

Point of View

PEOPLE, PLACES and POLITICS

By Joe Neal



A letter to Al Levy, Commissioner of the City of Las Vegas, Nevada.

Dear Mr. Levy:

I listened to your statement on Channel Eight Television November 3, 1981 regarding the visit of the South African Government representatives to our community.

It was appalling to me to learn that you felt it was your job to escort and give the keys of the city of Las Vegas to the representatives of a government which has killed and maimed millions of people because of the color of their skin.

You, as a follower of the Jewish faith, should understand the concerns of black people relative to sanctions given to the South African Government to participate in any affairs of this community. Would you, sir, invite Col. Maummar Khadafi or the PLO and render to them the keys to the city? Hank Greenspun would probably hang you for even thinking about such an act.

Adolph Eichmann killed six million Jews just because it was his

"job". Am I now to understand that you, in 1981, can overlook the lesson learned from the Holocaust just because it is your "job"?

I prefer not to stand by and wait until the knock came to my door as many of your faith did and found themselves lined up for what was known as the "Final Solution of the Jewish Question". You see, sir, I have learned from the Holocaust.

The depths of man's inhumanity to man lies just below the surface and can be aggravated by economic strain and the willingness on your part to accept a ruthless government in your midst because it shows the potential of alleviating certain economic conditions. It sounds similar to the "Third Reich", does it not, sir? The other side of this, sir, is the legal concept from the "Nuremburg Trials," which says it is legally and morally wrong for one to aid in the death of a people just because it was his "job."

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THE HAITIAN DILEMMA

By Bayard Rustin

The ghastly sight of 33 drowned Haitians washed ashore onto a Florida beach has once again focused attention on the plight of refugees from that beleaguered land.

Haiti is a dictatorship in which the government-controlled militia has suppressed all forms of free political expression, has restricted the fundamental freedoms of the press and assembly, and has engaged in murder, execution, imprisonment without trial, exile, and torture. In the midst of this brutal violation of human rights the vast majority of the Haitian people live in abject poverty. The line between those fleeing that country for political reasons as opposed to those fleeing for economic reasons is fine indeed.

The mother of a

pregnant Haitian girl who drowned in Florida has stated that she "would prefer to be shot rather than let her daughter's body go back to Haiti." Her vehement contempt for Haiti's government indicates



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that the Haitian refugees are not fleeing solely for economic reasons. Moreover, can there be any doubt that those who are willing to risk death at sea to reach refuge on our shores are

fleeing a terrifying form of oppression?

In part, the Haitian dilemma is complicated by current immigration rules. Under these rules, "political" refugees enjoy important advantages: Their applications for asylum are quickly processed and they can receive an immigration status under which they can become

munist—are classified as "economic" refugees and thus subject to deportation.

While it is easy to understand the special treatment accorded to those escaping Communist tyranny, it is clear that similar protection must be extended to those fleeing other brutal dictatorships for political reasons.

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American citizens within five years. However, there is an important qualification. Those who are deemed "political" refugees must have fled from a Communist nation such as Cuba, the USSR, East Germany, or Vietnam. Haitians who escape the Duvalier dictatorship—which, though brutal, is not Com-

American immigration policy must rid itself of its double-standard in dealing with refugees escaping oppression. A single standard must apply to all victims of dictatorship and tyranny.

The Reagan Administration's efforts to deal with the influx of Haitians, to date, have
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To Be Equal

ANOTHER WAR ON CRIME

By Vernon Jordan

If crime didn't exist, politicians would have to invent it, for there is nothing more rewarding politically than a fresh announcement of a "war on crime."

A new war on crime seems about to get off the ground, with get-tough speeches by Chief Justice Warren Berger and President Reagan, and a Justice Department report that recommends among, other things, weakening of constitutional protections and building more prisons.

Justice's Task Force on Violent Crime specifically suggested a \$2 billion grant program to help the states construct new prisons. And several states plan to float bond issues for prison construction.

Somehow a nation that claims to be unable

to afford decent social service benefit levels is supposed to come up with the money to finance prisons. A nation whose inner-city housing stock is



VERNON JORDAN

deteriorated and is being abandoned, is supposed to build prisons that cost about \$70,000 per bed just for construction, with up to \$20,000 per year in maintenance costs per individual. And that princely sum doesn't allow for in-

flation.

Talk about misplaced national priorities!

Buying more prisons won't buy more security. If anything, our experience with prisons suggests they do not deter people from committing crimes. Indeed, they serve to warehouse people in brutalizing

skills, anti-social attitudes and limited opportunities that helped land them in trouble, they are likely to continue to swell the crime rate.

Nor do the hard liners have much to say about keeping young people from the lure of criminal activities. Apparently

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conditions, leading to increased likelihood that they will return to custody once released.

That raises another point neglected by the get-tough-with-crime advocates. You can arrest, convict and imprison people. But ultimately, they will serve their time and return to the community.

Unless they are helped to overcome the lack of

they would rather build prisons at luxury-hotel construction rates than invest in the education and job opportunities that give economically deprived young people a stake in stable, crime-free communities.

A lot of the old bromides are also being hauled out in this year's version of the war on crime. Preventive deten-
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