

# CIVIL RIGHTS JOURNAL

# THE BELL CURVE BALL

By Bernice Powell Jackson

People are talking about it. Time, Newsweek, the New Republic and the New York Times have reviewed it. USA Today has written an editorial against it's arguments and the Wall Street Journal devoted an entire op-ed page to them. Too many are buying the book and the theory underneath it. It's called The Bell Curve and it's trying to put a new spin on an old, racist belief — that black people are genetically intellectually inferior to whites.

The Bell Curve is the name of the new 845 page book by Charles Murray and the late Richard Herrnstein and it's causing quite a media uproar. But if you're over 40 it sounds like old hat, albeit dressed up in

1990's Halloween costume. Indeed, many of us remember the 1960's-1970's Shockley-Jensen debate on IQ and race. Even in the early days of this century "Scientists" were even measuring our skulls and comparing bumps on our heads to prove that blacks were intellectually inferior.

The Bell Curve is based on three arguments. First, that "cognitive elites," smart people selected by IQ tests, SAT's and admission to elite colleges and universities, are now the ruling class in America. These people are mostly white.

Their second argument is that intelligence is the primary factor in determining success, wealth and social status (I guess they didn't see Forrest Gump). At the bottom end of the intellectual spectrum, Murray and Herrnstein place the growing underclass whom they deem intellectually inferior (I guess they've never tested some of the brilliant but

illegal businessmen of the street either). These people they place in the underclass are mostly black.

Their third point is that American society is becoming more and more polarized between these two extremes. Newsweek says this argument culminates in a vision of "political apocalypse" which foresees the transformation of the welfare state into the "custodial state — a high tech ... version of the Indian reservation." A frightening scenario for us all.

Murray and Herrnstein are careful to point they are talking about groups of people in general and therefore this should have no impact on the way individual whites and blacks see each other. But, they also use test-score data to show that the black-white IQ gap exists even for middle-class blacks. Or, as Leon Weiseltier of the New Republic Magazine said, "Having delivered African-Americans to inferiority and inequality, Murray tells them to 'Have a nice day...'"

The fact that we are once again having this debate about IQ and race and that this book is receiving so much attention only points to the reality that racism is still alive and well in America. Sadly, some Americans are still looking for ways to prove that African Americans are less than human.

The dangers that these theories pose are several-fold. They give academic legitimacy to an old, unproven argument. They will be used as political fodder by those who want an excuse to end government

progress such as Headstart. For example, some would question the funding of Headstart if it can't change the IQ of the children, without taking into account that raising IQ is not the primary reason for Headstart. Headstart's purpose is to enrich the lives of children and to give them self-esteem and basic skills tools for a fighting chance.

The theories of Murray and Herrnstein, if taken to their logical conclusion, can lead to the selective breeding programs of Nazi Germany. And they can have a more troubling danger as well. I call it the God complex. For when humans decide another human's destiny, they're trying to be God. God doesn't make decisions about destiny based on race or there never would have been a George Washington Carver or a Leontyne Price or a Frederick Douglass or a Mary McLeod Bethune.

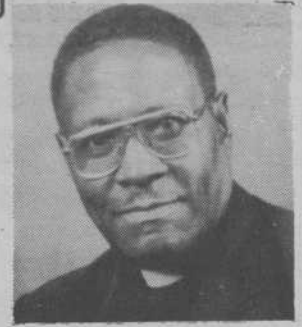
There may well be a "cognitive elite" developing in America. In fact other scholars and academics are writing about the "symbolic analysts" and the "knowledge workers" who they predict will be the working class of the future. But when race is seen as the primary determinant of such a future, that's when some of us begin to look for the white hoods and sheets underneath the discussion table.

The Bell Curve isn't just an attempt "to substitute IQ for moral worth" as Newsweek wrote. It's a curve ball thrown at efforts to end racism in this country. Don't buy the book and don't buy the argument.

## THE NAACP AND YOU



Rev. Jesse D. Scott  
President  
Las Vegas, NAACP



## SCHEDULES BRANCH ELECTION

Sunday, November 20, 1994 has been set as the date of the Las Vegas branch NAACP election and the time will be from 7:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m. at Mable Hoggard School located at 950 North Tonopah, Las Vegas, Nevada.

This branch election, as well as all others held in Las Vegas, is very important to the general welfare of all the people who live in Southern Nevada.

Therefore, you should not allow anybody or anything to keep you from casting your ballot on election day.

The hours have been set long enough to allow everyone to cast his or her vote for the candidate for President based solely on his or her choice. You can vote before or after you go to work or church. Remember, your one vote might decide if your candidate will or will not be elected.

Don't allow the controversy that you may have heard about the NAACP taking place in the NAACP National or local offices to stop you. The work product of the NAACP has been and still is racism, ignorance, repression, oppression, segregation, denial and discrimination.

Sometimes these issues confuse and frustrate people. Dr. W.E.B. DuBois, one of the founders of the NAACP and it's magazine, evidently, envisioned so much trouble for the NAACP in the future that he named the NAACP magazine "The Crisis."

Socially, politically and economically speaking the NAACP was in a crisis or trouble in 1909 just as it is today.

The good Lord God must have ordained and divinely approved of the organization otherwise it would have died on the vine many years ago as so many others have done during these 85 challenging years of history.

My reason for saying that is because the NAACP for 85 years has been broke financially speaking or in the red.


Having a lot of money in the bank is not the heart, soul, strength and power of the NAACP. One might ask then what makes the NAACP so effective and different from any other organization in the world? The answer is very simple, yet profound, "People Power."

On this year's NAACP election ballot will be the names of three people who will be seeking the presidency of the branch. These candidates are Mr. Leo McDaniel, Mrs. Barbara Robinson and Rev. James M. Rogers, Sr.

You are eligible to vote on election day if you have in your possession one or more pieces of the following evidence: 1) a current NAACP membership card from the Las Vegas Branch NAACP, 2) if you received a letter from the NAACP announcing when and where the election will be held for 1994, 3) if you have a NAACP paid membership receipt from the branch office, 4) if you attended the NAACP 1994 Freedom Fund banquet and have some evidence to prove it, 5) if you are a life member or transferee from another branch by letter or from the National Office NAACP.

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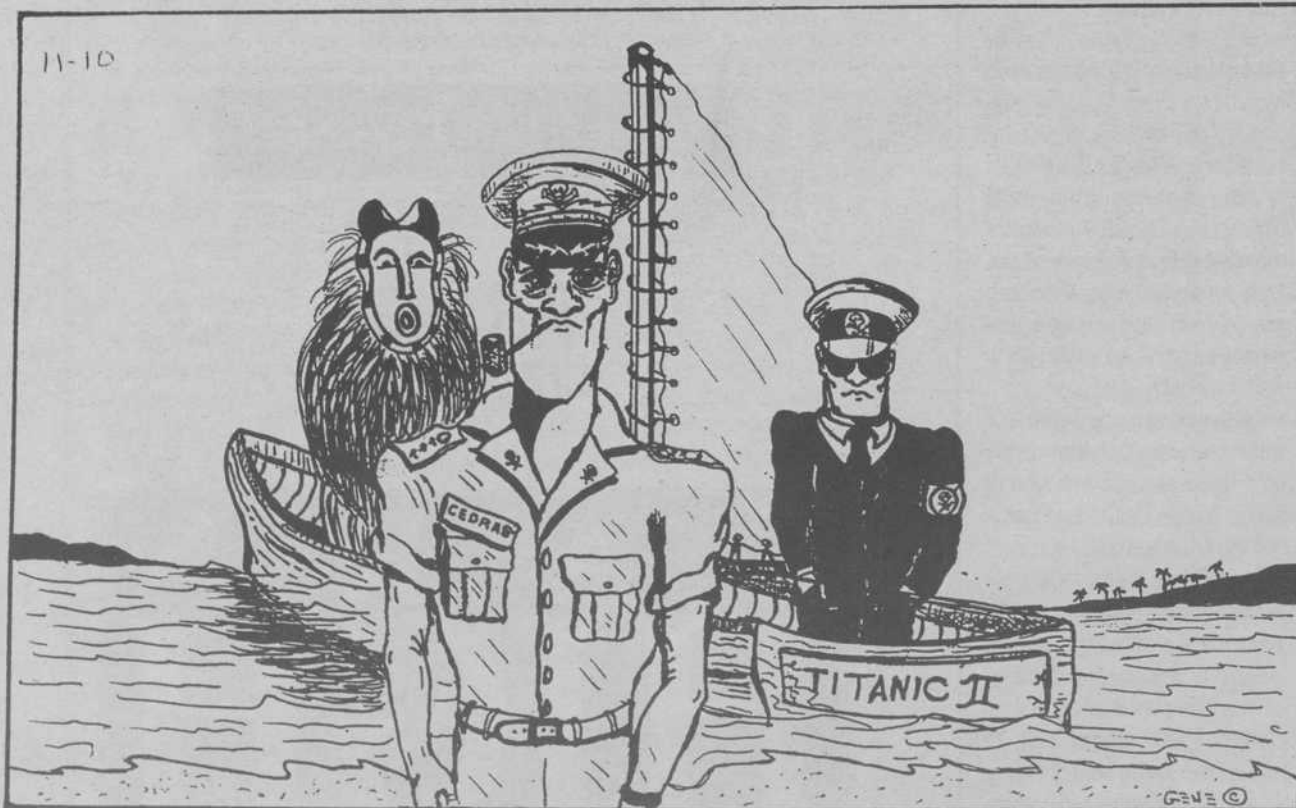
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## ELECTION

LAS VEGAS NAACP BRANCH ELECTIONS WILL BE HELD AT THE MABLE HOGGARD MAGNET SCHOOL, 950 N. TONOPAH.

THE POLLS WILL BE OPEN FROM 7 AM - 7 PM ON SUNDAY, NOV. 20TH. VOTERS ARE ASKED TO BRING THEIR MEMBERSHIP CARD OR RECEIPTS, AS WELL AS A PICTURED I.D.

FOR FUTURE INFORMATION CALL 646-1662. SUBMITTED BY PAT SPENCER, SECRETARY