

# Point of View

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## TO BE EQUAL

# REMOVING THE GLASS CEILING

By John Jacob

The February issue of Black Enterprise magazine carried a feature story titled: America's Most Powerful Black Executives.

It profiled 40 top African American movers and shakers who hold positions of power and authority in corporate America.

Some run big-company divisions that would be on the Fortune list of the 500 largest corporations if they were stand-alone companies.

By a curious coincidence, the same day my magazine arrived in the mail the Washington Post ran a page-one story head-

lined: "Few Blacks Reach Top in Private Sector, Census finds." That story reported on census figures showing blacks lagging behind as private sector managers and in the professions. Far greater gains were made in government, where black department heads and managers are

much more common than in private industry.

Reading those two stories back-to-back is a sobering experience.

On the one hand, it is gratifying that some corporations have opened their doors wide enough to minorities that talented Afri-

can Americans have made their way to the top.

One the other, the overall situation regarding private sector black advancement is nowhere near what it should and could be.

After almost 30 years of federal fair employment mandates, there ought to be many more black executives at the top of the corporate ladder. Why aren't there?

Well, many reasons come to mind but one big one is the difficulty so many white male managers have in believing that blacks, minorities, and women have the brains and the ability to move on to the fast track to corporate stardom.

That external barrier erected by the gatekeepers who won't open doors to non-whites, is reinforced by the internal barriers left by four hundred years of oppression and racism.

The legacy of self-doubt and self-acceptance of negative stereotypes breeds an unconscious feeling of "I don't have what it takes to get to the top."

And that negative residue also helps explain why many individuals don't set their sights higher instead of accepting middle manager status or refusing to take entrepreneurial risks.

A lot of us had to overcome great hardship and poverty to get where we are. So it's tempting to settle into a situation that can appear comfortable instead of continuing the struggle by setting higher goals and taking just supports the prevailing attitude among many white execu-



JOHN E. JACOB

tives that their black managers are doing fine. The unspoken thought finishing that sentence is: "... for blacks."

I have met top corporate executives who boast about how high this or that African American has risen in their organization, without understanding that the individual in question, if he or she were white, would have gone much further.

They think it's a great accomplishment for a brilliant, highly talented black person to reach a corporate vice presidency. But if that individual was white, he would be groomed for even higher positions, including the chief executive officer's chair.

Some corporations know they need all the talent they can get to make it in this tough new global economy and they work to identify, retain, train, and groom the best and brightest of all races for top executive positions.

And people like those profiled in the Black Enterprise "top 40" are demonstrating that African Americans have both the talent and the drive to rise to the top.

But more must be done to crack corporate America's glass ceiling. And it must be done faster, if minorities are to progress in corporate America and if corporate America is to progress in the new world economy.



## POLITICAL POINTS

By Assemblyman Wendell P. Williams



## "FILL-THE-GAP"

Political candidates should be judged on the platforms that they stand on, or they should be judged on their track records that they have established. In most cases for first time candidates, the platform is the only thing that can truly be used to evaluate a person in considering him or her for the position that they are seeking. If a candidate for public office does not have a platform with substance, then don't expect much from that person after they are elected. In fact, even as candidates, those with no real platform to talk about, you usually find that same person only talking about their opponents. This is too bad because voters often listen to political slander and garbage and the person with the vision to help people comes up short. However, the real truth is that the candidate does not lose as much as the people do.

During the 1992 election season, the majority of the races in Clark County were ran in the mud and more than likely will go down in political history as one of the biggest turn-offs to voters, due mainly to platforms without planks of substance. However there were a few exceptions. The race in Assembly District 12 was one such exception.

Dora Harris in her unsuccessful bid to win the Assembly seat, often spoke about one of the planks in her platform called "Fill The Gap." This issue was overshadowed by a campaign against her that played the race card. That's too bad because that 1993 state Legislature's committee on Health and Human Service could have used her knowledge on the issue of Fill The Gap. On last Tuesday the committee room was filled to capacity as the panel took testimony on AB 276 which deals with none other than "Fill The Gap" budgeting.

"Fill The Gap" budgeting addresses perhaps the central hypocrisy in our welfare system which recognizes that a mother and two children need \$670.00 per month plus food stamps for basic necessities but provides only \$348.00. The System penalizes mothers who attempt to earn the difference for their children by reducing grants one dollar for every dollar earned. "Fill The Gap" budgeting takes the opposite approach. It asks mothers to be responsible for earning what they can toward their children's needs. The state then "fills-the-gaps" between the mother's earnings and the cost of basic necessities. "Fill the Gap" reinforces the value of work and places the initial financial responsibility on the parent

rather than the state, and provides a stepping stone for mothers, making it easier to ultimately move to full financial independence.

If something is not done soon to give mothers a chance, over 30,000 children monthly will suffer at below substance levels by the end of 1995. These children which we are now depriving of basic necessities, are the same people who must, in the future, drive our economy, and pay our Social Security benefits. They will be our future leaders or our future prisoners.

Something must be done and something can be done. Give the mothers of these children the ability to do what the state is unable or unwilling to do. Through their own earnings mothers can make up the difference between the state's efforts and the amount these children really need.

Not only would "Fill-the-Gap" budgeting offer the immediate opportunity to double the standard of living of 30,000 children, it would also provide their mothers with a "step ladder" off of welfare and onto financial independence. We offer a mother with two children \$348.00 per month. Realistically around \$1000.00 is necessary to pay for her needs and those of her children without the state's assistance. We now ask her to leap



Assemblyman  
Wendell P. Williams

straight up from \$348 to \$1000 without a "stopping place" in between. "Fill-the-Gap" budgeting would create a "Step ladder" effect so that she could first provide basic necessities and then move from that point to independence.

It is hard to disagree that it is better to encourage recipients to work than to be idle or that the state should allow mothers to provide necessities to their children which the state cannot afford.

"Fill-the-Gap" is being presented in this session of the legislature under the title of AB 276. It comes directly from a plank in the Dora Harris platform. A platform that understood that welfare recipients in Nevada cannot presently risk losing their benefits by trying to find work. The entry levels of most jobs do not come with benefits or salary sufficient to make-up for lost benefits from the state. One that also understood that we are at the forefront of a revolution in the welfare system, a revolution that is long overdue.

To contact your legislator about reforming this issue and others, call him or her at 384-2225 toll-free. There are a lot of gaps to fill and little time to fill them.

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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  
Ulysses Palrose, Distribution  
Don Snook, Graphics

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

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