

# Point of View

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## CIVIL RIGHTS JOURNAL

# THE STRENGTH OF MAYOR DINKINS

By Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.

Simply put, it is not easy to be the mayor of this nation's largest city. Mayor David N. Dinkins of New York City has exhibited extraordinary strength and wisdom as the elected leader of millions of persons who are often at odds or in conflict on matters of race and justice. The problem of racial injustice, bigotry and hatred is certainly not confined within the city limits of New York City.

These problems are national and international.

Yet, it is significant that Mayor Dinkins has in fact done more than any previous mayor to "heal" the city not by pretending that there are no racial problems, but by being a strong advocate for racial justice and harmony.

We salute Mayor Dinkins for the courage of his 1992 "Thanksgiving Message" that was aimed at reducing racial and ethnic

tension. As an African American leader who knows well what it is like to be discriminated against because of race, Dinkins has emerged as a consistent national voice for racial tolerance and mutual respect for the dignity of all humanity.

It is appalling that there are some who are trying to exploit the racial tensions in New York out of narrow political motivations. Even though the racial

incidents of Crown Heights happened over a year ago, there are some who are trying to use that situation as a means of undermining the mayor. Unfortunately, race-baiting politics will only cause more racial polarization in the city and in the nation. Like in Los Angeles, whatever happens in New York City along the racial divide will ultimately impact the nation as a whole.

Dinkins' proactive strategy of

going to the local television and radio networks to deliver another message and call for racial justice and harmony was very effective and timely. The strength of leadership is measured not by ducking the hard issues of life but by rising to the occasion of life's struggles demanding justice with courage and compassion. This is the gift that many African American and other people of color mayors of large cities in the U.S. bring to the office of mayor.

The question is, however, who is willing to stand with Mayor Dinkins in his call for multiracial unity in the pursuit of racial justice and economic empowerment for all? Beware of all those who would throw rocks of division at Mayor Dinkins solely for political manipulation. Beware of those who are divisive "hustlers" who thrive on spreading racial hatred and division. Beware of those who would attempt to blame the victim of racism for their victimization.

As we witness the continuation of racial and ethnic conflict in Germany and in Bosnia and Herzegovina, it is relevant to view racial and ethnic tension and conflict in the United States in a broader historical context. We still have a long way to go in the U.S. to improve race relations. The judicial and criminal justice systems in particular play a large role in the institutionalization of racial prejudice across the nation. The cases of Rodney King,

Malice Green, Manuel Salazar, and many others expose the horrible racial brutality that takes place under the color of police lawlessness that is commonplace in urban rural areas throughout the country.

The acquittal of the African American defendant, Lemrick Nelson, Jr., in the killing of Yankel Rosenbaum during the Crown Heights racial conflict, only exposes another double standard of justice. The jury has been severely criticized because of the not guilty verdict for Nelson because, some say, there were African American and Latino jurors.

Now some would even make Mayor Dinkins responsible for the outcome of the verdict. Are African American defendants granted the right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty? The jurors in the trial agreed that the prosecution had not proven the guilt of Nelson for the alleged crime.

Until there can be fairness, equal justice and a spirit of mutual respect the tensions in New York will stay high. Yet, Mayor Dinkins has reached out to all the racially diverse communities of New York City, and thus far, we have observed, the Mayor has done a remarkable job under a very trying set of circumstances. Without bold mayoral leadership as exemplified by Dinkins, New York City will find it difficult to render justice, and thus have peace.

## TO BE EQUAL

# TRADE AND JOBS

By John E. Jacob

All the experts say that free trade creates jobs — the freer the trade, the more jobs. That's an attractive formula, but in fact, trade has varied effects on workers in different industries.

Export-oriented industries benefit, creating more jobs, while some domestic producers lose out to imports, close factories, and lay off workers.

The free trade agreement with Mexico and Canada, called NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement), makes it important for the U.S. to take a long, hard look at the impact on jobs.

The experience of the existing free trade agreement with Canada suggests that unless there are major policy changes in the U.S., the NAFTA could have a negative impact on American workers.

Since the U.S. - Canada free trade agreement went into effect Canadian industrial unemployment has skyrocketed, in part because producers relocated to the U.S., where costs are cheaper.

And that happened although the U.S. and Canada are both modern industrialized nations with relatively high living standards. With Mexico in the equation we add a developing country with much lower living standards and wages to match.

The idea behind NAFTA is that long-term, the expanded economic activity sparked by

removing trade barriers will help the Mexican economy develop faster and provide a rich market for U.S. goods.

Short-term, the impact may be less rosy.

While a big boost in U.S. exports to Mexico will result in more jobs for American workers, we are also likely to see some industries pack up and move south. Even without a NAFTA, that has been happening in recent years.

Hardest hit would be workers in such industries as clothing, auto parts and electronics assembly, where Americans can't compete with cheap labor in Mexico.

Even accounting for the greater productivity of U.S. workers, it may make economic sense for companies to ditch \$12-\$20-per hour U.S. jobs and set up shop in Mexico where they can pay \$1-\$2 per hour, and escape unions and regulations.

The productivity gap is likely to close, too, since U.S. and foreign investors in Mexico will most likely use the most modern technology in their operations. That means jobs in more advanced U.S. industries could wind up under siege.

Aside from job losses, there may be further downward pressure on low-wage jobs here at home, since the threat of moving plants to Mexico and the burdens of competing against lower wage competitors may put a lid on pay rises.

U.S. workers are already on a downward wage slide. Since 1972 hourly wages for high school graduates fell by 20 percent after adjusting for inflation, and we now have almost a fifth of our work force working for wages that are below the poverty level for a family of four.

The world has changed too much to allow us to retreat into a Fortress America shielded from foreign competition. Expanding trade that leads to more growth should be encouraged.

But we can't make low-wage U.S. workers pay the price for benefits that go to high-wage professional.

NAFTA should be the trigger



JOHN E. JACOB

to develop comprehensive job training and job creation programs that save workers and communities placed at risk by the agreement.

And part of NAFTA should be renegotiated to ensure that employers don't set up runaway plants to exploit dollar-an-hour Mexican workers.

So far most of the discussion about NAFTA has centered around the environmental impact on U.S. workers, and on assuring that the burdens and benefits of NAFTA are shared equally.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To the Las Vegas Black Community:

I am writing you to lambaste you. It is time for you to grow up and be the people of God that you were meant to be.

You will never be anything but N—R's until you understand the language of your conquerors. His language is money & economic power.

Until we have a bank of our own, and utilize the merchants in our community and build our own businesses, and put away our petty differences, we will stay on our knees; and you seem to forget that we are the first people of the earth and that all knowledge came & was stolen from

us.

It seems to me that all the civil rights movement did was to give us a window seat in the back of the bus (tell me if I'm wrong) thus letting everyone as usual to pass us by.

I look at these so-called black organizations having functions in the enemies camp. Brother's and Sister's don't support them until they come to their senses and bring that money back to the Westside where it belongs.

Don't give 'em one penny until they utilize: The Moulin Rouge, New Town Tavern, Frank Hawkins, Seven Seas, Etc.

Until we come together as  
(See Letters, Page 3)

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