

EDITORIAL

Civil Rights Journal

Aids And Families

BY BERNICE POWELL JACKSON

In the night of December 1 the lights of the White House were dimmed for fifteen minutes to commemorate World Aids Day and to offer a tribute to those infected with HIV/AIDS. Many other towns and cities across America joined as well, expressing their commitment to stop the spread of HIV/AIDS in the world.

December 1 was World AIDS Day, a day when all of us are called upon to do our part to strengthen the global efforts to face the challenges of this terrible epidemic. We are not alone in this resolve, as 189 countries around the world celebrate this important day.

The theme for this year's World Aids Day was "AIDS and Families", to help us focus on the fact that AIDS affects us all. Indeed, the most recent statistics show that 13 million men, women and children are living with HIV and AIDS around the World. Thirteen million people with AIDS

or HIV. Millions of families facing a loss of income and stability. Millions of families facing challenges that can tear families apart or can bring them closer together than ever before. Millions of families fighting denial, fear, discrimination and the complacency of those around them.

HIV and AIDS are a disease of families across this country and around the world. In Africa, where AIDS is largely a heterosexual disease, tens of thousands of children have already been orphaned by AIDS. Here at home, 30,000 American children have already lost their parents to AIDS and by the year 2000 that number will have grown to 80,000. Women, also, are being infected more and more by HIV and AIDS. Indeed, AIDS is the fourth leading cause of death among women between the ages of 25-44. Women of color are particularly at risk.

The fastest growing population with HIV/AIDS in the U.S., however, is young people. That's not surprising when you find that less than half of the high school students who

said they were sexually active reported that they used a condom and nearly one-fifth of all high school students have had four or more sex partners. As a result, AIDS is the sixth leading cause of death among young people under 24.

HIV/AIDS is a disease of families. But some people are doing something about it. Take Joan McCarley and her sister, Reverend Debbie Tate in Washington, D.C. Nearly a decade ago they noticed the growing number of abandoned babies with HIV/AIDS in hospitals in Washington, D.C. In life, some people get paralyzed by crises, others get organized. These sisters got organized and did something about these forgotten children.

They founded Grandma's House, a residential program for children with HIV/AIDS. They opened one home, which now has grown to five homes in the District of Columbia. They take babies from infancy to children aged 12. They provide not only nutritional and medical care, but also the love and support these

children so desperately need. They provide social workers and therapists of all kinds and they provide an atmosphere which feels like home, like Grandma's home.

If you are interested in making a donation to or finding out more about Grandma's House, write to them at 1222 T Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. If you want to find out more about HIV/AIDS you can call the National AIDS Hotline at 1-800-342-AIDS. The Spanish National AIDS Hotline is 1-800-344-SIDA.

AIDS can be prevented. Education is the key to prevention of this horrible disease. AIDS is a disease of families -- men and women and children -- and families need to come together for the fight against AIDS. Families need to talk about HIV/AIDS and families need to support one another. We've a heritage of support and love and caring in our families. Let's continue that proud tradition. Let's embrace those with HIV/AIDS. And let's get busy working to end this epidemic which threatens us all.

perspectives "Wollemi!" Brothers, Sisters And All Other Other Poor Folks

In the language of the Black people of Australia (the so-called Aborigines), 'Wollemi' means "look around you." It is unfortunate they didn't look closely enough at those ships from England intent upon occupying their ancestral lands with hordes of evicted criminals and bankrupts. This happened early on in America, too, but it is not politically correct to mention.

This admonition was a warning of an African peoples displaced in a diaspora of several millenniums ago. I was reminded of this "Down Under" word-to-the-wise when several readers said their ears perked up last week as they read my documented recitation of the rip-off of middle-class African American property owners by county and city taxing officials. I barely got into the subject but, now, I have had replies to relevant inquiries made of several former students around the country and the readers can take it from there; one lady was very worried about her assessment. "Look around you," sister!, and not just Gresham and Beaverton.

We are talking about the revelations of studies financed by the New York Times newspaper last summer, "Census data show that Black families who move to the suburbs of U.S. cities are taxed more than their neighbors." The study looked at 30 cities and 31 suburbs and found that black, homeowners are taxed more than whites on comparable homes in 58 percent of the suburban regions and 30 percent of the cities. If you can't trust your county assessor who can you trust? It is interesting, that amid all the rhetoric about a new, highly educated and prosperous black middle class that has run off to the suburbs and left their poor brethren behind, I seem to remember my grandfather and his peers complaining about the identical situation (circa 1935). The plantation has an iron grip.

A typical example is drawn from the Long Island, New York

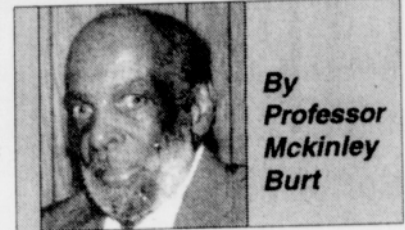
area. "A home that sold for \$141,000 last September in the suburb of Roosevelt, which had a tax bill of \$5,750, while another in the nearby affluent village of Garden City, which is almost all white, that sold for \$440,000 had a tax bill of \$2,696 -- though the lot was twice as big." Hello, 'Welcome Wagon'.

This type of disparity was found to exist not only in New York, but in New Jersey and in the suburbs of Chicago, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Philadelphia and many other cities. After reviewing the

study's, Billy J. Tidwell, the National Urban League's director of research, said "The tax disparities compounded hardships he has documented as blacks move to the suburbs. They include 'difficulties obtaining mortgages' and racial steering away from 'white' neighborhoods." (Portland banks should also pay close attention).

In my September series of articles, "Urban Renewal: People, Politics And Planning", I cited a highly regarded book relevant to so much economic disparity and rip-off in the urban scene; "The Geography of Nowhere: The Rise & Decline Of America's Man-Made Landscape" by James Howard Kunstler (Touchstone, Simon & Schuster, 1993). Other reliable information and documentation may be obtained through the Census Bureau, The Urban Institute in Washington, D.C., and such individuals as Dr. Andrew A. Beveridge at Queens College, N.Y. or Dr. John R. Logan at State University of New York at Albany.

Of course we have Anne Aubrey, a spokeswoman for the International Association of Assessment Officers saying, "tax assessors are not to blame," we follow the law, and sociologists, politicians and tax 'experts' say they do not think disparities stem from "racism" (but "guns don't kill, people do!" right). Lets question the Urban Departments of local universities or even tax assessors.



By
Professor
McKinley
Burt

Along The Color Line

Race, Gender Fuels Elections Victories

BY DR. MANNING MARABLE

The November 1994 Congressional elections gave Congressional control to the Republicans in both the House and Senate for the first time in 40 years.

The Republican victories placed President Clinton even further on the defensive as the administration scrambled to regain the initiative around public policy issues. Regrettably, the Clinton administration has moved toward accommodation with the right around many issues, from prayer in the public schools to welfare reform.

However, let us be frank: the key factor in the smashing success of the far right is the core reality of racism within American politics and society. Race, and to a less extent gender, were primary factors which fueled the victories of Republican

Congressional candidates in 1994.

According to Voter News Service exit polls, in the election of 1992, the overall vote was divided by 54 to 46 percent in favor of Democratic candidates. White males that year tended to favor Republicans by a slight margin, 49 percent to 51 percent. In 1994, the general electorate favored Republicans marginally, 49 percent to 51 percent. But significantly, white males as a group overwhelmingly endorsed Republicans, by a margin of 63 percent to 37 percent. Since white males comprise 42 percent of all voters, their nearly two to one endorsement of the Republicans was chiefly responsible for the disastrous Democratic defeat.

To understand the full significance of the 1994 Republican Congressional victories, we must place recent events within a historical and political context. The 1994 Congressional campaign, the vitriolic rhetoric of Republican leader Newt

Gingrich and company, and the recent media controversy surrounding the Bell Curve, the pseudo-scientific text which asserted black intellectual inferiority, are all part of a broad political and ideological assault against black people. What we are witnessing is the logical culmination of a process which actually began a generation ago.

After the political defeat of Jim Crow racial segregation across the South, highlighted by the 1965 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act, a white political backlash began to erupt. Led by Alabama Gov. George Wallace, white racists and conservatives mobilized behind the banner of "state's rights." "Dixiecrats" who had belonged to the Democratic Party moved to the Republican Party, including South Carolina Sen. Strom Thurmond and North Carolina Sen. Jesse Helms. By the late 60s, Richard Nixon successfully appealed to these reactionaries

by advancing what became known as the "Southern Strategy." Nixon opposed court-ordered bussing for school desegregation, attempted to elevate southern conservatives to the Supreme Court and made direct appeals to Wallace voters. This political reaction produced Nixon's massive electoral landslide against liberal Democrat George McGovern in 1972. However, the political scandal of Watergate, combined with the major economic recession of 1974, led to the collapse of the Southern Strategy. Nixon was forced to resign in disgrace, and the Democrats by a narrow margin were able to recapture the White House in 1976.

Clinton mistakenly believes that if his administration becomes more "conservative," that this will appeal to elements of white, middle class America which are firmly under the electoral domination of the Republicans. This is a strategy which will only produce disaster.

BLACK EMPOWERMENT

Encouraging Moves Toward Black Unity

After an election, it's customary for political and community leaders to assess election results and figure out where to go next. This year was no exception. African American leaders around the country are beginning to analyze what the Republican victory means for the Black community, what it means for the Democratic party, and what it means for the future of Black participation in independent politics.

On November 21 in New York, three weeks after conservative Republican George Pataki was elected governor, Black leaders met at the memorial Baptist Church in Harlem, at the invitation of Reverend Al Sharpton. Attended by some 50 Black leaders from around the state, the meeting included Democrats (among

them Hempstead Mayor Jim Gardner) and independents (among them myself, now the chair of the Committee for a Unified Independent Party and an activist in Independence Fusion, New York's newest ballot status party; along with attorney Colin Moore, a leader of the Freedom Party). The independent option has come of age for the Black community over the last year; its inclusion in the most critical dialogue on strategies for our empowerment is, in my opinion, a significant development.

The participants at the November 21 meeting decided to organize for a statewide Black political convention to be held within the next few months. The organizing committee, led by Reverend Sharpton, includes

Democrats, Republicans and independents.

Reverend Sharpton and I agreed at the meeting that it was critical that the Black convention create an environment in which diverse opinions and strategies can be presented and discussed.

Unfortunately, such an environment was not created during the recently completed election season in New York; in certain Black leadership circles it was effectively open season on me. I was attacked for being an independent (something our community desperately needs); for working with whites (something every Black leader does); and for not being a "real Democrat" (this by a Black Democratic Party elected official who was working for the white

incumbent governor I was challenging). Virtually no one in Black leadership circles stood up to stop those attacks.

Since the first meeting of this group of Black leaders, I have been singled out for attack by one Black newspaper writer (who in the past has called Reverend Sharpton a "scumbag"). I have asked Reverend Sharpton to insist upon a fair framework for the conduct of the convention and to set a strict standard for respect of all participants. I believe he is uniquely positioned to do so. We need to assure that the Black convention is a constructive step in the direction of finding new and specific political strategies for our people.

Notin but da blues

Now, whenever I think back on that meeting, I get nothin but da blues, and, I keep hearing the written words of Joseph Lattimore.

"Being black in America is like being forced to wear ill-fitting shoes. Some people adjust to it. It's always uncomfortable on your foot, but you've got to wear it because it's the only shoe you've got. You don't necessarily like it. Some people can bear the discomfort more than others. Some people can block it from their mind, some can't. When you see some acting docile and some acting militant, they have one thing in common: The shoe is uncomfortable. It always has been and always will be."

Creating A Circle Of Elders

BY NYEWESI ASKARI

Earlier this year, a young brotha who had recently joined a popular, local gang, asked me if I would allow him to visit my home. Curiously I said yes and asked about the nature of his visit.

"Brotha," he said, "I'm on da rocks wid my mon 'n' dad. Dey jest don't understand what I'm goin thru. Every time I try to run it down, dey wack out on me, saying, I'm too young to understand what being black is all about. I thought dey'd be da first people to listen and understand. So, I need some talkin to from a Elder I

respect, and, I respect you."

All the while he was talking, I was thinking, "Dis young brotha sho knows how to make me say yeah. "Truth-fully, there was something about him that made me anxious to say yeah, come on. Not only that, he approached me in a very respectful and traditional manner. And because of that alone, I would've been in violation of Elder custom if I would have said no.

So, four cancellations and six weeks later, we finally got together.

The meeting

On the morning he showed up at my door, he was wearing nothing that indicated he was a

gang member.

Talking about a talker! Brotha man could rap, mack, sig, jive and speak english - all in the same sentence. He called it "Bustin some conversation."

And bust some conversation we did - for six whole, fast moving hours. Of the subjects we kicked, he was most stressed out by racism and the impact it was having on his life and his relationship with his family.

"How could someone who don't even know me, hate me?" he frequently asked. "I don't hate white people."

He shared. I cared. Then he was gone. The victim of a drive-by shooting.

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