

Point of View

To Be Equal

REAGAN'S LEGACY

by John E. Jacob

The Reagan presidency is deeply wounded. Americans feel betrayed by the Iran-Contra scandals. They are disturbed by the privatization of foreign policy that lets an Ollie North subvert the will of Congress.

And they are deeply disturbed by the farcical attempts to name a Supreme Court Justice that meets Ed Meese's ideological specifications, and by the general incompetence shown in the wake of the stock market crash.

But even opponents of the Administration can take no pleasure from its difficulties. All Americans suffer when our government is rudderless and without a clear sense of direction.

And advocates for a compassionate government that creates opportunities have to be disturbed by a weakening of government's ability to make a positive difference.

One disturbing legacy of the Administration is its encouragement of a national mood of greed and indifference to the poor.

Yesterday's hero was Martin Luther King, Jr., whose dream of brotherhood inspired a nation. Until the crash, today's heroes were the financial wheeler-dealers who pass homeless people on the sidewalk to get to work to make their millions. Martin's Dream has been re-

placed by Boesky's greed. Another legacy is the resurgence of racial antagonisms. History will judge Ronald Reagan harshly as the man who had the power to



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reconcile the races, but who failed to even try. Just as it took a hard-line Cold Warrior like Nixon to make an opening to China, it would have been a historic breakthrough for a President who once opposed the Civil Rights Act to make an opening to black Americans.

But he didn't, and because he didn't, America's divisions run deeper.

Reaganism has also brought economic troubles that will haunt us far into the future. Today's economic recovery is false prosperity. We have high unemployment, with seven million people out of work. Most of our new jobs pay less than the ones we've lost. There has been a terrible rise in poverty.

And America has become the world's biggest debtor

owing foreigners more money than Mexico, Brazil and Argentina put together. In just a few years we've gone from being the country to which the rest of the world owes the most, to the country that owes the most to the rest of the world.

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Today's debt-ridden economy spells recession and austerity ahead. It's going to be harder to make the investments we need to make in our people and in our futures — investments in the infrastructure of roads and bridges, and in the education and training programs needed to keep our workforce competitive.

A final, negative legacy of this Administration's Ice Age is the transformation of the federal courts from defenders of civil rights to yet another barrier to civil rights.

In the past six years, Ronald Reagan and Ed Meese have appointed almost 300 federal judges — and only five were black. Today, they are in the process of trying to stock the Supreme Court with rigid right-wingers.

That's a sad record for an Administration whose initial popularity could have helped it accomplish so much.

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Commentary

Holding Our Leadership Accountable The Return to Self-Help Principles

Martin Luther King Jr. said it, and put it on record for all time: "It is not a sign of weakness, but a sign of high maturity to rise to the level of self-criticism." Yet, in the black community, it is still possible to incur the wrath of many community leaders and civil rights officials to suggest that we blacks could do a lot more exploring among ourselves for the causes of ongoing social and economic decline. In some quarters, it is still possible to get branded a mischief maker to even imply that racism is not the major reason why blacks have failed to create an economic base in America.

Issues & Views was founded in 1985 to give voice to just such dissident opinion. As a forum for the views of those who oppose the policies molded by a select leadership for the last two decades, we have watched in this short two-year span as events have overtaken our civil rights organizations. It has been gratifying to witness ordinary rank and file blacks, without benefit of elaborate media coverage, or

the blessing of the black or white establishments, or the assistance of government devising local grassroots strategies to deal with the critical problems which still plague our communities. Such blacks are, in effect, leading the leadership.

Although not obvious at the time, this past summer was a momentous one. After the annual conventions in July of both the NAACP and the National Urban League, the nation's newspapers were full of reports of these organizations' intent to "shift gears." This means that after 20 years of shouting down the principle of self-help, some of our leaders are now reevaluating

too long.

Has such a conclusion been reached because American blacks are more mired in poverty than ever in their history? Or, perhaps, it's because the chances of escape from such poverty appear to be negligible, considering the fact that close to 60% of blacks now born belong to mothers who are destitute, unmarried women and to fathers who are as likely to be prison inmates as lifelong indigents.

During years of declaring themselves the only legitimate voice to speak for black needs, our leaders invented every rationalization for why blacks were growing poorer and poorer. While opponents

Our civil rights groups must assume a new role as we move into the 1990s.

their stubbornly held positions, and are even urging a "return to basics." According to reports, there is a growing consensus among them that, indeed, their very policies may have helped to keep blacks dependent on government aid for

of their policies were denounced as Uncle Toms and traitors who "do not represent the black community," this same leadership downplayed the importance of free enterprise. Instead, blacks were counseled to place their hopes in a web of social reforms. The very policies which were promoted have helped to undermine black self-reliance and resourcefulness, and threaten to turn vast numbers into a permanent underclass. Now these officials claim a readiness to "shift gears."

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.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Newspaper Editor:

Enclosed is a press release about METPRO, a two-year newspaper internship for college graduates aimed at increasing the number of Black, Latino, Asian-American and Native American journalists working in this country.

As you probably know, the number of minority journalists is terribly low. Minorities make up only about 6% of editorial employees on the nation's newspapers, and more than half of all newspapers have no minority reporters or photographers on their staffs.

METPRO (Minority Editorial Training Program) was begun four years ago by the Los Angeles Times/Times Mirror Co. to help create more diverse newsrooms, which will ensure fairer coverage of minority communities. It's a commitment we know your newspaper shares.

I hope you will help us reach that goal by printing this press release to publicize the program among your readers. Please be mindful that the deadline for applications to METPRO is Jan. 1.

Thank you for your help.

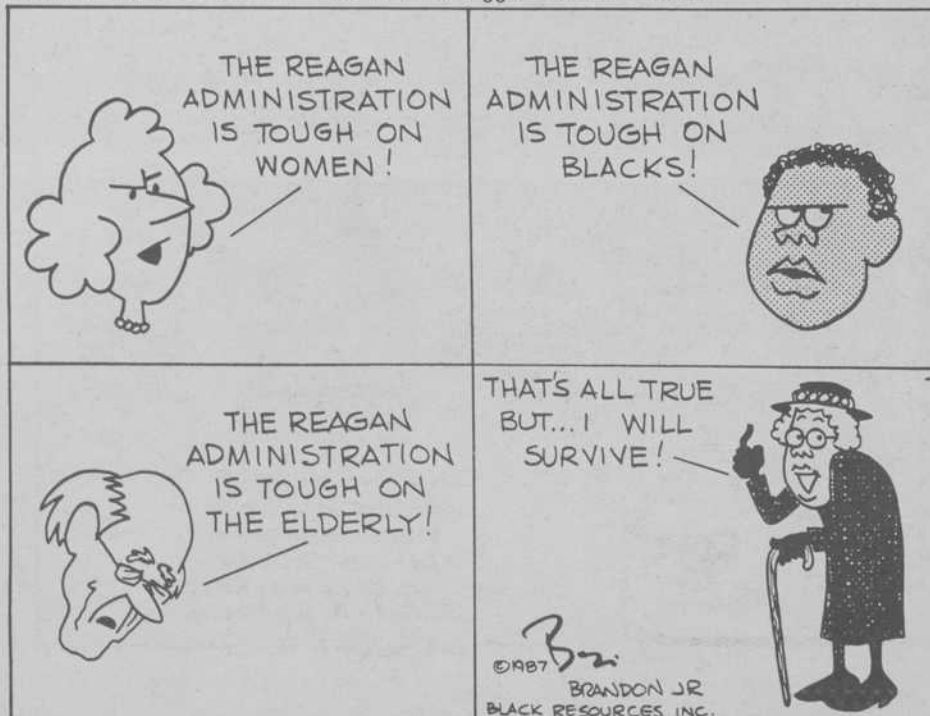
Sincerely,
Sandy Banks
METPRO Director

Editor's Note: See Page 4 for METPRO release mentioned above.

A suggestion: since they are so new at the business of directing blacks toward greater self-sufficiency, might these officials be big enough to turn to those black thinkers and doers who have intimately lived with the principle of practical self-help for longer than just a couple of months? There are those who have laid the groundwork through their research and study to give us a clear understanding of the facts behind how blacks really got into this mess. And there are others who, for years, have been helping blacks to get out of it.

Among those working to find long-term solutions are many neighborhood groups

See LEADERSHIP, Page 12



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