

Reagan's racial policy: The politics of failure

By Norman Hill

In the six months he has been president, Ronald Reagan has failed to articulate anything approaching a coherent policy on matters of racial inequality and poverty. Aside from generalities concerning the need to combat discrimination and to bolster productivity, the Administration shows no sign of having given serious thought to the plight of what has come to be called the Black underclass.

This underclass has been a persistent fact in the life of American society for many decades and its ranks continue to swell. The typical Reagan Administration response to

the problem of Black poverty and unemployment has been to assert that only the private sector can resolve the problems faced by Blacks and others who are poor. Help business and industry, the Reagan argument goes, and you will help poor Blacks and all poor Americans improve their lot. However, a glance at the recent history of Black unemployment and impoverishment gives little indication that the Reagan approach will work.

Since World War II, the rate of Black unemployment has stood at roughly twice that of white unemployment. This ratio has remained constant in times of economic

prosperity and through periods of economic decline; through periods of inflation and periods of price stability. No matter how the economy has been doing, Blacks seem to disproportionately shoulder the burdens of unemployment. What improvement has been made by Blacks in the last 35 years can be attributed to increased education. Blacks who have received adequate training and education have made tremendous strides economically. Black women college graduates, for example, today earn slightly more than their white counterparts. But the Reagan Administration has implemented massive cuts in federal aid to education and has drastically

cut funding for a number of training and employment programs which seek to prepare minorities and the poor for meaningful private sector employment—precisely the initiatives one would expect the president to support.

Of equal importance is the Reagan approach to "states' rights." The Administration is a vocal proponent of block grants and of giving increased power to the states. Yet it is precisely at the regional and state level that, for historical reasons, discrimination remains a significant problem. For example, due to a variety of complex factors, in the South, Black workers earn 78 percent of the in-

come of white Southerners. Throughout the rest of the country, however, the earnings of Black and white workers are nearly identical.

An approach which emphasizes "states' rights" will prove unable to diminish the discrepancy between the earnings of Southern whites and Blacks. Federal action must be a component in diminishing these differences. And it is precisely such federal intervention which President Reagan appears to oppose.

Recently, the Gallup Organization conducted a poll of the views of the Black population. The results are both interesting and ominous—for they indicate a deepening division between Blacks

and whites, in some measure as a direct consequence of the policies of the Reagan Administration. The Gallup study has found that while 55 percent of whites were optimistic about what 1981 would bring for them personally, only 18 percent of Blacks expected a better year and 48 percent expected things would be worse. Similarly, in February a *Newsweek* poll found that 52 percent of Blacks expected things would get worse for them during Reagan's presidency and only 8 percent felt things would improve. In April, while President Reagan enjoyed a 74 percent approval rating among whites, only 25 percent of (Please turn to page 5 col 1)

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Riding a white horse

Grassroot News N.W.—Dope fiends, Stone Junkies and addicts are all terms used to describe someone who has used this derivative of opium one too many times. Heroin has been called dog, smack, horse and junk. The name may change, but the effects remain the same. Once used, addiction is possible and if used enough, addiction is reality. Heroin becomes your life, the high is your sex and your time will be used to gather the money to buy a drug that nourishes the life right from under you.

"The thought of using heroin years ago was one of being a serious offense. Now today, because of the permissiveness and availability, heroin use is on the increase. People start with using it as a recreational drug. But this drug is not like most. People start for the kicks and it kicks you." An officer from the Portland Police Department gave a contemporary view of the use. "Those who are physically addicted to heroin need money to support the habit that runs from \$100 to \$400 a day. That's why 7-11s keep getting ripped off and the burglary of homes. You have to do a lot of boosting and stealing to support a heroin habit.

"The reasons for using heroin vary from individual to individual.

One general reason for the use of heroin is that the person has feelings that he cannot let out. Most addicts don't feel good about themselves, and their identities come from a peer group where most are users. They are scared of failing and are afraid of succeeding." An individual from Alpha House provided insight into the motives for using dog.

"I started using it when I was in the army. I guess I can say it was peer pressure that got me started. I just wanted to fit in and be accepted. The basic thing I got out of shooting dope was the euphoria," a former user declared.

"It's a false feeling of euphoria. I started smoking smack by sprinkling a little over weed. I was overseas and it was cheap. When I came back to the States, the story was different. I was lucky because I had a strong mind. I would smoke weed and shoot heroin. When my tolerance grew higher, I could tell because I couldn't get high off weed. When that happened, I would cut down my heroin use and eventually stopped." Another user with a different story about the same false glory.

From the opium poppies of Turkey, Iran, India and Mexico, horse finds itself being cooked up all

across the country. Historically, profit and greed played a part in the spread of this narcotic. Resistance in China led to the Opium Wars of the 1840s and when the British defeated the Chinese, the importation of the drug flourished.

Morphine is the principal derivative of opium, and dog is derived from morphine. Pure morphine is treated with acetic anhydride. Afterwards, it is heated at a constant 85 degrees Centigrade by independent chemists in what is known as heroin labs. From labs overseas, the finished product hits the golden market, New York. The Big Apple is said to contain more than half the junkies in the U.S. "You can deal with the rats on four legs and the ones on two better on heroin than cocaine," an observation from a former New Yorker.

In the States, with one kilo of heroin, you can mix in one kilo of quinine and seven kilos of mannite in a common kitchen sifter and arrive at 20 pounds of this sellable sucker smack, with 24 or 26 spoons to the ounce. Each spoon is worth about \$150. "I don't make a lot of money," a cocaine dealer stated. "It's the person who sells heroin because they triple their money with each score."

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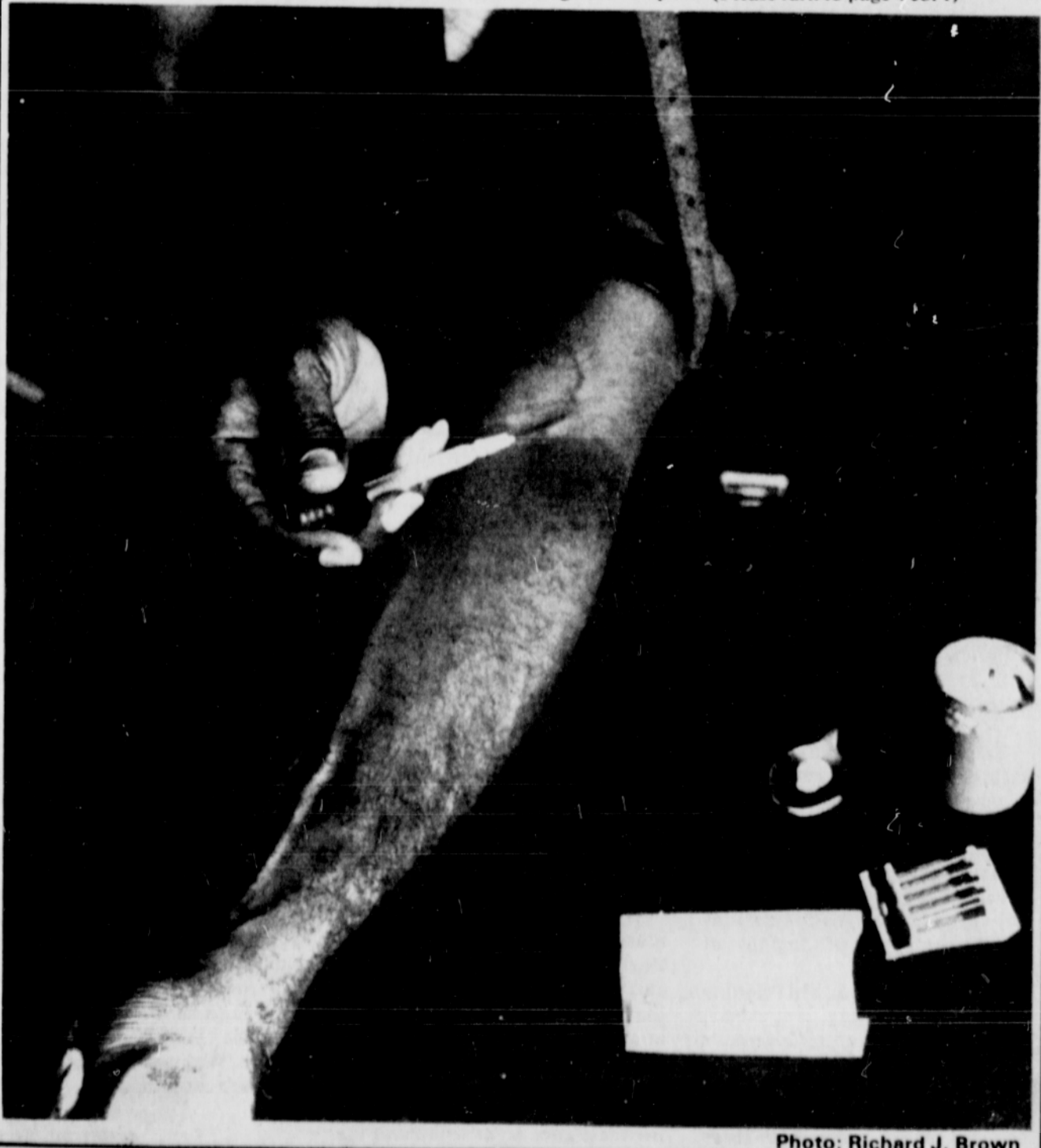


Photo: Richard J. Brown



Give us a chance: Angela Logan; Chalaunda Parker, and Sylvia Logan participate in a march and rally August 15 protesting the rehiring of police officers Ward and Galloway, who deposited

dead opossums in front of a Black-owned restaurant. The march was sponsored by the Black United Front.

(Photo: Richard J. Brown.)

Reverend Sam Johnson dies

Reverend Samuel Johnson, pastor of Highland United Church of Christ, died of a heart attack on August 14. He was 48.

Memorial services will be held Thursday, August 20, at McKinney Temple.

Rev. Johnson became associated with Highland Church in 1968 as a community worker, establishing a Labauch Literacy Program funded by the War on Poverty Program and housed at the church. He also established an administrative training program to teach typing, shorthand, 10-key adding machine and sewing.

The first housing cooperative was established under the 235-J program and remodeled seven homes for sale to low-income families. Members of several Lutheran, Presbyterian and United Church of Christ congregations assisted with this program.

Highland Community Center was established in 1969 to operate the church's social programs.

Working with Tektronix, a small electrical plant was established. Welfare mothers and ex-offenders were provided employment.

Although the program was closed during the recession of the early 1970s, it had provided an opportunity for training. At about the same time, a sewing industry was started.

Using the parsonage building, a home for disturbed and delinquent boys, ages 13 to 17, was opened. In 1973, a home for girls was added. These homes are now incorporated under the name of Yaun Child Care Centers and provide a controlled, structured environment in an intervention and interracial setting.

Highland Center also currently operates an educational program for retarded teen-agers and adults. Progress House, directed by Rev. Johnson until his death, is a work release program for persons coming out of federal prisons. Mission House is a home for persons who (Please turn to page 11 col 5)



REV. SAMUEL JOHNSON