

11

THE FIGHT FOR FREEDOM AS A PUBLIC POLICY DEBATE:
THE CASE OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION IN THE U.S.A.
=====

by

Abdul Alkalimat
Department of African American Studies
Northeastern University
Boston, Ma. 02115
U.S.A.
Phone: 617-373-3148
Fax: 617-373-2625

presented at

WORKSHOP IN AFFIRMATIVE ACTION
IN THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS AND
IMPLICATIONS FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Education Policy Unit
University of Natal
Durban, South Africa
November 11 - 13, 1993

THE FIGHT FOR FREEDOM AS A PUBLIC POLICY DEBATE:
THE CASE OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION IN THE U.S.A.
=====

Abdul Alkalimat
Northeastern University
U.S.A.

The plight of the African American has always been one of the most important contradictions of social life in the USA. There is no doubt that the experience of the African American, perhaps more than any other, reveals fundamental limitations of the political (democratic), economic (capitalist), and moral (Christian) traditions of the USA. On the other hand, it is also true that within this context the historical fight for freedom by the African American people and their allies has given great hope and meaning to the potential for the realization of a truly democratic society. At the center of this controversial summary statement is the difference between democracy, freedom, and equality in theory, and their realization as material historical fact. This paper will discuss this contradiction in relation to the affirmative action policy debate.

The most general and universal meaning of affirmative action is the implementation of any anti-discriminatory policy (especially anti-racist policy), toward objective change and/or specific goals. This includes current patterns, particular forms of discrimination within specific institutional contexts, and the cumulative result of past forms of discrimination. In other words, affirmative action covers the broad policy debate about forms of what we can call domestic reparations as well as the specific social engineering to eliminate specific forms of current institutional racism. So the affirmative action debate concerns how to change the present to create equality now, and to overcome past inequality as well. The policy crisis is how to do both, fairly and equitably.

This paper is organized in four sections. The first section will present the historical background of the issues that lead up to the 1960's when affirmative action became a policy issue. Secondly, the focus will be on the development of the official affirmative action policy as it developed through the various branches of the federal government. And third, we will discuss the results of affirmative action. Finally, the paper will conclude with a discussion of the current affirmative action debate in the USA, and how the meaning of this debate has changed within the context of the fundamental transformations sweeping the US economy and the world.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The fight for affirmative action raises basic questions about political rights that reside at the heart of constitutional democracy in the USA. An examination of the historical origin of the USA can help one grasp the basis for the current situation. The USA was created by uniting settler colonies that had been formed by European trading companies. These Euro-American settlers waged a war of national liberation against British colonialism. Subsequent wars were fought, especially against the Native peoples of North America. In fact, the legitimacy of the US governments' claim to North American land was secure only after having carried out in large measure a policy of genocide against the indigenous population, and otherwise signed treaty's with Indian nations that have never been honored. In addition, the origins of industrial capitalism involved the intensive exploitation of white child labor in the textile mills of the north, working on cotton produced by Black slaves in the south. In sum, national oppression and class exploitation were essential.

The US Constitution is a document that can only be fully understood in relation to this history. It is a document that defines the rights and responsibilities of the "individual citizen" as the fundamental political unit of democracy. It constructs a tripartite structure (presidential, legislative, and judicial branches of government) that governs a national federation of states. However, when adopted the Constitution systematically excluded three key groups (native peoples, African Americans, and all women) from being full citizens. The US Constitution covered its silence on the exploitation of these groups by codifying an ideology of individuals. US law does not recognize group rights, although the US was founded on the destruction of such group rights.

It is also important to note that while the Constitution established a somewhat democratic process for those included within the polity as citizens, it did the opposite for Black people. Blacks were not only denied civil rights, they were denied human rights. Here one need only mention that the Constitution did not outlaw the slave trade but merely put a tax on each of the imported "persons," did not outlaw slavery, did not protect fugitive slaves who escaped from "slave states" to "free states," and for the purposes of taxation and political apportionment counted Black people only as 3/5 of a person! It is important to state these basic flaws in the US Constitution as they disqualify it as the all-time definitive document for democratic government. Further, these racist flaws have shaped the attitudes and political disposition of Black political forces as oppositional. This in large part explains why Black political thought is in opposition to the more conservative thinkers who call upon people to uphold the intentions of the founders of US democracy. Black people have had no option but to be in opposition to this approach that defers to

the intentions of the "founders."

The early history of the USA was dominated by the South based on the slave system. The economy was southern based and the federal government was dominated by the southern interest of the cotton planters. It is in this context that we can see that the historical positions of Black people began consistently with a dual focus, to fight for individual rights and opportunities as defined by the "best" aspects of the US Constitution, while also fighting for group advancement against the slave system. This was a rational approach to historical conditions. To the extent that Black people have fought for inclusion within the individual rights as outlined by the US Constitutions, then they have been on the road for a political revolution, but to the extent that it has upheld a demand for resolution of collective problems then they have been on the road to an economic revolution in that it aims to fundamentally transform the objective structure of society, the social relations of production and exchange.

The social and political revolution came in the form of the Civil War which was the basis for the final emancipation of Black people from slavery. The achievement of emancipation was stated as official government policy in post-war amendments to the US Constitution: the 13th Amendment (1865) ended slavery; the 14th Amendment (1868) extended citizenship rights to former slaves; and the 15th Amendment (1870) established the right of former slaves to vote. These political changes established the right to be a citizen, but not necessarily the means to be one.

In order to enable the former slaves to be secure it was necessary to establish an economic basis for their survival as new citizens. The possibility for this change was based on the fact that Black people had actively fought in the civil war. In fact, for all Black men (slave and free) aged 18 to 45 (1860) 21% fought against slavery in the Union army, and for Black men specifically from "free" states 71% joined the union army and fought to end slavery! In some instances abolitionist generals in the Union army began to distribute "free" land to the former slaves, and it appeared a serious economic revolution was possible based on a transformation of land ownership. In fact, the general claim for this was stated in the demand for each former slave to get "40 acres of land and a mule" for economic freedom. This was to come from the lands seized from the former slave owners who had committed treason against the USA.

However, the political and social revolution was subverted by the failure of the economic revolution, and Black people were forced to face nearly another century in a "second-class status," and the southern region was locked into backwardness and poverty. The federal troops pulled out of the south in 1877 based on a deal to trade southern political support for a northern presidential candidate, in exchange for restoring the political dominance of the

former plantation slave owners in the southern region. The slave owners got their land back. In sum, Black people were forced into a US form of apartheid. By 1896 the Supreme Court (in Plessy v. Ferguson) was to argue that "The object of the 14th Amendment [to the US Constitution] was undoubtedly to enforce the absolute equality of the two races before the law, but in the nature of things it could not have been intended to abolish distinctions based on color, or to enforce social, as distinguished from political equality, or a commingling of the two races upon terms unsatisfactory to either." This decision led to a network of laws that enforced rigid patterns of racial segregation. The privileges thereby enjoyed by white people quite exceeded any known affirmative action program yet devised till this day.

A half century later, the Supreme Court issued a ruling that returned expectations back to the political revolution of the 13th, 14th, and 15th constitutional amendments (Brown v. Board of Education, 1954): "We conclude that in the field of public education the doctrine of 'separate but equal' has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal. Therefore, we hold that the plaintiffs and others similarly situated for whom the actions have been brought are, by reason of the segregation complained of, deprived of the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the 14th Amendment." The Supreme Court ruled only against racial segregation in education, but they set in motion a powerful movement that challenged segregation in all walks of life.

It is essential to ask why the Supreme Court would make one ruling in 1896 and an opposite ruling in 1954, would construct the legal basis for segregation, i.e. "U.S.A. apartheid," and then dismantle it. In 1896 Black people were the basis of cotton production much like they had been under slavery, first as slaves and then in 1896 as sharecropping tenant farmers. The material economic conditions of southern agriculture changed radically, and thereby altered the relative economic security of Black people. In the 1940's the technological innovation of the mechanical cotton picker, and in the 1950's the introduction of chemical fertilizers and insecticides led to a dramatic reduction in the demand for Black labor in the south. Small scale tenant farming was soon to be replaced by more capital intensive large scale farming. Black people were virtually driven off the land by the new machines. The 1896 ruling was for one kind of population, and once the social character of that population changed so the law could be changed as well.

The actual historical motion for the new politics did not happen over night, however, and certainly was not an act of benevolence. Racial segregation was deeply rooted in the political culture of the USA, north and south. The armed forces and defense industries were segregated. The federal government was dominated by southern politicians who had the longest seniority because of the disenfranchisement of the Black voter.

The opportunity for change ripened with the challenge of World War II. The government needed national unity for the war effort. Virtually all African American leaders agreed that this unity should not be based on the existing segregation. There was a consensus among Blacks that the armed forces had to be integrated. Further, in opposition to white trade union leadership, Black workers advanced the demand to end segregation in industry as well!

President Franklin D. Roosevelt was faced with these militant demands as put forward by A Phillip Randolph, head of an all Black rail road workers union. In the midst of the war Randolph threatened to bring 100,000 angry Black workers to Washington DC on July 1, 1941 unless the President acted. Roosevelt waited until June 25th, and then issued Executive Order 8802. It banned racial segregation and religious discrimination in defense industries and government training programs. One month later, Roosevelt created the Fair Employment Practices Committee as an advisory body to monitor this policy. The FEPC was a watch-dog committee without teeth, but while it had no power it could advocate change. This was the beginning of a recognition that the labor force was changing and the laws would have to be adjusted. This was as far as Presidents Truman and Eisenhower went as well, the appointment of advisory committees to monitor events.

In sum, in response to the collective denial of rights to all Black people, most policy measures were designed to address the grievances of individuals complaints. But Black leadership has always had to uphold both the individual complaint, and their rightful claim to group redress.

We can find these themes in the famous "I Have A Dream" speech by Martin Luther King (August 1963, March on Washington). King said "I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character." This hope for individual freedom was contained within his commitment to fight for group advancement: "...we have come to our nation's capital to cash a check....America has given the Negro people a bad check; a check which has come back marked 'insufficient funds.'...So we have come to cash this check -- a check that will give up upon demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice."

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION AS PUBLIC POLICY

The affirmative action policy had a two phased beginning over the decade from 1961 to 1971. The first phase began in 1961 when President Kennedy issued Executive Order 10925 that used the phrase "affirmative action" to spell out a voluntary anti-discriminatory civil rights policy. This phrase had been used in the 1935 Wagner Act of Congress to protect the rights of workers to a union, and to empower the federal government (i.e., the National Labor Relations Board) to get workers rehired if they had been unfairly dismissed

for union activity. Kennedy used the term to mean only that government employers and contractors should not discriminate, and should hire workers "without regard to their race, creed, color, or national origin."

The major legislative initiative was the passing of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. This law spelled out in more detail than ever before a commitment to follow through on the post Civil War Constitutional amendments regarding voting, the desegregation of public life and schools, including employment by government agencies and government contractors. This Act created the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). The key parts of this were Title VI, that stipulated nondiscrimination in federally assisted programs, and Title VII, that stipulated the policy of equal employment opportunity.

The comprehensiveness of this bill was in part due to the swing of public opinion based on the massive civil rights struggles, and in part due to the necessity of the Black vote to secure the electoral base of the Democratic party. Kennedy had won the presidential election in 1960 only with the overwhelming support of the Black vote as he had actually lost the white vote in key states like Illinois! After Kennedy was assassinated, President Lyndon Johnson got behind the Civil Rights Bill as a memorial to the late president, and as a way to place himself at the head of the civil rights movement.

Following its enactment, in June 1965 President Johnson gave a speech at Howard University, a historically Black institution in Washington DC. He said "We seek...not just equality as a right and a theory but equality as a fact and equality as a result." Then in September Johnson issued Executive Order 11246 that directed the Labor Department to set up machinery to put teeth behind the contract compliance provision of Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. This led to the Office of Federal Contract Compliance (OFCC). Thus, the second phase of the affirmative action policy initiative was started.

The Black freedom struggle has always been the vanguard effort for expanding the broad democratic rights of all other sections of the US population. In the Executive Order 11246 Johnson had included in addition to "Negroes," such other groups as Orientals, American Indians, and Spanish Americans. These terms reflect the confusion in US law for dealing with nationality groups (confusion in all ways except immigration law!). The ambiguous term Oriental was not defined further, but Spanish Americans was broken down into Latin American, Mexican, Puerto Rican or Spanish origin, and then later clarified as all Spanish surnamed persons. Later in 1967, Executive Order 11375 extended coverage to all women.

By May 1968 the OFCC had issued comprehensive guidelines that spelled out the official interpretation of the law. Each contractor was required to prepare and submit a written affirmative action plan if they had 50 or more employees and a contract of at least \$50,000. "The contractor's program shall provide in detail for specific steps to guarantee equal employment opportunity keyed to the problems and needs of members of minority groups, including, when there are deficiencies, the development of specific goals and time-tables for the prompt achievement of full and equal employment opportunity. Each contractor shall include in his affirmative action compliance program a table of job classifications....The evaluation of utilization of minority group personnel shall include...an analysis of minority group representation in all categories."

The first major campaign was launched against racial discrimination in the construction industry. This was a vital area of the economy as construction involved so many facets of industrial activity. The trade unions were vulnerable as these skilled trades recruited through guild-like procedures limited usually to ethnic/familial networks. The OFCC took a plan that had been developed in Philadelphia as its basis for national policy. In Philadelphia the local authority had challenged the local builders to hire Black workers in each job category to match the proportion of Blacks in the entire work force, which was 30% in Philadelphia. But, national resistance developed around the question of whether this goal oriented Philadelphia Plan was in violation of Title VI. Things stalled., but it was clear that there was a policy shift beginning from one of equality of opportunity to equality of results.

By the end of the 1960's the EEOC and the OFCC were firmly established and being reproduced throughout federal, state, and local government agencies. Affirmative action was appearing everywhere as the most pervasive policy of the government by which the demands of the Black community were being coopted. The election of Richard Nixon in 1968 and 1972 changed the direction further to "take race into account." This followed the Black movement as by 1966 in Mississippi Black militants had raised the Black Power slogan, and then by 1968 the Black middle class had accommodated themselves to this new development by interpreting it in their interests as leading to "Green Power" [green being the color of money in the USA]. The Republican Party began to solicit support from the Black middle class by redefining "Black Power = Green Power" as a new era of "Black capitalism." For the working class their new race specific agenda was designed to drive a wedge between the Black movement and the white trade unions. The Philadelphia Plan was reinstated in 1970, and affirmed by the Supreme Court in 1971. This established the policy of proportional hiring to over-come a pattern of discrimination.

The Supreme Court clarified things further in the 1971 Griggs v. Duke Power Co. ruling by establishing the disparate impact standard by which the plaintiff merely had to show a pattern of statistical disparity. The company in question had the burden of proof that their job qualifications and hiring practices were a "business necessity," that they had "job relatedness," but in no instance were cost based defenses allowed. Given the overwhelming patterns of racial stratification and job recruitment the Griggs ruling unleashed an explosion of legal challenges. On study reports that annual discrimination law litigation increased from 350 cases in 1970 to over 7,600 in 1989.

However, in less than a decade a counter movement got a hearing in court based on the claim that while affirmative action programs might help some Blacks overcome the disadvantaged state of all Blacks in the past, all too often they unduly disadvantaged whites today who had nothing to do with the crimes committed in the past. This was the claim that affirmative action was "reverse discrimination" against whites. The Supreme Court ruled in Bakke v. University of California (1978) that the university could have an affirmative action policy to develop a diverse student body but that they had to use the category "disadvantaged" rather than "race." Further, in 1979 the Supreme Court ruled in United Steelworkers of America v. Weber that an affirmative action hiring plan based on "disparate impact" would be supported only to the extent that it did not lead to the firing or displacing of white workers.

On the other hand, while the trend was cooling down for employment things began to pick up for minority business activity. In 1977 when the US Congress passed the \$4 billion Public Works Employment Act they included a provision for minority business: "...ten per centum of...each grant shall be expended for minority business enterprises." This was to overcome the fact that minorities were at least 18% of the population but minority businesses got less than 1% of federal contracts. The Supreme Court upheld this law (Fullilove v. Klutznick, 1980).

The high tide of affirmative action was the 1970's, however Ronald Reagan was elected President in 1980 and 1984, followed by George Bush in 1988, both as opponents of affirmative action. Together they represent a total of 12 years of policy that reversed things in a very dramatic way. They began to cut back the budget and staff of the regulatory agencies related to the EEOC and the OFCC. And, most importantly, they began to appoint judges throughout the federal system, including the Supreme Court, in keeping with their ultra-conservative views. One study looked at presidential judicial appointments of judges whose net worth was over \$500,000. Of all their respective appointments, such wealthy appointments made up 17% from Carter, 45% from Reagan, and 75% from Bush! Overall, Reagan and Bush over twelve years appointed 440 of the 837 lifetime federal judges. They have appointed the majority

of Supreme Court justices, and a majority on 11 of the 13 federal circuit courts.

The death knell for affirmative action began to ring in 1989 based on two significant Supreme Court rulings. In *Wards Cove Packing Co. v. Atonio* the Court ruled that merely showing statistical disparity was insufficient to make a case for discrimination. The Court required the plaintiff to show a causal link between a policy and discrimination. This was a clear reversal of the Philadelphia Plan, in that it reversed the Griggs ruling, and shifted the burden of proof from the company involved to the person being discriminated against. Also, in the *City of Richmond v. Croson* the Supreme Court ruled against a minority set aside case because they held that sufficient evidence hadn't been presented to make a case of discrimination. However, the ruling did not declare that all such set aside programs were ruled out as a matter of principle, just made harder to justify. In general the trend is away from the Court accepting class actions that assume the legitimacy of claims against past discrimination to deciding individual cases in which the plaintiff has the burden of proof. In addition to this, the 1991 Civil Rights Act essentially wrote these rulings into law ending at least the current era of affirmative action.

We can summarize that the affirmative action debate revolves around three theoretical problems/questions:

1. Does racism and national oppression exist in the USA as critical problems to be solved? This is a critical issue as it forces one to rethink the legal terms for democracy. The issues seem to revolve around whether one is focused on de jure or de facto patterns of oppression, more conservative positions tend to hang on the letter of the law while more radical critiques point to the lived experiences of the oppressed.

2. Is it possible to eliminate discriminatory practices and be fair to everyone? This is the issue of whether affirmative action is inevitably a zero sum game in which whites lose. On this basis, some white people have charged "reverse discrimination."

3. Is it possible to guarantee results, to establish equality as historical fact? This is the controversial issue of quota or goal setting. There are many issues here: Does capitalism require a meritocratic society? Can a meritocracy be fair? Do short run gains pay off in the long run? What are the unintended consequences of any stigma associated with a position based on special preferential treatment?

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION RESULTS ?

As the saying goes, the proof of the pudding is in the eating. So, the utility of an affirmative action policy is whether any real changes take place as a result of the policy. This is a somewhat difficult issue as what impacts change involves the entire scope of political and economic forces at work in the situation. There are some studies, but the data is not nearly what we need.

There has always been a large number of claims made against acts of discrimination. The EEOC reports that in 1979 there were 35,275 charges made, and by 1992 the number had gone up to 70,339. However, one study pointed out that the per cent of these cases dealing with racial discrimination had been declining. In 1970 85% of the cases dealt with race, in 1980 - 61%, and in 1992 only 40%. What was happening is that by 1992 27% of the claims were about age discrimination, and from 1991 on the fastest growing claims were about sexual harassment (from 1991 - 1992, an increase of 50%).

One approach to affirmative action results has been to compare those firms covered by EEOC with those not covered. In 1966 Black men were 8% less likely than white men to work in firms covered by the EEOC, but by 1980 Black men were 26% more likely to do so. For Black men in professional jobs the change was from 41% less likely to be equally as likely as white men to be so employed. It is clear that for many Black people the affirmative action policy has meant a job when there would have been none, or a promotion that would have been denied.

However, there are data which indicates that even these findings are unclear. Of all EEOC claims in 1985 only 19% were about discrimination in hiring, while 59% were about discrimination for being discharged. Is the meaning of affirmative action offensive or defensive? And wage disparity tended to increase on the job. While in some cases for college graduates entering the job market in 1971 Black incomes were equal to or exceeded those for whites, by 1989 Black college graduates only made 75% as much as their white counterparts.

The overall situation that we end up with today is summed up in a recent editorial comment in the Boston Globe Newspaper (9/24/93):

"...The Wall Street Journal reported that between July 1990 and March 1991 - the official dates of the last recession - three years of gains in Black employment were wiped out at companies that provide employment statistics to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. While whites gained 71,144 jobs at these companies, Hispanics gained 60,040 and Asians gained 55,104, Blacks lost 59,479."

Coca-Cola's Black employees made up only 17.89 percent of the company's work force in 1990 but represented 42 percent of the jobs lost by 1991. At McDonald's, where African-Americans made up 23 percent of the work force, they represented 36.52 percent of the job losses. Bank America's Black workers represented 7.9 percent of its employees and 28 percent of its cutbacks. Digital's Black employees represented 6.84 percent of the work force and bore 11 percent of the job loss.

...corporations and the government must own up to racist policies and halfhearted commitments to affirmative action that have sunk Black America into a depression that will have dire implications for the entire nation."

To be more descriptive of the situation that we find today, it is important to point out that Black people remain the main barometer of how far the USA falls short of a democratic society based on "freedom, justice, and equality." This point can be made by discussing two major issues, income and crime.

1. INCOME: The good news is that from 1967 to 1990 Black families making over \$50,000 increased from 7% to 15% of all Black families. On the other hand, those families making less than \$5,000 increased from 8% to 12%. Based on official government statistics the following racial comparison can be made for people living below the poverty level:

FAMILIES BELOW THE POVERTY LEVEL (PER CENT)

YEAR	WHITE	BLACK
-----	-----	-----
1960	14.9%	38.8%
1970	8.0	29.5
1980	8.0	28.9
1990	8.1	29.3

Further, overall the distribution of income adds up to slippage in median family income, as each decade Blacks fall behind in real purchasing power:

MEDIAN FAMILY INCOME (1990 DOLLARS)

YEAR	WHITE	BLACK	DIFFERENCE
-----	-----	-----	-----
1970	\$34,481	\$21,151	\$13,330
1980	34,743	20,151	14,640
1990	36,915	21,423	15,492

Within these data there is polarization in the Black community. In 1967 over 75% of all Black families were two-parent families, but by 1990 this had declined to 47.8%. Over 70% of all Black poverty was concentrated in the single parent household. However, the top 20 percent of Black families earned \$61,213, only 64% of the top

20 percent of white families who earned \$95,042.

2. CRIME: The anti discriminatory progress is that in the largest cities Black mayors have been elected and they in turn appoint Blacks as Chief of Police, e.g., this has been true in New York, Detroit, Philadelphia, Chicago, Atlanta, Los Angeles, etc. Most of this is the result of Black political power in the cities, and an aggressive use of local affirmative action programs. This is demonstrated by the fact that there were almost 100,000 new police jobs created from 1970 to 1990 and Black got over 40% of them. in 1970 there were about 214,000 Black police officers in the USA and by 1990 the number had grown to 63,855. The bad news is that they were hired to arrest Black people.

While Blacks were less than 15% of the urban population in the US they were more than 50% of all arrests, and over 60% of all arrests for robbery. On any given day over 1/3 of all Black men are under some kind of jurisdiction by the criminal justice system. Blacks constitute over 10% of the work force but only 3.2% of lawyers, although in 1960 Blacks were only 1.3% of all lawyers. Within a bad situation one can see some progress, and one can at least hypothesize that the progress came as a result of some kind of affirmative action program.

The juxtaposition of income and crime helps us to see that there is a real polarization in the Black community. On the one hand there is the Black middle class who has gained from affirmative action, is leading a comparatively comfortable life, but is still discriminated against as compared to its white counterpart. On the other hand at the opposite end of the spectrum is a growing impoverished class of people who barely have enough to survive. The middle class is increasingly being brought into the police forces to deal with the impoverished section, especially in the cities. So far, Black progress is for some, not for all!

THE AFFIRMATIVE ACTION POLICY DEBATE CONTINUES

We can sum up the general historical dynamic utilizing a schemata developed by Bart Landry in his analysis of the new Black middle class. Landry argues that the 1960's was key because there was a Black movement with a liberal government that created a positive political climate that went along with a positive economic environment of an expanding economy. This is a formula for clarifying the social process of successful reform politics, and as such we have to repeat that affirmative action is a perfect example.

CONDITIONS FOR BLACK SOCIAL PROGRESS

	ECONOMIC CLIMATE -----	POLITICAL CLIMATE -----
1950'S	+	-
1960'S	+	+
1970'S	-	+
1980'S	-	-

But, there is another story to tell. The economic climate in the 1970's and 1980's was not merely a quantitative slow down as part of the business cycle. The changes of the 1970's were the beginning of a revolutionary qualitative transformation of the production forces. This economic revolution is polarizing class relations in the US and throughout the global economy, and on this basis society is being reorganized.

The first industrial revolution began at the end of the 18th century and utilized the steam engine, mechanized textile production, the railroad, and the systematization of technology through standardized parts. The second industrial revolution was between 1860 and 1910 and represented break throughs in electricity, telephone and telegraph, radio and cinema, as well as chemicals, oil and rubber, and automobiles. We are now in the third industrial revolution based on the computer and robotics, the information revolution.

The technical division of labor, the grouping of skills together into job categories, must be reorganized in an economic revolution. Today, whole sets of jobs are being liquidated forever and new ones are coming into being. This is not only happening as a result of the computerization of industry, including replacing people with robots, but it also involves the computerization of the computer industry itself. Thus we get the "down sizing" of industry, keeping productivity up based on the new technology, but forcing some people to face permanent unemployment. A big example of this is in the steel industry. In 1970 there were 531,000 workers in steel plants, and by 1991 the number declined to 185,000.

The automobile industry is another important story. In 1913 Henry Ford started the first modern assembly line. By the 1940's the world's largest auto plant was the Ford River Rouge Plant in Detroit that employed over 60,000 workers. Today, the plant produces more cars but only employs less than 15,000 workers. Further, Detroit has changed. It is now 75% Black, and an urban disaster. Between 1970 and 1990, the unemployment rate in Detroit nearly tripled, from 7.2% to 19.7%; the poverty rate doubled, from 14.9% to 32.4%; and median household income plunged, from \$25,000 to \$18,700.

What is the role of affirmative action in this kind of economic environment? The issue is either one of a diminishing job market and therefore affirmative action can only be perceived as a zero-sum game by everyone in the job market, that's

the best case scenario. The worst case is permanent unemployment, or no game at all. This is the most profound class question, and as such it takes us back to the same crisis of emancipation in the middle of the 19th century. The profound possibility is based on the economic transformation that is taking place. The situation then was whether Black people were going to own land and have economic independence. Today, the crisis is being part of the new high tech economy, by having at least a college education and then whether you have a job or not having sufficient income to lead a decent life. This raises the political stakes past reform to the necessity for revolution.

SELECTED REFERENCES

1. Thomas G. Abram, "The Law, Its Interpretation, Levels of Enforcement Activity, and Effect on Employed Behavior," American Economic Association Papers and Proceedings Vol 83 (May, 1993) pp 66 - 66
2. Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, Affirmative Action Revisited (a Symposium) Vol 523 (September, 1992) pp 7 - 220
3. Herman Belz, Equality Transformed: A Quarter-Century of Affirmative Action (New Brunswick, USA: Transaction Publishers, 1991)
4. W. Avon Drake and Robert D. Holsworth, "Electoral Politics, Affirmative Action, and the Supreme Court: The Case of Richmond v. Croson," The National Political Science Review: A Publication of the National Conference of Black Political Scientists Volume 2 (1990) pp 65 - 91
5. Nathan Glazer, Affirmative Discrimination: Ethnic Inequality and Public Policy (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987)
6. Andrew Hacker, Two Nations: Black and White, Separate, Hostile, Unequal (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1992)
7. Gerald Horne, Reversing Discrimination: The Case for Affirmative Action (New York: International Publishers, 1992)
8. Christopher Jencks, Rethinking Social Policy: Race, Poverty, and the Underclass (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992)
9. Seymour Martin Lipset, "Affirmative Action and the American Creed," The Wilson Quarterly Vol 16, (Winter, 1992) pp 52 - 62.
10. James Smith, "Affirmative Action and the Racial Wage Gap," American Economics Association Papers and Proceedings Vol 83 (May, 1993) pp 79 - 84
11. William Julius Wilson, The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass and Public Policy (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987)