

Point of View

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TO BE EQUAL

RACE AT THE CORE OF U.S. HISTORY

By John E. Jacob

Public television's documentary series on the Civil War was the season's first big hit, with millions of homes tuned in to an exploration of a watershed event in the American past that has deeply influenced the way we live today.

But beyond the mythical figures and battlefield heroics of the war — and therefore, the series — is the blunt truth that the Civil War was about slavery.

Many people see the Civil War as a fight to preserve the Union and others as a fight to preserve state's rights.

But The Civil War wasn't about abstract principles. It was about human freedom — whether this nation would tolerate the enslavement of millions of Afri-

can Americans.

While the War may have started over the right of states to secede and may have been justified by appeals to abstractions, the cause of the conflict was rooted in the institution of slavery.

When the Union's war aims were expanded by the Emancipation Proclamation it became very clear that the war was really about human freedom.

Likewise, the issue of racial justice has been at the core of our entire national history.

From the drafting of a Constitution that recognized slavery and defined black people as "three-fifths" of whites for census purposes up to our own times, racial inequity has characterized our nation.

The issue of slavery was resolved by the War, but the issue of race was not.

Slavery was replaced, not by freedom, but by second-class citizenship and oppression.

Instead of getting a fresh start with "forty acres and a mule" the newly freed slaves were all re-enslaved through a system of white supremacy and discriminatory laws and practices that violated their constitutional rights as citizens.

African Americans were brutalized by terror and intimidation in the South, and by discrimination in the north to which so many fled.

Segregation was toppled only after bitter civil rights campaigns that cost many lives of both black and white freedom fighters.

Too many people think history started with the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and too many people think the struggle for civil rights ended with that law, too.

They're wrong. The civil rights

struggles of the 1960's were part of a continuing struggle for racial justice. Success in one area necessarily had to be followed by advancing to other stages — the constant goal being black-

(See JACOB, Page 7)



John E. Jacob

United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice CIVIL RIGHTS JOURNAL

By Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.

GENOCIDE IN AMERICA CONTINUES

Genocide is defined as the deliberate and systematic destruction of a racial, ethnic, political or cultural group. During the course of the last ten years,

Civil Rights Journal has documented numerous examples of the fatal results of deliberate and systematic racial oppression of the African American community. The public health statistics of African Americans, Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans and Native Americans continue to portray the fact that living in America is "hazardous to your health."

We have just returned from a tour of Altgeld Gardens Housing Projects on the southside of Chicago where more than ten

thousand African American children, women and men reside. Altgeld Gardens is surrounded by multiple toxic waste dumps, petro-chemical plants, and a toxic waste incinerator. Mrs. Hazel Johnson, a long time community activist and resident of Altgeld Gardens stated, "Our people here are unjustly exposed to deliberate dumping of cancer causing substances in our very midst...It is another form of genocide." The cancer rate among the residents of Altgeld (See CIVIL, Page 7)



African-American Newspapers The Life Blood of Our Struggle

By Assemblyman
Wendell P. Williams

The morning after Minister Louis Farrakhan delivered his message to 3,000 plus at the Cashman Field Complex, conversations on streets everywhere were filled with reactions to the Minister's visit here in Las Vegas. One of the more interesting topics surrounded the manner in which the press covered the event. Many people felt that the daily newspapers did not cover the event "strong enough". Surely not as strong as they tend to cover violence and crime that occur in the African-American Community.

Although I share the frustrations and resent-

ment of many African-Americans when it comes to the history of our treatment by the press and the insensitive posture it has taken concerning our true view points, I'm also frustrated each time we fail to realize the history, the importance, the potential and the urgency of supporting African-American Newspapers. It only seems logical and economically sound to promote the source of information that we can depend on to report our existence and purpose fairly, yes, if we agree that Minister Farrakhan was right in his call for supporting African-American Business and increasing the positive communication among us, then don't forget the African-American Newspapers

are also businesses and they deserve our support.

More importantly, we must never forget the role that African-American Editors and their newspapers have played in our struggle for equality.

After the Revolutionary War, free African-Americans became increasingly active in the anti-slavery movement. Some of them had fought in the war. Others had escaped to freedom during the war or had gained freedom through military service. All of them had heard the words "liberty" and "freedom" over and over and not only desired such a state for themselves but also for the black millions still in bondage. They began to speak about free-



Assemblyman Wendell P. Williams

dom, write about freedom and African-American Newspapers were basically the only outlet we had.

The first African-American newspaper published in the United States was Freedom's Journal published by John P. Russwurn. Russwurn, along with Samuel E. Cornish, began publishing Freedom's Journal on March 16, 1827. By this time, the liberalism of the American revolution had faded. Serious proposals were advanced by some of the leading men of the U.S. to send all free men of color to Africa. States had begun (See POLITICAL, Page 7)

