

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### ONE AMERICA IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY: FORGING A NEW FUTURE

*Today, I ask the American people to join me in a great national effort to perfect the promise of America for this new time as we seek to build our more perfect union....That is the unfinished work of our time, to lift the burden of race and redeem the promise of America.*

—President Clinton, June 14, 1997

America's greatest promise in the 21st century lies in our ability to harness the strength of our racial diversity. The greatest challenge facing Americans is to accept and take pride in defining ourselves as a multiracial democracy. At the end of the 20th century, America has emerged as the worldwide symbol of opportunity and freedom through leadership that constantly strives to give meaning to democracy's fundamental principles. These principles—justice, opportunity, equality, and racial inclusion—must continue to guide the planning for our future.

On June 13, 1997, President William Jefferson Clinton issued Executive Order No. 13050 (the “Executive Order”), which created the Initiative on Race (the “Initiative”) and authorized the creation of an Advisory Board to advise the President on how to build one America for the 21st century. The Board, consisting of Dr. John Hope Franklin (chairman), Linda Chavez-Thompson, Reverend Dr. Suzan D. Johnson Cook, Thomas H. Kean, Angela E. Oh, Bob Thomas, and William F. Winter, was tasked with examining race, racism, and the potential for racial reconciliation in America using a process of study, constructive dialogue, and action.

Board members have spent the last 15 months seeking ways to build a more united and just America. They have canvassed the country meeting with and listening to Americans who revealed how race and racism have impacted their lives. Board meetings focused on the role race plays in civil rights enforcement, education, poverty, employment, housing, stereotyping, the administration of justice, health care, and immigration. Members have convened forums with leaders from the religious and corporate sectors.

This Report, a culmination of the Board's efforts, is not a definitive analysis of the state of race relations in America today. Board members had no independent authority to commit Federal resources to a particular problem, community, or organization. Rather, this Report is an account of the

Board's experiences and impressions and includes all of the recommendations for action submitted by the Board to the President following its formal meetings. Many have already been implemented or are awaiting congressional action.

## **CHAPTER ONE—SEARCHING FOR COMMON GROUND**

Throughout the year, the Board heard stories and shared experiences that reinforced its belief that we are a country whose citizens are more united than divided. All too often, however, racial differences and discrimination obstruct our ability to move beyond race and color to recognize our common values and goals. Common values include the thirst for freedom, desire for equal opportunity, and a belief in fairness and justice; collective goals are securing a decent affordable home, a quality education, and a job that pays decent wages. All people, regardless of race, want financial and personal security, adequate and available health care, and children who are healthy and well-educated. Chapter One discusses these shared goals and values and also describes how the Initiative used dialogue as a tool for finding common ground. Through One America Conversations, the Campus Week of Dialogue, Statewide Days of Dialogue, tribal leaders meetings, and the *One America Dialogue Guide*, the Initiative was able to spark dialogue across the country. The chapter also points to the importance of recruiting a cadre of leaders to provide strong leadership in the corporate, religious, and youth sectors of our society and provides examples of Promising Practices.

## **CHAPTER TWO—STRUGGLING WITH THE LEGACY OF RACE AND COLOR**

Chapter Two confronts the legacy of race in this country and in so doing, answers the question of whether race matters in America. Our Nation still struggles with the impact of its past policies, practices, and attitudes based on racial differences. Race and ethnicity still have profound impacts on the extent to which a person is fully included in American society and provided the equal opportunity and equal protection promised to all Americans. All of these characteristics continue to affect an individual's opportunity to receive an education, acquire the skills necessary to maintain a good job, have access to adequate health care, and receive equal justice under the law.

Americans must improve their understanding of the history of race in this country and the effect this history has on the way many minorities and people of color are treated today. Each minority group shares a common history of legally mandated and/or socially and economically imposed sub-

ordination to white European-Americans and their descendants. In this chapter, the experiences of American Indians and Alaska Natives, African Americans, Latinos, Asian Pacific Americans, and white immigrants are highlighted.

The lesson of this chapter is that the absence of both knowledge and understanding about the role race has played in our collective history continues to make it difficult to find solutions that will improve race relations, eliminate disparities, and create equal opportunities in all areas of American life. This absence also contributes to conflicting views on race and racial progress held by Americans of color and white Americans.

This is especially relevant in the context of race-conscious affirmative action programs. Lack of knowledge and understanding about the genesis and consequences of racial discrimination in America often make it difficult to discuss affirmative action remedies productively. It also obscures the significant progress made in the last two decades in eliminating racial disparities in the workplace and in educational institutions through the use of properly constructed affirmative action strategies.

### **CHAPTER THREE—THE CHANGING FACE OF AMERICA**

In Chapter Three, the Board examines the changing face of America. The discussion of race in this country is no longer a discussion between and about blacks and whites. Increasingly, conversations about race must include all Americans, including, but not limited to, Hispanics, American Indians and Alaska Natives, and Asian Pacific Americans. Statistics show that by the year 2050, the population in the United States will be approximately 53 percent white, 25 percent Hispanic, 14 percent black, 8 percent Asian Pacific American, and 1 percent American Indian and Alaska Native. This represents a significant shift from our current demographics of 73 percent white, 12 percent black, 11 percent Hispanic, 4 percent Asian Pacific American, and 1 percent American Indian and Alaska Native.

Further complicating the discussions of race is the increasing amount of interracial marriages. Americans are marrying persons of a different race at consistently high rates. U.S. Census data show that 31 percent of native-born Hispanic husbands and wives, between ages 25 and 34, have white spouses. In the native-born Asian Pacific American category, 36 percent of the men and 45 percent of the women marry white spouses.

The complexities, challenges, and opportunities that arise from our growing diversity point to the need for a new language, one that accurately reflects this diversity. Our dialogue must reflect the steps being taken to close the gap in data reporting on America's less visible racial groups—American

Indians, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, and all of the subgroups of Asian Pacific Americans and Hispanics.

## **CHAPTER FOUR—BRIDGING THE GAP**

Chapter Four summarizes key facts and background information that emerged from each of the Board's formal meetings and the recommendations made to the President on civil rights enforcement, education, economic opportunity, stereotypes, criminal justice, health care, and the immigrant experience. The data show that although minorities and people of color have made progress in terms of the indicators used to measure quality of life, persistent barriers to their full inclusion in American society remain.

In the area of civil rights enforcement, the Board made the following recommendations:

- Strengthen civil rights enforcement.
- Improve data collection on racial and ethnic discrimination.
- Strengthen laws and enforcement against hate crimes.

Two of the early Board meetings focused on the role of education in helping to overcome racial disparities. These meetings stressed the importance of educating children in high-quality, integrated schools, where they have the opportunity to learn about and from each other. These meetings served as the basis for the following recommendations:

- Enhance early childhood learning.
- Strengthen teacher preparation and equity.
- Promote school construction.
- Promote movement from K-12 to higher education.
- Promote the benefits of diversity in K-12 and higher education.
- Provide education and skills training to overcome increasing income inequality that negatively affects the immigrant population.
- Implement the Comprehensive Indian Education Policy.

The Board analyzed the issue of economic opportunity through formal meetings on employment and poverty. Information gathered showed that a substantial amount of disparity remains between the economic prosperity of whites and most minority groups. Also, the Board found clear evidence of active forms of discrimination in employment, pay, housing, and consumer and credit markets. The Board made the following recommendations for correcting these disparities:

- Examine income inequality.
- Support supplements for Small Business Administration programs.
- Use the current economic boom to provide necessary job training and to increase the minimum wage.
- Evaluate anti-poverty program effectiveness.
- Provide a higher minimum wage for low-wage workers and their families.
- Improve racial data collection.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of job-training programs designed to reach minority and immigrant communities.
- Commission a study to examine American Indian economic development.
- Support the right of working people to engage in collective bargaining.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development convened a meeting for the Board on race and housing. Active forms of racial discrimination continue to plague our housing markets. According to current statistics, blacks and Hispanics are likely to be discriminated against roughly half of the time that they go to look for a home or apartment. The recommendations for addressing the disparities in the area of housing follow:

- Continue to use testing to develop evidence of continuing discrimination.
- Highlight housing integration efforts.
- Support the increase and targeting of Federal funds for urban revitalization.
- Support community development corporations.
- Promote American Indian access to affordable housing.

In one meeting, the Board addressed the issues surrounding negative racial stereotypes, which are the core elements of discrimination and racial division. Stereotypes influence how people of different races and ethnicities view and treat each other. The Board's recommendations on stereotypes, which follow, focus on using both public and private institutions and individuals to challenge policymakers and institutional leaders to examine the role stereotypes play in policy development, institutional practices, and our view of our own racial identity:

- Hold a Presidential event to discuss stereotypes.

- Institutionalize the Administration's promotion of racial dialogue.
- Convene a high-level meeting on the problem of racial stereotypes with leaders from the media.

At the Board meeting on race, crime, and the administration of justice, experts explained how racial disparities and prejudices affect the way in which minorities are treated by the criminal system. Examples of this phenomenon can be found in the use of racial profiling in law enforcement and in the differences in the rates of arrest, conviction, and sentencing between whites and minorities and people of color. These discoveries led to the following recommendations:

- Expand data collection and analysis.
- Consider restricting the use of racial profiling.
- Eliminate racial stereotypes and diversify law enforcement.
- Reduce or eliminate drug sentencing disparities.
- Promote comprehensive efforts to keep young people out of the criminal justice system.
- Continue to enhance community policing and related strategies.
- Support initiatives that improve access to courts.
- Support American Indian law enforcement.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services sponsored a meeting on race and health for the Board. Disparities in the treatment of whites and minorities and people of color by the health care system can be attributed to disparities in employment, income, and wealth. The Board made the following recommendations as a result of information received at this meeting:

- Continue advocating for broad-based expansions in health insurance coverage.
- Continue advocacy of increased health care access for underserved groups.
- Continue pushing Congress for full funding of the Race and Ethnic Health Disparities Initiatives.
- Increase funding for existing programs targeted to under served and minority populations.
- Enhance financial and regulatory mechanisms to promote culturally competent care.

- Emphasize the importance of cultural competence to institutions training health care providers.

The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and the Georgetown University Law Center jointly sponsored a meeting for the Board that explored immigration and race. Evidence showed that race is the source of a fundamental rift in American society that affects immigrants and their experiences with discrimination. The Board issued the following recommendations as a result of the information it received in this meeting:

- Strongly enforce anti-discrimination measures on behalf of every racial and ethnic minority group.
- Back programs that would promote a clear understanding of the rights and duties of citizenship.
- Support immigrant-inclusion initiatives.

## CHAPTER FIVE—FORGING A NEW FUTURE

Chapter Five calls for the continuation of the Initiative to complete the work already begun. The following elements are the most critical in developing a meaningful long-term strategy to advance race relations in the 21st century:

- **A President’s Council for One America.** This year’s effort has been vital in laying the foundation for the larger task that lies ahead. The creation of a President’s Council for One America speaks to the need for a long-term strategy dedicated to building on the vision of one America. Its main function would be to coordinate and monitor the implementation of policies designed to increase opportunity and eliminate racial disparities.
- **A public education program using a multimedia approach.** A public education program could assist in keeping the American public informed on the facts about race in America, pay tribute to the different racial and ethnic backgrounds of Americans, and emphasize and highlight the common values we share as a racially diverse Nation.
- **A Presidential “call to action” of leaders from all sectors of our society.** A call to action should come from the President to leaders in State and local government and private sector organizations to address the racial and ethnic divides in their communities. Public/private partnerships can demonstrate leadership by working collaboratively to make racial reconciliation a reality in all communities across America.

- **A focus on youth.** Young Americans are this Nation's greatest hope for realizing the goal of one America. Young people must be engaged in efforts to bridge racial divides and promote racial reconciliation. Organizations and groups that encourage the development of youth leaders must be supported.

This chapter also includes a brief discussion of other critical issues, such as environmental justice, media and stereotyping, and police misconduct, that the Advisory Board believes deserve further dialogue. Among these issues is affirmative action, which the Board believes remains an important tool among many for overcoming racial discrimination and promoting the benefits of diversity in education, employment, and other contexts.

Chapter Five concludes with the 10 suggestions on how Americans can help to build on the momentum that will lead our Nation into the 21st century as one America.