

Point of View

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CIVIL RIGHTS JOURNAL

STAND WITH MAYOR DINKINS

By Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.

The sight of more than 10,000 angry New York City police officers demonstrating against New York City Mayor David N. Dinkins resembled a post-modern lynch mob full of racial bigotry and hate. While the central issue appeared to be Mayor Dinkins' support for the establishment of an independent, civilian, police review board; members of New York's Patrolmen's Benevolent Association exposed the deeper underlying reality of institutionalized, "uniformed" racism.

Let us be absolutely clear and up front. We stand with Mayor Dinkins and we implore all who believe in justice and fairness to express their support of the courage of the Mayor. It is not easy to stand up to the nation's largest municipal police force, in particular when this police department has had a long history of racially motivated police abuse and violence.

Mayor Dinkins also was right to quickly respond to the racist acts of those police officers who publicly shouted, "Get the nigger out of the City Hall," and who pushed several non-white on-lookers with unnecessary force. This happened in New York City, but the implications go way beyond the "Big Apple." The problem of racially motivated police brutality and abuse is a growing national concern. From New York to Miami, to Los Angeles and to nearly every major city in the United States, the persistence of racist behavior among police officers continues.

What is so wrong with the idea of an independent, civilian police review board? Why do some police officials feel that they are not supposed to be held accountable to the communities that they are supposed to "serve"? Of course it has become very apparent that Mr. Phil Caruso, President of the N.Y.C. Patrolmen's Benevolent Association, had two agendas in calling for the police demonstration at City Hall. First, Caruso provided the political opportunity for Mr. Rudolph W. Giuliani to attack the leadership of Mayor

Dinkins. Everyone knows that Giuliani wants to become the next mayor of the city.

Second, Caruso staged the demonstration to deflect attention from the racial abuses of some police officers. If Caruso and the guilty officers had nothing to hide, then they would not be so adversely opposed to the establishment of the civilian review board.

Mayor Dinkins pointedly stated, "Some of them out there

who were calling out "nigger," why would the people in our communities have the confidence in them, that they would have the sensitivity to handle a tense situation in the minority community?" The mayor deserves all of our support not only on this issue, but also we must be vigilant not to let unprincipled politicians play the games of racial divide against mayors like Dinkins who have the courage to say no to all forms of racial

injustice.

The "benevolence" of the New York PBA has undergone a type of immoral retrogression under the tutelage of Mr. Caruso. At least, however, the public has a better example of what kind of mayor Mr. Giuliani would be on this important subject. Anyone who would attempt to manipulate racial prejudice for political gain should be rendered incapable of being an effective mayor of a multiracial city like New York.

While there have been some to offer criticism of Mayor Dinkins, the fact is that he has already made significant progress in trying to pull a divided city together. The point here is simply to state for the record that Mayor Dinkins has done more than any previous mayor of the city to promote racial justice.

Too often people become cynical and hopeless without taking into account incremental progress which is better than no



By Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr. progress at all. Yes, New York City still has a long way to go to realize full empowerment of all the peoples who reside within the city limits, but the mayor's leadership on issues like the independent civilian police review board needs to be applauded and supported.

TO BE EQUAL

GET OUT THE VOTE

By John E. Jacob

In 1992, black voters hold the key to the White House.

All indicators suggest that this will be a close election, different from those in the recent past which were essentially decided by large white male's support for Reagan and Bush.

The deteriorating economy has led many to believe it's time for a change. States once safely in the grip of one party are now up for grabs. And the electorate appears angry and fed up with politics and promises.

In that unsettled political atmosphere, minority voters will exercise the power to elect the next president and to determine the composition of the Congress.

Big states like California, New York, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Florida and Texas, are must-wins, and black and Latino votes there will be necessary ingredients for victory.

Smaller states are the key to putting a candidate over the top in the Electoral College, and here too, minority votes will be crucial.

The South, for example, was once solidly Democratic and then solidly Republican. But with the Democrats fielding a ticket made up of two Southerners, it will be a major battleground in 1992.

That means the black vote — over a third of the electorate in many southern states — will decide who wins Georgia, the Carolinas, and others.

A record black turnout can put job creation, civil rights and urban concerns at the top of the agenda for the next Administration.

But there won't be a big black turnout unless the community mobilizes to get every eligible adult registered and voting.

In this critical election year, community organizations have to educate the minority community to the issues, energize it to become involved in politics, and make an all-out effort to get record numbers of citizens to the voting booths.

That's tougher than it sounds, for there is widespread disillusionment about politics, especially in poor communities that have seen candidates come and go while poverty and hardship remain.

The system has betrayed African Americans to such an extent that many of us is no longer

will have political clout they have not had for over a dozen years. Time is short. Community organizations and concerned individuals have to organize meetings to explore the issues, conduct grass-roots registration and voter campaigns, target the unregistered, recruit volunteers for house-to-house canvassing and phoning, and help people get to the polls.

It seems an enormous task but the payoff is worth the effort. The stakes are too high to sit

They have to point out that we can't complain about being powerless when we throw away our potential power by not voting. Dropping out of the electoral process is a form of betraying our community and our children's future.

And they'll have to tell people that if the black vote elects the next President of the United States, minorities and the cities



JOHN E. JACOB

this one out.

The next president will determine the composition of the Supreme Court for the rest of the century, make decisions that determine America's economic future, and frame policies that will either close the racial gap or drive us further apart.

This is one election that minorities can't just watch from the sidelines.

Keep Hope Alive... Register to Vote

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CORRECTION

The headline of a cover story in the October 1, 1992 issue of the Las Vegas Sentinel-Voice gave Harry Reid the incorrect title of State Senator, when in actuality he is a United States Senator.

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In a cover story regarding the Moulin Rouge's nomination to the National Register (September 24, 1992), the Sentinel-Voice misspelled the names of Dr. Paul Meacham and Lubertha Johnson.

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It is the policy of the Las Vegas Sentinel-Voice to correct mistakes. Errors should be brought to our attention by calling 383-4030.