

# Point of View

## To Be Equal

### APARTHEID UNDER PRESSURE

by John E. Jacob

The movement of American corporations out of South Africa is fast becoming a mass exodus. The latest pullouts, Ford Motor Company and Citibank, are among the world's largest corporations. Their withdrawal suggests that if South Africa insists on maintaining its apartheid policies, it is doomed to economic Depression.

Whether the companies that leave do so for moral purposes or for economic reasons, the result is the same — increased isolation of South Africa and its economy.

And the withdrawals will get a further impetus from Rev. Leon Sullivan's recent statement urging total with-

drawal of U.S. firms from South Africa and for breaking diplomatic relations with the outlaw state. He also wants a total economic embargo on South Africa until it ends apartheid.



John E. Jacob

Rev. Sullivan's statement is significant because of his authorship of the Sullivan Code — the code of conduct for corporations in which signers pledge themselves to

integrate their operations, help South Africa's black majority raise its living standards, and implement fair employment and compensation policies.

The Sullivan Code was effective in softening some of the hard edges of apartheid. It led to a sharp increase in

the cosmetic "reforms" implemented by the government. Its failure to secure lasting changes in the system has led Rev. Sullivan to move to advocate total withdrawal.

The withdrawals and international condemnation are opening wide rifts within

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black managerial jobs and to positive improvements in the living standards of some blacks. As a challenge to the system's segregation mandates, the Code was always a thorn in the side of the apartheid forces.

But despite the Code, apartheid is meaner and uglier than ever, even with

South Africa's minority white community. Top business leaders there advocate negotiating with the African National Congress, the outlawed opposition group. And in the recent whites-only elections, some prominent past defenders of apartheid split away from the ruling party to run on more

moderate platforms.

And *The Wall Street Journal* recently reported that South Africa's biggest corporation is urging whites to share power with the black majority, saying that the only choice before them is to negotiate or be doomed.

Those voices of reason may be few, but their numbers are growing. Will they make a dent in the solid wall of apartheid? I hope they will, but their chances depend on continued outside pressures to tumble the walls of apartheid.

The U.S. can certainly help make a difference, by keeping up the direct pressure on South Africa's government, by coordinating anti-apartheid moves with other nations, and by aiding

the internal opposition. Increased aid to South Africa's neighbors, who bear the brunt of the struggle, is also necessary.

But while focusing on toppling apartheid, we also need policies that aid the black majority to govern a modern economy. For apartheid has led to economic, educational, and housing deficiencies among the black majority that could wind up doing as much harm as apartheid. We need to look further into the future than today's headlines.

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### CRISIS IN EDUCATION

by Norman Hill

Of the many problems facing public education today, two disturbing trends need to be closely examined by educators and community activists concerned about the progress of black students and their preparedness to compete in the social and economic mainstream. The first is the negative effect of peer pressure on individual achievement, and the second

is the broader question of cultural illiteracy among students, both black and white.

Recent studies have disclosed instances where bright and highly motivated black students often refuse to answer questions or intentionally give wrong answers because they fear being accused of "acting white" by many of their peers. This form of intimidation cannot

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be merely dismissed as the typical and usually harmless harassment of bookish students. It implies the dangerous and outrageous notion that somehow excellence means betrayal of black culture. And it engenders the cynical and defeatist view among a segment of black youth that working hard or setting goals are futile in a society that is essentially racist and indifferent to black aspirations.

These attitudes, however misguided, are a sad statement on the growing frustration in the black community at the polarization of society caused by economic upheaval and the indifference of the Reagan Administration to civil rights and social justice. In a broader sense, they reflect increased alienation and a regressive reflex toward a wrongheaded "separateness" that, in its emphasis on isolation, rejects as "white" values and ethics that are the rudiment of Western cultural life of which, indisputably, black Americans are a part. The Judeo-Christian

tradition, the Protestant work ethic, advancement through individual initiative, are not alien to black American culture; they are a part of it. Moreover, they are an integral part of society as a whole, and they inform the way we live, do business, interact with each other. Understanding and incorporating these values and their history is an integral part of success in America.

But if black students need to be encouraged not to reject Western culture as "white" and alien, recent studies indicate that a growing percentage of white students also lack knowledge in the basics of Western history, tradition, philosophy, science, art and culture. So while both black and white students have shown steady improvement in reading on a basic level, both groups are having trouble with more sophisticated material. A recent survey of all high school 17 year olds founds that only 35 percent could read *The New York Times* and only 20 percent had

adequate writing and reasoning skills to clearly articulate their thoughts in letters, resumes and job applications. The figures for blacks and Hispanics were lower.

Today, we find students who can read, but who do not understand what they are reading beyond the most elementary levels. The reason is that on more sophisticated levels, writers and authors presuppose the readers' knowledge of fundamental facts and information that are an integral part of our broader Western heritage. For some time, schools have stopped teaching the solid facts students need to know because, in part, most adults take these facts for granted, and also because the emphasis in the 1960s on "relevancy" and race and gender-oriented information has eliminated this material from curricula.

Not being culturally literate has led to such true stories as the UCLA junior who thought Toronto (Canada) was in Italy; the graduating

Harvard seniors who sat through a commencement address by King Juan Carlos and did not know he was king of Spain; and the girl in Latin class who thought she was learning the language, not of ancient Rome, but of Latin America.

The cultural illiteracy question is especially important to minorities in America. While trying to make courses more relevant by focusing on black or Hispanic touchstones is indeed important for fostering cultural pride, it should never be done at the expense of the larger cultural tradition of this country.

Schools and parents' organizations must work together to combat the pervasive apathy toward learning and negative peer pressure on students who want to excel. There must also be a renewed emphasis on core subjects that deal with the fundamental historical, social and cultural traditions that define American and Western society. Otherwise, a whole

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#### True Greatness

*"The ends you serve that are selfish will take you no further than yourself; but the ends you serve that are for all, in common, will take you even into eternity."*

Marcus Garvey

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