

Point of View

United Church of Christ
Commission for Racial Justice
CIVIL RIGHTS JOURNAL

by Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.

THE HARASSMENT OF AFRICAN AMERICAN LEADERSHIP

Physical threats against the lives of progressive African American leaders are an ever-present reality in the United States. However, this is not the only kind of attack which they risk when they speak out on the issues. A more veiled but equally insidious attack is the legal harassment of African American leadership. This was re-documented in a study earlier this year, entitled: "Harassment of Black Elected Officials: Ten Years Later." The report was prepared by Dr. Mary R. Sawyer for Voter Education and Registration Action, Inc., a Washington-based research institute.

An earlier report by Dr. Sawyer, conducted ten years ago, concluded: "The higher the level of office or the more outspoken the official, or the greater the influence and power — the higher the incidence of harassment [of a Black elected official]."

From the evidence presented in the current study, not much has changed. The weight of the evidence leads Dr. Sawyer to conclude that after much legal maneuver-

ing by local and federal prosecutors, usually via a grand jury investigation, "[An] indictment typically results in acquittal, or in a conviction which is ultimately overturned on appeal — which then receives a three-inch announcement on page 17 after the story had been front page, headline news for months on end."

And this is a major point of the study. Black elected officials under attack are not being tried by a jury of their peers. They are being tried in the press by prosecuting attorneys who selectively leak information helpful to the prosecution. Certainly this has been true of the witch-hunt now being carried out by U.S. Attorney DiGenova against Washington, D.C. Mayor Marion Barry. As hard as he has tried — and he's tried very hard — DiGenova can't seem to substantiate any charges against Mayor Barry. Thus, he has stooped to trying Mr. Barry in the press. And papers like the Washington Post and the Washington Times have been only too happy to oblige.

To Be Equal

Will Blacks Get The Jobs Of The Future?

by John E. Jacob

The Labor Department recently published a look at America's future workforce. It's called "Workforce 2000" and it says that skill and education requirements for the jobs our economy will generate are rising.

For the first time in history, over half of all new jobs will go to people with some college education. Only a minority of the new jobs will be available to high school graduates or dropouts, and they'll be the least desirable jobs.

And even those jobs will require higher skills levels. It's going to be hard to find jobs that don't demand at least minimal skills in reading, math and communications. Without higher educational achievements, the job train will speed right past minorities.

Here's what the report found about the black prospects for the future:

Blacks are now about a tenth of the workforce. By the year 2000, they'll make up twenty percent of all new entrants into the labor market.

But unless black educational achievement is drasti-

cally upgraded in that time, the report says blacks can expect to get less than ten percent of the new jobs. In effect, that means only about half of all new black workers can expect to find employment in the year 2000; the rest will be consigned to joblessness. We don't have to peer into the future to see the shrinkage of jobs for people without high skills and educational levels. In New York City, the telephone company found that 84 percent of applicants for entry-level jobs failed the test it gives prospective new employees. And big banks that pledged 250 jobs for young graduates of five selected high schools only hired 100. The rest failed a math test

the Justice Department had harassed scores of elderly Black voters. Another major difference between the investigations of African American and white officials is the disproportionate number of investigations aimed at African American elected officials. There are 490,770 white elected officials in the United States. Of that number only a small percentage are being investigated. In stark contrast, only 6,400 or 1.5% of the elected officials are African American. Yet when William Webster was FBI Director he admitted that 40% of African American elected officials were under investigation. This is not a random occurrence. It is a deliberate and systematic scheme to prevent further political empowerment of the African American community. In this nation, when a people are singled out for racial and political intimidation, the result impedes and strangles democracy for all citizens.

ally upgraded in that time, the report says blacks can expect to get less than ten percent of the new jobs. In effect, that means only



John E. Jacob

about half of all new black workers can expect to find employment in the year 2000; the rest will be consigned to joblessness.

We don't have to peer into the future to see the shrinkage of jobs for people without high skills and educational levels.

In New York City, the telephone company found that 84 percent of applicants for entry-level jobs failed the test it gives prospective new employees. And big banks that pledged 250 jobs for young graduates of five selected high schools only hired 100. The rest failed a math test

that was at the 8th grade level.

What's going on here? When people graduate from high school, they ought to be able to pass basic skills tests. The schools aren't do-

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

ing their job, and because of that our kids aren't getting jobs.

The Labor Department study ought to be setting off alarm bells all over the country. Those bells ought to be ringing in corporate offices, where executives should pressure the schools to produce the educated people they need if their companies are to survive.

And they ought to be going off in city halls and state houses all over the country, because political leadership has to realize that the future economy of their cities and states depends on making their schools work better.

Most of all, those alarm

bells should be sounding in minority communities. Because our kids are being shortchanged by inferior schooling that condemns them to lives of unemployment and dependence.

The black community has demonstrated it cares about education, and about the need to improve the quality of schooling our kids are getting. We'll have to put pressure on educators and on political leaders to ensure that our kids get quality schooling.

And we'll also have to get tough about doing homework, and demand more effort and better performance from our children.

The schools that serve disadvantaged youngsters should be getting more money, better equipment and the best teachers. Every community ought to be targeting the worst-performing schools for total overhaul and insisting on the changes that bring them up to the standards needed by our kids and our changing economy.

BUSINESS IN THE BLACK

By Charles E. Belle
Business Editor

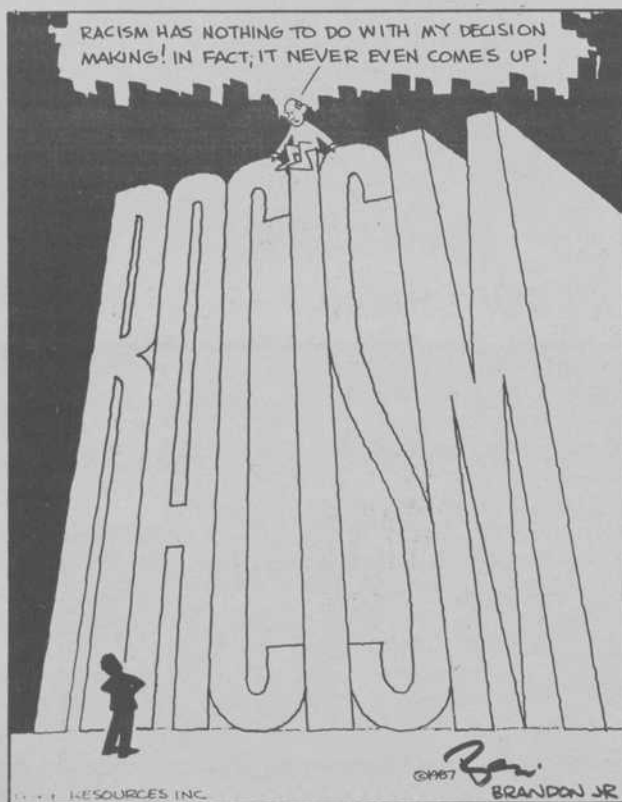
Census Bureau to Bypass Black Americans WHEN PEOPLE DON'T COUNT

It has been a bourgeois brand of thinking "that it is not just good enough to get out of the ghetto, but you have to forget about it." This argument has been augmented by asinine occupants of the White House. While most of middle and upper income white Americans have been content with the cutbacks in social services which benefitted both poor whites and minority Americans under the Reagan regime, Hitler himself could not have activated more maiming of the Black American community for care than the President's administration approved program not to

count people who fail to return census forms or whom they cannot find in the 1990 national census.

The U.S. Commerce Department under its Secretary selected by the President stated last month it would not adjust U.S. decennial population totals to account for people who are missed by census counters or fail to return census forms even though there is a public record of birth or other official means are available to measure their presence. This means that minorities will be especially penalized for the absence of their pres-

See BUSINESS, Page 16



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.