

divided among two or more majority-white districts. On the other hand, stacking occurs when two counties with large population concentrations, one white and the other Black, are joined. In this case, the majority-white district will be larger than the majority-Black district. Thus, the minority district is deprived of a voting majority. The object of gerrymandering is to reduce the number of Black elected state legislatures and to reduce and/or eliminate the number of majority-Black counties. Ultimately, the goal of gerrymandering is to weaken the political power that arises from a large concentration of minorities in one region.

Changing from district to at-large voting is another form of redistricting that can be deemed racially discriminatory. Minority voting is engulfed in a district that has a large concentration of majority-white votes. With at-large voting, the majority population wins all of the electoral positions, and the minority portion of the population cannot obtain representation of their own choice. This was the primary method of blocking the Black community/voters from obtaining representation of their choice in southern legislatures.

Another barrier is the change in political structure that makes an elected office one of appointment only. When a district region "gives up" its ability to elect a public official, they are giving up political power. The people represented in the district no longer have a choice who represents them in a specific appointment. Control and political power is passed to the appointed person(s).

Run-offs are also techniques developed to dilute and manipulate the vote of minority communities. In a run-off situation, it is required that the winner of the election receives an absolute majority of the vote in order to win. If one candidate does not receive 50% or more of the vote, the candidates who have received the top two votes must have a run-off. Therefore, if a majority candidate wins an office in a plurality and the white vote is split among several candidates, there must be a run-off between the minority candidate who won and the majority candidate with the most votes. Ultimately, the white vote will no longer be spread across multiple candidates and the minority candidate will probably lose the run-off. Some other barriers that exist are:

- Abolishing elections for county school superintendent and making the office appointive.
- Increasing the qualifying requirements for independent candidates to prevent Black independents from getting elected
- Making it easier to abolish majority-Black counties and combine them with majority white counties

African Americans have realized that mere access to the ballot box does not insure that blacks are awarded equal opportunity to participate in the political arena. The aforementioned election strategies seek to minimize the voting strength of African Americans.

The significant barrier to African Americans making political progress is no longer access to the ballot box but also economic deprivation. The number of Black elected officials has increased from 500 before 1965 to over 8000 in 2002. However, more blacks have fallen into poverty. During the stated period, median household income for African Americans fell 3.4% in 2001. One would expect that the increase in

the number of Black elected officials and the overall improvement of African American political participation would result in decreased poverty. However, that is not the case, and as poverty increases among the African American community, voting participation is expected to decrease, because individuals with lower incomes are less likely to vote.

Further deterrents to accessing the ballot box exist. The latest Presidential election is a good example of these difficulties. In many districts across the country, people were told that they were not registered to vote and many suggest that their votes were not counted. Furthermore, difficulties still exist with the registration process. It can be concluded that structural barriers still exist that prohibit continued progress in Black political and economic development and power.

Final Examination

Question (4)

What was the economic basis for exclusion and inclusion of African Americans in the political process? (See especially chapter 5)

The history of the African American exclusion to inclusion of the political process by American society will show how economics is always the basis for action. In the beginning of African American history in early America, they were excluded from the political process because white Americans exploited slave labor for profit and capital and they based their economy on the gains made by Slavocracy. This exploitation and exclusion continued until the Civil War and until the destruction of Slavocracy.

Inclusion came about for African Americans during Reconstruction. The northern industrialists, represented by the Republican Party, supported the enfranchisement of the ex-slaves as part of their strategy to control the national economy and break the stranglehold of the Slavocracy, represented by the Democratic Party. By this enfranchisement, voter turnout by ex-slaves and southern white farmers and workers boosted, and a significant number of African Americans won political office during this period. Once the power of the former Slavocracy was broken and the industrialists gained the upper hand in the nation's economy, the votes of the newly freed African Americans and the poor white farmers and workers were no longer needed. Therefore, blacks then had to struggle to keep the political gains that they had made because of the "support" they received from the Republican Party.

New political inclusion for Blacks did not really come about until the post-WWII period. This was the era of the greatest economic expansion of the world capitalist system and then became the era of "politics of inclusion" and "politics of reform." Capitalists began to bribe sections of the labor force (mainly white men in northern unioned industry) with good-paying jobs and benefits. With these incentives, labor forces were thus loyal to the interests of the capitalist class. Their loyalty was the key to capitalist control over the lower, unbribed sections of labor—predominantly Black and southern white laborers. But with the industry expanding in the South in the 1950s and 1960s, Capitalists soon realized that new arrangements with Southern workers, including Black workers, had to be reestablished. To fully exploit African American labor, as well as southern white labor, Black workers had to be integrated into the workplace and into the larger society. African American, thus women, at long last, had their "civil rights." They won the legal rights to equal and integrated education, the vote, and the freedom from discrimination on the basis of race and color. These civil reforms were the last

major reform of labor-capital relations in the United States. African Americans were integrated into the existing class structure of American society, but they were always infused at the bottom of their respective classes.

As the Civil Rights Movement and the election of African Americans to office was made possible by the stage of expansion to the United States and the world capitalist economy in the post-WWII period, similarly, the recent roll-back of civil and constitutional rights and the genocidal attack on the entire U.S. working class. The current economic contraction is expressed in the politics of reaction, the politics of exclusion, and the politics of demobilization. In this period of economic contraction, African American elected officials and African American corporate and professional elite are especially constrained and limited in their abilities and "right."

Thus, the politics of contraction is the politics of exclusion. The ruling class, including those who are Republicans, is unable to grant any economic and social reforms because of the contracting economy. Consequently, they seek to narrow the base of those participating in the political and electoral process. They do not wish to mobilize a large section of the people whom they can offer nothing. They do not want to be answerable and accountable to those in the working class, to those most oppressed in the African American community, and to those among other nationalities.

Today, the revolution in the forces of production—that is, electronically based production replacing machine-based production—is really causing a commotion in the social, economic, and political society of the United States. The capitalist organizations set up around machine production, the private ownership of the productive forces, the distribution of the necessities of life based on wages and the market system, are no longer workable or practical. The workers have lower and lower wages, and the capitalists can circulate fewer and fewer of their goods and services. And today the evidence of the capitalists are trying to exclude African Americans again is seen by the degeneration of the political process and the low participation in the electoral process.

Because of capitalists running the politics of the United States, the electoral process is deteriorating. Politicians representing the capitalist class run "issueless" campaigns. They seek only to be accountable to the interest of those who finance their campaigns and whose interest they served. Negative campaigns, mud slinging, and personal scandals have replaced the issues, which are about the real economic and social problems facing the working class, and the real solutions to these problems. "Sleaze, lies, deception, and confusion are the order of the day."

Participation by the masses in the electoral process is at a historic low. By the late 1980's, voter turnout rates plummeted to a dangerously low level and as the decade of the 1990's began, voter turnout was only 36.4 per cent of the voting age population. "What we witnessing is the decay of the impulse to civic duty on the part of the American citizen, not because of their dereliction, but because of the conduct of their political and institutional leaders."

QUESTION 5 -- What were the results of African American political participation?

(See Chapter 3, Theresa Chamblis' article)

There is perhaps no better indicator of the importance of voter participation than the lengths to which whites throughout the nation went to keep African Americans from voting. The advantages of full participation of African Americans in the political process are obvious. Being a part of the governmental process increases the likelihood of Blacks securing their fair share of public goods and services. Already, attacks on affirmative action and other race-specific politics policies in the last decade have presented threats to the hard-earned socioeconomic and political gains Blacks have made since the 1960s.

Access to the ballot box made possible by the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which outlawed unfair electoral procedures and required the Justice Department to supervise southern elections brought about the registration of many Blacks and the increase of the Black vote. Between 1968 and 1988, almost 5.5 million additional African Americans registered to vote.

As more Blacks voted, more Blacks were elected to public office. The number of Black elected officials grew from fewer than 500 in 1965 to 7,370 in January 1970. The South, where most Blacks remained disenfranchised until 1965, has been the region of greatest progress. In January 1990, there were 64 times more Black elected officials in the South than there were in 1965 (4,955 compared to 78). The increase in the number of Black elected officials is an important measure of Black voting strength. This voting strength has enabled Blacks to prosper in holding various offices; African American-owned businesses expanded; the rate of small business failures declined, and both the numbers and proportions of African American employed in city government significantly increased. With more black officials elected, the following advantages should have been experienced:

- More influence on policy making
- Further increase the number of black workers in city offices
- Continue to increase the number and quality of black elected officials
- Narrow voter participation gap between blacks and whites
- Increase the economic and political well-being of Blacks (Class Lecture, 2002)

African American elected officials, though small in numbers, have made significant policy impacts. To increase their strengths they have come together as coalitions and addressed many policy issues. For example, the Congressional Black Caucus consists of African American members of Congress who have significantly impacted and initiated social policies that focus on minorities and other disadvantaged groups. Their political power has allowed them to impact legislation on Apartheid in South Africa, collaborate with other minority based caucuses, insure the maintenance of civil rights for women and minorities and moderate budget proposals.

The black vote is increasing; more and more black elected officials are being elected and in the last 20 years, there has been a considerable narrower gap between

white and black voter participation. By 1990, blacks have held elective office in almost every category except president and vice president. In 1988, the proportion of African Americans registered to vote was only 3.4 percentage points lower than the white proportion. Similarly, the gap between black and white voter turnout closed from 11.5 percentage points in 1968 to 7.6 percentage points in 1988. These statistics may seem encouraging, but in reality, despite 25 years of progress, black elected officials still constitute only 1.4 percent of the total number of elected officials in the nation. While there are far more African American elected officials than at any time in the history of the United States, African American workers found themselves disproportionately disenfranchised, unemployed, poor, and in still great need of reform.

Question 6 -- Is such participation enough to improve the life chances of Americans in general and the social underclass in particular.

(See especially Chapter 6, Robert Smith's article)

Effective minority incorporation requires three elements: (1) the mobilization of the majority electorate, (2) the development and maintenance of multiethnic coalitions of other minorities and progressive whites, and (3) the use of these unions to win elections and become the dominant governing coalition. When applied to the national level, however, evidence suggests that politics is not enough because of the following reasons: (1) the black electorate nationally is generally much smaller than at the local level in many areas, (2) it is more difficult to develop and maintain dominant multiethnic coalitions at the national level, and (3) when such coalitions come to power, they tend to be less responsive to the black agenda than similar governing coalitions at the local level.

Incorporation of blacks into electoral offices throughout the nation remains partial and incipient, and given the slow rate of growth black elected officials also demonstrated in before, it is unlikely that full incorporation (blacks holding about 12 percent of all elective offices given their proportion of the population) will occur in the foreseeable future. Statistical equality in elective office does not necessarily result in equality in substantive outcomes.

Even for the blacks that have been elected, because of their fewness in number, blacks in Congress tend to act cohesively on most issues. Thus, if they had higher numbers, they could act as a balance of power in the party caucuses, in committees, and on the floor on many issues. Yet, under present electoral conditions, this level of representation is not likely ever to be achieved.

As for the appointment of blacks to federal executive positions, prior to the John F. Kennedy administration, blacks were not appointed to high-level positions in the executive branch of government. Actually, before 1960, only ten blacks held subcabinet posts in the federal government. President Kennedy appointed several blacks to high-level posts in the executive and judiciary branches. President Johnson, as well, made a number of historic "first Negro who" appointments to the cabinet, subcabinet, independent regulatory commissions, the judiciary, and the diplomatic service. These appointments mainly only reflected that the black power rebellion was coming near its peak. But even with all of these appointments, at the end of the Johnson administration,

blacks constituted less than 2 percent of executive branch appointees and only about 4 percent of the judicial ones.

In all administrations examined during this 25-year period, black appointees tended to be concentrated in the civil rights and social welfare bureaucracies—Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW), the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), Health and Human Services (HHS), and the Civil Rights Commission—rather than in the “inner” or “core” bureaucracies dealing with economic, internal, and national security affairs (State, Treasury, Defense, and Justice).

The difference these appointments make (or do not make) in executive branch policy-making is the critical issue to be assessed. Is politics of this sort enough to move the black agenda, or is it simply the matter of black faces in high places with policy consequence for the black agenda. Many blacks in executive branch policy-making positions are frequent supporters of black interests, but just as frequently, they were ignored, invisible to the president and his senior advisors. For example, Fredric Morrow, the first black White House staff aide, tells in his memoirs the sad story of his tenure in the Eisenhower administration, where he could hardly get an office and secretary, let alone advise the president on civil rights policy or other race concerns; he was the classic invisible man. Similarly, in the administration of Nixon, the top black officials were granted the opportunity to communicate with the president only after the press leaked about their displeasure and gave the hint of mass resignation.

Overall, then, those who place hope in black appointees effectively pursuing black interests in bureaucratic decision-making are likely to be disappointed, because the results thus far show that this kind of politics is not enough. Even the blacks in House of Representatives have felt the sense of isolation, frustration, anger, and bitterness, because they are routinely ignored. Because of the inherent racism in the bloodstream of America, it becomes increasingly difficult to get beyond the color of one's skin. One of the fundamental social and economic priorities of blacks is to seek the support of Congress, since only about one in seven members is black. Many times the things that blacks bring up in Congress are not defeated, but ignored. Black substantive power is hardly greater now than it was 25 years ago when blacks were just beginning in their executive powers. On the fundamental needs of the black community, politics is not enough.

After two decades of the new black politics of institutionalized participation, the weight of evidence is quite persuasive that politics as routinely practiced in the United States by Black Americans is not enough to alter the terrible conditions of the American underclass. In actuality during this 25-year period of the new black politics, the conditions of the bottom third of black Americans grew worse by almost any measure of well-being.

Many of the problems of the black situation is that black leaders and would-be leaders become so thoroughly integrated into institutional structures and processes that are physically and psychological from the mass base of the black community. Rather than being leaders for the black poor, so many pursue a top-down hierarchical model for social change. Most black leaders know that the condition of the black poor cannot be

effectively addressed without changes in the structure of the national economy. But in order to maintain their status among white leadership, they act as if fundamental changes can come about as a result of playing routine power games in Washington or in city politics. It's not that routine institutional politics is not necessary, but simply not enough. What is needed is a balanced strategy of politics and protest. This is not to say that the black gains aren't effective or incremental issues of importance to blacks; rather, it is to say that incremental changes are not enough. Nor is this to say that routine institutional politics is not necessary; rather, it is to say, once again, that it is not enough.

Question 7 -- What other kinds of actions might be necessary to improve the social, economic, political needs of African Americans?

(See Chapters 7, 8, 9 and 10)

Black Americans have clearly made political progress in the United States, especially since 1965. This much the preceding necessarily makes clear. It has pointed out the difficult two-century-long struggle for equal voting rights and the importance of its victory in securing the Voting Rights Act of 1965. It has explained the influence of black political organizations in mobilizing black voters. It was discussed the successful strategy that lies behind many of the electoral victories. But, just as it has pointed to growing black political success, much has been focused on the limits of such progress.

So many questions are left to be answered. What can be done to increase the level of black voter participation or to build more successful black political organizations or to remove barriers to black representation and rapidly increase the election of black candidates of blacks' choice to public office? What can improve the outcomes for the black poor? These questions are combined into three greatest areas of need of reform for African Americans: (1) political education, (2) voting rights, and (3) redistricting. Recommendations for actions to take to improve the social, economic, and political needs for African Americans will be discussed.

POLITICAL EDUCATION

There is a definite need for political education about the nature of the American political economy. For the masses of black America, the following activities are recommended.

Black organizations, such as the NAACP, should develop educational and training programs generated toward high school students, community, universities, women's organizations, etc., in order to promote awareness of a full range of participatory organizing, letter writing campaigns, lobbying, and so forth. Political education should be provided by these organizations on a steady basis, not just around election time. Political education should include a focus not only on narrowly defined political issues but also about how the political economy is actually structured and how it works. The provision of information about issues, policies, and political candidates should be developed.

~~Black institutions of higher education should create excellent programs for the study of politics, including foreign affairs. These programs, centers, or institutions~~

should provide multidisciplinary education in foreign policy and internal affairs in particular with emphasis in the social sciences, humanities, foreign languages, and with options for studying the natural sciences and mastering technical skills. It should also provide interdisciplinary seminars.

VOTING RIGHTS

Despite limited gains in voting rights, as already indicated, much remains to be done. Recommendations for reform include:

- State registration procedures should be reformed to promote the remedying of continuing barriers.
- At-large election systems should be continuously opposed, as well as run-off requirements.
- There should be a focus on providing blacks a few single-member electoral districts in which they are a majority, with the greater goal being to challenge majority rule where it does not protect minorities.
- Focus should be on reforming both the way representatives are elected and the rules under which legislative decisions are made. There must be a greater emphasis on accountable representation.

REDISTRICTING

The most immediate areas of political action is likely to be the battle over redistricting. How the nation is redistricted will play an important role in political configurations for at least a decade.

- Supporting efforts, including lawsuits, to reduce the size of the census undercount.
- Building a national coordinated effort to protect the existing majority black congressional and state and local legislative districts.
- Increasing the number of majority black districts where possible and where this action will not weaken minority influence in electing those (regardless of race) sympathetic to the interests of the black poor.
- Being prepared to use the Voting Rights Act to overturn reapportionment and redistricting plans designed to dilute the impact of the minority vote.

An additional aim must be to approach the redistricting process with the goal of making viable coalitions with other minority groups and progressive whites.

Blacks, as a group, have made tremendous progress during the twentieth century, but then progress has been uneven. Middle-class blacks have benefited, working-class blacks have practically stayed the same, and poor blacks have consistently worsened. Whether Black Americans in general can make progress in the American system is the question of the next century. African Americans must not lose sight of the goals that they fought so hard to gain in the African American struggle. They have made many gains

and received many reforms, but they must continue to strive for the ability to participate in all aspects of American society as equal partners.