

Present laws must be enforced

# Civil Rights Moves Still Urgent

It's a mistake to artificially divide civil rights issues into boxes marked "economic," "social," and "civil rights." The disadvantage facing black people today derives from a complex set of circumstances, each feeding into a discriminatory whole.

In fact, black joblessness derives from a whole set of circumstances and cannot be divorced from "pure" civil rights concerns such as discriminatory practices.

The pursuit of removal of barriers to an integrated society and the

s, BOTH more jobs and an end to discriminatory practices.

If the civil rights movement has paid more attention in recent years to the economic and social conditions affecting black people, that's because those issues seem most pressing. But it shouldn't be seen as a downgrading of traditional civil rights concerns. Indeed, it is inseparable from such concerns.

Civil Rights laws now on the books have to be enforced. The most blatant example of this is in the field of housing, where the Fair Housing Law of 1968 has been virtually ignored.



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Congress is considering amendments to the law that would go a

long way toward finally enforcing fair housing.

The result would expand housing opportunities for black families. At the same time, minorities and the poor will continue to suffer from inadequate housing unless steps are taken to increase housing production and to bridge the gap between what it costs to build and operate housing and what low income people can afford for decent shelter.

A generation after the BROWN decision, most black children attend schools that are effectively segregated. That situation is unconstitutional and the courts have consistently

backed moves to integrate the schools.

But an entirely new set of school-related civil rights issues has surfaced. Institutionalized discrimination through biased testing, putting minority students onto slower tracks that deny them college preparation courses, and discriminatory disciplinary moves all demand action.

One important mandate for civil rights fighters in the eighties will be to press for metropolitan solutions to problems now seen as inner-city concerns.

Segregated urban schools won't be fully integrated without plans that include the entire metropolitan region. Now the artificial county and district lines form huge barriers that wall off urban minorities.

Housing is another problem area demanding metropolitan-wide solutions. So long as suburbs limit low income housing opportunities within their jurisdictions -- often through zoning laws -- minorities will have few housing opportunities and won't be able to get the jobs that are moving to the outskirts of the city.

Another challenge for the eighties is to broaden civil rights enforcement at all levels of government. There's no question that federal agencies must retain prime responsibility for civil rights.

But state and local agencies have responsibilities too, and they may even be more effective in some areas. They should not be left off the hook.

Nor can business and labor and other groups be allowed to assume that civil rights is a federal responsibility and that they need not develop mechanisms that solve civil rights problems.

The 1980s will have to see a renewed emphasis on civil rights issues, with an understanding of how they interact with the economic and social environment, and development of a broad-based consensus against discrimination in all its forms.

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For example, overt discrimination in jobs is seen as a "civil rights issue." But disproportionately high black jobless rates are seen as part of a larger question of economics.

pursuit of qualitative changes in people's lives must go hand-in-hand.

That means BOTH better schools and integrated ones; BOTH better housing opportunities and integrated neighborhood-

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