

Point of View

CHILD WATCH

By Martin Wright Edelman
President, Children's Defense Fund

Helping Children: A Time for Action

As elected officials begin their work—in the COngress, the state legislature, the state houses, and the White House — it is time for them to make good on their often-voiced commitment to children.

During 1988 children's needs took a bipartisan leap toward the center of the political marketplace. The election of 1988 rang out with campaign promises for America's children. Child care Centers replaced factory sites as the preferred backdrop for television news coverage. Presidential candidates issued position papers on children and both party platforms, competing for ownership of the future, pledged to invest in children. And Congress took a few important incremental steps to improve child health, child support, and child care (for welfare recipients).

At least 10 senatorial candidates featured children's ads in their campaigns (seven won) and 34 governors, Republicans and Democrats, prominently featured

investment in children in their state of the state addresses. Virginia Gov. Gerald Baliles, chairman of the National Governors' Association (NGA), has set the needs of children as a top NGA



priority. A new NGA task force to identify steps states can take to reduce infant mortality, provide health services for children, address the needs of dropouts, and meet working parents' needs

for child care, has been organized and is being chaired by Arkansas Gov. Bill Clinton. Republican governors like Oklahoma's Henry Bellmon, Illinois' James Thompson, and New Jersey's Thomas Kean are emphasizing investing in children in their states.

The national bipartisan consensus has been achieved on the importance of early childhood investment. It is long overdue. Now we have got to do it. The debate over the next four to eight years will be on the form, level, and timetable of that investment.

The recent *American Agenda* report, cochaired by former Presidents Ford and Carter, put investing in at-risk children among the top six immediate national priorities. The study, given to President Bush in November, calls for a \$2 billion increase in investment in each of the next eight years to ensure full funding for these successful children's programs: Head Start; the Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC); prenatal care, immunizations, and preventive health care; and Chapter 1 of the Elementary and Secondary Act education supplements. President Bush's

United Church of Christ

Commission for Racial Justice CIVIL RIGHTS JOURNAL

by Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.

SUPREME RACISM

The recent ruling by the Supreme Court of the United States against state and municipal minority set-aside programs is the latest in a series of anti-civil rights rulings by the Reagan-dominated court. Thus, another blow to affirmative action has been dealt.

The Supreme Court is the highest judicial body in the nation and its rulings have far-reaching implications. Theoretically, this court is supposed to display the greatest amount of objectivity and fairness in the quest to ensure justice for all citizens of the nation. Former President Reagan was successful, however, in stacking the court with persons who are ideologically opposed to equal justice when it comes to the rights and privileges of African Americans and other racial and ethnic citizens of the United States. In other words, the recent rulings by the Supreme Court

gave evidence that the majority of the current justices on the Supreme Court do not have the ability to prevent their own racial prejudices from influencing their decisions on matters of racial justice.

In writing the dissenting opinion, Justice Thurgood Marshall stated, "Today's decision marks a deliberate and giant step backward in this Court's affirmative action jurisprudence." Justice Marshall added that the Court's "unnecessary pronouncements will inevitably discourage or prevent governmental entities, particularly states and localities, from acting to rectify the scourge of past discrimination. This is the harsh reality of the majority's decision, but it is not the Constitution's command."

With the unemployment rate in the African American community soaring at an un-

precedented level, the action of the Supreme Court will not cause thousands of others in racial and ethnic communities to become unemployed. Minority set-aside programs were designed originally to ensure that a fair percentage of contracts, particularly government contracts, would be given to minority vendors and co-minority vendors and contractors. Of course, minority contractors were able to provide thousands of newly-created jobs as a result of this approach to affirmative action in the letting of contracts.

This ruling should not go unchallenged. Martin Luther King, Jr. taught us 25 years ago that it is immoral to obey an unjust law. We believe it would be equally immoral to accept this latest ruling of the Supreme Court without issuing a call to continue to demand affirmative action. Justice Marshall has taken exception to this ruling and we have a responsibility to do no less. When the Supreme Court engages in racism it is up to the people to become involved in the necessary legislative processes to rectify judicial injustice.

To Be Equal

by John E. Jacob

DEFINING AFRICAN AMERICAN

There is a growing feeling among black Americans that it's time for a name change.

In my own lifetime, the standard useage to describe people of color has evolved

campaign position paper, *Invest in Our Children*, overlaps significantly with the Ford-Carter agenda.

These investments are achievable in the near future and should be pursued as fast as the delivery systems of these already successful and proposed new programs can effectively serve more children. We are at a point in national life when we no longer have the luxury of time nor the unchallenged myth of a guaranteed tomorrow. We must act now.

from "colored" to Negro to black. Today, the term African American is coming into broad useage, and I'm all for it.

"Black" gained currentcy in the 1960s — the result of black pride and insistence on replacing society's negative connotations on earlier terms. It reflected a people's will to name itself, and the unashamed embrace of a term white society deemed impolite.

But times change and contexts change. Today's growing self-identification by

many blacks as African Americans suggests a new maturity in our community and a healthy attitude toward our past.

African American is also consistent with prevailing standards in identifying other groups. In pluralistic America, people identify themselves as Italian Americans, Polish Americans, Asian Americans, and so forth.

In each instance, the term reflects the duality of all Americans — their ethnic or
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For my people standing staring trying to fashion a better way from confusion from hypocrisy and misunderstanding, trying to fashion a world that will hold all the people all the faces all the Adams and Eves and their countless generations: let a new earth rise. Let another world be born.

MARGARET WALKER

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