

SOCIAL SECURITY PRIVATIZATION TALKING POINTS

- **Social Security is the mainstay of retirement income for African Americans.** About three fourths of African American seniors rely on Social Security for half or more of their retirement income. About 40 percent rely on Social Security for all of their income. Without Social Security, the poverty rate for African American seniors would more than double. Social Security's progressive benefit formula is designed to help low wage workers, and workers whose careers are interrupted by periods of unemployment or disability. These features especially benefit African Americans. Furthermore, African Americans are less likely to have private pensions or savings income than white households. This means Social Security's retirement benefits are particularly important for African Americans.
- **Social Security's disability and survivor protections are critically important for African Americans.** Although African Americans represent about 12.5 percent of the U.S. population, 17 percent of the workers receiving Social Security disability benefits are African American. In addition, 23 percent of the children getting survivor benefits are African American. Thus, African Americans are more likely than other families to benefit from Social Security's disability and survivor protections.
- **Overall, African Americans receive a higher rate of return from Social Security than whites.** Social Security's actuary has reported that, overall, African Americans get a higher rate of return from Social Security than do whites. This is due to the progressive benefit formula for Social Security's retirement benefits, and to the heavy reliance of African Americans on Social Security's disability and survivor benefits.
- **President Bush is wrong when he suggests that African Americans will not get any benefits out of Social Security because of their shorter life expectancy.** President Bush fails to mention that this lower overall life expectancy is due primarily to the high death rates among African American children and young adults. In fact, African American men who live to age 65 and begin to collect Social Security benefits have a life expectancy that is close to that of whites (14.6 more years for African American men, compared to 16.6 more years for white men). Thus, it is simply flat wrong for President Bush to imply that African Americans are disadvantaged by the current system.
- **President Bush's plan to privatize Social Security would have a devastating impact on African Americans.** It would force huge cuts in Social Security benefits for future retirees - a 46 percent cut by the year 2075. These cuts would be most devastating for African Americans, because they rely so heavily on Social Security's retirement, disability and survivor benefits. Furthermore, because African Americans tend to have lower wages and more unemployment than whites, they would be less likely to build up significant assets in private accounts. The net result is that millions of African Americans would be condemned to a sharply lower standard of living!