

# Point of View

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## TO BE EQUAL

# TARGETING POVERTY

By John E. Jacob

Poverty is one word that summarizes a host of national problems. Eliminate, or at least drastically reduce poverty, and you take a huge step toward solving many other problems, and make a major contribution to securing America's future.

Just consider — poverty is at the root of America's urban problems. In many large cities, as

many as one of every four people are poor.

What we call "urban problems" largely describe the effects of large concentrations of the poor in cities, and the resulting financial strains on local governments of declining revenues and rising demands for social services.

Crime is also linked to poverty, since people who are poor

have fewer opportunities and are more exposed to criminal activities, either as victims or as perpetrators.

Education too, is statistically linked to poverty. A child's family's economic status is a fairly good predictor of his or her educational achievement.

Run other social forces through the poverty test, and you'll not likely find a connection, whether they are racial problems that are worsened by disproportionate minority poverty, or other concerns such as family structure, which is also affected by poverty.

So it makes sense to attempt to resolve the root problem of poverty instead of applying band-aids to a host of other issues that are largely the consequences of poverty.

The new Administration's focus on economic growth is a sensible objective, but taken by itself, that's not enough. More important is what kind of growth, whether all will share in it, and whether growth policies will be shaped to pull people out of poverty.

After all, the 1980s were a period of economic growth, the largest peacetime expansion in our history, some say.

But the 1980s were also a time when the numbers of poor people grew and the benefits of growth did not trickle down.

So I hope the new Administration will not take simple economic growth statistics as its benchmark, but rather determine if there is an appreciable decline in poverty.

And in determining that, the government should go beyond the misleading definitions of poverty, which drastically underestimate the problem. Today, the statistical books are cooked to count fewer people as poor.

The poverty line was first created almost thirty years ago as a measure of how much a family needed to survive an emergency period. It was based on food costs, since the typical American family spent a third of its budget on food at that time.

A lot has happened since those days. The poverty line is now pegged to the Consumer Price Index, which measured prices for all consumer goods, not just the necessities. But the price of most necessities have increased faster than overall consumer prices. If the original formula to determine poverty were still used, the poverty line would be about fifty percent higher than ours. In other words, there are many millions more people who are actually poor than the 33 million that government admits.



JOHN E. JACOB

One of the first tasks of the new administration should be to determine how much money it takes to achieve a decent, no-frills minimum living standard.

That it should implement economic growth policies targeted at bringing people above that minimum living standard.

Such policies would include the Urban League's Marshall Plan for America, that would create jobs and help poor people get the education and training necessary to be productive in this economy.

If we can do that, not only drastically, we'll lift a lot of other social ills and problems that way.



By Assemblyman Wendell P. Williams

## THE FAT LADY AIN'T SINGING YET

Fredrick Douglass, W.E.B. DuBois, Marcus Garvey, Huey P. Newton, Martin R. Delany and many other strong brothers had one unique thing in common aside from their work as renowned fighters of freedom.

These men understood more so than others, the importance of communicating and educating the masses about the constant need to stand up and continue the struggle for human justice. These men not only understood the importance of providing the tool, supporting the tool, and assuring that the tool not only exist, but to flourish. What is the tool? The tool is the African-American press. The above mentioned men, all started an African-American newspaper.

They all did so because they understood the need for the people to not only be informed, but more importantly, informed with the truth. And every great freedom fighter, man or woman, knows that the Truth Shall Set You Free.

I have never been one to run behind editors of daily newspapers begging them to print their reports from an African-American point of view. Or try to get their writers and reporters to think like someone else. The truth of the matter is, they are not someone else.

The bottom line is, if you want your message told, tell it yourself. If you want things from your point of view, tell them yourself. The energy spent on worrying about the RJ or the SUN, could be better spent on planning and building KCEP and the Sentinel-Voice. Its sort of like the old, "if you don't like the soup, and the prices are too high, then build your own cafe."

By the same token, the African-American press has an undeniable obligation to its readers and listeners, to be as accurate and informative as possible. They should also stand ready to correct any information that is no correct.

Last Thursday night, Senator Neal informed me that the selection of the position of minority leader in senate for the

upcoming legislature session has not been decided as I indicated in this space last week. It was released in the press several days before, that Senator Dana Titus had been selected to that leadership position, becoming the first female to become so. Neal indicated to me that, in fact, Titus does not have the votes, and he still will become the person to get the nod. In other words, the Fat Lady is an imposter, and a master at the game of the lip-synch. According to the senator, this week he should have the votes on a North Las Vegas Senator Tom Hickey returns to the state.

Last week in this space, I did pose the question of "What Happened?" I didn't expect the Senator to surrender the post without a fight.

We will have to watch this political battle unfold. By the way, the position of minority leader gives that individual the leadership of the democrats in the Nevada Senate.

If there were more democrat senators than Republican senators, the position would be more

intentional and termed minority leader. However according to Neal, the Fat Lady Ain't Singing Yet. We stand corrected.

On another note, the best thing about the speaker of the candidates running for president of the NAACP is that it happened. The amount of interest in this race is a good sign. And the three candidates that showed up deserve our appreciation for taking the stand. The NAACP has and always has had an important role in the nation. Therefore, who ever wins should remember that their win does not end with them. The real race is not between them, but rather, about them. All four, regardless of the outcome, should remember that winning the race is only the beginning - The Fat Lady Ain't Singing Yet - The Fight and the struggle continues. Let's stick together! Don't forget to vote on Sunday, 10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. at the Heritage Lounge. Do it!

Assemblyman Wendell P. Williams

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