

# EDITORIAL

## NATIONAL RAINBOW COALITION

After "law and order," "busing," "welfare queen" and "Willie Horton," it is quite likely that the Republicans will choose affirmative action as their "wedge issue" to divide the electorate (and the country) in the 1996 elections.

Governor Pete Wilson and the California Republican Party are already acting to put an initiative on the 1996 California primary or general election ballot to make affirmative action illegal.

It is also quite likely that the vast majority of Democrats, including the President, will not adequately defend affirmative action. [If the President will not defend his own wife after she is called a bitch by the Speaker of the House, what makes you think he will defend affirmative action?]

What is affirmative action anyway? It has been called a lot of things -- e.g., reverse discrimination, an attack on the merit system, etc. It is none of these. Affirmative action is not reparations (repair for damage done), but a conservative remedy to offset historic negative action. Affirmative Action Is Equal Opportunity!

After 250 years of slavery, another 100 years of apartheid, the Supreme Court in Brown v. Board of Education (1954), which established the legal principle of "equal protection under the law" for all Americans, overturned Plessy v. Ferguson (1896), which established the "sepa-

### Affirmative Action

rate but equal" legal doctrine.

Following Brown, "equal protection" Laws were passed outlawing discrimination -- e.g., 1964 Civil Rights Act, the 1965 Voting Rights Act, the 1968 Opening Housing Act. In one sense, however, these "you can't discriminate any more" laws were Neutral. They did nothing to overcome the Legacy of racial and gender discrimination or ongoing Institutional discrimination.

Affirmative action meant "going out of your way to include people locked out historically" -- e.g., advertising in minority and women's media, recruiting on historically Black college campuses, etc.

All affirmative action does is Get One In The Pool Of consideration So That everyone Has An Equal Opportunity Of Being Chosen for the job or admitted to the university. Affirmative action does not get you the job or admitted to school and you have to be qualified (or qualifiable)

to even be in the pool. The qualifications must be job or function related -- i.e., no college degrees required for street sweepers.

If those who have been locked out historically get in the pool and, over time, do not get chosen, then one knows that discrimination is continuing, because everyone was in the pool and had an equal opportunity of being chosen. If two people are equally qualified, because of historic discrimination, race and gender can be used as a factor, and could tip the scales in favor of the minority or woman.

What happens if you don't meet the goals and timetable and someone takes you (a company or school) to court? The courts, through case histories, have established criteria that determine whether someone has made a "Good Faith Effort" to reach the goal and timetable. If they have, then one can renew even more

diligent efforts to meet the goal within another time frame.

However, if the courts determine that you have not made a good faith effort, they can impose Sanctions -- i.e., fines, penalties and quotas).

Inherent in the Constitution, the Declaration of Independence and the ideals and idealism of the American promise is a certain equality and egalitarianism -- if not a guaranteed equal result, certainly a guaranteed equal opportunity. But -- unless one agrees with the racism inherent in Charles Murray's Bell Curve -- since we are all the same as human beings, if each of us genuinely has equal opportunity, then the results too will be equal. Certainly, God has not given just one group, one race, one gender, or one side of town a monopoly on genius, ideas, economic and political power.

Thus, when President Clinton, quoting from the DLC's (Democratic Leader Council) New Orleans Declaration, says that he believes in equal opportunity, but not equal results, he is operating off of a racist premise -- i.e., that genuine equal opportunity is not enough for some people (or groups). He seems to be saying, some groups are inherently inferior and, therefore, require something more than a truly equal opportunity to achieve an equal result.

### perspectives

#### Blacks On The Way Out? Could It Happen Here? III

At first, that possibility seemed to remote for consideration among my friends and associates, but subsequent inquiries of their own seem to have produced more than a little food for thought.

Initially, they were comfortable in the conclusion that, unlike Los Angeles, there was "no obvious pressure on jobs or housing from other ethnic."

Really? What about disgruntled white males in an era of economic downturn? Also, a key parameter of evaluation of either a system or group centers on its vitality -- that is, its ability to regenerate itself. If there is not a constant flow of new ideas and energies -- no recharging of the batteries -- then, such a system or group will not survive in a recognizable or desirable form. Recently, I was reminded of a group of black males who several years ago lunched a "business" organization that would "bring about change!" To date, I am told these quite mature gentlemen have provided numerous dances -- no enterprises.

Now, I have written here in detail of earlier days in the Black community when young men like myself had the inspirational role models that are necessary to motivate the youth or 'seed' which supposedly constantly regenerates the system. Fifty years ago there was no dearth of middle-aged blackmen who pooled their resources to provide housing, business enterprise and other urban infrastructure necessary to the viability of neighborhoods.

Of course, we must consider the fact that these ethnic environs were established and maintained with restrictive covenants and other racial barriers just as real as in Mississippi or South Africa (Bantustans). I can attest to this fact (and others) without refutation for included in my accounting practice

were not only the aforementioned black entrepreneurs, but several of the white middle class, businessmen, realtors, investors.

One of the greatest farces in the American University system is the fact that on the shelves of the "Urban Studies Programs", there is not a single 'text' written by an African American. Some instructors attempt to fill this gap with "suggested readings", or by bringing in 'controversial' presenters from the communi-

Occasionally, I am heartened by reports on the activities of innovative entrepreneurs like "Roy J.", and I have been made aware that the recent influx of out-of-staters has included several very talented blacks, however readers often remind me of the content of those very realistic "Black Economics" courses I taught at the University years ago. I led with the premise that beginning with the critical decade just before the turn-of-the-century and lasting until World War II, at least half of the admired, respected and emulated African American leadership came from the ranks of successful businessmen, industrialists and inventors. Not bureaucrats.

This is why I so often quote from that book of startling and well documented) revelations: "Evidences of Progress Among The Colored People," by E. G. Richings. My own realistic experiences being from business and industry, I tried mightily to reach a generation of young blacks who had been shaped, bamboozled and exploited (as many of us still are) by the social engineers and programmers -- the social Sciences elite who never manufactured a product, grew a crop or invented a machine. So they never told us who we were or what we could do. Now, we all must strenuously strive to reach this generation before we lose it completely. To be concluded



By Professor Mckinley Burt

## Civil Rights Journal

### Declaring War On Our Children

BY BERNICE POWELL JACKSON

It's "open season on children," says DeWayne Wickham, USA Today columnist. "Not since slavery have our children faced greater threats from inside or outside our community to their safety, well-being and futures," says Marian Wright Edelman, president of the Children's Defense Fund. It's as if our children, like the children of Bosnia or Chechnya, are under siege and trapped in the political cross-fire.

Those are strong words. But they are aroused by the steamroller tactics now being employed in Washington by Republican Congressional leaders, with a few Democrats helping them out. They are aroused by a so-called Contract with America and a so-called Balanced Budget Amendment. They are aroused because I am frightened for our children and our community.

Let's look at the Balanced Budget Amendment now being debated in Washington. A balanced budget is good, anyone who balances their own checkbook knows that. A balanced budget amendment is another thing, however. It sounds good, requiring the government to balance its own checkbook by the year 2002, which seems far enough away to make it seem painless. But if defense spending and Social Security are not touched and taxes are not raised when we are forced to balance the budget, then it is estimated that all other government programs will face a 30 percent cut in funds. If veterans benefits are also exempted, then all other government programs will face approximately a 40 percent cut in funds. And if military and civil service pensions are added to the exemption list, then all other government programs will face a 50 percent cut in funds.

Such cuts would have devastating impact on the most vulnerable of our society, our children. Proven programs like Head Start and feeding programs for women and infant chil-

dren would be jeopardized. The medical safety net for our nation's poorest children would also be snatched away by Medicaid cuts and cuts in newly-provided immunization programs.

What most Americans do not realize is that not only the poor will be adversely impacted by the Balanced Budget Amendment. Such drastic cost-cutting would be necessary that such things as mortgage interest deductions for federal income tax would be in jeopardy since they would be a source of some \$50 billion in new revenues. College education would also be adversely impacted as dollars would have to be drastically cut.

One of the most frightening things about the Contract with America and its Balanced Budget Amendment is the lightning speed which the Republican leadership is trying to enact it. It almost seems that they don't want to give the American public time to examine the legislation and decide whether or not they really favor it.

But there is a way to stop this train. We can write our senators and tell them we oppose the Balanced Budget Amendment. Whether they are Republican or Democrat they need to hear from you. We can get our neighbors, members of our church or mosque, our sorority or fraternity, our card club or bowling league to write our senators and let them know we support our children and programs that help them. School children can write letters. The elderly can write letters. Prisoners can write letters. Even if they only say, "I am against the Contract with America and the Balanced Budget Amendment," that will tell them you did not vote for the contract.

We also can call the offices of our senators and we can even ask to meet with them or their staff. Every senator and congressman has offices back home. They're our offices and our elected representatives and they have a duty to listen to us.

(Note: Write to your senators at the U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C. 20510.)

## Vantage Point

### Can Jesse Jackson Revive The Rainbow Coalition?

BY RON DANIELS

One of the greatest tragedies to befall the progressive movement in recent times was the failure of Jesse L. Jackson to organize the National Rainbow Coalition into a viable independent third force in American politics.

Against the wishes and advice of many of the liberal-progressive activist who constituted the backbone of his '84 and '88 campaigns, Jesse Jackson elected to position himself inside the Democratic Party, he demobilized the Rainbow Coalition as a mass based membership organization opting instead for a top down campaign type structure. As a result of these fateful decisions there was widespread demoralization, disaffection and defections among the rank and file activist who were the heart and soul of the budding Rainbow Coalition.

Though remnants of the Rainbow remain in some states, and Jackson has appointed his son Jesse Jackson Jr. to the position of Field Coordinator, in reality Rainbow Coalition is largely non-existent. The annual Rainbow Conferences which Jesse

Jackson stages, though useful as a medium for networking and information exchange, are little more than political dog and pony shows which give the illusion that there is a real Rainbow Coalition. Unfortunately, the energy, enthusiasm and work invested in Jackson's '84 and '88 campaigns resulted in great strides but loss opportunity.

Nothing illustrates the need for a real Rainbow Coalition more than the Republican sweep to power in congress, the rise to hegemony of the radical right and the drive by Newt Gingrich and company to enact the reactionary contract with America; a contract whose appeal is rooted in subtle and not so subtle appeals to racism, sexism, homophobia and anti-immigrationism. If only we had a real Rainbow Coalition in place the task of challenging and countering the right would be much easier. We need a real Rainbow Coalition and it would be wonderful if Jesse Jackson acknowledged the errors of his ways and rededicated himself to reviving/building a real Rainbow Coalition - a mass based, democratic, independent, progressive political movement for fundamental change.

I have suggested that the way to

revive the Rainbow is for Jesse Jackson to make a decisive break with the Democratic Party crusade would energize millions of non-voters, particularly among those constituencies that will be most adversely affected by the Contract with America. An independent crusade would also reactivate thousands of liberal-progressive activists who have been waiting for Jackson to break with the Democrats.

No one is better suited than Jesse Lewis Jackson to challenge the contract with America. No one is more gifted at articulating the liberal-progressive vision of a new America than Jesse Lewis Jackson. No one is more capable of firing the imagination of the disenfranchised and the dispossessed and galvanizing the locked out and left out to act than Jesse Lewis Jackson. Having learned the lessons from his past mistakes, Jesse Jackson could utilize and independent presidential campaign to shake up America and fundamentally change the political equations in the electoral political process. An independent presidential crusade would afford Jesse Jackson a chance to redeem himself by forging a real fighting Rainbow Coalition that could

contest for power into the 21st Century.

Will Jesse Jackson run as an independent? Will Jesse Jackson revive the Rainbow Coalition for real? Frankly, no matter how much I wish it were so, it is extremely unlikely that Jesse Jackson will break with the Democrats and build a real Rainbow Coalition. My suspicion is that the lucrative grants which Jackson receives to do his voter registration, get out the vote for the Democrats ritual every two years is a major source of revenue for what remains of his Rainbow. Breaking with the Democrats would cut off this source of revenue. And, finally, by his own admission, Jesse Jackson is a "tree shaker, not a jelly maker." What the progressive movement needs is some "jam" - a real Rainbow Coalition.

What this means is that the challenge of building a real Rainbow Coalition is a task which must be assumed by liberal-progressive activist and organizers and a lot of ordinary people. I am convinced that we cannot and must not depend on Jesse Lewis Jackson to undertake this vital endeavor. We must decide to do it ourselves. "We are the leaders we've been looking for."

### Letter To The Editor

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

I want to thank Michael Grice and Ken Berry and all their helpers for their dedication to the continuation of the annual Martin Luther King Day celebration. Thank you for your perseverance and selfless energy. It is an inspiration to listen to the speakers challenge us. It is heartening to watch the young people - our hope for the future - with their enthusiasm, talent and possibilities, be involved in positive activities. It is encouraging to learn of the many adults who are actively giving of themselves to influence and direct the lives of others, especially young people.

Each year as I attend the MLK recognition day, I am caused to look at myself, to look within at

what I am doing to contribute to our community and what I am doing to give of myself for the betterment of life. It puts a balance in my perspective of what's going on in our society. We all need that. We need to see the power of the forces of good against evil or the negative.

It was last year's program that moved me to volunteer at Beaumont School once a week during my lunch hour to work with a 6th grade boy who needed extra attention. I hope that many others hear the message of the life of Martin Luther King - that of being of service and making a difference - some difference - small or great.

Velma Heckman

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