

# NATIONAL FORUM

## The Color Line

by Dr. Manning Marable

### "The Myth of Equality"

A myth is haunting Black America—the illusion that equality between the races has been achieved, and that the activism characteristic of the previous generation's freedom struggles is no longer relevant to contemporary realities.

In collective chorus, the media, the leadership of both political parties, the corporate establishment, conservative social critics and public policy experts, and even marginal elements of the Black middle class, tell the majority of African-Americans that the factors which generated the social protest for equality in the 1950s and 1960s no longer exist. The role of race has supposedly "declined in significance" within the economy and political order. And as we survey the current social climate, this argument seems to gain a degree of credibility. The number of Black elected officials exceeds 5,600; many Black entrepreneurs have achieved substantial gains within the economic system in the late 1980s; thousands of Black managers and administrators appear to be moving forward within the hierarchies of the private and public sector. And the crowning "accomplishment," the November, 1989, election of Douglas Wilder as Virginia's first Black governor, has been promoted across the nation as the beginning of the transcendence of "racial politics."

The strategy of Jesse Jackson in both 1984 and 1988, which challenged the Democratic Party by mobilizing people of color and many whites around an advanced, progressive agenda for social justice, is dismissed as anachronistic and even "reverse racism." As in the Wilder model, racial political and cultural style of the white mainstream. Protest is therefore passe. All the legislative remedies which were required to guarantee racial equality, the spectre dictates, have already been passed.

It is never an easy matter to combat a myth. There have been sufficient gains for African-Americans, particularly within the electoral system and for sectors of the Black middle class in the 1980s, that elements of the myth seem true. But from the vantage point of the inner cities and homeless shelters, from the unemployment lines and closed factories, a different reality behind the spectre emerges. We find that racism has not declined in significance, if racism is defined correctly as the systemic exploitation of Blacks' labor power and the domination and subordination of our cultural, political, educational and social rights as human beings. Racial inequality continues despite the false rhetoric of equality. Those who benefit materially from institutional racism now use the term "racist" to denounce Black

critics who call for the enforcement of affirmative action and equal opportunity legislation.

Behind the myth of equality exists two crises, which will present fundamental challenges to African-Americans in the decade of the 1990s. There is an "internal crisis"—that is, a crisis within the African-American family, neighborhood, community, cultural and social institutions, and within interpersonal relations, especially between Black males. Part of this crisis was generated, ironically, by what I term the "paradox of desegregation." With the end of Jim Crow segregation, the Black middle class was able to escape the confines of the ghetto. Black attorneys who previously had only Black clients could now move into more lucrative white law firms. Black educators and administrators were hired at predominantly white colleges; Black physicians were hired at white hospitals.

As the Black middle class increasingly retreated to the suburbs, they often withdrew their skills, financial resources and professional contacts from the bulk of the African-American community. There were of course many exceptions, Black women and men who understood the cultural obligations they owed to their community. But as a rule, by the late 1980s, such examples became more infrequent, especially among younger Blacks who had no personal memories of experiences in the freedom struggles of two decades past.

The external crisis is directly related to the internal, institutional crisis, a one-sided, race/class warfare which is being waged against the African-American community. The external crisis is represented by the conjunction of a variety of factors, including: the deterioration of skilled and higher paying jobs within the ghetto, and the decline in the economic infrastructure; the decline in the public sector's support for public housing, health care, education and related social services for low-to-moderate income people; and the demise of the enforcement of affirmative action, equal opportunity laws and related civil rights legislation.

The myth of equality is required in order to convince African-Americans that the external crisis doesn't really exist, and that racism is dead. That's why it's more important than ever for the Black Movement to be reborn, using the strategies of demonstrations, community mobilizing and resistance to the "new" racism. Institutional racism may be more sophisticated, using the language of equality, but the necessity for struggle still exists.

The American economic and political

system promises equality, but has never delivered for the African-American. In fact, the system uses the rhetoric and myth of equality to hid the process of oppression, both through legal and illegal means, Blacks are being destroyed.

Illegal drugs destroy thousands of African-Americans in many direct and indirect ways. We witness the daily, destructive impact with the proliferation of gangs and fratricidal criminality, but there are other indirect effects as well. In January, 1990, a comprehensive study by the New York Hospital-Cornell Medical Center, which reviewed traffic fatalities between 1984 through 1987, observed that nearly one in four drivers age 16 to 45 killed in New York City tested positive for cocaine in autopsies. Researchers suggested that individuals addicted to cocaine experience spatial perception and other physical dysfunctions. How many thousands of African-Americans are crippled and killed in accidents caused by those whose abilities are impaired by crack or other drugs? How many homes are destroyed, and dreams shattered? How many daughters and sons are lost forever from their families and friends?

The cancer of crack creates many more living victims than those who are killed by the drug. Crack is part of the new urban slavery, a method of disrupting lives and "regulating" the masses of our young people who otherwise would be demanding jobs, adequate health care, better schools and control of their own communities. It is hardly accidental that this insidious cancer has been unleashed within the very poorest urban neighborhoods, and that the police concentrate on petty street dealers rather than those who actually control and profit from the drug traffic. It is impossible to believe that thousands and thousands of pounds of illegal drugs can be transported throughout the country, in airplanes, trucks and automobiles, to hundreds of central distribution centers with thousands of employees and under the so-called surveillance of thousands of law enforcement officers, unless crack represented at a systemic level a form of "social control."

Most African-Americans do not realize that the most destructive drug problem within our community is tobacco addiction. The tobacco industry makes its highest profits from African-Americans. For two decades, tobacco companies have followed a strategy of "special marketing," targeting younger, poorly educated African-Americans as potential consumers. In late December, 1989, for example, R.J. Reynolds Tobacco company announced the

development of "Uptown" menthol cigarettes, a product specifically designed to "appeal most strongly to Blacks." One NAACP leader has called the strategy "unethical," and the American Cancer Society declared that the "campaign exploits Blacks, especially the ghetto poor." Under fire, R.J. Reynolds was forced to cancel the scheme for higher profits.

The "Uptown" controversy highlights the fact that African-Americans currently suffer higher death rates for virtually all types of cancer, especially cancer of the lungs, prostate, esophagus and cervix, than white Americans. The statistical life expectancy for Blacks actually declined in the late 1980s, due in part to extremely high mortality rates from cancer.

However, the major means for the social control of the African-American remains the criminal justice system. As of June, 1989, the U.S. prison population reached 673,000, of which Blacks comprise 46 percent. Prisons have become the methods for keeping hundreds of thousands of potentially rebellious, dissatisfied and alienated Black youth off the streets. There is a direct correlation between the absence of job training programs and social programs designed to elevate Blacks' incomes, and the increased utilization of the criminal justice system to regulate unemployed and unemployable Blacks. Keep in mind that between 1973 and 1986, the average real earnings for young African-American males under 25 years fell by 50 percent. In the same years, the percentage of Black males aged 18 to 29 in the labor force who were able to secure full-time, year-round employment, fell from only 44 percent to a meager 35 percent. Is it accidental that these young Black men, who are crassly denied meaningful employment opportunities, are also pushed into the prison system, and subsequently into permanent positions of economic marginality and social irrelevance? Within America's economic system, a job has never been defined as a human right; but for millions of young, poor Black men and women, they appear to have a "right" to a prison cell or place at the front of the unemployment line.

The struggle against the myth of equality requires a break from the tactics and ideas of the desegregation period of the 1960s. Our challenge is not to become part of the system, but to transform it, not only for ourselves, but for everyone. We must struggle to make economic and racial equality for all.

## VANTAGE POINT

### Cashing In On The Peace Dividend

Articles and Essays by Ron Daniels

The staggering cost of the arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union has been a gigantic burden which has severely hampered the growth and development of both major super powers. Though it is now abundantly clear that the "threat" from the Soviet Union was greatly exaggerated, this perception of threat has been the basis for the near sacrosanct status of the defense budget and the military-industrial complex.

Mikhail Gorbachev however, has concluded that the fulfillment of the aspirations of the citizens of the Soviet Union have been delayed long enough. Under his leadership the Soviet Union is quickening the pace of disarmament and demilitarization in order to feed, cloth, house and otherwise improve the standard of living for the masses of Soviet citizens.

Despite the enormous wealth and prosperity in America, the arms race has not been without its toll here either. With huge sums of monies going to research and development for the military and investment in military hardware, there has been a pronounced erosion in America's civilian economy. While other nations like Japan and Germany have invested in research and development to improve technology for civilian pursuits, the U.S. has been left out along with the Soviet Union in the "Cold War." Not only has America lost its competitive edge in terms of industry and commerce, the disproportionate outlays for unproductive defense spending has left much of America's infrastructure of roads, railroads, highways, bridges, industrial plants etc. in disrepair and ruin.

But the greatest cost of the arms race has been the human toll; the underdevelopment of vast numbers of human beings because of America's preference for guns and bombs over bread and butter. While America gloats over the "collapse of Communism," the underbelly within this society, the domain of the poor and disadvantaged is as devastated as any dispossessed Third World nation. Those who are stuck at the bottom of the ladder in America yearn for a kind of perestroika as deeply as their Soviet counterparts.

The dramatic changes transforming Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union mean that there is absolutely no reason why poverty, disease, illiteracy and the absence of opportunity cannot now be erased from the face

of this nation. Now any pretense of a real threat from the Russian bear is just that, a pretense. If there ever was the prospect of the dawning of an "age of Aquarius," the time is at hand. America has no excuse not to convert to a peace economy.

Former Defense Secretary Robert McNamara estimates that the United States could reduce military expenditures by 50% over the next decade. Currently the defense budget is about 300 billion annually. At the current pace of spending, 1.5 trillion will be spent on defense over the next 5 years and a mind boggling 3 trillion dollars will be shelled out over the next decade. Using McNamara's formula, 150 billion a year or 1.5 trillion could be slashed from the defense budget and used for other purposes. This "peace dividend" could work miracles in terms of creating jobs, building affordable housing, providing education, health care, repairing America's infrastructure and cleaning up the environment.

Unfortunately, ushering in an age of Aquarius and an era of universal prosperity will not be quite that simple. The military budget has been the sacred preserve of a relative small circle of rich and super rich corporations and individuals who have made their fortunes feasting on defense appropriations and contracts. Profit not peace has always been the principal agenda of this elite circle. Hence the current circumstance of prosperity for the few and misery for many in these United States.

President George Bush is not anxious to upset the status-quo. Despite his obvious jubilation over the changes sweeping the eastern bloc, Bush has warned that America must maintain its military muscle such a posture, in light of current events is hardly rational. But in an effort to head off the anticipated clamor for deep defense cuts, Defense Secretary Dick Cheney is already offering up what amount to some cosmetic cuts. Cheney is proposing reductions of only 39 billion or a mere 2.6% over the next five years.

What all of this means is that if African-Americans, other minorities, poor and working people are to cash in on the "peace dividend," we will be forced to fight for it. The power of our collective voices, ballots and marching feet must be heard. Otherwise the peace dividend will simply become yet another bonus for the rich, the privileged and the powerful.

## THIS WAY FOR BLACK EMPOWERMENT

by Dr. Lenora Fulani

### Make Way For Democracy!

No sooner had Francis Fukuyama, the State Department official who declared that history has come to an end, uttered this self-serving idiocy than millions of people around the world burst forward with a renewed militance and fervor for human progress!

The heirs of Josef Stalin—the old left—were put on trial by the masses of Eastern Europe and found guilty: corrupt traitors to the radically humanistic social vision of Marx and Lenin; counterfeits who substituted the fake coins of bureaucracy for the real gold of democracy; saboteurs of hope.

For their crimes against humanity many of revisionist communists, whose parties had exercised state power for more than a generation, have been justly disgraced and punished (Mikhail Gorbachev, seeking to be spared, has embraced feudalism as well as capitalism in the hope that the Pope and George Bush will together help him feed the spiritual and material hunger of the Soviet people). Like the once formidable Berlin Wall—reduced overnight to a historical curiosity from which tourists and entrepreneurs hack off souvenirs—the Communist Party governments of Eastern Europe are already relics of an obsolete past.

The leadership of the Communist Party USA and their clones on the traditional (orthodox, Stalinist, old) left in this country have done at least as bad a job here as their comrades have done in Europe; they have totally abdicated responsibility for organizing a working class-led resistance to the right wing takeover of the American political process, of culture and the economy.

There could be no better expression of the difference between America's corrupt, anti-democratic old left and the non-revisionist new left which is rising up to take its place than in the roles they each played recently in a very significant New York City election. The scene was the predominantly Black and Puerto Rican 11th Councilmanic District of the South Bronx, which includes some of the most economically and socially devastated neighborhoods in the United States of America. On one side was the incumbent City Councilman, Ra-

fael Casteneira Colon, a political hoodlum enmeshed in the notoriously corrupt county Democratic Party machine. On the other side was a grassroots Puerto Rican leader, Pedro Espada, who ran against Colon on the independent New Alliance Party line.

In Colon's corner was the entire array of Democratic Party officialdom, elected and otherwise, machine hacks and "reformers"—INCLUDING THE CPUSA. Backing up Espada was the new left political tendency that gave birth to the Black-led, multi-racial, working class wide NAP. Everyone in the district (and the city) knew who was who: Colon, frantic, rode up and down the streets of the South Bronx on a school bus lent to him by the borough president, warning the people that the "communists" wanted to turn the district into "another Cuba-another Nicaragua." Despite the red-baiting tactics, physical intimidation, and the deeply entrenched Democratic Party "habitué" to which our people have been forcibly addicted, on election day an extraordinary 42% of the Black and Puerto Rican electorate in the 11th Councilmanic District rose up with their sisters and brothers in Beijing and East Berlin and Sofia to cast a vote against corruption and for democracy. The new left made it possible.

The fact that the old left has never held state power is the only major difference between the Communist Party in this country and its counterparts in Eastern Europe—that and the fact that the masses of American people know little and care less about the senile, racist, hog-tied-to-the-Democrats old left, whose leaders have wallowed in the mud of political compromise for so long that there is no longer anything "left" of them.

As a proud and vigorous and dedicated new leader of the new left, I call on the leadership of CPUSA and the rest of the old left to follow their European comrades into retirement—to leave the stage of history before they are booted (or kicked) off. The new left, which does have the support of the masses, is taking over.

Say You Saw It In The  
**Portland Observer!**

### CRED OF THE BLACK PRESS

The Black Press believes that America can best lead the world away from social and national antagonisms when it accords to every person, regardless of race, color, or creed, full human and legal rights. Hating no person, fearing no person, the Black Press strives to help every person in the firm belief that all are hurt as long as anyone is held back.

## Civil Rights Journal

by Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.

### Support District of Columbia Statehood

Colonization is an injustice in the nation's capital area. Taxation without voting representation in the Congress of the United States for two-thirds of a million people, 80 percent of whom are African-American, is an injustice.

We join with Congressman Walter Fauntroy and Rev. Jesse Jackson in their united call for the building of a national movement for statehood for the District of Columbia. There are many who believe that the large racial and ethnic population of D.C. is one of the leading factors contributing to the reluctance of the Congress of the United States to act on this issue.

Given the fact of the daily testimonies from members of both the legislative and executive branches of the U.S. government concerning the welcomed atmosphere of freedom and democracy, particularly as been evidenced in eastern Europe, the absence of participatory and representative democracy in this nation's capital city is beyond the absurd. Jesse Jackson stated, "Washington is the last colony here and the Congress should end its occupation and its tyranny of taxation without representation." Last year, the United States Senate voted 97 to 2 not to approve financing for a D.C. Statehood Commission to study the issue. Why would the Senate not even entertain a study of the question? What are the members of Congress afraid of? Is it the prediction that D.C. statehood would insure at

least one African-American a seat in that august body known as the U.S. Senate? Is this a form of American apartheid?

Congressman Fauntroy has been erecting statehood signs throughout the District of Columbia as part of the growing campaign. Some of these signs read, "Welcome to the Nation's Last Colony: All Residents Must Leave Their rights at the Border. D.C. Statehood Now!"

The campaign for D.C. statehood will be one of the major national political issues during the 1990's. There are now organizing committees being established in every state to support the effort.

Given all the negative publicity that the District of Columbia has received recently because of the drug crisis and unprecedented crime rate, the campaign for D.C. statehood is a journey "up the rough side of the mountain." We believe, however, that once the majority of Americans understand the moral principles involved as well as the contradictions surrounding the District's present status, the battle can and will be won.

As during the 1960's, when it became necessary to bus freedom riders to the deep South to challenge racist, segregationist laws and institutions, we predict that it may be necessary in the near future to send freedom riders of the 1990's to the nation's capital to help mobilize for D.C. statehood.



## To Be Equal

by John E. Jacob

### Tragedy In Washington

The arrest of Washington, D.C. mayor Marion Barry on drug charges is a personal and national tragedy that raises important issues about political leadership, drugs, and law enforcement in our nation.

At one level, Mayor Barry's downfall is a poignant personal tragedy. He is a popular leader whose long career was marked by contributions to social progress. He was brought down by a weakness that has become all too common in our nation.

It is a very lucky American family that can claim no direct impact from drugs. No matter how wealthy or powerful, virtually all of us are touched by the drug plague—either directly, as Mayor Barry was; by the involvement of family members and friends, or through the deterioration of neighborhood life caused by widespread drug dealing and drug abuse.

Drugs were something the majority of Americans chose to ignore as a problem of inner cities and the so-called underclass, or as the plaything of a deviant subculture of the privileged.

But today, drugs are endemic and their toll on our society has spread to the point where virtually all of us—of whatever color or status—are touched by the epidemic of drugs.

Sympathy for the plight of Mayor Barry and others who become victims of drugs cannot, however, obscure the essential point that drug use is illegal and cannot be tolerated.

And while the Mayor was able to immediately check into a clinic to receive the treatment he needs to overcome his problem, this is not an option available to most drug abusers.

The bulk of those in need of treatment are too poor to afford anything but public drug treatment clinics, and for all the noise about a "war on drugs," treatment facilities are in short supply, underfunded and understaffed. They serve barely a fraction of those who want help in kicking the drug habit.

Another aspect of the tragedy in Wash-

ington that must be confronted is the widespread feeling among many African-Americans that the Mayor was the victim of a conspiracy to "get" Black political leaders, especially those who are outspoken and aggressive.

That feeling was reinforced by the entrapment process used by government agents.

Whether the process by which Mayor Barry was caught stands up in court or not, it is clear to a layman that it was entrapment—law officers setting up a situation that encourages a citizen to perform an illegal act.

And while ultimate responsibility for performing that act must rest on the individual who breaks the law, it is troubling to find federal law enforcement officials engaging in such questionable tactics.

Many African-Americans can't imagine a similar law enforcement effort to entrap a white political leader. And those feelings are strengthened by the fact that over the past decade disproportionate numbers of African-American politicians have been indicted and subsequently acquitted.

But despite all the misgivings and troubling features of the Washington tragedy, we have to accept the fact that leaders must be accountable and must be above suspicion.

Ethical and moral standards have tightened considerably in recent years, and our leaders have to play by those new rules.

That Mayor Barry ran afoul of those rules is sad, and hardly the occasion for the gloating that comes from some quarters. Politicians are people too, and office holders face enormous pressures that unfortunately will sometimes lead to personal problems, including drug abuse.

But no matter how sympathetic we must be, and no matter how much we wish to help victims of drug abuse, alcohol abuse, and other illnesses, a strong, rigid line has to be drawn that says such behavior will not be tolerated from anyone, and most especially from those who would lead us.