THE SENTINEL May 2 1980 THAN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Vernon E. Jordan, Jr.

Black Census More Important

By Vernon E. Jordan, Jr.

The 1980 Census of- but many will get a longer ficially began April 1, and form taking nearly an it is the most important hour. event of the year for minorities, perhaps even figures reflect the fact more important than the that outcome of the presiden- households are disadtial election.

census results will affect form will be a test of perjust about every area of serverance, and many minority life. Part of the may just ignore it. problems faced by These and other shortminorities in the seventies comings place a heavy derived from the factg burden on minority comvariety of federal and ensure that people in their state aid programs.

1970 census. But while everyone gets their cen- redistricting. Exactly one thern minority com- programs are also at counted out again. only one out of fifty whites was not counted, one out of fourteen blacks and one out of seven Hispanic-Americans were not counted. Almost one out of five young black men were missed by the census-takers.

Over the course of the decade that undercount cost minority communities billions of dollars in job programs and other social services allocated in part on population figures based on inaccurate census numbers.

Apologists for the undercount claim that minority suspicions of official documents and government probers were the main cause.

But more important was the failure to design procedures to ensure that everyone is counted. Major efforts were not made to penetrate suspicions and convince people that it was in their own interests to fill out and return the census forms.

It is questionable whether the 1980 census will do much better on that score. There's been little evidence of concentrated advertising campaigns directed at minorities. Some urban neighborhoods that are predominately Spanishspeaking will be mailed forms in English.

This year's census will rely more heavily on mail returns than ever before, although pilot tests show this method results in lower compliance rates.

The forms themselves could be simpler. Most families will get a form that supposedly takes fifteen minutes to fill out,

But do those time many poor vantaged educationally? That's because the For them, even the short

that so many were coun- munity organizations, sus questionnaires filled predicting a massive shift education aid and other special stake in being ted out, affecting a wide churches and others to out and mailed in. neighborhoods are coun-

The Census Bureau it- ted. And that means why their cooperation is and the South. If that shift programs. self admits that it missed providing information and important. five million people in the assistance so that One key reason is dercounting both nor- State and local too. We can't afford to be

states and localities for minorities now wield will closing hospitals. the purpose of redistric- decline even further. libraries, schools and fire the census, Congressional and legislative seats may be redistricted out of black and brown communities and given to predominately white suburbs.

away from the big nor- set guidelines for equal been counted out in People have to know thern states to California employment opportunity previous censuses, and

is based on un-

year from now the Census munities and those of the will release the official South and West, then the stake. Census figures population figures to little political power may be used to justify

ting legislative seats. Census figures will also stations if an undercount Without maximum decide the distribution of suggests minority participation in some \$60 billion in population than actually

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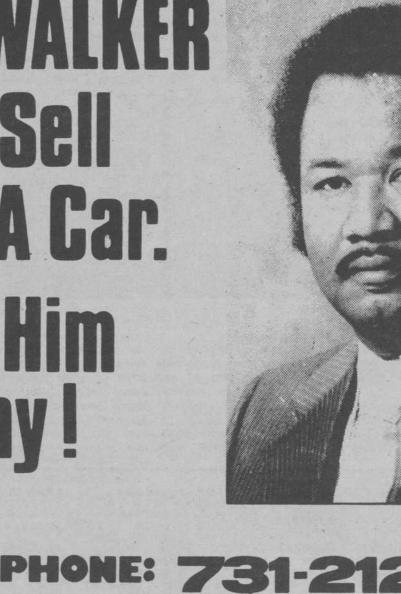
So minorities have a that meant being counted out of jobs and programs

federal funds for revenue exists. Already, experts are sharing, job training, in Congressional seats programs. They'll help counted in 1980. We've

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