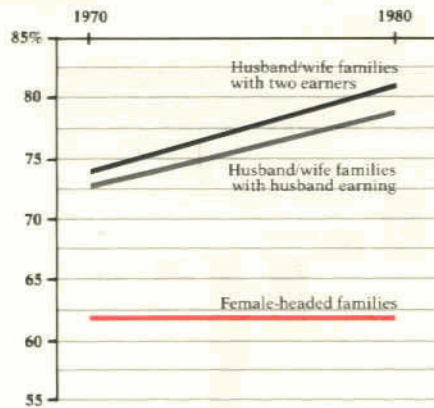
Percentage of white and black children born out of wedlock since 1950*



* Figures for 1950 and 1960 include small numbers of "other" nonwhites.

BLACK MEDIAN FAMILY INCOMES

As percent of white median family incomes, by family status



Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census.

tion, and it is undeniable that discrimination continues to aggravate the social and economic problems of poor blacks. But is discrimination really greater today than it was in 1948, when black unemployment was less than half of what it is now, and when the gap between black and white jobless rates was narrower?

As for the black family, it apparently began to fall apart not before but after the mid-20th century. Until publication in 1976 of Herbert Gutman's *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom*, most scholars had believed otherwise. "Stimulated by the bitter public and academic controversy over the Moynihan report," Gutman produced data demonstrating that the black family was not significantly disrupted during slavery or even during the early years of the first migration to the urban North, beginning after the turn of the century. The problems of the modern black family, he implied, were a product of modern forces.

Those who cite racial discrimination as the root cause of poverty often fail to make a distinction between the effects of *historic* discrimination (that is, discrimination prior to the mid-20th century) and the effects of *contemporary* discrimination. That is why they find it so hard to explain why the economic position of the black underclass started to worsen soon after Congress enacted, and the White House began to enforce, the most sweeping civil-rights legislation since Reconstruction.

Making Comparisons

My own view is that historic discrimination is far more important than contemporary discrimination in understanding the plight of the urban underclass; that, in any event, there is more to the story than discrimination (of whichever kind).

Historic discrimination certainly helped to create an impoverished urban black community in the first place. In his recent *A Piece of the Pie: Black and White Immigrants since 1880* (1980), Stanley Lieberson shows how, in many areas of life, including the labor market, black newcomers from the rural South were far more severely discriminated against in Northern cities than were the new white immigrants from southern, central, and eastern Europe. Skin color was part of the problem, but it was not all of it.

The disadvantage of skin color—the fact that the dominant whites preferred whites over nonwhites—is one that blacks shared with Japanese, Chinese, and others. Yet the experience of the Asians, whose treatment by whites "was of the same violent and savage character in areas where they were concentrated," but who went on to prosper in their adopted land, suggests that

skin color per se was not an "insurmountable obstacle." Indeed, Lieberson argues that the greater success enjoyed by Asians may well be explained largely by the different context of their contact with whites. Because changes in immigration policy cut off Asian migration to America in the late 19th century, the Japanese and Chinese populations did not reach large numbers and therefore did not pose as great a threat as did blacks.

Furthermore, the discontinuation of large-scale immigration from Japan and China enabled Chinese and Japanese to solidify networks of ethnic contacts and to occupy particular occupational niches in small, relatively stable communities. For blacks, the situation was different. The 1970 census recorded 22,580,000 blacks in the United States but only 435,000 Chinese and 591,000 Japanese. "Imagine," Lieberson exclaims, "22 million Japanese Americans trying to carve out initial niches through truck farming."

The Youth Explosion

If different population sizes accounted for a good deal of the difference in the economic success of blacks and Asians, they also helped determine the dissimilar rates of progress of urban blacks and the new *European* arrivals. European immigration was curtailed during the 1920s, but black migration to the urban North continued through the 1960s. With each passing decade, Lieberson writes, there were many more blacks who were recent migrants to the North, whereas the immigrant component of the new Europeans dropped off over time. Eventually, other whites muffled their dislike of the Poles and Italians and Jews and saved their antagonism for blacks. As Lieberson notes, "The presence of blacks made it harder to discriminate against the new Europeans because the alternative was viewed less favorably."

The black migration to New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, and other Northern cities—the continual replenishment of black populations there by poor newcomers—predictably skewed the age profile of the urban black community and kept it relatively young. The number of central-city black youths aged 16–19 increased by almost 75 percent from 1960 to 1969. Young black adults (ages 20–24) increased in number by two-thirds during the same period, three times the increase for young white adults. In the nation's inner cities in 1977, the median age for whites was 30.3, for blacks 23.9. The importance of this jump in the number of young minorities in the ghetto, many of them lacking one or more parent, cannot be overemphasized.

Age correlates with many things. For example, the higher

**BLACKS IN SCHOOL:
TRYING TO CATCH UP**

When black children finally gained access to "mainstream" public schools, they arrived during the turmoil of the late 1960s. Schools were beset by falling standards, lax discipline, and rising rates of crime and vandalism, not to mention repeated efforts to achieve greater racial balance. The big-city public schools, in particular, were in poor condition to help an influx of black underclass youths overcome the cumulative effects of family instability, poverty, and generations of inferior education. When family finances permitted, blacks, like whites, often put their offspring in private schools or moved to the suburbs.

Blacks have nevertheless made some gains through public education. At the grade school level, the gap in school attendance rates between whites and blacks has been closed. Between 1970 and 1982, the proportion of blacks graduating from high school (now 76.5 percent) grew twice as fast as that of whites. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reveals that blacks in grade school and junior high are improving their skills more quickly than are whites, though they still lag behind.

But high school students of neither race are doing better now than their counterparts were 10 years ago. Indeed, the NAEP reports that the proportion of 17-year-old blacks scoring in the "highest achievement group" in reading tests actually declined from 5.7 to 3.9 percent between 1971 and 1980. In the Age of Technology, blacks are still less likely than whites to take science and math courses. The modest gains by blacks during the past decade on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) still produced an average combined (math and verbal) score in 1983 of only 708 out of a possible 1600. The National Assault on Illiteracy Program estimates that 47 percent of all black Americans still read at a fourth-grade level or lower. As more blacks finish high school and college, such "functional illiteracy" will decline.

the median age of a group, the higher its income; the lower the median age, the higher the unemployment rate and the higher the crime rate. (More than half of those arrested in 1980 for violent and property crimes in American cities were under 21.) The younger a woman is, the more likely she is to bear a child out of wedlock, head up a new household, and depend on welfare. In short, much of what has gone awry in the ghetto is due in part to the sheer increase in the number of black youths. As James Q. Wilson has argued, an abrupt rise in the proportion of young people in *any* community will have an "exponential effect on the rate of certain social problems."

The population explosion among minority youths occurred at a time when changes in the economy were beginning to pose

serious problems for unskilled workers. Urban minorities have been particularly vulnerable to the structural economic changes of the past two decades: the shift from goods-producing to service-providing industries, the increasing polarization of the labor market into low-wage and high-wage sectors, technological innovations, and the relocation of manufacturing industries out of the central cities. During the 1970s, Chicago lost more than 200,000 jobs, mostly in manufacturing, where many inner-city blacks had traditionally found employment. New York City lost 600,000 jobs during the same period, even though the number of white-collar professional, managerial, and clerical jobs increased in Manhattan. Today, as John D. Kasarda has noted, the nation's cities are being transformed into "centers of administration, information exchange, and service provision." Finding work now requires more than a willing spirit and a strong back.

Beyond Race

Roughly 60 percent of the unemployed blacks in the United States reside within the central cities. Their situation, already more difficult than that of any other major ethnic group in the country, continues to worsen. Not only are there more blacks without jobs every year; many, especially young males, are dropping out of the labor force entirely. The percentage of blacks who were in the labor force fell from 45.6 in 1960 to 30.8 in 1977 for those aged 16–17 and from 90.4 to 78.2 for those aged 20–24. (During the same period, the proportion of white teenagers in the labor force actually *increased*.)

More and more black youths, including many who are no longer in school, are obtaining no job experience at all. The proportion of black teenage males who have *never* held a job increased from 32.7 to 52.8 percent between 1966 and 1977; for black males under 24, the percentage grew from 9.9 to 23.3. Research shows, not surprisingly, that joblessness during youth has a harmful impact on one's future success in the job market.

There have been recent signs, though not many, that some of the inner city's ills may have begun to abate. For one, black migration to urban areas has been minimal in recent years; many cities have experienced net migration of blacks *to* the suburbs. For the first time in the 20th century, a heavy influx from the countryside no longer swells the ranks of blacks in the cities. Increases in the urban black population during the 1970s, as demographer Philip Hauser has pointed out, were mainly due to births. This means that one of the major obstacles to black advancement in the cities has been removed. Just as the Asian and

European immigrants benefited from a cessation of migration, so too should the economic prospects of urban blacks improve now that the great migration from the rural South is over.

Even more significant is the slowing growth in the number of *young* blacks inhabiting the central cities. In metropolitan areas generally, there were six percent fewer blacks aged 13 or under in 1977 than there were in 1970; in the inner city, the figure was 13 percent. As the average age of the urban black community begins to rise, lawlessness, illegitimacy, and unemployment should begin to decline.

Even so, the problems of the urban black underclass will remain crippling for years to come. And I suspect that any significant reduction of joblessness, crime, welfare dependency, single-parent homes, and out-of-wedlock pregnancies would require far more comprehensive social and economic change than Americans have generally deemed appropriate or desirable. It would require a radicalism that neither the Republican nor the Democratic Party has been bold enough to espouse.

The existence of a black underclass, as I have suggested, is due far more to historic discrimination and to broad demographic and economic trends than it is to racial discrimination in the present day. For that reason, the underclass has not benefited significantly from "race specific" antidiscrimination policies, such as affirmative action, that have aided so many trained and educated blacks. If inner-city blacks are to be helped, they will be helped not by policies addressed primarily to inner-city minorities but by policies designed to benefit all of the nation's poor.

I am reminded in this connection of Bayard Rustin's plea during the early 1960s that blacks recognize the importance of *fundamental* economic reform (including a system of national economic planning along with new education, manpower, and public works programs to help achieve full employment) and the need for a broad-based coalition to achieve it. Politicians and civil-rights leaders should, of course, continue to fight for an end to racial discrimination. But they must also recognize that poor minorities are profoundly affected by problems that affect other people in America as well, and that go beyond racial considerations. Unless those problems are addressed, the underclass will remain a reality of urban life.



BACKGROUND BOOKS

BLACKS IN AMERICA

"I can't think there is any intrinsic value in one colour more than another, nor that white is better than black, only we think it so because we are so, and are prone to judge favourably in our own case."

Captain Thomas Phillips, the master of a slave vessel, made that assessment in 1694, and his opinion was not unusual for the time, according to historian Winthrop D. Jordan.

In **White Over Black** (Univ. of N.C., 1968, cloth; Penguin, 1969, paper), Jordan surveys the evolution over three centuries of Anglo-American attitudes toward blacks. He observes that the black man's complexion was considered a "marvel"—until slavery was introduced into North America, and theories of inherent black inferiority developed to justify it.

The first Negroes arrived in Jamestown in 1619, and they probably came as indentured servants, not slaves. Indeed, the slave system took several decades to develop according to John Hope Franklin in **From Slavery to Freedom** (Knopf, rev. ed., 1980, cloth & paper), a comprehensive survey of blacks in America through the 1970s. There were only 300 blacks in Virginia in 1650, and the colony did not countenance slavery in law until 1661.

But by the end of the 17th century, the London-based Royal African Company was bringing 1,000 slaves into Virginia every year. Victory in America's War of Independence did not end the slave trade. By 1790, roughly one of every five persons in the new republic was black. August Meier and Elliot Rudwick cover much of the same ground as Franklin in **From Plantation to Ghetto** (Hill & Wang, 1976, cloth & paper).

Congress outlawed the importation of African slaves in 1807, but the domestic slave trade continued to thrive. Slavery made good economic sense in the South, where slave agriculture was "35 percent more efficient" than free agriculture in the North. So write Robert W. Fogel and Stanley L. Engerman, arguing in their controversial **Time On the Cross** (Little, Brown, 1974, cloth & paper) that the slave was harder-working than the white farm hand.

According to Vincent Harding in **There Is A River** (Harcourt, 1981), the slaves never relinquished the hope that they would one day live as free men. The "river" of the title refers to the continuity of black struggle flowing from the shores of West Africa to the battlefields of the Civil War. Harding focuses on slave rebellions and the work of great abolitionists, such as Sojourner Truth and Harriet Tubman.

Frederick Douglass (1817-95), the mulatto ex-slave and orator from the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, also figures prominently in this tradition. His **Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave** (Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Office, 1845; Penguin, 1982, paper only), describes the misery he suffered as a slave and condemns the "slaveholding religion," the "women-whipping, cradle-plundering, partial and hypocritical Christianity of this land."

Though slavery was everywhere dehumanizing, the formal legal regime varied widely from state to state. A. Leon Higginbotham, Jr.'s historical survey, **In the Matter of Color** (Oxford, 1978), provides examples aplenty. Whereas Georgia and

South Carolina permitted masters to execute disobedient slaves, Pennsylvania did not. Nor did Pennsylvania adopt a bounty system, which in Georgia reimbursed head-hunters for the return of a fugitive slave's "scalp with two ears."

Other significant works on slavery include Albert J. Raboteau's **Slave Religion** (Oxford, 1978, cloth; 1980, paper); Eugene Genovese's **Roll, Jordan, Roll** (Random, 1974, cloth; Vintage, 1976, paper), a social portrait based on excerpts from Negroes' diaries, letters, travelers' journals, planters' records, and other sources; and Lawrence Levine's **Black Culture and Black Consciousness** (Oxford, 1977, cloth; 1978, paper), which brings to life the "sacred world" of slaves, their folk tales and songs.

Abraham Lincoln freed the slaves on January 1, 1863—those slaves, at any rate, in states that had taken up arms against the Union. As James M. McPherson points out in **The Negro's Civil War** (Pantheon, 1965, cloth; Univ. of Ill., 1982, paper), the Union abolished slavery in the rebellious states mostly to create chaos in the South, where slave labor supported the economy in general and the war effort in particular. "My paramount objective in this struggle," Lincoln wrote to New York *Tribune* publisher Horace Greeley in 1862, "is to save the Union, and is not either to save or to destroy slavery."

Congress passed four Reconstruction Acts in 1867–68 that reconstituted the 11 Confederate states as federal territories. To gain readmission to the Union, the territories had to adopt constitutions giving black adult males the right to vote. Territories also had to ratify the U.S. Constitution's Fourteenth Amendment, which prohibited states from denying to any persons "life, liberty, or property without due

process of law."

But the progress of blacks during this period was short-lived, as Kenneth Stampp reminds us in **The Era of Reconstruction, 1865–77** (Knopf, 1965, cloth; Random, 1967, paper). Lincoln's successor was Andrew Johnson, a Union Democrat from Tennessee who believed that "white men should determine the way of life that was to be led in the Southern states."

Still, black political representation did soar between 1865 and 1877. During that period, 22 Southern blacks, many of them former slaves, were elected to Congress. On the state level, the statistics are even more surprising. In **Black Over White** (Univ. of Ill., 1977, cloth; 1979, paper), Thomas Holt points out that "of the 487 men elected to the various state and federal offices in South Carolina between 1867 and 1876, more than half were black." But many of these black politicians were scions of the old free black elite, who "oftener than not failed to act in the interests of black peasants."

Other significant works on the Reconstruction Era include Leon F. Litwak's **Been in the Storm So Long** (Knopf, 1979, cloth; Vintage, 1980, paper) and Howard N. Rabinowitz's **Race Relations in the Urban South** (Oxford, 1978, cloth; Univ. of Ill., 1980, paper).

In retrospect, the Reconstruction Era was a tragic saga of missed, squandered, or compromised opportunities. But in the field of education, blacks continued to make substantial progress, thanks, in part, to the efforts of Booker T. Washington (1856–1915), the former slave and founder-director of the Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute in Alabama. Louis R. Harlan tells Washington's story in two volumes, **The Making of a Black Leader,**

1856-1901 (Oxford, 1972, cloth; 1975, paper) and **The Wizard of Tuskegee** (Oxford, 1983).

Washington urged blacks to seek advancement through vocational education and small business enterprises and not to antagonize white authorities. "The wisest among my race understand that the agitation on questions of social equality is the extremest folly," he told Southern whites in his famous "Atlanta Speech" in 1895.

But many blacks criticized Washington's leadership. Among them was W. E. B. Du Bois, a privileged, free-born black, who sported a top hat, white gloves, and cane as a graduate student at Harvard. (He was the first black ever to earn a Harvard Ph.D.) Du Bois, who eventually embraced Marxism, opposed Washington's "Gospel of Work and Money" because it overshadowed the "higher aims of life."

Du Bois urged "a Talented Tenth" of blacks to attain a broad education and help guide the race to "a higher civilization," even as he condemned segregation in Dixie. The South needed "discriminating and broad-minded criticism," he wrote in **The Souls of Black Folk** (McClurg, 1903; Kraus, 1973), "for the sake of her own white sons and daughters, and for the insurance of robust, healthy mental and moral development."

As black partisans of competing strategies quarreled among themselves, white Americans in the South finished spinning a web of legal restrictions that disenfranchised blacks and mandated racial segregation in everything from schools to factories, hospitals, restaurants, and funeral homes.

These "Jim Crow" laws—probably named after a song-and-dance routine of the 1830s—"lent sanction to

racial ostracism" and reminded blacks of their inferior position, according to C. Vann Woodward's **The Strange Career of Jim Crow** (Oxford, rev. ed., 1974, paper only).

Ironically, while "Jim Crow" is usually associated with the South, Woodward observes that segregation laws first appeared in the North, where slavery had been effectively abolished by 1830. As slaves there became freedmen, whites sought legal means to keep the races apart.

Black enclaves, such as "Nigger Hill" in Boston and "Little Africa" in Cincinnati, had long existed in Northern cities. Few of these communities achieved either growth or prominence prior to the black migration from the South during World War I. But by 1920, there were 152,000 blacks in New York City, according to Gilbert Osofsky in **Harlem: The Making of a Ghetto** (Harper, 1966, cloth; 1971, paper).

As the new immigrants replaced upwardly mobile Italians and Jews, Harlem became "a Negro world, unto itself." Ninety percent of Harlem blacks, Osofsky says, were "menials and laborers."

In **A Ghetto Takes Shape** (Univ. of Ill., 1976, cloth & paper), Kenneth Kusmer paints a less gloomy picture of Cleveland between 1870 and 1930, when many blacks made real economic progress. World War I "broke down the color barrier in Cleveland's heavy industries," Kusmer says, where they received double or triple the money they had earned in the South. While most blacks did not get rich, Kusmer emphasizes that the black ghetto was not an "undifferentiated mass of slum-dwellers."

Whatever their economic condition, Northern black communities, especially in New York City, experienced a cultural revival during the

1920s. A new crop of black artists (e.g., poets Countee Cullen and Langston Hughes, musicians Jelly Roll Morton and Louis Armstrong, sculptor Richard Barthé) gave rise to the "New Negro Movement." Nathan Huggins tells their story in **Harlem Renaissance** (Oxford, 1971, cloth; 1973, paper). David Lewis's **When Harlem Was in Vogue** (Knopf, 1981) covers the same material in greater depth.

American blacks made some economic and social progress during Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal. But it was the Supreme Court's decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* that "severed the remaining cords of a de facto slavery." So writes Richard Kluger in **Simple Justice** (Random, 1976, cloth; Vintage, 1977, paper), a comprehensive history of the social, political, and legal turmoil that culminated in the *Brown* decision on May 17, 1954.

Ironically, Kluger writes, the decision came unexpectedly, catching official Washington unawares. At the Supreme Court, most reporters were downstairs in the press room, when at 12:52 P.M., Chief Justice Earl Warren began reading the Court's opinion in *Brown* in a "firm, clear, unemotional voice."

Warren's opinion took only minutes to read, but the decision would take years to enforce, as civil-rights groups and their foes clashed in the North and South during the late 1950s and 1960s. This period in-

spired a sizable crop of books on civil rights and the condition of blacks in America.

Some of the better works include Clayborne Carson's **In Struggle** (Harvard, 1981, cloth & paper), which chronicles the rise and fall of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee; August Meier's and Elliot Rudwick's **CORE** (Oxford, 1973, cloth; Univ. of Ill., 1975, paper), which does the same for the Congress of Racial Equality; David Lewis's **King** (Praeger, 1970, cloth; Univ. of Ill., 1978, paper), a biography of the slain civil-rights leader; and Alan J. Matusow's comprehensive **The Unraveling of America** (Harper, 1984).

Amid the scholarly analyses, the memoirs and fiction of black writers have conveyed the experience of being black in America in vivid and convincing detail. These include Richard Wright's **Native Son** (1940), James Baldwin's **The Fire Next Time** (1963), and **The Autobiography of Malcolm X** (1964).

Ralph Ellison's **Invisible Man** (1952), the story of a young black man's search for his own identity in white America, arguably deserves the top spot on any list. Perhaps no one has evoked in more powerful terms the historic predicament of the Afro-American, who "took on the complex symbolism of social health and social sickness [and] became . . . symbolic of America's hope for future perfection."

—Neil Spitzer

EDITOR'S NOTE: Neil Spitzer is senior researcher of *The Wilson Quarterly*. Several of these titles were suggested by James M. McPherson, professor of history at Princeton. Other books worthy of note are cited elsewhere in this issue in the essays by William Julius Wilson and Terry Eastland. Readers may also wish to consult *WQ's Background Books essay on Reconstruction* (Spring 1978).