

American Presidents and Their Attitudes, Beliefs, and Actions Surrounding Education and Multiculturalism

A Series of Research Studies in Educational Policy

Seventh and Final Installment:
Analysis of Power and Leadership in the Presidency



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Introduction

In this series of research papers and projects we have used multicultural education theory to analyze presidential administrations with a special emphasis on their policies dealing with social justice. Our research findings reveal the lesser known aspects of presidential administrations, aspects which have resulted in widespread oppression, discrimination, and marginalization of minority groups throughout the history of this country. In this sense we are unmasking the presidential agendas, revealing the nature of the

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presidency as it has perpetuated a class of privileged elites, always at the expense of minority groups. By analyzing the presidency in this way, we have been able to contextualize the actions of many of the presidents of the United States, eighteen in this series of articles, through their policies related to issues of social justice.

Any study of the presidency tends to reveal the awesome power of the office and thus the power of the men occupying it. One cannot help but be struck by how the character and beliefs of the president, as transmitted through the power of the office, can impact every facet of our society. What perhaps is most intriguing is how selective a president may be in exercising (or not exercising) this great power.

Our objective in this work is to use multicultural theory as constructed by many prominent multicultural scholars (Banks, 2003; Baptiste & Boyer, 1996; Nieto, 2000; Brown & Kysilka, 2002; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997) to evaluate the performance of the American presi-

dents. To this end, individual American presidents and their administrations have been investigated, using such multicultural theory, to examine and consider how the particular policies of those presidents influenced educational policy and practice.

As we began contemplating the content, context, and praxis of this research three years ago, the following encounters or experiences led to its development:

1. Listening to an interview of Dr. Roger Wilkins by a National Public Radio broadcaster, wherein Dr. Wilkins was sharing his thoughts that led to the writing of *Jefferson's Pillow*.
2. Listening to an audio tape of *James Madison: The American Presidents* by Arthur M. Schlesinger.
3. Listening to President G. W. Bush's numerous speeches in which he demonstrated a determination of the U.S. going to war with Iraq.
4. Reading *Jefferson's Pillow: The*

Research

Founding Fathers and the Dilemma of Black Patriotism.

If one is to accept the thesis that “culture shapes mind, it provides us with the toolkit by which we construct not only our worlds but our very conceptions of ourselves and our powers” (Bruner, 1996), then it naturally follows that some intervention must take place, which is not only culturally sensitive, but totally aware of the intoxicant power of culture which allows most participants to abide by a “doublethink” philosophy at best, and at worst provides them with a myopic view for justifying their position as a God-given right for their inherent status. This “double think” philosophy is illustrated in the following:

Consequently, after Bacon’s Rebellion of 1676, itself largely a product of anti-Native American sentiment, when it seemed politically desirable and economically necessary, it was easy and natural to firm up the already established position of blacks as perpetually bottom-dwelling, lifelong, and hereditary human chattel. (Wilkins, 2001)

So as Virginia’s founding fathers moved into the ten-year period preceding the firing of the first shots at Lexington and Concord—they had been handed a rich bouquet of ways to understand the world, including the freedoms due to Englishman of substance, disregard and even contempt for the English lower orders, the view that Native Americans were dangerous exotics, and the “knowledge” from daily life that blacks were both irretrievably inferior and, at the same time, indispensable to them. (Wilkins, 2001)

Thus the founding fathers, in declaring that “all men are created equal,” intended this to mean that these white men in America from their perspective were equal to white upperclass Englishmen. This was pointed out to Thomas Jefferson in a letter by his contemporary, Benjamin Banneker:

Sir, How pitiable it is to reflect that although you were so fully convinced of the benevolence of the Father of Mankind and his equal and impartial distribution of these rights and privileges which he hath conferred upon them, that you should at the same time counteract his mercies in detaining by fraud and violence so numerous a part of my brethren under groaning captivity and cruel oppression, that you should at the same time be found guilty of that most criminal act which you professedly detested in others with respect to yourselves. (Haber, 1970)

This was a bold, courageous, and challenging letter. In it, Banneker accused Jefferson

of guilt as a slaveholder and of having double standards when he wrote “all men are created equal” and that they are entitled to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” These fine words, said Banneker, should apply to all men—black as well as white (as cited Haber, 1970).

As we began to reflect on our research of the Presidents’ administrations, we became more intrigued with the following phrases of Arthur M. Schlesinger, General Editor of *The American Presidents*:

The president is the central player in the American political order...One of the three branches must take the initiative if the system is to move. The executive branch alone is structurally capable of taking that initiative. The Founders must have sensed this when they accepted Alexander Hamilton’s proposition in the Seventieth Federalist that “energy in the executive is a leading character in the definition of good government.” They thus envisaged a strong president—but within an equally strong system of constitutional accountability. (The term imperial presidency arose in the 1970’s to describe the situation when the balance between power and accountability is upset in favor for the executive.)

The American system of self-government thus comes to focus in the presidency—“the vital place of action in the system,” as...the American president “resembles the commander of a ship at sea. He must have a helm to grasp, a course to steer, a port to seek.” The men in the White House (thus far only men, alas) in steering their chosen courses have shaped our destiny as a nation.

Presidents serve us as inspirations, and they also serve us as warnings. They provide bad examples as well as good. The nation, the Supreme Court has said, has “no right to expect that it will always have wise and humane rulers, sincerely attached to the principles of the Constitution. Wicked men, ambitious of power, with hatred of liberty and contempt of law, may fill the place once occupied by Washington and Lincoln.” The men in the White House express the ideal and the values, the frailties and the flaws, of the voters who send them there. It is altogether natural that we should want to know more about the virtues and the vices of the fellows we have elected to govern us. (Schlesinger, 2001)

Presidential Leadership and Power

Presidents who serve as national leaders for the people must value the interests of all people and make policies that are equitable for all. A successful leader’s pur-

pose should be to pursue his or her uses of power, not for their own good or for purposes to gain greater status, but to achieve goals of empowering others. Leaders of and for the people are educators, they are visionaries. Presidential leaders move the government in pursuit of the consensus generated from the values of the nation, and appeal to the best in citizens while they attempt to lead the nation toward improvement (Genovese, 2001).

We believe the president should be a moral leader. He should put aside all biases to create a nation promoting equality for all, where all can live freely. Furthermore, the president must set the tone of the nation in leading by example. If a president does not believe in equality of all races, how can she or he lead our nation to believe in equality? To be a truly great president, he or she must genuinely believe in equality and social justice for all, and do anything in her or his power to uphold these ideals (Baptiste & Araujo, 2004).

Presidents, as leaders, in this sense, foster citizen responsibility, and inspire and empower others. Our presidents must be willing to establish a moral vision; pursue egalitarian goals; question, challenge, engage, and educate citizens; and offer hope. We do not believe, as Emiliano Zapata said, that “strong leaders make a weak people” (Genovese 2001), but instead, that strong national leaders help create strong citizens.

This then makes it evident that the president is the embodiment of leadership in this country. The president has the power to frame, implement, and transform government (Schlesinger, 2002; Baptiste & Sanchez, 2003). “The office of the presidency has an enormous, larger-than-life quality, it is at once the most powerful and the weakest executive office in the world. The great opportunity to do good is matched by the equally strong capacity to do great harm” (Genovese, 2001).

Many question the power that our president—one person—has in terms of leading our country and institutionalizing change. “Presidential power appears to be a bit of a misnomer. Presidential influence or leadership is more important” (Genovese, 2001). It is understood that, “much of the expected policy changes are likely to be attributable to presidential influence” (Shull, 1993 p. 26). Genovese allows us to better understand the power that exists with presidents:

Presidents have limited and shared powers. They are well positioned to exert influence in leadership but their power is

hemmed in by a variety of forces, most importantly the Congress. Presidential power exists in two forms: formal powers and informal powers. To understand presidential power, one must understand how both the formal and informal powers work and interact and how the combination of the two can lead to dominance by a president who, given the proper conditions and abilities, is able to exploit his power sources. (Genovese, 2001, p. x)

The formal powers of the president are derived essentially from the Constitution (Neustadt, 1960). Neustadt, in his book, *Presidential Power*, discusses the informal power of the president to “persuade.” Neustadt and others feel that the power to persuade is the most important of all the presidential powers. These informal powers of the president rely upon his ability to engage in a personal part of politics. Informal powers involve many skills including the skill at persuasion, personal manipulation, and mobilization (Neustadt, 1960).

Over time, the presidency has served many needs and interests: chief modernizing agent of the nation, protector of the status quo, the defender of liberty, symbol of nationhood, source of unity, leader in war and crisis, national highlighter of issues, moral educator, and much more. The office has been praised and scorned. Some great and good men served, and some small, hateful men did as well. The office remains what it has been for over two centuries: a grand paradox (Genovese, 2001).

This article will make known the following: The relevance of presidential leadership and its impact on social justice issues, a summary of our past research articles regarding several of the president’s leadership actions and policies and their positive or negative impact regarding social justice issues, our current President (G. W. Bush), a ranking of some of the presidents, and some conclusions regarding our research.

Some will argue that the president is merely a figurehead and has very little impact in regards to social justice issues. We argue rather that presidential leadership and power are essential for progress regarding social justice issues. “The presidency is the chief engine of progress in American history; its leadership and power are central” (Blumenthal, 2003). While presidential power is sometimes abused, often misused, and usually poorly used, we should not forget that the office and powers of the presidency are potential powers. The president is involved in each stage of policy making (Shull, 1993). If the presidency of the modern era has not been able

to translate power potential into practical good, it must be remembered that it is not power itself that is good or ill, but the uses to which power is utilized (Genovese, 2001).

Any study of the presidency tends to reveal the awesome power of this office and thus the power of the men occupying this office. One cannot help but be struck with how the character and beliefs of the president as transmitted through the power of this office can impact every facet of our society. What perhaps is most intriguing is how selective a president may be in exercising this power.

Multicultural Perspective and Analysis

The question may arise, why look at the presidents through a multicultural lens? Too often we have become academically socialized by our education system, which is predominantly based on a monocultural curriculum (Boyer & Baptiste, 1996). “Our desire for power based on cultural norms slows the process of learning—of understanding—and seeing knowledge and truth right in front of us” (Thomas, 1998). Too often our way of thinking and living is predicated on the dominant perspective. Cultural blinders and justifications influence our way of thinking which hinders the possibilities or excludes other multiple perspectives (Baptiste, Orvosh-Kamenski, & Kamenski, 2004).

Multicultural education theory offers a unique perspective from which to analyze and interpret the actions of our presidents (Baptiste & Sanchez, 2004). This perspective allows for additional recognition of the roots of contemporary struggles. Gay (2004) describes the primary characteristic of multicultural education: “multicultural education is essentially an affective, humanistic, and transformative enterprise situated within the sociocultural, political, and in historical contexts of the United States” (p. 39). Kincheloe and Steinberg (1997) describe how “critical multiculturalism reveals historically how race, class, and gender make a difference in the lives of individuals and how racism, class bias and sexism have played a central role in shaping Western societies” (p. 41). Nieto (2004) defines multicultural education as:

a process of school reform and basic education for all students. It challenges and rejects racism and other forms of discrimination in schools and society and accepts and affirms the pluralism (ethnic, racial, linguistic, religious, economic, and gen-

der among others) that students, their communities, and teachers reflect. Multicultural education permeates the schools’ curriculum and instructional strategies, as well as the interactions among teachers, students, and families, and the very way that schools conceptualize the nature of teaching and learning. Because it uses critical pedagogy as its underlying philosophy and focuses on knowledge, reflection, and action (praxis) as the basis for social change, multicultural education promotes democratic principles of social justice. (p. 346)

By viewing the presidents through a multicultural lens, it enables us to better understand the impact of their legacies and how their decisions reflect upon our educational system and society with respect to issues of social justice (Baptiste, Orvosh-Kamenski, & Kamenski, 2005).

We believe that until we learn how to embrace diversity through a multicultural lens, history will only continue to repeat itself, with the continuation of the marginalization of “others.” To ensure that history doesn’t repeat itself, we need to study the actions and policies of our past Presidents and analyze the social realities of African-Americans, Mexican-Americans, Native Americans, women, and other cultural and ethnic groups under their leadership. The power of the presidency at times hypnotizes the citizenry, weakens the environment of a democracy, and permits the actions and policies for the nation not to be questioned fully.

We need to remove our cultural blinders to enable us to internalize multiple perspectives and more fully participate as citizens in a democracy (Baptiste, Orvosh-Kamenski, & Kamenski, 2004). The actions, policies, and administrative decisions of the Presidents influence and determine the fate of the citizenry in terms of equality, racism, discrimination, and attitudes about groups. The historical legacy and glorification of the same men in educational texts, and the failure to include the often devastating significance of their actions towards certain groups in historical accounts, has further distorted societal attitudes about multiculturalism in our country (Baptiste & Sanchez, 2004; Ellis, 2000; Ellis, 2004; Wills, 2003).

Through the policies and actions of each president’s individual administrations, the role of multicultural education in this country is affected, both positively and negatively (Baptiste & Michal, 2004). With few exceptions, the deeds and dreams of our Presidents, and the choices they made, deepened the racial rut, a rut that

Research

has existed in the United States since George Washington's administration (O'Reilly, 1995). Our presidents have had the opportunities to change the nation to a more just and free one, yet many of them have ignored taking actions concerning racial matters and continue to be influenced by the ingrained ideologies of a Eurocentric perspective. Several presidents who illustrate this position are: Andrew Jackson (Garrett, 1982, Loewen, 1995; O'Reilly, 1995), James Madison (Wills, 2002, Wills, 2003, Wilkins, 2001), Thomas Jefferson (O'Brien, 1996; Wallace, 1999; Wilkins, 2001), Andrew Johnson (Garrett, 1982; Trefousee, 1999), James Buchanan (Degregorio, 1946; Garrett, 1982) Henry Polk (Bergeron, 1987; Dusinger, 2003; McCoy, 1960), Woodrow Wilson (Garrett, 1982; Freund, 2003, Loewen, 1995), Henry Hoover (Garrett, 1982; Kunhardt, Kunhardt & Kunhardt, 1999), Richard Nixon (Katz, 1993; Kutler, n.d.), Dwight Eisenhower (Ambrose, 1984; Morrow, 1963; Wicker, 2002), and Ronald Reagan (Chomsky, 2004; Lahman, 1998; West, 1993, 2004). Through these choices racism and division continued to be a potent part of American ideology, thought, and action (Baptiste & Araujo, 2004).

President George W. Bush

The current President Bush (i.e., George W. Bush) perhaps comes closer than any of his predecessors to moving the office to that of an imperial presidency. There appears to be an imbalance of power between the presidency and the other two branches of the government. President Bush has focused the nation's attention on a war against Iraq and neglect of his "No Child Left Behind" education plaudit. As we invaded Iraq, we could not help but remember these warnings of Paulo Freire:

Cultural invasion, which serves the ends of conquest and the preservation of oppression, always involves a parochial view of reality, a static perception of the world, and the imposition of one world view upon another. It implies the "superiority" of the invader and the "inferiority" of those who are invaded, as well as the imposition of values by the former, who possess the latter and are afraid of losing them.

Cultural invasion further signifies that the ultimate seat of decision regarding the action of those who are invaded lies not with them but with the invaders. And when the power of decision is located outside rather than within the one who should decide, the latter has only the illusion of deciding. This way there can be no socio-economic development in a dual,

"reflex," invaded society. For development to occur it is necessary: (a) that there be a movement of search and creativity having its seat of decision in the searcher; and (b) that this movement occur not only in space, but in the existential time of the conscious searcher. (Freire, 1970)

Social Currency

George W. Bush was born in New Haven, Connecticut, and grew up in Houston, Texas. G. W. Bush, like his father, was educated at Phillips Academy and went to Yale University and later attended Harvard University, making him the first president to hold an MBA degree. He also became a member of the secret society "The Skull and Bones" (Hatfield, 2002). G. W. Bush and his father G. H. W. Bush are the second father-and-son to hold the position of president of the United States.

G.W. Bush used leftover money from his trust fund to enter into the oil industry. G. W. Bush was also the part-owner and manager of the Texas Rangers baseball team from 1989 until 1998, when he sold the team, earning \$15 million. He later became the first Texas governor to serve two consecutive terms (www.whitehouse.gov). On January 20, 2001 he became the 43rd President of the United States in the closest general election in American history.

Societal Values

Campaign. The power of the presidency is influenced and expanded through campaign promises (Watson, Hilliard, & Lansford, 2004). G. W. Bush's campaign promises prior to the September 11 terrorist attacks involved a large domestic agenda which included: education, Social Security, the economy, welfare reform, and the environment. His agenda after September 11 focused on foreign affairs, homeland security, and the war on terrorism. G. H. W. Bush, his father, promised a "kindler gentler" nation, while G. W. Bush brought a similar philosophy, which he called compassionate conservatism (Phillips, 2004), to the presidency. G.W. Bush, during his first campaign, identified himself as a "compassionate conservative."¹ This brought a new ideology to the Republican Party, as compassionate conservatives follow communitarian ideas and theories (Riggs, 2004).

Communitarians recognize that if citizens follow a purely private life in pursuit of self-interest, then their social, political, economic, and moral order will suffer. Consequently, some measure of caring,



sharing, and being our brother's keeper is essential if we are not to fall back on an even more expansive government, bureaucratized welfare agencies, and swollen regulations, police, courts, and jails. Much as do compassionate conservatives, communitarians propose programs of national and local service and volunteer work to bring people closer together while fostering mutual respect and tolerance. (Riggs, 2004, p.36)

Actions, Policies, and Political Decisions

President Bush's ideology of compassionate conservatism promoted that "government should encourage ownership and opportunity, compassion, and responsibility" (The White House, n.d.). During the Bush administration numerous actions, policies, and political decisions have been made. We chose several of these to critique and to examine their impact on multiculturalism and social justice issues.

Tax Relief. President Bush persuaded Congress to pass the largest tax cut in a generation (The White House, n.d.). According to the White House the average taxpayer will receive an average tax cut of \$1,586. The three tax relief bills include: reduction of the marriage penalty tax, doubling the child tax credit, and reducing the taxes on small business owners. According to The Tax Policy Center, 80 percent of filers would receive \$1,083 and half would pocket less than \$100 (as cited Corn, 2003). In reality Bush's tax cuts have benefited corporate America instead of the middle class (Corn, 2003; www.ctj.org/html/gwb0602.htm).

This tax relief has not helped the middle class, but instead has shifted the burden. A study released by Citizens for Tax Justice (2002) found that the richest one percent will receive 52 percent of the total tax cuts. In a state-by-state analysis the Institute of Taxation and Economic policy found that in 2004, 47 percent of the taxpayers will get \$100 or less. The average tax cut for these 63.4 million taxpayers will be \$19. In 2005, 74 percent of the taxpayers will get \$100 or less and the average tax reduction for these 97.9 million taxpayers will be \$5 (as cited Citizens for Tax Justice, 2003).

Bush personal tax saving was \$30,858 in 2003 and Bush's cabinet members that year received an average savings of \$42,000 as a result of tax cuts in capital gains and dividends (Carter, 2004). In comparing the impact of capital gains and dividends it was found that 88 percent of American families can expect to receive less than \$100 in 2006 (Carter, 2004). According to Fritz, Keefer, and Nyhan (2004) the reason why these statistics from the Bush administration are so misleading is because the numbers "represent the sum of all the benefits to taxpayers in the group divided by the number of taxpayers" (p.133). The result of this type of calculation is an exaggeration of benefits for the middle class taxpayer because of the very large tax cuts received by the wealthiest Americans, which push the average up.

Our research has concluded that the presidential rhetoric used to promote President Bush's tax cuts has been misleading. Depending on which source you use, the benefit the average tax payer is getting amounts to very little under Bush's tax relief plan. The other consequence of the tax plan is less funding for federal programs and a growing deficit which impacts many social programs (Fritz, Keefer, & Nyhan, 2004; Citizens for Tax Justice, 2005).

The deficit has continued to grow. In August 2002, the CBO (Center Budget Office) released figures that the projected ten-year surplus had declined to \$5.3 trillion (Fritz, Keefer & Nyhan, 2004). The White House blamed this on the recession, the stock market, and the war. However, the tax cut represented 31 percent of the total decline of the ten-year surplus (Fritz, Keefer, & Nyhan, 2004). Figures from the OMB (The Office of Management and Budget) showed that the tax cut increased the deficit.

The Medicare Act. The Medicare Act of 2003 was reformed to include a prescription drug benefit. Starting in 2006, eligible

Medicare beneficiaries will be able to join a prescription drug plan. This plan helps seniors, with low incomes, to reduce the costs of their prescriptions. Once a beneficiary spends \$3,600 on prescriptions, Medicare will cover 95% of their future drug expenses (The White House, n.d.). Other reforms to Medicare include expanded coverage of preventive services, disease management services, funding for new medical research, medical liability reform, access to generic drugs, and Health Savings Accounts (HSAs) which are tax free savings accounts for future medical expenses (The White House, n.d.).

Critics warn that under this plan states will have more latitude and responsibility in determining benefits. As with many of President Bush's other proposals, advocates for those who need social services fear, that as the federal government continues to transfer responsibility to the states, funding for these programs will be cut, which would lead to a cut-back on services provided. Critics of the plan also state that health insurance and pharmaceutical companies will reap large financial profits from the plan (Allen, 2003).

No Child Left Behind. President Bush's educational policies, as governor of Texas, paid off for him politically by reporting student test scores as increasing under his leadership. In the 2000 election he used these statistics to promote his campaign and persuade the public that he had the leadership ability to improve public education. However, further investigation showed the reported results were manipulated to get positive results (Emery & Ohanian, 2004; Coles, 2002; Haney, 2000; Karp, 2003; Mathis, 2003). For example, the numbers reported in "The Texas Miracle in Education" were very misleading. The dropout rate as reported had declined from 10.4 percent to 2.8 percent. However, Haney (2000) points out actual graduation numbers for Blacks and Latinos were below 50 percent. For students of color, the achievement gap was not narrowing, but increasing, according to the NAEP reading scores for fourth-graders between 1992 and 1998 (Coles, 2002). We strongly recommend further reading of these misrepresented statistics.

G. W. Bush made education one of his main domestic policy issues. President Bush pursued education reform by advocating for vouchers and mandatory testing. Bush had to settle for a compromise and that meant removal of vouchers from his proposal, but the mandatory testing was increased. Bush sent six major com-

ponents, of what is now known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) to Congress to consider within the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. His proposals follow his belief that governmental institutions must be driven by standards (Maranto & Coppeto, 2004). This is affirmed from his personal experiences. When G.W. Bush transitioned from a Texas public school to the private Phillips Academy, he was met by high standards which he believes have contributed to his success (Maranto & Cappeto, 2004). However, this belief when mandated into federal legislation may not have the same impact for numerous reasons.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) is one of the most sweeping federal educational policies since 1965. It requires yearly testing for grades 3-8 and requires schools to meet adequate yearly progress (AYP). Test scores are divided into groups and each group must also meet adequate yearly progress. The diverse groups are ethnicity, Special Education status, income (free and reduced lunch), and Limited English Proficient (LEP) status. If any group does not meet AYP the school is placed on probation. Any school on probation for more than three years is deemed a failing school and assumes sanctions, such as being closed down or taken over by the state. Many believe that schools with the most diverse populations will be the ones most negatively impacted by NCLB sanctions.

There are a few positive elements of No Child Left Behind. One of the most positive elements is that it ensures that schools are held accountable for diverse populations and these students cannot be ignored in the assessment of schools. Schools deemed failing must provide tutoring, which will benefit students from low income families that cannot usually afford those types of services. It will also allow parents the choice to withdraw their child from a failing school and send them to another school.

All fifty states, for the first time in history, must have accountability plans measuring progress in order to receive federal funding (The White House, n.d.). The problem with this is that schools must use a large amount of their funding for costs associated with testing. While we support the concept that schools need to have some measure of accountability, there are many serious issues surrounding the NCLB legislation. Despite President Bush's stance on accountability, there have been no scientific studies to prove that if we hold schools, teachers, and students to higher

standards that teachers will teach better and students will learn better. Furthermore the Bush administration is not clear as to how much of the needed funding for NCLB implementation will be provided by the Federal government.

Additionally, there is the evidence that we have been testing kids for 30 years with minimal results. The negative consequences of high-stakes testing, such as increased drop out rates and added costs associated with testing, are being overlooked (Emery & Ohanian, 2004; Goodman, Shannon, Goodman, & Rapoport, 2004; Mathis, 2003). Just because high standards worked personally for G. W. Bush does not mean it will work for the diverse populations our schools now teach. There are many factors that play into student success. Some examples include: school funding, access to resources, home environment and access to qualified teachers (Coles, 2002; Goodman, Shannon, Goodman, & Rapoport, 2004). Lastly, there currently are inadequate funds to support the goals of NCLB, despite the rhetoric that NCLB is fully funded.

The US Patriot Act. This act was passed soon after the events of September 11, 2001, and was created so that federal law enforcement agencies could track and share information. The Department of Homeland Security was also created, which is considered to be the most extensive reorganization of the federal government since Truman (The White House, 2004).

While personal information is now more accessible to federal law enforcement agencies, government information is becoming more restricted. Waxman (2004) released a comprehensive report which analyzed how the Bush administration has changed the principle of open government. President Bush has issued an executive order which restricted the public release of the papers of past presidents. Furthermore, the Bush Administration expanded its authority to classify documents and increased the number of documents classified. "It has used the USA Patriot Act and other legal theories to justify secret investigations, detentions, and trials. The Administration has engaged in litigation to contest Congress' right to information" (Waxman, 2004, ¶2). Many consider such actions to seriously hinder the public's ability to voice concerns or hold the administration accountable for its actions. It has also brought about discrimination, and many U. S. citizens feel they have been unfairly targeted by the new security measures.

Civil Rights. There is continued rheto-

ric from the Bush Administration that through hard work and perseverance, "everyone" has access to opportunities to become successful. It appears President Bush is unable to realize how "others" are denied access to those same types of opportunities that he and his privileged colleagues had and continue to have because of their status and family name. One example is his admittance into Yale University. G. W. Bush got accepted into Yale not on his own merits, but because of his connections. His grandfather and father both graduated from Yale, facts which assisted in his acceptance (Hatfield, 2002). "Although he had an SAT score of 1206, 200 points below that of the average Yale freshman of 1970, he benefited from an admissions policy which gave preference to the children of alumni" (<http://www.usa-presidents.info/gwbush.htm>, ¶ 2). So you have to ask yourself, how many students who had the same SAT scores or even higher got denied admittance because they didn't have a parent who graduated from Yale. It is hard to comprehend his stance on affirmative action issues concerning college admissions based on this knowledge.

President Bush filed a brief with the Supreme Court to challenge the University of Michigan's use of racial preferences in admissions. Bush called the method used for admission "fundamentally flawed" and "a quota system" (as cited CNN.com, 2003). Legal scholars believe the Bush Administration's actions could imperil affirmative action programs throughout the nation (Lewis, 2003). Civil rights advocates are now questioning Bush's commitment to civil rights. The United States Commission on Civil Rights posted a report (<http://www.usccr.gov/>) which states Bush "has neither exhibited leadership on pressing civil rights issues, nor taken actions that matched his words." The report further criticizes Bush for not adequately funding civil rights enforcement and his stance on voting rights, educational opportunities, and affirmative action (The Associated Press, 2004).

Presidential Analysis and Leadership

There are indeed different theories about leadership, resulting in a range of theories: great-man theories, trait theory, leader-member exchange theory, contingency theory, humanistic theory, leader-role theory, path-goal theory, charismatic leadership theory, results-based theory, and spiritual leadership theory to name just a

few (Covey 2004; Northouse, 2001). So which leadership theory would be most effective for the Presidency? Sergiovanni (2003) discusses the politics of leadership in regards to community. He states that James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, Thomas Jefferson, and other American founders envisioned "a politics motivated by shared commitment to the common good and guided by protections that ensure the rights and responsibilities of individuals" (p. 284). This vision is found in our most valued documents such as the Declaration of Independence, the Bill of Rights, and The Constitution of the U. S.

What does leadership mean today? The presidency was invented more than 200 years ago as a relatively small, controlled office with limited powers. Today, the office is larger, more powerful, but in some ways still quite controlled and limited (Genovese, 2001). Today, the president is considered symbolically as the leader of the United States. A president's ability to lead is an intricate part of how successful he is in exercising, shaping, and fulfilling his role as president. The presidency is at the center of the United States government. "In spite of institutionalized checks and balances, the presidency has evolved well beyond the constitutionally weak office envisioned by the framers to become the most dominant institution in government" (Watson, Hilliard, & Lansford, 2004, p. 2).

Congress prior to the 1930s was the primary source of policymaking (Greenstein, 2004). Franklin Delano Roosevelt's leadership brought about an expansion of federal government influence, on policy, through the New Deal and World War II (Greenstein, 2004). The president is now a primary source of policy initiatives and is also a legislative leader. The president must use his personal skills to influence, to calculate strategies, to negotiate, and to persuade others to agree or promote his policies. The president, as chief executive, uses his power and influence in using executive orders, appointments, and proclamations to the nation.

For clarity and a better understanding of our research analysis, we have provided the following examples to demonstrate the affects that presidential leadership and power have concerning policies on social justice and how those policies impact the citizens of our country. The leader profile for the Presidency, we advocate, should be an individual who is not afraid to step out and be a leader for *all* people. This individual makes decisions based on the greater good and serving all

people, rather than decisions based on self interests or serving political interests.

Since President Lyndon Baines Johnson, there have been few presidents willing to take steps toward inclusive policies. Once Johnson took office, as the president of the United States, he considered himself a leader of *all* people (Goodwin, 1991; Johnson, 1971). The driving force of many other presidencies has been a political agenda shaped by political interest groups rather than for “everyone.” “There is but one way for a president to deal with the Congress,” Johnson said, “and that is continuously, incessantly, and without interruption. If it’s going to work, the relationship between the president and Congress has got to be almost incestuous” (Genovese, 2001, 157). No other president had Johnson’s understanding of the Congress or its members (Caro, 1982; Caro, 2003). President Johnson knew each member of Congress, he knew their strengths, weaknesses, what they liked to drink, and what they did in their spare time (Caro, 1982; Caro, 2003; Genovese, 2001). According to Genovese (2001) “Johnson knew when to push, where to push, how far to push. ‘I pleaded, I reasoned, I argued, I urged, I warned,’ said Johnson of his lobbying efforts” (as cited p. 157).

President Johnson achieved numerous policies that promoted social justice: the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Economic Opportunity Act of 1984, Medicare, Medicaid, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, the Higher Education act of 1965, and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (Baptiste, Orvosh-Kamenski & Kamenski, 2004; Genovese, 2001). What set Johnson’s Great Society apart from other reform efforts of previous presidents, such as Wilson’s New Freedom or Roosevelt’s New Deal, was that his reforms included all people (Baptiste, Orvosh-Kamenski, & Kamenski, 2004). Johnson stated, “I wanted power to give things to people—all sorts of things to all sorts of people, especially the poor and the Blacks” (Dalleck, 2004, p.13). In a book about his former boss, Press Secretary George Reidy, wrote the following:

President Johnson possessed the finest quality of a politician. It was a sense of the direction of political power—the forces that were sweeping the masses. He did not merely content himself by getting ahead of those forces. He mastered the art of directing them. Of all his qualities, however, the most important was that he knew how to make our form of government work, that is an art that has

been lost since his passing and we are all suffering heavily as a result. (Genovese, 2001, p.158)

President Johnson took up the cause for the rights of people of color at a time when very few politicians had or would (Goodwin, 1991). During Johnson’s presidency there was success and failure, however his legacy continues to have a significant impact on Americans today in the area of social justice. Johnson “took the most advanced position on racial issues of any president in American history” (Goodwin, 1991, p. 232). President Johnson’s unmatched capacity to persuade individuals was used to benefit others (Dalleck, 2004; Goodwin, 1991). Despite enormous opposition, he was able to persuade everyone that his goals were in the best interests of all people.

President Jefferson also had the leadership power and the opportunity to do great things in the area of social justice. Instead, he remained silent and failed to submit any plan for emancipation to Congress for consideration (Ellis, 2000). He used his power and made a personal and political choice not to free slaves or provide social justice for all (Garrett, 1982). Jefferson used his power to be an advocate for the slaveholding South (Dabney, 1991). He used his power to change and pass laws that favored his party beliefs, and failed to protect the rights of other groups. Jefferson believed that African-Americans would be an obvious problem to society because they were untrained and illiterate (Dabney, 1991; Gordon-Reed, 2004; Schuffelton, 1999). As a result, inequality grew and became institutionalized. Jefferson could have freed his own slaves, “but financially and probably physically as well” he was incapable of such sacrifices (Wilkins, 2001, p. 122). Jefferson’s actions, policies, and attitudes set a precedent to oppress other groups including Native Americans and women (Baptiste, Orvosh-Kamenski, & Kamenski, 2004).

Lincoln was a great man in a great president. In the midst of a vicious and divisive Civil War, he appealed to her better angels. His methods may have raised concerns, but his principles and purposes were about highest order. He stretched the Constitution but preserved the union. As George Fort Milton noted, no other president “found so many new sources of executive power, nor so expanded and perfected those others had already used.” (Genovese, 2001, p.88)

President Lincoln was a great speaker

and considered to be a master of rhetoric (DiLorenzo, 2002). Murray Rothbard, an economist, said of Lincoln, “Lincoln was a master politician, which means that he was a consummate conniver, manipulator, and liar” (as cited by DiLorenzo, 2002, p.11). David Donald wrote in his book *Lincoln Reconsidered*, “perhaps the secret of Lincoln’s continuing vogue is his essential ambiguity. He can be cited on all sides of all questions” (Bennet, 1999 p. 43). Bennet noted, “Lincoln spoke with a forked tongue... by saying two different things at the same time” (Bennet, 1999, p. 618). In particular this was never more apparent as Lincoln struggled with issues concerning slavery and equality for people of color. Many historians attempt to explain why Lincoln had such a hard time with concerns for the issues of abolishing slavery. Lincoln felt he couldn’t abolish slavery because the Constitution and the Congress prohibited him as the president from doing anything about it. Yet his concern and allegiance for the Constitution was often ignored as he defined and manipulated its wording to justify his causes, mainly, saving the Union from secession. “In 1861 Lincoln implemented a series of unconstitutional acts including launching an invasion of the South without the consent of Congress, as required by the Constitution; declaring martial law; blockading the Southern ports; suspending the writ of habeas corpus. . .” (DiLorenzo, 2002 p.131-132). Lincoln used his power to serve some purposes while ignoring others (Baptiste, Orvosh-Kamenski, & Kamenski 2004).

Regardless of however right or wrong one thinks Lincoln was in his actions, one must take into consideration that he had the overwhelming responsibility, as the commander and chief, of a country which was greatly divided by the Civil War throughout his presidency. He acknowledged that his one and only priority was to save the Union, winning the war. Lincoln said, “My paramount object in this struggle is to save the union and it is not either to save or destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slave I would do it, and if I could do it by freeing all the slaves I would do it...and I intend no modification of my oft-expressed personal wish that all men every where could be free” (Thomas 1994, p. 342-343). In the speeches and letters he spoke and wrote, concerns about people of color and concerns with issues of equality appear to contradict one another.

Lincoln, although he may have been forced into dealing with issues of social

justice, did do more than the previous presidents about the cause for social justice concerning slavery. Lincoln's proclamation of emancipation was a step in the right direction toward the emancipation of slaves. On April 1865, eight months after the death of Lincoln and three years after he signed the Emancipation Proclamation, the thirteenth amendment was enacted which abolished slavery (www.mdcbowen.org). It appears the Civil War which he initiated while he was president became the cause for the social revolution of Black equality.

President Reagan's popularity with the American people enabled him to pursue his divisive conservative agenda, while still coming across as sincere and persuasive (Schaller, 1992). Reagan's chief function as president was essentially to serve as a national storyteller and develop a positive vision of America in that what it means to the world, and connect that vision to the past, present, and future (Walsh, 1997). It appeared to some that Reagan, through his strength as a communicator, was able to restore confidence in the American people. His vision for the nation was easily understood by many Americans through his unique ability of communication that was comparable to Franklin Delani Roosevelt and Lincoln (Truelsen, 2004).

To Reagan's credit, "His policies accelerated the decline of the Soviet Union, and he used the rhetorical aspects of the presidency to full effect. But the Reagan years also left astronomical budget deficits, a wider gap between the nations rich and poor, a legacy of sleaze, the Iran-Contra scandal, and an aloof and disengaged management style" (Genovese, 2001, p. 179). Reagan pursued policies that were, for many, hurtful. Reagan cut the budget of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the main government supporter of subsidized housing for the poor, by three-quarters during his eight-year term. Furthermore, under Reagan the number of people living beneath the federal poverty line rose from 24.5 million in 1978 to 32.5 million in 1988 (Gray Panthers, n.d.). Cutbacks in food stamps, Medicaid, housing subsidies, unemployment compensation, urban mass transit, student loans and welfare were part of Reagan's tax cuts aimed at stimulating the economy (D'Souza, 1999).

The reality was the poor got poorer and the economy never became stimulated through the Reaganomics monetary theory (Kunhardt, Kunhardt, & Kunhardt, 1999). The income gap between the rich and everyone else widened, wages for the work-

ing class declined, the homeownership rate fell and the poverty rate in cities grew under his watch (Dreier, 2004). As President, Reagan cut funding for civil rights enforcement and opposed a Martin Luther King holiday (Klinkner, 2004). Reagan's limiting government served to camouflage the real motivation behind his hostility to the public sector: the need to dismantle programs largely benefiting minorities and the poor, especially affirmative action, civil rights regulations, and welfare, in order to appeal to working-class whites, many of whom harbor racial resentments against people of color (Laham, 1998). Reagan's policies and actions showed an obvious lack of compassion for the social justice of human beings and that is why we would place him at the bottom of our ranking.

President G. W. Bush has lead the war on terror, while other policy matters have become overshadowed. Bush, unlike his father, has kept his campaign promise and has provided tax cuts. However, tax cuts without spending cuts amount to an expanding deficit. Bush is following Reagan's formula for spending (Dolan, 2004) which resulted in the largest deficit in history. Bush's ideology of compassionate conservatism influences his leadership. "Bush combines principle-driven leadership and risk acceptance with a pragmatic willingness to compromise for results" Maranto & Cappeto, 2004, p.110).

President Bush's overall impact on the following issues which he is pursuing in his second term, Medicare, Social Security, education, and terrorism have yet to be realized. We wonder how these major issues will impact diverse groups, especially, if they continue to be addressed conservatively. Our concerns are based on the legacy he left as the governor of the state of Texas. Texas under Governor Bush was tied for third for the highest percentage of children living in poverty, and Texas ranked second in the percentage of poor children who lacked health insurance. With the 1999 Texas budget surplus, Bush blocked an insurance program for 250,000 children, but declared a legislative emergency and provided a \$45 million tax cut to oil well owners (Coles, 2002).

Ranking Presidents Based on Use of Power and Policies Regarding Social Justice

"Thomas Jefferson believed that the primary duties of a democratic leader were to inform the public and follow their wills,

hence elevating both leader and citizen" (Genovese, 2001, p. 194). We find our research to be important because there is a lack of research that focuses on presidential policy through a social justice lens. Numerous rankings of presidents have been done, but none through a multicultural lens. Some examples of rankings include:

- ◆ Schlesinger Polls 1948 and 1962 by Schlesinger, A. Sr. (n.d.).
- ◆ The American Presidents Ranked by Performance by Faber & Faber (2000).
- ◆ Siena Tracking Study by Siena Research Institute (2002, 1994, 1990, 1982).
- ◆ Ranking The Presidents by Lindgren J. (n.d.).
- ◆ Rating The Presidents by Ridings and McIver (2000).

The idea of what makes a "strong President" is elusive and tends to be defined very differently depending on whose perspective the definition is coming from. Hargrove (1998) said "In studying the presidency, we study ourselves as Americans" (ix). As our society becomes more diverse we must challenge why the United States has yet to elect a person of color or a woman to be the President.

Any democracy following the will of the people is essential. Any leader who pursues policies contrary to the express wishes of the people can be accused of the cardinal sin in a democracy: defying the will of the people. Thus, to be a leader requires, first, that one use all possible means to bring about informed judgments by the people. Then, the leader must serve the people. This form of democratic accountability calls for the leader to play an important role, but it ultimately relies upon the people to make final judgments.... The best Democratic leadership, in Bruce Miroff's words, "not only serves people's interests but further urged their democratic dignity as well."... Thus, Thomas Jefferson's vision of a Democratic leadership that informs the public, then follows their will, elevates both leader and citizen. Such a form of leadership is difficult, time-consuming, and fraught with pitfalls. But it is a style of leadership that builds strong citizens for a strong democracy. (Genovese, 2001, p.194)

Our research, which is ongoing concerning the presidency, bolstered by the evidence of some presidents' administrations, has led us to the conclusion that only ten of

our presidents have demonstrated leadership as we have defined it through a multicultural/social justice lens: Presidents as leaders who were serious about their being a leader for *all* citizens and residents of this country. An essential quality that the president's leadership style had to meet was the quality and quantity of presidential actions and policies related to social justice appropriate for excluded groups (i.e., minority groups, women, and residents, for example American Indians) as well as mainstream society.

We have discovered that only 10 of the 42 presidents have provided leadership during their administration which utilized the power of the presidency to eliminate and/or challenge the many institutional inequities practiced in our country. These 10 presidents, in various degrees of success, with great diligence, fought to bring about equity in the treatment of various members of social groups by our government, social institutional practices, laws, and individuals in our society. The previous presidential articles in this journal support this ranking; however continuing and future research beyond this article will continue to support and address these rankings. These rankings are subject to change as our research continues to develop. Our ranking of these ten most effective presidents in regards to social justice are:

1. Lyndon Baines Johnson
2. Abraham Lincoln
3. William Jefferson Clinton
4. Ulysses Grant
5. John F. Kennedy
6. Rutherford Hayes
7. Franklin D. Roosevelt
8. Jimmy Carter
9. George Washington
10. Harry Truman

We are aware that this ranking may differ from others. We are also aware that these chosen presidents have some flaws. However, taking all this into consideration, these individual presidents appear to have been most effective when it comes to social justice and equity issues related to all of the citizens and residents of our country, including people of color, marginalized groups, and women.

Conclusion of Our Analysis

Our research of the various president's administrations in this series has allowed us to come to some conclusions:

We have not found any previous rank-

ing of the presidents using a social justice/multicultural lens.

Secondly, we found that some of our most popular presidents and highly ranked presidents (Washington, Jefferson, Reagan, and Theodore Roosevelt), if viewed through a multicultural lens, would not rank as high. Numerous presidents used their power and leadership to promote their values and failed to make decisions or take positive action in regards to social justice issues. Members of privileged groups, because they have the power to initiate change, must choose to either ignore or fight for issues of oppression and social justice.

Thirdly, we noted that many of the authors of books on the presidency or a president were white male historians. We found there to be a lack of books that were authored by people of color or women which might offer a different perspective.

Fourthly, we have attempted to use a critical, multicultural lens to view the presidencies. While our analysis is only partial, it will continue to evolve as more information on our presidents is released. As educators we must realize that history is a social construction. History is not just about events, it is what we choose to teach, what lens we use to view it, and the cultural blinders we use to interpret it.

Lastly, we have found it extremely difficult to decipher what we call the presidential "spin" on information. We understand why it is so difficult for the American public to make informed decisions, when the information and presidential rhetoric can be so misleading. The president is able to use his position of power and provide the public information on his policies and actions which has profound influence over other sources of information (Fritz, Keefer, & Nyhan, 2004). "Policy issues of the day are complex and tough to navigate. A lie from the White House—or a fib or a misrepresentation or a fudged number—can go a long way toward distorting the national discussion" (Corn, 2003, p. 324). We must continue to challenge and question how the actions, policies, and attitudes of our presidents can preserve oppression and impact every facet of our nation.

Note

¹ For further information on compassionate conservative see Olasky, M. (2000), *Compassionate conservatism: What it is, what it does, and how it can transform America*. New York: Free Press.

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**Previous installments in this series of articles
on Presidents of the United States and multicultural education
appeared in the following issues of *Multicultural Education*:**

- Winter 2003 issue: Presidents James Madison, Rutherford B. Hayes, and John F. Kennedy.
- Spring 2004 issue: Presidents Andrew Jackson, Woodrow Wilson, and Dwight D. Eisenhower.
- Summer 2004 issue: Presidents John Quincy Adams, Theodore Roosevelt, and Harry S. Truman.
- Fall 2004 issue: Presidents George Washington, James K. Polk, and Franklin D. Roosevelt.
- Winter 2004 issue: Presidents Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, and Lyndon B. Johnson.
- Spring 2005 issue: Ronald Reagan, George H. W. Bush, and William Jefferson Clinton.

