

Point of View

from capital hill To Be Equal

Ignorance Of Actions Does Not Excuse Performance

By **Alfreda L. Madison**

The Iran-Contra arms deal hangs around President Reagan's neck like a noose, and it draws tighter each day. President Reagan says his goal was to have a better relationship with Iran and to get the hostages back. A lofty goal indeed, but the method used to attend it proved to be scandalous and ridiculous. The selling of arms to Iran for the release of hostages was nothing less than negotiating with terrorists. The President himself had termed Iran terrorist country and said that he would never negotiate with terrorists.

Three hostages have been released and each time it was immediately after Iran had received a load of arms. It appears that some of the money paid by Iran went to the Contras in Nicaragua. Just how much money was paid and its final destination is not fully known.

Mr. Reagan says that he had no knowledge of really just what was going on until Attorney General Edwin Meese told him that something was amiss. Mr. Reagan said, "He came to me and said another country was facilitating those sales of weapons systems. They were overcharging and were

apparently putting the money into bank accounts of the leaders of the Contras. It wasn't us funneling money to them. I knew then that for us not to act immediately would be wrong. I told him we must tell the American people and the Congress. And we did. Ed is continuing to check the facts. I've appointed a little group of my own to look into this to see if we can improve the procedures in the National Security Council."

Since Attorney General Meese is a cabinet member and the chief law enforcement officer and the advisor to the president on legal matters, and has admitted that he did advise Mr. Reagan on these matters, and it appears that some law was violated, it is ridiculous to have Meese investigate himself and at the end, to come out and admit that he gave lousy advice. It is as Senator Kerry, Democrat of Massachusetts, said "it's like asking the fox to guard the chickens. The appointment of this special group seems to be just a tactic of the president's avoidance of requiring a special prosecutor and giving Congress the information and cooperation he says he is

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By **John E. Jacob**

Racism is alive and well in our America. Recent months have seen a series of incidents that indicate a resurgent racism in the land whose leaders say is not a colorblind society. In fact, a good deal of racism's strength derives from that false premise. Refusing to admit the problem creates a climate in which racism can flourish.

And flourish it certainly has. The terrifying incident in the Howard Beach section of Queens, in which a white mob beat three black men and caused the death of one of them, made national headlines.

So too did the troubles at The Citadel, South Carolina's military college, where Klan-like attacks drove one black student from the school and led other blacks to protest persistent racial harassment. The tepid response by the school's administrators clearly indicates the feeling that racism is not an evil to be

expelled from the school's environment, but something to be indifferent about unless it gets out of hand.



John E. Jacob

Elsewhere, white students at the University of Massachusetts attacked blacks in a post-World Series riot, and many other schools report racist graffiti, racial incidents, and persistent harassment of black students and faculty.

But the racism that makes the headlines is just the tip of the iceberg. Discrimination in jobs, housing and other necessities is commonplace. The overt racism of the past - and the present, as indicated by the recent spate

of racial violence -- is supplemented by subtle racist actions that range from steering black home-buyers away from white neighborhoods to counseling black students to take less demanding courses.

The grim fact of life for

of the colorblind society, and sent strong signals that civil rights concerns were no longer on the national agenda.

Affirmative action was labelled reverse discrimination. Efforts to help the victims of

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most black citizens is that America's historic racism has survived; it's been strengthened, and is bursting out in ugly ways.

For a brief season, our nation identified racism as a national disease and took some halting measures to combat it. But then it lapsed into an indifference fed by the comforting -- and false -- notion that the disease was cured.

The endless parade of statistics showing continuing black disadvantage and the persistent effects of continuing discrimination were ignored. National leadership peddled the myth

discrimination overcome the heritage of racism were ended. The poor were blamed for their poverty.

The result was all too predictable. The nation is now in the throes of a new crisis of conscience set off by resurgence of raw racism.

In effect, the Administration's refusal to recognize the validity of race as an issue; its deliberate withdrawal from efforts to remedy racial imbalances, and its constant harping on the fiction that racism no longer exists, encouraged racists to come into the open.

With civil rights out of fashion, ignored by the government and the media alike, and with racial disadvantage blamed on supposed character traits of poor blacks, people were encouraged to let their prejudices show. Racial jokes crept back. Racial insults returned. And now, open harassment and mob violence are back.

Just as national leadership is partially responsible for racism's return, it must become responsible for attacking it and for making the nation understand that racism in any of its forms will not be tolerated.

The Las Vegas Sentinel-Voice welcomes expressions of all views from readers. Letters should be kept as brief as possible and are subject to condensation. They must include signature, valid mailing address and telephone number, if any. Pseudonyms and initials will not be used. Because of the volume of mail received, unpublished individual letters cannot be acknowledged. Send to: Letters to the Editor, The Las Vegas Sentinel-Voice, 1201 S. Eastern Ave., Las Vegas, Nevada 89104.

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Human Rights In Africa

by **Norman Hill**

In a general, discussions in this country on human rights have focused mainly on Central America, Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union and other areas deemed to be of particular strategic or political importance to the United States. For a number of reasons, rights abuses (or advances) in Africa, with the possible exception of Ethiopia and South Africa, have been largely ignored.

Some have argued that this indifference is tied to the perception that most of Africa is of little economic or strategic value to the United States. A more cynical (and innately racist) view is that democracy and civil liberties are alien to the continent, and that the proliferation of totalitarian regimes is an indication that Africans are "not ready" for democracy.

For black leaders in America, the issue of human rights in Africa presents something of a conundrum.

Their relative inattention to serious rights abuses in a number of nations is partly rooted in a reluctance to acknowledge the political, social and economic repressiveness of some black African countries, even if many of these conditions are the direct by-product of colonial oppression and the arbitrary drawing of tribal and linguistic realities.

When discussing human rights in Africa, several major historical factors must be taken into account. First, the slave trade and colonialism disrupted Africa's independent evolution. Economic progress, education and individual rights were made subservient to the needs of the colonial power. Second, many of Africa's leaders spent the colonial period in exile or jail, where they embraced anti-democratic notions and Marxist ideologies irrelevant to

African conditions. And third, many newly independent nations were defined by arbitrary borders, drawn in Europe without regard to tribal and language considerations.

These factors, coupled with desperate economic conditions, often led to the development of systems of government that put a premium on strident state control of all facets of social and economic development at the expense of civil liberties and individuals rights.

Of late, a number of African nations have been experimenting with economic decentralization and other reforms that may contribute to greater freedoms in politics and social life. Zaire, Zambia, Somalia, Mali, Guinea, Senegal, Kenya and