

Experts warn America could soon become more polarized

Special to Sentinel-Voice

New York, N.Y. - African-Americans face certain exclusion from prosperity in the next millenium unless leaders heed an urgent call being issued today by the National Urban League to set new civil rights agendas that focus on wealth, assets and rebuilding community infrastructures.

Issuing a landmark report that details specific approaches, policies and steps aimed at changing the way African-Americans view inclusion, Urban League President Hugh B. Price joined some of our nation's top analysts in calling for the creation of a new economic legacy at the National Press Club in Washington D.C.

The report is the Urban League's *The State of Black America 1998*. The volume, containing nine essays and three appendices, continues the organization's 25-year record of publishing analyses of the status of African-Americans. The book is now available.

"Many of us have been laboring under the false comfort that the expansion of the black middle class and the creation of individual black millionaires has moved African-Americans closer to economic parity in America," Price said.

"The reality is, no matter how great incomes become for individual blacks, our wealth is not sustained because we have very few assets that can be passed on from generation to generation. Once we build an economic legacy, we will remove many existing barriers because our access to power structures will become

permanent instead of temporal. We will also restore hope because our children will quickly understand and respond to these changing dynamics."

One area of change includes the information superhighway, which authors note, does not have off-ramps in most African-American communities.

Price will emphasize the economic plan must be multifaceted and include: shifting the black communities emphasis on spending and consumption to savings and investment; implementing policy changes that open and expand government programs promoting asset building, such as the Homestead Acts and GI Bills; focusing on employment and educational practices stifling blacks' progress in labor markets; and using black philanthropy and coalition building as tool.

The call for a new focus on assets over income is being proposed in the report by Melvin L. Oliver, vice president of the Ford Foundation and a UCLA sociology professor, and Thomas M. Shapiro, professor of sociology and anthropology at Northeastern University.

In their article, "The Racial Asset Gap," the professors define income as "a flow of money over time" while wealth "signifies the command over financial resources that a family has accumulated over its lifetime along with those resources inherited across generations."

While it is common knowledge that most blacks earn less income than whites, Oliver and Shapiro said that

"deeper inequalities" exist in wealth where whites have nearly 12 times as much median net worth as blacks and the average white household controls about \$7,000 in assets (excluding homes and vehicles) compared to no "nest egg" for average black households.

"An oppressive racial legacy continues to shape American society through the reproduction of inequality generation," the professors conclude. "Now, however, it is both possible and desirable to fashion new asset-building policies that do not discriminate against minorities and the poor. Assets used for the improvement of human capital through such things as education, home ownership and business development have the potential to expand social mobility."

Oliver and Shapiro also are proposing mechanisms such as Individual Development Accounts, similar to Individual Retirement Accounts, that would only be used for dedicated purposes such as first home purchases, education, job training or capitalizing a small business.

Other State of Black America 1998 authors outline myriad traps that they say will preserve inequalities if left unaddressed such as the labor market's move away from collective bargaining to individual bargaining; the education arena's emphasis on new standards without a commitment to providing the resources to achieve such standards; technological advances that improve work and community life but are inaccessible to many African-

Americans; and political attacks on civil rights gains.

Economists and political commentator Julianne Malveaux, Ph.D., in "The Future of Work and Who Will Get It," notes that civil rights efforts must more strongly embrace employment practices to address issues such as the expanding peripheral workforce and disappearing employee benefits packages.

"The snapshot I have developed suggests a less hierarchical labor market; with fewer guarantees than the markets of the past," Malveaux writes. "For some, this dynamic situation provides opportunities. For many, the situation poses challenges and erodes employment security and well-being. A new set of inequities, based overtly not on race or gender, but employer size and access to technology, will likely come to the forefront."

Malveaux recommends

black leaders take a renewed look at service industries, particularly emerging ones in healthcare, child care and transportation, to help restore job opportunities.

In "Jobless Ghettos: The Impact of the Disappearance of Work in Segregated Neighborhoods," sociologist William Julius Wilson also focuses on labor market trends and job creation. His picture, however, depicts the hopelessness and desperation that result in communities where job prospects do not exist and how this reality impacts personal as well as professional lives.

"A neighborhood in which people are poor but employed is much different from a neighborhood in which people are poor and jobless," Wilson writes. "Many of today's problems in inner-city ghetto neighborhoods — crime, family dissolution, welfare, low levels of social

organization and so on — are fundamentally a consequence of the disappearance of work."

Equally important and lacking are quality educational facilities, argues Linda Darling-Hammond in, "New Standards, Old Inequalities: The Current Challenge for African-American Education."

Darling-Hammond notes that most inner-city students are taught simple thinking skills by the least prepared educators.

She concludes: "The bottom line for students, especially African-American and other students of color, is whether investments in better teaching, curriculum and schooling will follow the push for new standards, or whether the new standards will simply be imposed atop the old foundation of education inequality and thereby reduce the now-limited access some have to future education and employment even more."

Grier

(Continued from Page 9)

The films declined, she theorized, "because they were redundant."

"You can't bore your audience. We lost our core audience because everybody was emulating each other ... I chose not to be

redundant, I chose not to bore my audience. I wanted to grow."

Grier likens her career to a strong tree: "It's going to buckle the sidewalk, it's going to reach over the river, it's going to reach for the sky, drop its leaves when fall comes and bloom again in the spring."

Hate crimes

(Continued from Page 4)

Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott has compared them to kleptomaniacs and religious groups are launching a national anti-homosexuality ad campaign. "It's always the same around election time," co-sponsor Schumer said. "The extreme wing of the Republican party throws red meat to

the lions."

Bill Lann Lee, acting assistant attorney general for the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division, told the committee the legislation was essential to lift limitations that often prevent federal authorities from prosecuting "many of the most heinous hate crimes."

Clark

(Continued from Page 3)

shot in what police say was a botched robbery attempt.

No one has been arrested for Cutler's killing.

Caruso is the son of Frank Caruso, Sr., who according to court documents and congressional testimony, is a "mid-level"

figure in the Chicago mob.

The father of DeSantis, the sole remaining eyewitness to the Clark beating, is also said to have "low-level" links to organized crime.

Recently, when asked if the families' alleged ties to organized crime played a role in DeSantis' disappearance, a law enforcement source said, "We don't rule it out."

Satcher

(Continued from Page 3)

"I said, 'Not only is the word condom being used in the church. I can assure you condoms are being used in the church.'"

Young added that in Michigan, black organizations have received little of the grant money available for prevention.

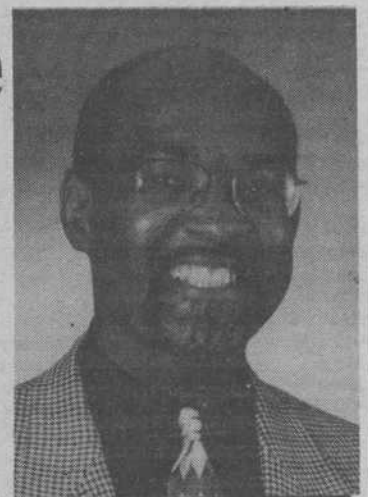
Today's fight presents challenges that did not exist during the 1960s, Satcher said. During

the civil rights movement, he said, people had hope that they could effect change. Today, too many young people are hopeless about their futures so they do not try as hard to avoid risky sex and other health threats, he said. But that can change, he said.

"Leadership is critical," he said. "I don't think we've found any substitutes for good leadership."

Put a Dodge in your Garage!

Zero Cash Down up to \$2000 cash rebates



Lawrence Ennis

98's MUST GO \$3,000 Push, Pull or Drag Your Trade*

*On selected full retail price

Fresh Start Program 99% Approvals We'll Find a Way!



CHAPMAN DODGE

3470 Boulder Highway • 457-1061