

Point of View

Editorial

The stages are being set and the curtains are about to be lifted for Election '86, starring the candidates for various offices to represent the West Las Vegas community, city and state, as well.

Not only in West Las Vegas, but throughout the nation, history has it that it's during the election period that "promises to make it all better, untruths and accusations, mudslinging, underhandedness and bitter back-stabbing, sometimes occurs."

In this time and age, voters have become far more sophisticated and politically astute, and they demand higher ethics and intelligence from their candidates and elected officials. In fact, they have become turned off dramatically by those who have demonstrated unacceptable behavior.

By contrast, the voters of today desire only that their representatives be caring, sensitive to their needs, hard-working, dedicated, honest, able to get things done, make promises only that they can keep and most importantly, after attaining the office that they so diligently seek, work to the best of their ability to represent well, each and every person, never once forgetting who put them there and why.

We call upon all the various candidates seeking offices not only throughout the West and North Las Vegas communities, but our entire city, state and nation, to keep those facts in mind, and to also realize that not only will they be held accountable for their actions, whether good or bad, before or after the elections by the voters, but more importantly, that they can count on their "sentence" being exactly what the voter passes via the ballot box and nothing else.

CHILD WATCH

By Marian Wright Edelman

Portraits of Poverty

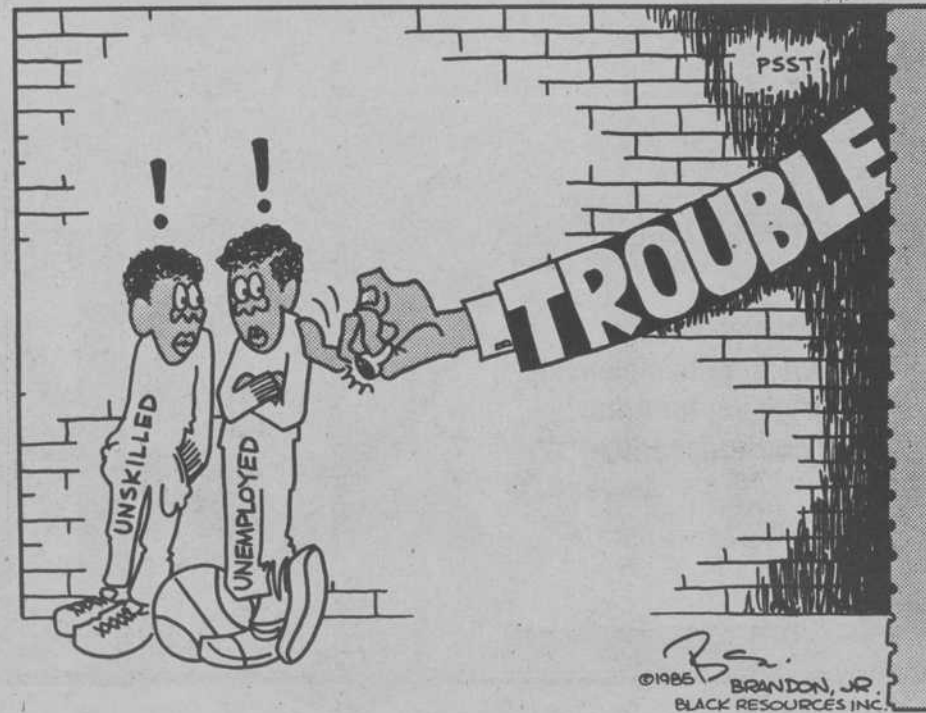
Aletha Harris worries every month whether she will be able to afford enough food for herself and her four children. Many months, she runs out. Even when she has the money for groceries, Aletha must walk the five miles from her home to the nearest grocery store to buy them. Although she works full-time, Aletha survives only with the help of her church and her friends.

In November, Aletha and several others who are struggling with the day-to-day crisis of poverty came to Washington, DC to testify before the House of Representatives Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families. There stories tell us, more clearly and eloquently than any report or study, what it means to be poor or near-poor in America today.

For Tweddy Williams, it meant spending two months in a shelter for the homeless with her newborn son, Bert, when they were evicted from their apartment building because the landlord had not paid the mortgage.

For Stephanie Epps, poverty means sharing her

bed with her children because she does not have room to set up a crib. She and her two sons, ages three and five months, are crowded with her mother and sister in a three-room apartment. Stephanie, who is trying to finish her high school diploma, often get up at 2 AM to study, since that



To Be Equal

THE BLACK FAMILY

By JOHN E. JACOB

A nationwide television broadcast on black teenage pregnancy and the ensuing media blitz indicate that America is rediscovering the black family.

Many view this with misgivings. They fear it will strengthen negative stereotypes and stigmatize all blacks, especially since there are all too many people anxious to jump on any evidence that reinforces their racism.

But teenage pregnancy, female-headed households, and family disorganization are real problems in the black community, and they won't go away by simply wishing them away.

We are in real trouble when children growing up in poor families have children themselves, thus closing off their future options and often perpetuating their poverty.

is the only undisturbed time available to her.

For Ana Moreno, a refugee from El Salvador, it means being separated from her oldest son, who remains in El Salvador because she cannot afford to support him in this country. Ana works several days a week as a domestic but cannot work more without child care for her other children, which she

cannot find or pay for. She has already lost one job because her employer would no longer allow her to bring her youngest son with her to work.

These stories give us a real picture of the human beings and personal dilemmas behind our nation's poverty statistics. When we say that 46 percent of black children



John E. Jacob

and 39 percent of Hispanic

children are poor today, we know that this means that millions of American families are struggling every day with some of the hardships faced by Aletha, Tweddy, Stephanie, and Ana.

Their testimony about what it means to be poor shatters popular myths about "welfare queens" and "people who will not help themselves." These mothers are trying to make their lives better for themselves and their children, against very difficult odds.

If more of our lawmakers could hear the poor speak for themselves, they might be more reluctant to continue the destructive cutbacks in programs to assist the poor that we have seen in recent years.

How best to provide minimum living standards is

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a question in itself, and the welfare system is not the best answer. But assuming that girls have babies to get welfare checks puts ideology ahead of common sense.

Welfare is not a significant factor in the alarming birth rates for both white and black teenagers. Emotional and psychological needs play

percent. Even among black youth in their early twenties, unemployment rates run to a fourth or more.

The message sent to young men is that they have no place in the economy, a message reinforced by widespread adult unemployment. Men without jobs are men who cannot support families. In a nation in which male self-esteem is often measured by educational attainment, employment and income, this is disastrous.

The resulting alienation is not understood by those who expect people to conform to middle class standards of behavior although denied the essential foundations of middle class life — security and income.

Poverty is no excuse for irresponsibility. But moralistic lectures won't bring about responsible behavior either. Changing the way people behave requires changing the conditions in which they must live.

While it is important to provide young people with the counseling and assistance that enables them to rise from their crime-infested streets, it is just as important to ensure quality education that enlarges their aspirations and employment opportunities that allow them to get decent jobs and support intact, healthy families.

VOTE

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