

Point of View

CHILD WATCH

By Marian Wright Edelman
President Children's Defense Fund

An Open Letter to the Class of '88

Dear Young Men and Women:

In the next few months you will be hearing many speeches and getting much advice about your future. Mine is short and to the point:

Do not worry too much about what others think of you. You are about to get the only teen symbol that really matters: a diploma. Much more than a pair of designer jeans or a flashy piece of jewelry, this piece of paper makes a clear statement that you are a person who is trying to go somewhere. By graduating, you have boosted your chances of getting a good job at a decent wage and being able to support a family later on.

Do not become a parent before you are ready. Raising children is a lot of hard work. It is not at all glamorous, and its rewards come slowly. Parenthood will bring you joy, if you can wait until you can handle it.

Persist and be patient. Whether you are entering the job market or going on to college, you will be stepping into a new and more challenging arena. You will make some mistakes. That is less important than developing the habit of picking yourself up, reflecting hard and learning from your errors, and trying again. There is no short cut to the top. You have to work your way up step by step.

Stay away from open manholes. Some of the ones in your path are drug and alcohol abuse and crime. Many people who fall into these habits in their youth end up in jail, on the streets or dead. Others climb back out through a long, painful process of rehabilitation. It is smarter to sidestep these problems while you are still young and strong.

Make a commitment to something beyond yourself and take risks for what you believe in. We hear a lot about how cynical and uninvolved our young people are today. But millions of young people are still speaking out for social justice, participating in political campaigns, and voting in growing numbers. Be one of them. Fence-sitting is not a suitable occupation for someone who is young and black in America today.

Give something back to the black community. When you have become established as an adult, and are living comfortably, do not forget the many who are not. Too much of black America is still stuck on the bottom rung of the economic ladder. Reach back and give them a hand. Let your niece or nephew or friend know about a job opportunity. Become a mentor to a young boy or girl. You would not have a future without the efforts of your parents and grandparents and neighbors. Remember to pay back that debt.

Good luck.

Marian Wright Edelman is President, Children's Defense Fund, a national voice for children.

To Be Equal

FAIR HOUSING

by John E. Jacob

It's twenty years since the Fair Housing Act became law, but housing segregation is still rampant. In some cities it is even more pronounced than it was in 1968. The Act was flawed because it did not provide adequate penalties for discrimination.

It included provision for complex conciliation procedures, and victims of discrimination can sue. But most people prefer to put their energies into finding another place, not in becoming enmeshed in long, possibly costly litigation or procedures.



John E. Jacob

Even so, many discrimination complaints are filed with the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and housing-related suits in civil courts and complaints to state and local agencies are common.

HUD says there are about two million instances of housing discrimination each year.

The law notwithstanding, landlords and agents have perfected an array of subtle ways to practice discrimination at little risk to themselves, especially when the penalties for discriminating are so negligible.

The problem of housing discrimination is serious in the best of times, for it amounts to a denial of the right to shelter based on race. But in times of a shrinking stock of affordable housing, and next to no new housing for moderate income families being built, it takes on a new dimension.

For twenty years, civil rights and housing advocates called for putting some teeth into the fair housing laws; and for just as long, Congress, backed by special interests, has deferred action.

But the time is now at hand for amendments to the Fair Housing Act that make it an effective means of combatting discrimination, and not the laughing stock that it has become.

John E. Jacob is President of The National Urban League

Under the present law, HUD can mediate disputes and the Justice Department can sue those responsible for a pattern of housing discrimination.

But what's needed is a coordinated, swift and fair procedure that deters housing discrimination while providing remedies for its victims.

Congress is considering amendments that would create administrative law judges to handle complaints of housing discrimination. They'd have the power to award damages and impose hefty fines set by law.

Realtors oppose this, insisting on jury trials in housing cases.
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United Church of Christ

Commission for Racial Justice CIVIL RIGHTS JOURNAL

by Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.

DEMOCRATIC PARTY: BE FAIR TO JESSE JACKSON

Jesse Jackson is breaking all records as he continues to win votes and delegates in the race for the Democratic nomination for President. The last state primary elections will be held on Tuesday, June 7th. In California, New Jersey, Montana and New Mexico 466 delegates are at stake.

In both Los Angeles, California and Newark, New Jersey I saw thousands of people rally in support of Jackson as he continues to define the key issues of this presidential campaign. Dukakis and Bush are increasingly being forced to respond to Jackson on the critical issues of the day: the drug epidemic, full employment, equal justice, a comprehensive national child care program, quality education for everyone, comprehensive sanctions against South Africa, and nuclear disarmament and world peace.

Since 1983, Jackson has been responsible for registering millions of new Democratic voters. In fact, Jesse Jackson has done more to pump new life into the Democratic Party than any other person alive. The building of the Rainbow Coalition has not only expanded the Democratic Party; it has transformed the character of rank and file Democratic voters.

Now, as we move closer to the Democratic National Convention, to be held in Atlanta, Georgia from July 18-21,

one fundamental question needs to be raised. This is the question of fairness.

After all that Jesse Jackson and millions of his supporters have done to show their explicit support for a Democratic win in the upcoming Presidential election, will the leadership of the Democratic Party be fair to Jackson? Better yet, can the leadership of the Democratic party afford *not* to be fair to Jackson?

Fairness means giving respect, but fairness should be measured in concrete terms. For example, the Democrats now control the United States Senate, in part because of the central role that Jackson played in registering and mobilizing the Black vote throughout the South in 1986. The Democratic Senate has directly benefited from Jackson's efforts by acquiring the chairs of the major Senate committees, due to the Democratic victory in 1986.

Fairness means that a reasonable number of United States Senators should openly announce their support of Jackson for President. Yet, to date, not one United States Senator has formally endorsed Jackson's candidacy for President. Senators fall into the category of "super delegates" to the Democratic Convention and they have a responsibility to support the political mandate

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Justice Kennedy Betrays Faith Calif. Blacks, Others Had In Him

by Chester A. Higgins, Sr.
NNPA News Editor

Washington, D.C.
So much for Black faith in newly appointed U.S. Supreme Court Justice Arthur M. Kennedy.

His "swing" vote enabling a Reagan conservative majority to revisit what civil rights forces thought was settled law protecting the right of minorities to use a federal statute to require the private sector not to discriminate, took care of that.

Before he won Senate approval (his was the third nomination try by President Reagan to fill the moderate "swing" seat of Justice Lewis F. Powell who retired June 26, 1987), Kennedy reportedly had the confidence of Blacks in the area where he lived and worked as a Federal District Judge—in Southern California.

This despite the fact that a background check revealed Judge Kennedy belonged to several private clubs that ex-

cluded Blacks and women. However, no meaningful opposition was mounted at his hearing and he sailed through Senate nomination just like that.

However, before Kennedy had hardly warmed his Supreme Court seat, he joined a conservative majority—Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist, and Justices Sandra Day O'Connor, Antonin Scalia (another Reagan appointee who slid through

nomination without much opposition), and Byron R. White to review the 1976 court decision, Runyon v McCrary. This unprovoked vote to review a prior court decision dealing with the rights of minorities dismayed civil rights groups who expressed alarm over the now Reagan-dominated (Justices Marshall, Brennan, Blackman, and Stevens dissented) court's move against stare decisis (the doctrine of adhering to principles estab-

lished in prior decisions). If this activist court could, without any ostensible reason, revisit one court decision favoring civil rights, what would keep it from revisiting with an eye to overturn all recent, hard fought civil rights court decisions? This is the overriding question.

Walter L. Sutton, Jr., president of the National Bar Association, the largest organization of Black lawyers in the nation, was especially disturbed. In a formal statement released to NNPA in Washington, D.C., Sutton was blunt. Said he: "The message is clear. President

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