

POINT OF VIEW

Our View

Where are all the black men?

Race and politics inextricably links Joe Neal, Morse Arberry and Wendell Williams.

For years, this trio — Southern Nevada's only elected African-American male state officials — have fought on the political frontlines. As a postscript to the recent elections, we ponder how much longer can they soldier our cause?



ARBERRY

Sure we've had former UNLV basketball star Greg Anthony, Franklin Simpson, Mujahid Ramadan, Eric Jordan and Paul Henry serve as staff members in various Congressional offices. And yes, there are some black women holding positions now, but where are the black men?

Listen up Gov. Miller, Congressmen Ensign and Gibbons and Sens. Reid and Bryan. We want to see more black men; both working in your offices and being appointed to various other positions within your control.



NEAL

Too often, our young black males are herded like cattle into careers already saturated by blacks or they are prodded into becoming entertainers — singers, rappers, dancers — athletes or blue-collar workers. Few venture into politics, leaving us with a politically desolate future.

But through proper cultivation, we can yield an abundant harvest of black male politicians.

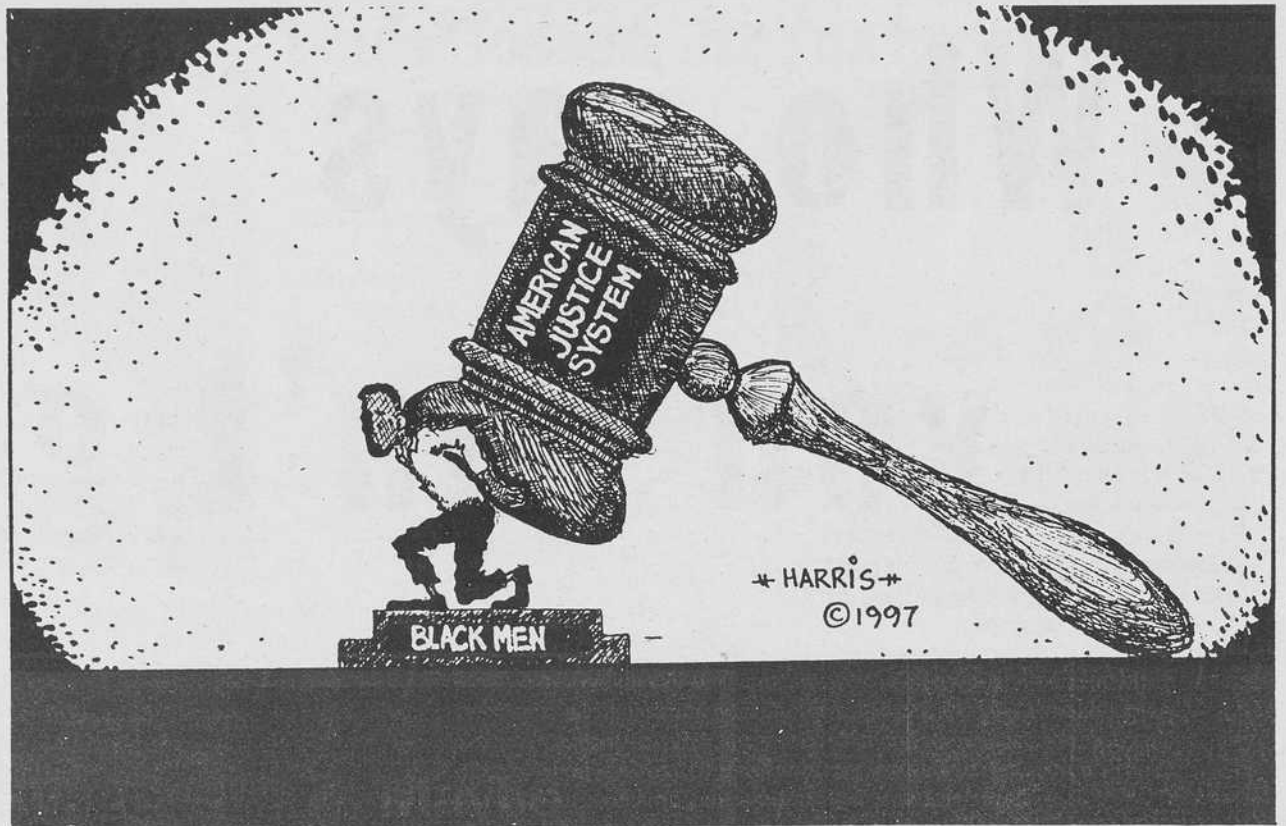
In 1998, we can plant the seed. The following offices are up for grabs: governor, lieutenant governor, attorney general, one U.S. senator, two congressional seats and numerous legislative, state, county and city seats.

We, as a community, must teach our black males to be great communicators, savvy enough to get results, proud of their ethnicity and concerned for their constituents. We, as a community, must insist, protest and demand competent, loyal and fair representation in these government staff offices at all times, not just during the white politicians' periodic fish fries and visits to the churches in West Las Vegas during reelection time.



WILLIAMS

Political power isn't a rite of passage. It's earned. Wake up black men; take hold of your political destiny.



ALONG THE COLOR LINE

Global sweatshops generate profits

By Dr. Manning Marable
Special to Sentinel-Voice

One of the greatest symbols of human rights violations today is the vast corporate empire of sweatshops throughout the Third World. Apparel giants like Nike, Guess and Liz Claiborne depend on cheap, mostly nonunion labor to generate vast profits. Under pressure from the Clinton administration in 1996, a presidential task force with representatives from business, trade unions and human rights organizations was created to improve working conditions. This April, the task force announced with great publicity the new "guidelines" for U.S. corporate labor practices in Third World countries.

The new agreement requires corporations to pay "the local minimum wage or prevailing industry wage." Workers should not be pressured to work over 60 hours per week as the norm, consisting of 48 hours plus no more than 12 hours mandatory overtime. Laborers have a right to organize their own unions to negotiate with management. Corporations also promised to permit "external monitors" to check their practices on a day-to-day basis. Despite these reforms, the root problem of corporate exploitation of underpaid, nonwhite labor still remains. Even the *New York Times* admitted that the revised "labor code is so littered with loopholes its impact will probably be limited unless public and press attention remains fixed on the problems of sweatshop workers."

The Campaign for Labor Rights, a Washington, D.C.-based group which mobilizes

grassroots support for working people, has fully documented the problems with the presidential commission's agreement. In nearly all sweatshops, workers are coerced to "put in endless hours of supposedly 'voluntary' overtime." Corporations are still permitted to waive the 60-hour limit if they claim an "extraordinary business circumstance," which can be interpreted as nearly anything. The promise that companies will pay the "prevailing industry wage" is meaningless in a Third World country that represses union activity and sets minimum wage standards "well below what workers need to meet their most basic needs."

According to the research report, "Misery by Design," prepared by the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees, sweatshops are truly a global phenomenon. The huge Federated Department Stores in the U.S., for example, import clothing from the PT Sandrafine factory in Indonesia. Employees at PT Sandrafine usually work six days a week, occasionally on shifts lasting twenty-four hours straight. But workers with fifteen years experience at this factory earn no more than \$2.30 per day.

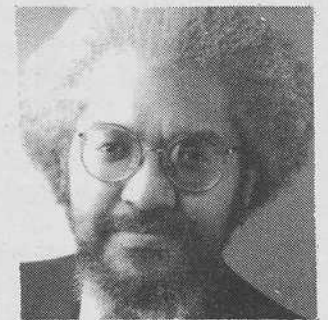
Many of Federated's Jennifer Moore and I.N.C. International Concepts private label tops are produced at a factory in Lima, Honduras. Employees there often work up to 15 hours per day, and receive 36 cents an hour.

One of Federated's most important suppliers is National Garment, located in Dhaka, Bangladesh. According to

"Misery by Design," National Garment pays its workers only \$12.50 per month. Normal work days in the plant are 14 hours. Workers have no access to medical care, and sanitation facilities and fire precautions are inadequate.

However, sweatshops are not only a problem in the Third World — they are growing rapidly across the U.S. In late 1996, five Guess clothing sewing firms were cited by the Department of Labor for minimum wage and overtime violations. One Los Angeles-based firm, Pride Jeans, which is a major Guess producer, reportedly owed its workers over \$100,000 in back wages. In March, 1997, Jeans Plus, another Guess contractor, was charged with intimidation and surveillance of workers.

What's the connection between sweatshops, corporate profits and black America? Consider Nike. The Campaign for Labor Rights reports that young Indonesian women working at Nike plants "average 11.5 hours per day and are fired immediately if they take sick leave. One young woman who collapsed from



MARABLE

exhaustion died when factory managers failed to provide her any medical attention."

This is the same Nike that has just hired former U.N. ambassador and Atlanta mayor Andrew Young to review its Asian-based operations in an attempt to counter charges of labor exploitation. This is the same Nike that has signed a five-year endorsement contract with golf star Tiger Woods for \$40 million. Most black Americans are rightfully proud of Wood's accomplishments, and the corporations are only taking advantage of his growing popularity. Nevertheless, we must ask ourselves how many brown and black young women will die to produce that \$40 million?

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