

# Point of View

## To Be Equal

# RIGHTS VETO IMPACTS ELECTION CAMPAIGN

by John E. Jacob

When Congress voted to override President Reagan's veto of the Civil Rights Restoration Act, it did more than just deliver a well-earned rejection of the President's stance on the bill.

It passed into law a significant measure that forbids discrimination by the recipients of federal monies. That plugs a gaping hole caused by the Supreme Court's *Grove City* decision, which limited federal funds cutoffs only to specific programs found to discriminate, and allowed other parts of an institution to retain their federal aid.

But perhaps of even greater significance is the political meaning of the veto override, for we'll be hearing its reverberations for quite a while.

The most important of these is the fact that Congress sent a resounding message that civil rights are not subject to loopholes. It's wrong to discriminate, and under no circumstance can we tolerate the use of federal money to subsidize discrimination.

The vote also confirmed President Reagan's lame duck status — he barely got a majority of his own party's senators to vote to sustain the veto. Congress overwhelmingly rejected his

spurious reasoning for vetoing a long-overdue civil rights measure.

The President's veto message — which tried to pit religious groups against civil rights advocates — not only failed to achieve its objective, but hardened the feeling that



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this President is hostile to civil rights.

The veto was just another in a long line of acts opposing civil rights aims. This Administration tried to allow subsidies to segregate schools. It fought the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday and tried to water down the extension of the Voting Rights Act. It destroyed the civil rights Commission, slowed down civil rights enforcement, and fought an eight-year war against affirmative action.

The big loser in the veto override, though, was George Bush.

By supporting the Presi-

dent's veto of the bill, Vice President Bush placed loyalty and expedience over principle. He lost a major opportunity to move to the political center and win the black votes crucial to his election campaign.

President Reagan's personal popularity allowed him to take unpopular anti-civil rights positions and still win.

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But George Bush doesn't enjoy that luxury. Polls show him running neck-and-neck against likely Democratic opponents, despite his many years in office and their relative obscurity.

He's going to have a very hard time winning large northern states and key southern ones without making inroads in the black vote. It's wrong to assume those votes automatically go to Democrats — several Republican senators and governors win black majorities because they identify with the concerns of their black constituents.

George Bush, early in his political career, took bold pro-civil rights positions and might have been expected to capitalize on that to campaign for black votes. Even

getting twenty to thirty percent of the black vote — as earlier Republican presidential candidates did — would assure victory.

But now the Vice President's support of the veto bill will haunt him throughout the campaign. Wherever he goes, voters will ask why he opposed the rights bill — and there isn't any answer good enough.

Certainly, loyalty to a President perceived as hostile to civil rights will not sway many black or white voters searching for a reason to support Mr. Bush.

And voters who have been asking what the Vice President stands for will find his abandonment of the important principles embodied in the bill disappointing.

United Church of Christ

## Commission for Racial Justice CIVIL RIGHTS JOURNAL

by Benjamin F. Chavis Jr.

### EASTER IN SOUTH AFRICA

Easter is the season of crucifixion and resurrection. It is the time in the Christian faith for spiritual rejuvenation when we celebrate the liberation and salvation of humankind through Jesus Christ. Nowhere in the world today is there a greater affront to the meaning of Easter than the racist apartheid regime of South Africa.

The oppressive government of P.W. Botha has embarked on its last, desperate attempt to remain in power. Not only have all of the anti-apartheid organizations in South Africa now been banned, but this brutal regime has also announced its intention to severely limit the activities of the church as a voice of protest against the continuing holocaust.

Anglican Archbishop Des-

mond Tutu and the Rev. Dr. Allan Boesak, President of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, together with other church leaders in South Africa, have called for a massive, nationwide celebration of liberation on Easter Sunday this year. The government of South Africa intends to prevent the services.

The church is the last non-violent voice that has not yet been extinguished by South Africa's repression. Bishop Tutu emphasizes, "Does the Government of South Africa really think it can dictate to the people of God in our quest for justice and freedom? We will not bow down and worship Botha. The idolatry and sin of apartheid must be ended now!" Rev. Boesak agreed, warning,

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## THE KERNER REPORT: 20 YEARS LATER

by Norman Hill

It's been 20 years since the Kerner Commission issued its report on the causes of the 1967 civil disorders that wracked black neighborhoods in many of this country's largest cities. The report concluded that the problems of blacks in America were caused primarily by white racism that was leading to the emergence of two societies.

The Commission also took great pains to distinguish between racist attitudes and racist behavior. In so doing, it was pointing out that the fundamental problems centered on racist behavior by American institutions, and the behavior of these institutions were influenced more by overt racist actions than by private attitudes.

The distinction was important. While racist behavior by institutions could be changed by laws and regulations, private attitudes could not. To cite an example, schools

could be desegregated by decree, regardless of the private attitudes of parents, students or teachers. This analysis, while not ignoring the necessity of revising private beliefs, stressed the democratization of American institutions.

are steadily climbing the corporate ladder, although perhaps not at a rate warranted by our overall population. These same trends hold true in the other institutions.

Private attitudes are more difficult to gauge. Ugly incidents such as Howard

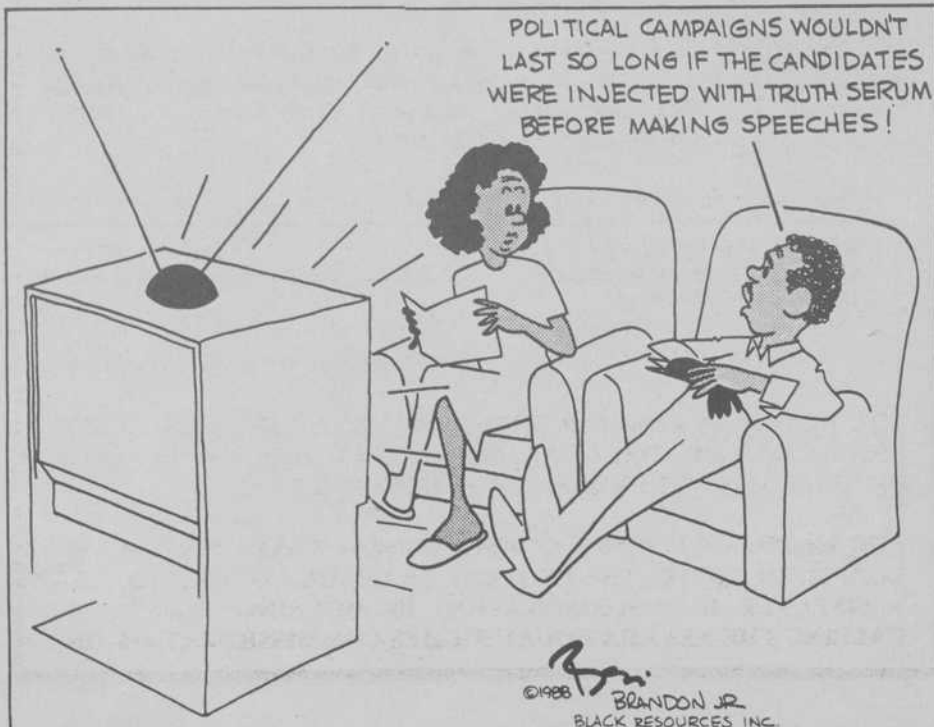
**Norman Hill is President of the A. Philip Randolph Institute.**

Much has changed since the report was issued two decades ago. Thanks to anti-discrimination legislation, regulations, and affirmative action, blacks have made substantial progress in such institutions as government, business, education, the public sector, and labor. Although overtly racist behavior continues to be a factor in black advancement, great strides have been made. There are more black elected officials than at any time in this nation's history, and a black man is demonstrating that he can be a viable candidate for president. Blacks

Beach, the harassment of a black FBI agent, and racist confrontations on several campuses are a dramatic reminder that racial intolerance is still with us. But it must be remembered that racism and bigotry are not a uniquely American phenomena. The relationship between the

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