

Clinton

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 punitive crime bill in American history through Congress. It gutted funds for drug rehabilitation, prevention, social service, youth employment and job training programs. It added scores of new death penalty provisions to federal law and shoveled out billions exclusively for more police and prisons. A year later, the U.S. Sentencing Commission voted four to one

against a recommendation to examine, modify or "equalize" the apparently harsh sentencing practices for crack dealers and abusers, most Black and Latino offenders: as opposed to the "hand-slap" sentences for powdered cocaine dealers and abusers, who are mostly white. Clinton said no.

Clinton defenders argue that he appointed Blacks to high administration positions,

supported minority redistricting and tougher action on the church burnings. But these were no-risk, big return political actions. The appointments were to high profile positions, with relatively little major policy making power and influence. He didn't fight for his nominee, Lani Guineir, to head the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division, and he quickly dumped Surgeon General Jocelyn Elders after

getting mild flack from conservative Republicans.

Clinton had to oppose Southern redistricting. It meant the potential loss of Democratic seats and votes. This only benefits Republicans.

And it took national protests by Blacks and church groups, then mass media attention before Clinton finally spoke out on the church burnings. While he approved funds for church

rebuilding and tough penalties for arson, Clinton doggedly denies the possibility that the burnings are linked to white supremacist groups. Meanwhile, the burnings continue.

Clinton has failed miserably

to address America's racial problems during his term in the White House. Can Blacks do anything to make sure that he doesn't completely fail again? Yes!

(To be continued)

Empowerment

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enhanced by the "Sister Souljah" episode, in which Clinton blasted Rev. Jackson on the eve of the National Rainbow Coalition's 1992 convention. The tensions between Jackson and Clinton were rife. Clinton was the new, more conservatized future of the Democratic Party. Jackson personified the failed bid by the Black and progressive wing of the party to take it over.

In his not-for-prime-time speech to the Democratic National Convention this year, Rev. Jackson, referring to the infamous 1968 convention in Chicago, said, "the tension with our party was over warfare. In 1996, it's welfare," referring to Bill Clinton's decision to sign the devastating Republican welfare bill. But in spite of this strategic retreat from the guarantee of a safety net, Jackson still endorsed the President and the party.

In an interview this month in the *Nation* magazine entitled "Toward Democratic Renewal," Rev. Jackson scoffs at those who are cynical about making changes in the Democratic Party. "When we move, they adjust to us," he said. "They didn't want to end slavery. We did. We won." It's quite true, Rev. Jackson, that the Democratic Party didn't want to end slavery. And moreover it didn't. Slavery was ended neither by an uprising nor a negotiation inside the party. It was ended by the creation of a new political party, the Republican Party.

In 1996, neither the Democrats nor the Republicans want to end racism. They thrive on it. If we seriously want to end racial strife, we must create a new party to lead the way.

To be equal

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and privilege of being an American: having a job. As he puts it: "It's a myth that people who don't work don't want to work."

And he also states plainly that "Solutions will have to be found—and those solutions are at hand."

A great part of what he suggests dovetails with what I (and others within and outside the Urban League movement) have advocated in several columns in recent months: an urban jobs program repairing and rebuilding cities' crumbling infrastructure that would provide poor inner-city residents with both employment and meaningful job-training in order to bring them into the nation's economic loop.

We are not proposing a "giveaway" program. We are proposing a program in which poor inner-city residents would get meaningful work and training at decent wages and all of America would get a refurbished urban environment—and a newly developed pool of workers.

Yes, such a program would cost money. We contend that America cannot afford the cost of not mounting such an effort.

What it takes, at the basic level, is understanding that America's economic survival rests on a society in which all levels of the society are economically healthy. What it also takes is understanding the more exalted meaning behind Christopher Reeve's words: America is stronger when all of us take care of all of us.

Hilton

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undergraduates but received only 5.7 percent of all bachelor's degrees. "Hispanics" comprise 5.3 percent of all undergraduates, but receive 2.7 percent of all bachelor's degrees. (ACE)

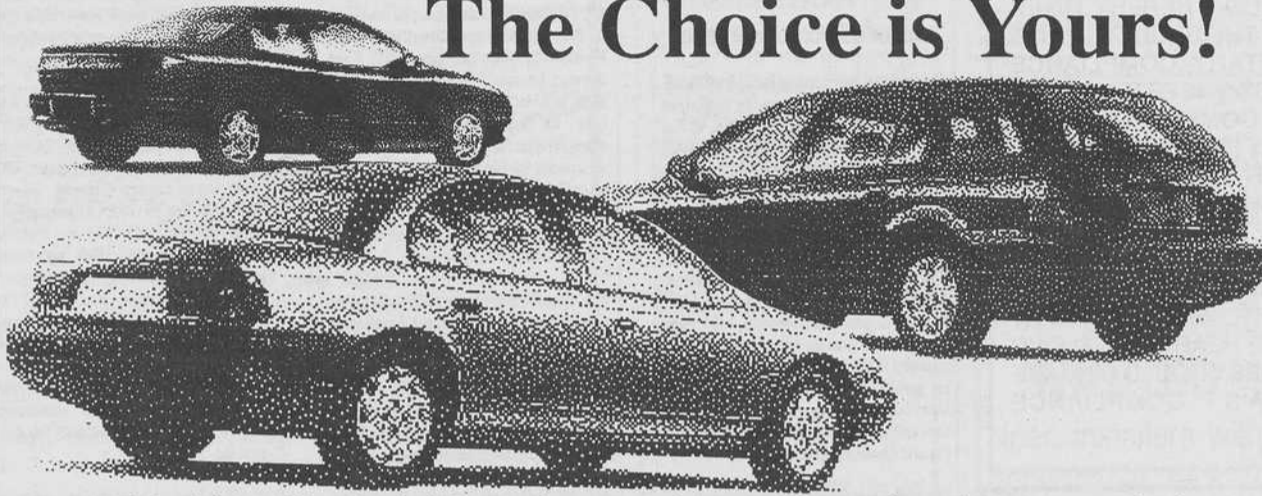
- Violence is the leading cause of death among Blacks (male and female) aged 15 to 34. (NCHE)

- Blacks are disproportionately affected by AIDS. We are three times more likely to be at risk for the disease, and currently make up 24 percent of all cases, though we are only 12 percent of the population. (NCHE)

- African-American students comprise 9.2 percent of all

- Forty-two percent of all 13-year-olds lack intermediate reading skills, which allows them to interrelate ideas and make generalizations. Sixty-one percent of African-Americans 13-year-olds cannot read at their age level. (Education Testing Service, under a grant from the National Center for Education Statistics).

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