

Point of View

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TO BE EQUAL

INVESTING IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY

By John E. Jacob

In the debate on how to strengthen the weak black economy, I sometimes hear people say African Americans should go it alone, and not look to government for the programs our communities need or to majority-owned financial institutions for the resources our businesses need.

Listening to that rhetoric, you get the impression that it is a militant expression of belief in the power black people can muster to improve their lot.

But the more I think about it,

the more I'm convinced it reflects fear of white rejection and a self-defeating refusal to claim our due as citizens of the society we helped build.

And it plays into the hands of those who want us to think that national and urban problems are "Black problems" to be solved by black's alone, even though white society created and perpetuates those problems.

Sure, African Americans do have tremendous power to change our condition. But not enough to let white society off the hook.

Some items on the agenda, only we can do ourselves—using our political power to improve schools and public services, pooling our resources to help finance community development and housing, and above all, helping all of our children and families develop the values and attitudes needed to prosper in a changing world.

But those efforts don't take place in a vacuum. We are part of the larger society and have as much of a claim on its resources as other citizens, who don't hesitate to expect its benefits.

Developing wealth-and-job-creating black businesses is an important goal that can serve as an example of both what we must do for ourselves and what we should rightfully expect society to do.

An African American community committed to self-development can overcome the internalized stereotypes that prevent so many talented people from taking the reasoned risks that lead to entrepreneurial success.

And developing a strong community spirit can foster young businesses through cus-

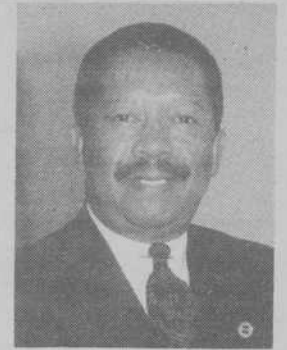
tommer support and financial investments.

But along with that, those businesses can and should expect what white-owned businesses expect—fair opportunities for government and corporate contracts and subcontracts, loans from banks and financial institutions, and a level, competitive field.

African Americans have long been at a business disadvantage because they have been denied those opportunities. Discrimination in lending and in other factors affecting business success have been amply documented.

But instead of demanding our fair share of government and private sector resources, some say the capital needs of black businesses should be met by a black investment fund financed by affluent African Americans.

Such a fund is a good idea, but it is no substitute for equal treatment from financial institutions and the government which



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command hundreds of billions. Why limit ourselves to the millions that might be raised in the community?

We need to light a fire under public and private sector institutions to make those resources as available to blacks as to whites. African Americans have as much right to them as anyone in the land.

We can say we can do it all by ourselves, but it is more realistic to do it all by ourselves with whatever resources are available from any source.

And it makes sense for society, too. For by developing the vast potential of African Americans and their businesses, America's economy becomes stronger and more competitive.



By Assemblyman Wendell P. Williams

"DON'T SPECULATE"

I can remember going into Jr. high school for the first time and carrying an awful amount of fear about one particular teacher. She had a reputation of being very intense in class, putting so much fear in her students that no one dared to even speak in her presence, let alone not complete a homework assignment. Her reputation preceded her by at least three years.

However my greatest fear was the thought of failing the class and somehow, maybe having to spend another semester in her class. My goal was to stay on target, not get behind on assignments and get this nightmare behind me. Anyway, on the first day of class the most unexpected thing happened; this teacher walked into class and began a non-stop lecture as we scrambled to take notes and just as I was thinking about how tough this class would be, she stopped and said, "Please don't speculate on anything. If there is something you don't understand, just ask, because no question

is a stupid question."

From that day on I felt relieved, plus I learned how important it is to explore things beyond face value and continue to pose questions and not to speculate.

For instance, why is Gov. Bob Miller, in his efforts to reform welfare, suggesting that mothers who are recipients of welfare should be accessed \$20.00 per month if their child misses 10% of their school classes.

Lets not speculate here, lets ask a few questions. First, would not this idea that would affect about 11,000 students violate local school attendance policies? Also, this would appear somewhat discriminatory. Why? Well, first of all, under this idea, if a parent was not on welfare and made good money, and their child missed more than 10% of their classes, or even more, they would not be penalized anything. It seems as if the ones who can afford to pay \$20 per month do not have to and the ones with the least amount of money pays, even though their children attend school the same amount of time.

Nevada has one of the larg-

est drop-out rates in America and one of the worst records for attendance by its students. Surely something must be done to improve those figures, but this is not it. Listening to this idea, if one would not ask you, would think that our drop-out rates and attendance rates are solely created by children of welfare recipients alone. Even if that were true, why penalize mothers for things that they may or may not be responsible for.

Just what does this really have to do with welfare reform anyway? What's next, do we charge people for having children? How far will this go? Will sensitive teachers alter attendance records just so parents don't lose any of the "too-short" money they don't already have? With the shortage of money for health care and preventative medicine, just maybe some of these children are out of school due to sickness and poor nutrition. However, lets not speculate, go ahead, pick up the phone and call the Governor's office. And remember, no question is a stupid question.

Finally, how does the police department get off by thinking



Assemblyman
Wendell P. Williams

that the case involving deadly force on Rodney King is the only thing that may cause an outcry by residents? What about the ongoing injustices that occur on a daily basis by law enforcement? Why do they perpetrate an ongoing war on "gang members" as if no one else is concerned when a human being gets killed or beaten down by a gang of cops? Why is it that they spread unfounded rumors that "gangs" plan to drive from L.A. to destroy Las Vegas? Killings and beatings are human rights issues not racial issues, as the police would have you to think. If something is going to happen, don't they know that they are not the only ones who can develop contingency plans? Besides, contingency plans will do nothing to solve the real problems that continue to exist because of their beatem' up-lock'um up mentality. And that's no speculation... that's reality!

It's time to pose the real questions and stop the speculation.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Sir:

John Moran, sheriff and head of the Las Vegas Metro Police Dept., wants to improve relations with the people of the Las Vegas Community by settling the Bush lawsuit with their own tax money and saying his cops being shot at are no longer special "Gods" above the law but the same as everyone else being shot at.

If Moran was sincere he would pay the Bush settlement with his own money and the large sums of political contributions left over from his election campaigns instead of unethically living off them. And if that wasn't enough he would have his police officers contribute the balance from the salaries so they would learn a lesson about respecting people's civil rights.

And if the sheriff was sincere he would stop the Nazi Gestapo-
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