

Point of View

The views on these editorial pages are those of the artists and authors indicated. Only the one depicted as the Sentinel-Voice editorial represent this publication.

TO BE EQUAL

KEEP RACIAL STEREOTYPES OUT OF THE CAMPAIGN

Is welfare going to become the Willie Horton of the 1992 presidential election campaign?

There's little question that a significant number of voters are responsive to racial appeals. Back in the 1988 campaign, television ads featuring a black convict who killed while on prison leave sent a deeper and more pernicious message than "let's get tough on crime."

It was a blatant appeal to racial antagonism, but because that infamous ad has become a permanent embarrassment it's likely that the major candidates

will be more sensitive about making such openly racist pitches in 1992.

But there's more than one way to get the message across, and vote-hungry politicians are likely to try more subtle attempts to play to the racial prejudice of many voters.

All candidates ought to get a message of their own across to their campaign staffs and political consultants — that no racial stereotyping should play any part in their campaigns, and that any campaign ad or speech that contains a hint of racial insensi-

tivity should be scrapped.

The Democratic candidates, with their heavy reliance on African American voter support, are less likely to fall into that particular trap, although the danger exists and is even stronger when it comes to stereotyping other minorities.

The combination of deep recession and trade conflicts make it possible that in trying to get across the message of protecting American jobs, candidates could cross the line into fanning resentment against Asian Americans and immigrant

minorities.

Asian American organizations are reporting a rise in racist harassment, and just last month a Japanese businessman who had been the target of anti-Japanese remarks was killed in California.

On the Republican side, the danger looms that conservative opposition to social welfare programs will be broadened to identify unpopular programs with the black poor. One candidate — Pat Buchanan — has already made statements many have interpreted as anti-Semitic, anti-

black, and anti-minority.

The President's State of the Union address included an attack on welfare dependency. Later, Vice President Quayle made a highly publicized speech in New York attacking welfare.

I'm not ruling out the possibility that those prominent attacks on welfare simply reflect conservative philosophy.

But neither can I rule out the possibility that an army of political consultants has taken a leaf from David Duke's book and decided to make welfare a hot button issue — using it to trigger racial associations and play to racial prejudices.

In other words, loose attacks on the welfare system could become this year's equivalent of the Willie Horton ads.

That can't be allowed to happen. When candidates go that route, their opponents should counterattack with the facts, and aggressively condemn the underlying racism.

The facts are that the over-

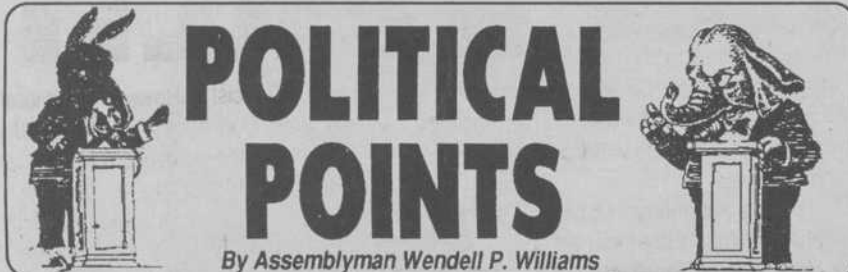


JOHN E. JACOB

whelming majority of people on welfare in America are white. African Americans are only 40 percent of welfare recipients, although blacks are three times as likely as whites to be poor.

And the stereotype of huge numbers of people permanently on welfare is false. Less than a fourth are on the welfare rolls for five years or more, and the overwhelming — 82 percent — stay on welfare for two years or less. If candidates want to cut the fast-rising welfare rolls they should address the real issue — the lack of jobs that keeps people in poverty and creates the "new poor," victims of layoffs.

Bashing the poor is an ugly and divisive tactic — a transparently racist ploy that should have no place in a national political campaign.



By Assemblyman Wendell P. Williams

"I DON'T DO VOTE"

You've almost got to be declared legally blind if you have not realized that the political season is upon us once again. However, election year 1992 will be a little different and more intense than the last season because this year is a presidential election year. Surely a time to expect the unexpected from the most unexpected individuals.

This election year also reminds me of one of the many negative instances as well. Like the hot afternoon of August 1990 when I was returning from a rough, hot, sticky and challenging day campaigning door-to-door, during my last political race. As I was just deciding to quit for the day, I noticed a very distinguished looking sister who was immaculately dressed with freshly done nails and her hair was laid "Ace-Duced" to the side. Truly a very smart-looking and progression woman. One who knew the intelligence involved in knowing how important exercising the right to vote was. Even though I was extremely exhausted from the door-to-door grind, I knew it would not be politically smart to pass up

a definite voter, without at least trying to talk to her about my platform. Just as I was getting in high gear with my spill, she suddenly threw both hands in the air, with each freshly done nail on both hand glittering with various types of gold trinkets; and said as her head slowly rocked from side to side with a slight jerk, "I don't do vote!" I walked away in total disbelief, wondering how could we still be locked into mental slavery in 1990. Just at that exact moment she looked back at me as she strutted away and said "Anyway, why should I?"

The real tragedy about that incident was not that particular lady, but rather the reality of the number of Americans, especially African-Americans, who feel exactly as the lady did, and many even stronger. For instance, during the last national election, there were 27 million eligible African-American voters in the U.S.; however only a mere 7 million of that number got out and voted. That leaves a whopping 20 million neglecting their responsibility.

It must be remembered that he or she who makes policy, are the controllers of society. They

dictate every single aspect of our lives, that's the power of politics. However the power of politics should really be termed as "potential energy." Because politics is played by showing a flexed muscle that's ready to strike a shattering blow at a moments notice, not by constantly lashing out. It's the art of leverage. In short, he who sits at the decision table makes all the decisions. It only makes sense to have a seat at that table. And to be able to sit at that table you have to first "do vote."

Prior to the 1964 and '65 Civil Rights Legislation African-Americans caught pure hell about wanting the legal right to vote from people who they felt somewhat understood their concerns. In the large urban centers of the North many could vote without difficulty and they possessed a considerable amount of political influence. However in the South the scene was totally different. There white politicians and police could treat African-Americans as they wished with no fear of redness at the polls.

In many cities of the South attempts to exercise the right of franchise were met with mob



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threats, Klan action, the bombing of churches and the dynamiting of Moses. Seventy-year old Gus Courts was shot and his grocery riddled with bullets in the Mississippi town where he tried to vote. He was forced to give up his business and flee. School Boards fired teachers who took part in voter registrations. Whole communities of African-American tenant farmers were evicted in rural Tennessee.

In Tuskegee Alabama the gerrymandering was so strong in 1957, it eliminated every African-American entirely. An African-American union leader received six months on a chain gang for ordering a poster with the slogan: VOTE TODAY FOR A BETTER TOMORROW. After his conviction, he and his son were beaten by a mob outside the courthouse. It seems to me that these few incidents alone would make one feel some responsibility to "Do Vote."

If not, heres another try - During a voting drive in Georgia in 1962, eight African- (I Don't Do Vote, Page 17)

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor:

I am forwarding this letter to inform you of an "Oasis in the Desert." While this description is admittedly quite generic, it is very fitting in regards to an organization which exists within Las Vegas, Nevada. This organization is Committed 100 Men Helping Boys. Committed 100 Men Helping Boys is an organization made up of African American professionals, both blue and white collar, totally dedicated to salvaging the African American male youths of today.

This is an organization born out of vision, a vision of reclaiming our youths of today. We strive to take our youths back from gang activity, crime involvement, horrendous levels of incarceration, and counterproductive sexual activity. This is an organization which prides itself in tackling the problem head-on. The black male is

(See Letter to the Editor, Page 17)

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