

# Point of View

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## TO BE EQUAL

# THE RACIAL FACTOR IN URBAN POLITICS

By John E. Jacob

The defeat of Mayor David Dinkins of New York City, and the recent electoral victories of white candidates in cities that had been run by African American mayors, such as Los Angeles and Philadelphia, suggest that the racial factor is still strong in big city politics.

In New York, for example, mayor Dinkins won handily among minority voters while his opponent did the same among white voters.

Most of those white voters has to cross party lines, since Mayor Dinkins was the Democratic candidate and the city is overwhelmingly Democratic.

In many instances, the motivating factor was racism—many white voters simply cannot ac-

cept a black man wielding power in City Hall.

And even when race was not an admitted factor, it's power was revealed in the stereotypes many people used to explain their vote.

For example, many voters in New York said they did not object to voting for a black mayor but that Mr. Dinkins did an extraordinary job of balancing the municipal budget despite declining revenues and increased demand for services; presided over a decline in the crime rate, was relatively scandal-free.

Now, I hold no brief for Mayor Dinkins. African American politicians have to take their lumps just like any other politician—you win some elections and you lose some.

But it seems obvious to me that being black carries a penalty for political leaders.

They are subjected to higher expectations from all sides. African American voters expect them to change urban conditions overnight, despite their limited powers and resources.

And white voters take an extreme "show-me" position. They demand superlative performance even as they accept lower standards from white officials, and interpret every attempt to improve the lot of the city's poorest as "giving the city away to the blacks."

But the attention given to the defeat of an African American mayor in a racially-divided city such as New York should not be allowed to obscure some other,

more positive aspects of race and urban politics.

For there is a counter-trend—of African Americans winning elections in cities that are largely populated by whites and of white candidates winning elections in black-majority cities.

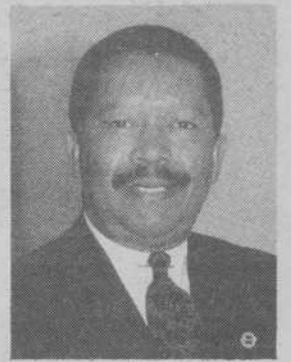
A new generation of African American political leaders won biracial support in cities such as Rochester, and won the white "swing" votes in black-majority cities such as Cleveland.

So issues, not race, have determined many recent elections. That's a healthy sign that should serve as a counterweight to racism's political effects.

Complicating the racial factor is intra-minority relations. In some cities, African Americans and Latinos have become politi-

cal rivals—a consequence of disadvantaged groups fighting for local jobs and power. But that's hardly a universal story. In New York's election, for example, minorities united behind Mayor Dinkins, despite his rival's attempt to court Hispanic voters.

Still, the racial factor in American politics remains powerful and it is particularly strong in urban politics. The disease of racism permeates virtually all aspects of our national life, so it is folly to expect urban politics to



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be free from it.

But its effect can be weakened by national policies that revive urban economies, and by a new national concern with race relations and with overcoming the racial divisions that continue to plague us.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### JUST ANOTHER NIGGAH SISTAH

I recently was a panelist at the annual "Unity Breakfast sponsored by the Las Vegas Alliance of Black School Educators and had the opportunity to witness first hand elected officials presentations on unity ... You would have to have been there! Thanks to the neutrality of Ray Willis, the master of ceremonies, the breakfast did not turn into a feast of horrors, name calling, political posturing or a free-for-all.

While some of the speakers forgot their mission and publicly attacked each other, Senator Joe Neal's idea of unity baffled me totally!! In what appeared to be totally unrelated to the subject, the senator spoke at length about women of African decent in the most unflattering terms, ending his presentation with "It does not matter what white woman's group you join, to them, you are still just another "niggah sistah."

The women in the audience sat stunned, some quite confused. Not knowing the origin of the senator's sinister character assignment was bad enough,

but the real shock came when the senator ranted and raved as if women of African-American decent were defined by anyone but ourselves! Worst yet, the senator doesn't know that we don't give a damn now or will ever give a damn about what white women or any other women say about us!! We have a long glorious history of success and achievement that eclipsed white men, white women and black men!! Further, as women, we do not, I repeat, do not ever have to apologize to anyone or be defined by anyone!

Has the good senator forgotten who we are? As a woman of color, I am appalled that the senator is that gender ignorant to think for one minute that women of color gave a damn about our perception!! Where has this man been for the last 50 years? The burning question is, how long Lord, how long? How much longer do we endure this level of stupidity from a man who was put into office and kept there by women voters as well as men? Sisters, we need to get busy! We (See Letters to Editor, Pg 29)



## POLITICAL POINTS

By Assemblyman Wendell P. Williams



## EDUCATE TO ELEVATE

American Education Week, first observed seventy-two years ago, is highlighted annually for the purpose of informing the public of the accomplishments and need of the public schools and to secure the cooperation and support of the public in meeting those needs. American Education Week came about mainly due to outcry surrounding the fact that over 25% of the nations World War I draftees were illiterate and more than 30% were physically unfit. In 1917 the American Legion and the National Education Association combined efforts to address this national problem and explore ways to gather support for public education. From that gathering came what we still know today, as American Education Week, which started two years later in 1921.

Forty-five years later, in 1966, Mr. H. Councill Trenholm, a long time leader in the predominantly African-American teacher group, The American Teachers Association, was mainly responsible

for a history making event in the field of education. Mr. Trenholm bridged the gap that created the merger of the American Teachers Association and the National Education Association. In doing so, they joined African-American and white school employees in a joint pursuit to equal educational opportunity for all American children. However, this is the point where America in general, has never really made true on that commitment. At least not to African-American children. From the beginning of the country, and up until even today, African-Americans are still forced to raise the question of equality in public education.

As educators throughout America and throughout Nevada are using American Education Week as a lever for sparking more involvement in public education. The African-American education community should use American Education Week even more so, to recommit to the overall enhancement of the educational state of all of our people. We have no choice.

The African-American's effort to obtain equal educational

rights had it's beginnings in the 18th century. One of the first evidences of this comes from Boston, Mass. and took the form of a petition to the State Legislature dated October 17, 1787. The leader behind this petition was Price Hall, who was born in Barbados in 1748 and moved to Massachusetts at age 17. He later served in the Revolutionary Army and became a Methodist Minister after the war. He was also the founder of the Negro Masonic Order in the United States and an early spokesman against the slave trade and slavery. At his home was established, in 1798, a school for African-American children. The following are the words from the 1787 petition:

*"To the Honorable the Senate and House of Representatives of the commonwealth of Massachusetts Bay, in General Court assembled.*

*The petition of a great number of Blacks, freemen of his commonwealth, humbly sheweth, that your petitioners are held in common with other free men of this town and commonwealth and have never been*



Assemblyman

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*backward in paying our proportionate part of the burdens under which they have, or may labor under; and as we are willing to pay our equal part of these burdens, we are of the humble opinion that we have the right to enjoy the privileges of free men. But that we do not will appear in many instances, and we beg leave to mention one out of many, and that is of the education of our children which now receive no benefit from the free schools in the town of Boston, which we think is a great grievance, as by woeful experience we now feel the want of a common education. We therefore, must fear for our rising offspring to see them in ignorance in a land of gospel light when there is provision made for them as others and yet can't enjoy them, and for not other reason can be given this they are black."*

Now the most interesting thing about this 1787 petition is how some of the key items expressed are some of the (See Political Points, Pg 4)

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