

Along the Color Line

by Dr. Manning Marable

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A Strategy for the Rainbow Coalition

Part I of a Two Part Series

The major breakthrough in progressive and Black politics in the Reaganite eighties has been the rise of the Rainbow Coalition, and the transformation of Rev. Jesse Jackson as a major, visionary leader in the tradition of Garvey, King, and Malcolm. As we prepare for next year's presidential primaries, we should make a critical assessment of the strengths as well as weaknesses in the Rainbow up to this point. If we fail to do so, Jackson's effort may yield no lasting benefits.

Why did 80 percent of the Black electorate and a small but growing percentage of white liberal-leftists back Jackson in 1984? Because we viewed the Rainbow Coalition as an essentially social protest movement, a Black-led, anti-racist mobilization drawing its strength from the grassroots across this country, which had acquired an electoral form. The Rainbow Coalition was fundamentally a revolt against the political betrayals and backwardness of the Democratic Party; but because of the absence of a mass, social democratic or labor electoral party in this country, the revolt had to occur within the Democratic Party's own primaries. We viewed the Rainbow as a means to build bridges across race, gender and class boundaries, linking up the various progressive struggles being waged by people of color, feminists, the homeless, the unemployed, gays, lesbians, trade unionists, farmers, housing tenants, and dozens of other key constituencies. And we also viewed the Rainbow Coalition as an opportunity to break the anticommunist, bipartisan monopoly within American electoral politics. Through the campaign itself, we discovered that we could present our ideas to a large audience on domestic and international policies. By and large, this analysis correctly depicts the main reasons why this group will endorse the Rev. Jesse Jackson's 1988 presidential campaign, and why it will continue to build the Rainbow Coalition after next year.

But our commitment toward constructing a Rainbow movement should not for a moment obscure a critique of the weaknesses and potential problem areas of the Rainbow up to this point. Certainly there's been real organizational weaknesses and a lack of real leadership

from the national center. Local grassroots activists were left frequently to fend on their own, without adequate support or direction. This situation should change, however, with the recent appointment of Ron Daniels as acting head of the Rainbow's National Office in Washington, D.C. Daniels was previously president of the National Black Political Assembly, a pre-party formation of Black progressive politicians which came out of the Gary, Indiana Black political convention of 1972. Daniels has strong administrative skills, but more importantly, he also has a lifelong commitment toward building an independent political vehicle outside of the Democrat and Republican parties. Daniels has roots as a community activist in the Youngstown, Ohio, Black community, and he is a person who shares a clear commitment to anticorporate politics.

However, another real contradiction inside the Rainbow has been between some of the more moderate forces vs. much of the left. The former view the Rainbow narrowly as primarily a means to barter more effectively for concessions from the Democratic Party's hierarchy, while not trying to overturn the undemocratic structure of America's party system. The left wing, on the other hand, sees the Rainbow as a necessary but transitional stage toward a new kind of basic realignment inside American politics. These two perspectives will continue to conflict with each other until one or the other becomes dominant. If the "moderates" win, Jesse's campaign may succeed in obtaining a few critical concessions from the white Democratic Party establishment, but the basic second-class, Jim Crow position of Black folks within the party will probably remain. If the left emerges, we can expect the Democratic leadership to do all it can to discredit Jackson, identical to the orchestrated smear of Gary Hart earlier this year. If Jackson emerges as the party's presidential leader after the megaprimaries in the South next March, a supreme counterattack will be launched to destroy and to derail both Jesse and the Rainbow. We must prepare ourselves now for this probable political assault. The time is short.

Letters to the Editor

The Prison System

Dr. Jamil Cherovee

Fears have been expressed that under the guise of eliminating "aggressive" behavior, the authorities are really seeking to end political activism in the prisons by destroying the minds of the more politically conscious inmates. Can we use dangerous and inhumane "behavior modification" techniques on inmates, then release the finished products: "vegetables" on society.

Around this nation, inmates, whom prison authorities have termed "abnormally aggressive," are given electroshock, psychosurgery, massive drugging, hypnosis, adverse conditioning and sensory deprivation. Some investigators have charged that chemotherapy and psychosurgery being developed in the prisons will eventually be used against the civilian population to control or eliminate political dissidence. Inmates have been used as captive guinea pigs by drug companies to test exotic new drugs before they are introduced on the market. The number of inmates who have been maimed or killed by these experiments is unknown. Furthermore, the number of Black and third world inmates involved in such programs is high, raising the spectre of Nazi concentration camps and genocidal experimentation.

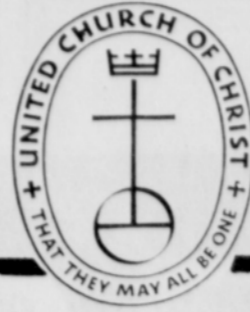
Our concern should be for the wholeness and freedom of the individual. The opportunity to be the best person we can be under God is matched by an emphasis on the individual's participation in decisions which affect his or her own body and life. Imposing the will of others and manipulating an individual, by either physical or spiritual means, violates the integrity of the person. It's a known fact that penal institutions, as they are constructed today, do not rehabilitate the inmates;

but instead, serve only as an environment which imposes numerous deprivations and presents many threats to the individual's identity, sense of worth and integrity. These threats or deprivations exist on two levels: They are discomfort and boredom, etc. But much more important are the deliberate symbolic and psychological threats to the individual's sense of well-being.

If the prison institution destroys the inmate's present self and molds him into a model prisoner, can we expect the inmate to return to the community as a model citizen? If the only acceptable goal is a fundamental change in the personality and life style of the inmate, prisons are no place for the practice of psychiatry and psychiatric experiments.

Lack of employment, education, money to support a family, or opportunity will force many poor people to commit crimes that will force them to return to prison. Perhaps this is a sign that it cannot treat the disease itself, which is unemployment; but at the same time, there is no justification for it to dehumanize the poor victim further.

This fear of genocide in the Black communities around this nation is, therefore, not part of the "folk culture," but part of the real and symbolic universe of our existence. It is standard for social scientists to say that such fears will go away once the economic position of Blacks improves, but it will probably never go away; because so-called christian America has concretely and symbolically said that it does not trust even the most well-intentioned of the Black community in so many ways.



CIVIL RIGHTS JOURNAL

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Twenty-First Century Leaders

What will be the future of the Civil Rights Movement in the 21st Century? Who will lead African Americans in the next century toward greater progress and empowerment? Well, in the South, particularly in the state of Alabama, the answers to these two important questions are now being provided by an outstanding gathering of young, gifted and committed Black youth leaders.

The Alabama New South Coalition has, for the past two years, sponsored the 21st Century Youth Leadership Training Camp. This summer the camp was held on the campus of historically Black Alabama A & M University in Normal, Alabama. Over 160 African American youth from throughout Alabama, as well as a few from other southern states, participated in the 10-day training camp. They ranged in age from 8 to 19 years and were divided into 14 different leadership development groups. The groups went through a demanding schedule of mental and physical development, training workshops, history and culture seminars and special interest sessions. The sessions covered a wide-range of subjects from teenage pregnancy and drug abuse to computer technology and voter mobilization.

The theme of this year's camp was "A Look Back, a Step Forward." One of the daily highlights was the viewing of the six segments of "Eyes on the Prize," the Public Broadcasting TV series on the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960's. The young participants gained even more by being able to talk with nationally known civil rights leaders who visited the camp, many of whom appeared in the TV series.

Rosa Parks, for example, reminded all those yearning to be leaders of the necessity "to put your faith in God and in your people by taking a deliberate action for that which is right." Rev. C.T. Vivian, a former executive director of Dr. King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference, gave a stirring address about the sacrifices

that leadership has to make in order to insure that victories are won for the cause of freedom.

The dream and idea of having this kind of camp came from that dynamic and hard-working Black family team of Atty. Rose Sanders and State Sen. Hank Sanders of Selma, Alabama. By sponsoring these events, the Alabama New South Coalition, of which the Sanders are members, continues to provide progressive and critical leadership for the state of Alabama, and the South in general.

I personally feel blessed that I had an opportunity to witness the enthusiasm and commitment of so many dedicated young sisters and brothers, who labored daily from 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. It is truly a good sign when young people themselves make up their minds that they want to be leaders and are willing to endure the rigors necessary to become leaders. Near the end of the camp the young people voted for the person among them who best exemplified the qualities of leadership. They chose 17-year-old Rachel Zippert, from Greene County, Alabama. Rachel addressed the closing banquet and stated, "In order to be a 21st Century leader, I realize that I have to prepare myself now for this responsibility. I have learned so many things this week that I will definitely use as I make decisions for the future. I am—and we all should be—21st Century leaders."

Mayor Richard Arrington of Birmingham, Alabama, introduced Rev. Jesse Jackson who gave the final keynote address. Rev. Jackson stated, "What you have accomplished here will have a positive impact on the whole nation."

It is our hope and prayer that the Alabama camp can become a model for all African American communities and other racial and ethnic communities. For, the investment of time and energy with our young will largely determine whether there will be a future.



HEALTH WATCH

BY Steven Bailey, N.D.

While the 1980's have seen a time of record numbers of medical mal-practice suits, the eventual outcome of these suits may be far from what most Americans want. We have, to a large degree, concentrated upon the rising costs of insurance and the impact to the private physician. What we have not attended to is the very great potential of losing choice and personal empowerment in our own health care.

Nowhere are these fears better illustrated than in the area of obstetrics (child birth). This is certainly the area of greatest concern, and subsequently represents a field with extremely high mal-practice rates. This has translated into a large number of private obstetricians either retiring, changing fields or joining hospitals to perform their work. While some people would hold this out as a major gain (believing that hospitals offer the safest environment for birth), I feel that it is in direct opposition to the gains of personal empowerment that women have witnessed in the past two decades.

I can still vividly recall one of my first obstetrics patients telling me about her first two hospital births in the early 70's. She was completely unconscious with both her arms and legs strapped to the delivery table. She was not conscious during the delivery and did not see her children until the following day. The home birth we provided for her third went smoothly and she holds

much fonder memories of this birth and the immediate bonding that followed. While most hospitals now offer much more supportive environments than in the 50's and 60's, we are not that far removed from the "doctor controlled" environment that once was the rule of western medicine.

The question that remains is whether hospitals began more gentle birth procedures out of an understanding of the benefits of this approach or out of a desire to compete with private birth homes and out-of-hospital clinics that promote more "natural" approaches to delivery. As more and more out-of-hospital clinics close due to skyrocketing insurance costs, this question will be answered.

It is ironic and tragic that through suits for mal-practice we may indeed be altering the direction of our "New Age" approach to medicine and returning once again to the impersonal and high-caesarian-rate environment of hospitals for our care. There a multitude of reasons that we are suing doctors (too many to comment on in this article), yet let us hope that we do not allow liability rates to determine our county's direction in health care. We should be able to demand accountability and receive quality care of our choice at the same time.



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