

A photographer's journal of Nicaragua



Richard J. Brown, photographer for the Portland Observer, spent seven weeks in Nicaragua learning about and meeting its people. His photographs will appear here as a weekly feature.

Reaching the age of 12 years at Cooperative Ernesto Acuna in Nicaragua brings with it a level of responsibility unknown to American youngsters. While playing tag or baseball, going to school, working or babysitting are but a few of the experiences youngsters here can relate to, the similarities end with the requirement for males over the age of 12 to perform two hours of guard duty during the day and two hours at night each day.

This young man sits on a bag of ammunition close to a trench, his rifle on his lap, ever alert for any signs that may mean the presence of the American-supported counterrevolutionary forces, the Contras. (Photo: Richard J. Brown)

Black research doctor honored



Tom Williams of Tektronix, presents the Blood Donor Canteen dedication plaque to the American Red Cross Headquarters, Oregon Trail Chapter at North Vancouver Avenue as American Red Cross President Richard Schubert looks on. The canteen is dedicated to Dr. Charles Drew, a black man who pioneered the development of blood plasma preservation and helped develop the world's first blood bank.

(Photo: Richard J. Brown)

Social status of Black children slipping lower

by Jerry Garner

Black children are sinking deeper and deeper into poverty in nearly all facets of life including education, family, health, and income. Black children fared significantly worse than white children.

There are more than 62 million children in the United States, 81 percent are white and 15 percent are Black. Out of 62 million children in the U.S., more than 21 percent are poor. However, 50 percent of all Black children are poor and 17 percent of all white children are poor. In fact, the number of Black children living in poverty has increased in the last six years.

A recent census study showed that the poverty rate dropped from 22.2 percent to 21.3 percent for children under the age of 18. During this same period, Black poverty remained around 56 percent. The high number of Black children living in poverty is reflected in the bleak statistics concerning unemployment, health and education of Black children.

The most common excuse given by whites concerning the low social-economic status of Blacks in the United States is the lack of education among Black youths. Although the Black high school graduation rate is up, 44 percent of Black adults are illiterate. In 1977 the figure was the same. This indicates that Blacks may not be graduating with the ability to read or write.

Studies have shown that the longer Black students remain in school, the more their educational achievement decreases when compared to whites. In 1984, Black students scored 84 points below the national mean on college entrance tests. Blacks scored nearly 100 below the national mean in math. The average performance of Black 17-year-olds remains only

slightly higher than that for white 13-year-olds. Almost half of all Black 17-year-olds are either behind in school or have dropped out, against one-third of white youths.

Nearly 60 percent of Black babies are born to mothers who received prenatal care in the first three months of pregnancy. In comparison, 80 percent of white mothers received prenatal care. The infant mortality rate for Blacks is about the same as it was for whites 20 years ago, even though nation-wide infant mortality rates have dropped steadily since 1940.

Black babies are more than twice as likely as white babies to be underweight at birth, and low-birthweight infants are 20 times more likely to die in the first year of life than normal-

weight infants.

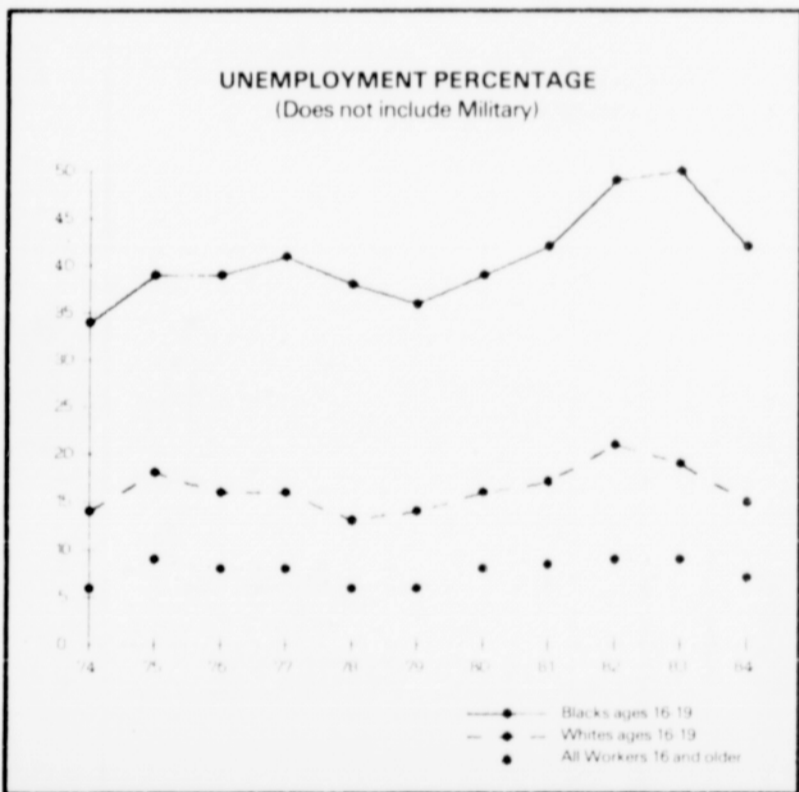
Several months ago President Reagan boasted to Europeans that the "Great American Job Machine" has dropped the unemployment rate in the United States. When Reagan made this statement to the Europeans, the Black teenage unemployment was over 50 percent nationwide. According to Linda King of the Portland Urban League, Black teenage unemployment in the city is anywhere from 50 to 60 percent.

Black unemployment has been high regardless of the economic climate in this country. For example, at the height of this country's economic boom from 1961 to 1969, the Vietnam War's expansion of the military forces only slowed down, but did not stop, the growth of Black teenage unem-

ployment.

While white teen joblessness is more than double the national rate, Black youth unemployment soars at six times the national rate. The accompanying graph illustrates the differences.

Overall the social status of Black children has been declining since the Reagan Administration took office in 1980. The President's cuts in social programs has contributed to the increase in Black poverty among children. Given the Administration's past record on social programs, the poverty rate will continue to increase for Black children.



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