

# 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

# DECLINING ECONOMY CUTS WAGES, LIVING STANDARDS

By John E. Jacob

Evidence is piling up that America is speeding down the road to a sharply lower standard of living.

Real wages are nose-diving for most of America's workers. More of the workforce is in jobs that don't pay enough to keep a family out of poverty. And the gap between the vast majority of citizens and the top handful of earners is widening.

You expect that to happen in a recession, and in fact the slump has led to higher unemployment, more people on welfare rolls, and a record number — nearly one out of ten Americans — receiving food stamps.

But the trends toward lower wages and greater income inequality predate the current recession.

They started in the 1970s and gained momentum in the booming eighties, proving once again that overall economic growth doesn't necessarily benefit everybody, or even most people.

The Census Bureau reports that from 1979 to 1990, workers in low-wage jobs rose from 12.3 percent to 18 percent of the workforce.

Currently, a fourth of all full-time black workers are in low wage jobs, as are almost a third of all Hispanic workers, while the proportion of men aged 25-34 earning below-poverty wages tripled.

Couple that with the sharp rise in unemployment for younger men and you have a good explanation for the growth in families headed by single women — too many young men can't get jobs that allow them to support a family so they don't marry.

Real wages — earnings adjusted for the effects of inflation — fell across the board in the 1980s. The lower the wage group, the more their wages fell.

And the gap between the college-educated and high school graduates, which had been moving closer, is growing — in the 1980s, the earnings gap between those groups widened by 16 percent for men and 12 percent for women.

According to a study by the Economic Policy Institute, the only groups to experience rising wages in the last five years were men with post-graduate educations and women with some college education.

Everybody else slid down the wage scale. At the same time, the top of the income pyramid did very well indeed.

A Congressional Budget Office Study found that between 1979 and 1989, the after-tax

income of the top one percent of American families doubled while the middle twenty percent of families fell by 5.2 percent and the bottom fifth lost 10.4 percent. Those studies have been controversial, but the basic outlines hold even when the numbers are adjusted to account for changes in family size, pre-tax income, or income from capital gains.

Any way those numbers are sliced, they still show a long-

term trend to lower wages and greater inequality.

Those trends are largely responsible for the sour mood among voters today. They are angry at their eroding living standards and at the unfairness of the way the system works.

The candidates will have to stop defending the indefensible or offering band aids. Voters want solid strategies that move wages up and reduce glaring inequalities.

The candidates have to address the issue of low-skill jobs being driven off-shore while technology drives their value down. And they have to come up with a game plan to create more and better jobs. One strategy is to beef up education and training programs to move people from low-pay, low-skill jobs to higher paying ones.

Another is to ensure that work results in above-poverty incomes.



JOHN E. JACOB

Either a rise in minimum wages or government wage supplements would do the trick. But the principle that work should enable people to escape poverty has to be maintained.

And a Marshall Plan for America that creates jobs and training opportunities in rebuilding the economic infrastructure would put us on a sound course of economic growth and expanded opportunities.

## CIVIL RIGHTS JOURNAL

# STRIKE FOR FREEDOM IN SOUTH AFRICA

By Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.

The leadership of the African National Congress once again has successfully demonstrated the ability to mobilize effectively the masses of the people of South Africa against the apartheid regime. In the wake of one of the largest and most effective protest strikes in history, Nelson Mandela and the ANC have served the final notice that racist apartheid must be dismantled completely with dispatch and urgency.

Over five million workers participated in the "Strike for Freedom." The August 3-4, 1992 labor strike and subsequent massive "March on Pretoria" was a living testimony to the fact that the organized and mobilized will of the people does have the power to make a difference.

Although there were numerous violent acts of intimidation that attempted to subvert the ANC call for the strike, millions of South Africans responded in unity and action. The Secretary General of the ANC, Cyril Ramaphosa, declared, "The disenfranchised have unmistakably voted with their feet for democracy now through participation in this mass action." Mandela, Ramaphosa and other leaders of the African National Congress have come under heavy verbal attack from both De Klerk and Mangosuthu Gathsha Buthelezi, the leader of Inkatha.

It is a tragic shame that even in the final hours of apartheid, Buthelezi continues to play a

role of the government's apologist. The negative rhetoric from Inkatha against the ANC has helped to fuel fratricide in South Africa. For example, just before the beginning of the strike, Buthelezi encouraged his followers to act to prevent the strike by actually saying that the political negotiation." Pronouncements like that will only serve the interests of the oppressive forces of apartheid.

When truth is spoken through demonstrative action by the oppressed to those who oppress, it sets the stage for change to occur. This is the reason that despite the diversionary actions of persons like Buthelezi, the struggle against racism and economic exploitation in South Africa will continue to accelerate. Truth and history are on the side of the African National Congress and nothing short of a

total dismantling of apartheid will do.

Here in the United States, it is important for the anti-apartheid movement to keep the pressure on during this advent to the final moment of victory. Vigilance and strong acts of solidarity are still necessary. We must not let our sisters and brothers in South Africa strike alone. We must act in concert with them and do our part here to demand freedom and justice in South Africa and in America.

We have heard that De Klerk has changed his previous opposition to the establishment of an "interim coalition government" toward a free and democratic South Africa. The success of the strike and recent demonstrations, at least now, have caused a political situation where De Klerk is willing to entertain the idea of negotiating the issue

of the interim government before the end of this year. The interests of freedom and justice should not be delayed. There is no justification for waiting until the end of the year to negotiate an interim governmental structure.

The time to act is now. Every day sees more and more political murders and violence in South Africa. The time to establish and negotiate an interim solution is now, not later. The people of South Africa have already endured a holocaust of genocide and unprecedented exploitation. The time to end this madness is now.

The strike for freedom in South Africa is a strike for freedom throughout the world. As the world "re-orders," let us make sure the suffering of the people of South Africa is not forgotten.



BENJAMIN F. CHAVIS, JR.

It is interesting that during the 1992 presidential campaign thus far, Africa in general and South Africa in particular have not been issues of debate and concern.

Racism will not end itself. It has to be struggled against in every place all of the time. We are thankful that our sisters and brothers in South Africa have not lost hope and are fighting on with renewed determination. Apartheid in South Africa will be broken down finally by the might of the people who cry out for freedom and who will not rest until victory is won.

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

So, Dr. Tate, you finally got around to attacking my "guest opinion." You had the perfect opportunity to explain your point of view, show me and everyone else in the community how wrong I was, and get an intelligent, sensible message out to the people. I guess you just aren't capable of that. Maybe I overestimated your abilities.

The funny part is, if I was going to invent the "typical" Black leader I talked about in my letter (as an example to prove my point), that person would have been just like you: Loud, strident, self-important, with just enough prestige to pick up those angry enough to follow where you lead. You are articulate enough to convince a few that what you say is true; unethical enough to lie for what you want; mean enough not to care who gets hurt. Your editorial in the Mother's Day issue of the *Sentinel-Voice* was a classic example of irresponsible

(See Letter to Editor, Page 17)

## LAS VEGAS Sentinel Voice

Nevada's only African-American community newspaper.  
Published every Thursday by Brown Publishing Co., Inc.,  
1201 South Eastern Avenue • Las Vegas, Nevada 89104  
Telephone (702) 383-4030

Betty Brown, President & Publisher  
Lee Brown, General Manager / Editor  
Ramon Savoy, Advertising & Marketing Dir.  
Lourdes Cordero-Brown, Office Mgr.  
William G. Ramirez, Assistant to the Editor  
Willis Brown, Production  
Don Snook, Graphics

Contributing Writers:  
Assemblyman Wendell P. Williams  
Ray E. Willis (CCSD)  
Rev. Jesse Scott (NAACP)  
Dr. James S. Tate, Jr. M.D. (NAARPR)  
R. K. Brown  
Gwen Walker  
Kimberly Bailey

Members:  
National Newspaper Publishers Assoc.  
West Coast Black Publishers Assoc.  
This newspaper is audited by:  
Community Papers Verification Service,  
6225 University Avenue, Madison, WI  
53705 (608) 238-7550

Subscriptions payable in advance  
Six months \$15.00  
Twelve months \$25.00  
The rates apply to Continental  
United States Only