

POINT OF VIEW

POINTS TO PONDER

"The Jets"

By Sylvia Perry
Special to Sentinel-Voice

When President Roosevelt created the welfare program as part of his New Deal, it was meant to be a temporary measure to allow American citizens the opportunity to still look for employment while keeping their family from starving to death. Instead, for many it has turned into a irreversible hereditary crutch that trains dependence and ignorance at an early age. Welfare was not meant to be a vehicle for Black people to get ahead or even survive. Despite the overwhelming stereotype that the majority of the welfare system is composed of African Americans, only a small percentage is received by

Blacks, instead the majority of welfare goes to whites. The problem is that considering the minute percentage of Blacks that make up the U.S. population, 13 percent, a disproportionate percentage are dependent on welfare (around 5 percent).

"Affordable" housing was once a sound way for working families to have a safe, up-to-standard, neighborhood in which to raise their children. As times changed and requirements for living in these areas became more stringent, working class people had to find some where else to live to provide for those with a smaller or no income base. The end result eventually grouped thousands of poorly educated,

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non-working, idle people in a congested, confined area. These areas in the past few decades have become a

breeding ground for crime, teenage pregnancy and drug trafficking.

Some people have used

their childhood experience in these 'government projects' to plant a seed of desire for a better future and have gone on

to prosper. Others, have chosen to join their environment as yet another negative statistic.

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ALONG THE COLOR LINE

Race, responsibility and history

By Dr. Manning Marable
Special to Sentinel-Voice

In post-Civil Rights era America, most white commentators on issues of race emphasize the necessity for all of us to become "color blind." That is, we should be "blind" to the real or imputed differences that divide people by skin color or phenotype, by our physical appearances, or our genetic backgrounds. We should learn to become "comfortable" with the differences which are reflected in the color spectrum of humanity. And to reinforce this perspective of white tolerance, we are often quoted the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., that people should be judged "not by the color of their skin but by the content of their character."

The "color blind thesis" almost always is accompanied by an appeal to "forgive and forget." The logic of this argument is as follows: "Black Americans were terribly oppressed during slavery and Jim Crow segregation. But there's been much social progress in recent years, thanks to the constructive cooperation between the races. We need to move beyond ancient grievances and racial bitterness towards taking personal responsibility for our own lives. After all, we are all responsible for ending racism."

With certain variations, this is the basic argument that is repeated over and over again in the white media, by white political leaders and institutions about the dynamics of race. The argument is that African Americans must stop being so "sensitive" and

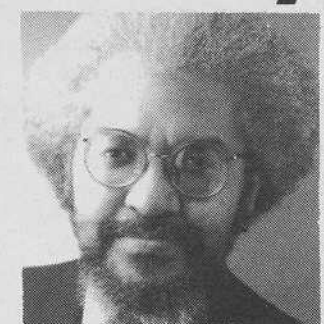
"defensive" about the problems of their people and communities. "Responsible" black adults supposedly should understand why a white middle-class couple walking to their parked automobile at midnight becomes fearful when they are approached by several African-American teenagers. All of us bear part of the blame for prejudice.

In popular films and culture, the message is the same. At the beginning of "Die Hard with a Vengeance," a white man stands in the center of Harlem, on Amsterdam Avenue, wearing a huge poster sign reading: "I hate Niggers." A cluster of justifiably outraged young black men surrounds the undercover white cop. Yet the film portrays the African-American males as emotional, dangerous, unstable, threatening. In the award-winning film "Pulp Fiction," a white criminal "accidentally" blows off the head of a young black man when his gun discharges. Covered with blood and gore, the white man and his black partner take refuge in the suburban home of another white man. The second white man is outraged that this "dead nigger" was dragged into his home. Yet to display that he's not really a racist, the film then shows that this bigot is married to an African-American woman. The fact that he has a sexual relationship with a black woman is supposed to illustrate that his tirade of racist epithets has nothing to do with hatred or personal prejudice.

The white corporate-controlled media loves to present stories about "black

bigotry." When the Oakland, California board of education suggested that African-American young people may learn best in an environment which validates the language they speak in daily life, blacks were attacked for "rejecting" standard English. When African-American students demand Black Studies courses, or advocate residential housing on campuses which emphasizes black heritage and culture, they are charged with "self-segregation." Affirmative action programs are often described in the press as being based on "racial preference" - despite the fact that the overwhelming majority of those who are the chief beneficiaries of affirmative action are white women.

We will never uproot racism by pretending that "everyone" shares a common responsibility for discrimination and inequality. Black people were not "equal partners" in the construction of slavery, segregation and ghettoization. We weren't personally or



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collectively consulted when the criminal justice system imprisoned one-third of our young men, or when we suffer with twice the unemployment rate of whites. To be "color blind" is to be blind to the history of oppression. To forget the past is to permit those in power to evade their responsibility for black inequality in the present.

Dr. Manning Marable is Professor of History and the Director of the Institute for Research in African-American Studies, Columbia University, New York City. "Along the Color Line" appears in over 300 publications throughout the U.S. and internationally.

Carl Rowan's Commentary

The attempt by some Republicans to keep "activist" judges off the federal bench has taken an ominous new turn. Rep. Tom DeLay, the House majority whip, has told The Washington Times that he and other congressmen will try to impeach so-called liberals now serving as federal judges.



CARL ROWAN

The thrust of this right-wing assault clearly is aimed largely at women and minorities, especially those who reject the conservative view on such issues as affirmative action and law-and-order. Voicing the kind of rightwing extremism that brought grief to House Speaker Newt Gingrich, DeLay has identified some of the impeachment targets: Chief U.S. District Judge Thelton Henderson of San Francisco, who has held unconstitutional California's Proposition 209, which would ban "preferences" for racial minorities and women in hiring and education.

Another impeachment target is U.S. District Judge Fred Biery in Del Rio, Texas. Biery has upset Texas Republican Rep. Sam Johnson with a ruling that two Republicans were elected sheriff and county commissioner illegally with invalid votes.

Judge Harold Baer, Jr., of New York is on the GOP "hit" list because he threw out drug evidence and a confession and then reversed himself after drawing criticism from both Bob Dole and President Clinton during the election campaign.

The scope of the Republican drive to control the courts becomes especially chilling when you look at the list of nominees they seek to deny confirmation.

Way back in July 1994 President Clinton nominated Judge James A. Beaty of Richmond, Va., to the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals. Beaty would become the first black American to serve on this court which handles cases in Virginia, West Virginia, the Carolinas and Maryland. Not only have the Republicans stalled on the Beaty nomination for almost three years, but Sen. Charles Grassley (R., Iowa) has suggested that the size of the court be reduced so no new member will be added.

A female nominee, lawyer Margaret Mary Morrow, has been approved by the Senate Judiciary Committee to become a U.S. District Judge in California. But conservatives have recently objected to some of her writings, and Hatch has indicated that he will reopen hearings.

One rightwing group, the Judicial Selection Monitoring Project, has taken the knee-jerk position that blacks, Hispanics and women nominated by Clinton are certain to be more liberal, or "activist," than Republicans can stomach. Some members of Congress are bending to the group's pressures.

DeLay has launched a dangerous gambit that could undermine the quality of justice in this country. Americans who want independent, fear-free judges, whatever their ideologies, must slap down DeLay and his cohorts. And they ought to do it fast.

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