EDITORIALS

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THE VOICE OF BLACK AMERICA SINCE 1892

Jackson and leadership

Much is at stake as the Rev. Jesse Jackson and Masachusetts Gov. Michael Dukakis strive to get in and out of the Democratic convention in Atlanta with a unified party in July — which would give Dukakis a good shot at defeating Republican Vice President George Bush in November.

After running a historically significant race for the Democratic nomination, Jackson finds himself in the sobering position of seeking to use his considerable influence to ensure progressive change will be forthcoming under a Dukakis administration without undermining a Democratic victory.

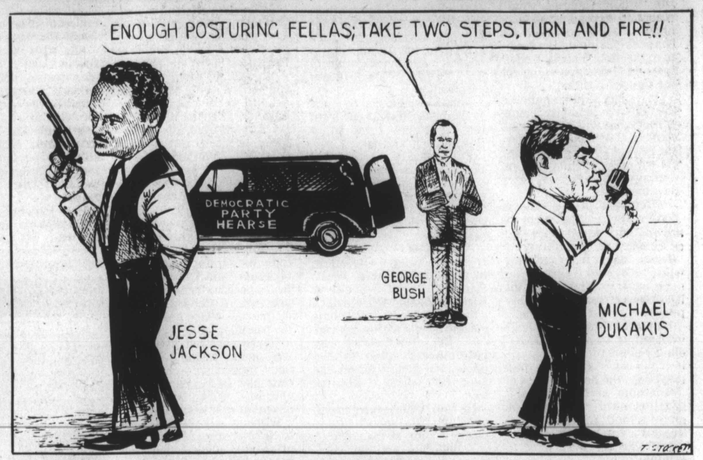
Despite a lot of discussion and opinions expressed in the media, after early rounds of actual meetings between the two top vote getters during the primaries and sessions of their people with party representatives, there has been reason to expect the desired unity.

Throughout the primary campaign Jackson leaned heavily on the theme of his leadership capacity. There have been disquieting statements from some of his advisers and supporters since Dukakis won the delegates necessary to claim the nomination. Jackson may be challenged to show how pragmatic he can be as a leader who understands both the bounds of how the political game is played and what the bottom line is for the general election.

View that bottom line in the harshest and frankest possible terms. Although Jackson may be able to deny a Democratic ticket victory in November, the fact remains that Dukakis and most Democrats are white Americans and as much as they surely want to win the election they still would be considerably better off under another Republican regime than would be most of Jackson's base constituents.

Having flexed their muscles two years ago to return the U.S. Senate to Democratic control, black voters would be naive to listen to those who argue that their votes are taken for granted and it thus does not matter if they become peeved and sit out the election. They have seen in just two situations, the defeat of Judge Robert Bork's nomination to the Supreme Court and the override of President Reagan's veto of a major civil rights bill that voting one's best interest can pay handsome dividends.

The concern is not that in the end Jackson, who has grown tremendously during his two presidential bids, won't in the end stand up for Dukakis and work hard for him. The concern is that the rhetorical game now underway not be played at a level that might leave too many of Jackson's constituents with negative perceptions which could dampen their fervor for November.



Parren J. Mitchell

FORMER U.S. REP.

Jesse: don't accept offer

"One of the most remarkable political feats of this century has been the Jackson Campaign for the Presidency. It ranks with Truman's shining campaign for the presidency, when he was considered to be the underdog to Thomas Dewey's well-financed campaign.

What Jesse Jackson has done is to move the Democratic candidates and, I hope, the Democratic platform from the political right to the political center and just beyond, to the left. He has begun to arouse concern again for those left out of the mainstream of America. He has rekindled some of the old traditional values of the Democratic Party. He has awakened the nation to the futility of militarism as a strategy to achieve peace on this globe.

The Jackson campaign, with no money to match other former candidates and the present candidate, has once again sparked pride in Black America, and has given Hispanics a sense of what might be in the future.

I truly believe that the Jackson campaign, more than any other development, has stopped America's dangerous drift to the political right . . . a drift that had been growing over the past 20 years.

By every possible measure, Jesse Jackson should be offered the position of vice president. To do anything else, could be a gesture of contempt and, in my opinion, would doom the Democratic Party's chances for capturing the White House.

When the office of vice president is offered to Rev. Jesse Jackson, he should and must refuse it. I repeat, Jesse Jackson should not, should not, accept the nomination for the vice presidency.

There are three compelling reasons why he should not accept the offer.

First, once you are a part of the president's team, you may make inputs on domestic and international policy, but the president makes the final decision, and, as a team player, you are required to support that policy and help to implement it.

If, for example, the Joint Chiefs of Staff persuade the president that a new, massive military build-up is necessary, as a team player, Jesse would have to live with and support that decision. Jesse Jackson could not do this and retain his integrity.

If the president, pressured by a loss of federal revenues, and buffeted by political pressures, imposed a two-year moratorium on federal housing programs, the team player would be required to support the moratorium. Jackson's sense of humanity would simply not permit him to accept this.

If, after accepting the nomination for the vice presidency and winning that office, Jackson was assigned to perform the ceremonial functions only (often this is the fate of vice presidents), Jackson's life would be one of misery.

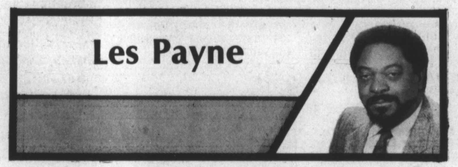
Remember how Lyndon Johnson chafed at his almost meaningless role as vice president to John Kennedy? Everyone remembers Franklin D. Roosevelt as one of the great presidents of this nation. Who was his vice president? it was John N. Garner, but who really gives a hoot?

The third reason why Jesse Jackson should not accept the offer is the most important one. Every government should have its loyal opposition outside of government to help shape the direction and focus of the nation.

President Nixon's policy of ignoring Africa needed former Representative Charles Diggs on the outside to force the development of American policy toward the African nations. Lyndon Johnson, certainly a friend to civil rights during his presidency, needed the loyal opposition who was Clarence M. Mitchell, Jr., the former NAACP lobbyist.

For this time, I cannot think of anyone who can better play that role than Jesse Jackson. It is in that role he can give his greatest service to the nation.

The offer should, must be made to Rev. Jesse Jackson. Please, Jesse Jackson, graciously turn down the offer.



Les Payne

In Reagan's fantasyland

Now that President Ronald Reagan has embraced Mikhail Gorbachev and the Russkies, he will likely strike human rights violations from his shrinking bill of particulars against the former "evil empire."

This trifle over a few million people will probably no longer matter in the swoon of Reagan's new openness. The president values celluloid art. Gorbachev has star quality. Now that the general secretary's autograph is on his Time magazine cover, all is well in Reagan's Fantasyland.

Human rights, it seems, is a matter Reagan will let stand between him and enemies, but not between him and friends.

This generally has always been the case.

South Africa, for instance, keeps 83 percent of its population virtually in stocks for no greater crime than being born with ebony skin and dark eyes. Until this very hour, black South Africans cannot vote, hold office, own real estate or enjoy any of the most valued benefits of citizenship in the land of their forefathers.

With key black journalists in prison without due process, South Africa denies freedom of the press, speech and assembly. Virtually the entire nonwhite population, whether incarcerated or not, is being held as political prisoners.

Reagan has not raised with Pretoria its extraordinary violation of human rights. It is a country over which the administration could exert enormous influence. But Reagan is the Boers' bosom buddy, and when he speaks to them, it is usually to praise or apologize.

Even on the issue of human rights, one is careful in criticizing Reagan because matters of substance stand so thin a chance of residing in his head. Though he reads his human rights speeches effectively enough, it is not at all clear that he understands — or feels — the gravity of his words. He put just as much passion into backing away from the issue at the Moscow summit as he had initially into raising it.

The real cue came when some Russians forced him to explain the American human rights stance as regards the Indians. With no speech handy, the president was on his own.

". . . You'd be surprised," Reagan said of the Indians, ". . . Some of their reservations were overlaying great pools of oil. And you can get very rich pumping oil."

For the Great White Father to take credit for what petrodollars Indians pump from their parched earth, is like Pharaoh taking credit for the way Moses turned out. Indians were not shut up on those reservations to pump oil but to die — bravely, of course.

Reagan failed to answer the Russians' question, perhaps because he is really ignorant of the Indians' real plight. At one point he said, "I don't know what their grievance might be."

A few years ago, Bob Wyrick, one of the finest investigative reporters in the country, examined those grievances in a wrenching Newsday series. Sure, there is oil and there is Bingo on some reservations. But the overwhelming majority of the 700,000 Indians living on or near reservations subsist on the nightmare side of the American dream.

There are 287 federally recognized tribes living on some 52 million acres the federal government has reserved, from the Pacific Northwest to Maine, down to Florida and back across Texas to California. Defined as wards of the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs, these native Americans, Wyrick found, have rates of unemployment, alcoholism and infant mortality that rank among the highest in this country.

"Indians living in metropolitan areas suffer much of the social disruption associated with depressed reservation life," Wyrick wrote. "Suicides, family breakups, spouse abuse and alcoholism have increased markedly in the past four years and remain many times greater than in the general population. Unemployment for Indians in nonreservation areas is still between 60 and 80 percent," said Gregory Frazier, director of the Denver-based National Indian Council.

Numbering some 10 million when Columbus landed in the New World in 1492, the Indian population has dwindled in parched isolation with little of the wealth that Reagan attributes to reservation life.

Indeed, life for the Indians has grown worse under the Reagan administration, according to Wyrick's findings. "Financing for the Bureau of Indian Affairs," Wyrick wrote, "which was slightly over $1 billion under Jimmy Carter in fiscal year 1981, has steadily declined."

The administration made drastic cuts in education, CETA job funding, food stamps and spending for reservation infrastructure, and proposed to "zero out" funds for a program that provided safe drinking water to reservation homes that previously was budgeted for $50 million.

As for criminal justice, Indians are subjected to a system which they say, with much evidence, regards them as unworthy of equal treatment before the law.

Unlike what Reagan described to the Russians, life on the Indian reservation is not all oil and riches. He might consider setting the record straight, or better yet improving America's sad history of reserving for the Indian a legacy of broken promises and broken lives.

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COMMENTARY

By Rep. Augustus Hawkins

The new morbidity: young black males

The disturbing plight of economically disadvantaged young black males in America is a national problem which needs immediate attention. These young men are falling prey to a "new morbidity"—or the destruction of life opportunities through social and behavioral factors. These factors include high illiteracy rates and school dropouts; criminal and violent behavior; premature deaths; unemployment; and incarceration.

The "new morbidity" is most clearly manifested in the absence of the black father from the family. This not only creates a loss of role models for our youth; but it places increasing black families in poverty. Hence the following statistic: 57 percent of black families were headed by women in 1986, and children in female-headed black families are five times as likely to be on welfare as those in stable black families.

Blacks are dropping out of the mainstream society in alarming numbers: Note the following statistics:

—About 20 percent of black males drop out of high school, according to the U.S. Department of Education;

—The leading cause of death among black males ages 15 to 24 is homicide; and while the typical American has a 1 in 133 chance of being murdered, the U.S. Department of Justice estimates that for black males the chance is 1 in 21;

—While black males account for about 6 percent of the U.S. population, they represent over 40 percent of the prison population;

—Black teen-age unemployment is over 30 percent, or more than twice that of white youth.

The problem of poverty in America has been swept under the rug by the Reagan Administration. Presidential candidate Jesse Jackson has exposed much of this indifference. The real test of government is how well can we best address the toughest problems in our society. The overall question of poverty, and the "new morbidity" as expressed in the problems of young black males should be one of our nation's top priorities.

COMMENTARY & OPINIONS

MEMBER NNPA MDDC UPI

Ruth Jenkins

SOB SISTER

Want my money now

We're the first to admit that we are gullible. But it hurts us to our quick when folks rub it in.

Especially magazine sales folks who sponsor million-dollar sweepstakes. Dangling the impossible dream of our winning the grand prize.

And asking first of all how we would like to receive the money. We don't understand why they need this info so soon. Right with the initial entry into the contest.

It simply boggles the mind. The instructions say, "If you are the grand prize winner, you will receive five million dollars. Tell us how you would like to be paid" by card-punching one of three choices. This card must be sent in with the contestant's registration certificates.

Our choice: Would we like to collect our five-million dollars at the rate of $166,666.67 now, plus a similar amount in each of the next 29 years, or the initial amount now, plus $13,888.89 a month for the next 29 years. Or the initial amount now, plus $3,205.13 a week for the next 29 years.

What's with this 29 years bit? Why yearly, monthly or weekly installments? Why burden the postal service for so many years? Why tire the mail carrier making all these deliveries? We told the sponsors we want our five million dollars Now, without extensions. And we want it whether or not we enter the contest.

Just for bearing up under the spiel.

They don't really care whether we register for the sweepstakes; they will attract enough other go-fers without us. Since they already have our magazine subscription, what they are really plugging now is a 448-page do-it-yourself book.

It's being ballyhooed as "A time and money-saving A-to-Z guide to making life easier." We already have one of these; he's our best beau. But he is not always available in we-can't-cope situations. So there may be times when we will really need that book.

Promoters say it provides "quick answers and on-the-spot solutions to 1,200 practical problems and commonplace concerns." They couldn't possibly have picked that figure out of thin air; they must have counted the things that stump us almost daily.

We're quite inept at mechanical arts. But we have lots of company, all inadequate at crafts. So we feel a kinship with that famous humor-columnist who says her ironing board gets decorated for Christmas because she doesn't know how to take it down.

Our problem is a little different. Our ironing board came also in a carton covered with fine-print complicated instructions. So we never figured out how to set it up; or even how to uncrate it.

Well, now about that book and its expert, explicit solutions to 1,200 daily dilemmas. Some of this advice we are prepared to skip over. Because quite frankly, we are a little touchy about those topics.

Like advice "on growing African violets." Flowers never grow for us, no matter of what nationality. Even our artificial plants die. But so what? We have neighbors who have rock gardens. And we've seen no rocks abloom there.

Or "on planning budgets." Our plans work, but our budgets don't. Our monthly budgets always add up to 10 dollars more than our monthly income. Must be something wrong with the calculator.

Or "on jump-starting cars." We don't have any cars. So we also don't need the book's suggestions "on garage sales." No matter what the bargain-sales price, we're not gonna buy any garage.

Or "on fixing leaky faucets . . . or noisy pipes." Are there any other kind? Even so, we wouldn't want ours fixed. That would soil the personality characteristics of our happy home.

Or "on patching clothing." At today's designer prices, the patches had darn better be already sewn in. And the last time we did any needlework, we lost the thimble. Into the hem of the skirt we had shortened. Incidentally, it's still there.

But the book has some very valuable health, housekeeping, homemaking and happiness hints. Dealing with apartment security, bathroom safety, caulking, chiseling, egg decorating, oven cleaning, paneling, moldings, flagstones, paint removal, wall papering, rust removal and the like.

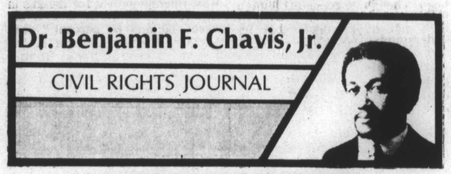
Even instructions for tankless toilets and (are they kidding?) chimney repairs. As a matter of fact, the scope of self-help suggestions is so wide, that one subject seems conspicuous by its absence. Guess the authors know we don't do windows.

Yes, we have two perfectly good hands. But they are not good at fixing things. We keep them very busy otherwise.

With working crossword puzzles, pulling slot machine handles, polishing apples for the boss, pointing to role models, writing love letters, patting our cronies on the back;

Helping Boy Scouts cross the street, signing credit card orders, shaking hands, passing the buck, applauding good deeds, waving bye-bye, mixing cocktails, and primping ourselves. Oh yes, and counting our blessings.

When it comes to sexist language
We take umbrage when we can,
But pardon us if we cop out
When the call's for "handyman."



Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.

CIVIL RIGHTS JOURNAL

Zambian humanism

President Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia and the people of Zambia should be congratulated on their progress as an African nation committed to the independence and freedom of all of Africa. Kaunda led Zambia to independence from the British in 1964 and since that time he has, as president, become a role model for African statesmanship and leadership.

Despite severe economic difficulties at the time of independence and the continued acts of aggression by the racist government of South Africa to destabilize the southern Africa region, Zambia has been able to achieve remarkable political and economic progress. I recently visited Zambia as part of a tour of the frontline nations that border South Africa. I was very impressed with the sense of pride and accomplishment of the people and government of Zambia.

Zambia is a large nation that is greater in size than the combined area of the nations of France, Belgium, The Netherlands and Switzerland. It has a population of approximately six million. Located in central southern Africa it is bordered by Angola, Zaire, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Malawi and Tanzania. Although Zambia is a completely land-locked nation, it is one of the most agriculturally rich nations on the continent. Zambia also has valuable minerals, including copper.

The week that I spent in Lusaka, Zambia, the capital city, was quite a learning experience. First, I witnessed a truly modern African society. Lusaka is a metropolitan area with most of the conveniences one might expect to find in the capital city of a European nation. Yet this city has held on to its indigenous African culture and tradition. Secondly, although English is the language used by the majority of the people, traditional African languages are still being spoken with a sense of pride and self-determination. In fact one Zambian official whom I talked to was quick to emphasize "As a developing nation we need the assistance of the world community to help in our development, yet we also know that we have something to offer the world community as an African nation."

Indeed Zambia has reached out to hundreds of thousands of fellow Africans who have come to Zambia seeking refuge from war situations in South Africa, Namibia, Angola and Mozambique. I was even surprised to find a community of African Americans who are living in Zambia after being exiled from the United States.

Zambia has also provided the sanctuary for the African National Congress to have its international headquarters. Zambia also provides a unique model for church/state relationships. The United Church of Zambia which has about one million members works very closely with the Zambian government on educational projects.

Humanism is the national philosophy of Zambia. It is the basis of all of the policies and programs of the government of Zambia under Kaunda's leadership. All the development effort in Zambia is based on humanism. It is a way of life which emphasizes the importance of humanity as the center of all activity. It stresses human dignity, equality of all, the extended family, hard work and self-reliance, resistance to exploitation and oppression, and the promotion of unity and justice.

In the words of President Kaunda, "Our revolution is a humanist revolution. We have decided to wage a struggle agianst imperialism, neo-colonialism, fascism and racism on the one hand; and hunger, poverty, ignorance, disease, crime and exploitation on the other hand. This is what our revolution is all about."

John Jacob

TO BE EQUAL

Housing crisis worsens

The Reagan administration has presided over the "de-housing" of moderate-income America, and one of the top priorities of the next president must be the formulation of a national housing plan that eases the crisis.

The large numbers of homeless Americans testify to the devastation of housing opportunities for the poor. Temporary shelters are overcrowded and local authorities are spending as much to house homeless families in hotels and motels as it would cost to rehabilitate or build new structures.

But while the homeless are the most visible part of the housing crunch, they are just the tip of the iceberg.

It's estimated that about 10 million people live in substandard housing and can't afford better — and that is expected to grow to 20 million within the next 15 years.

Only about a fourth of poor people live in subsidized housing. They typically pay 30 percent of their small incomes for rent.

The majority of poor renters are even worse off — they compete for a shrinking number of apartments in the unsubsidized market, and most pay half their small incomes in rent.

As in most areas of life, poor single-parent households suffer most. According to a Harvard study released in March, their average portion of income going to rent is an incredible 58.4 percent, leaving little for food, clothing and other essentials.

Without a comprehensive national housing policy directed at low-income families, the outlook is bleak.

The supply of low-income housing units is shrinking, as owners abandon them or upgrade them for more affluent tenants. That's happening in many big cities, as neighborhoods are "gentrified" and their low-income populations pushed out.

Vacancy rates for rental housing are supposed to be climbing, but virtually all of the increase is in units beyond the reach of low-income renters. And rents have risen faster than inflation, putting more pressure on low-income families.

Another threat to the supply of affordable housing comes from the imminent conversion of large numbers of units in the subsidized private rental market. Housing built in the 1960s and 1970s with federal mortgage subsidies carried provisions allowing owners to pay off their mortgages after 20 years.

That allows owners to rid themselves of their obligation to rent to low-income tenants and get higher rents from more affluent families. There are almost two million such housing units and experts say up to half of them could be lost within a decade.

Add to that the perilous state of many public housing projects, whose operating costs are rising faster than federal housing subsidies, and you have the makings of a housing crunch for the poor that will make today's look like a picnic.

Much of the crisis derives from government's withdrawal from housing — the Department of Housing and Urban Development's 1989 budget will be almost a third of what it was 10 years ago.

A private advisory group appointed by Congress to examine the housing crunch has come up with a plan to put the federal government back into housing.

It recommends that Washington commits itself to spending $3 billion a year for the next dozen years to build, renovate and buy low-income housing units. And it would require matching funds from states and cities, to attract additional resources.

The serious shortage of affordable housing has to be a major national priority and we've got to insist that the candidates address the issue.

COMMENTARY

Looking beyond the Jackson campaign

By Norman Hill

It is now patently clear that, barring some unforeseen circumstance, Jesse Jackson will not be the Democratic nominee for president in 1988. Now, some are expressing the fear that perhaps a significant segment of Jackson supporters — dispirited or embittered by their candidate's defeat — will stay home during the November elections.

I, for one, do not share this view, but it does merit comment. For millions of black Americans and others, Jackson's gallant campaign was a harbinger of hope and progress during this election year. But while his apparent failure to gain the nomination may be demoralizing to some, Jackson's candidacy has had a profound impact on the American political landscape.

He has proved that a black person can be a viable candidate for the highest office in the land. He has raised important social and economic issues that cannot be ignored by either party. His campaign has inspired millions to take part, perhaps for the first time, in the electoral process. His social and economic message broadened his support beyond the black community to include a wide spectrum of American society. And even in defeat, he will be a factor to be reckoned with when the Democrats draw up their strategy for November.

The end of Jackson's run for the White House must not mark the end of the efforts of black Americans to help shape this nation's policy agenda. There is too much at stake in 1988 for any black Americans to walk away from the political process.

Despite rosy economic statistics, security and prosperity still elude millions of Americans, especially blacks. Real after-tax family income has fallen over the past 10 years for all but the top 20 percent of the population. The rich-poor gap is at its widest in 40 years. Rising rents and deep cuts in federal housing subsidies since 1981 have made decent, affordable housing little more than a dream for many families.

Thirty-five million Americans are without health insurance and 20 percent of American children grow up in poverty. The figures for blacks are substantially higher. In addition, the problems of decaying public schools, racial polarization, and crime- and drug-ridden neighborhoods are all too familiar.

Intractable problems continue to threaten social foundations and the economy: huge trade and budget deficits; a declining productive base and lagging competitiveness; the erosion of infrastructure, education and research.

The black underclass continues to be mired in poverty and isolation, and the number of working poor is growing at an alarming rate. Moreover, the last eight years have been attempts by the administration to weaken existing civil rights laws and regulations.

These chronic problems will only be solved when a politically engaged and active citizenry demands a social, economic and political agenda which addresses these issues. In recent years, the growing power of the black vote and political activism have forced politicians to seriously consider the concerns of the black community, particularly in areas where the black vote could provide the margin of victory.

Most political analysts predict that the November election will be closely contested. Hence, the black vote can play a pivotal role in the election of the next president of the United States.

And even though Jesse Jackson will not be a candidate, this responsibility should not be taken lightly. The Jackson candidacy was about political empowerment. It demonstrated the enormous political resources of the black community. Those resources will be needed in November when the country decides its course going into the 21st Century. Clearly, the 1988 elections are too important and the issues too pressing for anyone to sit out.

Norman Hill is President of the A. Philip Randolph Institute.