

Point of View

We 'The People'

Celebrate By Voting

Throughout the country last year, commemorations were held honoring those who gathered in Philadelphia in 1787 and crafted the U.S. Constitution. Additional celebrations have been held (or have been planned) around the country this year and next in recognition of the 200th anniversary of the ratification process.

All of these various events are certain to be worthwhile and rewarding to all who participate. But the best possible celebration of the Constitution is to participate in democracy by registering and voting in the upcoming presidential election.

The right of every adult to participate in choosing the country's leadership is the heart and soul of the U.S. Constitution. It is a cherished right longed for by millions of people around the world. The modern struggle for the right to vote in other countries is constantly on the front pages of today's newspaper as voters are sometimes shot on the way to the polls and candidates are assassinated in the midst of their campaigns for office.

Our system of government was bought with the blood and sacrifice of Americans throughout our history. The only way to repay our debt to the men of genius who wrote the Constitution and the men and women of valor who have fought to preserve it is by exercising the right to vote. Through that simple act, you will have reaffirmed the greatness of America, which recognizes that the people . . . "We the People" . . . are the source of all power in our unique system of government. **li**

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United Church of Christ

Commission for Racial Justice

CIVIL RIGHTS JOURNAL

THE ASSASSINATION OF JULIAN PIERCE

by Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.

An assassination is always painful. It is particularly painful when it takes from us a leader who was beloved by his people and whose potential was so vibrant. Julian Pierce, a Lumbee Indian attorney and activist in Robeson County, North Carolina, was just such a man. He was killed on March 26th of this year.

Atty. Pierce had decided to run for a newly created Superior Court judgeship in the May primary. It was a dangerous decision. For this is a county in which drug corruption reputedly reaches even into the offices of the sheriff and other local officials. In addition, Pierce's opponent was Joe Freeman Britt, an established member of the power structure that runs the county. Mr. Britt is the current District Attorney and holds the world's record for sending more people to death row — primarily Native American and African Amer-

ican — than anyone else. In fact, he's in the Guinness Book of World Records for this dubious distinction.

Together, the Native American and African American populations make up 58% of Robeson County. Dexter Locklear, finance committee chairman for Pierce's campaign, noted that the passage of a recent school referendum showed the potential of the combined strength of the Native American and African American votes. Through Julian Pierce's candidacy, that coalition would have been strengthened even more.

Who was this man and why did someone feel he was so dangerous that he was shot-gunned to death in his own home? Pierce was born and raised in neighboring Hoke County, graduated from college to become a chemist and then returned for his law degree. After receiving his master's degree

To Be Equal

BLACK YOUTH ENDANGERED

by John E. Jacob

Black youth are at a terrible disadvantage in our society, and young black men are the most vulnerable group in America. The statistics show that half of all our children are growing up poor, and almost half are in female-headed households.

Black children are three times more likely than whites to be homeless, to be suspended from school, placed in classes for the retarded, or to be unemployed. They're five times more likely to become murder victims.

They drop out of school at nearly twice the white rate. Many are involved in criminal activity and have substance abuse problems. Homicide is the leading cause of death for young black men.

These awful figures are behind the black community's mobilization to fight the crack pushers in our neighborhoods, to become involved in programs that help black youth, and to foster a greater sense of responsibility among young men.

But it's clear that it will take a national effort, including government action, to change the conditions that lead to self-destructive behavior and help people to strive to advance themselves.

We have to help young people to act responsibly, and to do so in a society

in tax law from Georgetown University he worked with the Securities and Exchange Commission in Washington, D.C.

Atty. Pierce could have stayed in Washington, earning a comfortable living and working decent hours. Instead, he made the decision to return home to help empower his people. In 1978 he became the first director of Lumbee River Legal Services, formed to provide legal aid to the poor of the area.

Atty. Pierce prepared the petition for official Federal recognition of the Lumbee Nation which would give them control over their community and its economic development. Pierce was

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that offers few incentives for such behavior and has traditionally punished black men who assert their individuality and manhood.

And we need to get young people thinking ahead to plan for a doubtful future when there is little in their experience to convince them to



John E. Jacob

sacrifice the instant gratifications of sexual experience, drug highs, and the thrills of street life.

Those problems cannot be

solved without the efforts of both the black community and sound government policies that impact on our youth. Given that imperative to action, the silence of the presidential candidates about the problems of poor, urban youth is baffling.

They ought to be telling us how they plan to change a society that creates conditions in which even little children sell their lives so cheaply . . . in which hopelessness is a way of life . . . in which despair drives young people to destroy themselves and their communities.

The candidates should back national full employment programs, quality schools, guaranteed jobs for young people, and social support services that open doors of opportunity and help people to overcome their deficits to make it.

Jobs and training for all youngsters at risk are needed to draw them into the mainstream and ease the transition from school to work.

Poor young people should have equal access to college through direct aid and work-study programs, instead of loan programs that discourage college attendance.

And the candidates need to ask why an affluent kid in the suburbs can win scholarship aid to go to an expensive college while a poor kid from the inner city can't get a dime to go to a technical school that teaches a trade or a marketable skill.

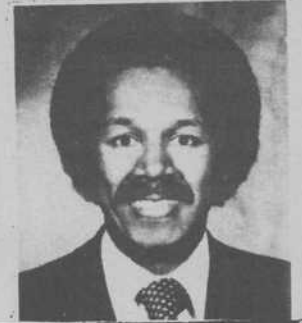
I suppose the list of what government has to do can be extended indefinitely—but the point is that today, the government is doing next to nothing given the depth of the problems.

NNPA FEATURE

COPING

by

Dr. Charles W. Faulkner



BLACKS PLAYING "THE ROLE"

There they are, lined up like beautiful cupie dolls, as if waiting to be swept off of their lovely feet.

Across the room from these gorgeous ladies stands a battalion of handsome black men, side-by-side, as if awaiting the arrival of the latest famous blues singer. Or, they might simply be protecting the wall that they are leaning against.

One of the men says to his pal, "look at those beautiful babes standing over there. Man, do they look good. See the one wearing that tight red dress? She acts like she owns the world. I'll bet she won't even dance if you asked her to."

"And that chick with the long hair looks so fly that she probably isn't even worth having. Dig that lady with the

smooth skin and neat, short hairstyle. I know she's at this party just to look good. Black babes ain't nothin' man. I wouldn't consider making a play on any of them just so they can embarrass me. Let's leave this lousy party."

In the meantime, the lady who is wearing the tight dress is saying to her friend, "look at those two fellows over there. Especially the one wearing the dark sport coat. He is just my type. I sure do wish he would come over and introduce himself. But you know how black men are. They think they are too good for us black women."

"See the one he is talking to? He looks like he really knows how to dress but I'll bet you he is just a con man who thinks he is

better than everyone else. I'd like to get to know him, but I know that he is full of a lot of jive. So I wouldn't give him my phone number even if he asked for it. All of those fellows look like they want to break some woman's heart. I don't like this party. Let's leave."

Repeated over and over again, from city to city, is this scenario that epitomizes the "Black Male-Female Problem;" a phrase has almost become a cliché. No one wants to take the chance of getting his/her feelings hurt so no one makes the aggressive move to befriend or, even, be friendly to the other individual. In fact, most people have been hurt so often in their efforts to be friendly with a member of the

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