

**NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE PRESIDENT TELLS:**

# What Blacks Can Expect In The '80s

BY VERNON JORDAN, JR.

The 1970s are over and the 1980s have begun. I suspect the new decade will be as different from its predecessor as the 1970s were from the 1960s.

The sixties ended with the nation enmeshed in a war in Vietnam, and exhibiting moral exhaustion derived from a decade of rapid social change. The domestic and international problems it tried to resolve proved more difficult than it imagined, and so the nation opted out of the struggle.

In doing so, it left those problems to hang over its head for ten long years, while economic and social changes during the decade worsened them.

The primary unresolved domestic issue was race. Racial disadvantage was attacked head-on in the sixties, with some phenomenal results. The system of legal segregation was dismantled, while blacks made great breakthroughs in almost all phases of life. But the engine of change stalled just when it

should have powered an even greater thrust ahead.

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The seventies were marked by a selfish privatism that placed personal concerns first and the common good a poor second. That mood was fed by resentment at minority gains, a sluggish economy that left a smaller pie to be divided, and runaway inflation that eroded purchasing power.

So the net result was that the nation's racial problems persisted and even deteriorated. Some blacks continued to progress in the seventies. Those with the requisite educational credentials streamed into jobs formerly closed to minorities. The black college population rose sharply.

Small wonder then that the seventies gave rise to the myth of black progress — the widespread belief that black gains were steady, even in the absence of a sustained national commitment to removing the



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last vestiges of the pent-up frustrations of racial and economic inequity will erupt into positive change.

But the truth about the seventies is that it was a decade of black losses.

Black income, over 60 percent of white income in 1969, fell to only 57 percent by the end of the decade. Black unemployment rose to two and a half times the white rate by the decade's end. And more blacks were poor at the end of the seventies than at the beginning of the decade. The black middle class, painted by "experts" as growing, actually declined from 12 to 9 percent of all black families.

Where the sixties showed dramatic leaps in jobs, income, and other indicators of progress, the seventies showed a few gains buried in an overall picture of continued hardship.

What about the 1980s? With the country sliding into recession, with inflation unchecked, and with a continued national mood of selfishness, will they be more of the same?

My guess is that the pendulum will swing once more and that the coming decade will be characterized by a new thrust of social change.

Part of my optimism derives from the fact that serious problems cannot be allowed to linger indefinitely. We are rapidly reaching the point where

A second reason is that without changes that make better use of the full human potential of all people, national productivity and the economy will decline. Thus it is in the national interest that social change be nurtured in the coming decade.

Those changes may also get impetus from external events — intolerably high unemployment and inflation, another OPEC shock treatment, or a foreign crisis that spurs more intensive development of greater equity in America.

Finally, the eighties will be a decade of enormous changes in the way

Americans work and live, and that always results in social changes. There will be an acceleration of the trend to a service economy, increasing the demand for educated workers and services that enhance human resources.

That kind of change must focus new attention on neglected minorities and on urban centers. The 1980s can be a better decade, but minorities must take the lead in fighting for change.

Just as the gains of the sixties were won by progressive alliances led by the civil rights movement, so too must the 1980s be a period of revived alliances for change.

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Clark County School District's Human Relations Department in conjunction with Clark County's Youth Fair, will present a Multi-Cultural Extravanga, Friday April 25, at 7:00 p.m., at the Las Vegas Convention Center. All activities will take place in the South Hall.

For the past five years the extravanga has been an outlet for many local youths. It has given them an opportunity to become involved in the fair, as well as display their many talents.

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