

***POLITICS
BIGOTRY*** &

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This publication was made possible by the Ernest Weiner Fund of the American Jewish Committee.

FOREWORD

The American Jewish Committee, since its founding in 1906, has worked to counteract bigotry in politics. We helped form Committee on Decent and Unbiased Campaign Tactics (CONDUCT) programs in many cities across America, and have worked with other religious and ethnic groups to combat divisive and hateful campaign messages.

This publication, *Politics and Bigotry*, is a unique and fresh look at this long-time AJC concern. Kenneth S. Stern approaches the political process realistically, and with a simple premise: If bigotry didn't work for politicians, they wouldn't use it.

From that premise the paper concludes that the only effective way to counter bigotry in politics is to make appeals to bigotry cost votes, and inclusive messages gain votes. It shows what the parties and community groups have to do to achieve that goal by examining how bigotry actually works in the political process.

While this paper is being released during the 1992 presidential primary campaign, its message is not for any single election, or any political season. It is a call, with a plan, for all of us who care about politics, and about bigotry, to help divorce the one from the other.

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POLITICS AND BIGOTRY

Mainstream politicians want votes.

Extremists crave an audience.

Both use bigotry in electoral campaigns for one reason. Bigotry works.

Republican and Democrat. North and South. East and West. Liberal and conservative. White and black. Every politician knows that hating, fearing, and scapegoating people based on their differences will produce media attention and, if cleverly done, votes. For mainstream politicians, or those desiring to appear mainstream, deniability is the key. The trick is pandering to bigotry while saying "who, me?" and keeping a straight face.

Despite the inevitable race and religious-based appeals during each campaign season, at least we, as a society, maintain a facade of not liking such tactics. Listen to the politicians of 1992. Bigoted tactics are always the fault of the other guy. Listen to the Democrats — the existence of Nazi sympathizers and Ku Klux Klaners in politics is the inevitable product of Republican presidential campaigns using race-based tactics since 1980. Listen to the Republicans — these same extremists are the inevitable result of liberal Democrats ignoring white voter resentment about well-intentioned but ill-conceived social policies. Both "politically correct" party lines may be partial truths, but both miss the point. Wasn't there bigotry in American politics before 1980? Why don't politicians see the manipulation of intergroup hatred in their profession as a fundamental societal concern — or at least a potential

disruptive force in their work place? Aren't we, as a society, in trouble if each political party primarily sees bigotry as just another weapon with which to assail the other?

Where are the non-partisan forces in American society to challenge bigotry in politics? What can they do? Groups are made up of people. If people care about politics they vote, and if they vote they, too, are Democrats and Republicans. Democrats are usually hesitant to criticize Democrats, for fear of helping Republicans. Republicans are usually reluctant to criticize Republicans, for fear of helping Democrats. That hesitation holds even in clear cases of bigotry. Most times today, the use of bigotry has become so sophisticated that it is not patently obvious and easily provable. And what can anyone do when, in the last days and even hours of a campaign, a desperate candidate starts playing the bigotry card?

And what about the other aspects of bigotry in politics, such as the interethnic contests and bigoted presumptions every time voting districts have to be redrawn? Are some remedies for past, overt bigotry — gerrymandering to empower disenfranchised minorities, for instance — now being used to promote another form of bigotry? And what is the role of the political parties involved in these fights?

A Longstanding Problem

None of these difficult questions are new. Bigotry in politics is as old as politics, and members of organized political parties have always used bigotry to increase their power, and diminish the power of others.

Go back to 1789. White males were the only empowered group. Jews were not allowed to run for office in many parts of post-colonial America. The Constitution had to be amended in 1870 to allow all black men to vote, and amended again in 1920 to empower women. Only American Indians deemed sufficiently "good" were enfranchised before 1924.

Even in modern times, with the vote legally available to every adult, there have been impediments based on differences between people. Poll taxes, literacy tests, and gerrymandering kept blacks from political power into the 1960s — and even then, racism and bigotry were used to effect outcomes.

In 1955, for example, a national political group, the "Federation for Constitutional Government" was formed to fight integration. This was no fringe group of beer-bellied bigots and Ku Klux Klansmen. Two United States senators, six United States representatives, and five serving or former governors were elected to its advisory board. The federation was "a great crusade [for] un-tainted racial heritage, culture and institutions of the Anglo-Saxon race," according to Democratic Senator James O. Eastland of Mississippi.

In 1956 Admiral John G. Crommelin ran against Alabama Senator Lister Hill in the Democratic primary elections, publicly blaming desegregation on a conspiracy spearheaded by "Felix Frankfurter, a Jew, Arthur Spanger, a Zionist Jew, and Senator Herbert Lehman, a Marxist Jew. . . . We've got to keep this last frontier of the real Anglo-Saxon race," the Admiral said, to a roaring crowd of supporters. "If I'm wrong," he yelled, "my name's Finkelstein!"

In 1956, a Republican Party official in Detroit was indicted for mailing hate letters to blacks in Atlanta. The letters were fictitious, and designed to scare blacks into voting Republican. They bore the false imprimatur of the "Council of White Citizens, Atlanta, Georgia," and argued that Democratic presidential candidate Adlai Stevenson would "keep the colored under control," and that a Democratic Congress would "block [Republican] civil rights legislation," designed to allow "Negroes [to attend] school with white children [and move] into the better neighborhoods and [get] better jobs."

If you think such vile tactics were just the legacy of the old South during the early civil rights struggle, think again. Less than twenty years ago, in South Dakota in the 1970s, Attorney General William Janklow — the chief law enforcement officer of the state — was able to win the governorship despite (because of?) his declaration that the way to deal with certain Native American leaders was to "put a bullet in their heads."

On the national scene, John Kennedy's 1960 presidential campaign was plagued by hate and ignorance. "Will the Pope move his controlling system to the United States?" a flyer asked. "Yes, if we elect a Catholic for president of the United States," it answered. Another asked "John F. Kennedy: Is he Jew controlled?" It answered: "The . . . American Jewish Committee . . . will be given carte blanche by Kennedy so that they can proceed . . . in their plan to Judaize America and to debauch the youth of our Nation down to their own level of degeneracy." Over ten million anti-Catholic leaflets were distributed, by scores of different groups. The Southern Baptist Convention boasted that it would attack Kennedy "because of his religion . . . throughout the campaign [not because of] bigotry or vindictiveness, but rather fear born of . . . experience."

A known racist, running for president on a platform of racism, surrounded by racists, received millions of votes and won five states in 1968. "Racists for Wallace" read signs at an Ohio campaign stop. Wallace's campaign staff included members who had been active in the American Nazi Party. Pledged electors for Wallace included anti-Semites who were Klansmen, members of the National States Rights Party, and of the Liberty Lobby. Wallace raised over 6 million dollars, much of it in small donations offered in response to his obvious segregationist message. He drew

huge crowds. Four months before the election, he had already sold over three million bumper stickers. Wallace's campaign literature, tinged with anti-Semitism (listing the names of Jewish "advisors" to Humphrey and Nixon) and racism ("rape" and "schools" were code-worded issues) called for "*equal* equal opportunity to all Races."

In the 1970s and 1980s religious extremists had an impact on the political process. During the 1976 elections, the Christian Freedom Foundation and some other similar right-wing evangelical organizations promoted what amounted to a "religion test" for national and state political office. Candidates had to be "real Christians" or "born again" in order to be endorsed. Few candidates aligned with these extremists won national office, although many won important state and local posts, such as school board membership. These fringe groups — and those that could not be so easily dismissed — tried not only to impact the political process, but also to legitimize themselves by reaching out to presidential candidates.

In 1980 a national affairs briefing of the Religious Roundtable drew between 8,000 and 15,000 Protestant ministers to Dallas to, in the words of one writer, "anoint Ronald Reagan as the chosen candidate of the evangelical movement." Reagan told a news conference at the meeting that he favored teaching creationism in schools as a counterbalance to Darwin. And Bailey Smith, a leading evangelical figure and a past president of the Southern Baptist Convention, told the gathering that "God Almighty does not hear the prayer of a Jew, for how in the world can God hear the prayer of a man who says Jesus Christ is not the true Messiah? It's blasphemous. Christianity isn't a religion; it is the truth!"

In 1984, Reagan campaign chairman Senator Paul Laxalt wrote letters to "Dear Christian Leader" as part of the Republican Party's "Christian voter program." The delegate packets at the Republic National Convention were to contain New Testaments, until American Jewish Committee Washington Representative Hyman Bookbinder called the White House and complained.

In 1988 two ordained clergymen — Reverend Jesse Jackson and Reverend Pat Robertson — ran for president, frequently sounding sectarian religious themes to sympathetic audiences of the faithful.

Jackson, in the 1984 campaign, had already alienated many Jewish voters by his long history of anti-Jewish statements,¹ his association with the anti-Semitic leader of the Nation of Islam, Louis Farrakhan, and Jackson's crack about New York being "Hymietown."²

Future Prospects

Viewed over time, bigotry in politics is a mixed bag. On one hand, minority members who would never have considered running for office a generation or two ago now are running, and are elected, whether they be Jewish governors and senators from states with few Jews, or blacks in cities where whites are the majority. And, certainly, the examples of bigotry are frequently less overt and crass than they were in generations past. Yet, given today's technology of instant communication, and the sophisticated veiling of bigotry under an intentional patina of deniability, the effect of campaign bigotry on society may be as significant as ever.

The presidential campaigns of the 1990s will certainly have their share of religious and racially-based bigotry. Even before the first 1992 primary, one candidate had to apologize for an ethnic crack he made about a potential challenger. The fringe groups and the racists are geared up. And, meanwhile, the parties and interested community groups are no better prepared today to counteract bigotry in politics than they were a decade, a generation, or a century ago.

While the status quo perseveres, the religious Christian right is working again — this time with sophisticated computer models — to elect those candidates who want to redefine America as a Christian Republic, rather than as an hospitable home for all Americans of whatever religious belief.

And, of course, politicians will extract every vote they can from promoting those emotional issues that are not so important for their substance, but for their appeal to racial divisiveness — such as "quotas" and "illegitimate birth rate."

As we approach the end of the twentieth century, what is the relationship between bigotry and politics? Can it be changed? Can appeals to fear and divisiveness be controlled? By the parties? By the electorate? What should the parties do about the obvious bigots, with dark histories, who use the political process for an even darker agenda? What about buzz words? We seem to always have them. "States Rights." "Busing." "Law and Order." "Quotas." And what about ads that play on bigoted stereotypes with real examples, like Willie Horton as the "furloughed-black-criminal-rapist" in 1988, or Jesse Helms's blacks-taking-away-white-jobs image in 1990? Ads are particularly hard cases. Should the networks and local stations refuse to air advertisements that are designed to divide one American from another? How would such ads be judged? And don't the American people have the right to hear the views of candidates without others censoring them — regardless of how bigoted they may be designed to be? And, after all, aren't these real issues? Willie Horton did, in fact, rape a woman after being released from jail. That he was black and she was white did not alter the truth that he was a prisoner, released from

jail, who then committed a brutal crime. Crime is a real issue. But so is the history of blacks being falsely charged with rapes of white women, and prejudices about interracial sex.

It is also an undeniable fact that at any given moment there are a finite number of jobs — especially in a recession. Affirmative action, regardless of its merits, does result in the loss of jobs for whites. Like crime, affirmative action is a real issue. And the questions these issues raise about bigotry in politics are not easy ones.

And what about candidates for all levels of government — local, state, and federal, who appeal to anti-gay or anti-Asian or anti-black or anti-white, anti-Native American or anti-Semitic sentiments in their day-to-day campaigns? What should party officials, the press, and the community do? Is it enough to hope people will vote against them? What, if anything, should be done about hate parties, like the Populists, or the LaRouchies, or the New Alliance Party? And what should be done about mainstream candidates who draw support from bigots and either fail to or are slow to repudiate it — Klansmen and neo-Nazis for George Wallace in 1968, Farrakhan for Jesse Jackson in 1984?

Add to these candidate-produced problems those that outsiders bring to politics. What about groups that hand out leaflets saying “vote Christian,” or who, without apology, demand the imposition of their definition of morality on everyone else? What about the abortion debate — can misogyny and anti-Semitism on one side, and anti-Catholicism on the other, be eliminated, or even contained? As if these questions are not already complex enough, consider how the media affects the process, especially TV, which forces candidates to speak in ever shorter sound bites.

Go through the archives of civil rights and religious organizations, and you will find yard-thick files documenting deep concern about an unspoken reality that connects all these questions: appeals to bigotry and fear have always been part of politics. This is not new. In its most extreme form, bigotry worked for Queen Isabella, when she expelled the Moors and the Jews. It worked for Hitler. It worked for the Young Turks against the Armenians, and for the Afrikaners against black Africans. It is working today in Slovenia and Croatia, in Azerbaijan and Estonia, in Moscow and Kiev. A kinder, gentler version of fear and hate works in democratic politics too. Just ask Louisianans. David Duke won 55 percent of the white vote, 700,000 votes overall, in his 1991 run for governor.

From time to time, American organizations have proposed codes of conduct for candidates, and have monitored campaigns for transgressions. Asking candidates to “do good” helps — they may fear loss of votes if they don’t promise to run their race by civilized rules. In 1992, for example, the National Italian American Foundation, on behalf of seventeen ethnic organizations including the American Jewish Commit-

tee, asked the presidential candidates to avoid bigotry in the campaign. But appeals to conscience, as important as they are, must, of necessity, fall short. The goal of politics is not good behavior, but votes. If the choice is between pandering to bigotry and winning, or being Mr. or Ms. Nice Guy and losing, there is no choice. It is a rare candidate who cannot rationalize the world as better off with him or her in office, regardless of what it takes to get there. For that rare candidate, there are staffs whose futures depend on winning the election to supply the necessary rationalizations.

If the exploitation of bigotry in the political process is to be combated, or merely managed, it has to be approached realistically. If all that matters is votes, then the only counterforce is to make politicians fear they will lose votes by exploiting bigotry, and gain votes by combating it — not only within the political process, but in society at large.

First Steps: The Extremists

When Illinois Congressman Gus Savage read the Jewish names of his opponent's contributors at a press conference; or when Jesse Helms played on stereotypes of blacks stealing from whites in a commercial, some politicians spoke out. Some didn't. Some did, only after pressure, their delay speaking louder than their words, emphasizing the calculation that had taken place: speaking out will lose less votes than not speaking out.

Leaders of civil rights organizations and the media always seem to replay the same tape. What was said? What was meant? Who repudiated whom? Was there an apology? Was it sufficient?

Are we, as a society, so partisan or so unsophisticated or so unconcerned about leaders pandering to hatred and misunderstanding between Americans that all we expect are condemnatory press releases correctly worded?

Everyone, including candidates, has a First Amendment right to express bigoted opinions; but the First Amendment does not obligate our parties and leaders to do next to nothing about hate and hateful expressions, and then only in response.

Bigotry in politics does not occur in a vacuum. Intergroup hatred, stereotypes and ignorance are not campaign problems as much as they are societal problems. As we approach the 21st century, neither our schools nor our religious institutions have given sufficient emphasis to teaching youngsters — future voters — the skills needed to reject prejudice and live in a religiously and ethnically diverse society. Politicians speak about teaching students new technologies for tomorrow's jobs; they talk about making students more literate, and about teaching them to reject drugs. In some schools, students are even taught the proper use of a condom. However, our children are not taught to consider their acquisition of intergroup relations skills to

be of the same importance as their learning reading or math. Our politicians have never articulated an agenda for teaching Americans how to become communally literate, to reject appeals to hate in their daily lives. Not surprisingly, the parties have no thought-out plan for rejecting bigotry in their own house, in the political process.

It is not only in dealing with elected members of their own parties that the Republicans and Democrats lack any finessed mechanism for rejecting bigotry. It is also in what should be the "easier" cases — the professional hatemongers.

According to Leonard Zeskind, research director of the Center for Democratic Renewal, there are "hard core, organized white supremacists who are seeking to use the electoral system, in the same way as they might, under other circumstances, use a Klan march through town. It is a recruiting device to spread their message and gain a little bit of power and leverage in the community. It's a phenomenon that is increasingly significant."

In the last fifteen years, there have been many members of organized hate groups hanging their sheets on the main party lines, and doing remarkably well. For example, in 1980, Tom Metzger, a registered Republican and television repair man, switched his party affiliation and ran in the Democratic primary for the 43rd congressional district in California. "There are deep rooted differences between people of different races," Metzger said. "I believe the white people of the United States, the inheritors of Western civilization, are best fitted to run this society." Metzger was no garden variety bigot. He was a Ku Klux Klan leader who believed in racial separation, and advocated violence against non-whites and Jews. Most of his campaign rhetoric, however, was not tinged with his well-practiced vocabulary of gutter racism and anti-Semitism. He emphasized his conservatism, his small business affiliations, and his plans to stop immigration, end affirmative action, and halt welfare for "bums who are too lazy to work."

Metzger had changed party affiliations tactically. The 43rd Congressional District's representative, Clair Burgener, a three-time incumbent and a Republican, was considered a certainty for reelection. Metzger (who campaigned in a bullet proof vest) vied for the Democratic nomination against easier targets — San Diego County Chairman Ed Skagen and Herbert Higgins, described in literature as a part-time aide at a fairground. Higgins withdrew two weeks before the election, and asked the voters to support Skagen. Higgins' name, however, remained on the ballot. He received 22,940 votes to Skagen's 32,026. Metzger — who received the least support in those areas where he campaigned the most — nonetheless recorded 32,344 votes. He became the Democratic candidate for Congress by 318 ballots.

Rosalyn Carter, in San Diego campaigning for her husband, spoke out against Metzger. Despite pleas by state Democratic leaders, however, President Carter did not, except to exempt Metzger from his vow to support all Democratic candidates.

While Metzger (who lost the general election) was embarrassing the Democrats on one coast in 1980, Harold Covington, a Nazi, was causing Republicans problems on the other.

Covington, who had received only hundreds of votes in two prior election attempts, ran in the Republican primary for attorney general of North Carolina. He had just become leader of the National Socialist Party of America, when Frank Collins, its former fuhrer, was ousted after his arrest for "taking indecent liberties" with young boys. Covington, like Metzger, did not emphasize the language and symbols of Klan gatherings or Nazi party meetings in his campaign. "It is time," the press release announcing his candidacy said, "the people of North Carolina put law enforcement into the hands of those who are dedicated to a decent, drug-free, Christian society without Communism, pornography, and rampant street crime."

Running against Covington was Keith Snyder, a former federal prosecutor. Both candidates campaigned sparingly, and the race was all but ignored by the media. Republican Party officials, however, disavowed Covington throughout.

Fifty-six thousand votes were cast. Covington lost, but received 43 percent of the vote, and won 45 percent of the state's counties.

Jack Lee, Republican state chairman, said that "maybe 5 percent" voted for Covington out of racism. "Its a freak," Lee said. Lee suggested that some of Covington's support may have been from votes cast "against the establishment." Others believed Covington benefited from his name coming first on the ballot, or that if people had heard that there was a Nazi running in this race, they might have assumed that it was the more German-sounding Snyder. The *Greensboro Daily News* said racism, stupidity, and ignorance accounted for Covington's strong showing, but that stupidity and ignorance were the stronger forces. "If you don't know who you're voting for, then don't vote at all," the paper intoned. The paper's thesis was probably correct. Covington had even done well in Jewish areas.

In 1986, backers of extremist and anti-Semite Lyndon LaRouche won the Illinois Democratic primary races for lieutenant governor and secretary of state. Little money had been spent on their election campaign, yet they stunned the party apparatus. Adlai Stevenson III, who won the party's nomination for governor, refused to run on the same ticket as people who argue, among other things, that the Queen of England is a major drug trafficker, and that a "Rockefeller-Zionist-KGB cabal" seeks to control the world. Ultimately, the LaRouchies lost, but they gained the attention they craved, and deeply embarrassed and hurt the Democratic ticket.

When extremists run and do poorly, party officials and the press ignore them.³ When they run and do well, party officials and the press always seem taken by surprise, and usually explain the results in the same ways: low voter turnout, rejec-

tion of party-endorsed candidates, economic frustration, place on ballot, stupidity, ignorance, non-ethnic sounding names.⁴

Such post-mortems give partial answers, but only to the less important question of "how did they get so many votes." The key questions are: "What effect do these candidates have on the political process?" and "What are the parties doing about it?"

Leonard Zeskind says that such candidates "cut the turf" that allows mainstream candidates to use bigoted appeals "the way Le Pen has raised the issues that are now embraced by Chirac and others in France."⁵

That strategy was also used in Louisiana in recent years. Elizabeth Rickey, a Louisiana Republican State Committeewoman and founder of the Louisiana Coalition Against Racism and Nazism, expects that during presidential election years in the 1990s there will be "over a hundred candidates around the country" using the political process to organize and empower those who see hatred as a virtue.

A hundred candidates, in a hundred campaigns, targeting voters' fears, can recast the political arena into a debate on race, especially as our society is growing more ethnically diverse, and our economic growth fails to keep pace with that of the last generation. Diminished hopes and increased differences provide fertile ground for messengers of hate — and the injection of bigotry into campaigns by hatemongers makes similar appeals more palatable and less risky for more "respectable candidates."

The electoral process is the environment in which politicians vie. If, as Leonard Zeskind suggests, extremists can skew or poison the process, shouldn't the parties want to preserve their ability to define issues?

In some places, the local parties have paid attention to extremists running on their party lines, and campaigned against them.

Maryland Democratic Party Chairman Nathan Landow, for example, spoke out in 1990 against Ku Klux Klan leader Roger Kelly who was running as a Democrat for a Frederick County Commission seat. "We dissociate ourselves completely from this man," Landow said. "He may call himself a Democrat, but he is not accepted as a Democrat. He will get no support from us — in fact, just the opposite. We'll do everything we can do to work against him." Kelly lost.

In elections after the stealth LaRouche candidates won in 1986, the Illinois Democratic Party publicly identified the LaRouche candidates. Having an organized party structure that marks the organized haters and denounces them is "absolutely critical" according to Zeskind.

Yet, there is little if any planning on the national level to root out the KKKers who tactically call themselves Democrats or Republicans, and most local parties are not doing much better.

"One of the major weaknesses inside both the Democratic and Republican parties," says Zeskind, "is that they do not regard this phenomenon seriously enough to gather real information."

There may be some superficial appeal to the idea that extremist candidates should be ignored — that campaigning against them will only help them. But "quarantining" (pretending the haters don't exist, and trying to deny them attention), which may work in other circumstances, should not be the first choice for political parties. Too often "doing nothing" is not a strategy, but an excuse. More fundamentally, should we just hope that the haters don't win? The Populist Party and the KKKers and the LaRouchies (as well as the Aryan Nations, the Nation of Islam and the New Alliance Party) want to exploit the attention given to the political process to get their message out.

Unlike the old-line segregationists, the current extremists will turn the issues around. White rights. Quotas. Welfare cheats. "Them" versus "us," the "justice" being on "our" side. The issues chosen will be those designed to divide people, to reinforce in the white majority a sense that it is okay to dislike minorities.

According to Cressey Nakagawa, National President of the Japanese American Citizens League, such candidates play "on the fear that whites are getting shut out, being denied what is their right: 'The laws aren't fair, and the political process is attempting to take things away from you.' That's economic class argument. It is using economics to bring out racial bias that's in everybody to some degree or another."

And while most of the candidates preaching hate are white, there are blacks from extremist organizations trying the same strategy, playing on black fears with messages that broadcast hatred of anything white and/or Jewish and/or Asian. Even the perpetual outsider, Reverend Al Sharpton, who is aligned with the anti-Semitic (pro-Quaddafi, pro-Abu Jihad, pro-Farrakhan) New Alliance Party, and who referred to Jews as "diamond dealers" during the height of the anti-Semitic eruptions in Crown Heights, ran for elective office, the United States Senate — as a Democrat.

Extremist candidates frequently sugarcoat their extremism to do well electorally, and any success pushes mainstream candidates to imitate them. The parties have an interest in exposing and shutting down the hatemonger's strategy early on. If ignored KKKers or followers of Farrakhan win even a minor election, they gain credibility, access to the system, and the ability to do better by raising funds from other extremists and those across the country who are too easily taken in by scapegoating.

A Role for National Parties

Even though the Democratic National Committee and the Republican National Committee "have minuscule effect on the local leaders," according to Stuart Eizenstat, former assistant to President Carter, shouldn't they do more to help local officials fight hatemongers and calls to bigotry? Beth Rickey thinks that "quiet support from the RNC" would have helped change things in Louisiana. "Quiet support" means helping officials craft tools for speaking out about hatemongers and exposing their messages.

Of course it is not the role of the national party to war with the local party, or to dictate, especially when that would risk a perception of "outside interference" that might cause a backlash at the polls. But just as McDonalds would never let one of its franchises sell a burger with a bigoted advertisement, neither should the national parties have a "hands off" attitude toward their local affiliates. Saying: "We repudiate so and so" — as the national party has done from time to time — is a start. It is not sufficient. Some skilled extremists are articulate, and hit emotional buttons. They play on the easiest button of all, hate and fear, and connect it to economics. Why can't the parties help their local political apparatuses learn how to delink the twin issues of hate and economics? And why can't the parties help local officials learn how to hit the equally powerful emotional button that can also be connected to economics: hope? Fear and hope are neither conservative or liberal doctrines, they are themes, aspirations. Properly defined and delivered, and connected to ideals of economic justice, they have power.

When hatemongers divide voters one against the other, why is the local party not able to counteract with themes that say "We are all Americans (or Californians or North Carolinians) — and none of us will be better off by fighting each other?" Why is there not more national help to encourage these local officials? Both parties have people working on every conceivable political need. Where is the office helping local parties develop strategies to identify and work against those who use the political process like a sophisticated cross burning, spreading appeals to bigotry? The sad fact is that the hatemongers are much better organized to inject their venom than our political parties are to reject it. The anti-Semitic Liberty Lobby, along with many old-line fascists, neo-Nazis, and white supremacists, are backing a new Populist Political Action Committee, designed to give money to candidates who support their agenda, and articulate it in the political process.

If it takes seminars and consultants and workshops and increased polling for local officials to learn these skills, isn't it worth the investment? Not only will state party leaders have a better plan for dealing with bigotry and bigots, they will have a

winning message. The extremist's message is an exclusive one designed only for one race or religion of voters, to motivate them to vote through hate and fear. A message of hope is inclusive — it speaks to everyone. It gives a reason to vote for a candidate other than to cast a ballot against his or her opponent. If the message hits the right emotional buttons, voter support should be even stronger, bringing people to the polls who might otherwise stay home.

Negative, hateful politics work. But so should politics that inspire. If that sounds naive, consider the alternative. If only hateful, divisive, and negative campaigns will attract voters, American democracy is in deep trouble.

The parties seem ill-prepared to cope with the manipulation of the electoral system by the white-sheet crowd. And they are no better geared to deal with other outside extremist forces that smack of bigotry and anti-Semitism. Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition is targeting the Republican Party delegate selection process for the purpose of electing Christians to the national convention, and to insure "the election of Christian candidates" all over America, especially in "key" United States House and Senate races. The national plans, outlined at a conference and strategy briefing in November 1991, dubbed "The Road To Victory," utilize computer programs and an in-depth analysis of all the primaries and caucuses. The state and local plans, also outlined at the convention, include sophisticated models and surveys to pinpoint individual voter interest. Voters who are not dismissed as hopeless⁶ are then written to, focusing on whatever issue is most important to them (e.g., hunting and fishing licenses, roads, recycling, water). Neglected in the letters is any mention that surveys and follow-up contact are designed to elect candidates of one religion.

It is one thing for groups to organize around particular issues, including so-called "family issues." But when tax-exempt non-profit groups are manipulating voters to elect candidates based on what is tantamount to a religion test, why are the political parties not speaking out about this blatantly bigoted — and illegal — scheme? That politicians may find themselves in agreement with the positions of the Christian Coalition should be no excuse for ignoring the danger of groups that promote or oppose candidates based on religion. Rather than condemning such tactics, many mainstream politicians are courting the Christian Coalition, seeing votes to gain, and none to lose.

Sadly, neither party is likely to challenge the other to do better on this score, for fear of alienating potential voters. Extremists and religious fringe groups are likely to continue to impact the political process as long as party leaders are content to have an ad hoc ostrich-like strategy for dealing with the former, and see the latter only as potential voters, and not a source of bigotry in American politics.

Community Groups

The most successful way to begin to fight bigotry in any arena is for people, especially leaders, to speak out against it. As the American Jewish Committee documented in a 1990 study of college campuses, there are fewer and less intense “explosions” of hatred in places where the president and key university figures denounce bigotry on a regular basis. If key people would quickly and forcefully condemn bigotry in the political process — even in the simplest cases, such as bigoted statements or ads — the same cause and effect might result. Imagine the change in the tenor of some recent campaigns if only clergy, political leaders, business leaders, and other community opinion-molders repeatedly called for an end to such divisiveness, and embarrassed or harassed the candidates into so doing. Why didn't these leaders do this?

One reason is partisanship. A liberal may be more reluctant to complain about a bigoted statement from another liberal than if the same statement had come from a conservative, and vice versa.

Another is the difficulty in defining bigotry. A candidate who sold Nazi books is one thing; a candidate complaining about “quotas” may be another. Certainly, the word “quota” has become racially charged, and has been bandied about more than is justified, but quotas are also a legitimate issue on which reasonable people can differ. Sometimes the intent of the candidate who plays on the edge of a racially charged issue is hard to discern. And even if we could discern it, does intent really matter as much as effect?

Many business and community leaders have to work with local government officials. Speaking out is risky because the candidate whose actions are complained about might win the election nonetheless. But even if leaders took an ethically pure position — that bigotry was to be challenged no matter what — there are still tremendous legal impediments to speaking out.

Go back to the 1986 LaRouche campaign. Here were known anti-Semites hoodwinking the voters of Illinois. Interviews conducted by the American Jewish Committee proved that “voter disillusionment and aversion to ‘ethnic’ names were the strongest factors” in the primary results. (The LaRouchies were Fairchild and Hart, their opponents Sangmeister and Pucinski.) The American Jewish Committee, which exists to counter anti-Semitism, investigated the primary results because there was anti-Semitism in the electoral process, and reported its findings. AJC believed that the voters had a right to know whom they had voted for in the primary.

The LaRouche organization filed a complaint against AJC with the Federal Election Commission. The FEC found probable cause that AJC had violated the

election laws, which prohibit corporate expenditures in connection with campaigns. The FEC proposed a settlement which AJC rejected, believing that it had done nothing improper. After years of proceedings, the FEC dropped the case. The case is still not dead. The LaRouchies have sued the FEC for failing to continue its prosecution of the claim.

The aftermath of this complaint, even though AJC was not penalized, had a chilling effect. Non-profit tax exempt organizations can be punished for speaking out about bigotry — even if that is their *raison d'être*. But that is only the beginning of the problem. Any complaint from the FEC will cost money to defend, more if it is successful. Similar rules also exist under the Internal Revenue Code. If a non-profit tax-exempt organization violates those provisions, it could lose its tax-exempt status, which, in all likelihood, would force it out of business.⁷

Most religious and civil rights organizations are “tax-exempt non-profits,” covered by Section 501 (c)(3)⁸ of the Internal Revenue Code. The law⁹ says tax-exempt non-profit organizations are prohibited from participating in or intervening in “any political campaign on behalf of [or in opposition to] any candidate for public office.”¹⁰

IRS decisions in this area are few and unclear.¹¹ Law professors and other experts have tried to define just how far a tax-exempt non-profit organization can go in doing anything relating to a campaign. Theoretically, it can condemn the expression of bigotry and not the candidate who expresses it, but that is a subtle distinction that voters may not understand.

Even if a community organization felt fairly certain that a statement against bigotry would not jeopardize its non-profit status, the IRS code is still a massive counterweight to action. No lawyer can guarantee that the IRS would not strip an organization of its tax exempt status for “intervening” in a campaign. And each time the decision to speak out or to remain silent has to be made, the terrible possible consequence of an Internal Revenue Code violation has to be weighed against the passing importance of a single bigoted statement. Loss of tax exempt status would be “catastrophic to any non-profit corporation,” says Sam Rabinove, AJC’s legal director. Unless a candidate were to advocate a reinstatement of slavery or Hitler’s death camps, few non-profits would be willing to take the risk.

Some people have asked, “How can it be that you as clergy, or as a civil rights organization cannot speak out against hatred? That is your mission.”

The answer, according to some experts is, “If you want to speak out about campaigns, don’t be a tax-exempt non-profit.”

There are, of course, some ways around the edges of this debilitating legalism. One is to have a bifurcated agency. Americans for Democratic Action, for

example, has both a tax exempt educational fund and an action branch, with is not tax exempt. But most religious and civil rights organizations, which have financial problems even with their tax exemptions, are unlikely to give up that status, even for part of their operation — the fear is that the non-tax-exempt part would draw funds away from the remaining entity.¹²

Another way to diminish the full impact of the IRS code is for leaders to speak about shaping the political process, rather than reacting to statements of the candidates. There is nothing wrong with encouraging the parties to set up offices to combat bigotry, nor with encouraging others to speak out. It is fine to condemn bigotry in the abstract. It is fine to challenge statements of candidates once an election is over. And it is fine to call on all candidates to repudiate appeals to bigotry. In October 1976, for example, when the issue of religion was seeping into the presidential campaign, four major religious leaders¹³ called on President Ford and Governor Carter to “reject forcefully any campaign appeals based on the religion a candidate may profess.”

Sometimes, the risk can be reduced when others challenge bigotry not directed at their group. For example, Congressman Courter ran for the governorship of New Jersey “on a very anti-gay platform,” recalls Kevin Berrill, head of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. “He advocated the banning of HIV positive teachers from the classroom and other draconian and from an epidemiological standpoint, useless measures for curbing the spread of AIDS.” A group of religious leaders came together at a press conference, and condemned Courter’s stands. From a tax code standpoint, it would have been riskier for a non-profit gay group to condemn this bigotry, because the unstated, but undeniable message, would be that “we as a gay organization think a candidate who panders to anti-gay messages should not be elected.”

The need to walk around the IRS and FEC codes is a fundamental impediment to fighting bigotry in the political process. There is every logical reason to deny tax exempt status to partisan organizations — tax dollars should not be used to help finance groups that back one candidate or one party. But all Americans share an interest in rooting out bigotry. The codes have a chilling effect on the freedom of religious and other figures in the non-profit world from condemning bigotry during election campaigns.

Congress should consider changing the IRS code and FEC provisions to allow non-profit groups to be vigorous and outspoken monitors of bigotry in the political process.¹⁴ This alteration would not only empower forceful voices to speak out against bigoted statements and tactics, it would send an important message — that our government stands behind those who want to fight bigotry. It is not enough that

government remains on the sideline and doesn't promote bigotry. In order to build a more tolerant America, government should be in the forefront, having the fight against bigotry appear as one of its missions. After all, why should fighting bigotry be any less important than other, clearly accepted government functions, such as fighting illiteracy, or poverty, or drug use? Intergroup hatred has harmed far more people in the history of the world than any other human malady. Empowering the community forces that teach intergroup respect and fight calls to bigotry should be a national priority. Sadly, it is not.

Some argue, however, that changing the tax and FEC laws would open a Pandora's box. There are already organizations on the fringe eager to enter the political fray. If the laws are changed to make it easier for those who oppose bigotry to affect the political process, won't those changes also make it easier for groups with divisive agendas to infect the process as well? If this is the result, would changing the laws be wise?

No one can answer that question with certainty. But at least it would be wise to have a full debate on the issue — and investigate how Americans can be better empowered to combat bigotry in politics. The saddest part of the laws that allow individual hatemongers to prey upon voters' fears, while muzzling mass organizations that fight intergroup hatred, is not that they exist. It is that Congress and others have not yet begun a debate about whether they should be changed, and if so how, to better counteract racism and bias in politics.

Some Remedies

In 1981, New York's race for Manhattan borough president saw charges and countercharges of racism and anti-Semitism. After the election, the New York chapter of the American Jewish Committee helped form an independent organization, CONDUCT, the Committee on Decent Unbiased Campaign Tactics. Leading New Yorkers of many religions, races, and ethnic backgrounds served on the CONDUCT board. Their prestige was designed to "shame those who employed racially divisive tactics into better behavior."

Following New York's example, AJC chapters in St. Louis and Chicago also helped organize CONDUCT committees. Today, Chicago's is the most well established.

All local candidates are urged to abide by CONDUCT's "Code of Fair Campaign Practice."¹⁵ In order to monitor campaigns and investigate allegations of bigotry, CONDUCT has a paid staff, including an executive director, a research director, a field coordinator, and campaign observers, who attend rallies and speeches, and speak to the candidates and their staffs. The board meets regularly,

and reviews complaints for action — usually a letter of censure if a violation is found. Letters and op ed pieces explaining CONDUCT's work are regularly placed in local newspapers.

The training of observers is crucial for CONDUCT's success. They have to be accurate and fair, and to know what to look for. One training exercise, for example, lists "code words" that may pander to racism.¹⁶

CONDUCT programs require money, continuing interest, and a time commitment from its board. Despite the effort needed to get it going, it is an excellent model for fighting campaign bigotry on the local level, especially as it brings together leaders from different communities whose joint voice has moral weight.

Recalling the anti-gay stand of Congressman Courter's campaign for the New Jersey governorship, Kevin Berrill says that he doesn't "know if there was an element of conviction in his hatemongering, but clearly he believed that his stands were politically advantageous." A common approach by many groups can make hatemongering politically disadvantageous.

Jewish, black, Hispanic, gay, Asian, Italian, women's, Native American and other ethnic and religious groups all fear bigotry in the political process. They have more power and protection when they act together. Bob Blancato of the National Italian American Foundation released a statement from seventeen religious and ethnic organizations that called on the candidates to refrain from bigoted tactics in 1992. The American Jewish Committee, also in 1992, encouraged such organizations to meet together with the Democratic and Republican platform committees and the candidates. In unison this broad-based group can be more effective: emphasizing its distaste for the injection of bigotry into the political process, asking the candidates to refrain from such appeals and to include in their campaigns specific plans for promoting pluralism and attacking bigotry in all aspects of American life.

This model can also be used during future presidential primaries, and in local and state elections. While less comprehensive than CONDUCT (there are no staffers attending every campaign speech, for example), it would create a political risk for campaign bigotry.

Positives Themes

People vote for candidates for an infinite variety of reasons. Party identification.¹⁷ Incumbency. Name familiarity. Position on issues. Attractiveness. Place on ballot.

All other things being equal, people will vote for candidates who touch them emotionally. Candidates who stand for something that grabs an inner concern, and communicates it well, do well.

Franklin Roosevelt. Martin Luther King, Jr. Ronald Reagan. Jesse Jackson. John Kennedy. Abraham Lincoln. Despite their widely different political philosophies and their distinctive personalities, all these leaders communicated themes that touched the heart, as did state officials Huey Long, David Duke, and George Wallace.

Hate touches. But so does hope. Divisiveness touches. But so does commonality.

Hate may be easier to articulate, but hope and tolerance, explained so that they have a personal dimension, can be equally effective. Next time skinheads or the Ku Klux Klan want to march down Main Street, watch the politicians fall over each other to be perceived as the strongest voice against these groups and what they represent. People also long for messages of togetherness — remember the reaction to Operation Desert Storm, the parades and yellow ribbons? That was not only a reaction to a successful war, but also to a concern that all Americans shared.

As Amitai Etzioni wrote¹⁸ in 1984, issues and themes are not the same thing. "Issues," he wrote, "concern specific policy differences from ways to get arms control to what not to do about Nicaragua. . . . Themes are embracing perspectives: they help people articulate their feelings and think about such matters as the future of the nation, peace with honor, and a growing economy. Issues interest mainly that segment of the public that follows public affairs closely. Just about everyone responds to themes. Issues allow a candidate to make debating points and build up scores in some voters' minds. The right themes allow him to mobilize masses of people and bring volunteers rushing to his campaign."

The New Deal was a theme. The Great Society was a theme. "No New Taxes" was a slogan that had attributes of a theme.

Themes unify, and point to the future. They help define the type of society we want.

The civil rights movement once spoke clearly to Americans. Whether one was black or white, from north or south, the message of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. hit an internal chord that resonated, either in sympathy or in contrast with our visions of ourselves and our society.

Themes energize. They define. As a candidate better articulates a theme, the better his or her chances for victory.

Why won't someone from either party, especially in a presidential year, articulate a theme of hope, of vision, of pluralism?

Issues that touch on race and fairness and justice need not be seen as just a matter of black and white, or affirmative action, or quotas. Those are not themes, but issues.

Themes unite. Every American, regardless of background, has been reduced by prejudice. Black, white, Asian, Hispanic, Indian, Wasp, Jew, Christian, Muslim, women, gays, we have all been hurt by stereotypes, by prejudgment, by messages that exclude or dehumanize.

That hurt is what demagogues and professional political hatemongers count on for votes, especially during tough economic times. Their theme is "it's us against them, I'll look out for our interests."

By definition the politicians who use this strategy write off the "others" in order to touch the voters they are running after. In contrast, an inclusive theme speaks to all potential voters. "Here's what I will do," the candidate should say, "so that your child or grandchild won't come home one day and ask you why they were called a dirty, debilitating, destructive name like 'spic' or 'kike' or 'nigger'," and then articulate plans for schools, programs for police, policies to involve communities, ideas and ideals reaffirming that hate harms us all, and that we can change human relations. The theme should focus on our future, and that of the next generation and the generation after, saying that our progeny's blackness or Jewishness or Asianness will be seen, by them and others, as a wonderful part of their Americanness, rather than something that diminishes that identity.

The theme should identify how we get from here to there. It should pull all of us together, and make us feel better about ourselves. It should touch our sense of abstract justice, and of long-range security. It is a message not about fairness for any one segment of our society, but a message that reaffirms a common justice in which we all share. It is a message also inextricably woven to our future economic success. Bigotry is divisive and debilitating. It affects how we relate to each other in the work place, how we as a society perform. Successful economics requires a concept of teamwork.

Community groups and leaders have a stake in what candidates articulate. Electoral campaigns define political attitudes. It is not only the election of candidate "A" over candidate "B" that will affect us, it is also the tone and style and issues and themes that are brought to the forefront of debate.

It is also inevitable that candidates will target segments of the population as more or less likely to vote for them, and respond accordingly.

When a candidate wants Jews to vote for him or her, he or she will speak about symbols important to Jews that, at the same time, will not risk alienating other groups. Israel. Discrimination. Bigotry.

When a candidate wants blacks to vote for him or her, he will likely speak about jobs, South Africa, racism, and affirmative action.

These special appeals are proper and inevitable — and allow minority groups to have a voice in America.

But beyond these special appeals, candidates should be encouraged by the community groups to hear something they would otherwise not — the importance of inclusive messages. Inclusive messages make us all feel good, part of a larger society. If a candidate can articulate a positive, inclusive, pluralistic theme that touches the heart, he or she can make voters feel as if they are doing a good deed — patriotic even — if they vote for him or her. Emotionally inspired voters are more likely to show up at the polls than those who are only planning to vote for the lesser of two perceived evils or nonentities.

The Media and Advertising

Candidates and the media need and use each other in a perverse symbiotic relationship, especially in broadcast media. The spicier and more articulate the seven-second sound bite, the more likely this candidate, rather than another, will be given air time on the evening news. Controversy and heat increase ratings, and increased ratings bring in revenue. Hate sells products for the television station, and in turn gives the candidate free access to spew his or her message.

Commentators sometimes complain about the unseemly amount of coverage hatemongers in politics receive. But calls to self restraint and good values will be even less effective on the media than they are on politicians. First, it is unrealistic to expect the media to ignore candidates — whether they be extremist or mainstream — who play on bigotry. Campaigns, and bigoted statements or tactics, are legitimate news. The coverage given may be too extensive or overly sensational, but certainly the reporting of bigotry in politics is entirely appropriate — in fact, it is essential.

Candidates and the media both live on their skills of communication. The key to all communication is people. It is the human component — the human story that attracts, that rivets. The Army-McCarthy hearings. President Kennedy's speeches. The Clarence Thomas hearings.

Community groups and others opposed to the use of bigotry in the political process must counteract hate with sophistication — to make hate cost. Professional hatemongers in politics, as well as those willing to pander to prejudice, use the media as a tool to get their message out. People of good will must develop equal sophistication. At a minimum, they should work with the media to identify real people whose lives have been diminished by bigotry, and whose plights are made worse off by offending campaign tactics. When a politician starts bashing the Japanese, for example, stories of the resulting bigotry experienced by Japanese-American school children should be brought to the press's attention.

Many people credit John Kennedy's victory over Richard Nixon in 1960 to Nixon's bad makeup job and obvious discomfort on camera.

Just four years later — in 1964 — politicians had become more savvy at using television. The advertisements reflected the new understanding of the potential of the medium. When Barry Goldwater's supporters told America "in your heart you know he's right," his Democratic opponent used an advertisement playing on fears of nuclear holocaust: "In your heart you know he might."

When George Bush was gearing up for the 1988 presidential primaries, many pundits said he was too "wimpy" to be president. Bush's handlers crafted media events, such as his antagonistic appearance on the CBS evening news where he confronted Dan Rather, to dispel this image.

The politics of the 1990s relies tremendously on television advertising. Handshakes and baby kissing and town meetings are still a part of politics to a degree, but nothing allows a candidate to get a message out in the way he or she wants, to the audience he or she targets, with as much precision as ads.

In recent years, advertising has become an exercise in competing attacks. The other person is a bum or a crook or otherwise disreputable. Finding some "dirt" on the other candidate increases his or her "negatives," thereby getting voters who may have been thinking of supporting that candidate to think again. Elections — especially in a two-candidate field — are easily influenced by negatives. A candidate may be able to pick up two votes through a negative campaign — one that was for an opponent is now his or hers. At worst, the prize is one vote — the voter who was for the opponent now stays home.

Attacking the other candidate also provides the attacker a patina of hardness, a sense of macho. Part of the psychodynamic of politics is that people are choosing leaders. Leaders are not wimps.

Add on to negative ads an appeal to bigotry, whether intended as such or not. The Willie Horton ad did just that. It was negative — attacking Michael Dukakis for his prison release program — and played on ethnic biases and stereotypes as well.

All the "experts" expect a continuation of this type of advertising — both the negative kind and the bigoted kind. The only way to stop these ads is if they prove counterproductive because of public disgust (unlikely), or to outlaw them altogether. Restricting their content — and defining what is or is not allowed would be impossible. Would Willie Horton be allowed on? Would it need some sort of "warning label" to be aired? Who would decide? There is no constitutional right for candidates to have access to television and radio advertising to promote their campaigns. The FCC, for example, prohibits the advertising of cigarettes on the air. It could, if it so desired, restrict or even eliminate broadcast advertising for candidates.

There are, after all, other forums for candidates to use. And, some would argue, the prepackaged prepoll predetermined broadcast ad really does not give the

voters a true picture of the candidate — rather, it provides the image the candidate thinks the voters want to see.

Ads, of course, favor those candidates who have greater campaign chests. If broadcast ads were restricted, these candidates would not lose the advantage, they would simply use the funds in other areas of their campaigns.

If negative, bigoted ads continue to plague campaigns, at least the question of restricting or eliminating TV advertising should be explored. No doubt each party would calculate whether it would be better or worse off with such restrictions, and announce its position accordingly. But at least a change in regulations about the injection of bigotry and nastiness into American society through this medium is something that all community groups could advocate, without concern for their tax status problems.

The Clash of Community Groups: Redistricting

Whereas most community groups have a common interest in keeping campaigns clean of bigotry, they frequently vie with each other for power. The politics of race resurfaces after every census, with the need to redraw district boundaries to reflect populations shifts.

Elbridge Gerry, who died in office in 1814 as vice president under James Madison, became immortal for an act committed in 1812, when he was governor of Massachusetts. Gerry drew an electoral district that resembled a salamander. He did so — “gerrymandered” — to achieve maximum political advantage for his party. Gerrymandering has been part of American political life ever since.

In the 1950s and 1960s gerrymandering was one of the principal tools used to disenfranchise blacks. In some places, it is still being used against identifiable groups. For example, if a metropolitan area has five congressional seats, and the population is thirty-percent minority, one would think that the minority group should be able to elect at least one representative. But if the district boundaries are drawn to dilute the minority voters to the maximum extent — spreading them thinly among the districts — voters can be effectively disenfranchised.¹⁹

The federal Voting Rights Act outlaws such tactics. And, unquestionably, the existence and continuance of the Voting Rights Act is essential for combating this insidious form of bigotry in politics.

Yet, despite the importance of the evil the Voting Rights Act addresses, it is no panacea. Districts need to be recarved from time to time, and those with the political scalpels will always have an eye to what gives them more power. We should not be blind to the incidental effect on societal bigotry that these scalpels may have.

Until recently, elected politicians have been predominantly male, and over-

whelmingly white. Urban ethnic groups are now actively taking advantage of redistricting to increase the chances that their voices can be heard. Just as the dilution of a group into many different districts eviscerates its potential power, the intentional collection of a small group into one district can give it new muscle. Voters who appeared to be marginal now can have their concerns advocated in government. Voices that were too scattered to be heard before can now have a voice. And the empowerment of those voices is, undoubtedly, helpful in providing role models, and enriching the process of government and the entire community.

For example, New York City's city council districts were redrawn in 1991.²⁰ The proposed boundaries of the districts would have even made Elbridge Gerry blush. Some proposals had districts that were not even contiguous. Aside from the goal of protecting some incumbents, the lines were drawn so that certain districts would be black, some Hispanic, some white.

For the first time in the United States an American of Dominican ancestry — Guillermo Linares — was elected to public office. His district, in the Washington Heights section of New York, has the largest concentration of Dominicans in New York. He won in the Democratic primary over other Dominican challengers. The district was designed to produce a Dominican victor. Dominican-Americans will, for the first time, have someone who truly understands their concerns in the counsels of government. And because Mr. Linares brings with him an understanding of what it means to be an outsider in the caldron of New York City and its political structures, he is destined to be one of its best voices for reform, and for combating bigotry, not only against Dominicans, but against everyone. Just weeks into office, he had already pulled together leaders of various groups in New York to help the city council find new, better, ways to combat bigotry and intergroup hatred.

That is the positive side. The negative happened in Brooklyn. Susan Alter, a white and a Jew, had been a well-liked representative of a predominantly black district for many years. When the districts were recarved, the line was stretched to move her out of her own district. One of the line-drawers was quite clear about the motives. This was to be a black district. Susan Alter was white. She had to run in another district, with white voters.

Alter sued. The lines were changed back. She easily won reelection to her old seat. Posited in the redistricting process to which Susan Alter objected is the notion that only black politicians should represent black voters, and only white politicians should represent white voters, whether or not black voters or white voters choose otherwise. Isn't the presumption behind this logic bigoted? And isn't its implementation dangerous, giving government and communal approval to additional bigoted assumptions? Doesn't this logic fuse the dangers of majoritarian rule with racial appeals?

It is understandable that groups that perceive themselves outside of the mainstream will want some share of power. The justice of that inclusion is undeniable, and the implementation a legal necessity. But isn't there a danger to the fabric of society when districts are set up so that a candidate, in order to win, may have to target his or her message to only one group of voters based on their skin color or ethnicity, and have to discount others? Is there a real danger that some of these "minority" districts may develop the hateful dynamic of some predominantly "white" districts — where appeals to divisiveness and scapegoating of neighbors, "us" against "them" (the "us" having enough votes to discount the "them"), become viable campaign tactics?

The Republican Party has helped Hispanic organizations propose new district boundaries. Hispanics vote primarily Democratic. That was the point. The Hispanics wanted to maximize their power by collecting enough voters in districts that they had a chance to win. If more Democratically-prone Hispanic voters were collected into fewer districts, the Republicans (who could not expect to win in these districts anyway) could reduce the number of Democratic voters in the remaining districts. The end result, at least in theory, was what they both craved. Hispanic votes would have a larger impact in the districts into which they were collected. And Republicans would end up winning more seats overall.

Can redistricting then, in some cases, become self-defeating? In this model, the concerns of Hispanic voters may be more ardently addressed by a few elected representatives, but the elected body as a whole will be less likely to care about those same concerns. If voters from many different backgrounds are needed for a candidate to win, the candidate will have to pay attention to all his or her potential constituents. If he or she can win with appeals to only one group, why should he or she care about the needs of others? In fact, wouldn't it make sense to define campaign issues that distinguish between voters, so that the predominant group — the only group that counts — can feel that its needs are being met?

As America becomes more diverse demographically over the next decades, the dangers of institutionalizing appeals to bigotry through the redrawing of electoral districts will increase. If campaigns for local and state election are held in an environment designed to increase appeals based on ethnicity or race, won't that create an environment that will make it more likely for state-wide and national elections to do the same? And won't it increase the opportunities for groups that represent the various communities to see themselves as vying for influence, rather than working on a common pluralistic agenda?

It would be unrealistic for politicians and community groups not to look at race and religion and voter affiliation when lines are redrawn. The manner in which lines

are redrawn defines who is more likely and who is less likely to have power. But the redrawing also affects how Americans look at each other. At the very least, community groups and the political parties should be holding forums, researching, and talking about how redistricting affects American society. The scalpel used in redistricting is a two-edged sword. It is essential that the provisions of the Voting Rights Act be upheld. But it is equally essential that we go the next step, and examine the implications for promoting bigotry that exist whenever political lines are changed.

Electoral inclusion is an essential goal, much as the preservation of free speech under the First Amendment is an essential goal. But just as First Amendment rights can be used to promote bigoted messages, so too can the only tool devised to guarantee minorities fair access to the political process.

Whether in redistricting or electioneering, we need to appreciate the risk of divisive messages, and investigate how we can attach a political risk to such appeals. Demographic changes will make America a country with a majority of minorities in the next century. If we do not become more sophisticated in rejecting calls to bigotry in politics now, the problem will be worse for our children than it is for us.

A Call to Action

Bigotry is at its most dangerous when it finds a home in institutions. It is amplified. It becomes acceptable.

There is no more central institution in American life than government and the electoral process that defines who makes up our government. That the road to power frequently utilizes the tool of bigotry should concern every American. History is too full of examples of the awful mix of power and hate — too frequently proving that the fine distinction between means and ends, between tactics and ideology, can become easily blurred.

The challenge is to recognize that bigotry in politics has always worked, and will continue to do so. But it is no longer enough for people of good will to condemn the clear cases of electoral hate or intolerance. Condemnations are important, but recede quickly, and do not change the way that bigotry works.

The political use of hate and divisiveness must be made to bear a political cost; and the use of inclusiveness and anti-bigotry themes rewarded.

It is time that we, as a society, start discussing these issues seriously. Congress should hold hearings on the laws that deter tax-exempt non-profit groups from challenging bigotry in politics. Perhaps these laws should be repealed. Perhaps not. But their impact on increasing America's bigotry level needs to be discussed openly.

Strategies that attack the worst in politics — the use of bigoted ads for example — need to be discussed by all Americans. Perhaps they too should be banned.

Perhaps not. But the question needs to be raised.

And community groups, which share a common agenda of combating bigotry, need to define ways to work together, and to avoid the temptation of turning new promises of enfranchisement into invitations for the evil of majoritarian politics that will be played out neighborhood by neighborhood.

It is time we start recognizing the danger that the germ of bigotry holds for the health of the American body politic, as it heads toward the next century.

If we start paying attention to these questions today — and start raising them for our candidates to answer — that would be the best election result possible.

Notes

1. Jackson had embraced PLO chief Yasir Arafat, said that he was "sick and tired" of hearing about the Holocaust, and had blamed the perceived insensitivity of the Nixon administration to the plight of the poor on the "German Jews" around Nixon (meaning Haldeman and Erlichman, neither of whom was Jewish).

2. Jackson apologized for causing this pain during a powerful speech at the Democratic National Convention.

3. In the 1991 New York City Council races right after the anti-Semitic riots in Crown Heights, two black candidates associated with the hatemongers were soundly defeated. Running in heavily black districts, C. Vernon Mason came in third in a four-way race. Colin Moore received only 1,625 votes out of 7,316 cast. Both lost to Jews.

4. Covington beat Keith Snyder (a German sounding name); the LaRouchies, Mark Fairchild and Janice Hart, defeated George Sangmeister and Aurelia Pucinski.

5. Le Pen has articulated a nativist, anti-immigrant, anti-Arab, and anti-Semitic agenda that has won his party the support of over 20% of the voters in certain parts of France.

6. The model provided for voter canvassing is as follows:

R -- Usually vote for Republican candidates.

D -- Usually vote for Democratic candidates.

B -- Voted for Bush in 1988.

D -- Voted for Dukakis in 1988.

L -- Would favor a law in Virginia placing restrictions on abortion.

A -- Would not favor a law in Virginia placing restrictions on abortion.

"R," "B," and "L" are "correct answers." Voters who do not answer correctly to two of the three inquiries are dismissed.

7. Note that even though this paper focuses squarely on the issue of bigotry in politics today, it does not deal with some obvious people that could be associated with the phenomenon. That is because these people had announced their candidacies for various offices at the time this paper was released.

8. Section 1.501(c)(3)-1(c)(3)(i) of the Income Tax Regulations declares that an "action" organization is not operated for tax exempt purposes. Section 1.501(c)(3)-1(c)(3)(iii) defines an action organization as one which "participated or intervenes, directly or indirectly, in any political campaign on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for

public office. . . . Activities which constitute participation or intervention in a political campaign on behalf of or in opposition to a candidate include, but are not limited to, the publication or distribution of written statements or the making of oral statements on behalf of or in opposition to such a candidate.*

9. The Federal Election Code also prohibits non-profit organizations from interfering in elections. An FEC violation can lead to a fine. Both FEC and IRS rules apply during primaries as well as general elections.

10. These provisions are distinct from those that restrict the amount of lobbying non-profit organizations can engage in.

11. According to illustrations given in Rev. Rule 78-248, 1978-1, C.B. 154, a neutral compilation of candidates' stances on issues is okay. However, sending questionnaires to candidates in order to distribute "voter education" material would be violative of the tax code if the selection of issues or content of the questions suggested a bias. For example, Jewish groups could not ask only about Israel, black groups about South Africa, the Sierra Club about the environment, etc.

According to Rev. Rule 80-282-2 C.B. 178, however, publication of incumbents' voting records on specific issues in a non-partisan newsletter did not violate the tax code. While the format of the publication was not "neutral," other factors outweighed that consideration. Namely, that all incumbents were included, there was no indication of who was running for reelection, there were no editorial comments about qualifications or implying favor or disfavor, no comparisons between incumbents and other candidates were made, and the organization stressed the need to look at more than selected votes to judge the qualifications of incumbents. The IRS also took note of the fact that the publication was not widely distributed, nor targeted to specific areas in which it might have had an impact on the election. Also significant was that the publication was not designed to come out during the election campaign.

Since the laws are murky, it is essential that organizations get legal advice about what they should or should not do, and what risks are involved.

12. There is also a legion of tax problems with a bifurcated agency -- how separate the entities have to be, for example. On the other hand, an action component to an agency would give it more visibility, and might attract funds to both parts of the organization.

13. The four were: The Rt. Rev. Paul Moore, Jr., Bishop, The Diocese of New York of the Protestant Episcopal Church; Father Joseph O'Hare, Editor-in-Chief of "America," published by the Jesuits of the United States and Canada; Dr. Arnold L. Olson, retiring President of the Evangelical Free Church of America and former President of the National Association of Evangelicals; and Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum, National Director, Interreligious Affairs, of the American Jewish Committee.

Their statement, released October 20, 1976, read, in pertinent part:
As representatives from the Evangelical, Protestant, Roman Catholic and Jewish communities in the United States, we call upon President Ford and Governor Carter to repudiate appeals to religious bigotry in the current election campaign.

• • •

Religious bigotry has in fact remained gratifyingly absent from the Presidential race, but it has become alarmingly evident in a number of Congressional contests. Reportedly, drives have been mounted in at least 30 districts to elect "God-centered citizens" who will seek to "rebuild" American as a "Christian republic." Such efforts have involved both Democrats and Republicans.

For example, in a Republican Senatorial primary in Arizona, a Jewish candidate received anti-Semitic calls and threats, and his opponent is reported to have told Evangelical audiences: "We need to elect a Christian Congress."

In a five-sided Democratic Congressional primary in Texas, candidates were questioned in detail about their religious beliefs, and their replies were publicly "rated."

At other levels of political and civic life, too, attempts have recently been made to impose a religious test, which violates the U.S. Constitution. In one case in North Carolina, school board candidates were questioned about their religious convictions for the "information" of voters. . . .

We urge the Presidential candidates as leaders of their respective parties, as well as the parties' National, State and Local Committees, to reject forcefully any campaign appeals based on the religion a candidate may profess.

14. The IRS and FEC provisions could be amended as follows:

"Nothing herein prohibits a tax-exempt organization that has been duly incorporated for more than seven years from commenting about the past or present actions, statements, history, or associations of candidates that, in the good faith view of the tax exempt organization, promote, pander to, or oppose* bigotry or discrimination against any group, so long as said organization does not officially endorse or oppose any candidate."

* The provision for "opposing" bigotry is to allow groups to commend candidates who speak out against hate.

15. Chicago's Code of Fair Campaign Practice states:

The right to seek public office in Chicago is a precious right which belongs to all qualified citizens of the city. Vigorous election campaigns and sharp debate are normal and healthy and very much a part of the Chicago political tradition. At its best, this process can help to clarify the issues and inform the voters. In their election campaigns, however, candidates have a solemn obligation to be truthful and fair and to respect the rights and dignity of their opponents and of all the individuals and groups who make up the community. Campaigns which appeal to fear or hate or which denigrate the opposition based on the opponent's race, religion, ethnicity or gender are morally wrong, undermine community peace and subvert the political process.

To help establish decent, unbiased, political campaigns in Chicago, CONDUCT, the Committee on Decent Unbiased Campaign Tactics, urges candidates for public office in Chicago to commit themselves to observe the following Code of Fair Campaign practice:

CANDIDATES:

- ** should not suggest directly or indirectly through speeches or campaign literature, that their opponents ought to be defeated because of their race, religion, national origin or gender.
- ** should campaign among *all* the voters in the community they seek to represent or serve, being careful not to systematically exclude neighborhoods or groups other than their own.
- ** should not appeal to negative stereotypes or hostilities based on race, religion, ethnicity, gender or other irrelevant group identification.
- ** should not seek to gain support by arousing or exploiting the fears of one group toward other, different groups.
- ** should not use pamphlets, flyers, code words or advertising which appeal to bigotry or fear.
- ** should publicly condemn bigoted literature, statements or actions in support of their candidacy or in opposition to their opponent.
- ** should be accountable for the actions of their campaign staffs relative to this code.

16. For example:

Dear [fellow ethnic]:

its our turn

we have to get it back from them

they're in control of the [party, City Hall, government, etc.]

the [black, white, Polish, etc.] (identifying person by race when purpose is to bias others against him/her)

he'll put in only the [blacks, whites, Hispanics, etc.]

we have to fight for what is ours

they want the [blacks, whites, Hispanics] to work against us

he is a stooge [puppet, crony] of . . .

you are paying for what they are getting

you can't even walk the streets in that [ward, neighborhood, etc.]

they take us for granted

they'll all vote that way

he sold out to the . . .

what can you expect from them

we know what we can expect from them

if you are afraid of crime, drugs, etc, then . . .

we have to save our neighborhood

all God-fearing people know . . .

if he gets election, then . . .

when they were in power . . .

we know what he is really saying

he will sweep the [blacks, whites, et.] out of City Hall

he is criticizing [names] only because he/she/they are [black, white, etc.]

we've seen what they will do

we've learned we really can't trust a . . .

they're all rallying around . . .

they're all voting for . . .

they control [the party, the city, the votes, etc.]
our time has come
it's time to take it back [power, City Hall, etc.]
we've earned . . .
only a [black, white, etc.] can understand
only a . . . can run this city
draw your own conclusions
how come he only wants to fire [blacks, whites, etc.]
his [father, brother, associate] did . . . to our people
we can only back one of our own
. . . is the enemy
we're the only ones who . . .
race is the issue
how long will we let them . . .
all the [whites, blacks, etc.] are

17. There is some indication that party identification is less important than it used to be.

18. *New York Times*, op-ed page, October 5, 1984.

19. There are claims that "at large" voter districts sometimes have the same intent and effect. For example, if there are five city council seats elected by all the voters, as opposed to having each council member come from a different geographic district, the "majority" can always outvote the "minority" for each seat.

20. The redrawing was the result of a lawsuit that challenged the constitutionality of the city charter that gave some boroughs more representation than others. Under the newly enacted charter, the number of city council seats was also expanded.