

## Education

**Q: Other than school standards, what can be done to improve diversity in our nation's elementary schools?**

A: We should place a high value on racial and ethnic diversity at all levels of our education system, not just in elementary school. Over the long term, having strong, diverse schools, with high expectations for every student, will help all our students succeed in an increasingly diverse economy.

We need to help communities throughout America develop safe, disciplined schools that help all students master the basics and reach high standards -- schools where students learn to read and to do math, where they can get extra help if they need it, where they can learn to take advantage of the Internet, and where they are taught from early on that a college education is within reach if they are willing to work for it. Good schools that have high expectations for students, and where the whole school is accountable for student success, will attract all kinds of parents and students, and the result will be a richer learning environment for all.

For this to happen we must attract highly qualified teachers to schools serving poor and disadvantaged kids. We've got to harness technology to insure that no matter where they go to school, in the inner city or in poor rural areas, that students have access to the same world of information on the Internet. And we must begin to address the infrastructure needs facing schools around the country, because students can't learn in buildings that are literally crumbling around them. Finally, we need to help teachers, parents, business and community leaders start more public charter schools that are open to students of all backgrounds and that only stay open as long as they do a good job.

Draft Q/A  
on Diversity

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1. NY Times - I/V  
2. Korea -

Advance Questions Submitted by Jodi Enda - Knight - Rider

1. **Affirmative Action**

CE  
How can you accomplish your goals of diversity in the face of the current backlash, especially among those in the white community? What do you see as possible alternatives to affirmative action?

SMC/SW 2. **Race Initiative**

What do you hope the race initiative will accomplish by the end of it's year run? Are you satisfied with your progress thus far?

3. **Racial and Ethnic Stereotypes**

How can the race initiative help to curb destructive racial and ethnic stereotypes? How can it help to change attitudes?

CE  
Lackhart/McLum? How can the race initiative help to deal with those stereotypes promoted by the media itself?

DRC 4. **Education**

Other than school standards, what can be done to improve diversity in our nation's elementary schools?

DRC 5. **Discrimination by the Police and Courts**

Do you plan to address discrimination by the police and court system as part of the race initiative?

DRC 6. **Civil Rights Enforcement**

What changes or new policies do you hope to see implemented in the near future?

COPY ALL DAC STAFF

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## RACE INITIATIVE Qs & As

### THE INITIATIVE

**Q: Is systemic racism and bigotry still a crucial problem for the United States? Is race still an impediment to opportunity and progress in America?**

**A:** America is moving closer to fulfilling its fundamental promise of equality and the opportunity of advancement for all. President Clinton has worked to restore the American dream by expanding the economy, investing in education and making our communities safer. However, more needs to be done. We face new challenges and a very different America in the next century.

For instance, there are four school systems in the country right now, including one across the river (in Virginia) where the school children represent over 150 nations and speak over 100 different languages all in a single district. We should embrace such diversity.

Unfortunately, there are some disturbing examples of going backward: the lack of economic progress among Hispanic Americans; the greatly reduced number of African-American and Hispanic students in California and Texas universities; and the young, African-American boy in Chicago who was dragged from his bicycle and beaten just because of his color.

**Q: How was this initiative developed? Who did the President call on among the White House staff?**

**A:** The President charged Erksine Bowles and Sylvia Mathews with developing the parameters of an initiative that would move to fulfill America's promise of opportunity and fairness for all Americans, and that would promote unity while preserving cultural differences.

Sylvia convened an internal working group of approximately 25 individuals from different offices within the White House and from different races. The group met regularly starting in March, and daily for the past few weeks. Erskine and other members of the senior staff participated periodically in the working group meetings. The President received regular updates on the group's direction and progress.

**Q: How can the President ask others to "get their houses in order" on this subject, when the White House itself lacks diversity, especially in its upper ranks?**

**A:** President Clinton is proud of the record diversity of his Administration. He has appointed more African Americans, Hispanics and Asian Americans than any other President.

Cabinet: 15% African American [Alexis Herman (Labor), Rodney Slater (Transportation), Jesse Brown (Veterans Affairs) and Frank Raines (OMB)]; 12% Hispanic [Bill Richardson (UN), Aida Alvarez (SBA), Federico Pena (Energy)].

Presidential Appointments: 13% African American (twice as many as any previous Administration); 8% Hispanic; 3% Asian American; 1% Native American.

**Q: Isn't this just the President's reactionary position after the Administration has neglected to take stronger stances on behalf of minorities?**

**A:** The President wants *this issue* to get more media attention. The President has consistently said he had three goals in running for the office: to keep the American Dream alive for everyone who wanted to work for it; to keep America a force in the world for peace and democracy; and to keep us "One America," a nation coming together instead of coming apart.

The Administration has made real progress on issues of economic opportunity, strengthening families, reducing crime rates, and foreign policy (the first two goals).

Economic policies that have helped the entire country have also helped minorities.

- The unemployment rate for Hispanic Americans in May was about 7 percent, down from 11 percent when President Clinton took office.
- The African-American poverty rate dropped to 29 percent in 1995 -- its lowest level since data was collected.
- The Administration has approved more than \$2 billion in Small Business Administration loans to Asian Americans.

The time is right to move forward more aggressively on the President's third goal. Already the President has taken action in this area with his apology, on behalf of the federal government, to the victims of the Tuskegee experiment and his commitment to a White House conference on hate crimes. In addition, an interagency group is exploring how to address the problem of declining diversity in student bodies.

### **PRESIDENT'S COMMITMENT**

**Q: The President seems to waiver in his commitment to this issue. One day he asks the Supreme Court not to hear an affirmative action case and the next day he announces an initiative on improving race relations. How serious is he about this initiative?**

**A:** The President is very serious about this initiative. He has been steadfast throughout his life and professional career in his pursuit of equality and opportunity for all.

- The President's experiences with discrimination are rooted in the South's legacy of slavery.

- As a candidate, the President has consistently said one of his main goals in running for the office was to keep the American Dream alive for everyone who wanted to work for it and to keep us “one America,” a nation coming together instead of coming apart.
- As President, he has been a constant voice in pressing racial healing and unity. For instance: speeches in Memphis, Tennessee, in 1993 and Austin, Texas, in 1995; inaugural and State of the Union addresses this year; and remarks at the Jackie Robinson anniversary commemoration.

President Clinton’s personal history and conviction to lead this country in finding strength in our diversity make him well-suited to help forge alliances and reconcile differences among us. The President will be actively involved in the initiative and will help provide its intellectual leadership.

**Q: Does the President really expect this initiative to make a difference or is it just a way for him to get more media attention?**

**A:** This initiative will attempt to identify and create solutions for improving race relations and the circumstances of Americans of all races. Those solutions will be designed for individuals, communities, religious congregations, educational and non-profit organizations, businesses, state and local governments, and other groups to implement. The Administration will develop wholly new policy and refocus existing policy. Some policies will respond to information arising as the initiative moves forward. Other policies will attempt to address longstanding problems in new and creative ways.

## **EXPECTATIONS**

**Q: Will this initiative address the serious imbalances in opportunity that can be attributed to race?**

**A:** This initiative will study the imbalances in opportunity that can be attributed to race, open channels for discussion about those imbalances and create or refocus policy to address those imbalances.

We will strive to identify and create solutions for improving race relations and the circumstances of Americans of all races. Those solutions will be designed for individuals, communities, religious congregations, educational and non-profit organizations, businesses, state and local governments, and other groups to implement.

**Q: How can the President hope to improve race relations and the lot of minorities without dedicating significant funds to the problems that arise from racism?**

**A:** Different times call for different solutions. The choice is not between massive programs and nothing. Much can be done within the confines of tighter federal spending that we face today and going forward. Funds can be reallocated, as they were, in the balanced

budget agreement, to provide health coverage to five million uninsured children. And we can seek creative ways to generate new funds, not just from federal and state spending.

**Q: What can we expect to see change as a result of this initiative?**

A: We will promote a better understanding of and a greater respect for both the similarities and differences between people of different races.

We will challenge leaders and “doers” will step forward, in communities throughout the nation, to find and put into practice ideas to improve race relations and stimulate opportunity for all.

We will identify and disseminate proven practices for promoting racial harmony.

We will analyze critical issues affecting race relations in this country and propose government actions and policies to address these issues.

**Q: How does the President intend to keep this from becoming just a big talk fest?**

A: The effort will be a balance of study, dialogue and action -- including fact finding and policy.

We will seek to promote honest dialogue on the issues of race and to develop real solutions that can be implemented by individuals, communities, religious congregations, educational and non-profit organizations, businesses, state and local governments, and other groups. We will undertake fact finding (e.g.: what are the stereotypes and what are the facts), dialogue and policy/action (e.g.: best practices, positions on minority enrollment in higher education) concurrently and through an iterative process.

**Q: Civil rights groups have expressed dissatisfaction that they have not been consulted and dismay at the lack of substance to the initiative. How do you respond?**

A: In the process of defining this initiative, we sought comments and ideas from numerous individuals and organizations. More importantly, we have created plenty of opportunities for future consultation. This is only the beginning of an initiative that will be a uniquely inclusive and broad-ranging year-long effort. We encourage those willing to engage in tough, honest dialogue to join us.

The President is prepared to design wholly new policy and to refocus existing policy. We will look for and implement solutions in areas such as economic opportunity, housing, health care, crime and the administration of justice. We have said all along that we will not outline a full set of proposals and recommendations at the outset. The Administration will unfold policy changes and developments over the course of the year.

## **LOGISTICS**

**Q: When will the advisory board hold its first meeting? When will it conclude its work?**

A: The advisory board will meet for the first time in the next six weeks or so. An exact date has not yet been determined. At this point, the board will likely disband after the President submits his report to the American people.

**Q: When can we expect to see the first action or policy recommendations from the advisory board?**

A: As a result of this initiative, we expect the President to implement wholly new policies as well as to reshape existing policies. The Administration's actions and policy changes will take place over the course of the year-long initiative. We cannot say when the first announcement will be. It will be several weeks before the advisory board, the initiative staff and Administration representatives start working.

## **ADVISORY BOARD**

**Q: Why did the President appoint an advisory board rather than an independent commission?**

A: This initiative is designed to use presidential leadership to prepare the American people for the next century. President Clinton's personal history and conviction to lead this country in recognizing the strength in our diversity make him well-suited to help forge new alliances among citizens. The President will be actively involved in the initiative and will help provide its intellectual leadership. He will also involve the American people in an unprecedented way.

The board members will serve as partners in the initiative by reaching out to various communities, amplifying the President's efforts and recruiting more leaders on this issue. The advisory board members were selected based on the concept that they would excel in these responsibilities and be respected, if not well known, in what is a Presidentially-led effort.

**Q: Wouldn't you have been better off with individuals with name recognition?**

A: In identifying an advisory board, the working group sought individuals who could reach out on behalf of the President to various communities, provide guidance and analysis on topics concerning race and recruit more leaders to implement solutions that will improve race relations.

We also looked for a group of individuals who would provide diversity on a number of fronts, be respected in their fields and work well together exemplifying the relationships we hope the whole initiative will engender.

Many of the advisory board's members are familiar ones, especially in their communities or areas of expertise.

**Q: How much is this initiative going to cost?**

A: We are working with the appropriators on a Justice Department reprogramming of funds for the initiative. The approximate cost of the initiative is \$2.9 million.

**Q: What is the \$2.9 million for?**

A: The funding will enable us to bring the advisory board to the American people and for providing staff who will study the issues and reach out to the American people.

**Q: Why are there no Native Americans on the advisory board?**

A: The advisory board is small in number. These individuals represent diversity in race, age, gender, background and political perspective. There will be many, many opportunities (for example: staff appointments, Presidential town hall meetings, advisory board outreach) over the course of the initiative for the President and the advisory board to work with and hear from individuals whose diversity is not reflected on the board.