

# Point of View

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## TO BE EQUAL

# NAFTA WINNERS AND LOSERS

by John E. Jacob

If you listen to backers of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), passage of what amounts to a merger of the U.S., Mexican and Canadian economies will bring benefits galore.

Long-term, they may be right but there will be a lot of short term pain that has to be addressed.

The theory is that manufacturers worldwide are shifting low-skill jobs to Third World countries where labor is cheap.

The jobs we lose are supposed to be replaced by growth in higher-skilled and professional jobs, along with many more jobs in trade-related industries.

Before buying that scenario, workers, especially minorities, need some assurances that their

short-term livelihood won't be sacrificed for someone else's long-term gains.

There's little question that before the ink on a NAFTA bill passed by Congress is dry, manufacturing plants and other industries will be moving south of the border.

African American workers appear to be most at risk of losing jobs in the rush to Mexi-

can cheap labor havens.

They are concentrated in industries most likely to be flight-prone and in the communities most vulnerable to the social upheavals that come from higher unemployment.

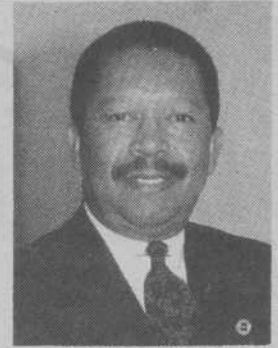
Textile and apparel factories and auto assembly plants are targeted as likely candidates for moving to Mexico. Black workers — about a tenth of the total

labor force — constitute 28 percent of all textile workers, over 16 percent of all apparel industry workers, and more than 15 percent of all auto assembly workers.

The cities where those plants are currently located have large concentrations of African Americans, and already suffer from high unemployment.

Those cities also have high levels of social ills, from drug abuse to crime to family breakup, all of which experts attribute in large part to the strains and stresses of economic insecurities which can only get worse in the post-NAFTA era.

Even if it is, it's not likely that the job outflow can be stanchd. After all, millions of jobs have emigrated overseas already, many to Mexico, even without a free trade agreement.



JOHN E. JACOB

Industry argues that unless it drastically lowers its labor costs, it won't be able to survive against the international competitors who manufacture in Third World countries with dollar a day pay scales.

If that's true, those jobs will eventually disappear, with or without NAFTA.

But that doesn't mean we should blindly go forward with a pact that had such potential for economic and social disruption. Nor should black and minority workers pay the price for long term economic benefits that they never see.

(See To Be Equal, Page 21)



## POLITICAL POINTS

By Assemblyman Wendell P. Williams



### "KICKIN' IT LIVE IN 1955"

Imagine for a few moments, the year 1955. The place, Montgomery Alabama where few people challenged the system of segregation. It was grudgingly accepted by African American men, and though there were at that time undertones of discontent, the city appeared peaceful on the surface. Even though peace was achieved at the cost of human servitude.

One place where the peace had long been precarious was on the city-wide buses. There were no African-American drivers and most white ones were very abusive.

It was very common to hear them referring to brothers and sisters as "black dogs" as "niggers" and "monkeys." Sometimes African-Americans paid their fare at the front door, and were then forced to get off and reboard the bus at the back.

If that was not enough, another practice was the custom of forcing African Americans to stand over empty seats reserved for "whites only."

If African-Americans were sitting in the unreserved section and all of the reserved seats were all taken, and additional white people boarded the bus, African-Americans would then have

to stand so whites could be seated. If African-Americans refused to stand and move back, they were arrested.

Considering this, imagine a brisk late afternoon on December 1st, when Mrs. Rosa Parks, an African-American seamstress, seated in the "negro" section of a bus in Montgomery, refused to give up her seat to a white male passenger. She was arrested.

Following the arrest, a group of influential African-American women decided that the time had come for action. They called upon all ministers and civic leaders to stage a bus boycott on Dec. 5, 1955 and to hold a city-wide mass meeting that night to determine how long the boycott would be continued. They knew that if it was to be, it was up to them, and to convince others.

Now let your mind drift across the country to the west coast. Imagine for a few moments, the year, 1955. The place, Las Vegas, Nevada, where few people challenged the system of segregation.

It was grudgingly accepted by African-American men, and though there were at the time undertones of discontent, the city appeared peaceful on the surface. Even that peace, was achieved at the cost human servitude.

One place where the peace had long been precarious was

the city's famous Las Vegas strip. The construction of a major defense plant near Las Vegas beginning in late 1941 led to a dramatic increase in the number of African-Americans, many from the deep south, including areas such as Montgomery were recruited by the thousands. Most had to live in the most undesirable conditions in the underdeveloped "west side."

During the ensuing years of the war, Las Vegas became more and more segregated. The city quickly acquired the nickname, "Mississippi of the West."

In the postwar era, tourism developed rapidly on the strip and downtown. The Flamingo opened in 1946, the Thunderbird in 1948 and the Desert Inn in 1950.

However, in 1955 things really began to get live. Five major hotel-casinos opened on the strip in that year alone. African-Americans were not allowed accommodations at these new resorts, nor could they enter casino and dining areas. Even after their performances nationally recognized entertainers such as Nat King Cole, Sammy Davis Jr., Louie Armstrong, etc., had to find places to stay on the westside.

Considering this, imagine a sunny late evening on May 24, 1955. Heavyweight boxing champion Joe Lewis made his way over to 900 Bonanza Road



Assemblyman  
Wendell P. Williams

in West Las Vegas to serve as host of the nation's first major interracial hotel, the Moulin Rouge. From that day on, Bonanza Road became live and would never be the same again.

Yes, almost nightly the Moulin Rouge was kickin', and kickin' it live. From staff to chorus line and security staff were all interracial. Jasmin' nitely were the likes of Harry Belefonte, Sammy Dsvs Jr., Dean Martin, Gregory and Maurice Hines, Lionel Hampton and many others. And not only was the Rouge jumpin' but a number of other popular spots in West Las Vegas were as well.

Since 1955 the resort and gaming industry has continued to grow but the Rouge has not. I would hate to think that community self-hate as well as continued racism is the reason for such. Even if that is the case, it is still no reason for this generation to let the Rouge slip into the sunset. Surely the Moulin Rouge is significant for what it aspired to be. But that simply is not enough. Even more significant is what it still must become. Yes, the Rouge was kickin' it live in 1955 but if it is to be in 1993, it's up to you and me.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To the Editor:

I have read with interest your articles on the proposal to site a high level nuclear waste dump in Nevada. As you know, high level nuclear waste is the most dangerous substance known to man, causing cancer and serious birth and genetic defects upon exposure. Nevadans are overwhelmingly opposed to putting this nuclear waste in our state.

A particular inaccuracy in the April 29th article, "Meeting Shunned by Elected Representatives" was troubling. As was made clear to the organizers of

the meeting to discuss the nuke dump issue, I had previously scheduled two town hall meetings and speaking engagements which precluded my attending the meeting.

I want to praise your report for indicating that recent polls indicate that the vast majority of Nevadans continue to oppose the nuke dump and oppose negotiating for the nuclear dump. As you know, should Nevadans negotiate for nuclear dump, we will give up our ability to contest health and safety features of the dump in court, as well as give up

(See Letters to Editor, Page 4)

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