

# Point of View

The views on these editorial pages are those of the artists and authors indicated. Only the one depicted as the Sentinel-Voice editorial represents this publication

## TO BE EQUAL

# 1995 A YEAR FOR COMMUNITY ACTIVISM

By Hugh B. Price

All eyes are on Washington these days, where the great debate begins between an Administration committed to a proactive government role in solving our nation's critical social problems and a Congressional majority skeptical of government's ability to do much of anything domestically right, except fight crime and foster economic growth. The Battle of the Budget will be the first test of strength as the adversaries press different conceptions of how government can best use its resources.

Don't look for new programs to create jobs or to expand training and education opportunities for poor people whose education and skills deficits keep them from meaningful employment. Neither the resources nor the will is currently available in Washington to pass such initiatives.

Do look for proposals that sharply cut government programs aimed at sustaining poor people and creating opportunities for them to enter the mainstream. Expect a welfare debate that centers not on creating jobs and providing necessary services, but on moving women and children off the welfare rolls and curtailing benefits. And expect increasing state and local responsibility for designing, financing and implementing social programs.

The Congressional majority plans to cut and cap social spending entitlements and turn them over to the states. Even if that fails to win approval, we'll see much state control of such programs. The grim political and budgetary realities ahead will result in an acceleration of the trend to a shift of authority and resources to state and local governments.

So while all eyes are on Washington, they should also be trained on the state capital and on city hall, because that is where much of the action will be in the coming months and years. As responsibility and resources are shoved down the local level, it is important to have robust, activist citizen organizations with the know-how and the clout to influence the way local governments operate those critical social programs.

What many of us think of as "federal" programs are actually run by state and local governments who have increasingly broad discretion in the use of the funds Washington sends them.

That means an important new role for community organizations

like our Urban League affiliates. They must educate people about such critical issues as crime, welfare, education reform, and others. And they must mobilize them to become actively involved in solving those issues.

That involvement can take many forms. An essential part of school reform, for example, requires that parents understand the national education standards that spell out what every child should know. They'll need to monitor their children's performance and the schools' effectiveness in teaching those fundamentals, and it's up to community organizations to help parents get the tools to do that.

School reforms also requires mobilizing parents and their

communities to ensure that curricula, teaching standards, and school budgets are adequate to educating our children for the world of the 21st century.

Similarly, it will take an informed, activist community to steer local government initiatives in the right direction to effectively cut crime and design welfare programs that assist people to become economically self-sufficient.

Washington may be where the rhetoric is pumped out, but our local communities will be where the action takes place in 1995 and beyond. We'd better be prepared.



HUGH B. PRICE

## CIVIL RIGHTS JOURNAL

# A STORY FOR NEW YEAR'S INSPIRATION

By Bernice Powell Jackson

The people in the Hough community were worried. In fact, the people in several adjacent Cleveland communities were worried. They were worried when they learned that Mt. Sinai Hospital was planning to build a new medical waste incinerator in their community. They were worried when they learned that medical and solid waste incinerators are responsible for 95 percent of all known dioxin emissions. They were worried when they learned that nearly ten years ago the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) said that dioxins probably cause cancer.

But the people in Cleveland didn't get immobilized by the

prospect of such an incinerator being built in their community, they got organized. A coalition of community and environmental groups had begun work working together in 1990 as the Earth Day Coalition. This coalition began to sponsor hearings on the incinerator in churches, libraries and community centers in the area. It invited block association leaders as well as clergy and lay persons from local churches and members of the environmental groups in the area. Every week there was a meeting to try to get the word out the people about the dangers of dioxins and lead, which is also emitted from incinerators.

What had seemed to be certain was now not so certain.

The City of Cleveland, which had given preliminary permission to the hospital, put that permission on hold until they received further information from the EPA. Each week the meetings of the community got larger, with more and more organizations being represented and officially voicing their opposition to the incinerator. The city councilperson decided that the Council should hold a hearing on the incinerator and agreed that it should be held within the community, in the evening when working people could come.

Then, in December, the hospital announced that it would not build the incinerator, pending the EPA study on dioxins and their hazards. The people won. The city of Cleveland won. Even the hospital won because they have shown that they are willing to hear the cries of the people and to look for less dangerous ways of getting rid of their waste.

But there are other hospitals with medical and solid waste incinerators in this city and in communities across this country. There are other communities which, as a result, are facing very real health dangers because

of these incinerators. And many of these communities are communities of color.

In September, the EPA issued a sweeping call to the scientific, medical and environmental communities asking for new data on dioxins as a part of their reassessment of dioxins. Their latest findings are reaffirming earlier ones and conclude with even greater confidence that dioxin does cause cancer in animals and probably in humans. In addition, said EPA Assistant Administrator Lynn Goldman, "Today we have a stronger body of evidence to suggest that at some dose, dioxin exposure can result in a number of non-cancer health effects... (including) developmental and reproductive effects, immune suppression and disruption of regulatory hormones."

Dioxins, which are a group of chemical compounds inadvertently produced through combustion, certain kinds of chemical manufacturing and industrial processes, are a product of modern industrial society. They are airborne and settle on plants, which then enter (See Civil Rights Journal, Pg 4)



## POLITICAL POINTS

By Assemblyman Wendell P. Williams



# HELP SOMEBODY!

As the 14th Annual celebration honoring the life of service of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. here in Las Vegas rolls upon us this weekend, we all should make an extra effort to really focus on what the legacy of the man was all about, but more importantly, let's use it to address our daily challenges and community ills. The King Holiday and Service Act of 1994, signed into law by President Bill Clinton on August 23, 1994, designates the King Federal Holiday to be a day of national service. The U.S. Congress also asked that the day be

one of interracial cooperation and anti-youth violence initiatives. Acting to implement its new Congressional mandate, the King Federal Holiday Commission has selected as its national theme:

### ON THE KING HOLIDAY HELP SOMEBODY!

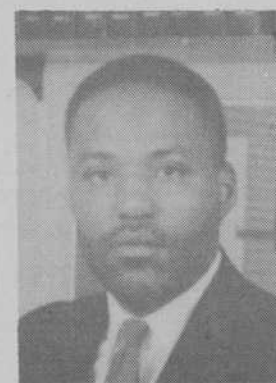
*Every American Can Make A Difference*

Martin Luther King Jr. believed that service was "the soul's highest purpose" and service was the path to happiness, to greatness and to God.

Let's make a real effort to open our hearts and offer our

hands to feed the hungry, house the homeless, care for those with AIDS and other diseases, to stop the violence and killing, to make schools and communities safe, and promote peace and justice. Not just for one day, but for the rest of our lives.

A few days ago, as we all felt a sense of loss, as H.P. Fitzgerald was laid to rest. Like King, the life of service that H.P. gave to so many will never be forgotten. Through the countless number of people that he unselfishly helped, "Fitz" will continue to live on. He is one person that proved that every man, woman and child can make



Assemblyman  
Wendell P. Williams

a difference.

Let's all be a part of King Week '95, the only holiday created for improving and helping ourselves, our families, our communities and our hearts.

For a complete and detailed rundown on the activities that you and your family can participate in, call the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Committee of Las Vegas at 631-1913. And remember, on the King Holiday — HELP SOMEBODY!

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Betty Brown, President/CEO  
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Ramon Savoy, Advertising & Marketing Dir.  
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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  
Diana Aird  
Timothy C. Williams  
Terrence R. Johnson  
Loretta A. Hall

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(608) 238-7550

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