

Point of View

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TO BE EQUAL

"Preference" Stigma

By Hugh B. Price, President
National Urban League

Earlier this spring I visited the Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania and encountered the "preference" stigma up close.

While there, I was approached by a fretful African-American first year M.B.A. student.

She confided that a number of her black classmates, who had been admitted under affirmative action, were dismayed that they weren't doing all that well academically.

They worried that the stigma associated with preferential admission was undermining their self-esteem.

Was it worth it, they wondered, to have been admitted in the first place? When I asked whether she or any of her black friends had flunked out, she replied, "No."

To which I replied that they therefore "belonged" at Wharton because they were the work.

Only if they were in over their heads academically should they question whether they belonged.

Next, I asked whether she thought any of the white students who were clustered around them in the class ranking were agonizing over whether they belonged.

I couldn't imagine this to be the case.
Nor could she, from what she'd observed.



HUGH B. PRICE

On this very point, I'll never forget the ruckus that erupted at Georgetown Las School a few years ago.

A white law student working in the admissions office charged that blacks were being admitted with low college grades and law school entrance exam scores than whites.

Moreover, many had gravitated toward the lower quarter.

The clear implication was that they didn't belong at Georgetown in the first place.

Obviously, low class rankings aren't a cause for celebration.

Our students should strive to excel.

But why were the black students the only ones in the bottom quarter said not to belong?

What about the white students with them in the lower quarter?

It's patently unfair to imply that our young people who aren't academic superstars, but who nonetheless haven't flunked out, don't "belong"-when the same isn't said of white students who are near them in the class rankings.

Black students must resist this assault on their self-esteem. To

CIVIL RIGHTS JOURNAL

Where Do We Go From Here?

By Bernice Powell Jackson

The title of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s last book was Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or

Community? That question is just as relevant for America today as it was 27 years ago.

Our country is at the

those who question their bone fides, our youngsters should cite limited predictive power of gatekeeping tests and grades, and then reply that they look forward to reconnecting at their 20th reunions to compare professional achievements and W-2 forms.

For further rebuttal, they should cite the wide array of supposedly race-neutral preferences that universities, employers and contracting authorities routinely use to favor whites with less than stellar credentials.

As Nathan Glazer of Harvard notes, they employ geography, alumni legacy, golfing friendships, fraternity and country club membership, family and social connections, wealth, seniority, nepotism, extracurricular activities, proficiency with the oboe, social class and such to tilt decisions overtly or imperceptibly.

The beneficiaries of these non-racial preferences seldom if ever suffer a demeaning loss of self esteem.

For all these reasons, it is quite wrong to accept a preference stigma against African-American students who are performing. The ultimate test is how they perform in the labor market and in life.

proverbial crossroads, where we must make difficult choices about how we live as a society; indeed, some would say the choice is whether we live as a society. For many Americans-for many people of color, for many women, for many of the poor-it feels that we as a nation are choosing to close doors, rather than open them.

As we begin to dismantle affirmative action, as we limit the federal court's jurisdiction in dealing with discrimination in education and voting rights and as we limit the federal government's ability to assist businesses owned by women and persons of color, some of us feel abandoned and under assault. As we begin the draconian budget cuts of the Contract with America, some of us wonder how poor women and



Bernice Powell Jackson

their families will survive and whether we as a nation really believe that hungry, angry, isolated people just will disappear quietly. As bright, articulate and committed African American leaders like Dr. Lani Guinier and Dr. Henry Foster are not even allowed to have their nominations voted upon by the Senate, some of us wonder if there is increasingly only room for the Clarence Thomases of the world to serve in the public
(See Civil Rights, Page 10)



POLITICAL POINTS

By Assemblyman Wendell P. Williams



DRY VICTORIES

With so many crucial issues facing all of us, especially women and children, we must be very, very careful and mindful not to spend so much of our time and energy on non- and low-impact issues.

Now I'm not trying to suggest that these non-issues be ignored, but there are many more issues that have the potential to devastate a lot more and longer periods of time; decades and beyond.

On Monday of this week on the national level, two attacks kicked-off that will vastly devastate the plight of two of the most defenseless groups of people; children and the elderly.

In Atlanta, House Speaker Newt Gingrich started his campaign to cut Medicare by \$270 billion. Part of his plan

will force the elderly into HMOs, which will restrict their choice of doctors, or force them each to pay at least \$6,000 more each year for health care. Now cutting Medicare for the elderly \$270 billion in addition to other factors such as the heatwave that killed 557 seniors in five days in Chicago alone is a lot more important than some of the nonsense we whine about.

Also this week, Senate Majority leader Bob Dole kicked-off his so-called Welfare Reform non-sense. Most agree that the nations' system of welfare need to take a different approach, however, this plan is totally punitive to children.

It would also place the responsibility of job training, payments and child care on the states. Needless to say, we saw the type of insane attacks that were attempted here in Nevada

during the recent legislative session in Carson City.

Sunday, August 6, 1995, Las Vegas Sun headline: LV's black districts could be challenged. Another sign of things to come. First of all, what is a black district. I don't think the newspaper was referring to a group of people. Maybe they were referring to the soil.

Maybe we Are missing the real message — that it's OK for districts to be totally "white" or white majority districts and be totally legal and fine. So how in the hell can you take a district like Assembly District 6, which I represent, be illegal.

District 6's voting age population is 40.79% African American, 51.65% white, and some would have the shameful, sinful audacity to suggest the district is illegal. It will be interesting to see how the



Assemblyman
Wendell P. Williams

community activists, and moreover, the Democratic Party take on this issue. White all right! Black get back!

There are a lot of things that affect the very daily survival of people. If you don't have the land, the job, the business or the money, you don't have much at all. Sick and old people need money to call for medical service and money to turn their phones on and keep them on; that's the real issue.

People need jobs and security to be able to shop for food for themselves and their families. It matters little what's inside or outside the supermarket if there's no money or transportation to create a need to go there in the first place. There is no
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