

# Point of View

## Editorial

### Depression Is Hardest On Us

Black Americans perceive the debate over whether we are in a depression as an irrelevant exercise in avoiding hard realities. Depression is a harsh and relentless fact of life in the underprivileged areas and its cold tentacles have begun to ensnare working people and the middle-class, having disposed of the most impoverished.

For many, the abrupt and unprecedented turn of events have encouraged a sense of hopelessness, a feeling that things are going to get much worse before they get better -- if indeed they do get better. We do not subscribe to the alarm and defeatism so often encountered today; we are convinced that Las Vegas and the County has the resources and creativity necessary to overcome current problems.

The prophets of defeat and gloom, however, will no doubt be proven accurate if the level of local leadership does not rise above its present mediocrity and timidity. And while the black community certainly did not create the problems we are mired in, it has a natural and fundamental leadership role to play in helping to determine how the community is to face the enormous consequences of economic deterioration, and to help formulate an aggressive, thorough-going agenda of change.

This agenda, it should be stressed, would require a considerable break from the thinking of the past. It would be more far-reaching than the limited response from the Great Society...their limited response to pervasive class and racial injustices. More to the point, it would not be a recognizably black program, but would instead embrace all those who need social change or the protection of government against consequences of a mismanaged economy.

It was not long ago when the basic goals of black people defined a national agenda of change. While this agenda was built around the specific and unique needs of minorities, it was relevant to all those who had been excluded from a share of the good things our society has generated. Today, of course, the destiny of blacks is much more intertwined with the future of the American society.

Blacks will not move ahead while the rest of the society is in a widespread decline. Our needs will only be served by a rapid and dramatic transformation of a society which results in a new and better social order that meets the needs of all who are in need.

*A unified people  
requires a  
unified Leadership."*

*Paul Robeson*

**We Can't Spell S CCESS  
Without U**

## To Be Equal

### WALLACE - END OF AN ERA

By John E. Jacob

George Wallace's announcement of his retirement from politics in early April marks the passing of an era.

Four-time governor of Alabama, three-time candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination, Wallace commanded the allegiance of millions of Americans. He was well placed to play a constructive role in helping lead his region into a multi-racial future, but he threw away that historic opportunity and became the symbol of last-ditch extremism and resistance to change.

That's a great pity, not simply because he deepened racial antagonisms and encouraged extremist attitudes that spilled over into racist acts, but because the people of the South needed the far-seeing, visionary leadership that would have defused the tense racial situation of the 1960s and helped the region adjust to change.

Instead, he courted national prominence through dangerous demagoguery. He became famous not for preaching moderation and respect for the constitution, but for his statement: "segregation now, segregation tomorrow, segregation for-

ever."

Later that year — 1963 — he made his famous stand in the schoolhouse door to attempt to block the entry of two black students to the University of Alabama, in de-



John Jacob

fiance of constitutional rights and court orders.

He played to the fears and resentments of poor and blue-collar whites, whipping up their anger instead of leading them in a coalition with similarly situated blacks, since both groups stood to benefit from measures backed by the civil rights movement.

Later, as the South changed and as the Wallace philosophy was firmly rejected by the region and the nation, he changed, too. He did all he could to keep blacks from voting, but after blacks demonstrated their

political power he changed his tune.

In 1970 he warned whites that if black voters determined that year's gubernatorial election, "they'll determine every governor for the next fifty years... Then who will stand up for you?" But then he crowned the first

school — an honor based on his contributions to black Alabamians in recent years.

It would be easy to simply say that George Wallace saw the light; that he was a changed man. But what changed was the South and the nation, and in order to survive politically, Wallace too, had to change.

*John E. Jacob is President Of  
The National Urban League*

black homecoming queen in the University of Alabama's history, saying "All of us are God's children," and later declared that times had changed and that he had no intention of turning back the clock.

Meanwhile, he courted black votes, which provided his margin of victory in the 1982 state primary. His last term as governor was marked by alliance with blacks, support for black institutions, appointments of blacks to state positions, and endorsement of a plan to double the number of black voting registrars.

Last month I went to Tuskegee to receive an honorary degree and found that Governor Wallace was also being honored by the

Blacks are a forgiving people; it is hard to think of another group that would forgive someone who once fought to exclude them from exercising their rights and who whipped up violent elements against them. But we are also a realistic people, and the alliance with the visibly changed Governor led to gains for black people in the state.

His career though, is a tragic one. He could have gone down in history as a great conciliator and as a man of courage who led his region well. Instead, he will be judged harshly as a dangerous demagogue whose efforts to maintain racial supremacy failed — but one who successfully adjusted to that failure. The South, and the nation, deserved better.

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

I've been credited with contributing to the article in the Las Vegas Sentinel-Voice written about the churches in the black community. I wish that I could take credit for what I believe to be an article which caused the greatest impact on the attitude and thinking of black people in Southern Nevada, in that this article has caused churchgoers and non-churchgoers, saints and sinners alike to come out of the closet to discuss openly and freely the pastors and churches' positions in the community.

The combined budget of all of the churches at a 50 percent error in the article still surpasses the yearly budget of North Las Vegas. I

don't understand the furor over the ministers' financial success unless there is some hidden guilt about their prosperity in face of a community without commerce, markets, banks, or drug stores.

My information is that the article brought about 15 of the pastors of the largest congregations together to discuss the article.

I challenge those same ministers to combine that same energy with their resources to purchase a community market, estimated cost \$200,000 and 20 employees.

I challenge them to confront the banks where they deposit their offerings to establish a branch in West Las

Vegas.

I challenge them to deposit 50 percent of those funds in the Westside Credit Union.

I challenge them to register 50 percent of their congregations to vote.

Conclusively, I challenge them to devise among themselves a comprehensive program to eliminate poverty, hunger, joblessness and lack of housing in the community without the use of public funding.

If the ministers want to maintain a position of respect and leadership, they must, collectively, address the

needs of the community in total and not selfishly in a manner that they can continue their fiefdoms..

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