

MINORITY Enterprise DEVELOPMENT

Minorities face economic roadblocks

Some say underclass is worsening, others argue progress in removing legal, political and economic roadblocks to the advancement of blacks and other minorities.

Go into any U.S. big city today and you'll find many black people living in squalor — illustrating that more than 130 years after the abolition of slavery, the United States still has a distinct underclass.

That's the bad news, and some experts say it's worsening.

The good news is that the United States, a nation founded on the principle of equality but until the last half of this century largely segregated, is arguably making progress in removing legal, political and economic roadblocks to the advancement of blacks and other minorities.

Since the Supreme Court outlawed separate black and white public schools in its 1954 Brown vs. Board of Education decision — a landmark ruling that spurred the civil rights revolution of the 1960s and '70s — the country has banned every form of overt discrimination.

Statistics on income show that millions of blacks are now ensconced in the middle class. Between 1987 and 1992, the number of black-owned businesses increased by 46 percent, rising from 424,000 to more than 620,000.

Thousands of blacks have been elected to political office, and retired Gen. Colin Powell, the first African-American to lead the armed forces, is considered a potential president.

President Bill Clinton celebrated these gains when he marked the 40th anniversary of the integration of Central High School in his home town of Little Rock, Arkansas, on Thursday. Nine black students were protected by federal troops when they broke color lines there in September 1957.

"We've come a long way, particularly in this part of the country. But we still have much to do to create the kind of society where racial injustice is eliminated," former Mississippi Gov. William Winter said.

Even a cursory look at the state of U.S. race relations shows that the situation is multi-faceted and highly complex, incapable of easy measurement. Adding to the complexity is the fact that the country is increasingly multi-racial, with a fast-growing population of Hispanic and Asian-Americans. Still, the divide that most perplexes the country remains the one between whites and blacks, who con-

stitute 13 percent of the U.S. population of 265 million.

"While there has been formal desegregation, it has not put down roots deeply enough to create a truly integrated society. In fact, most whites and blacks live in de facto segregation," said David Shipler, author of a new book called "A Country of Strangers — Blacks and Whites in America."

Shipler, a former New York Times reporter who spent the last six years examining race relations, said conditions for blacks have clearly improved since the civil rights revolution of the '50s and '60s, but it's "hard to say" whether things have progressed or slipped backward over the last decade.

"A lot of African-Americans have managed to move out of poverty and into at least a modicum of comfort. But at the same time, people have been left behind in inner city neighborhoods that are worse now than they were when I was covering urban affairs in the 1960s and '70s," he said.

The poverty rate for blacks is still nearly three times as high as it is for whites, and only about half as many blacks as whites are likely to earn a college degree.

The continued divide between blacks and whites was brought into sharp focus by the reaction of the two communities to the 1995 O.J. Simpson trial. Blacks generally applauded the mostly black jury's not-guilty verdict, while most whites believed Simpson, a black former football star accused of killing his wife Nicole and Ron Goldman, had gotten away with murder.

Another gap exists on the issue of affirmative action, a system of preferences in higher education admissions, hiring and government contracting for blacks, women and other minorities historically victimized by discrimination.

Launched in the the 1970s, the program has sparked a powerful political backlash. In California, a state that often sets national trends, citizens voted last year to abolish most forms of affirmative action.

Clinton, a son of the South interested in race relations throughout his political life, hopes to leave behind a more unified country when he leaves office in January 2001.

Courtesy Janitorial Service, Inc. Selected as Minority Contractor Of The Year

On October 9, 1997 there will be a formal presentation of this award to Courtesy Janitorial Services, Inc. at the 1997 Minority Enterprise Development Week Awards Luncheon. The award will be accepted by the President, Floyd N. Booker Sr.

Courtesy Janitorial Service, Inc. (CJSI) provides a full range of maintenance services to government, commercial, industrial and residential customers. CJSI services office buildings, banks, retail outlets, warehouses, residences, etc.; we specialize in medical clinics.

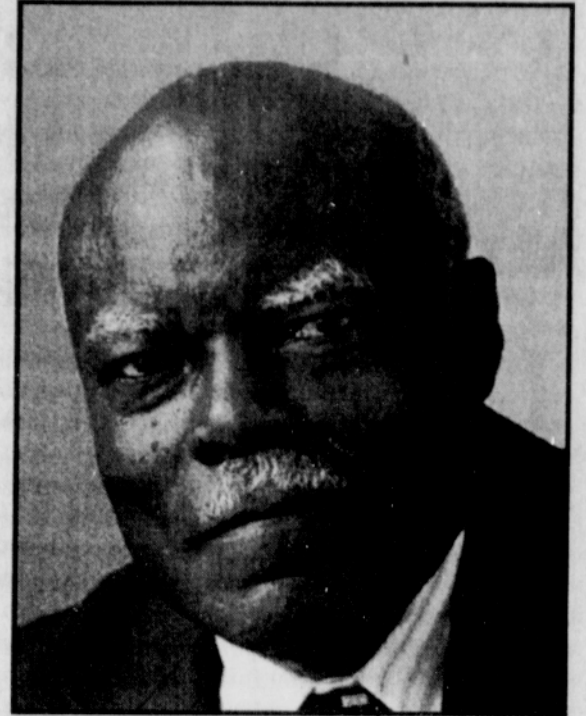
CJSI was formed in 1956 under the name Floyd's Janitorial Service. The company name of Courtesy Janitorial Service was adopted in 1967 at which time CJSI entered into the competitive janitorial service industry on a

full-time basis. Upon entry into this field, CJSI began building a staff of trained and skilled personnel knowledgeable in maintenance techniques.

CJSI employs both full and part-time employees. The staff is highly trained by professional maintenance assignment.

CJSI is committed to the total janitorial service market. This commitment is emphasized by an array of product lines that covers the entire field of maintenance services. The services include floor care, window washing, carpet cleaning, wall washing and complete building security. CJSI uses only the finest organic products to deliver top cleaning power and consistent quality, thus helping to ensure the highest level of service to their customers.

The Portland Observer wishes to congratulate the Courtesy Janitorial Service, Inc.



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