

EDITORIAL

NATIONAL RAINBOW COALITION

It's Still A Crime (Bill)

On Thursday, August 11, by a majority of 225-to-210, the House voted against a RULE governing floor debate on the crime bill.

Democrats were stunned by the loss! The vote—with 11 members of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) voting in the majority—prevented the bill from coming before the House for a full debate and a vote on the legislation. Fifty-eight (58) Democrats voted against the President. The small number of moderate Republican defections (only 11 Republicans voted with the President) surprised the Democratic leadership.

The 10 Democratic CBC members voting against the bill were Clay, Fields, Hilliard, Lewis, Rangel, Scott, Stokes, Washington, Waters and Watt. Republican Gary Franks voted with the majority, but for totally different reasons than the 10 Democrats. Forty-eight (48) White Democrats opposed the bill, most of whom were conservatives and opposed the bill because of provisions banning 19 assault weapons, and/or the bill's prevention components—which they described as "pork."

CBC members were placed in a dilemma. They supported the ban on assault weapons, and \$8 (of the \$33) billion that was designed for preven-

tion programs—i.e., education, drug prevention, recreation, jobs programs for young adults and community policing. CBC members were angered because Democratic congressional leadership, and the White House, refused to negotiate on the death penalty; because the White House, refused to negotiate on the death penalty; because they were morally opposed to the addition of 60 new federal death penalty offenses; and the exclusion of the racial justice provision passed by the House. The racial justice provision would have statistically monitored the death penalty to see if it was being used in a racially discriminatory manner, and helped with appeals of those sentences. The CBC attempted to negotiate a compromise on racial justice only to find itself abandoned by the White House, which withdrew its support when it found itself in trouble in the Conference Committee, and a threat by 17 Senators to filibuster the bill if it included the racial justice provision.

The need for the racial justice provision is clear. According to Rep. Rangel (D-15-NY), in the last two years alone, 11 people have been sentenced to death in the U.S.—all have been black. Of the 236 people executed since 1977, 200 were Blacks convicted of murdering

Whites, even though Whites and Blacks are victims in roughly equal numbers. Prior to 1972, more than half of the people condemned or executed were African American, even though the Black population is just 12 percent.

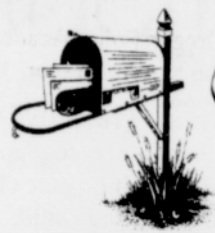
There was intense lobbying against the bill by the NRA—they oppose the ban on assault weapons—and an obstructionist Republican leadership who said that the bill was soft on punishment and additional police. It is clear that this bill is racially motivated, driven emotionally by the fear of crime—portrayed as Black—and a feeling that more cops and jails will solve the (violent Black crime) problem.

What was even more interesting, however, was the President's political response to his legislative defeat. More Democrats than CBC members voted against the President. More Roman Catholic legislators voted against the President than did Blacks. More moderate Democratic Leadership Council (DLC) members—the organization the Bill Clinton helped to form—voted against him. Did he invite David Wilhelm, Chairman of the DNC, to the White House and urge him to whip up grassroots Democrats against Democratic legislators? Noooh. Did he go to a Roman Catholic Church and call

priests to the White House to send a message to Roman Catholic legislators? Noooh. Did he call Al Fromm, Executive Director of the DLC, to the White House and sic him on the DLC members who abandoned his ship? Noooh. Then what did he do?

President Clinton decided to pit Black preachers against 10 Black politicians. He went after Black people through the Black churches and Black clergy in order to put political pressure and whip the strayed "sheep" in the CBC back into the fold. First, he went to a Black church in the DC metropolitan area and "preached." In his sermon, he raised passage of the crime bill to a higher level, claiming it was "the will of God" that it be passed. He invited the nation's ministers to come forward and support it. Second, he invited 25 African American clergy to the White House and commissioned them to go forth and preach the Gospel of Crime in an attempt to undermine the MORAL OPPOSITION and CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION of 10 members of the CBC.

The NRC joins with these 10 CBC members in a conscientious objection to the current crime bill. TODAY, call your representatives in Congress at 202-224-3121 and the President at 202-456-1111 to express your opposition!



Letter To The Editor

Send your letters to the Editor to:
Editor, PO Box 3137, Portland, OR 97208

City Of Portland Trashes Artist's Work

"It looked like junk to me," said the supervisor of a Portland Bureau of Buildings operation. This was reported to a local Afro-American artist as he returned home from the funeral of a relative.

The artist, Ray Eaglin, had notified the Bureau of Buildings that he had been called to Houston since his brother was gravely sick. Neverthe-

less, Eaglin found the city had taken his art when he returned.

Eaglin's work has been displayed in numerous colleges businesses, galleries, and public places. Many pieces have been sold. They were removing works of art.

The city had a large dumpster parked at the curb to remove more "junk". Eaglin populated his whole

front lawn with works from his house. The city backed off.

Ironically Eaglin had saved another Afro-American home from the city the year before. The story was that the day after the head of household refused to sell her house to a developer, the city condemned the roof. The roof didn't leak but "looked old". Eaglin joined a volunteer team

of neighbors that put on a new roof.

Eaglin feels that the city has no legal or moral right to encroach upon the property of homeowners and designate what is art and what is junk. He feels he was "Blitzkrieged".

Committee For Community Art
4909 NE 12th; Portland OR
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Civil Rights Journal

Aids and Black America

BY BERNICE POWELL JACKSON

I heard a startling statistic a couple of weeks ago. I heard that more people have died now from AIDS than the number of Americans killed in the Viet Nam War. More AIDS fatalities than war fatalities.

In fact, the Center for Disease Control estimates that nearly one million Americans, or one in every 250 people, are now infected with HIV. One in every 250. If your office has 250 or so employees, one of them is probably infected with HIV. If your high school class is 250, one student has HIV. If your fraternity or sorority chapter has 250 members, one of them may have HIV. If your local church is a 250-member congregation, someone you are worshipping with is infected with HIV.

The reality is that AIDS is now the leading cause of death for men between 25-44 years old and the forth leading cause of death for women in that same age group. It is the sixth leading cause of death for young people between 15-24.

Yes, I said it is the sixth leading cause of death for young people under age 24. One of the fastest growing segments of the population suffering from AIDS today are teenagers.

The fact is that there were 14,000 American teenagers with AIDS a year ago and nearly 13,000 cases between the ages of 20-24. A staggering 51,000 cases of AIDS were reported a year ago among ages 25-29. That makes 78,000 young people suffering from AIDS last year. If one were to include all those infected with the HIV virus, the numbers would be even greater. And from what we know about the spread of the disease, that number has increased in the past twelve months.

Moreover, our babies are living and dying from AIDS. Black children are more than 14 times more likely to contract AIDS than white children. In one city, San Francisco, 41 percent -- nearly half -- of the babies infected are African American.

It is important to say that AIDS of the 1990's is a people disease. It is not a gay men's disease or an intravenous-drug users disease. It is a disease of teenagers and babies, it is a disease of hemophiliacs and heterosexual mothers. AIDS is a disease of the young and the old. And it is surely a disease of African Americans and Hispanic Americans as our numbers of infected people continue to grow. Lynora Williams, of the AIDS Action Council, warned, "Those who think they are insulated from HIV are mistaken." You can't contain an epidemic and AIDS is

clearly an epidemic.

There are some, including some in the African American community, who warn that AIDS is a punishment by God for the wicked ways of modern humankind. But would God punish a newborn baby? Would God punish a hemophiliac child or an adult who had open heart surgery and become infected before they knew how to test blood for HIV? Do we really believe in that cruel and fickle a God?

In the midst of the controversies about treatment, the controversies about prevention and education, the controversies even about the cause of AIDS, there is some good news. Some stories of people doing something about this epidemic in our community. Some stories of people who are truly ministering to the least of these.

One such story is happening in the San Francisco area. God is working through the Ark of Refuge, Inc., a minority community-based agency which provides housing, direct services, spiritual healing and education and training for persons with HIV/AIDS in the Bay area.

The Ark maintains two clean and sober community living facilities with support services for "low income or no income" people living with AIDS. In Oakland, it provides permanent housing and support ser-

vices at its Hazard-Ashley House. In San Francisco, it operates The Restoration House for African American women with HIV/AIDS and their children. In addition, it provides training to the religious community and community organizations. It also offers advocacy and support services for people living with HIV/AIDS, caregivers and clergy.

The Ark of Refuge ministry grew out of the dynamic ministry of young African American woman, Rev. Yvette Flunder. Originally an associate pastor to Rev. Walter Hawkins, and a powerful singer herself, Rev. Flunder takes the well-known phrase "The doors of the church are open" seriously. In 1991 she founded the City of Refuge church, which has now grown to more than 500 members. It is her mission to bring God's love and human caring to those who feel that nobody cares for them.

For too long the African American community, and other communities of color, have been in a state of denial about AIDS in our community. Our men, our women, our teenagers, our babies are living with and dying from this disease. Let's get past the denial stage. Let's minister to our brothers and sisters with this disease, regardless of how they got it. Let's begin to talk to our teenagers about how they can avoid getting AIDS. And let us begin right now. For tomorrow will be too late.

perspectives

Minority Business: "Property Survey Finds Lack Of Space For New Business In Northeast Portland"

Didn't I tell you so? Last week I talked quite ugly about that "Median Strip" dividing Martin Luther King Blvd., "a deliberate and quite effective barrier to the commercial and social development of the NE community" see August 24th's article in The Portland Observer (The Geography of Nowhere: Locating Minority Business).

The next day, August 25, the daily 'Oregonian' informs us that the North-Northeast Business Association has conducted a survey that reinforces my cogent evaluations of this blighted area. Also, a commercial Realtor in the area observes, "with regard to Northeast Martin Luther King Blvd., commercial property there that doesn't have its own off-street parking isn't worth much." Of course it isn't, and, indeed, the same prognosis may apply to many of the lives that have been circumscribed and impoverished--include the youth forced to mature in a dysfunctional community (deliberately or with an equivalent contempt).

As reported here earlier, it is an accepted fact that it is "Small Business" that will be depended upon to furnish most of the nation's new jobs through and beyond the turn of the century. And at the same time, we would keep it in mind that these small enterprises, for the most part, will be launched by owners who gained their skills and experience working for someone else, given this fact, it immediately follows on that the advocates and developers of "Minority Business" would be well advised to evaluate the African American (or Hispanic) employment picture from the following perspectives.

The continuing, if not accelerating, layoffs in business and industry disproportionately affect minorities who, with few exceptions, have the least seniority. To make matters worse, we 50 often find them concentrated (neosegregation) in particular skill areas or departments of an industrial plant or government bureau. Both blacks and whites notice that when the television cameras visit Washington D.C. they take in entire vistas of folks working for social security, Treasury, Internal revenue and the Veterans Administration--wall-to-wall 'folk s'!

Suddenly, the real portent of President Clinton's statement on financing the "Crime Bill" brings a number of Blacks squarely up against reality: "Why, we're going

to layoff 225,000 'superfluous' government employees!" I rest my case. The phenomena is repeated across the country where city, county and state governments, under the pressure of Affirmative Action laws, have stacked their work force decks with 'virtual departments of African Americans in the lower-paid, lower-skilled positions.

Now, if it is true that the new

small business owners will come from a bank of skilled and experienced workers who have been displaced by cutbacks, out scouring, leveraged buyouts or other euphemisms, then it appears that not many will be drawn from the ranks of unemployed African Americans. There are a few exceptions if one may rely on the investigative skills of magazines like 'Black Enterprise', but far from enough to make a real difference. I called or faxed a number of my former students around the county, and they have reinforced these observations.

Additionally, they comment on the continued discrimination by commercial banks against black entrepreneurs whatever their background, preparation or resources (remember the "Famous Amos" model I gave here several years ago? The bank turned him down, but the finance company gave him what he needed). I answered in the affirmative to one student, now a businessman in New York, who wondered had I seen a New York Times News Service series on 'Bank Discrimination' In Black Communities (The Portland Oregonian reprinted a relevant article by Robert D. Hershey Jr. on Tuesday, August 23, 1994: United States vs Chevy Chase Bank).

However, this case and the nationwide attack on bank discrimination centers on the bias in financing mortgages; surprise, surprise! But you can't buy a house without a job--and, all else being equal, you can't run a business without the same bank support received by Other Americans! Next week, has anything changed in Portland? While a professor teaching business at Portland State University, my white students could get loans at the community's big bank, while I required the intervention of a vice president. And in all the decades no black has yet to reach a meaningful 'line' position of power in any bank here! Only staff positions for community public relations.

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