Having Their Say, Leaving Their Mark
The Lasting Contributions of NCOBPS and Black Political Scientists to the Political Science Discipline

ABSTRACT In general, the founders of the National Conference of Black Political Scientists were "movement people." Powerful agents of socialization such as the uprisings of the 1960s molded them into scholars with tremendous resolve to tackle systemic inequalities in the political science discipline. In forming NCOBPS as an independent organization, many sought to develop a Black perspective in political science to push the boundaries of knowledge and to use that scholarship to ameliorate the adverse conditions confronting Black people in the United States and around the globe. This paper utilizes historical documents, speeches, interviews, and other scholarly works to detail the lasting contributions of the founders and Black political scientists to the discipline, paying particular attention to their scholarship, teaching, mentoring, and civic engagement. It finds that while political science is much improved as a result of their efforts, there is still work to do if their goals are to be achieved. KEYWORDS National Conference of Black Political Scientists, Black political science, HBCUs, Ralph Bunche Summer Institute, civic engagement

INTRODUCTION
Many of NCOBPS’s founders were “movement people,” participants in the Civil Rights Movement or the emerging Black Power Movement. They wished as political scientists to take advantage of the new rights and opportunities afforded by the recently enacted civil rights laws and the new ideas and strategies of liberation advanced by the advocates of Black Power, particularly the call to organize independent, autonomous Black organizations. Movement experiences, ethos, and momentum were animating factors in the founding. As Mack Jones recalled, “This meant that we, the founding members of NCOBPS, committed ourselves to developing a new, different political science, a black political science, that would be part of an interrelated network of self-defining and self-directed black organizations involved in the struggle for black liberation” (Jones 2014:92).
Indeed, Walton, Smith, and Wallace wrote, the “scholars who are the founders [of NCOBPS] and innovators in the study of Black Politics created this scholarly subfield out of nothing. Principally, working in Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), without major financial support or grants and with large numbers of classes and students, these scholars decades ago launched in small steps and limited ways a new area of academic study” that continues to challenge the dominant paradigm in political science (2017: xx). Their work was published in their two established academic journals. In 1975, NCOBPS joined with the Commission for Racial Justice to produce the Journal on Political Repression, edited by Mack Jones and Lew Myers (attorney for Assata Shakur), which was published from 1975 to 1979 (Henry 2017: 124). In 1977, the National Political Science Review (NPSR), which has had several editors, was founded and issued from 1989 to 2019 before being replaced in 2020 by the National Review of Black Politics (NRBP).

In 2018, the NCOBPS executive committee established the task force on the “Contributions of Black Political Scientists to the Political Science Discipline” to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the founding and to identify those Black political scientists who, since the founding in 1969, have made important contributions to the discipline in research, teaching, and service, or as we choose to call it, activism or engagement with the political process and the liberation struggle. After several teleconferences the task force, co-chaired by Robert C. Smith and Sherri L. Wallace, decided to pursue its charge by documenting the history and contributions of the founders, whose individual biographies are printed in this volume.

This particular essay asks: How did the founders of NCOBPS set out to influence the political science discipline? Moreover, what impact have they made on the profession as a result of their labors? Through the analysis of historical documents, speeches, interviews, and other scholarly works, we argue that the founders transformed the profession through their scholarly activity, teaching, mentoring, and political and civic engagement. The study of race and ethnic politics is now more accepted in the discipline. Likewise, political science today is more racially and ethnically diverse. Even so, if the full vision of access and equity is to be realized, then more work must be done.

**Research and Scholarship: A Black Perspective in the Scientific Study of Politics**

Most of the founders engaged in research and publishing, while some pursued careers in university administration. All of the founders were engaged in political activism, with a few who prioritized scholarship in academia. Each combined the three in the course of their careers, so it is a matter of emphasis. Notably, Marguerite Ross Barnett, C. Vernon Gray, Lenneal Henderson, Edward Jackson, Mack Jones, Jewel Prestage, Leslie Burl McLemore, Frank Morris, Sr., and William Robinson concentrated on building infrastructure to support their vision via administrative work as program directors, department chairs, deans, or in other senior leadership roles; yet, Jones, Prestage, and McLemore are justly celebrated for their teaching and mentoring, and Jones and Prestage for their...
research as well. Meanwhile, Hanes Walton, Jr.—the most prolific scholar among the founders—assiduously avoided administration so as to focus on research and publishing, although he was also an attentive mentor to his students.

When NCOBPS was established, the study of Black Politics in the discipline of political science was almost nonexistent or ignored. Only a few articles had appeared in the journals and the number of books could be counted on the fingers of one hand. Much of the resistance to recognize Black Politics as a legitimate area of scholarly inquiry can be traced to the racist ideologies and practices at the heart of the development of the profession itself (McClain et al. 2016). However, this has gradually changed over the last fifty years due to the pioneering efforts of the NCOBPS founders, which both raised the profile of Black Politics research and inspired future Black academicians to build on that foundation. This can be clearly demonstrated with even a brief survey of the scholarship produced by the founders.


Today, it may be said that the study of race and ethnicity is institutionalized in the political science discipline (Watts 2007). NCOBPS and its founders are principally responsible for this development. Interestingly, as NCOBPS members either continued to push for change within the American Political Science Association (APSA) or later resumed working with the group during the 1980s and 1990s, Black scholars made inroads in the discipline. Through vehicles such as the APSA Committee on the Status of Blacks in the Profession, and later organized sections like Race, Ethnicity, and Politics, they promoted the research of Black political scientists regarding “the absolutely critical role of race in American political life and history” (Pinderhughes 1990: 17). They also
advocated for diversity programs hoping to establish a pipeline through which talented Black students could enter the discipline. The founders’ dedication to inclusive excellence is acutely evinced in their teaching.

TEACHING AND MENTORING: CHANGING THE CONTENT AND COMPLEXION OF THE DISCIPLINE

In forming NCOBPS as an autonomous organization, many of its founders sought to develop a Black perspective in political science to push the boundaries of knowledge and to use that scholarship to address the adverse conditions confronting Black people in the United States and around the world (Jones 2014; McCormick 2011; Reports of APSA Committees 1969). However, the founders were a diverse assemblage attempting to organize an even larger group, so they did not always agree on how to involve the membership in Black political life. Interviews from the African American Political Scientists Oral History Project reveal that several wanted to speak truth to power and dismantle systems of oppression, yet others wanted to teach students how to function in the society as it existed (Jones 2014; Reports of APSA Committees 1969). Even so, they needed Black political scientists to shape the new Black political science and, in 1969, they were few and far between. Consequently, the founders recognized the dire need to establish a pipeline to produce Black scholars so that they might transform the discipline and make a better world—a point underscored by Jewel Prestage (1979) in her research. This desire to reconstruct political science into something that could serve Black people influenced the founders’ approaches to strengthening undergraduate instruction, building rigorous graduate programs, and diversifying the composition and scholarship of the discipline.

First, with regard to student intellectual development, while the founders held academic or administrative appointments at institutions across the country, most of them were situated at HBCUs in the South. Thus, it was fitting that institutions like Clark Atlanta University, Fisk University, Jackson State University, Norfolk State University, Savannah State University, Southern University, the University of the District of Columbia, and Virginia State University served as a base of operations to formulate the Black perspective in political science. At Southern, such efforts were led by Jewel Prestage. Recognized as “the Mother of Black Political Science,” Prestage was a pioneer in the study of Black women in politics, a leader in establishing NCOBPS, and a driving force in promoting access and equity in the profession (Martin 2005). Political science was a womanless discipline when she entered the field. Undaunted and unyielding, she spent nearly a half-century influencing the profession through scholarship, teaching, mentoring, civic education training, and institutional capacity building. Prestage created opportunities for people of color and women that continue to serve those who are still underrepresented in political science (Alexander-Floyd 2008; Task Force 2011).

Prestage and her NCOBPS contemporaries understood the connection between the paucity of political science offerings at many HBCUs and the lack of Black political scientists. They sought to remedy the situation by encouraging gifted undergraduates to study government and politics, offering them a quality education to improve their
prospects for graduate study (including research methods or non-Western languages), and providing students with enriching experiences to help them thrive in those graduate programs. In 1969, Prestage, Russell Adams, Mack Jones, Robert Martin, Lois Moreland, and Alex Willingham published a report for the APSA on the state of political science curricula at Black colleges and universities. The document noted that even though political science had established itself as a core discipline at most American colleges, the same was not true at HBCUs. Summarizing the deliberations of thirty-five Black political scientists gathered at a special conference at Southern University in April 1969, Prestage et al. wrote:

> One of the basic reasons for this dearth of political science offerings in Black colleges and universities is the absence of qualified faculties in their discipline. A committee for the Ford Foundation has compiled a list of 65 Blacks known to presently hold the doctorate in political science. Of these, 25 are listed as teaching at Black institutions (Reports of APSA Committees 1969: 322).

The report made several major recommendations to the APSA that, if supported, would address the challenges faced by Black political scientists at HBCUs. Among these were the suggestion that the APSA Committee on the Status of Blacks in the Profession (CSB) be expanded to represent the range of HBCUs where most Black political scientists were situated, that the APSA be more intentional and assertive in including Black scholars in all aspects of the organization’s activities—even those dealing with the problems of Black people—and that “special efforts should be made to get more Black students into graduate schools in the South” (Reports of APSA Committees 1969: 336). While some attendees of the Baton Rouge conference believed it was possible to secure these changes by working within the APSA, others were highly skeptical, noting that not a single member of the CSB attended the Baton Rouge meeting (Pinderhughes 1990). They were also upset that the APSA only offered to support five graduate fellowships (over a ten-year period) for Black political science students. Such frustrations led a cadre of Black scholars to not only reassemble at the September 1969 APSA annual meeting in New York City, but also to establish a Black Caucus to put greater pressure on the association. As caucus members grew more dissatisfied with the APSA’s response to their grievances, they rejected the association’s offer, thus leading to a “tactical withdrawal” and the creation of NCOBPS (Alexander-Floyd, Orey, and Brown-Dean 2015; McCormick 2011; Pinderhughes 1990). As “engaged activist-scholars,” NCOBPS members then went to work on remaking the discipline in light of the Baton Rouge conference and the “call to action” signaled by founders Willingham and Jones.

At Southern, Prestage and colleagues like Twiley Barker and Rodney Higgins brought talented Black students into the profession across multiple generations of college attendees. What is more, “Prestage sponsored many programs designed to broaden the intellectual development and exposure of students to international leaders and renowned scholars” (Martin 2005: 95). This included the Africa initiative and an annual symposium on the status of women in the American political system. Founders such as Leslie Burl McLemore, a consummate scholar-activist, and Hanes Walton, Jr., a prodigious researcher, led similar efforts at Jackson State and Savannah State, respectively.
What these scholars achieved at their colleges was nationalized with the Ralph Bunche Summer Institute (RBSI) in 1986—a major undertaking given the declining enrollment of Black political science graduate students by the early 1980s. From 1974 to 1983, the number of Blacks enrolled in doctoral programs plummeted from 435 to just 207, thus clearly signifying the need for innovative approaches to recruiting, retaining, and graduating Black students (Preston and Woodard 1984: 788). Although Bunche was created through a partnership between the APSA, the CSB, Prestage, and Peter Zwick of Louisiana State University, it was truly the invention of Prestage. Originally started as a summer program for Black students, Bunche “aimed to increase diversity within the discipline by introducing students to the graduate experience and to senior scholars in the discipline” (RBSI 2016). By 1991, there were 300 Black students enrolled in PhD programs around the nation (Ards and Woodard 1992: 253). Later, Bunche “expanded to include students from underrepresented backgrounds, and students interested in broadening participation in political science and pursuing scholarship on issues affecting underrepresented groups or issues of tribal sovereignty and governance.” Now hosted by Duke University, nearly 600 students have completed the RBSI in its thirty-plus year history. Altogether, they hold roughly seventy PhDs and numerous MAs in political science (RBSI 2016).

Second, dealing specifically with undergraduate instruction, founders like Jones (1994) expressed in an interview that while most political science students were taking courses from “the dominant American worldview,” he was more interested in generating knowledge that Black people could use to transform their condition. It was imperative for students to get a foundation in “the philosophy of the social sciences” so that they understood how knowledge was generated. This produced a concerted effort to publish works for those new to the study of Black Politics, including Black Political Life in the United States: A Fist as a Pendulum (1972) by Lenneal Henderson. Jones himself partnered with Lucius Barker and Katherine Tate to co-author African Americans and the American Political System, a significant contribution to undergraduate education that was first published by Barker and Jesse McCorry in 1976. Although the fourth and final edition of the book was released in 1999, others stepped in to fill the void. For instance, Walton and Robert Smith collaborated on American Politics and the African American Quest for Universal Freedom, now a mainstay for scholars teaching Black Politics. It has been published in eight editions since 2000; the 2017 edition features Sherri L. Wallace as the new co-author after the passing of Walton.

Finally, with respect to training scholars, the work of founders Jones and Adams is especially instructive. As chair of the political science department at Clark Atlanta, Jones helped establish a doctoral program with a $1.7 million grant from the Ford Foundation in 1968 ($12.8 million in 2019 dollars). In seeking funding, the department argued it was essential “to have at least one place where Black folk would develop curriculum that came out of our own experiences” (Jones 1994). With the grant secured, the department hired new professors like Bob Holmes and Shelby Lewis (both NCOBPS founders), funded graduate scholarships, and built one of the top producers of Black political scientists in the nation (Woodard and Preston 1985; Ards and Woodard 1992). Meanwhile, at Howard University (HU), Adams used a grant from the Ford Foundation to help further establish
the university’s Black Studies program. This work was akin to that being done by other NCOBPS founders situated at predominately White institutions where Black students and their allies were demanding autonomous spaces for study of the Black experience from Black perspectives, to connect the campus with the community, and to cultivate theories and strategies of liberation (Rogers 2012; Rooks 2006; Woodyard 1991). The Ford Foundation credited Adams with increasing the program’s visibility on campus and around the country. Under his leadership, HU became “an example of adherence to the interdisciplinary Black studies model”—an approach highly regarded by Ford (Rojas 2007). Exploring the Black experience using the tools of economics, history, and sociology, the curriculum “included basic courses on Black history and more specialized courses on Black education and the history of Black business.” Howard was also a top producer of Black political science PhDs (Ards and Woodard 1992). Through these advanced programs and others, the founders helped change the content and complexion of the discipline, as there are now hundreds of Black political scientists in the United States. Even so, in 2010, just five percent (461) of the nation’s 9,302 political science professors were Black (Task Force 2011: 39). Relatedly, with Blacks comprising just 3.6 percent of the APSA’s domestic membership, there is still work to be done in this area (Mealy 2018).

In sum, the founders did what they could to change political science for the better. For individuals like Prestage, her mentees across five decades in academia became known as “Jewel’s Gems” and included “45 Ph.D.s and over 200 lawyers, judges, elected officials, administrators, commissioned military officers, and business executives” (Martin 2005: 96). For NCOBPS as an organization, in holding annual meetings over the last fifty years, it has provided a “safe haven” for outstanding undergraduate and graduate students to enter the profession. In describing the benefits for professors of “group-specific conferences” like NCOBPS, Alexander-Floyd, Orey, and Brown-Dean (2015: 319) show that the meetings “provide a meaningful space for receiving critical feedback on scholarly products, fruitful avenues for professional development, and networking with scholars with similar research interests.” The same is true for students. “[T]here is a greater benefit and incentive to attend conferences in which the environment is more receptive and one’s research is better understood” (322). Such conferences also reinvigorate professors and students in isolated departments or programs with just a handful of scholars who engage in research related to race and politics. Historically, mainstream conferences have rarely provided this same energy. Worse, such assemblies typically fail to offer the “historical and cultural context necessary to properly analyze Black politics” and are, at times, outright hostile to research that centers racial identity and/or employs intersectional analyses of politics (319, 322).

**CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND POLITICAL ACTIVISM: FROM (STUDENT) PROTESTS TO POLITICAL OFFICE**

The lasting contributions of the NCOBPS founders to the discipline of political science, while also being politically engaged with the liberation struggle of Black people over the last fifty years, are manifest not only in the areas of research, teaching, and mentoring, but
also through their civic and political activism. In fact, the decision to found this intentionally independent academic organization during the burgeoning Civil Rights and Black Power movements was a radical act of self-determination. As McCormick (2011: 159) states,

The call to organize was profound because it rendered superfluous the simplistic debate about integrationism versus separatism as a strategy for Black progress by affirming that self-directed and self-defining organizations of those with common purposes and objectives are absolutely necessary, though not sufficient, conditions for progress. The NCOBPS was one of the organizations that grew out of this awareness of the need to organize and virtue of organizing.

McCormick chronicles the early history of NCOBPS—borrowing from and building upon historical reflections written by Mack Jones (1990) and Diane Pinderhughes (1990)—reasoning that their “tactical withdrawal” from the APSA was outlined in the “call to action” white paper that emphasized a distinct, dual role for Black political scientists as an “engaged activist-scholar” (2011: 170). All the founders embraced this dual role in myriad, far-reaching ways from local participation in protests to becoming prominent leaders in local chapters of national civic organizations to being elected to office. There was no “wall of separation” between their research, teaching, and political activism.

A few of the founders began as students and young scholars in local protests during the Freedom movements. Mack Jones came of age at the height of the Civil Rights Movement. He was expelled in 1960 for protesting segregated facilities at an area bus terminal, launching a consolidation of cases that ultimately landed in the Supreme Court in Garner v. Louisiana (368 U.S. 157 [1961]). In the majority opinion, authored by Chief Justice Earl Warren, the Court held that the criminal convictions of peaceful protestors violated the defendants’ rights to due process of law guaranteed them by the Fourteenth Amendment to the US Constitution. In 1964, as a politically engaged graduate student and president of the campus National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) at University of Illinois, Jones also led a demonstration against US senator and presidential candidate Barry Goldwater (R-AZ) during a visit to the university. Moreover, as researched and eloquently summarized in a profile written by task force member Charisse Burden-Stelly:

In March 1960, Mae C. King went to jail. As a twenty-one-year-old student at Bishop College and Chairman of the local chapter of the National Student Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA), she was at the forefront of student challenges to racial discrimination in Marshall, Texas. There, she helped to lead sit-ins and other forms of direct action after being trained in nonviolent tactics by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. This commitment to justice and equality was met with violent repression from law enforcement and she, along with hundreds of other student protestors, were arrested, jailed, and put on trial. Undeterred, Mae C. King continued to struggle against structural racism and to speak out about her experience of confinement.

Like Jones and King, other NCOBPS founders also gained a great sense of purpose as a result of their involvement in the uprisings of the 1960s. As a freshman at Rust College,
Leslie Burl McLemore—a distinguished veteran of the campaign for civil rights in Mississippi—became actively involved in the Freedom Movement via the NAACP, the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the Freedom Vote Campaign, and as the vice chair of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP), serving as a young delegate to the infamous 1964 Democratic National Convention. As a student at University of California, Berkeley, Lenneal Henderson was active in the Afro-American Students Association. When Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., visited the campus in 1967 to protest the Vietnam War and to recruit volunteers for the Poor People’s Campaign, Henderson joined and traveled to the District of Columbia as one of thousands of protestors who occupied the National Mall for forty-two days at Resurrection City. In an interview with *Smithsonian Magazine*, Henderson recalled that what led to his resolve for political activism was being “raised in the housing projects of New Orleans and San Francisco, and [having] parents [who] were very strong community advocates. [And having] witnessed the Black Panther Party emerge in Oakland in 1966. Stokely Carmichael’s call for Black Power focused on the need to transform our communities first” (Diamond 2018). Lastly, founder Calvin Miller was a practitioner, scholar, and activist who marched with the NAACP and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). He also participated in the 1965 March for voting rights in Selma, Alabama.

Three of the founders were active leaders in local chapters of the Urban League and NAACP in their respective communities. A few even received accolades for their leadership in these organizations. William “Bill” Daniels remains active in the Urban League of Rochester, New York, where he served on the board of directors and as chairman of the Advisory Council. In addition to Jones and Miller, both C. Vernon Gray and Frank Morris, Sr. were active in the NAACP, with Morris serving on the NAACP National Educational Advisory Board, while Alex Willingham provided research and support for voter rights litigation as a member of his NAACP chapter.

With respect to leadership in civic engagement, Sheila Harmon Martin (2005) highlighted the scholar-educator-citizen activism of Jewel Prestage. She details how Prestage, along with husband and fellow academician, James, became a political activist in the community surrounding Southern University—the same HBCU where the seeds for the founding of NCOBPS were planted. The Prestages joined the Second Ward Voters League to get Louisiana Blacks registered to vote, even before the landmark Voting Rights Act in 1965. After the adoption of VRA, they trained Blacks to run for office via the newly established Louisiana Center to Assist Black Elected Officials. As its director, Prestage was successful in challenging the state’s discriminatory voting laws, registering citizens to vote, and providing political training and technical assistance to newly elected officials. One of Prestage’s most enduring contributions was her fight to get quality civic education incorporated into the school curriculum. Working through the National Defense Education Act Civics Institute (1967–69) and the Robert A. Taft Seminars for Social Science Teachers (1979–92), Prestage led the way for over five hundred teachers to learn and teach civic education in the state.

Finally, five NCOBPS founders had careers in politics or held public office. Charles “Chuck” Stone served two years as a chief administrative aide and press secretary to US
Representative Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. (D-NY). In 1969, William Robinson became the first Black elected to the Virginia House of Delegates since Reconstruction, representing an inner-city district in Norfolk. In 1980, he also became the first Black delegate to chair a House committee—the Health, Welfare, and Institutions Committee. Even though he was scholar and teacher at Norfolk State University, Robinson spent much of his career as a dedicated public servant. In Georgia, Bob Holmes participated in multiple neighborhood and political associations in the City of Atlanta. He worked on the Andrew Young for Congress campaign and Maynard Jackson’s mayoral campaign before his own election to the Georgia General Assembly, where Holmes served from 1974 to 2008. In recognition of his outstanding community service, a portion of Interstate 285 in Atlanta is named in his honor. In Maryland, after spending thirty years in academia, C. Vernon Gray was elected to the Howard County Council in 1982, in a majority White district, as the first Black elected to any office in the county. As a member of the council, Gray focused on affordable housing, health care, and expanding minority business. In addition, he was the first Black to be elected president of both the Maryland Association of Counties and the National Association of Counties. Gray continues to serve as administrator of the Howard County Office of Human Rights. Lastly, ten years after serving on the Platform Committee of the 1988 Democratic National Committee, Leslie McLemore ran and won a special election in 1999 to fill a vacant seat on the Jackson (Mississippi) City Council, where he served for ten years as president of the council, and acting mayor. He is now as a member of the Walls, Mississippi Board of Aldermen where he made history as one of two Blacks elected to the board.

CONCLUSION

By and large, the founding members of the NCOBPS were “movement people.” Powerful agents of socialization such as family, Black religious institutions, Black colleges and universities, and the movements of the 1960s molded them into scholars with tremendous resolve to tackle systematic inequalities in the discipline. In establishing NCOBPS as an intentionally autonomous association, many sought to develop a Black perspective in political science to push the boundaries of knowledge and to use that scholarship to address the adverse conditions confronting Black people in the United States and around the world. Political science is much improved as a result of their labors. Today, the study of race and ethnicity, in general, and Black politics, in particular, is better situated in the discipline. There are more scholarly works across the various subfields of political science that do a better job of engaging the political lives of Black people than ever before—some of which are published by the most prestigious university presses or journals. Similarly, there are more Black political scientists today than ever and they are working at every level of university life as professors, program directors, department chairs, deans, provosts, and even as chancellors or presidents. Some have also held offices in the discipline’s various regional associations and even the highest positions in the APSA.

Nevertheless, it is unlikely that the profession today looks like what the founders’ envisioned fifty years ago when they launched NCOBPS. In 1980, approximately 96
percent of political science professors were White. Three decades later, in 2010, roughly 89 percent of them were White (Task Force 2011: 42). In other words, while Black folk (and other people of color) have made progress in the profession, they remain sorely underrepresented in the discipline—especially at the highest rank of full professor. Also, given the reliance on adjunct faculty and the ever rising cost of college attendance, to today’s first-generation Black students the prospect of spending a decade to earn a doctoral degree to then face an uncertain job market is unappealing. If the effort to achieve diversity and inclusive excellence in political science research and teaching falls back yet again, then it will have serious consequences in the academy and beyond. In 2011, the APSA Task Force on Political Science in the 21st Century wrote,

Political science is often ill-equipped to address in a sustained way why many of the most marginal members of political communities around the world are often unable to have their needs effectively addressed by governments. Just as importantly, political science is also ill-equipped to develop explanations for the social, political, and economic processes that lead to groups’ marginalization (Task Force 2011: 1).

For five decades, NCOBPS has led the way in confronting these challenges. Now, all of us have more work to do if the goals of the founders are to be attained. The APSA Task Force forcefully noted that “[a]bsent direct, intentional efforts to further diversity faculty, we should expect that the pace of progress will continue to be slow and that the rate of inclusion will also be very slow” (Task Force 2011: 4). If a “Black perspective” in political science is still needed to confront the stubbornly persistent ills faced by Black people domestically and internationally, then Black political scientists still matter. To that end, both NCOBPS and the APSA have supported initiatives intended to identify and encourage exceptional undergraduates to pursue advanced study in the field. Yet, while there are continuing “pipeline” issues that require attention, it is also true that deans, department chairs, and faculty search committees hire junior professors. Therefore, a concerted effort must be made to provide professional development for those mid-career Black and Brown faculty members who aspire to join administration, as they would then be in a position to influence hiring decisions. Likewise, it is vital that junior faculty of color move up to the senior ranks. In the near term, this means sponsoring workshops targeted to current deans and department chairs on “best practices” for the recruitment and retention of diverse faculty (Task Force 2011: 4). It also means reconceptualizing faculty roles, work, and rewards in light of the important “invisible labor” performed by professors of color that largely goes unrecognized, sometimes hinders their advancement, and is infrequently demanded of their White colleagues (Williams June 2015). The profession can and must do better.

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