

Press

(Continued from Page 6) ticularly newspapers — but [to] also go into the community and find out what [it is that basically motivates] the people the most. And they'll find that Black newspapers get [more] trust than anything else."

"I enjoyed the breakfast that they paid for. I enjoyed meeting with both of my Republican senators from Texas. However, I am very concerned that they have not spent any money with the African-American Press in America. And it would be my wish that they would support the African-American Press and also to help us to get our fair share of the millions of dollars that the government spends nationally," says *Dallas Examiner* publisher James Belt.

"I'm not only disappointed in the efforts of the Republican Party, but I am very disappointed in the efforts of the Democratic Party to make sure that the African-American Press has [gotten a] fair amount of business from the DNC and these other governmental agencies," Belt says.

Political scientists say the low spending with Black me-

dia have separate meanings for the parties.

David Covin, a political scientist at California State University, Sacramento says the Republican behavior is rooted in a historic "solid South" mentality that aims to maintain a lock on Southern White voters.

"One of the things the solid South means is that you cannot court the Black vote. You cannot do it publicly. You can do it in back doorways," says Covin, president of the National Conference of Black Political Scientists. "Almost nobody covers the Black Press convention, so they can be there and nobody will even know about it, so they don't have to worry about alienating their base. And still, they can make inroads into the Black Press."

As for the Democrats, "It could be just a presumption, again, that they're going to sew up the Black vote," says Katherine Tate, professor of political science and Afro-American Studies at the University of California at Irvine. "Or, they may not be aware of the mobilizing factor media coverage brings in terms of increasing the turn out."

Urban League

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perience are assigned to predominately Black and other racial minority schools at twice the rate that they are sent to White schools.

Social Justice: 2005 showed the equality gap between Whites and Blacks in the criminal justice system is worsening, going from 73 percent to 68 percent. Blacks are three times more likely to become prisoners once arrested, and a Black person's average jail sentence is six months longer than a White person's for the same crime — 39 months versus 33 months.

Civic Engagement: Volunteerism is declining for both Blacks and Whites, most likely because of the problems associated with the 2004 elections.

"Forty years later, we can look around and take some comfort in the gains we have made since that day. A Black middle-class that has quadrupled, an African-American poverty rate that has been cut in half, and more African-American doctors, lawyers, business owners, and elected officials than ever before," says Morial. "But when we look at where we are now, when we look at this year's State of Black America report, we see that we still have a long, long way to go."

Two years ago, the State of Black America predicted that with a third of Black families trapped near or below the poverty line, Black America would remain socially stagnant in the 21st century. Last year's report said Blacks were less than three-quarters of the way toward reaching equality with Whites, as if Blacks are still counted as three-fifths of a person as they were counted two centuries ago. The report released this week says the equality index is the same as last year — three-quarters of the way to reaching equality with Whites.

Morial and 11 social scientists, whose essays are published as part of the report, say there are answers to the disparities.

In his "Prescriptions for Change" chapter, Morial sug-

gests:

- Congress must extend the 1965 Voting Rights Act; some sections expire in 2007.

- There must be universal early childhood education with access to quality preschool education that is mandatory for every child beginning at age three.

- Over two years, raise the minimum wage from \$5.15 to \$7.25 per hour with future increases tied to an index.

- Close the homeownership gap by lowering down payment requirements and making mortgages available and affordable.

- Increase business development and access to the free enterprise system.

- Urge bipartisan Congressional effort to increase and expand funding for Community Development Block Grant programs.

- Expand job training for urban males, and develop a comprehensive reentry program for ex-felons.

- African-Americans, especially the middle class, should commit to "civic tithing" for Black institutions through financial support and volunteerism.

- African-Americans must renew focus on savings, investing and reducing consumer spending.

- Congress should be urged to support policies that increase access to affordable and preventable healthcare for African-American and other communities of color.

"It's time for America to wake up," says Morial. "The growing wealth gap in this country is not just leaving behind Black America, it's leaving behind Middle-Class America and Urban America and Rural America and Hispanic America, too. When one community in America suffers, our entire economy suffers, too. And so, if W.E.B. DuBois once identified the color line as the great challenge of the 20th century, then the economic line between Blacks and Whites; rich and poor; the haves, have-nots, and have mores is the great civil rights challenge of the 21st century."

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