

Point of View

To Be Equal

Save The Children

by John E. Jacob

The United States is often called the most child-centered country on earth, but the way we neglect our kids makes that very doubtful.

In virtually every other industrial nation, there is an array of child-centered income grants, health care and day care programs, and other family support programs.

But in America, government traditionally takes a hands-off policy. Everybody -- rich or poor -- is considered to have an equal opportunity to buy the best of everything for their kids, whether pre-school nursery care or medical services or decent housing.

So kids in affluent families get those indispensable aids to growing up healthy well-cared for, and well-educated, while children who are poor do not.

And that apparent equal opportunity works out in the real world to disproportionate

numbers of African American children being denied the basics they need to grow to fulfilling adulthood.

Almost half of all African American children are poor, but child services as a national issue transcends race. Two-thirds of all poor children are white.

Poor kids are most likely to



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have health problems, to have learning disabilities, to drop out of school, among other problems.

That makes federal cuts in children's services over the past years even more tragic. Income support and jobs programs for their

parents have been cut; prenatal care programs for poor women and their infants were slashed; aid to schools serving the poor was trimmed, and successful programs such as Head Start barely reach a fifth of eligible children.

In addition, while many families were forced off the Medicaid rolls by tightened regulations, some 37 million people, a third of them

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children, lack health insurance and have limited access to health care.

Congress needs to act on the vital issue of saving our kids. It's taking a small step toward that with a new child care bill that would subsidize day care programs.

The Senate's version, called the ABC bill -- the Act for Better Child Care Services -- appropriates money to the states for child care subsidies for low income families.

That will help many women take or keep jobs. Private child care services are so costly that low-and moderate income families just can't afford them. Many parents who want to work can't because of the unavailability of child care services.

Child care with an educational component has been proved to improve poor children's school performance and to increase their life chances.

ABC bill would make only \$1.75 billion available for child care subsidies, but it may be unrealistic to expect Congress to shake more money loose from a deficit-ridden budget at this time. Not because it can't -- but because it would be a politically difficult thing to pull off.

But even modest federal grants could stimulate matching funds from state and local governments, and help focus more attention on this crucial issue. Political realities will have to shift to make child services an item on the nation's priority list.

The bill also expands the earned income tax credit, which supplements the earnings of low income working families. That would give them more funds which to buy child care or health services -- far from the total answer to the problem, but certainly a long overdue step that would help.

Passing an improved child care services bill has to be seen as the first step, not the last. Our kids are our future, and the nation's future depends on how much of a break it's willing to give its disadvantaged kids.

Political Points

By

Assemblyman Wendell P. Williams

What came first the chicken or the egg? The answer to this question has been, and will be debated or many years. Two things we do know about this teaser is that chickens derive from eggs and eggs derive from chickens; secondly, if we never find the answer to this question, nobody really cares.

However, another seemingly unanswered question is, what comes from economic power or political power? Here are, two things we know is that economic power brings political power and political power brings economic power; Secondly, until we find the answer to this question, everybody had better care.

Moreover, regardless of the answer, we must score points to attain both forms of power. Why take chances?

Here is a list of things we all can do to work for political powers:

1. Participate and encourage every person you know to participate in the 1990 census count.
2. Conduct ongoing voter registration drives, they must not be seasonal.
3. Follow your elected officials voting records and

must face.

But the reality is that all too often we are only told the negative stories about African American children. All too often we do not hear the stories of the African American valedictorians who are graduating from high schools across this country, of the young people who volunteer with local civic and community groups; of the successful athletes, artists and scholars who are making significant contributions to their communities and, often, to their churches.

At a recent convocation of the Ministers for Racial and Social Justice and United Black Christians of the United (Church of Christ held in Fort Worth, Texas, eight-year old Wiletra Burwell of Warrenton, North Carolina spoke to nearly a thousand people who had gathered to hear mayor Andrew Young at that important gathering. Wiletra nearly brought the house down with her

keep them accountable.

4. Attend or make sure someone you know attends all city council, county commission or school board meetings.

5. Register to vote, and make sure you fully understand every candidates platform before you vote.

6. Support with time and or money organizations that fight for political fairness.

7. Read the newspaper daily and write letters to the editors each time you strongly disagree or strongly agree with an political issue.

8. Turn off the television and discuss political realities with your children.

9. Seek public office through election or appointment.

10. Report and make public every time you are treated unfairly or witness some injustice. Then Demand Answers!

Now to score points for economic power:

1. Encourage a state and local government to face the reality that a government that can make work for African-American men inside prisons after they commit crimes but cannot find work for African-American men before they

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eloquent speech, which she wrote herself and delivered impeccably.

But rather than tell about Wiletra's speech, I decided to reprint it here because it gives hope and challenge to us all:

I AM THE BLACK CHILD
 "I am the black child! All the world awaits my coming. All the earth watches with interest to see what I shall become. Civilization hangs in the balance, for what I am, the world of tomorrow will be. I am the black child! You have brought me into this world about which I know nothing. You hold in your hand my destiny. You determine whether I shall succeed or fail. Give me, I beg you, a world where I can walk tall and proud for I am the black child..."

I feel I must say to you that of us are not interested in drugs and vulgar rap music...I say to you adults this evening, pray for us. Forbid us not for

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United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice CIVIL RIGHTS JOURNAL

BY Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.

In Honor Of The African American Child

Every day we read in newspapers and see on our television sets story after story about the problems of African American youth. We are told about the crack epidemic and its impact on young people, about young people dropping out of school in large numbers, about gang wars and crime and violence. We are told and warned that in particular racial and ethnic children in the United States are now being doomed for future hardships. These are true

stories and stories which should challenge all of us to find new and effective ways to save especially African American children, who are twice as likely to die in their first year of life, who are three times as likely to be poor and four times as likely to be incarcerated between the ages of fifteen and nineteen as white American children. Indeed, the very future of an entire race is being challenged by all of these terrible facts which African American children