

Sen. Moynihan left indelible civic rights legacy

Robert B. Hill

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The late Daniel Patrick Moynihan, the unflappable former Senator from New York, was a scholar and an individual with a marvelous bent toward public service: he served in the administration of two Democratic presidents and two Republican presidents.

But many African-Americans may not view him favorably at all: They remember his 1965 report that declared the female-headed family structure as a "self-perpetuating tangle of pathology" which was primarily responsible for most black ills.

Many critics charged the study with "blaming the victim" because it appeared to minimize the role of such external forces as racism, economic oppression and destructive government policies. Blacks also recall the "benign neglect" memorandum that Moynihan prepared as an advisor to President Nixon in 1969—a memo that was widely constructed as urging this nation to shift its attention from racial concerns. These were the sources of the feeling among some

that Moynihan was anti-black and anti-poor.

That view is wrong.

For example, Moynihan's intent in the controversial report: "The Negro Family: A Case for National Action," which he prepared for President Johnson to incorporate in his 1965 commencement address at Howard University was to spur policymakers to enact major legislation to strengthen black families.

However, legislation in the Congress and the statehouses ignored their responsibilities in this area. Such efforts did not materialize, and the report itself was roundly condemned by many blacks and liberal whites.

Yet, much of Moynihan's document had strong empirical support.

It made a convincing case for assessing the lasting effects of slavery, historic discrimination, unemployment, and poverty on black family instability. It referred to studies that found strong correlations between single-parent families and low educational achievement and high rates of delinquency and crime. And it predicted that the declining ratio of males to females would have detrimental

consequences for black families.

Unquestionably, the most troubling aspect of the report was casual role attributed to the female-headed family structure.

Here, Moynihan was on less sure ground. Although he cited the African-American sociologist E. Franklin Frazier extensively in the document, Frazier himself viewed single-parent black families in urban areas as a consequence, not a cause, of such developments as recessions, discrimination, unemployment, and poverty.

In his influential 1968 book, the scholar Andrew Billingsley asserted that one couldn't fully understand how the black family functioned without examining the impact of social forces and institutions in the larger white society as well as in the black community.

Moreover, the 1972 National Urban League study, "The Strengths of the Black Families," which I authored, contended that most black families headed by women were not characterized by weak work ethic and moral defects, but by strong kinship networks and other as-

sets. My focus on female-headed families, and also on out-of-wedlock births, followed a path forged in preceding years by numerous black scholars.

Indeed, at the 1930 White House Conference on Children, the noted black sociologist Ira DeA. Reid, then Director of Research for the National Urban League, presented a "pre-Moynihan" report that highlighted the alarming rates of single-parent families, out-of-wedlock births, infant mortality, poverty, overcrowding and ill health among blacks. Reid concluded that the black community would be willing to address these issues itself if it were provided adequate resources.

Of course, his plea, and those of others along the same lines, went unremarked upon by the larger society for a generation—until the Moynihan report appeared. Moynihan's commitment to progressive public policies can be seen in such things as the major role he played in ensuring that the Supplement Security Income (SSI) program provided more adequate income to elderly persons who had been domestics or

farmers when those job categories weren't covered by the 1935 Social Security Act. He also spearheaded the expansion of the progressive Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) to reduce the disparate tax burden on low-income working families. Both of these measures disproportionately help poor blacks. Furthermore, Moynihan's efforts were crucial to the passage of the innovative

Family Support Act in 1988; and he was an early and vigorous critic of President Clinton's support for the so-called welfare reform act of 1996.

Moynihan rightly predicted that this "anti-family" legislation would have harmful consequences for many poor families, a prediction subsequent research has vindicated.

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Overstreet

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ranking blacks in corporate America at a time when there were not that many of us serving in senior management.

Unlike his contemporaries, Tom viewed his work as having a position and not as one of needing a job. Thus, he was very effective in what he did. Man, Las Vegas does not yet know what valuable and extremely creditable people it has in its presence. However, it will not be long before we all will benefit from the work of one of America's truly outstanding couples.

The NAACP was welcomed back into the community at a reception attended by an interracial gathering of more than two hundred persons. Under the leadership of Reverend Spencer Barrett and key board members such as Debbie Conway, Sam Smith, and others, look for those who have taken comfort that no community group was advocating for our civil rights to become very uncomfortable in the coming months. Folks who have had the upper hand in suppressing the civil rights of persons of color your "free ride" is just about to come to an end.

The Urban Chamber of Commerce, the National Urban League and the Las Vegas Branch NAACP, working together, will be capable of satisfying condition number two.

I am aware of the fact that alliances are being formed and/or discussed between Al Barber, President of the local chapter of the National Association of Minority Contractors (NAMC); Chairman Horacio Lopez of the Hispanic Business Roundtable; Hannah Brown, President of the Urban Chamber; James Yu, President of the Asian Chamber; and Tony Sanchez, President of the Latin Chamber. These alliances in a very short time will satisfy condition number three.

Now for the big condition number four, unbiased law enforcement. Sheriff Bill Young certainly placed the community on notice that fairness was going to become the hallmark of his administration. In a speech that could only be called straight talk, he exhibited the courage to talk about subjects that are often considered to be too politically delicate for polite company. He discussed the subjects of the existence of some "bad cops," African-Americans' over-presentation in certain statistical categories of crime, and racial profiling. Further, he announced the formation of a citizens advisory council to be headed up by Mujahid Ramadan. He told the audience no "yes" men or women need to bother about volunteering to serve on his council. In what must be considered a "profile in courage," he went on record as opposing a bill that would eliminate the subpoena power of the Citizens Review Board. Subpoena power is the chief tool for independently investigating officers accused of misconduct. Talking about a new sheriff in town, Bill Young is certainly "all that, and a bag of chips" too! He deserves our total support.

With all four conditions now in confluence, it should be a walk in the park for bringing about the equitable and fair treatment of persons of color, right? Wrong, Mr., Mrs. or Ms. Apathy. It "ain't gonna" happen without your help. However, knowing how we as a people want to have our rear ends kissed before we will do anything, please consider this my best "suck-up" move: please join the Urban Chamber, The National Urban League, and/or the NAACP, and help those of us working to make Las Vegas all it can be!!!

Triche

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stop talking like a racist and lying about why those who know him call "a horse a horse," as he put it, so making equine feces the apt metaphor for his ideas.

"The truth is, programs such as affirmative action are the racism of today," says this racist of today, less acquainted with truth than Pilate and so foolish he warns us: "the pendulum swings both ways," while standing in its path. Experiencing bigot's rapture, Sluggo begins speaking in racist code, and that's why our school district is relevant. Both kids are CCSD students, and you can't grow Sluggos

in a vacuum.

School may be his only contact with truth, because if he attends church...well, movin' right along. If he discovers his toxic views at home or in his community, it's the solution to America's intractable race problem that's "self-evident."

Meanwhile, here's something to really worry about: Sluggo could have kids, and grandkids, and great-grandkids...oh my! Furthermore, given Nevada's tastes, he could end up in the R-J editorial staff; or worse — if another "conservative Supreme Court" has its way as the current one did after November 2000 — as president.

Curry

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to alter discriminatory by-laws of campus organizations, University President Harlan Hatcher and other officials flatly refused to do so, leaving University-recognized organizations free to continue their discriminatory practices with implicit or explicit University sanction."

As late as 1958—four years after the Supreme Court struck down the "separate but equal" doctrine in the "Brown v. Board of Education" decision—the university continued to "respect the wishes of a student who said that he or she did not wish to live with a student of another race."

By contrast, foreign students were treated better than native born Blacks.

"The University treated foreign students in a markedly different fashion, relying on a 'Michigan tradition that segregation of foreign students by nationality is undesirable and that contact with American students is mutually beneficial' to justify full integration of foreign students into campus life and policies giving them priority over African-American students in both admissions and housing," the LDF petition states.

In May 1973, the University of Michigan created the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee on the Negro in Higher Education.

The following year, the committee announced the school's first mandate, "the Opportunity Program," to admit "socially

disadvantaged" students.

"While minority enrollment increased to some degree in the years immediately following, students of color still face apathy at best, and often active resistance, to their presence at the University and were still excluded from campus activities and university social functions," states LDF.

It was not until a student group, calling itself Black Action Movement (BAM), staged a series of strikes in 1970, that the university "finally agreed to pursue limited admissions and recruitment efforts, only to abandon them in 1973."

During the 1970s, there were widespread and well-publicized racial incidents on campus and Black student enrollment fell by 34 percent from 1976 and 1985.

Following hearings in the state legislature, Provost James Duderstadt announced the "Michigan Mandate" in 1988 to increase enrollment of students of color.

LDF states, "Although implementation of the Michigan Mandate over the last 15 years represents a substantial and continuing change in the University's attitude toward minority students and applicants, it has not in a single generation eradicated the hostile attitudes entrenched by prior discriminatory conduct and indifference."

George E. Curry is editor-in-chief of the NNPA News Service.