

## History and Status of Affirmative Action

1973 "only 18% of the police force and 8% of the officers were black." But "the voluntary affirmative action program has raised black participation in the department to about 32% . . . with 30% of the lieutenants and 23% of the sergeants now black." Similarly, Robert Drinan, writing in *America* reports that "President Carter in four years appointed more black lawyers to the federal bench than all other presidents taken together had ever done before." Drinan views this as a dramatic example of affirmative action and raised the intriguing question as to "why were not more black attorneys appointed to the federal bench prior to the Carter Administration?"

Nonetheless, the Reagan Administration along with a number of white litigants have charged that affirmative action is "reverse discrimination." They claim that Affirmative Action represents a "new racism" because unqualified blacks are being hired at the expense of qualified whites. They argue that race should not be a factor in employment in a color-blind society. The Reagan Administration also opposes employers being required to keep Affirmative Action records because such paperwork is viewed as too great a burden. It is also claimed that Affirmative Action elevates group favoritism over the rights of individual whites.

Advancing these and similar claims, the Reagan Administration is intent on dismantling Affirmative Action. The threat is serious because the very offices — Attorney General, Assistant Attorney General, Chairman of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, and chairman of EEOC — that once promoted Affirmative Action have now been filled with staunch opponents dedicated to destroying it. Additionally, the Reagan Administration is doing everything within its power to influence the Supreme Court to overturn Affirmative Action.

The Black community along with other minority groups and women face a challenge in 1986 while they celebrate the first national birthday of Dr. King. They must provide creative action that will keep Affirmative Action intact and strengthen it. The real attack against Affirmative Action is geared toward preventing women, Blacks, and other minority groups from reaching self empowerment, determination, and dignity. The history of the black movement in this country teaches that this battle can be won. It must be won so that the efforts of Dr. King, Medgar Evers, Fannie Lou Hammer, and thousands of freedom fighters will not have been in vain.

## Comparable Worth Court Opinion Is Praised

An opinion by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit on September 4 affirmed the validity of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights' position on comparable worth. A commission statement in the case of *AFCME v. State of Washington* notes that "the Court of Appeals relied on a definition of comparable worth which is entirely consistent with the definition relied upon by the commission in its report on comparable worth. The decision therefore serves to repudiate the claims of the General Accounting Office and Representative Mary Rose Oaker, that in rejecting comparable worth as a legitimate standard under Title VII of the Equal Pay Act, the commission relied upon a definition of comparable worth which was inappropriate."

The court's opinion agreed with the commission in rejecting the notion that a wage disparity between jobs predominantly occupied by women and those occupied by men is proof of discrimination — even if the jobs are alleged to be of comparable worth according to a particular job evaluation study.

The commission in its September 6 statement said that it hopes the decision rendered by the Ninth Circuit will help return the focus of discussions about employment discrimination to areas where such discussions are genuinely beneficial, such as discrimination in hiring and promotions based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin, and the payment of equal wages to women and men for equal work. Discrimination on these grounds is already prohibited by Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Equal Pay Act of 1963. The commission unequivocally supports vigorous enforcement of these laws, and urges recognition of the principle that everyone is a beneficiary of a free market.

## Two Pivotal Leaders of the Civil Rights Movement

Wyatt Tee Walker

by Aldon Morris

In an essay on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Lerone Bennett Jr. wrote that, "what is important is that King, like Franklin Delano Roosevelt, demonstrated in Montgomery and later a rare talent for attracting and using the skills and ideas of brilliant aides and administrators." The Reverend Dr. Wyatt Tee Walker and Reverend Jesse Louis Jackson are two outstanding examples of brilliant individuals who worked closely with Dr. King. Walker and Jackson have made enormous contributions to the Civil Rights movement. What is equally important is that both continue to be pivotal leaders of the human rights movement today. The purpose of this article is to reveal why Walker and Jackson personify the qualities essential for leadership and progress in the black community and the world.

Dr. Walker is of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s generation. He was born August 16, 1929 in Brockton, Massachusetts and grew up in Merchantville, New Jersey where he attended high school. He received his Bachelor of Science and Master of Divinity Degrees from Virginia Union University. In 1975 Walker earned a Ph.D. degree in Afro-American Studies from Colgate-Rochester University. From 1960-64 he served as Chief of Staff to Dr. King and in 1982 he became Chairman of the Board of the Freedom National Bank of New York and he currently serves as Special Assistant to Reverend Jesse Louis Jackson. Walker is also an author and scholar having written six books and numerous articles. He is a citizen of the world given that to date he has traveled to seventy-one countries. But most of all Dr. Walker is a minister. He is currently the Senior Minister of Canaan Baptist Church in Harlem with a membership over two thousand. He refers to himself as the "Harlem Preacher." The above accomplishments represent only a fraction of Walker's activities. By any yardstick Walker is a workaholic. The primary concern here is Dr. Walker's role in the Black Freedom struggle.

Walker grew up in a religious family that was economically poor but rich in education given that both his parents were college graduates. Even though Dr. Walker's father was a clergyman, the family still experienced poverty. According to Walker, "I remember family prayers in my house where we prayed for food for the next day. I never owned an overcoat that was bought brand new until I finished college." Walker's resistance to racism began early. In his words, "My father's personality make-up was such that I and the rest of the members of my family were very sensitive to any kind of discrimination or racial slight or slur. I remember at nine years old two sisters and I invaded the little white movie theater in my town. So, from as far back as I can remember, I have been sensitized to racial inequality." In the late 1950s the modern civil rights movement emerged. By this time Walker was pastor of Gillfield Baptist Church in Petersburg, Virginia and was directly involved in organizing protest movements across the state of Virginia.

In the late 1950s Walker was President of the Petersburg local NAACP, State Director of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), President of the local Petersburg Improvement Association (PIA) and a Board Member of Dr. King's Southern Christian Leadership Association (SCLC). These were the organizational tools through which Walker confronted racial segregation headon. The most important organizational tool in Walker's arsenal against racism was the black church. Walker, like Dr. King, viewed the black church as the center for resistance to racism and oppression. Both felt that the church — because it embodied the black community and its resources — had to save souls for Christ and overthrow racial oppression. Thus, in the late 1950s Walker armed with the NAACP, CORE, PIA, SCLC and the black church, led masses of people in protest against segregated schools, libraries, lunch counters and the like. It is beyond dispute that Walker functioned as the guiding organizational genius behind the protest movements that swept Virginia in the late 1950s. As the black writer Louis Lomax put it: "Walker was master of all he surveyed in Petersburg, his home-grown protest movement was one of the best in the nation."

After becoming aware of Walker's administrative abilities, Dr. King persuaded him to become the Executive Director of SCLC in 1960. Walker swiftly shaped SCLC into a solid organizational force. To understand the monumental accomplishments of Dr. King one must understand the brilliant behind-the-scenes work of Dr. Walker and others like him. Walker was a chief architect of the famous confrontation with Bull Connor in Birmingham, Alabama in 1963. Walker and

others including Fred Shuttlesworth, Andrew Young, James Bevel, Dorothy Cotton, C.T. Vivian, James Lawson and Diane Nash-Bevel planned that confrontation to the smallest detail. Dr. King wrote in his book, *Why We Can't Wait* that Walker developed the mechanics behind the confrontation and that King vividly described the numerous tasks that Walker performed. King wrote that "Wyatt familiarized himself with downtown Birmingham, not only plotting the main streets and landmarks (target stores, city hall, post office, etc.), but meticulously surveying each store's eating facilities, and sketching the entrances and possible path of ingress and egress. In fact, Walker detailed the number of stools, tables and chairs to determine how many demonstrators should go to each store."

Because it was one of the best organized struggles of the entire civil rights movement, King's Birmingham confrontation was successful. Bull Connor was knocked from his racist throne by the Black masses who followed the organizational blueprint mapped out by Walker and Associates.

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Martin Luther King, Jr. — 1968



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