



BLACK EMPOWERMENT

By Dr. Nathaniel Wright, Jr.
Human Rights Activist

A GENUINELY BLACK AGENDA

One of the serious problems facing Black America today is the wide gap which exists between the goals of its leaders and the beliefs and aspirations of the large majority of black people.

Spelled out in one rather risky way, it has been said that black leadership tends to be "liberal" while the bulk of black people tend to be "conservative." Regardless of how we may describe or define the difference, it seems increasingly evident that a gap in terms social or political goals does exist.

By way of accounting for the difference, one plausible explanation or clue may be found in the way that black leaders are elected.

In order to be elected, a candidate must have or must build a substantial base of community support. Two large and already organized groups of politically-oriented and dependent persons are highly visible in almost every black community. These are, first, the welfare mothers and, second, the city hall or county-funded community action groups.

Both of these groups have been the creations of "liberal" politics. Both groups are largely the products of a parentally caring white mind set which has been characteristic of liberal or Democratic Party politics.

When a prospective black

candidate decides to run for public office, he or she normally does so with limited funds. Hence, there is not a great opportunity to organize a base of support. The simplest route is to ally one's self with the "liberal-oriented" agenda of the two groups just described which are already organized and to work from there on to win some kind of black majority support.

One may ask at this point why an ostensibly conservative black majority would go along with an agenda with which it does not happen to agree. The answer rests in the fact that the majority is not organized. But even more to the point is the awesome fact that, apart from the polls taken on black political opinions, most black people who differ with their elected leaders are unaware that other black folks share generally the same convictions as themselves.

The black community may be, in reality, organized politically only to the extent that such organization has been funded under white liberal sources.

The task of creating a genuinely black majority agenda must be seen as an open one. There is little, if any, successful experience to build upon. But it would seem clear that representative black agenda-building cannot be achieved easily through our elected

black leadership which may be wedded, unconsciously or by default, to doctrinaire ideas which differ from those adhered to by the black masses.

Hence, such black leadership-sponsored black agenda-setting meetings as the one held in Richmond, Virginia early in 1980 would be seen as possibly doomed to failure from the very start.

Another difficulty stems from the recognition that most conservatively-minded people are too conservative in their actions to "stir things up." They would tend to be among the last to provide the active leadership to give voice to their own cause or concerns.

The polls, in the final analysis, have provided the only semblance of reality to the black conservative majority. Perhaps, then, we need more results of honest polls to help all black Americans to begin to look closely at the issues which claim our varying allegiance.

A candid look at the polls tell us even how that black Americans have long been opposed to urban renewal. Urban renewal years ago was seen as synonymous with black or Negro removal while black Americans have opposed urban renewal in general, there has been no systematic appraisal of alternatives.

Here again, our weak point has been our predisposition to permit others to set our agendas for us. The "liberal" mind set, in regard to black housing, has been toward subsidized rentership in publicly-owned plantations only euphemistically called homes.

Black Americans urgently want and need home ownership and the fullest possible control of the turf on which they live. But the majority of black people have as yet no voice through which to speak these sentiments.

The majority of black Americans also want the limitations or near-abolition of public welfare as we now know it and its proliferation. But having no voice—and not having even a national black organization—through which to speak, the earnest and urgent desire of black people for "work, not welfare," has not been sufficiently audible to make its needed impression.

Several millenia ago, Paul of Tarsus wrote: "If the trumpet sounds an unsure note, who shall prepare himself for the battle?" Black Americans, before preparing for whatever agenda battles which may lie ahead, must first have a reasonable consensus that there are actually notes they earnestly want to sound.



PEARL CLEVELAND

A vote of confidence for Pearl Cleveland is a Vote of confidence for your community. Pearl is a 36 year old, 16 year resident of No. Las Vegas, who knows her community's needs.

All three of her children were born here. James 16, Tomorie age 13, and Dockery age 11. She and her husband James Cleveland have been married for over 17 years. Pearl has been actively involved in such community groups as Welfare in Action, Voter Registration, Mental Health, Black Pageant, Marion Bennett Youth Program and she is a frequent visitor to the convalescent homes in the area. She is the Vice President of her service sorority Alpha Delta Chapter of Beta Sigma

Phi.

She and her family love fishing and other outdoor activities associated with Lake Mead and the desert lifestyle of our area.

Pearl Cleveland believes in orderly economic development for North Las Vegas. She is a supporter of The MX Missile System and the Small Business Administration in terms of what they can do for North Las Vegas. She ardently believes in better relationships between the Police Department and her community.

Her motto is "I Love North Las Vegas." And she sincerely believes that by you giving her your support:

"A vote for Pearl is a vote for your community."

NOBC ANNOUNCES 11th ANNUAL CULTURAL AND WORSHIP WORKSHOP

WASHINGTON, D.C.—For the first time in its history of sponsoring annual workshops in sacred music having a black influence, the National Office for Black Catholics (NOBC) will offer programs in sacred liturgies incorporating elements of jazz and other contemporary styles along with the popular gospel adaptations familiar to participants.

A contingency of renowned experts are slated to facilitate each workshop session. They include famed Harlem jazz musician Eddie Bonnemere and veteran gospel musician Bob Ray of Chicago.

NOBC's 11th Annual Workshop in Afro-American Culture and Workshop will be held this summer in two locations: St Mary's Seminary in Houston, Texas, June 28 - July 3, 1981; Maymount College in Tarrytown, New York, July 26 - 31, 1981. Gospel liturgies by the Office of Black Ministries, Archdiocese of Galveston, Houston, while jazz and other contemporary styles will highlight the New York program, co-sponsored there by the Office of Black Ministry.

Black Catholics who attended NOBC's tenth anniversary conference in Chicago last summer—"Black Catholics: An Action Agenda for the Eighties"—were influential in the organization's decision to introduce a variety of liturgical styles for this year's workshop.

"One of the conference resolutions adopted then by the more than 1,000 attendees specifically called for NOBC's helping parishes to 'provide a variety of black worship experiences addressing the religious and cultural needs of the community,'" said Ronald Sharps, head of NOBC's Department of Culture and Worship and coordinator of the workshop. "This year's programs are a response to that appeal," Sharps added.

NEW YORK PROGRAM

In New York Eddie Bonnemere, one of the foremost liturgical composers in this country, will give many participants their first experience ever with liturgies for contemporary Masses. His music, depending on the words, may be a Kyrie in the form

of jazz, a calypso, a bossa nova, the blues, gospel, or a straight Gregorian chant.

Said Bonnemere of people who find it difficult to associate jazz and other contemporary styles with liturgical worship "People can't separate themselves from life. They think its wine, women and song, but it has nothing to do with that (in liturgical use). The spirit is entirely different. The music is singable and easily retained."

Critics support Bonnemere in this contention, saying that, whatever the style, his music is extremely singable and quickly lures congregations into full participation. Bonnemere's religious compositions reflect his efforts for theological accuracy, simple understanding and catchy tunes which inspire a sense of joy.

HOUSTON PROGRAM

The Houston program will be fortified with the ecumenical experiences and talents of Chicago choir director and composer Bob Ray. Ray whose "Gospel Mass" sheet music will be released in May, is expected to cover a range of music focusing upon gospel, spiritual, folk and classic renditions written by black composers.

The gospel musician's efforts will be complemented by two fellow Chicagoans who work for the archdiocese there—Fr. Wilton Gregory and Dr. Nathan Jones.

Gregory has been a member of the Catholic Theological Society of America, the North American Academy of Liturgy and Societas Liturgica. He is currently a faculty member at St. Mary of the Lake Seminary in Mundelin, Ill., and Director of Liturgy for the seminary community. Gregory received his S.T.D. in Liturgy from the Pontifical Liturgical Institute in San Anselmo, Rome last year where he completed his studies summa cum laude.

Jones, who is Director of Black Parishes, CCD Center, Archdiocese of Chicago, has recently written a new black book catechesis—"Sharing the Old, Old Story"—which contains an overview of the fundamental principals necessary for the propagation of the faith in the U.S. urban black communities. The book will be published this spring.