

ALONG THE COLOR LINE

"The black male vote"

Dr. Manning Marable
Special to Sentinel-Voice

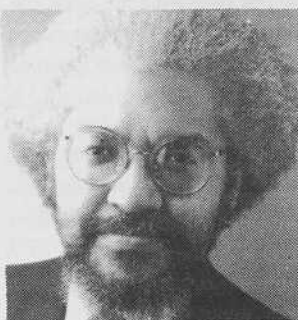
In the aftermath of the 1995 "Million Man March," many African-Americans felt a renewed commitment to become active in civic and political affairs. There is striking evidence from last November's presidential election that this new attitude has directly contributed to much higher voting rates.

In November, 1996, the number of black men who voted was about 4.8 million. This was a 1.7 million increase over the number who had voted in 1992, an increase of 55 percent in four years.

This massive increase of black male voting power was even more remarkable when considered against the voting patterns of everyone else. In

1996, less than one-half of all registered Americans actually voted, the lowest percentage of the electorate since 1924. The percentage of both African-American women and white males who went to the polls respectively declined by 8 percent. For white women, the drop in voter participation was 14 percent from 1992 figures, or about seven million fewer voters.

President Clinton won 84 percent of the African-American vote, a substantial part of his margin of victory over Republican challenger Robert Dole. Even more influential was the impact of the black male vote in key Congressional races. In New Jersey, for example, Democrat Robert Torricelli was locked in a bitter contest with



DR. MANNING MARABLE

Republican Dick Zimmer for a U.S. Senate seat. In the election, Zimmer won 54 percent of New Jersey's white voters. But Torricelli won 85 percent of the African-American vote, and won the election by an overall margin of 53 percent to 47 percent. Observers noted with amazement that New Jersey's black turnout of registered voters had almost doubled compared to 1993 election figures. Most of this growth in the black electorate came from black men.

The greatest factor undermining the full power of the black male vote is the criminal justice system. According to a study released by the Sentencing Project, a nonprofit organization, of a total voting age population of 10.4 million African-American men in this country, nearly 1.5 million have had the right to vote taken away from them due to a felony conviction. In short, about 14 percent of all black men are unable to vote, either because they are in prison or because they have been convicted of a felony.

According to the study, felons are barred from voting while in prison in 46 states. Thirty-one states also disenfranchise convicted felons while they are on parole or probation. And there are thirteen states, mostly in the South and the West, that permanently prohibit former felons from voting.

African-Americans currently comprise 51 percent of the 1.1 million Americans incarcerated in Federal and state prisons. About one-third of all young black males in their twenties are, at any given time, either in prison or jail, on probation, parole, or awaiting trial. The criminal justice system is the chief means of warehousing unemployed, undereducated and poor black men. Denied economic opportunity, African-American men are disproportionately locked up by a penal system which is designed to ensure that their full voting power is reduced and for many completely eliminated.

As David Bostis, a researcher at the Joint Center for Political and Economic

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POINT OF VIEW

POINTS TO PONDER
BY
PROFESSOR #HARRIS#

SHOULD WE SPEND OUR ENERGY AND EFFORT CORRECTING THE "MAINSTREAM MEDIA" OR SUPPORTING THE BLACK PRESS

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TEACHER, WHY DID YOU GIVE ME AN 'F' ON MY ENGLISH PAPER?

NO! NO! JOHNNY YOU SAID THAT WRONG.... YOU SHOULD SAY: "TEECHA, WHY YOU BE GIVIN' ME A 'E' ON MY PAPA'?"

I CAN'T BELIEVE WHAT I'M READING!

BLACK ARE EVIL

I CAN!

THE BLACK PRESS

IS THE ENCOURAGED USE OF "EBONICS" OR "BLACK ENGLISH" IN OUR SCHOOL SYSTEMS, JUST ANOTHER PLOT TO KEEP BLACKS FROM COMPETING IN THIS AMERICAN SOCIETY?

TO BE EQUAL

What's good for business

By John W. Mack
President

Los Angeles Urban League
(Guest Columnist)

A year ago this month Ron Brown, the Secretary of Commerce, and veteran of the Urban League Movement died in a plane crash in Croatia. His tragic death underscored the significant service he had given America as the world's chief strategist and "salesman" of commercial diplomacy. Ron's brilliant insight was that the way to preserve the peace in the post-Cold War world was to build a network of economic interests and benefits that would permeate societies not only at the level of government agencies and businesses, but at the level of ordinary workers, too. It was an insight that Ron shared with John W. Mack, president of our Los Angeles affiliate and his long-time close friend and mentor. That commercial diplomacy can be applied at the local level to the economic benefit of all is the subject of this column, which John originally wrote for the booklet of the Japan Federation of Economic Organizations. It discusses the economic benefits our Los Angeles affiliate has helped bring to inner-city residents there by developing partnership with Japanese corporations and presents the case to its largely Japanese audience that being a good corporate citizen, wherever one is, is good for business. — Hugh B. Price.

Nowhere is the force of the global economy's push to make the world's nations more economically interdependent more apparent than in the relationship between Japan and the United States. In both countries the pace of the changes is reshaping the business world and the job market at breakneck speed.

For Japanese-affiliated businesses in America, doing well in our pluralistic racial,

ethnic and cultural market, requires recognizing that diversity and equal opportunity are an asset to the corporate bottom line.

Like their American-owned counterparts, Japanese corporations that do business in America must become good corporate citizens. They must commit major financial and human resources to help solve critical problems in communities where they do business. And they must adhere in their business policies and practices to equal opportunity, fairness, inclusion and respect for individuals of all races and cultures.

This is not just a matter of altruism. It is good for business. The payoffs for good corporate citizens include an expanded, deeper and more skilled pool of potential employees for every level of the company, a richer consumer marketplace to tap, and consumer goodwill that translates into consumer purchases of the corporate product. The partnerships the Los Angeles Urban League has established with many companies, including Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A. Inc., and Nissan Motor Corporation, U.S.A. have shown what can occur when corporate leaders recognize being civic-minded

is good for the company, too.

Toyota made a major commitment to become more involved in Los Angeles following the 1992 civil unrest that was triggered by the first jury verdict in the police beating of Rodney King. The company signed an agreement with us and contributed three million dollars to establish a facility that would provide state-of-the-art training in automotive repair for out-of-work inner-city residents. The Los Angeles Urban League Automotive Training Center provides this entry-level training and also job placement services at no cost to the trainees. In fact, the economic benefits to inner-city Los Angeles began flowing even before the training center itself opened. It is in a predominantly African-American community, and was renovated by an African American contractor who hired individuals from the community as part of his work crew, who did a quality job.

Since its opening in 1993, approximately 400 individuals have successfully trained there, and 93 percent of the graduating classes have found good jobs.

More recently, Nissan has asked the staff of our Ron

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Carl Rowan's Commentary

I am here, and I was in Nashville yesterday, to celebrate the republication of a book I wrote 45 years ago about race relations in my native South.

Louisiana State Press has flattered and honored me by including my first book, "South of Freedom," in a series of American "classics" that it is republishing in paperback. It affords even me the opportunity to reread my chronicles of the 6,000 mile journey of a black man through Jim Crow Dixie and get a new sense of just how much relations between black and white Americans have changed.

Yesterday, at the Freedom Forum's First Amendment Center on the campus of Vanderbilt University, an event took place that would have been unthinkable 45 years ago. A few hundred people, half of them black, half white, including a black justice of the Tennessee Supreme Court, A.A. Burch, and Vanderbilt's president, Joe Wyatt, gathered to say howdy and buy the book.

In 1952 there were no black judges at any level in my native Tennessee; I could not have gone on the Vanderbilt campus except as a servant, and most white Tennesseans dared only to buy "bootleg" copies of "South of Freedom."

In New Orleans I am staying at the Ponchartrain Hotel, where I would have been denied a room because of my race in 1952. I moved with great fear of personal safety here 45 years ago, knowing that black people held no political or police powers. Now a black man is mayor of New Orleans and the black vote is a powerful force.

The positive effects of the civil rights revolution of the 1960s are manifest everywhere across the South.

But I am seeing stark reminders that the spirit of Jim Crow is alive, and sinister, in some areas, although no longer a phenomenon of the former slave states.

In Nashville and New Orleans, as in Boston and Buffalo, passions over race are still corrosive factors in the education of the nation's children. De facto racial segregation, reflecting elements of apartheid in residential and school location patterns, produces racial divisiveness almost as deep and bitter as was the anger over legally-imposed racial separation almost half a century ago.

I don't see today, as I did in 1951, WHITES ONLY and COLORED ONLY signs on water fountains or railroad station doors. Laundries no longer carry boastful but inaccurate signs saying, WE WASH WHITE FOLKS CLOTHES ONLY.

The remarkable thing is that so many young adults express amazement that so many "stupid" kinds of racism were "the way of life" 45 years ago.

What will we deem to have been stupid 45 years from now?



CARL ROWAN