

Point of View

Editorial

Are you registered to vote? Have we been missing out on our rights by not exercising our responsibility to vote for persons and issues of our choice? Have we become so complacent about participating in our governmental affairs that we have begun to say, "Oh, what's the use?"

Our willingness to accept the status-quo is directly proportional to our willingness to register to vote and vote. If we are unwilling to take the few minutes required to register to vote and then vote, then we might be letting ourselves in for some very hard times ahead. The opposite is also true. It appears that many politicians, both those presently in office and those who would like to get into office, have written us off as a non-caring group who can be persuaded to accept anything they present to us. These persons are paying very little attention to us as Blacks.

The only way to stop this inattention to Blacks and their needs is to make sure that we all are registered to vote and then exercise this privilege.

After registration, we must become informed on the issues, present our needs as pertinent issues, and make sure that we vote our convictions.

As we enter into this election year, we will be hearing from many politicians who have been unable or unwilling to confront us during the past two or more years. We must avail ourselves of the opportunities to hear as many sides of each issue as possible. Without this information, we cannot make decisions concerning our local, state, and national governmental affairs.

Many individuals and organizations around our fair city are sponsoring voter-registration drives. If we are not registered, we must become registered. After registration, we must vote.

NBCSL Focuses on Black Political and Economic Independence

By Alfreda L. Madison

The National Black Caucus of State Legislators (NBCSL) met recently in Philadelphia.

This marked the ninth annual meeting of the group. NBCSL started nine years

ago when 18 state legislators found themselves being excluded from meaningful participation in the National Conference of State Legislators.

More than two hundred Black state legislators from 42 states focused on the theme "The Politics of Black Economic Independence." Maryland State Senator Clarence Mitchell said "one of the goals of the conference is to increase communication among Black state legislators. We are powerless when we are uninformed. One of the purposes of this conference is to share information so that we can be more effective.

Mitchell noted that since the organization began, several of its members have been elevated to higher positions. As an example, he cited Virginia State Senator Douglas Wilder's being elected the first Black lieutenant governor of a southern state since Reconstruction.

In addition to Black state legislators, there were Black-owned corporation members

"Our minds, the lifestyle that we have, and the vision that we possess have all been shaped by our education. The reason we find it difficult living and working with each other is that we have been taught from birth to work against ourselves."

*Haki Madhubuti
(Don L. Lee)*

The views expressed on these editorial pages are those of the artists and authors indicated. Only the one indicated as the Sentinel-Voice editorial represents this publication.

To Be Equal

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

By JOHN E. JACOB

February is Black History Month, and the rich, complex story of the struggles of black Americans becomes the subject of a multitude of special exhibits, teaching programs, and other informational activities.

That's important, but as important is the need to move the black heritage out of its February ghetto to become an integral part of America's year-round consciousness.

This is especially necessary for the schools to do, for an important way to inspire and motivate black children is to introduce them to the story of their forebears, most of whom had to struggle against conditions that make even today's injustices seem mild.

Nor is black history just for blacks. White Americans are

well too ignorant of the role blacks have played in American history. Even as they use inventions discovered by black scientists, listen to music and view paintings and sculptures made by black artists, and read books written by black authors,



John E. Jacob

many white Americans view our common past through racially-constricted filters.

The American past is a multiracial one, and events like Black History Month serve to restore the minority component to an otherwisely bleached version of the past.

The historical amnesia I'm referring to was put on

display last month in many localities that celebrated Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.

Some stressed Dr. King's Dream while ignoring his struggle — as if the Dream could be fulfilled without the struggle.

They reduced Dr. King's work to the level of a do-good philosopher of peace at the expense of downplaying the core of his work as an activist protester who broke

that was his Dream.

One thing black history teaches us is that for four hundred years America had a powerful policy of affirmative negative action directed against black people. The twenty-year-old effort of affirmative positive action seeks not simply to help undo that terrible past, but to provide equal opportunities today.

So it was unseemly to see

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unjust laws in order to replace them with just ones.

And many of those celebrations emphasized the moral principles Dr. King fought for without applying them to the current scene. For had he lived, Dr. King would still be crusading — for the poor, the jobless, the homeless, the oppressed.

And he would be fighting attempts to weaken or destroy affirmative action programs that are an essential component of building the society of equals

people trying to dismantle affirmative action programs invoking Dr. King's dream of a color-blind society, as if we had already reached that elusive state.

One of the hazards heroes of the past are subjected to is that their names are subjected to cynical political usage.

We can't let that happen. Dr. King, or to the mult of other black heroes in struggle for freedom, must constantly teach study the way they stood up for black rights and spoke boldly against the wrongs of their society.

By doing so we can rescue them from the clutches of those who are enemies of their principles, and we can inspire our young people to follow in their paths.

Black history can be a vehicle to understand the riches of their past, while drawing them into subjects they need to master in order to write their own pages in the continuing book of black achievement.

That's why this month's activities are so important — and why they should be an integral part of the educational process.

and health professionals and experts from health insurance companies in attendance.

Several outstanding people addressed the conference. AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland told the legislators that the Reagan Administration is trying to strip Blacks' gains made in the sixties and seventies. He said, "our pride is tempered by the knowledge that a new generation has stepped forward at a time when many of our goals appear to be receding. Over the last two decades, we are confronted with an administration in Washington that seems intent on making us refight the old battles." Kirkland reminded the group of its history of reinforcing its efforts when its victories are few. He told them that conservative Republicans have targeted Blacks, women and labor for defeat.

William Welsh of the Federal Employees said, "Republicans' recent successes have had a

negative effect on national policy issues such as mental health, workfare, pay equity for female employees and pension and wage scales for public sector workers."

It was pointed out at the meeting that Democrats lost 350 legislative seats in 1984 and the Republican goal is to take control of a majority of legislatures by 1990. Emphasis was placed on the importance of Congressional redistricting and reapportionment. Which are done by state legislatures.

An interesting panel discussed the history of the Black movement from 1960 to the present, which analyzed the evolution of the movement in the future, and the responsibilities of Black people in controlling their individual and collective destinies.

The group recognized the South Africa struggles of Blacks for similarities with the struggle of American Blacks for full citizenship. Randall Robinson, executive

See NBCSL, Page 7

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