

# Point of View

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## TO BE EQUAL

# DISCRIMINATION DIES HARD

By John E. Jacob

The myth that discrimination is no longer a major factor in American life persists despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary.

Most Americans seem to think that just because a law is passed, discrimination just fades away. It doesn't.

Most companies think that just because they have strict rules forbidding discriminatory treatment, discrimination no longer exists in their business. They're wrong.

And many people of good will think that because they act in ways that are fair toward all and because they wouldn't dream of treating others on the basis of their race, religion, or ethnicity,

that discrimination is a thing of the past. They too, are wrong.

Unfortunately all the laws and company policies and personal good aren't enough to erase the prejudices and stereotypes that are deeply ingrained in people.

The myth of fading discrimination can be helpful, since it reflects a behavioral norm that says discrimination is wrong and should not be tolerated.

But it also serves as a barrier to ending discriminatory practices, since believers in the myth look to other causes for African American disadvantage.

That's why we hear so much about people not wanting to work instead or about people unable to find work or about people facing discrimination in their

pursuit of a home or a job.

And it's why some Americans are so shocked when evidence of discriminatory practices thought long dead suddenly surfaces in the headlines.

That's what happened when the news reports told of a law suit by six African American Secret Service agents against the Denny's restaurant chain, charging denial of service on the basis of race.

Earlier in the year, another restaurant chain, Shoney's Inc., paid \$132.5 million to settle a law suit filed by minority workers and job seekers who had been discriminated against.

That kind of discrimination was supposed to have ended with the passage of the Civil

Rights Act of 1964, but as those incidents show, it's alive and well.

So is the more subtle discrimination rooted in negative stereotypes. Many banks, for example, make far fewer personal mortgage loans to African Americans than to white people, despite formal equal lending policies.

One banker explained to the Washington Post recently why he thinks loan officers treat blacks differently.

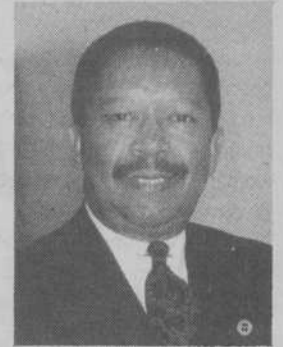
He gave the example of a mother and child walking down a street and seeing a black male approach. "What happens?" he asks. "The mother squeezes her child's hand and pulls the child close. To me, this is one of the classic examples of how biases

get built in at the very youngest age."

He's right. Those almost subliminal misperceptions are reinforced throughout life, as people substitute negative stereotypes for reality.

So bankers see African American loan applicants through the distorted lenses of a lifetime's worth of negative stereotypes. So do landlords, factory managers, personnel executives and teachers.

The result is a web of subtle discriminatory practices that may not be immediately visible to the naked eye. But they show up in lower lending to African Ameri-



JOHN E. JACOB

cans, higher black layoffs, lower black hiring rates, and lower black school achievement.

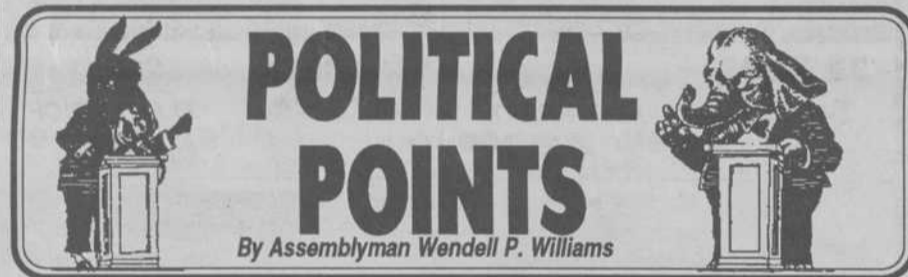
That's why it's necessary to strictly enforce laws and company policies that bar discrimination. It's why the courts have to be strict in their enforcement. And it's why all institutions in our society have to be made to see, to understand, and to correct the terrible impact of negative stereotyping and deep-seated prejudices.

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Mr. Stephen Alan Wynn

We, the members of the West Las Vegas Black Panther Party, are concerned with the upcoming attraction of the Sir Francis Drake Pirate Ship. Because of this particular ship's original history, we feel it is offensive to the black community to place such an attraction on the Las Vegas Strip. During the past period of sixty-four years, which extended from 1555 to 1619, the exportation of so-called "Negro Slaves" (Africans) were upon ships destined for the "New World" (America). One of the most well known slave traders of that time was Sir Francis Drake - who pledged services to his queen (Elizabeth of England).

Because of the pre-conceived notion by the Europeans that Africa was the land of wild savages and beasts, the only sailors he felt were qualified to accompany him on his quest were winos, vagabonds, robbers and thieves. These men were soon to be known as pirates. After Sir Francis Drake and his crew of pirates reached the "Ivory and Gold Coast" of Africa, they saw African tribes possessing goods such as solid gold crowns, white silk, precious gems, and a balance with nature, he and his pirates realized these original men had no guns in which to defend themselves. Sir Francis Drake and his men (See Letter to Editor, Page 4)



## POLITICAL POINTS

By Assemblyman Wendell P. Williams

## UNBOUGHT AND UNBOSSSED

In 1968, the New York State Legislature set up a committee to redraw some of the congressional district lines in central Brooklyn. While they were at it, the big political leaders decided that since the African-American population of Brooklyn was quite large, and all the congressman from Brooklyn were white, it made sense to redraw the lines in such a way that one new congressional district in Brooklyn was built around the African-American neighborhood of Bedford-Stuyvesant. That way it assumed that in the next election Brooklyn would be sending an African-American representative to congress for the first time in history.

The newspaper ran several stories filled with names and speculation of who the Democrats would choose as their candidate. One evening

in February an elderly African-American lady rang the doorbell of State Assemblywoman Shirley Chisolm and presented her with a campaign contribution of \$9.62, all in coins. Chisolm, whose assembly district was in the heart of the new congressional district began to consider at that time running for the new seat.

Her only concern was that she would be tagged as too independent for the party leaders and had never been the favorite of the political good ole boys.

Chisolm's campaign manager, Wesley Holder, asked her for an idea for her campaign slogan and she replied "since the big party leaders aren't supporting me, because they know that they can't control my votes, and since everyone knows I always speak my mind, how about Unbought and Unbossed for a slogan?" The rest is history.

On last week, just off the

heels of an outstanding performance on the U.S. Senate floor by Senator Carol Mosely Braun as she wiped out what the U.S. Senate had routinely done for decades, Shirley Chisolm declared that the 1990's was a time to bring a new meaning to the term "Unbossed and Unbought", and Mosely Braun represents that new meaning.

It has been 25 years since Shirley Chisolm coined the phrase "Unbought and Unbossed" and since then, others have also used it as well. However, it is Chisolm herself that admits even though her career was successful and she aided in many accomplishments for many people, she told the National Urban League last week that it's time for a new day and a new meaning to the slogan "Unbossed and Unbought."

We all like to reflect on the accomplishments of those who came before us, and we should.



Assemblyman  
Wendell P. Williams

But to think that the heros of decades gone by and their tactics can move us forward in the future, is simply a stupid dream. The conditions of this country and the mindsets of those of good-will and evil-will tells us we can not afford the antiquated motives of those whose time has come and gone. Activists and policymakers of today and in the future, like no other time, must remain "Unbought and Unbossed," however it comes with a new challenge and new energy. Those who don't realize that or refuse to realize it, must be made to do so. We love you, but we can't afford you any longer. There must be a new meaning to those who used to be Unbought and Unbossed and have now become Unbearable and Uncurable.

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