

# Point of View

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## TO BE EQUAL

# LEARNING TO LIVE TOGETHER

By Hugh B. Price

Nelson Mandela, in his moving address to a joint session of the U.S. Congress on October 6, spoke of a world "which inexorably says to all of us that we are human together or nothing at all."

Those words and that message would resonate among Americas, who appear to be caught in the tangles of negative racial and ethnic attitudes.

Public opinion polls consistently show that whites and African Americans have divergent views of racial progress and of the causes of many critical social problems.

And some recent polls not only indicate that those racial attitudes are hardening, but that, as a headline reporting the results of one of them put it, "minorities resent one another almost as much as they do whites."

That survey, released last spring by the National Conference of Christians and Jews, found that majorities of all the major minority communities say they have less chance to get good schooling, jobs, and homes

than whites.

At the same time, large numbers of blacks, Hispanics, and Asians believe negative stereotypes about other groups.

Such results are troubling, not only for what they say about present intergroup tensions, but also for what they indicate about the future of a society as diverse as ours.

Population projections indicate that half the population will be made up of minorities by the middle of the next century. Today, no single racial or ethnic group is a majority in many cities.

America's varied peoples will either learn to get along and to cooperate with one another, or we'll see our society fracture into mutually suspicious ethnic enclaves. You need only look around the world as places such as Bosnia and Rwanda to see where that can lead.

Such a grim prospect is far from inevitable, for the polls also indicate important areas of agreement upon which we can build a new national consensus.

An October Wall Street Journal/NBC News poll, for example, found that strong

majorities of both African Americans and whites agree that integration is good for society, progress is being made, and racial discrimination continues to be a national problem.

And the poll of minorities found that along with broad acceptance of negative stereotypes, large majorities of each group held positive opinions of the others.

All groups have their share of demagogues who want to stir up trouble, and the media give them

the attention they crave.

But most people want to live in harmony with other groups. History teaches us that widespread negative racial and ethnic stereotypes can give way to more positive attitudes as people learn that their common interests outweigh their differences.

So continuous dialogue among groups, educating people for the multicultural world in which we live, and overcoming the racial and ethnic segregation

that still characterize our work and housing patterns can help.

But even more helpful would be getting people to learn to focus on their common problems, such as fixing an economy that breeds the insecurity which contributes to intergroup tensions.

Minorities, for example, share a sense of exclusion from the larger society and a feeling that they're competing with one another for the worst jobs. They need to unite behind a common



HUGH B. PRICE

platform that creates opportunities for all.

And the white majority need to support real action to speed progress on many fronts — dismantling patterns of segregation and unequal justice, relieving the economic distress that hits minorities and cities disproportionately, and encouraging policies that lead to inclusion and opportunity.

## ALONG THE COLOR LINE

# "COLIN POWELL FOR PRESIDENT?"

By Dr. Manning Marable

Colin Powell is widely recognized, according to Newsweek magazine, as "the most respected figure in American public life. He is an African-American who transcends race; a public man who transcends politics." When Newsweek asked Americans several weeks ago who they would support in a presidential election if Powell ran as the Republican candidate against

Bill Clinton, the choice was obvious and easy: Powell received 54 percent to only 39 percent for the incumbent president.

Powell's rise to public prominence has been nothing short of spectacular. And in many respects, the closest parallel which can be drawn with Powell's political career was the rise of Booker T. Washington, a century ago. Like Washington, Powell's origins were humble. Born in

Harlem and raised by a seamstress and shipping clerk in the South Bronx, Powell joined the U.S. Army. After fourteen years, he had served two tours of duty in Vietnam, winning a Purple Heart and a Bronze Star along the way. Also like Washington, Powell has benefited from the patronage of the Republican Party. In 1972, former Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberg selected Powell to work in the Nixon budget office as an administrative fellow. Under the Reagan Administration, Powell's star rose steadily; first as Weinberg's military aide, then as Frank Carlucci's deputy national security adviser, and then as Carlucci's successor.

When Bush became President, Powell advanced to become Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff. As head of the U.S. military during the Gulf War against Iraq, Powell became a popular, well-known figure to the American public.



DR. MANNING MARABLE

Booker T. Washington became powerful with Republicans, corporate capitalists and white conservatives by preaching a doctrine of self-reliance, hard work and faith in American institutions. He promoted these values to develop the National Negro Business League and Tuskegee Institute, at a time when White Americans were endorsing racial segregation. Similarly, Powell has stepped forward on the national stage to embrace the same kind of (See Along Color Line, Pg 23)



## POLITICAL POINTS

By Assemblyman Wendell P. Williams



## A TOAST FOR HISTORY

If you look at former Nevada State Assemblyman Woodrow Wilson today, as he glides around with grace and distinction, it kind of makes you realize that history is not something of long ago, but rather something that's always happening. And always unfolding. As I'm sure you already know, Woody Wilson became Nevada's first African American State Legislator a couple of decades ago.

Now I've always been taught that being the first African American to accomplish a certain thing, really just means two things. First, it's not necessarily that you are so good, but maybe you were the first of the good

that was given the opportunity. Secondly, being the first African American to enter a certain arena means that you now have a new and tremendous burden to prepare a new and wider path for those who will come after you. This, and only this, is the real honor of being a "first." And those who realize this and act accordingly, will always be remembered as a contributor to real history, and not his-story.

So if you have been around Nevada for some time, chances are you've seen Woody Wilson struttin' in his impeccable attire and strong air of confidence. His attitude is fat, not because he thinks so much of himself, but rather he knew back when he first got elected, that his election

was just a small thing of bigger things to come. And you know what, Woody was right.

This past Tuesday's elections here in Nevada again proved that being the "first" is only as good as the next first. And boy did we get "a first."

When the polls closed, Nevada history was being remade in a number of ways. First, for the first time in the state's history, Northern Nevada will be represented by African American Legislators. Not just one, but two! Secondly, for the first time in the state's history, an African American woman was elected to the Legislature as Reno City Council member Bernice Matthews pulled 4,909 votes to beat out Kendall Matting for State



Assemblyman  
Wendell P. Williams

Senate District #1 in Washoe County. Next, if that wasn't enough, in State Senate District #2, Maurice Washington upset long-time Democratic Senator Len Nevin 5,186 votes to 3,863 votes, to become the first African American Republican Legislator in the state's history.

As the champagne cheer exploded Tuesday night and the pats on the back felt good, another first in history. As you take the toast for victory, take a drink for Woody and drink one for visions for the future.

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