

SOCIAL JUSTICE AND CIVIL RIGHTS

The continuing campaign to achieve civil rights is an important issue to me. In college I helped lead a movement to build a Black Cultural Center recognizing the slave labor that built the University of North Carolina. In 2000, I co-founded the confluence academies, a charter schools serving predominantly African-American students in North St. Louis. In congress, I will continue to work to achieve social justice.

If elected, I will:

- **Fight to equalize the educational systems of all communities**, ensuring quality schools for minority and low-income students. The great promise of Brown vs. The Board of Education was that equal opportunity would come to all Americans. Fifty years later that promise is unfulfilled. African-American students continue to perform significantly below white students.

While the President has suggested that we can fix the school system with more standardized testing, I will seek to adequately fund African-American school districts enabling them to provide the best teachers, the best technology, and the best curriculum. When I was an evaluator in the Saint Louis Public Schools I met many skilled and motivated teachers, but I also found teachers who read the newspaper during class. We need policies to attract and retain talented educators in our public schools. We can start by forgiving loans for teachers who commit to working in under-funded school districts.

While we work to improve our public schools, we must acknowledge the imbalance in the college admissions program. I fully support Affirmative Action as a means to ensure that all students have a fair opportunity to attend college, regardless of the race, or test scores at their high school.

- **Continue Affirmative Action programs** that provide extensive business opportunities to minority entrepreneurs. The Bush administration has cut key programs that provide small urban entrepreneurs a chance to start a business and draw economic development to their own communities. I will fight to ensure that the Small Business Administration expands small business support programs in urban areas, and fund micro-loans for beginning businesses.

In addition, I will fight to restore funding to the Empowerment Zone program that has provided so many opportunities to our urban communities. The Federal government promised \$100 million over 10 years, but has yet to provide even a quarter of that. Without access to the low interest loans and business support provided by the Empowerment Zones, African-American entrepreneurs will face further burdens trying to establish successful businesses in their communities.

- **End racial profiling in all forms.** Racial profiling is discrimination, it is illegal, and it is wrong. We must pass federal laws that hold state and local police agencies accountable for racial profiling. Data clearly show that African-Americans disproportionately come into contact with law enforcement authorities. Communities that do not effectively address these sorts of civil rights violations must face federal sanctions in the form of a reduction in federal aid.

Smith, 30, has made improving urban education his life's work. In late 2000, Smith co-founded Confluence Academy, a public charter school in North St. Louis focusing on math, science and technology. At the University of North Carolina, Smith majored in African-American Studies and Political Science and then returned to St. Louis where he worked in the St. Louis Public Schools and helped implement innovative curricula. Smith has also served as a consultant to the Vashon Compact, a non-profit group striving to enhance student achievement at ten of the city's lowest-performing public schools. Smith currently works as an award-winning teacher of political science and public policy at Washington University and UM-St. Louis. In his spare time, Smith teaches ACT prep courses for underprivileged area high school students and coaches youth basketball.