

Point of View

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TO BE EQUAL

A NEW START ON THE DRUG WAR

By John E. Jacob

President Clinton's appointment of former New York City Police Commissioner Lee Brown as the nation's drug czar is an outstanding one. Hopefully, it heralds a new approach in the losing war against the plague of drugs that is destroying our communities.

The "war on drugs" was the first announced back in 1972, but the nation's drug problems have only become worse since then.

We've tried to interdict drug shipments from aboard, but they still flood in.

We've tried beefing up criminal enforcement and loaded our prisons to the bursting point, but

new dealers stalk the streets and forty states are under court orders to reduce prison overcrowding, largely caused by sentencing drug offenders.

The failure of that approach is seen by growing numbers of federal and state judges who refuse to take drug cases in protest against failed policies and harsh sentences.

They argue that long sentences for drug offenders overload the criminal justice system and don't deter drug dealers or users.

The Justice Department is now studying federal prosecution and sentencing policies to determine whether they are excessive and whether they

have a disproportionate effect on minorities.

It's estimated that the nation has spent \$100 billion over the past dozen years trying to stem the drug epidemic, and there's not much to show for it.

That's because the drug war resources have been largely channeled to interdiction and criminal prosecution.

It's time to replace that failed policy with a new one geared to prevention and treatment.

We can still go after the dealers and try to stop the imports, but since the supply-side approach hasn't worked, it's necessary to put our resources into programs that stem the demand for drugs.

The place to start is in the prisons, where drug offenders make up an increasing proportion of inmates. According to the Justice Department, almost a third of all people sent to prison in 1990 were drug offenders.

Mandatory drug treatment programs for substance abusers now in the prison system should be instituted immediately. There is evidence that inmates who participate in such programs have a far lower rearrest rate than those who do not.

We should also vastly expand the number of drug treatment centers available for high risk substance abusers. Again, the evidence is clear that such treatment works, but there is

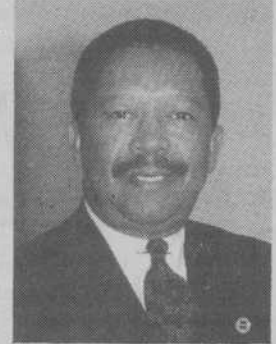
space available for perhaps one-tenth of those in need of those programs.

Another step should be to overhaul the criminal justice system and funnel them into treatment programs.

There's been talk about using military bases slated for closure as detention centers for first offenders or for residential drug treatment. Again, that's an idea worthy of investigation.

I don't buy the increasingly persistent calls for legalizing drugs and legitimizing practices that destroy people's minds and encourage dependency.

But I do know there's a better way to deal with the problem than the present one of locking



JOHN E. JACOB

people up while the drug epidemic rages on.

Current policies aren't working; new ones need to be tried. We need to get at the core of the problem by making treatment available to all who need it, starting with those most at risk.

That will cost money; lots of it. But at last it will be money that helps people free themselves from self-destructive habits and become productive citizens contributing to society instead of preying upon it.

CIVIL RIGHTS JOURNAL

SCHOLARSHIPS FOR RACIAL JUSTICE

By Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.

The "politics of change" is now being exhibited inside the U.S. Department of Education. To the eventual shame of the entire nation under the Reagan and Bush Administrations, the

former officials of the U.S. Department of Education actually attempted to prevent colleges and universities that received Federal funding from administering specified "minority" or "race-based" scholarship programs.

Thanks to the massive response of national civil rights organizations, the wholesale dismantling of these very important scholarship programs in thousands of colleges and universities was stopped. The Clinton Administration has changed that course of this issue in the correct direction.

Richard W. Riley, Secretary of Education, recently wrote a letter to more than 7,500 colleges that are recipients of some type of Federal funds. Secretary Riley emphasized, "I believe race-based scholarships can be a valuable tool for providing equal opportunity and for enhancing a diverse educational environment for the benefit of all students."

We agree with Riley on this point, but we need to state emphatically that the prior attempts by Federal officials to limit and terminate race-based scholarships amounted to nothing more than a backward and racist policy. Any nation that would systematically deny minority students an affirmative access to higher education is a nation that is destined for counterproductive racial strife.

Unfortunately two years ago we recall that the Bush Administration used an African American named Michael Williams to

lead the charge against the concept and practice of offering designated scholarships for deserving students from people of color communities. Williams had erroneously argued that colleges and universities were in violation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 because of the awarding of race-based scholarships.

Williams at the time was Assistant Secretary of education. He tried to confront college administrators on this issue by proposing a cut off of Federal funding. All of this had a very chilling impact on existing scholarship programs. It is important to let Secretary Riley know that we support his efforts to restore the legality and the moral imperative of offering educational scholarships to our nation's students from people of color communities.

The African American community in particular should articulate a renewed demand for an increase in funding from both state and Federal sources for higher education scholarships. Given the development of new and more complex job markets in the United States, there will be a corresponding new demand for well educated and well trained persons to be employable. In addition, affirmative action has

to be institutionalized inside all levels of the education system.

We have learned that there remains some persons within the Department of Justice who are still reviewing the constitutionality of race-based scholarships. We believe that it will be a serious setback to the Civil Rights Movement if the Clinton Administration reasserts the Bush Administration policies on this matter.

Racial justice is served through the provision of educational assistance and scholarships for students who come from communities that have



BENJAMIN F. CHAVIS, JR. been marginalized, exploited and oppressed. Education is a strategy for liberation.

Secretary Richard Riley has shown early in the Clinton Administration that at least he has the courage to attempt to rectify some of the misdeeds of the Bush Administration. We must continue to press a unified demand that every child in the nation be given the opportunity to receive a quality education.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Just Say No!!!!

You've heard the phrase before, and now you'll hear it again. Only this time in a different way.

Actually it should read - Just Vote No!!!!

Seriously people, on June 8 an election will take place to decide whether or not 300 additional police officers, our "city's finest," will be added to the force, with 250 more patrol cars. Also whether or not more sub-stations will be built throughout the community and if 500 more beds should be added to the county jail.

Obviously Question 3, about the beds, would be advisable to Vote Yes, but as for Questions 1 and 2, don't get sucked in.

It has been over a year since the original Rodney King verdict, truces have been called across the nation, even police-community relations boards

have been formed; but don't fall to quickly.

First of all, be aware that voting yes means it is coming out of your pockets. Yes that's right, you get to pay for more harassment from the police department.

Question 2 will fund seven new neighborhood police stations across the valley - including one on Washington and Martin Luther King Blvd. Its enough that Metro stays on the 'Side looking to harass someone, but now they want to have a substation right there. Who knows if they're coming to protect or disrespect. Have these so called officers of the law proved that they are on our side, or are they expecting not to be on our side?

You have to ask yourself these questions and realize what your voting for. Not to mention (See Letter to Editor, Page 10)

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