



BLACK EMPOWERMENT

By Dr. Nathaniel Wright, Jr.
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WHAT LIES AHEAD

What lies ahead on the national political scene for black Americans? The answer to this question may be found to rest more in its meaning than in the ones who provide the answer.

Black Americans, in establishing political, social and economic goals, have tended to seek for a generalized kind of "more." They have not sought for a proportional share, based upon either their needs or their numbers within the nation's life. Hence, when crumbs were given—or even when the pie or cake was divided up—if "more than in the past" was handed out, then "progress" was said to have been achieved.

This type of attitude has been thoroughly consonant with a white American attitude of benevolent good will which blacks have courted, or to which they have been at least kindly disposed.

Black Americans have tended to build alliances with white Americans based upon "niceness" and "brotherly love" rather than upon the criteria of justice and reciprocal or mutually beneficial rewards.

Perhaps the greatest exemplar of caricature of the white attitude of extreme benevolence and of limitless good will has been the Jimmy Carter White House. Congressional Black Caucus member, William Clay of Missouri, himself an intensely loyal and responsible Democrat, is reported in the *Congressional*

Record as making a scathing indictment of Mr. Carter's record of black appointees. These were said to have been based more upon the perspective of niceness than of equitable justice of fair play for black Americans.

Without going into Congressman Clay's detailed accounting of the results of the Carter mentality, one may simply call to witness the Carter highly publicized promise to use the large number of new federal judgeships created by the Congress as his own way of ending the "white male image" of the courts.

For such a monumental task of restructuring the face of a ruggedly racist court system, on behalf of the black community to which Mr. Carter owed his residence in the White House, Mr. Carter brought amazingly little ammunition. He did not think to create a public support system. Nor did he build the kind of powerful lobby or support base in the Senate which might have confirmed the weightiness of his overarchingly substantial purpose.

Rather, this task seemed well within the capabilities of Mr. Carter's Atlanta-bred white inner circle and the black affairs counsellors to whom the White House gave shelter in the minority-oriented Media Relations office. At least this is what the approach used by Mr. Carter would seem to suggest.

The actual results in the end came exceedingly far short of the Carter promise concerning the righting of an imbalance in the federal courts. Yet black leaders praised Mr. Carter on the strength that it was only marked by "more."

The overall gains in Carter-appointed blacks to the federal judgeships were such that, if blacks were appointed continuously in the same proportions, it would take perhaps half a century or more for blacks to be represented equitably or proportionally in the federal courts.

Black Americans have not yet come to the point where they will command what is their due. So long as niceness or friendliness rather than justice and fair-play remains the criterion for black approval, it may be reasonably expected that white paternalism of the Carter kind will continue and that authentic progress elude black Americans.

What should lie ahead for Black America is the closing of the hitherto unclosed and unclosing gap which separates black Americans from the American mainstream. In every anticipated move for black self-interest there must come to be some clear calculation of what is required for the gap between white and black Americans to close securely now or in the very near future.

There is a revealing sidelight to the Carter judiciary

appointments story which tells of the naively unthinking attitudes held by many well-intentioned and socially-conscious black Americans.

The chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee is Senator Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts. Mr. Kennedy is the leading liberal idol to many large numbers of black Americans. During his tenure as judiciary committee chairman, up until this writing, not one black lawyer has been hired by Mr. Kennedy on that crucial committee's staff.

Further, when five judicial vacancies were created in Massachusetts, Mr. Kennedy—in a directly opposite move and spirit from what was announced by the White House—nominated three white males, one black male and one Jewish female to fill these vacancies.

Mr. Kennedy should have been seen as a major milestone-maker in the minds of black Americans (even as he should have been in his gratuitously active role in unseating Senator Edward M. Brooke). Yet friendship rather than fair play remained the crucial test.

So long as the perceptions of good will take precedence over calculated steps to enter forthwith, or nearly so, into the nation's mainstream, just so long will the apparent bliss of "more" be the alternative to truly substantive black gains.

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LAS VEGAS, NEVADA

Move To Abolish Sex Ed Groups

CARSON CITY (AP) — Two Las Vegas assemblymen introduced legislation Monday to abolish sex education advisory groups in the state's public schools.

Democrats Lonie Chaney and Marion Bennett said the measure was aimed at shutting down the advisory group in the Clark County School District. They said the group has hindered sex education more than it's helped it.

The two lawmakers were behind legislation two years ago requiring the advisory committees for any school district with a sex education program. Bennett said the effort to give the community greater say over sex education "ended up creating more problems than it

solved."

If AB305 is passed, it will allow school districts to abolish the advisory groups, giving boards of trustees the final word on sex education, as in the past.

In Clark County, creation of an advisory group led to bickering between opposing factions — particularly between representatives of Planned Parenthood and right-to-life groups. The right-to-lifers eventually won out, gaining control of the committee.

Chaney complained that the group — which serves in an advisory capacity to the school board — has only made recommendations on sex education material it supports.

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