

Point of View

TO BE EQUAL

Race Relations In America

By Hugh B. Price President, National Urban League

Race relations in America have turned sour.

From the sharply conflicting reactions along racial lines regarding the Willie Horton commercial in 1988, the Rodney King beating, books like *The Bell Curve* and *The End of Racism*, and the assaults on affirmative action, to the O.J. Simpson verdict, the notorious Fuhrman tapes and, most recently, the Million Man March, blacks and whites see too many issues through different lenses.

Even issues like welfare, out-of-wedlock births and crime have been racialized.

The reasons for the racial divide are complex.

One contributing factor is economic change.

In the last two decades, the wages of blue collar workers, white and minority alike, have declined sharply.

The number of workers holding more than one job has jumped by 25 percent.

America now has the widest income and wealth gap between haves and have-nots in the entire industrialized world.

Even white collar workers have begun to feel the sting of job cutbacks and stagnant wages.

The inevitable result is heightened competition for what's perceived as ever more limited economic opportunity and advantage.

This environment enables cynical practitioners of wedge politics to play apprehensive Americans off against one another along ethnic and gender lines.

Rather than dwell on the origins of our nation's racial trauma, I want instead to focus on why its imperative to heal race relations and how, specifically, we might set about doing so.

As president of the National Urban League, I speak to this issue from a base of deep institutional experience and commitment.

Promoting racial harmony has long been one of the Urban League movement's primary missions.

Since our founding 85 years ago, we have focused on helping black folk gain access to society's mainstream.

Racial harmony is essential to the realization of that objective because it facilitates the move from isolation to inclusion.

To put it bluntly, the most basic rule for surviving and thriving in American society is that if an individual, an institution, an enterprise or a people doesn't have something of value to put on the table, they simply won't be at the table in the 21st century.

That's the bottom line of why we African Americans must be obsessed with our own development.

It means we must grow and support our businesses, whether they operate in the mainstream economy or serve our own markets, so that we create even more jobs and wealth.

It means supporting those institutions that have been vital to our survival and success.

It means using the economic muscle we possess to advance our interests with those who covet our purchasing power.

An obsession with development means participating fully in the political process.

Given all the changes in domestic policy, we have too much at stake to watch what's going on around us from the sidelines.

If we fail to flex our political muscle, we'll be marginalized politically.

It's time for America to purge the remnants of racism and promote racial harmony.

Racism must end. Healing must begin.



HUGH B. PRICE

THIS WAY FOR BLACK EMPOWERMENT

Presidential Politics: The Untold Story

By Dr. Lenora Fulani

You probably caught the news on TV about Bob Dole winning the Florida straw poll. No doubt you saw the headlines about the so-called budget deal between the Democrats and Republicans, with both sides claiming victory—and a better shot at the White House in 1996. And perhaps you read an editorial or two analyzing the Colin Powell campaign—that never was.

Here are some of the stories you didn't read. You may find that these stories—small, and for the most part unreported—ultimately have more significance for the future of Black empowerment and development than all the hype.

The National African American Leadership Summit met in Washington, DC a few weeks ago. With a televised town hall meeting that featured Minister Louis Farrakhan, the Reverends Ben Chavis and Jesse Jackson and Dr. Joseph Lowery, and workshops and issues committees which hammered out a Black Agenda, the Summit built upon the momentum of the Million Man March.

My representative at the discussions, Mamie Moore of Richmond, Virginia, brought a report of the many inquiries I have been receiving from around the country since the March and Minister Farrakhan's call to create an independent "third force," and urged the Summit to extend its dialogue on third party politics. March participants have been asking me how to register as independents, how to vote as independents and how to participate in building an independent party through which the African American Agenda may be achieved.

At the same time that Minister Farrakhan and others are calling for a "third force" in Black politics, some Black voters and activists are building bridges to the Ross Perot-led third party movement. I gave my support to Mr. Perot's drive in California to create a new political party there. (Out of 120,000 new registrants in the California Reform Party, about 10,000 people from the African American, Chicano and gay communities were registered by my supporters.) Next, I was asked to be of help in Perot's next drive—in Ohio—which was just completed on November 20. In particular the Perot forces asked for my involvement in bringing them into the inner-city communities in Columbus, Cleveland, Cincinnati and elsewhere. The Black activists in my networks

who hooked up with Perot's organizers encountered a very positive response among Black voters to the creation of a multi-racial independent party. Thousands signed the petitions. A similar relationship is evolving in South Carolina, where the head of the Patriot Party there (I am a founder of the national Patriot Party), African American businessman Wayne Griffith has visited and dialogued with the head of the Citizens Committee to Establish a Reform Party in South Carolina.

Some have said that Perot is not interested in support from Black voters. I disagree. I believe that Mr. Perot is well aware that if his party-building effort is to go beyond what his independent presidential run accomplished

WHERE WE STAND

Drugs, Crime & the African American Community

By Craig Stevens

The devastation of drugs that once dominated the headlines now plays second string to several issues that are neither as important nor as deadly. Although they have been pushed to the side, drugs are still a major contributor to crime within the African American community.

As the popularity of crack increased so did the death and addiction rate of many of the members of our community. Over the past ten years, despite inflation and the increase in law enforcement, the price of crack has gone down, life became very cheap and death became available in a bottle for as little as fifty cents. During this period the use of crack has ignited, fueled and driven the underworld.

The people of our community that sell the drugs have put our community up as collateral for a new pair of sneakers, gold watch, or maybe even a car. This illegal activity has set the stage for an increase in harassment, murder, police brutality and a presumption of guilt towards all African American males.

In cities all over America poverty is the back drop for a series of life circumstances which have led many young African American males down the wrong road. On the corners of these roads many of them are aimlessly selling drugs. Some think that they can beat the streets or die trying, while other young males believe that drug money would jump-start them off the bottom floor of poverty, but they never live to regret their decision.

Drug dealers who are usually forced into early retirement, learn that wealth, fame, and glory is a very short story.

in 1992, he is going to have to reach out to other—and other kinds of—voters. I think his efforts—through me—to build bridges to the inner-city communities is a sign that he sees such a new coalition in the making.

The more actively we, as African Americans, participate and leverage our position, the more this new party can be a viable political vehicle for us, certainly one that is more open to our influence and our agenda that either the Democrats or Republicans.

You will be interested to know that the recent City Vote experiment, in which urban voters participated in a mock election in 17 cities, showed Ross Perot with one and a half



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times the support of Jesse Jackson in a poll which had both running for president as independents. Perot also had twice as much support as Jackson in cities like Rochester, New York, which has a substantial Black population. I think a Perot-Jackson independent ticket would be a great way to go in 1996.

unwilling to break the informal code of the "hood."

We are the eyes, ears, and voice of our community and we know all too well everything there is to know regarding who's using and selling on the streets. The frightening reality of drugs in our community is that these are our sons and brothers that are doing the selling. We would never assume that the war on drugs would be the war on us or that innocent law abiding citizens would be placed in a position where they could be silent and guilty, or speak out for less drugs during a short period of time without safety ever being guaranteed. A difficult decision but when all is said and done, we will be the judge and jury, or winners or losers for ourselves, our families, and our communities.

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SEND ALL LETTERS TO:
LAS VEGAS SENTINEL-VOICE
900 E. CHARLESON • LAS VEGAS, NV 89104
All signed letters will be published.

LAS VEGAS Sentinel Voice

Nevada's only African-American community newspaper.
Published every Thursday by Griot Communications Group, Inc.
900 East Charleston Boulevard • Las Vegas, Nevada 89104
Telephone (702) 380-8100 • Fax (702) 380-8102

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