

COMMENTARY

# Economics, not politics or education, key to uplift

*Special to Sentinel-Voice*

Studies show that when adjusted for inflation, the average income of black families in America has not increased in 30 years.

While black family income remained stagnant, white family income has continued to rise. In other words, the income-gap between black and white households got worse.

Actually, Asians are the nation's wealthiest group, and the fact of their success lies at the root of the most fundamental problem facing black America: lack of wealth and economic security.

More than civil rights, politics or education, it's the lack of wealth that is the fundamental problem facing African-Americans today.

Economics is the cornerstone of life and anything built on a weak foundation is fundamentally

weak, no matter how it appears on the surface. Black Americans need to get their economic house in order.

Here are some steps:

Get the entrepreneurial spirit: Black people need to start and grow businesses. This is how wealth is built in America. Jobs don't pay enough to guarantee financial security. We need to sell more than our labor and must put products and services into the market. Not only do we fail to buy from black businesses, there aren't enough of them.

Find additional sources of income: Bringing another source of income into your life does not necessarily mean getting a part-time job, but it does mean doing more than you are doing now. It could mean a part-time home-based business activity ranging from sponsoring financial or self-help seminars to selling computers and telecommuni-

## Business Exchange

By William Reed,  
Publisher of Who's Who in  
Black Corporate America.



cations products.

Invest: You cannot build wealth by just working for money. At some point you must make your money work for you and that means investing.

Start off with safe investments such as Individual Retirement Accounts (IRA), annuities and certificates of deposit. Then, start to take a few chances by putting funds in some promising business ventures. Such ventures offer the greatest return, but also

carry risk.

Reduce your tax burden: The government takes too much of your money. According to The Tax Foundation, the average American has to work from January to May each year just to pay taxes.

The single best way to reduce your tax burden is to own a business. The tax breaks associated with business ownership are tremendous even if the business is not profitable. Look seriously into a part-

time business activity. In addition, just about every American should open an IRA. For most Americans, it is still a good bet.

Join or form a wealth-building or investment club: Pooling the resources and talents of just four or five success-oriented people can be a ticket to wealth.

Organized group effort is virtually always superior to individual effort. Yes, there can be problems dealing with individual personalities and idiosyncrasies, but you must learn to assertively deal with them in order to master the tremendous power of group effort.

Wealth-building clubs can simply raise funds to invest in stocks and bonds or they may pool resources to sponsor a money-making event or acquire income producing real estate.

The International

Exchange Network, 2054 National Press Building, Washington, DC. 20045 offers an excellent guide on how to form a wealth-building club. It sells for \$15.

Set goals and form good habits: The two most important things you can do to guarantee success are to set clear, specific goals and then form good habits for accomplishing those goals. Remember, it is not what we do occasionally that determines the course of our lives, it is what we do most frequently.

The time to build personal finances and black community commerce is now. This type of economic development is being, and can be done.

It's not the responsibility of the government to lift your wealth status. That's up to you, and you should get started now.

## Carl Rowan's Commentary

### Clinton's lasting legacy could be creating peace in the Middle East

*Special to Sentinel-Voice*

History may be cruel to William Jefferson Clinton, remembering him mostly as a womanizer, adulterer, perjurer and only the second president in the nation's history to be impeached by the House of Representatives.

History could also enshrine Clinton as a martyr, a victim



CARL ROWAN

of a merciless witch hunt during one of the worst spasms of partisan politics in America's history.

I don't know how the historians will vote on the sex scandal that has wrecked Clinton's life in so many ways and made the nation the prime casualty of the war between him and his political enemies.

But I am sure that they will say that in many ways this flawed man from Arkansas performed with greatness, especially in his efforts to defuse the power keg relationship between Israel and the Palestinians.

The people of Israel have had a harsh life, spilling blood in major wars and lesser conflicts as they fought for survival.

It is manifestly clear that they avoided being pushed into the sea early on, largely because of U.S. military, political and economic support.

President Carter provided some small measure of serenity when, at Camp David, he lured Egypt out of any equation of organized warfare against Israel.

But there remained the horror and the terror of a seemingly endless hostility between Israel and the Palestinians, a people now long under Israeli occupation, yearning for recognition by the rest of the world.

Very few world leaders of any era would

have risked their reputations on trying to negotiate and force a peace between a hard-line Israeli government led by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon and Palestinians led by Yasser Arafat, a man under intense pressure from groups that have vowed to give their lives to

destroy Israel.

Given the Israelis, who still argued that GOD gave disputed lands in the Middle East to the Jewish people, and the Palestinians, who had adopted a charter in 1964 calling for the destruction of the Jewish state, pressing a formula under which Israel surrendered land for peace seemed to be a fool's double folly. But Clinton persisted. And while there is yet no genuine or permanent peace, he has brought about some remarkable concessions and changes that seemed beyond hope when he assumed the U.S. presidency almost six years ago.

The president of the United States had, with one historic visit and one groundbreaking speech, legitimized the Palestinians as a people with basic human rights who deserve their own state.

Perhaps because of Clinton's weakness at home, Israeli conservatives are temporarily reneging on the Wye agreement, and violent Palestinians are trying to undermine the entire peace process.

But by the time the historians make their ultimate judgments about William Jefferson Clinton, a Jewish state and a Palestinian state almost surely will coexist, side by side, in a measure of peace beyond anything that now seems possible.

## Mentoring key component in rescuing America's youth

By Marian Wright Edelman  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Newspapers and television news programs are often accused of reporting only the tragic and terrible news in our world. As the festivities of the holidays and the New Year are fresh in our minds, let me tell you about a reason to feel a little optimistic.

The Justice Department added a little additional light to our Hanukkah, Christmas and Kwanzaa celebrations this year with his news: The arrest rate for juveniles involved in violent crimes fell 23 percent from 1994 to 1997, and included a drop of more than 40 percent in the juvenile murder arrest rate.

"While no one is claiming victory, we are clearly moving in the right direction," Attorney General Janet Reno said. "We are making a difference."

Robbery, aggravated assault and rape crimes are down. I was also immensely pleased to note that weapons law violations were down 24 percent from 1993 to 1997.

Unfortunately, violent crime arrest rates increased for females by 111 percent between 1987 and 1994, and only decreased by 12 percent between 1994 and 1997. This compares to a 23 percent decrease for males in that period.

There are some good reasons for the lower crime rate for young people, and we should take note of some programs that work.

Eleven states have recently enacted laws that provide for alternatives to traditional incarceration. Newly authorized projects reduce the burden on state-run juvenile correction facilities.

"State and local governments are willing to experiment to develop a juvenile justice system that takes into account the security requirements of communities and the individual treatment needs of the youth," said Shay Bilchik, administrator of the Justice Department's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

At an OJJDP national conference in Washington, D.C. recently, Reno cited

community involvement and mentoring as factors in reducing crime.

I would like to offer personal testimony about the importance of mentoring. I am profoundly grateful to those special people from my childhood and youth who gave of their time, wisdom and love to guide me on the paths I believe God meant for me to walk. I could not have done it alone. Nobody can.

The ancient Greeks gave us the word "mentor." In the Odyssey, Homer named Odysseus' older and wiser friend Mentor. The goddess Athena later pretended to be Mentor, giving advice and encouragement to Odysseus.

In every culture throughout history, the older generation has mentored the younger one. Today, when families and communities are disintegrating, when single mothers and both mother and father in two-parent families must work to make ends meet, when our children are living with inadequate child care, violence in their schools, neighborhoods and homes, and drugs are everywhere, the role of a mentor is more important than ever.

Mentoring is widely acknowledged as one of a short supply of tools that can and does help children. There are many programs across our country that are working miracles. I'm going to be writing about some of them in the coming months.

For now, I want to encourage you to think about how you might be able to mentor a young person. There are programs in your community that can show you the way, give you the training, support your efforts and match you with a compatible youth.

I hope you'll consider this and other ways in which you might be able to, as Reno said, make "a difference," by being a light shining the way into the future for a child or teenager.

As we enter this last year of the 20th century, let us all take steps that will guarantee that a child will have reasons to look forward to the 21st century.

Marian Wright Edelman is president of the Children's Defense Fund.