

Roosevelt Fitzgerald

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give their children a chance. For the moment, however, their dreams would have to be deferred.

Black parents, until a quarter century ago, had to deal with those realities. What could they tell their children -- those who talked of being doctors, nurses, and the rest? The truth. "They don't let Black people do those things." Today, Black people are paying the price for those lost opportunities. The tradition of being high school, college and professional school graduates is not on a par with white counterparts. Some white people yet see this reality as being the fault of Blacks. Can you believe that?

A generation ago, not too many Black youngsters were completing high school. The incomes of their families was so limited that quite often it required the efforts of all members of a family to simply help make ends meet. In the past, Black children attended school until such time that they were big enough to go to work. Those of smaller stature were lucky, they were able to remain in school longer. The same was true of Black girls. Their job opportunities were much more limited than those of their brothers.

During the era of segregation in Las Vegas, Black students were not permitted to participate fully, in all school activities. There were white organizations and, except for elementary schools on the west-side, there were only limited extra-curricular activities open to Black students. Black girls suffered the most. They were not cheer leaders, pom pom girls, beauty queens or members of elite marching groups. At every turn, their self-concepts were diminished.

In the past, large numbers of Black students have been not only directed away from college preparatory courses but, they have been denied access to certain classes. Quite often they were told that those classes were filled, when they were not, and thereby shut-

tled off the meaningless "busy work" classes.

In the past, Black male students who have participated in interscholastic sports have been waltzed through the system. Their eligibility was protected so long as they had playing time. Once the season ended

programs. Until recently, Black students were not involved in that activity. It was not of their choosing. Some counselors and employers simply refused to either recommend or accept black youngsters.

A great deal of the success of these programs hinge on local

served, either consciously or unconsciously, the almost total absence of Black youth on most of those jobs in most of the business establishments. There are areas of town, where one can go from store to store for hours and not see a single Black person working. Yet, Black people spend money in those stores. It is crazy. We subsidize racism when we do those things.

Nationwide, the unemployment rate among white youth is less than 8% while that of Black youth is over 40%. If we see two Black youngsters, there is a darn good chance that one of them does not have a job. If we see ten, there is a strong likelihood that four are out of work.

There are federally funded youth employment programs. These are open to students of all races whose family income falls within a certain (See Roosevelt page 22)



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or they would have exhausted their eligible years, they go down the tubes. An alarming number cannot read or write and we are forced to wonder how they had managed to remain scholastically eligible.

In the secondary schools, there are programs which are designed to permit students to take classes and, at the same time, participate for credit, in the job market. Students are both encouraged and aided in participating in those "job study"

businesses. Without their support, it would be doomed to failure. I am certain that most of us have observed, in our travels around the city of Las Vegas, the large numbers of young people who are working. Their places of employment range from fast food operations, department stores, boutiques, lot boys for automobile dealerships, runners for ad agencies and others, stock boys, grocery baggers and any number of other ventures. We have also ob-



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