

POINT OF VIEW

TO BE EQUAL

Where are the jobs?

By Hugh B. Price
President

National Urban League
Where are the jobs?

This is the issue which has always been at the center of the debate over the welfare reform law enacted by Congress and signed by President Clinton last summer.

There will only be one measuring stick of the new law's success: jobs which make it possible for former welfare recipients to leave the welfare rolls and live decently — and thus, which justify society's demand that all able-bodied individuals work to support themselves and their families.

Some who support the new law boast that nationally the number of people on welfare has fallen from just over 14



HUGH B. PRICE

million in January, 1993 to 11 and a half million now.

The astonishing, and frightening, fact is that, because most states don't systematically keep track of them, neither the federal government nor state governments know how many of those 2.6 million former welfare recipients actually got



jobs and how many have just sunk deeper into a now-invisible poverty.

It does no good to assert that the welfare reform law is going to work simply because of the number of new jobs our currently strong economy has created.

Welfare recipients are still going to be without work if all but a relative few of those jobs are ones requiring white-collar skills. The overwhelming majority of welfare recipients do not have those skills and won't get them without intensive and expensive training.

Or, if the entry-level jobs which are open are really just temporary or seasonal work, or pay subsistence wages, former welfare recipients will likely endure a poverty completely devoid of the assurance of the "safety-net" features of housing, food and medical care that the now-discarded government assistance program provided.

President Clinton sought to address these concerns in his radio address last Saturday by announcing that he has ordered all federal agencies to immediately begin preparing detailed plans for hiring people off welfare.

"Government can help to move people from welfare to work," Mr. Clinton said, "by acting the way we want all employers to act — demanding high performance from workers, but going the extra mile to offer opportunity to those who have been on welfare and want to do something more with their lives."

Mr. Clinton said that the kind of federal jobs he is thinking of are as clerical aides, security guards, messengers, library technicians, supply clerks, mail clerks and forestry workers. They typically pay about \$12,500 a year.

The idea of the federal effort is both proper and praiseworthy. The federal government must act. It cannot

simply leave it to charitable organizations, community groups, churches, and businesses to hire welfare recipients.

For society's sake, we at the National Urban League want the forthcoming plans to show the innovative thinking and commitment that is

required to add welfare recipients to the working class, not the underclass.

Nonetheless, that central question — where are the jobs? — still looms.

Where are the jobs for welfare recipients when the federal government isn't hiring many people at all. Since

President Clinton took office, the government's civilian workforce has shrunk by 13 percent, to 1.9 million people, its lowest level in three decades, and that reduction will continue.

Moreover, most of the hiring that the government is

(See Jobs, Page 16)

Carl Rowan's Commentary

Whether it is to a miscarriage or to a long illness at age 60, there is no painless way to lose a child. But there surely can't be a more crushing way to lose an offspring than to a wanton, random murderer, as in the case of Bill and Camille Cosby.



CARL ROWAN

This America icon, Cosby, had opened his heart in his writings to tell us how much he wanted just one son to carry on the family name. He had told us how he had advised his son, Ennis, to strive for anonymity — obviously as protection against those restful or covetous of the Cosby family's wealth and fame, those potential kidnapers and killers.

But Bill Cosby's only son has been shot dead in the wee hours while trying to change a tire on his car alongside a Los Angeles freeway.

We recently got a barrage of dubious statistics about a great decline in crime in the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports. We were told that the overall rate of crime in America dropped to its lowest level in a decade in 1995, down 4 percent from 1994 and 11.3 percent since the 1980's. Our media focused on this "good news," almost to the exclusion of nothing that there were 1,800,000 incidents of violence reported in 1995, a figure 21 percent higher than just 10 years earlier. All statistics aside, we live in a society where no family is immune to sudden death, or to the unspeakable grief that came to the Cosby family in a telephone call. The recent FBI statistics suggesting a great reduction in crime reflect the need for politicians to prove that their recent panaceas have worked. We have gone through an era dominated by politicians who screamed that the way to reduced crime was to put thousands more policemen on the streets; to arrest more young, jobless, ill educated males; to build more prisons; to execute more offenders. A lot of jurisdictions have shaded the statistics to try to prove that this anti-crime formula is working.

I say that the murders of Ennis Cosby in Los Angeles and JonBenet Ramsey in Boulder, Colo., the bombings in Atlanta, and the myriad other current acts of violence represent a sickness of spirit in America, not a shortage of prison beds and electric chairs. I remain convinced that the resort to more and more state-sanctioned executions only adds to that sickness of spirit. The widening income gap between rich and poor does not summon a greater respect for human life. But the politicians who hold sway in America today are not inclined to change the climate and culture of violence. They turn a deaf ear to the cries of the needy. So they will go on bamboozling Americans into believing that their draconian agenda for broader punishment will reduce crime — eventually.

While we wait for what will never come, a lot of parents famous and unmentioned will cry rivers of tears.

On the sentencing of Suge Knight

By Dr. C. DeLores Tucker
National Chair
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of Black Women, Inc.

Let the healing begin! As Suge Knight heads for prison, C. DeLores Tucker holds private courtroom confab to suture a gaping wound.

Through the generosity of Judge J. Stephen Czulegas, I was privileged to spend 15 private minutes in the courtroom with Marion "Suge" Knight (of Death Row Records) before he was sent off to begin serving nine years in prison.

That wasn't much time, and we had so much ground to cover. First, I wanted to express the deep compassion of my organization, the National Political Congress of Black Women, Inc. (NPCBW), and myself over his present predicament. Here was an extraordinarily talented young man (only 30 years old) whose life somehow took a dangerous wrong turn.

I extended our heartfelt sympathy to him and his bereaved family, and told him that a faith in God would surely help him through his perilous time and that he would then emerge a much stronger and positively focused young man in the end.

Second, I wanted to know, finally, if he was the principal person who brought the racketeering suit against me and my organization two years ago. He flatly assured me that he had nothing to do with it and that executive officials higher

up in the Death Row organization were responsible.

This confirmed my suspicion that the gangstas in the suites — not those in the streets — are the driving forces that spread the filthy rap lyrics all over the world.

Their intent in filing this pernicious suit was obvious:

It was meant to silence our outcries — to shut us up so they can continue to reap untold wealth from the production and distribution of this negative music.

This was quite obvious in the words of Ted Field, heir to the Marshall Field department store fortune, who told a *Wall Street Journal* reporter that, "I totally identified with all the rebelliousness of the '60s. The more political the music was, the better I liked it. That's why I love and am willing to record the farthest-out protest gangsta rap at our company. I love that stuff... You can tell the people who want to stop us from

releasing controversial rap music one thing: Kiss my a**."

Thirdly, I was able to convey very clearly to Suge Knight that our campaign against nasty rap lyrics that grossly demean black women as "bitches," "hos," and "sluts" and that also pimp pornography to our children was never directed at the wretched, self-hating, young black inner-city artists — a very talented group of people. It was aimed solely at the gangstas in the suites who exploit them by refusing to accept only the lowest of the low-down filth that they produce.

We have tried to work with Suge and his talented artists to help them direct their artistry in positive, uplifting ways that enhance, not demean, their own people. It is believed by many that these same gangsta executives "dropped a dime" (i.e., snatched to authorities) on Suge whom we were

(See Suge, Page 16)

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