

Point of View

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TO BE EQUAL

CONSIDER RACE TO MOVE BEYOND RACE

By John E. Jacob

America seems to have trouble understanding that if it wants to move beyond racial considerations, it first must be race-conscious.

The reason is that race-based disadvantage is so pervasive and so much a part of our societal institutions, that only by taking such race-conscious steps as affirmative action can we hope to level the playing field and create a society in which race can actually disappear as a factor that determines one's life-chances.

But adopting such a position takes a willingness to act on

today's reality and not on theoretical suppositions.

The Supreme Court turned a blind eye to that reality in a recent decision challenging a North Carolina congressional election district designed to assure the election of a black representative.

By a slim 5-4 majority, the Court sent the case back to the lower courts to determine whether the creation of a black-majority district to fulfill the mandates of the Voting Rights Act violated the constitutional rights of white voters.

That's about as strange an argument as I've ever heard from

a Court that consistently comes up with strange ones.

If white rights are violated by creating a district designed to send an African American to Congress, are not black rights violated in the overwhelming majority of districts that are designed to send a white to Congress?

And although two districts in the state had black majorities, the other ten had white majorities. So the 76 percent of the state's population that is white, were in the majority in 83 percent of the districts.

The Court was also exercised about the district's odd shape,

although it has allowed such districts designed to elect Republicans or Democrats or farmers.

Shape only became an issue when it was designed to assure minority representation. Justice Stevens, in his dissent, was right to remind the Court that the equal protection clause it invoked to defend supposed white rights was framed to protect the rights of African Americans.

An irony in the North Carolina case is that the conservatives who are against creating black-majority districts are the same ones who stuck daggers in Lani Guinier's nomination as

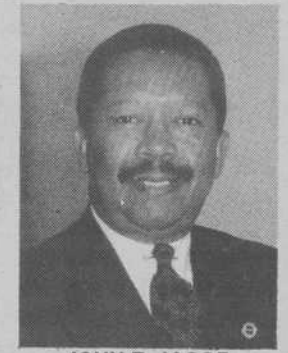
head of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division.

Yet it was Guinier who expressed doubts about such districts and sought to find other means of assuring minority participation in government.

I've never been enamored of such "safe" districts myself, since it is likely that African Americans would have more, not less, electoral influence if our votes were significant in several districts.

That would give us more leverage in more districts, strengthen our ability to lead coalitions, and force candidates to campaign for our votes instead of ignoring us.

In fact, the push for black-majority districts came from the Reagan-Bush Justice Department, which sought to create safe seats for Republicans by eliminating likely Democratic voters from those districts.



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Given America's history and its recent discriminatory patterns, it is absurd for the Court to make the case turn on supposed violations of white rights.

Writing for majority, Justice Sandra Day O'Connor argued that race-consciousness "threatens to carry us further from the goal of a political system in which race no longer matters..."

That goal is one we all share, but unless society takes race-conscious remedies to correct for minority underrepresentation and for the effects of discrimination, we will never achieve a society that moves beyond today's racial divisions.



POLITICAL POINTS

By Assemblyman Wendell P. Williams



"MAKE ME WANNA HOLLER"

When I first heard the process of "sampling" music, I viewed it as totally negative. However, my view lately is beginning to change. Sampling by the way is a recording artist or group who takes the music from a past hit song and injects it into a new release. For instance, MC Hammer's "Can't Touch This" carried the music from Rick James' super hit from the late 1970's. Even Ralph Tresvant's "Sensitivity" carried the music of the late Marvin Gay's "Inner City Blues." My first thought when I heard that process was that much of originality that had made music so great would be lost. However, with the absence of "message music" that was so prevalent in the 60's and 70's, sampling may not be such a bad idea. At least until writers put something down on paper besides something that rhymes.

Sampling may be just one small way of bringing back the lyrics and "messages" that we could definitely use today.

Where is the O'Jays' "Unity" and "How Can You Call Me Brother?" when we need them? Not to mention Harold Melvin and the Blue Notes' "Wake Up Everybody", just to name a few.

I'm sorry but with the events that are unfolding in America and in our communities today, "Whoop! There It Is" just does not move me to revolution. It sure didn't help when I received a flood of telephone calls after a scheduled "Legislative Issues Briefing" went foul. I even spent part of this week fielding questions about the briefing. However, for those who are still calling and for those who are still wondering what happened, this is the most I can tell you. Councilman Frank Hawkins hosted the briefing and mailed out invitations to citizens and groups to attend the briefing on key legislation from the just ended session of the Nevada Legislature. This event was scheduled for last Friday at 5:30 pm at the Councilman's sports bar. The invitation also indicated that the briefing would be done by State Senator Joe Neal, which an-

swers the questions of many who called me when they heard about it and asked why I wasn't providing any information at this event. Quite simply, the councilman only invited one of the three African-American state legislators to participate. Assemblyman Arberry who attended, not as a participant, ended up attempting to field questions from those who showed up to be informed on how the 67th session in Carson City affected citizens, especially African-Americans. The whole thing went down like four flat tires when Senator Neal was a "no-call, no-show." The result, a briefing that didn't brief! The losers, the people.

When will we ever learn that unity is power and through unity there is strength. Politics is the process that decides who gets what and how much. With this in mind, we must remember that our people face some very difficult times and conditions. They greatly depend upon us for action and information, not games. One of the biggest downfalls of a politician is short memory. And one of the attributes of one is a



Assemblyman
Wendell P. Williams

long memory. I guess the old saying is still true, "Where there is no vision, the people will perish."

So maybe the next time you are sitting around listening to "Daddy Dukes," sample a little Marvin Gay's "Inner City Blues" into your mind and remind yourself of who we really represent and some of their conditions. Here is a little help:

Rockets, moon shots, spend it on the have nots

Money, we make it, before we see it you take it.

Inflation no chance, to increase finance

Bills pile up sky high, send that boy off to die

Hang ups, let downs, bad breaks, set backs, natural fact is I can't pay my taxes

Crime is increasing - trigger happy policing

Panic is spreading - Only God knows where we're heading

Make me wanna holler - throw both my hands.

NOTES FROM THE SCHOOL OF AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY

Just the other day I saw very interesting picture. It was a picture of army helicopters that looked as if they were engaged in delivering supplies to the jungle somewhere. What was striking, however, about this scene was not so much the helicopter but the message affixed to it: Freedom is not free!

A simple picture with simple words but let's analyze the deeper meaning. When one thinks of the army, or the military for that matter, all kinds of ideas come to mind but the fundamental purpose of the military is to maintain peace and democracy at home and abroad through the use of force. In so doing it is believed that freedom can be obtained. Hence the caption: Freedom is not free.

Because of the mind set of many Africans it is believed that freedom can be obtained from the stroke of a pen or from the goodness of the hearts of beasts. This is not so and has never

(See Notes from the School, Page 4)

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Telephone (702) 383-4030 • Fax (702) 383-3114

Betty Brown, President
Lee Brown, Publisher / Editor
Ramon Savoy, Advertising & Marketing Dir.
Lourdes Cordero-Brown, Office Mgr.
William G. Ramirez, Sports 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. (NAARPR)
R. K. Brown
Gwen Walker
Kimberly Bailey

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