

Point of View

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United Church of Christ • Commission for Racial Justice

CIVIL RIGHTS JOURNAL

"BUTHELEZI, SAVIMBI AND CLARENCE THOMAS"

By Benjamin Chavis, Jr.

The hearings now being conducted by the Senate Judiciary Committee to determine the fate of Clarence Thomas' confirmation to the Supreme Court of the United States should be viewed in a historical context. Although numerous African American and progressive organizations and churches have started their public opposition to the appointment of Thomas to the nation's highest court, powerful political and economic forces have to attempt to steam role Thomas' appointment.

What does David Duke, Senator Jesse Helms, and President Bush have in common? It is their devotion and strong support of Clarence Thomas' efforts to prevent racial and social justice.

What does Buthelezi in South Africa and Savimbi in Angola have in common with Clarence Thomas in the United States? It is their opportunism against the interests of freedom and justice. It is their unmitigated gall to place their own, narrow, wicked and selfish desires over the interest of millions of persons who are crying out and demanding justice.

We salute the Congressional Black Caucus, NAACP, National Baptist Convention-USA, The Progressive National Baptist Convention-USA, Inc., The National Baptist in America, National Council of Churches and the array of other national organizations who have started their forthright position to Thomas being on the Supreme Court.

Today, as we witness the continuing struggle in southern Africa against racist apartheid, we have seen how persons of African decent like Buthelezi and Savimbi have been used to further the

objectives of racial oppression. Such is the case with Clarence Thomas, who has become the young "darling" of the "far right."

Another appalling similarity between Buthelezi, Savimbi and Thomas is their stated disregard for the rights of people. The nomination of Thomas cannot cover up his public record of not upholding the rights of the victimized.

The National Council of Churches Prophetic Justice Unite has developed a researched "critique" of Thomas' past maneuvers to weaken civil rights enforcement. According to this "critique", in 1981-1982 Thomas was the Director of the Office of Civil Rights in the Department of Education, and from 1982-1988 Thomas was Chair of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. In these two positions, the document states, "He was a public official sworn and paid to carry out certain civil rights responsibilities. In instance

after instance, he was dilatory, even defiant, in declining to do what the law—as embodied in stature, case law and court orders—required him to do."

One specific example of Thomas' tenure as Chair of the EEOC, was his refusal to protect the rights of the elderly from employment discrimination. This resulted in the lost of millions of dollars in pension benefits for older workers, many of whom were African American workers.

We also in the conclusion of the Leadership Conference on Civil rights: "We oppose the Thomas nomination because we believe that Clarence too often allowed his personal opinions to interfere with his constitutional and statutory responsibilities to enforce civil rights laws."

No to Buthelezi! No to Savimbi! No to Clarence Thomas!

TO BE EQUAL

WHY A MARSHALL PLAN FOR AMERICA WILL WIN

By John E. Jacob

When I first proposed that America adopt an Urban Marshall Plan to invest in its infrastructure and its human resources, the response was a mixture of "great idea" and "it will never happen."

The nay-sayers were transfixed by the enormous obstacles to such a sweeping national plan.

Among them: fiscal conservatism that resists taxes and spending, no matter how sound; mistrust of government's ability to act creatively, and political barriers to programs that help the poor.

I'm not foolish enough to think that a bold new domestic agenda will be an easy sell, but I am realistic enough to know that economic realities make a Marshall Plan for America inevitable.

The current recession has exposed the gap between America's ambitions and the need required to fulfill those ambitions.

For example, while national leadership talks about the importance of education, state and local governments lay off teachers in a vain attempt to balance budgets.

They are also cutting back on infrastructure maintenance, even as bridges rot and highways deteriorate.

And while everyone agrees that we need to upgrade worker

training and train the unskilled, we have no effective national program to implement those goals.

We revel in our position of world leadership. But maintaining that leadership demands a modernized infrastructure and a world-class skilled labor force.

That requires making the necessary investments. Because we refuse to do so, other countries are pulling ahead of us. U.S. productivity growth lags our major competitors and productivity is the key to competitiveness and to rising living standards.

So we're getting poorer while they're getting richer.

That erosion of America's economic strength can only be countered by a long-term, national plan to make maximum use of all of our people and to bring our economy into the 21st century.

A Marshall Plan for America would slam the brakes on our decline by creating jobs and training opportunities while renewing and modernizing the infrastructure every society depends on.

I've suggested a modest \$50 billion a year, ten-year program — really a drop in the bucket for a nation whose national government has a \$1.2 trillion annual budget loaded with nonessential spending and waste.

Marshall Plan funds would

be targeted to priority areas — developing a national telecommunications network, repairing highways and bridges, investing in early childhood programs and schools, and training the underutilized disadvantaged.

A key goal would be to bring job, education, and training opportunities to the masses of people who today have no productive role in our economy.

A Marshall Plan administrator would coordinate the programs and ensure they are efficient and cost-effective, and that they do what they are supposed to do.

Such a program is long overdue, and even fiscal. Conservatives recognize that only such a broad-based federal effort can get America off the down esca-



JOHN E. JACOB

lator.

A Marshall Plan for America would back up all the rhetoric about being number one, developing a world-class school system, and having a competitive work force with the necessary investments.

There's a growing realization that only a national commitment to a program of long-term, strategic investment in the nation's human resources and in the physical infrastructure that supports economic activity can reverse U.S. decline.

And that's why — however long or hard the struggle for it — a Marshall Plan for America is inevitable.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

The Assassinations of Eric Eackles and Calvin Long On August 20, 1991 Merit a Federal Investigation

The following is a set of facts and circumstances which Eric Eackles' family and friends assert give cause to believe that the murders of Eric Eackles and Calvin Long were more than simply "gang related shootings" and that these murders merit investigation by federal authorities:

based on falsified police reports which stated that certain informants identified Eric Eackles as a shooter, but the charges were dismissed when sworn statements from the same informants denying they had identified Eric Eackles as a shooter were submitted to the City Attorney's Office.

1. Eric Eackles was arrested on numerous occasions by Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department and North Las Vegas Police Department officers but was never convicted of a felony or gross misdemeanor.

4. It is the contention of Eric Eackles' family and friends the arrests of Eric Eackles in the past were evidence of continuous police harassment of Eric Eackles and not evidence of criminal activity.

2. Eric Eackles was arrested on a number of occasions on trumped up charges such as loitering and unlawful assembly which charges were not pursued by the City Attorney's Office for lack of merit.

5. Eric Eackles was once a member of the Rolling 60s street gang, but dropped his involvement from all gang activities in 1988. Unfortunately, the police still identified Eric Eackles with the gang and harassed him on that basis. Eric Eackles' own poverty bespeaks of no involvement on the part of Eric Eackles (See Letter to Editor, Page 3)

3. In 1989, Eric Eackles was arrested by the North Las Vegas Police for attempted murder

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