

Point of View

To Be Equal

RESULTS OF WELFARE CUTS DAMAGING

By John Jacob

When the budget cutters went after the federal welfare program in the 1981 massacre of social programs, we were assured that the truly needy would be spared, and that hardships would be limited. Then, when there was no mass movement of the working poor to quit their low-paying jobs and go back on the welfare rolls, many observers said that proved the cuts were wise.

Nothing could be further from the truth. The fact that the working poor stayed on their jobs simply indicates how strong the work ethic is among poor people. Apparently the wealthy are presumed to need huge tax incentives to work, but the poor who had their small benefits cut or eliminated stayed on the job.

But their sacrifices have been great, and the toll in damaged health and poor nutrition will hurt the nation far into the future.

The government's General Accounting Office recently surveyed the effects of the welfare cuts and the picture is not a pretty one.

Some 493,000 families were cut from welfare rolls because of the 1981 changes in the law. Those families included about one million children. Another 300,000 families, most of them headed by working women, stayed on welfare, but with reduced benefits.

In addition, most of those dropped from welfare also lost their eligibility for Medicaid and food stamps. So hundreds of thousands of families were left with less cash and lost food and health care assistance during the most severe recession since the war.

The GAO study documents the government-



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imposed hardship on those families. The GAO investigation found that the biggest blow was felt among families that relied on welfare help to supplement below-poverty wages.

On average in the cities studied, the families lost anywhere from \$71 to \$198 each month — a large part of the total family income. Among those that stayed on welfare, benefits were cut from \$46 to \$137 per month.

After being dropped from welfare, the working poor lost Medicaid. Many report they now do not seek treatment for health problems or dental problems because they can't afford to pay

for the care.

What that means is that, in addition to neglecting medical problems that should be cared for, huge numbers of children are not getting the routine check-ups and monitoring they need to assure prevention of health problems.

And uncared-for illnesses because life-threatening chronic conditions that will ultimately cost the govern-

ment far more than it saves on mean-spirited cuts now. The same holds for dropping poor families from food stamps and nutrition aid. We're setting ourselves up for massive fiscal

costs in the future as a result of squeezing the poor.

Most of those dropped from the rolls are working longer and harder and even making more money than in 1981. But inflation and the loss of welfare and related aid leave them farther behind than they were.

The bottom line is not how much the govern-

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ment saved by its cuts, but how much poverty was increased by those cuts. And the numbers of the poor almost doubled in the past three years, due largely to the lethal combination of high unemployment and fed-

Editorial

The time has come when we will be inundated with politicians promising to change the world for the better, and that they will work for the people they represent.

We have become accustomed to empty promises as far back as the ending of slavery. We know that many politicians will visit our churches, kiss our ladies and our babies, and give barbecues in order to get our votes. As soon as many of these people get into office, we do not see or hear from them until next election time, and they are "out," "in a meeting," or "very busy" when we need them.

When we have voted for and elected to office an individual such as is mentioned above, we become offended when we are ignored, we feel betrayed and that we have been made a fool of by a smooth talking politician.

Instead of stewing in our proverbial juices, why not get out and make sure that one who has a proven record of community involvement is elected to office? Why not make sure that too many of us do not run for the same office, splitting the vote, and allowing an outsider to be elected.

Our observations reveal that several people who live among us and have a proven record of community involvement are running for Assembly District 6 and 7 seats in the State Legislature. However, why not get together in an open forum and support one person for each of these seats? A good answer to this question may be "that anyone should be allowed to run on their own if he/she wants to." This is true, but we have seen, in too many cases, too many running for the same office, the total Black vote being split, and someone getting into office who did not have our sincere interests at heart.

Let's get together!

eral social program cuts.

The slashing of the safety net is not irreversible. New policies can mend it and once again restore some semblance of assistance to those who need it.

Any longterm econo-

mic policy has to meet the needs of the poor, needs that include jobs and job training, a minimum income level consistent with a modest but decent living standard, and health and nutrition assistance.

PEOPLE, PLACES and POLITICS

By Joe Neal



This past weekend, I visited the show at the Town Tavern called AMA ZULU. You may have remembered this show by its former name "IPI TOMBE," which played out on the Strip a few years ago.

For some reason, I am always attracted to any exhibition of culture from our African past. This is what AMA ZULU is about. It not only entertains you, but it also gives Black people insight into their past. Through songs and dance AMA ZULU bemoans the affects of modern life when it dares to strip away cultural ties of a people and leaves them bare to the exploitation of drugs, alcohol and prostitution.

My mama used to say that when you get away from your "up-bringing, you are looking for trouble. These were words which implored us not to lose sight of who we were and are. Maintaining one's identity is another way to look at it.

If you know who you are and the ties that make you who you are, then your chances are much greater of surviving the pressures of modern society with all of its trappings. It is this thought that AMA ZULU brings to mind and it is a thought that is needed in our community.

One of the scenes in AMA ZULU is about the life in the city, where members of the tribe have gone in search of a better life and their finding that what was encountered was not a better life but life that tore at their cultural ties which were rooted in their tribal order. This particular scene was what we see on Jackson Street today.

When life becomes dominated by the quest for material goods and the exhibition of wealth for wealth's sake, it is not a life which all can immolate. We become motivated by achieving effortless bucks, when there are not many effortless bucks to be gained. If your mind is encased with effortlessness in making money, it makes you less than a pickpocket and directs you upon a course where there are bound to be conflicts of a violent nature.

AMA ZULU tells us that only when we lose the identity of who we are, do we get into trouble. You know, I believe that AMA ZULU is right.

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