

# Point of View

## PEOPLE, PLACES and POLITICS

By Joe Neal



In the time of Babylon's existence, there was a king who imposed a rule of law, which was designed to extract an eye for an eye or a life for a life. This rule of law took its name from the Babylonian King, Hammurabi. It was called the Hammurabi code.

Ole Hammurabi has been dead for thousands of years, but his code still lives in Nevada. In fact, the local District Attorney has seen fit to employ such a code in cases where Blacks are involved in acts of violence against whites.

We have witnessed such an application of the Hammurabi code in the trial of Bobby Bernard Thomas, who has been charged with the stabbing death of Gregory Sylvester. The District Attorney is seeking the death penalty in this case, when the facts and circumstances do not warrant such.

As I sat in Judge Thomas O'Donnell's court and observed Attorney Archie, through witnesses, reconstruct what happened the night that Thomas killed Sylvester in the parking area of the Convention Center, I asked myself the question "How could the District Attorney's Office permit such a case to become a capital offense?"

The facts and circumstances which were meticulously reconstructed by Attorney Archie clearly placed the victim Sylvester in the position of the aggressor. The testimony of "Gus" Wilson and others indicated that Thomas and Wilson were coming across the Convention Center parking lot toward the Hilton Hotel. As they approached the driveway leading to Paradise Road, a car pulled in front of them. It is claimed that, as they attempted to cross the driveway from the back of the car, the words "F-----Niggers" was heard. According to the testimony of "Gus" Wilson, he went to the passenger side of the car, reached inside and punched Sylvester. Sylvester then pushed open the car door knocking "Gus" Wilson to the ground. As "Gus" Wilson was falling, he was struck with a green beer bottle. Sylvester came out of the car and attacked Bernard Thomas. It would seem that Sylvester would have become the aggressor and Thomas would have been obligated to defend himself.

The District Attorney did not take into account the apparent provocation and the aggressive act of the victim, but instead attempted to picture Thomas as part of a group of marauding young blacks, who was out to kill at random. This is the

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## To Be Equal

### IS THERE A TILT TOWARD SOUTH AFRICA?

By Vernon Jordan

There are disturbing signs that the Administration's foreign policy may undermine long-term American interests in various regions of the world.

Much attention has been given to the confrontation with Russia, intervention in El Salvador, downgrading human rights issues, and the massive arms buildup that could renew the arms race while wrecking our economy.

But little attention is being paid to the indications that a negative reversal of American policy toward Africa is under consideration.

The long-standing policy of keeping South Africa's racist government at arms length helped win fresh respect for our nation among the people of Africa. But that respect is eroded when our UN Ambassador meets top South African army officers or when the President states, as he did in a television interview, that South Africa is a "friendly

nation."

It is endangered still further when our national security advisor says that improving relations with South Africa does not imply approval of apartheid, although that is certainly how South Africa and the rest of the world would interpret a warmer



Vernon Jordan

U.S. attitude.

Such signs of a thaw in U.S. — South Africa relations may have encouraged the harder line toward Namibian independence taken by the South Africans recently. Until then, the UN-supervised negotiations, aided by American diplomacy, were moving slowly but surely toward a resolution of that

situation. But South Africa now is stalling and the Administration has yet to say whether it will push for completion of those negotiations.

Namibia is also a key to the Angolan conflict, for that country says it will ask Cuban troops there to leave after Namibia, which is now a base for South African troops on its southern frontier, becomes independent.

discredited "homelands" policy of relegating blacks to reservations.

Administration spokesmen have mentioned South Africa's strategic position and raw materials as reasons for closer relations. But have we forgotten the lesson of Iran so swiftly? When the white supremacists are finally swept from power — be it five years, ten years or twenty years from now

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South Africa has taken some small steps to remove some of the "petty apartheid" regulations that are so damaging to its reputation, and those moves — more cosmetic than substantive — are often pointed to as signs of progress.

But South Africa continues to maintain its grand design of excluding the black majority from sharing political power, and it still clings to its

— our interests will be endangered unless we move away from the present racist regime.

And what about the strategic location and raw materials of the rest of Africa? Nigeria, for example, is one of our leading suppliers of oil and is a major regional power. Nigeria and other African states may slam the door on us if we cozy up to a South African regime that denies human rights to its black

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## CARL ROWAN

### Few Things Are Crueler Than Economy's Statistics

WASHINGTON -- Few things are crueler than the statistics of the American economy.

Report that in a single week in April a record 605,000 Americans filed for jobless benefits, and Americans yawn. For those who still have jobs you might as well write that 605,000 sparrows laid eggs in cypress trees.

Put General Motors Chairman Thomas A. Murphy on CBS' "Face the Nation" and mention that unemployment in the automobile industry is running around 25 percent, and his response is that "the recession, if there is one, will be short and mild." Murphy says he opposes a tax cut, and

that "we need the discipline of reducing federal spending," and furthermore, "hopefully, we've seen the worst of it." Murphy earned \$366,667 last year and will earn a princely sum this year, no matter how far GM's profits fall.

Statistics are the new opiate of the masses. Those who go on living the luxurious life during periods of economic calamity use numbers to delude ordinary people into believing that a recession is just an interlude in some magically inevitable process of lifting poor people to prosperity.

We ought not forget that the kind of recession

we are moving into is not an interlude. Economists speak of "the recession of 1973-75," but recessions do not die in times and places that economics professors assign to them.

From March to April, unemployment jumped by 827,000, the largest one-month rise since the Jan. 1975 leap of 867,000. But the statistics hide the human tragedy of a child of one of those newly-jobless Americans who will have to drop out of college, never to return. That young American's future will be changed forever.

Long years after Murphy dismisses the sickness of the

automobile industry with political clichés about the discipline of reducing federal spending, some former automobile dealer will twist his gnarled hands and tell his grandchildren how, "We used to be rich, until the government and Detroit tycoons drove me into bankruptcy."

The victims of bankruptcy will be many -- remembering into their dotage. And late this year, perhaps, a male auto worker laid off in Detroit will find his TV set, his refrigerator and his automobile of all things, being repossessed because he is reduced to welfare and can't make

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