

Point of View

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United Church of Christ • Commission for Racial Justice

CIVIL RIGHTS JOURNAL

IMMORAL STATE OF THE UNION

By Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.

Millions of Americans were tuned to their television and radios to hear the President of the United States deliver the 1991 State of the Union message to the nation. President George Bush began the speech by emphasizing, "We stand at a defining hour." To our dismay much of what the President had to say dealt with the United

States attempt to "redefine" the world in terms of American "supremacy" and domination of the emerging "new world order."

We challenge the self-idolatrous and self-righteous tone and substance of the State of the Union speech. The immortality of the Persian Gulf War as well as the immorality of the growing suffering of millions of poor persons throughout the nation can-

not be concealed by the President's latest attempt to assert, "America has served the world as an inspiring example of freedom and democracy."

Bush further asserted, "But we also know why the hopes of humanity turn to us. We are Americans; we have a unique responsibility to do the hard work of freedom. And when we do, freedom works." The problem is

that Bush's understanding of the scope and range of "freedom working" is too narrow and exclusively Eurocentric. For Bush, the emerging "new world order" began with the reunification of Germany and the democratization of eastern Europe.

Yes, we are also pleased to see a greater sense of democracy spread throughout Europe. But Europe is not the whole world

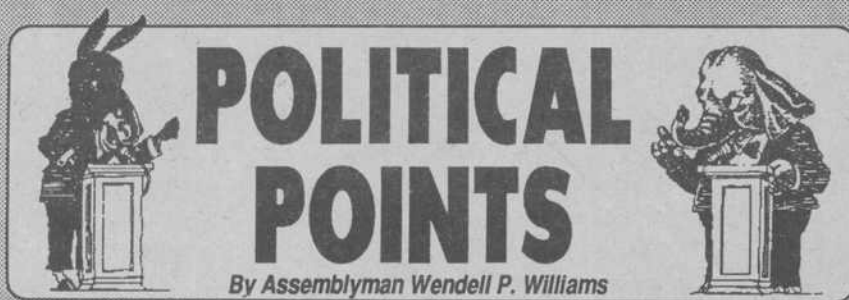
and neither does the rest of the world revolve on a European axis.

Most African Americans were stunned by the arrogance of the President proclaiming his vision of the United States as the model for the rest of the world to follow.

Freedom does work. But the reality for African Americans and the many other racial and ethnic communities in the United States is that our struggle to experience limited freedom and justice in America continues to be a painful reality permeated with racism. The President says that the 21st century will be the "American Century." If it is true that much of American foreign

policy emerges out of domestic policy, then the handwriting is on the wall. The global community will become more racially as well as geo-politically polarized. The rich will get richer and the poor will get poorer. Those with the highest degree of lethal technology will rule those of less technological advancement.

Human history, however, is replete with the fall of empires. No nation should seek to be "the super power" of the world. The present situation in our nation is full of social contradictions. But one thing is certain: immoral behavior at home and abroad will not bring a lasting justice nor peace.



By Assemblyman Wendell P. Williams

A DREAM DEFERRED

If you listen to most people who observe the birthday of the late Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., you would almost believe that the only thing that Dr. King did during his whole life was to dream. Yes, one would think that the only vision that Martin experienced was during that famous "dream." However, most people in the world who looked beyond the extreme highlights of King's fruitful life and investigated the true ideals of King's mission, understand that he not only dreamed, but moved so, he worked, planned, thought, sacrificed, organized, studied and he challenged the conscience of the entire world. Through King's life we know he had many, many dreams, however if he were around today, those same dreams would be a nightmare!

For instance, he probably never dreamed that in 1991, nine million African-Americans who could vote, wouldn't.

He probably never dreamed that in 1991, that this nation rising up to live out the true meaning of its creed would mean the promotion of Willie Horton and David Duke.

He probably never dreamed that in 1991, that "holding these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal" would mean the nation's president would veto a Civil Rights Bill and blame it on quotas.

He probably never dreamed that in 1991, little children would be bused past ten schools just to get to one; not because of the content of their character but because of the color of their skin.

He probably never dreamed that in 1991, after some people struggled hundreds of years to overcome oppression imposed by those who would rather hate, would now strive to become carbon copies of their enemies.

He probably never dreamed that in 1991, after not being able to shop at white-owned businesses and sometimes beaten and even killed if we tried, now years later we refused to shop anywhere else.

He probably never dreamed that in 1991, 20 years after Viet Nam, the same people, the poor and young men and women of color, still bear the heaviest burdens both on the front line at war and at home.

He probably never dreamed that in 1991, the phrase "all de-

liberate speed" in the Supreme Court school desegregation decision really meant centuries would pass before true educational opportunity and moral freedom would be given to all students.

He probably never dreamed that after young students staged "sit-ins" to demand equal education, that in 1991, students "sit-in" to avoid any education.

He probably never dreamed that in 1991, the hand rope would transform into the "choke-hold."

He probably never dreamed that in 1991, after African-Americans were not allowed to walk downtown in Las Vegas, several decades ago, today UNLV basketball players who are mostly African-Americans refuse to even respond to any invitation to ride downtown in the 1991 Dr. King Parade.

He probably never dreamed that in 1991, that people who burn flags are still hated more than people who burn crosses.

He probably never dreamed that in 1991, we would have a sheriff that tries to be a cross between John Wayne and Bull Connor.

He probably never dreamed that in 1991, we would still be



Assemblyman
Wendell P. Williams

singing like Negroes, "We shall overcome."

He probably never dreamed that in 1991, every 53 seconds a child dies because of poverty in the wealthiest nation on earth.

He probably never dreamed that in 1991, some people still think that money can buy them a piece of the American pie, still not realizing that it's not where you live but how you live.

He probably never dreamed that in 1991, that many of us don't realize that Miss Daisy can drive her own car.

He probably never dreamed that in 1991, after years of being mistreated by the general media, many still won't advertise or buy subscriptions to their own newspaper.

Yes, King probably never dreamed that in 1991, 25 years after the Voting Rights Act, many still don't realize that democracy can never be of the people and for the people if it's not by the people.

TO BE EQUAL THE FLAWED DOMESTIC AGENDA

By John E. Jacob

Why can't our national leadership be as aggressive in tackling domestic issues as it is in dealing with critical international ones?

Let Sadaam Hussein threaten our energy supplies and we're in there with bombs flying.

But faced with the even more serious threat posed by the erosion of workforce skills, the decline of our cities, and the growth of an undereducated army of disadvantaged, national leadership looks the other way.

In the long run, though, urban decline and poverty can bring America to its knees.

We ought to be mounting an Urban Marshall Plan to educate



JOHN E. JACOB

and train all of America's people and to create jobs and training opportunities by rebuilding our infrastructure.

The stock answer is that we can't afford it.

But if we can afford a billion dollar a day war in the Gulf and
(See To Be Equal, Page 20)

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