

BY WILLIAM H. FREY

Age, at first glance, seems the great divide in the Presidential election this year. Come November, John McCain will be 72 while Barack Obama will be just 47. But winning is ultimately about putting together 270 electoral votes. And when one focuses on the states likely to decide the contest, race is more likely to be decisive than age.

What I call Fast-Growing Battlegrounds (Florida and four western mountain states, with 56 electoral votes) are the most racially diverse: 15 percent of their eligible voters are Hispanic, and almost 30 percent are racial minorities. Yet more striking, racial minorities represent more than half the growth of eligible voters in these states since 2000. So, if Obama can build a rainbow coalition of new voters, he has a shot at making inroads here despite the fact that George Bush won all five states in 2004.

By contrast, the Slow-Growing Battlegrounds (Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, West Virginia and Iowa) are largely white. Obama's relatively poor performance with middle-income whites in the primaries has given McCain strategists hope that he can take Michigan and Pennsylvania (and their 38 electoral

votes) back from the Democrats.

Finally there are the Fast-Growing South Longshots. The south has been Republican country since Richard Nixon. But Obama's black constituency, coupled with recent mi-

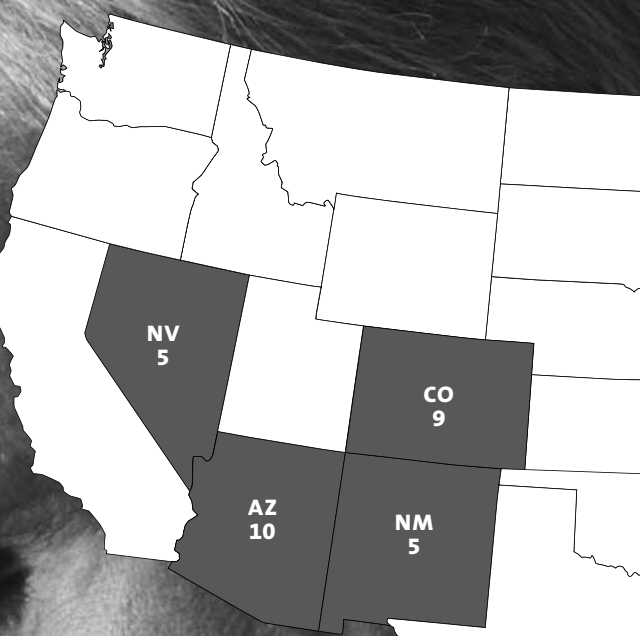
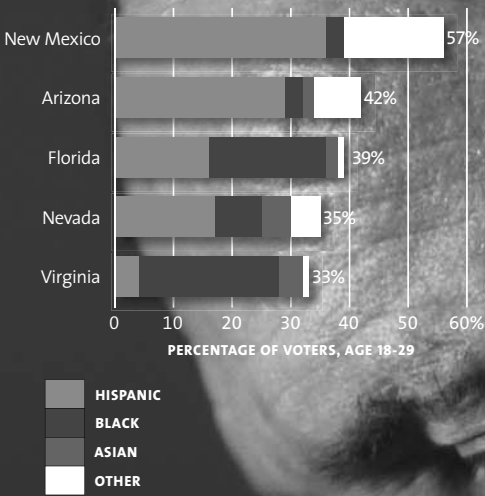


gration from blue states, could put Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia, with their 51 electoral votes, back into play.

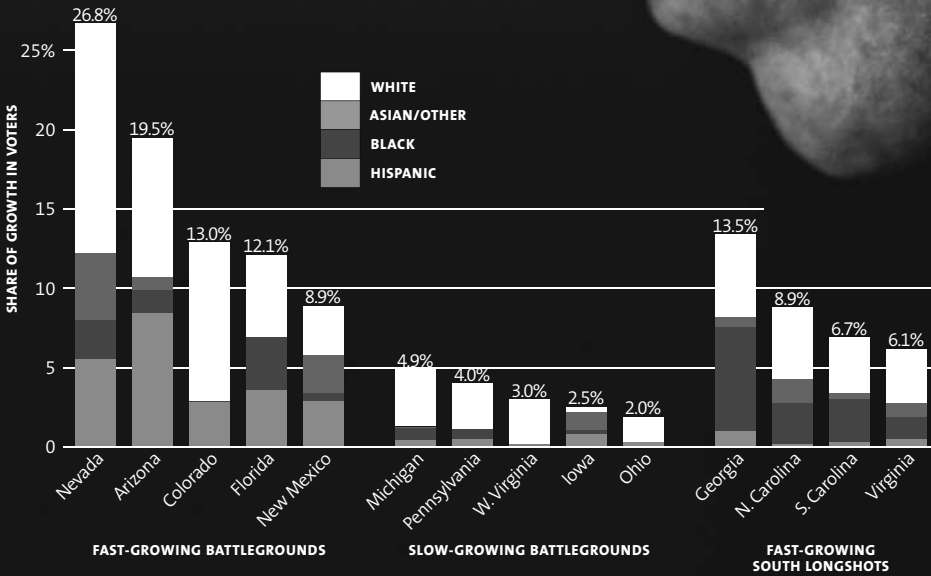
Race, then, focused through a generational lens, may alter a political map that has largely remained unchanged in the past two presidential cycles. **M**

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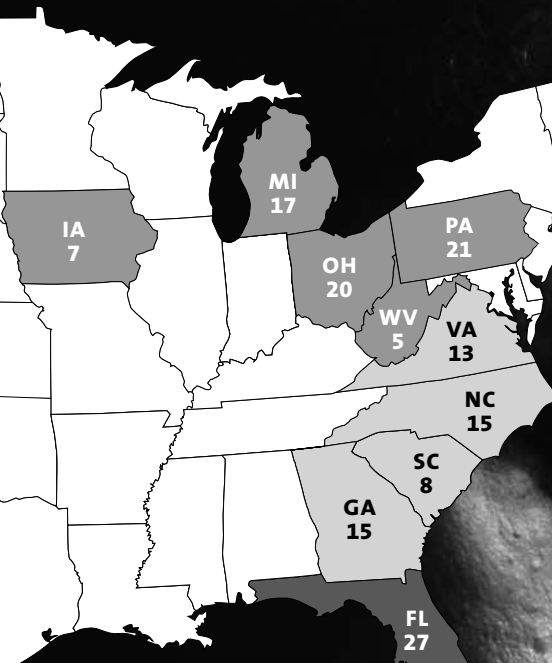
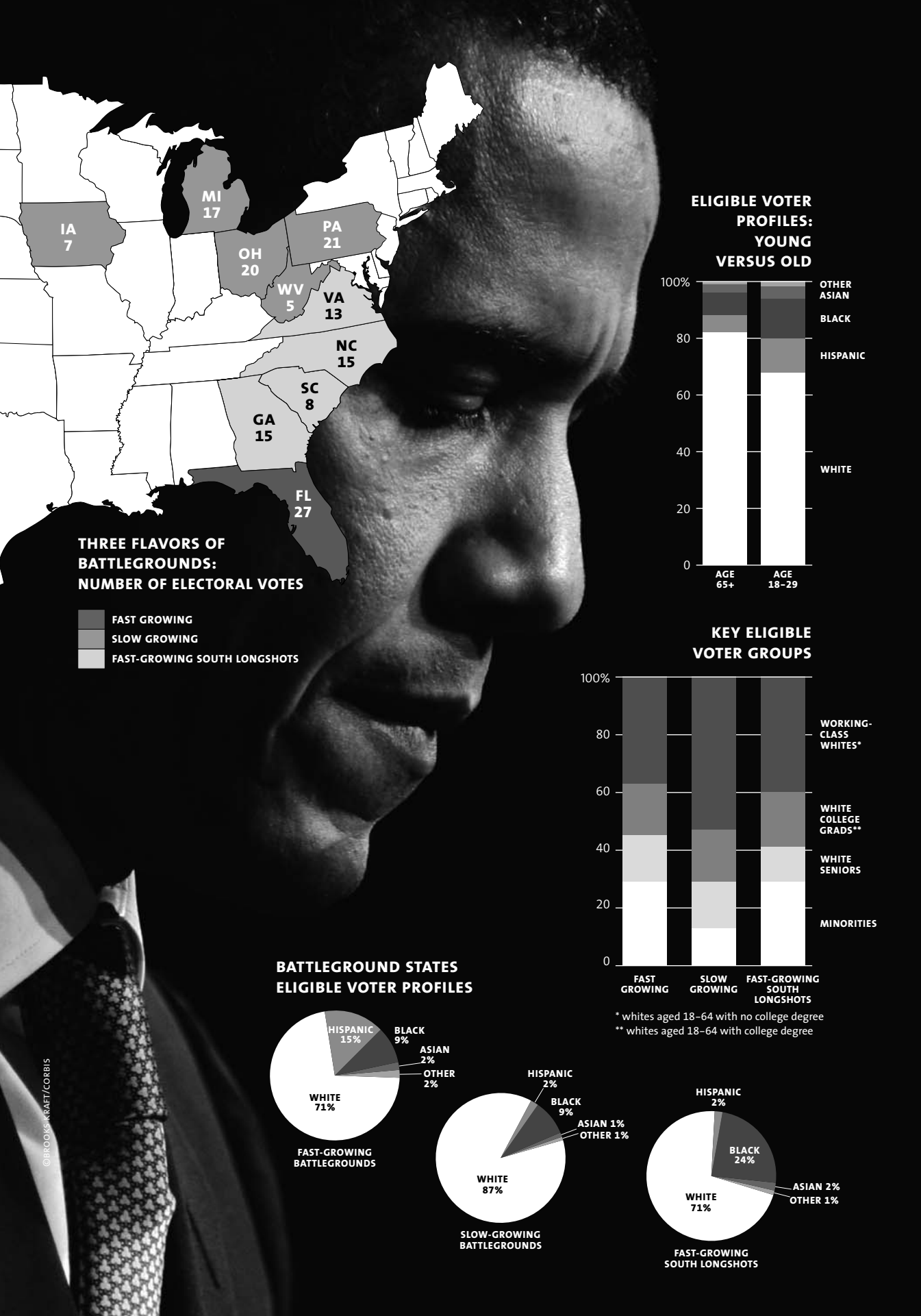
MINORITIES AS SHARE OF YOUNG VOTERS



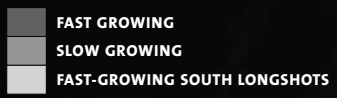
GROWTH IN ELIGIBLE VOTERS BY RACE/ETHNICITY, 2000-2007



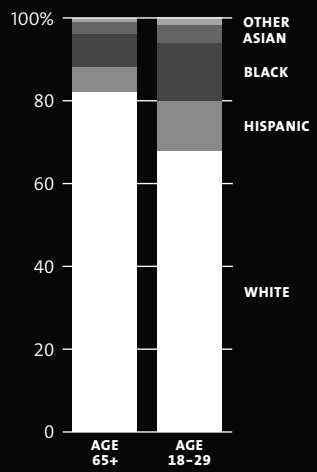
SOURCE: Author's analysis of the 2007 Current Population Survey and 2000 U.S. Census



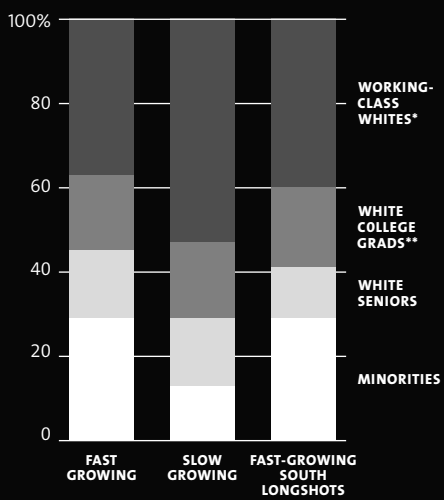
**THREE FLAVORS OF BATTLEGROUND STATES:
NUMBER OF ELECTORAL VOTES**



**ELIGIBLE VOTER PROFILES:
YOUNG VERSUS OLD**



KEY ELIGIBLE VOTER GROUPS



* whites aged 18-64 with no college degree
** whites aged 18-64 with college degree

**BATTLEGROUND STATES
ELIGIBLE VOTER PROFILES**

