

Time grows short for Haitian refugees in U.S.

Concern is rising over the fate of over 50,000 Haitian refugees who are seeking asylum in the United States. Unlike the Cubans who are arriving daily in southern Florida, these refugees are receiving little attention.

Because the U.S. government has determined that they are coming for economic rather than political reasons, there is no welcome for the

Haitians. They do not qualify for work permits or for government aid. A group of Miami city officials recently told the federal government that "starvation, not malnutrition is becoming the major problem among Haitian refugees in south Florida."

The Immigration and Naturalization Service has been forced by a court order to stop deporting Haitians refugees. A federal

judge also told INS to issue work permits but, according to an attorney representing Haitians in a class action suit, Immigration officials are defying that order. Because under existing law persons designated as "economic" refugees are not eligible to remain in the U.S. only 61 persons have been granted political asylum. The remainder remain in legal limbo, under constant threat

of deportation.

Several organizations including the American Friends Service Committee, the NAACP, and Operation PUSH and church organizations have asked President Carter to grant political asylum to the Haitians. It is imperative that the action be taken before May 15th, when the law changes. After that date the new law will allow

Congress and the Attorney General to grant asylum, which will be much more difficult process.

A major problem is that after May 17 the new Refugee Act of 1980 terminates the President's parole authority to grant political asylum to refugees on a group basis.

According to United Nations statistics Haiti is the poorest country in the western hemisphere. Illiteracy

is 90 percent and infant mortality 20 percent. Approximately 50 percent of the work force is unemployed. The life expectancy is less than 45 years.

While the U.S. refuses to accept Haitian exiles, it helps keep the regime in power by providing arms and police training. Assistance other than military came to \$28 million in 1978.

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The beach at Cathedral Park offers relief from Sunday's heat for Marco, Paul and Tracy Parks, and Nick Campbell.

(Photo by: Richard J. Brown)

VOTE MAY 20

Why America's prisons are Black, Hispanic

By Joseph Kelly and Frank Viviano

Two statistical milestones were passed by U.S. prisons between 1975 and 1980. For the first time in the nation's history, the incarcerated population exceeded 300,000, marking a 50 per cent increase in the total number of prisoners in just five years.

And also for the first time in U.S. history, the non-white prison population became a substantial majority.

Today, 55 per cent of the men and women behind bars in the United States are "Third World" Americans: Blacks, Hispanics and Indians. The consequences may be social dynamite. The recent bloody uprising in New Mexico's state penitentiary is viewed by some as the opening salvo in what could be a decade of Third World revolts inside the U.S. prisons. Since then, riots have erupted at prisons in New

Jersey and Indiana.

"Tensions within the system are building rapidly," concluded a California Bar Association study which found five state penitentiaries "unfit for human habitation." The study warned "that explosions comparable to what occurred at Attica in New York can be anticipated."

Nationally, Blacks are put into prison at a rate eight times that of whites, according to a survey completed last summer by the National Institute of Corrections, part of the Federal Bureau of Prisons. In New York and California, nearly 50 of every 10,000 Black citizens are imprisoned, which is some ten times the incarceration rate for whites.

In states with large Hispanic populations, the pattern is repeated. Chicanos are three times as likely as whites to be incarcerated in California, and four times as likely in New Mexico. The imprisonment rate for Puerto Ricans in New York is eight

times the state-wide average.

Compared to other western nations, white incarceration statistics in the United States are not unusual. But because of its extraordinary number of Blacks and Hispanics, America's inmate population is proportionately the third largest in the world -- surpassed only by the Soviet Union and South Africa.

Why this appalling imbalance? The reason begins with economics. After dropping 28 per cent in the Sixties, the number of Blacks officially classified as poor began growing once again in the Sixties, the number of Blacks officially classified as poor began growing once again in the Seventies. The group most severely hit by the combination of inflation and unemployment -- young Black men -- is also the one most responsible for the large increase in the prison population. In 1973, criminologist Erik Olin Wright estimated that 25

to 30 per cent of Black men in their early twenties will spend time in prison. The rate for white men in that same age group is approximately seven per cent.

But, maintains criminologist Michael Hindelang, "Too many people for too long have said that the only thing that accounts for the higher arrest rate of Blacks is discrimination." Hindelang believes that Blacks simply commit more offenses -- and he has completed a study of more than eight million incidents of robbery, rape and assault which shows them to be disproportionately involved in nearly all categories of personal crimes.

Others claim discrimination is central to that very problem. "Crime is a matter of opportunity," observes William Nagel, a former prison official who heads the American Foundation Institute of Corrections. "Bankers and people with large expense accounts do not

Civil Rights Bureau suit goes to court

The Civil Rights suit of Walter Williams and James Amaya has come to trial, six years after the complaint was filed. The suit is being heard by Judge Owen M. Panner.

James Amaya testified that in 1973 he was hired by the Bureau of Labor to be its affirmative action officer. He said he was informed by Gayle Gemmer and others that the funds for the position had not arrived and that he should "take it easy for a while and learn as much as you can." After weeks of inactivity he asked for cases to investigate and was given several. He testified that during several conversations with Labor Commissioner Nilsen he was introduced as "my affirmative action monitor," as identified as a Chicano, in a negative manner and was asked about things pertaining to Chicanos.

He testified that at one point the Labor Commissioner asked him if a certain Chicano activist was his friend. After he said he was, the Commissioner said he didn't like the man or his "militant" friends. Amaya perceived this remark to mean that in the interest of his job he had better stay away from some of his friends, so he did.

Amaya said that "after I told him I was a Chicano who identified with Chicanos," the attitude toward him became unfriendly. Amaya said he was not provided training as an investigator, the position he found himself. He was assigned some cases, but never more than eight, while others had twenty or more.

Eventually a white man was hired as the affirmative action officer, with an Argentine woman as assistant. Amaya stayed on as an investigator.

His first evaluation said he was not providing the quantity or quality of work expected, but he said Ms. Gemmel indicated there was no problem, that he would receive a raise anyway. He said he constantly requested more cases so he could achieve the expected work goals but that he was given no answers.

Amaya said that when Lee Moore became Acting Administrator the atmosphere became more hostile. Moore called him into his office and asked, "Do you consider yourself the leader of Chicanos in Oregon?" He was told all of his cases would have to be redone.

Two days later he gave Moore his resignation. He testified that Moore told him that was what Nilsen wanted. The next day Amaya attempted to take back his resignation but that right was denied.

Walter Williams testified that

when he was hired by the Bureau of Labor in 1971 there were no other Blacks working there. During his period of work there - from 1971 until 1975, he was subjected to frequent racial slurs by staff members and to repeated conversations about racial inferiority of Blacks.

He testified that at a staff meeting the staff was informed that sex discrimination cases would be pushed and race discrimination put aside because "Oregon is not ready for cases dealing with race, color or national origin." The explanation was that the Judges in Oregon could more easily understand and deal with sex discrimination. When he complained, he was informed by the director, Gayle Gemmel that he was too sensitive.

In 1972, he told the court, he went to a conciliation meeting with Tri- (Please turn to P 2 Col 1)

Proby heads Washington minority program

Nathan Proby, founder and former director of the United Minority Workers, is the director of the newly organized Southwest Washington Association of Minority Contractors, Inc., funded by the Washington State Highway Department. SWAMC will serve six counties in Southwest Washington, assisting minority contractors to participate in federally funded road related projects.

Proby's job is to identify minority contractors, have them certified by the Highway Department, arrange for technical assistance and negotiate for them. Additional offices have been established in Spokane, Bellevue, Tacoma and Seattle.

The project will identify areas of pending contracts that can be performed by minority contractors, and have that stipulated before the project is put out for bid by general contractors.

"The idea is not to have a percentage set-aside, but to identify

projects that can be done by minorities," Proby explained. "For example, if we have one or more minority contractors who can do guard rails or pavement striping, we will identify jobs for them. Then our agencies will look at the jobs and see what it takes in equipment, supplies, time and help the contractor decide whether he can do it and make a profit.

"The idea is to supply the work a minority contractor can reasonably do and make money, which will allow him to develop his company.

"We're not trying to just grab a lot of contracts and not know whether we have anyone to perform them."

The program identifies the portion of the job that will be done by minority contractors before it goes to the general contractor. "When the general contractor bids the job he knows what is expected of him." In set-aside programs the contractor decides what areas he wants to subcontract to minorities and this has not always been successful. "They

have been able to set-aside a job that no minority is qualified or available to do, so it is of no benefit to us."

Proby said the atmosphere for minority contractors is much different in Washington than in Oregon. "The Highway Department here in Washington is very cooperative. They have let the general contractor know that they

mean business. The Associated General Contractors also have a better attitude. They are working with us and are anxious for the program to work."

With few minority owned companies in Southern Washington, many Portland businesses are looking North where they find their services are wanted and needed.

Community Unity Day

The Black United Front will sponsor day-long activities for "Community Unity Day," on Sunday, May 18 at the King Neighborhood Facility and King School Grounds, one day prior to the scheduled, BUF-organized, boycott of Portland Public Schools.

According to the Front, the theme of "Community Unity Day" is

community unity, quality education and a tribute to Malcolm X. May 19, day of the boycott, is the birthday of the late civil rights activist.

Speakers, music, food, artistic displays and exhibits will highlight the "Community Unity Day" activities and will take place from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.



Flagwoman Bonnie Thomas helps control the flow of traffic thru the Union Avenue construction site.