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## Notes on Contemporary Issues in Black Politics

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NOTES ON  
CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN BLACK POLITICS

Before

UNIVERSITY OF DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

BY DR. J. CLAY SMITH, JR.

MARCH 24, 1982

- 1. The study of political behavior is an important way for American citizens to occupy their time.
  - a. Foreign governments study American governmental process. Why?
    - 1. to ascertain signals on foreign aid.
    - 2. to assess military alliances.
    - 3. to evaluate the balance of power.
    - 4. to generally protect their interests.
  - b. American citizens study political behavior differently from different layers or levels.
    - 1. The corporate community is highly mobilized in the science of political behavior.

(a) It influences political behavior via the financing of political candidates; it is able to finance both sides of the isle; support all types or kinds of issues -- the survival of corporate America is viewed by a large, respectable and distinguished cadre of Americans as the survival of America.

- (1) Provide jobs.
- (2) Produce military equipment.
- (3) Cultivate and support political think tanks.

2. The union community is also highly mobilized in the science of political behavior.
  - a. It, too, influences political behavior v<sup>ia</sup> the financing of political candidates; like corporate America it, too, often finds it convenient to finance both sides of the isle. However, it is less likely to support any issues which undercut the majority of the dues paying rank and file. The survival of union America is viewed by a large, respectable and distinguished cadre of Americans as the survival of America.
3. Political groups are organized for the sole purpose of influencing political behavior.
  - a. Political groups are diverse in America; they represent the best of the meaning of Freedom of Speech; Association guaranteed in the U.S. Constitution; political groups (to be distinguished from) political parties feed their ideology into the fabric of the political party process. The survival of political parties is said to depend on the survival of political groups.
4. Fragmentation of corporate, union and political groups, excluding political parties - equal: Special interests groups.

Special interests groups are legion because they are usually oriented towards a single political objective; often, special

interest groups are converted into political groups because the issue draws a diverse constituency and the issue is concrete and permanent.

5. Blacks in the Political Process -- as a political group; as a special interest.
  - . The U.S. constitution identified Blacks as a special interests -- as property.
  - . The U.S. Const. by the 14th Amendment deregulated Blacks from a property concept to that of a person.
  - . The political Process in America has sought to erase the shameful ignomious stain of slavery from the face of America.

However, as Justice Douglas said in the case of Jones v. Mayer - their are yet Badges of slavery unwilling to die.

These badges of slavery gives rise to the Black political environment of today.

1. Affirmative action debate: issue; goals, quotas and the notion of dicrimination against whites; intent test to prove discrimination.
2. Voting Rights: Effort to make proof of discrimination more difficult by requiring proof of intent rather than effects tests.

3. Proof of intent in discrimination is difficult, if not impossible.
4. Tampering with the jurisdiction of the courts - legislatives' way of slowing the evaluation of jurisprudence which they believe to be unacceptable, e.g., busing amendment.
5. Determining social values by Executive decisionmaking via the Budget Process.
  - a. Results in political behavior.
6. Unemployment/youth unemployment.
  - a. Welfare/health care.
  - b. The work ethic of youth hangs in the balance.

Politically, for Afro-Americans the decade of the 1980's looks bleak as of now. Unfortunately, there is a negative perception pervading a large and growing segment of the black population that national government policies cut against their historical and group interests. The contemporary issues in black politics seems to support this position.\*

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\* J. Clay Smith, Jr., a member of the bar of the District of Columbia and was National President of The Federal Bar Association from 1980-1981.