

Vernon Jordan

Clifford Alexander, Executive Vice President - Sponsoring Committee said: "The Urban League will be explained fully to you tonight." He then introduced Henry Talbert of the Western Regional Office of the National Urban League, who would introduce the evening's speaker.

Mr. Talbert then spoke about himself by saying: "It has been said that some people are born great, some achieve greatness and others have it thrust upon them. You realize I am in the later group. I have had the pleasure of introducing this man several times. in the past.

Vernon Jordan has approximately 25 honorary degrees from some of the most prestigious and some of the most critically located colleges and universities around the nation. He is quite at home in a corporate board room serving on some major corporate boards such as Xerox and J.C. Penney among other. Is a board member of some of the most prestigious foundations around the nation. Best of all, he also is equally at home with the persons who feel they live in a disadvantaged state.

It is a special privilege to be here to witness what I hope is the motivating, exciting, and permanent organization of the local Urban League in this community. Here is Vernon Jordan, National Executive Director of the Urban League."

"Special thanks to Henry Talbert, Regional Director, for his many hours spent here and who has always had great hopes for an Urban League in this community. Also thanks to Bishop H.H. Brookins of the 5th Episcopal District of the A.M.E. Church to which I belong and to which I pay my conference claim. I think Las Vegas needs the Bishop and the Bishop needs Las Vegas. Thanks also to Cliff Alexander, who as a fairly newcomer to this community, he brought with him some gifted talents. Alexander and I went to the same school in Atlanta. Alexander was younger, so I did not know him well there. It also is the same school Martin Luther King attended.

The most important thanks go to the people attending the dinner. If not for them I would not be here. I have been speaking daily since the Tuesday before, and am all talked out. I only have a couple of notes on the back of this program.

What is important to any organization is that we understand its basics and fundamentals.

I am the fifth Executive Director of the Urban League since its inception in 1910. While it is not clear that I have brought some distinction to the Urban League, but I have brought some differences. I am the youngest of my predecessors; Whitney Young, Lester Granger, Eugene Jones, and George Edmond Hayes; and the biggest. Roy Ennis of CORE said that I am not only the youngest and the biggest, but the BLACKEST, that they have ever had and he viewed this as a sign of progress. Be that as it may, all of my predecessors and most of the Urban League staff people are trained Social Workers. I am not a Social Worker, I am a lawyer. About three weeks after I took office, one of the social workers came to my office and said that if I was going to be successful, I would have to adjust my language downward so that I could communicate with the Social Workers, but I showed the social worker the organizational chart. My box is #3 in the chain of command. I explained that all the boxes under mine meant that any adjustments to be made would have to be upward rather than downward.

The Basics of the Urban League are:

1. Advocacy: We take positions of issues of public policy as those issues affect the needs and aspirations of the minorities. The position of full employment, or the position of minimum wage, or affirmative action - that is advocacy.

2. Agency of Direct Services: We render direct services to people at the local level. We don't do that in New York where the corporate headquarters are. We do that in 109 cities across the country. Los Angeles has the Urban League Data Processing Training Center. Direct Service is what we do best. We have 3,000 employees in 109 cities across the nation on a 24 hour basis and render direct services where they are and where their problems are. Direct Services are directly related to advocacy. It is absolutely impossible to arrive at a reasonable, rational, meaningful and right advocacy position unless you have an experiential factor upon which to base it. If we are not doing direct services at the local level we are not doing our job.

3. Urban League is a Forum: We are without apology an interracial agency. Urban League is for Black People, White people, young people, old people, rich people, poor people, learned people, the not so learned people, the public sector and the private sector. We even invite people to speak to us that even disagree with us.

4. We are forthrightly and unapologetically committed to the concept of the open Pluralistic integrated society. This is what democracy is all about.

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