

The Civil Rights Quarterly

# PERSPECTIVES

SUMMER 1983



**Key Social Trends and Civil Rights**  
**A Special Yankelovich, Skelly & White Analysis**

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# Guest Editorial

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## Anti-Semitism: Barometer for Democracy

by Nathan Perlmutter

Is anti-Semitism on the rise in the United States?

A milestone study undertaken during the sixties by the University of California Survey Research Center at the behest of the Anti-Defamation League found that one third of the American people is latently anti-Jewish, one third indifferent and the remaining third favorably inclined. Other studies since have substantiated this finding.

One wondered if this sleeping volcano was becoming activated when the League's seismograph—its annual audit of incidents of anti-Semitic vandalism—suddenly registered a surprising rise, increasing from 49 episodes in 1978 to 129 in 1979, then tripling to 377 in 1980 and 974 in 1981.

Despite misgivings that publication of this data might incite imitative behavior, perhaps even divert attention from more dangerous threats to Jewish security, ADL opted to release the audit as the linchpin of a comprehensive program of education and action designed to develop greater public awareness and produce counteraction. Publication did have that effect: Sensitized educators, clergy and community leaders organized bias task forces. Police stepped up their vigilance with greater consideration for victims. Judges handed down stiffer sentences to deglamorized vandals—arsonists, cross burners, desecrators, graffitists. Many states enacted punitive measures, a model statute prepared by ADL serving as a guide.

Reassuringly, the number of incidents reported to ADL's audit for 1982 declined 15 percent, with 829 reported episodes in 35 states as compared to 974 in 31 states in 1981.

What is the relevance of this audit as an indicator of peril to the Jewish people? Despite the insights its findings provide about the irrational fringe of domestic anti-Jewishness, the audit illuminates only a small part of the anti-Semitic cosmos.

Greater danger to American Jews smolders elsewhere—in the United Nations where "Zionism is racism" is megaphoned; in the Soviet Union's oppression of its Jewish population and its imperialistic ambitions; in the collusion of the Communist states, the Arab powers and some Third World countries against Israel; in western accommodation to petrodollar influence and pressure; in paramilitary extremist groups like the Ku Klux Klan and Posse Comitatus, and in Holocaust revisionism.

American Jews are imperiled not only by nations and organizations which make them a target but by any threat to democracy.

Democracy was the beacon which attracted our parents and grandparents to these shores. Its precious hospitality has been proven through the generations. We all thrive in freedom.

That is why the answer to the question about the state of anti-Semitism in the United States is in another question.

"What is the state of our democracy?" ♦

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*Nathan Perlmutter is national director of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith.*

The Civil Rights Quarterly  
**PERSPECTIVES**

SUMMER 1983

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Investigate complaints alleging denial of the right to vote by reason of race, color, religion, sex, age, handicap, or national origin, or by reason of fraudulent practices;  
Study and collect information concerning legal developments constituting a denial of equal protection of the laws under the Constitution because of race, color, religion, sex, age, handicap, or national origin, or in the administration of justice;  
Appraise Federal laws and policies with respect to the denial of equal protection of the laws because of race, color, religion, sex, age, handicap, or national origin; and  
Submit reports, findings, and recommendations to the President and Congress.

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# Letters

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## Thanks for the Unthinkable

I wish to commend the editor and *Perspectives* for publishing the Speaking Out article by Haskel Ward in the Fall 1982 issue entitled "The Dead End of Compensatory Policies: Thanking The Unthinkable." I felt that this was a very thoughtful article by one apparently very cognizant of the sensitive problems inherent in affirmative programming, and in adopting policies which are perceived to produce gains to the benefit of one group at the expense of others.

**Harry W. Wellford**

Circuit Judge  
U.S. Court of Appeals  
for the Sixth Circuit  
Memphis, Tennessee



## Share the Wealth

At a recent Image Conference in Baltimore, I was given a copy of *Perspectives*. I found it full of valuable information, and would like to share it with 300 employees at my agency.

**Dorothy L. Eiser**

Internal Revenue Service Center  
Internal Revenue Service  
Philadelphia, PA.



## Computers Make Race Discrimination an Economic Issue

The ensuing gap between computer literates and illiterates, as referred to in James P. Johnson's article, "Can Computers Close the Educational Equity Gap?" (See Fall 1982 *Perspectives*) disheartened me greatly. According to Johnson's article, the computer literates are predominantly mid to upper-class whites while the illiterates are predominantly lower-class blacks and Hispanics. What disheartened me about the situa-

tion was the apparent absence of outside control over the state of computer education in inner city school districts. Federal assistance, under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, is not, according to the article, doing much for computer education in inner city school districts.

Johnson's article came to mind again on May 25, 1983 when the Supreme Court decided against President Reagan's proposal to grant racially discriminatory private schools tax-exempt status. President Reagan's proposal has become simply a footnote to 165 years of racial segregation in American schools. Minority groups, without money to afford computer educational facilities for their schools, will be inadequately prepared for the computer age. It is interesting that thanks to the dawn of the computer age, racial discrimination is no longer a question of morality, but a question of economic status.

**Elisabeth A. Reese**  
Philadelphia, PA.



## Abourezk's Version of Case Disputed

James Abourezk's article, "Ending Discrimination Against Arabs" in the Winter-Spring issue of *Perspectives* contains a remarkable distortion which demands correction.

Abourezk alleges a variety of "civil rights abuses" in the United States' extradition of Ziad Abu Eain to Israel.

The FBI did not, as Abourezk states, "accuse (Abu Eain) of having planted a bomb in the Israeli town of Tiberias...." Rather, the FBI acted on a request to locate and extradite to Israel Ziad Abu Eain, who was accused of murder in the 1979 terrorist bombing in that city.

Subsequent FBI and court records show that Abu Eain, located in Chicago,

lied to FBI authorities by seeking to hide his identity, and enlisted others to assist him in evading justice.

It is not all that unusual, despite Mr. Abourezk's unhappiness, to keep accused murderers in prison. That was the case during the prolonged court hearings before acting on the extradition request. During that time Abu Eain was well-represented by counsel, and was able to avail himself of the full benefit of legal and judicial protection up to and including appeals to the Supreme Court of the United States.

As a result of that review, the courts determined and affirmed that Abu Eain should be extradited to Israel to stand trial for murder. In the process it became clear to the courts that there was, indeed, substantial evidence that connected Abu Eain with the crime for which he was to be tried.

Mr. Abourezk is also wrong in his assertions concerning Abu Eain's confession. "The confession is in fact a statement in Hebrew, a language the signer could not read, speak or understand," Abourezk states. But Abourezk does not add that there were also statements by accomplices implicating Abu Eain in deliberately planning to execute this terrorist action. Nor does he add that the statements were translated by an Arabic-speaking official and were sworn to.

James Abourezk may be correct about racist-motivated discrimination and bigotry against Arab-Americans. But the Ziad Abu Eain case is plainly not an example of such activity, but of the careful efforts of courts in two democracies to seek justice.

**Michael Berenbaum**

Executive Director  
Jewish Community Council  
of Greater Washington  
Washington, D.C.

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# Up Front

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Edited by F. Peter Model

## **A Limp Hoagy For Philly....**

Before too many more self-congratulations are heard about the civilized way Philadelphia went about electing its first black mayor—compared to the racial undercurrents that swirled around Chicago's recent mayoralty—check out a new study by the private Citizens Commission on Civil Rights. It depicts the City of Brotherly Love as decidedly *unbrotherly*: between 1970–80, Philadelphia was one of two big U.S. cities (Cleveland was the other) that actually became *more* segregated. During that same time, such southern bastions of Jim Crowism as Birmingham, Atlanta, Jacksonville, Richmond and Nashville became more integrated.

The Citizen's Commission—comprised, in part, of former members of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights—looked at those 28 major cities with black populations of 100,000 and up. Its segregation index was based on the 1970 and 1980 Census as well as on how well city blocks were mixed with blacks and non-blacks.

Oakland, across the Bay from San Francisco, has long been depicted by the news media as an "all-black" city: in fact, it may be the most integrated of all 28 cities, with only two percent of the black population living on exclusively "black blocks." Dallas, once 96 percent segregated, has dropped to 83 percent—no doubt due in part to a 1971 "fair housing" ordinance.

But Philadelphia, which in 1970 ranked 18th in terms of segregation, now has climbed to 4th place, right behind Chicago, Cleveland and St. Louis.

## **....And Certainly No Cigar For Cicero**

But when it comes to the prize for be-

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*F. Peter Model, a New York publicist and freelance writer, has been covering the civil rights field for 20 years.*

ing the most segregated *northern* town, Philly can't hold a candle to Cicero, Illinois—a compact, 5.5 square mile neighbor of Chicago. Eight miles southwest of The Loop, Cicero—best-known for having served as Al Capone's headquarters during Prohibition—has a black population of *less* than one percent, according to the 1980 Census. Of the 74 blacks who live in Cicero (pop. 61,232), 67 are seasonal hired hands working at Sportsman's Park Race Track, and living on the grounds in cinder-block huts during the eight months the horses are running. The other seven are nursing home residents.

Not one of the city's schoolchildren is black. Neither are any of its 400 municipal workers, thanks to a tough residency law for civil servants. Its biggest employer, Western Electric, whose workforce has dwindled from 22,000 in 1973 to 4,000 today, lists 900 black employees—but they are commuters. "Let the colored come to work here," *Time* magazine recently quoted a tolerant co-worker. "That's fine. The dollar is democratic. But we'd just as soon they sleep somewhere else."

What brings Cicero back in the news is that more than 30 years after a white ethnic mob of 5,000 drove a 29-year-old black college graduate and veteran named Harvey E. Clark Jr. and his family out of town, triggering a race riot and a week-long declaration of martial law by the then-Gov. Adlai E. Stevenson, the Justice Department filed a suit against Cicero earlier this year to force it to integrate housing and its municipal workforce.

That's not the only lawsuit Cicero faces. In February 1982, black restaurant manager Ronnie L. Stackhouse moved into a Cicero apartment, setting off months of harassment, the threat of physical violence, firebombing of his car,

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# Up Front

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burglary of his apartment, and wrongful arrest. Stackhouse also sued the city for violating his civil rights.

It won't be easy litigation, that much is certain. Henry Klosak, Town President, vowed, "We will fight. This is the finest community in these here United States with sixty some thousand God-fearing people...."

Harvey Clark, who moved his family to Little Rock, Arkansas, finds little comfort in the fact that the wheels of justice may grind exceedingly slow, but that they at least grind: back in the 1950s, when he sued Cicero for damages, racial discrimination and physical assault, he was awarded a mere \$2,500.

## DOD—We've Got Your Number

*Timely Telephone Tips*, a Defense Department advisory to all Department personnel receiving and making telephone calls, says more than the Department may have intended to say about sex-equity in the ranks, military as well as civilian. For example, under the heading of "Avoid Trite or Abrupt Phrases," it cites such tight-lipped responses as "He's busy," "He's in conference," "He's tied up" and "He isn't in."

Under another heading, "Volunteer The Whereabouts and Whenabouts of an Absent Person," it suggests this helpful example: "He can be reached in Mr. Jones' office, extension 2094," and "He is out of the building until 3 o'clock. May I locate him and ask him to call you?" Under "Identify Yourself When Answering" comes: "Mr. Brown's Office, Miss Andrews."

Virtually all of the hints using the male gender indicate *he's* the boss. According to a slightly ticked-off Pentagon correspondent, the hints are "indicative that the Defense Department does not see women in any role *other* than secretarial." Of course, "all of the offices [cited]

are headed by men. They're the ones who *don't* answer their telephones."

## "Telephone Tips" Changed

*In accordance with Commission policy, the Defense Telephone Service was given an opportunity to respond to the above Up Front item. Its edited response follows:*

We sincerely appreciate your bringing the "Timely Telephone Tips" matter to our attention and are taking immediate action to correct it.

The "Timely Telephone Tips" page has been a part of our telephone directory since 1942 and was included merely to indicate that courtesy should be conveyed when using the telephone and was never intended to indicate supremacy of either gender.

Following are some of the revisions to the "Timely Telephone Tips" page we plan to incorporate into our next issue of the directory in December 1983:

### IDENTIFY YOURSELF WHEN ANSWERING.

"Mrs. Jones' Office, Mr. Smith speaking."

"Mr. Brown's Office, Miss Andrews."  
"Personnel, Mason."

### AVOID TRITE OR ABRUPT PHRASES.

"Who's calling?" .....

"Just a moment."

"She's busy." .....

"He's in conference."

"He's tied up." .....

"She isn't in."

### VOLUNTEER THE "WHEREABOUTS AND WHENABOUTS" OF AN ABSENT PERSON.

"She can be reached in Mr. Jones'

Office.....Extension 2094."  
"She is out of the building until  
3 o'clock."

"May I locate her and ask her  
to call you?"

## C.B. Overly, Jr.

Director

Defense Telephone Service-Washington  
Department of the Army

## Tell-a-Stereotype

In Southern California, they're also publishing helpful hints for the working class. Only this time, the end result strikes the beneficiaries as a lot more demeaning.

An enterprising, 32-year-old Spanish Language teacher at Beverly Hills High by the name of Linda Wolf is cleaning up, as it were, printing and selling (at \$2.50 a pop) a series of 28-page memo pads containing key phrases and tear-out instructions in both Spanish and English for L.A.-area employers to use on their domestics. Ms. Wolf describes "Tell-a-Maid" and "Tell-a-Gardener" as the purest form of public service-for-profit. "My basic intention is to help people," she insists, though a number of Hispanic community leaders think otherwise.

They suggest that the very *concept* of the booklets is to further stereotype Hispanic workers as household drones, unwilling to learn the language of employment, and they take particular umbrage at the commanding *tone* of the instructions—some of which don't even bother with the common nicety, "*Por favor*" (please).

What troubles State Assemblywoman Gloria Molina is that these booklets "eliminate the need for human contact" and have the effect of turning domestics and gardeners into "little robots." Others think the booklets also discourage *em-*

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# Up Front

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ployers from learning even the most rudimentary of voice instructions, a courtesy they don't withhold from their pets. "Around here, the dog gets much better treatment," snaps Sophia Esparza of the Chicana Service Action Center.

Wolf says she came up with the idea for "Tell-a-Maid" and its now and future spin-offs when friends in the San Fernando Valley (where she lives in a two-bedroom condominium serviced by a Mexican maid) asked to borrow some of her written memos she routinely leaves taped to the refrigerator door in the morning.

As to propagating a stereotype, she notes, the fact of the matter is that 60 percent of the domestics in L.A. happen to be Chicano—many of whom, she adds, have told her they find such instructions useful.

So, apparently, do the people who are snapping up these booklets—though a Doubleday bookstore clerk told *People* magazine that "I've never seen anyone come in here and admit they were buying [it] for themselves. Always for a friend."

## Revising Textbook Revisionists

In a recent 68-page study by Harvard sociologist Nathan Glazer (co-author with now-Sen. Daniel P. Moynihan of *Beyond the Melting Pot*) and Tufts U. assistant history professor Reed Ueda (a Nisei), titled *Ethnic Groups in History Textbooks*, the Ethics & Public Policy Center suggests that in our rush to purge books of the old mythology glorifying the white man's history, we have put back *new* myths that, in the words of Washington *Post* reporter, Lawrence Feinberg, "oversimplify group conflicts, romanticize underdogs and attach too little significance to the nation's common problems and achievements."

The study says the new history books

are "no longer written from a single national point of view but from a variety of group perspectives."

This greatly muddies the historical waters, they say. "The expansion...to the west becomes the tragedy of the [American] Indian. The history of the south becomes the story of slavery. The story of the growth of industry focuses on the sufferings of immigrants." Minorities are depicted mainly as victims whose civilizations and cultures were destroyed by whites.

"The American story cannot be properly reduced to that of the exploited and the exploiters," say Glazer and Ueda, "in which the superior moral qualities of minorities" are celebrated and whites are shown as "malevolent." Ours is "indeed a history of oppressors and oppressed, and it must be told," but not without also pointing out the back-grounds of the "white oppressors"—"a complex mix of European ethnic groups, divided by language and religion...(whose varied experiences) indicate a potential course for those nonwhite minorities and new immigrants" of below average income and education.

One of the authors who is indirectly criticized, Temple U. history professor Herbert J. Bass, allows as how "sometimes there's so much about the skills and abilities of the Indians that it's difficult to understand how they lost."

The report's co-author, Reed Ueda, is particularly sensitive about one minority, his own. Books talk about the horrendous humiliation and hardships suffered by the Japanese Americans during their internment during World War II, "but nothing is said about their amazing social rise" afterwards.

One thing is for sure, though. A historian will have the last word. The scholarly swords are now drawn to determine just who that will be.

## The Housewife Apologia

A few months ago, when the Radcliffe Class of '58 sent around its 25th reunion report, *New York Times* deputy editorial page editor Jack Rosenthal noted an interesting pattern: a number of the '58ers had become "housewife commas." That is to say, to escape the *ex-post facto* stigma of filling in, under *occupation*, that dreaded word "housewife" or "homemaker," and finding themselves unable to scribble in, say, "Supreme Court Justice" or "Executive Vice President, Finance," a number of them put down a comma, followed by a *second* occupation—as in "housewife, volunteer" or "homemaker, scholar." To Rosenthal, this sounded as if a lot of them were't quite sure, in 1983, they'd done the right thing. "How tenaciously the women who want and need fulfillment from jobs have struggled to find it," wrote Rosenthal, "thus overcoming the stigma of 'housewife.' Yet, how passively they have acquiesced in that stigma."

Just around the same time, *USA Today* carried one of its front-page statistical tables, courtesy U.S. Commerce Department, showing the decline in job stereotyping of women. While there are fewer women holding down jobs today in grade school teaching, nursing, dancing and hairdressing, there's been a substantial influx of women into such traditional macho-work bastions as lawyering (more than three times as many as in 1970), bartending (twice as many), air traffic controlling (almost four times as many), not to mention police work, carpentering, real estate and journalism.

No statistics exist covering the new work classification, "househusbanding," however.

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# Speaking Out

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## The "H-2" Enemy: Institutionalized Injustice in Our Fields

by Aurora Camacho de Schmidt and  
Frank O'Loughlin

*The [Jamaican] H-2 worker is for [the cane growers] the perfect farm laborer—a man of the barracks, a man in a camp who spends all of his time under supervision if not under surveillance, surrounded by barbed wire. A man without a family who will never be part of the larger community; who has no hope of a better job or indeed any job in this country other than swinging a machete eight hours a day. A man who will never vote in Florida, never join a union, and never go to court to correct an injustice.*

Testimony by Florida Legal Services attorneys, House Labor Standards Subcommittee, April 1983.

**O**ur enemy is the H-2 grower-abused system: not the Jamaicans," read the picket sign in front of the Department of Justice one day in July, five years ago. The picketers were Puerto Rican farmworkers—U.S. citizens under contract to harvest apples on the East Coast who had been fired *en masse* by growers eager to employ Jamaican pickers instead.

Although that episode has been replayed countless times throughout the country since then—often with blacks, Chicanos or white U.S. citizens doing the protesting—the situation, if anything, has worsened. Yet the larger "illegal alien" dilemma confronting the nation, together with an unemployment crisis in other sectors of our economy, has virtually blinded the media and numbed the nation to a continuing tragedy: sometimes needed, legally sanctioned but incredibly abused foreign worker importation program that victimizes domestic and foreign workers alike—and ultimately de-means all of us.

H-2 is a section of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 allowing the temporary importation of foreign agricultural workers under certain conditions. The Department of Labor

(DOL) must certify that there are no available domestic workers to do the jobs, and that the wages and working conditions offered to H-2 workers will not have a depressing effect on the U.S. labor market.

Designed as an emergency measure to deal with severe labor shortages, the use of H-2 has become the norm rather than the exception in Florida's sugarcane industry and with apple growers in New England and the Middle Atlantic States—and the program has spread to other areas of the country harvesting other crops. Although H-2 has traditionally relied on Caribbean workers, mostly Jamaicans, Mexican workers have also been imported under the system. By the end of 1983 alone, some 35,000 H-2 workers will have come to the United States under the claim that nobody else was available to do those jobs.

Farm labor organizations have been fighting H-2 since its inception, frustrated by the inability of DOL to restrain an out-of-control program through its certification process. H-2 has come back to public attention, however, as part of the immigration reform package, the Simpson-Mazzoli Bill, introduced in Congress last year and again in 1983. One of the most controversial provisions of the bill

would attempt to stem illegal immigration by fining employers of undocumented workers. Whether employer sanctions will indeed limit illegal labor immigration or result in grower reluctance to hire non-English speaking or foreign looking U.S. citizens or resident aliens, proponents of a sanction program anticipate that the legislation will help protect the jobs of U.S. workers.

Yet, as the Simpson-Mazzoli Bill has moved through subcommittees and committees of both houses it has acquired features that make it in fact a system for importing new foreign workers to satisfy the demands of growers nationwide. Fearing the loss of their undocumented labor force through expulsion by the Border Patrol or through a legalization provision that is part of the bill, many growers have organized and lobbied for concessions which would preserve their supply of cheap and vulnerable workers for whom temporary work in the United States is a favor. The measure of their power is that, as of this writing, the H-2 provisions in the bill have been amended to facilitate the importation of workers in much larger numbers. The Attorney General has said that 350,000 H-2 visas per year could become available under Simpson-Mazzoli; others estimate the number at half a million. But this is not all. The House bill now includes a provision for the creation of a Seasonal Agricultural

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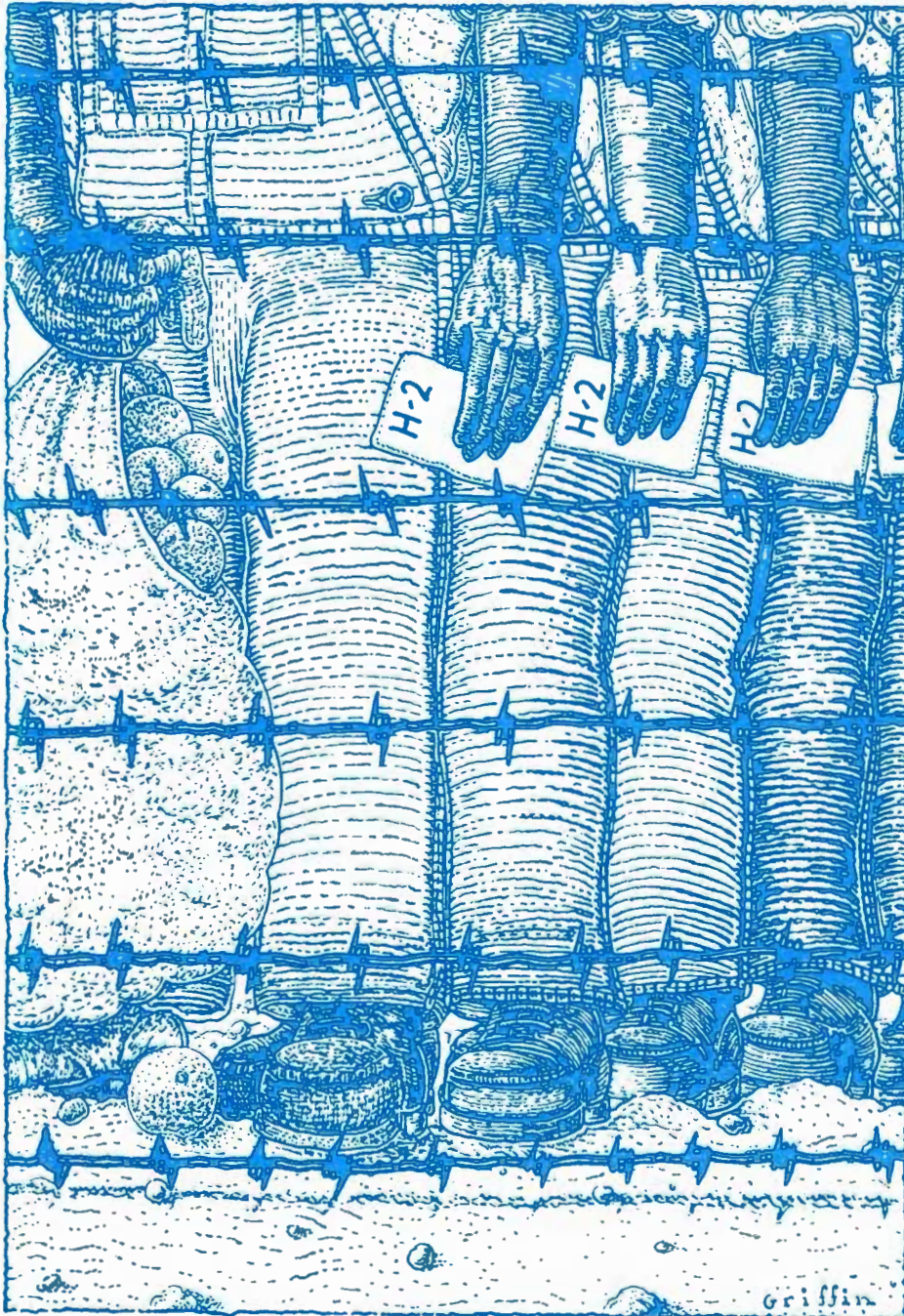
*Aurora Camacho de Schmidt is director of the Mexico-U.S. Border Program of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC). Father Frank O'Loughlin is a parish priest in Indiantown, Florida and an advisor to the Florida project of AFSC.*



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# Speaking Out

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Workers Program (or "P" Program) to satisfy the needs of western growers of perishable foods. An immigration bill introduced in large part as a job saver has instead become a means of importing hundreds of thousands of new foreign workers who will displace American workers.

What is the incentive for the growers? Why can't they find domestic workers when unemployment reaches such proportions? Is it true that there are no takers in the United States for those jobs? Who protects the foreign workers' rights while they are here?

The public is told that in order to have cheap food the U.S. government must cooperate with the agricultural sector to keep production costs down. Yet, less than two percent of the price of apples goes to the picker. In the sugar industry the labor cost may be even lower. Any savings provided by cheaper labor, rather than being passed on to the public in the form of lower food costs, become part of the profit margin.

Hiring H-2 workers holds other strong incentives for growers. H-2 users do not have to pay social security tax under the Federal Insurance Contributions Act (FICA). Growers in many states are exempt from unemployment insurance payments on H-2 wages. The strongest financial incentive for the grower, however, rests in the fact that the industry does not have to meet standards that would be required if it were to hire domestic workers. The return of large numbers of injured workers to their native lands without compensation prompted a study of Florida H-2 workers by the Jamaican Council of Churches in 1975. That study reached a conclusion that is relevant today: "Anyone who has to

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# Speaking Out

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work and live under the conditions described is virtually confined to the same conditions of labour on the Sugar Estates of about two centuries ago.”

Growers exercise absolute control over their labor force from the very beginning. Recruiting agents go to Jamaica and other Caribbean countries to select cane cutters out of a large pool of able, willing and qualified young males. According to a 1977 U.S. Department of Agriculture report, men are first looked at as physical specimens; then they are asked questions to measure intelligence and degree of understanding of English; and finally, according to a recruiting agent quoted in the report, “we try to find out about the man’s work background. We also check our black book to see if the man has been “breached” (i.e., sent home for violating the contract)....”

The ease with which the Jamaican worker can be deported becomes his best credential for getting a job. As an officer with the U.S. Sugar Corporation has said, “If I had a remedy comparable to breaching an unsatisfactory worker which I could apply to the American workers, they’d work harder too.” But “violating the contract” or being “an unsatisfactory worker” may mean simply not meeting an arbitrary production quota. A 1982 University of Florida study confirms this:

Management is entitled to verify a worker’s productivity. If he fails to achieve the required minimum for three days, he can be sent home for breach of contract. Breaching the contract, whether in this manner or by some other offense, results in blacklisting the individuals. Recruiters come to the islands with a “black book” listing all blacklisted workers.

Cutting cane is not an easy job in Florida—indeed it is a dangerous job. According to a recent report of the House Subcommittee on Labor Standards, out of 7,885 H-2 workers during the peak of the 1979–80 Florida cutting season, 3,721—almost half—sought medical attention for work-related injuries. In spite of some improvement, fully a third of all sugar cane cutters in Florida were injured in some way last year during the harvest season.

The West Indian worker arrives here alone, lives in housing provided by the company and has a quarter of his pay deducted and sent to his country of origin, where he will recover it upon his return. He cannot change employers, cannot belong to a union and cannot refuse to work six days a week without forfeiting the company’s payment of transportation back to the Caribbean. When a worker is “breached,” he goes home at his own expense.

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## The ease with which the Jamaican worker can be deported becomes his best credential for getting a job.

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The British West Indies Central Labor Organization (BWICLO) represents the Caribbean workers and bargains for their interests. The growers and BWICLO draw up each contract together. The worker is handed a contract on a take-it-or-leave-it basis. BWICLO itself is not in a good bargaining position. The Caribbean countries perceive a need for the jobs and the foreign exchange they bring in in the form of worker’s remittances, and openly admit as much. In 1973, for example, one of the largest sugar grow-

ing corporations in Florida was transporting cutters to the fields in open trucks, in direct violation of DOL’s safety regulations. One of the trucks skidded and 86 workers were injured and hospitalized. The Ambassador of Jamaica, asked for his reaction to this kind of incident, replied: “Yes. It’s a problem. But if a man came to me and asked my personal opinion of what he should do—the choice is not working—I think I would have to tell him: risk the truck.” Since the Caribbean workers and their governments want the jobs desperately, not even the rights accorded to the cutters by law can be seriously enforced.

There is another practice in the sugarcane industry usage of H-2s that promotes productivity and docility: only 60 percent of a season’s labor force is assured of being hired again the following year, so the incentive to be among the chosen ones is very strong. This explains the fact that in 1963 it took 2.4 labor hours to produce a ton of Florida sugarcane, while 10 years later it took only 1.6 hours.

Before growers can qualify for H-2 workers they must post job advertisements through the Interstate Clearance System. With unemployment in farm labor being at 17 percent, why don’t domestic workers apply? Every effort is made to manipulate the system and discourage applicants.

The Puerto Rican farmworkers who picketed the Department of Justice in 1978 had been displaced by Jamaicans in the apple orchards. Because their contract had been negotiated by the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, it provided for slightly better working conditions than those offered to H-2 workers. The courts upheld the right of the growers to bring in H-2s, since the refusal by the Puerto Rican farmworkers

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# Speaking Out

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to accept the actual working conditions "made them in fact unavailable." In this way H-2 perpetuates itself, widening the gap between U.S. workers' demands and the desperation leading foreign workers to accept substandard wages and working conditions.

There are many other ways that H-2 users manipulate the system. In 1977 the onion and cantaloupe growers of the Presidio Valley in Texas applied for H-2 workers from Mexico. The growers refused to provide housing and they did not comply with other H-2 regulations, including the "adverse effect wage rate," (the minimally-acceptable H-2 wage rate, almost always slightly above the official minimum wage, established by DOL so as not to depress wages in the area). When DOL denied certification, the Immigration and Naturalization Service acceded to the growers' demands and granted 806 visas to Mexican H-2s. This year, vegetable growers in Florida petitioned for H-2s from Mexico, having demanded as part of workers' qualifications four years experience in picking lettuce—a job that can be learned in one day.

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## Fully a third of all sugarcane cutters in Florida were injured in some way last year.

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DOL's denial of certification has been overruled by the courts time and again. This was true even in the case of fruit growers in Colorado, peach growers in Maryland and citrus growers in Arizona in 1979, where the Department of Labor had located local workers who were denied jobs in favor of Mexican H-2s. That same year, to-

bacco growers successfully sued the Department of Labor to prevent enforcement of the DOL-certified "adverse effect wage rate." Such actions discourage the Department of Labor from carrying out its mandate to protect the interests of U.S. workers and to limit unfair competition. In light of this situation, the Migrant Legal Action Program sees the H-2 program as "a Federal subsidy which allows these producers to continue highly inefficient business operations. The cost of this subsidy is now paid by the poorest U.S. workers through loss of their work and depression of their working conditions."

For the sugar cane industry, H-2 is only one of many subsidies. In 1974, the Sugar Act provided for a direct Federal payment to the industry of \$7.9 million, protecting growers from price fluctuations. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, the price of domestic sugar was 22 cents a pound in June, 1983, while worldwide it was about 10 cents a pound. Moreover, sugar industry spokespersons invariably claim that U.S. dollars carried home by H-2 workers amount to a form of foreign aid to Caribbean nations struggling against stagnant economies. But import quotas staunchly supported by U.S. sugar growers—quotas that severely restrict the flow of cheaper Caribbean sugar entering the United States—actually serve to maintain the precarious state of Caribbean economies. Essentially, sugar cane growers here have it both ways: H-2 helps keep their labor costs depressed and import quotas on Caribbean sugar artificially inflate the price they can charge U.S. consumers. Unless the rules of this tragic game are changed, neither the H-2 workers nor their homelands can escape a no-win

situation. Indeed, the only assured winner would continue to be an entire industry protected from free market forces.

Yet opponents of the H-2 program, like the Puerto Rican picketers, are not the enemies of the Jamaican and other foreign workers. Such imported workers, pushed by their country's dire poverty, are generally seen as having no other choice but to submit themselves to conditions of work that are deemed unworthy of U.S. laborers in the 20th Century. Simply put, the H-2 program survives precisely because foreign workers are exploitable. But if a job is too unsafe, too dirty, too inhumane for U.S. workers then that job is too unsafe, too dirty and too inhumane for any human being.

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## All evidence calls for the abolition of H-2 as a long-deferred act of justice.

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What is needed, then, is a significant upgrading of working conditions throughout our agricultural sector. The existence of H-2 has contributed to the delay of that process. Today, a negligible percentage of agricultural workers are unionized in spite of painstaking efforts by farm labor organizations to reach out to them—a fact underscoring the relative powerlessness of all farm workers. What is not needed, we are sure, is the expansion of H-2 when all evidence calls for the abolition of the program.

Without the H-2 program, sugar cane, apple, tobacco and vegetable growers may finally have to meet their real costs of production. And that would amount to a long-deferred act of justice for all farm workers. ♦

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# A CHANGING CLIMATE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS FIVE KEY TRENDS

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*"Times do change and move continually."—Edmund Spenser (late sixteenth century)*

by Edward B. Keller

John Naisbitt, in his bestseller, *Megatrends*, looks at the current changes America is witnessing and concludes that, "We are living in the time of the parenthesis, the time between eras. It is as though we have bracketed off the present from both the past and the future, for we are neither here nor there."

One consequence of living in changing times is that reality becomes relative and perceptions differ depending upon one's vantage point. During such times, the tendency for optimists to see the proverbial glass as half full while the pessimists see it as half empty is heightened. Times of change are often times of uncertainty; views often become polarized. Such differences in perception can be found in the civil rights arena.

From some corners, the Reagan record on civil rights has come under strong attack. For example, the 1982 report of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights charged that the Justice Department has subverted Federal rights laws under pressure from conservative politicians, labelling the department as a "locus of anti-civil rights activity in the Federal government." More recently, Representative John Conyers, during Congressional hearings, called President Reagan's civil rights policies "harmful" and "painful."

From a different vantage point, however, *Fortune* magazine featured a story last year in which it surveyed the likely future direction of affirmative action and concluded, "Affirmative action is here to stay. Numerical goals and timetables are here to stay. The system will clearly survive the Reaganites, which presumably means it can survive anything." From the perspective of critics of the affirmative action system, says *Fortune*, there is a "fear that the Administration has blown a historic opportunity to do something about quotas."

Underlying such different perspectives on the same reality is the fact that the context within which civil rights, and

a range of other issues, are being discussed and debated is changing. In a very real sense, the 1980s are shaping up to be quite different from the 1960s and 1970s. In assessing the changing social climate of the last few years, Daniel Yankelovich notes, "In a matter of a few years we have moved from an uptight culture set in a dynamic economy to a dynamic culture set in an uptight economy.... The world we live in has been turned upside down."

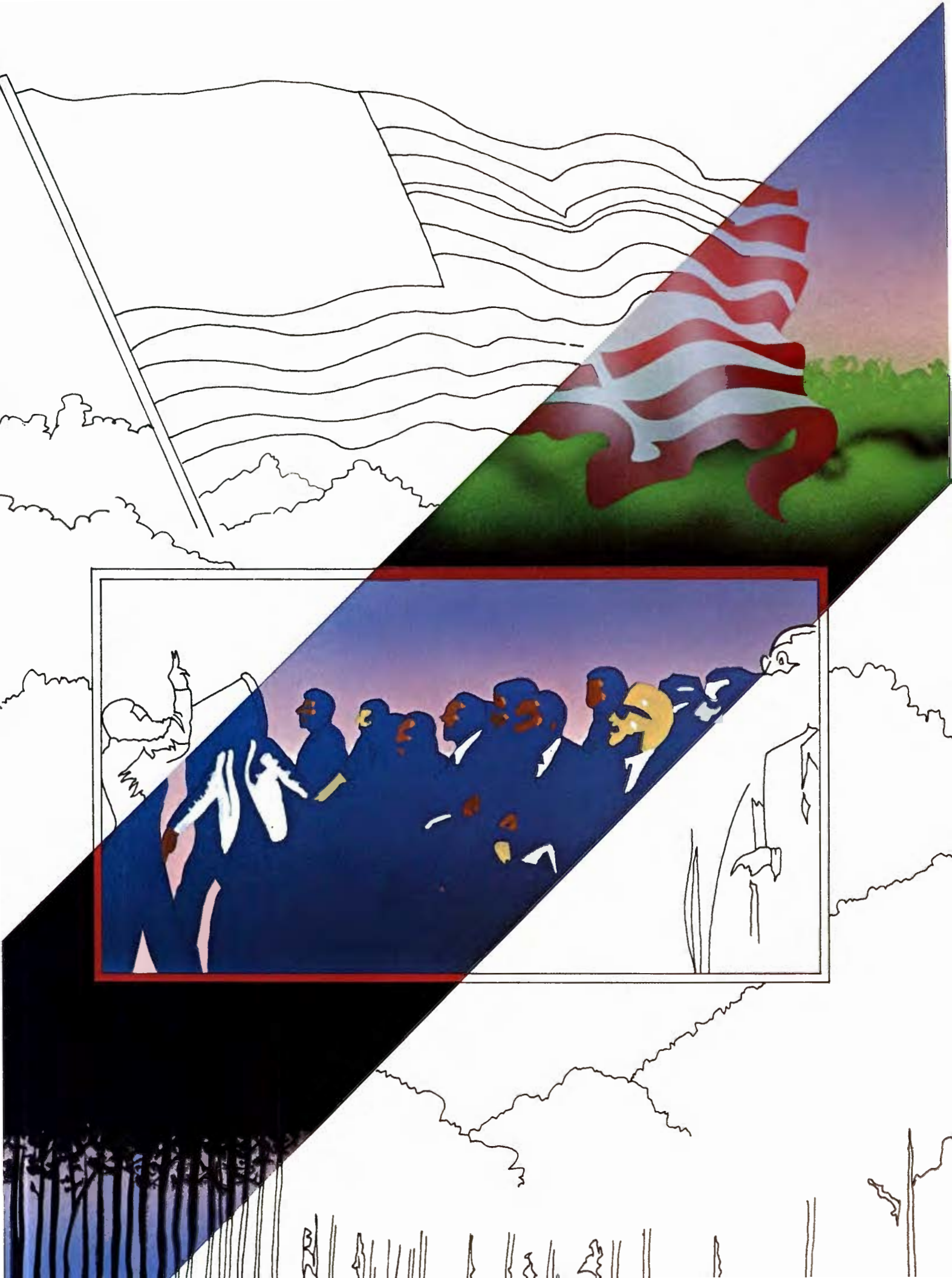
In the aftermath of World War II, the U.S. enjoyed a period of unparalleled economic growth. The country's war-time industries rapidly shifted toward meeting pent-up consumer demands; in the process, American technology, primed by the necessities of war, became preeminent. Domestically, scores of Americans, by virtue of their increased access to affluence and higher education, began to realize the American dream. Upward mobility and middle-class lifestyles became the norm and, by the end of 1950, nearly 70 percent of the population attained middle-class status. Overseas, America's military and economic power were unmatched.

For most people, classic American values—the Protestant ethic, with its emphasis on self-denial and rigid moral standards—set fairly inflexible standards of behavior; the nuclear family—with the husband as sole provider and head of household, and the wife as homemaker and mother—was the accepted norm. During this period, success was demonstrated by ownership of certain material possessions: a large car, an expensive home, and the latest appliances. There was great optimism about the future as economic vitality continually increased. In fact, by the end of the 1950s the idea that the nation was capable of nearly unlimited economic growth had become prevalent.

With the rise of this unprecedented optimism came a new social phenomenon: the psychology of affluence. As depression-bred economic insecurities gave way to an expectation of affluence, the nation's traditional social values were replaced by a new set of values which emphasized a focus-on-self, creativity, self-expression and freedom from moral and financial constraints. Many Americans had come to believe that affluence was no longer something that had to be struggled for; instead, it was considered the logical by-product of America's endlessly expanding economy. With affluence and economic growth now taken for granted, the

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economic agenda of the forties and fifties was supplanted in the 1960s by a social agenda which sought to “fix” the perceived inequities of American society and improve the quality and style of American life.

This new desire for change soon brought responses from the private and public sectors. Corporate ownership was spread over an increased number of stockholders, altering corporate goals and introducing the era of professional management, which paved the way for the growing power of Wall Street. There was a focus on worker happiness, instead of worker productivity, and an emphasis on business’ responsibility to society: if business was unwilling to meet that responsibility, then government would step in to regulate it. Medical care was seen as inequitable; our commitment to it seemed inadequate by the standards of an affluent society. Both employers and government began to address this gap.

Other social causes were advanced. The civil rights movement gained prominence, and activists continually pointed to the inequities in society as whites achieved economic success while the door remained barred to blacks. This argument struck a responsive chord with the American public, who wondered why all Americans should not share in the rewards of the expanding economic pie.

Research by Yankelovich, Skelly and White (YSW) found three main threads to the “fix it” thrust of the 1960s and 1970s. The first was a commitment to health and safety. There was a widespread perception that an advanced industrial society need not be an unhealthy society. Out of this concern came the focus on the health and safety of workers and consumers, as well as the commitment to environmental protection.

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## **We have moved from an uptight culture set in a dynamic economy to a dynamic culture set in an uptight economy.**

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The second was a commitment to fairness. New standards of fairness were developed, out of which stemmed concerns about employment discrimination, as well as demands for more honest advertising, more complete product labeling, more attention to quality and service, and a redefinition of what constitutes a fair profit for business.

The third thread was a focus on the quality of life. The nation’s economic strength changed the population’s life goals from materialism and upward mobility to self-fulfillment and an emphasis on enjoyment and experience. It is largely from this new perspective that the women’s movement developed, as women sought to break down the barriers which inhibited their self-expression and self-fulfillment.

To help advance the social agenda, the public turned to the government, which was ready and willing to heed the call. The public sector rapidly increased its investment in social welfare programs that served not only the poor, but also the middle class. This point is important, for as Daniel Yankelovich describes in *New Rules*, “studies show that many Americans favor leveling up under certain conditions

but are unalterably opposed to leveling down.”

The government was also quick to take on the task of regulating business to assure that business did not put the pursuit of profit ahead of the new agenda which demanded greater corporate attention to such matters as fair hiring practices, health and safety, environmental protection and a general corporate responsibility to society.

In a few short years, however, as the 1970s ended and the 1980s began, the social and political climate suddenly shifted again as the assumption of affluence that had given rise to the social agenda was called into question. The assumptions that had engendered the “fix it” trend were weakening. New economic realities had developed, and both business and the public began to doubt the idea of unlimited growth. Inflation and unemployment were painful and seemingly intractable problems. By 1980, over 60 percent of the public had come to believe that “Americans should get used to the fact that our wealth is limited, and most of us are not likely to become better off than we now are,” and that “our current standard of living may be the highest we can hope for.” The classic American optimism has begun to erode, and the psychology of affluence has begun to give way to a psychology of limits and lowered expectations.

Moreover, the massive government spending programs of the 1960s designed to “win the war on poverty” and to end racial discrimination were called into question as inequity continued. With the national debt and inflation rising at an alarming pace, the public’s disenchantment with government rose sharply, with the primary focus not on the philosophy of “big government,” but on the performance of “big government.”

Furthermore, the population was aging; the postwar baby boom generation had reached their 30s and were confronted by an America in which the efforts to “fix everything” seemed to have created a situation that itself needed fixing.

The response to the new realities, however, has not been a return to the past as some observers had predicted. Rather, if the keynote of the 1950s was self-denial, a future orientation, and a belief in the power of hard work in order to get ahead in a climate of economic growth—and if the keynote of the 1960s and 1970s was a zeal to fix the quality of American life, and a trend toward focus-on-self, less rigidity, self-fulfillment, and social responsibility, all based on the assumption that economic plenty was assured—then the keynote of the 1980s can best be described as adaptation.

Americans have not retreated from their commitment to health and safety, a cleaner environment, or fairness and openness on the part of our institutions—the “core” components of the social agenda—nor has there been a strong reemergence of the Protestant ethic. Nevertheless, survey after survey indicate that the economy has become (and is likely to remain) a dominant issue of the eighties. No longer is the “traditional” economic agenda of economic growth, job creation, technological development and international competitiveness taken for granted. In short, the eighties are seeing a *blending* of the social and economic agendas. Americans are attempting—as painlessly as possible, using strategic planning, competitiveness, and a greater emphasis on

# SELECTED YANKELOVICH, SKELLY AND WHITE, INC. DATA ON CIVIL RIGHTS ISSUES

## Public Attitudes Toward Enforcement of EEO Regulations

Enforcement of EEO Regulations Should Be:	1976 %	1982 %
Stricter	31	22
About as strict as present	52	61
Less strict	12	13
Don't know/no answer	5	5

## Public Perceptions of Business Compliance With EEO Laws and Guidelines

Business has complied:	1974 %	1982 %
Very well	10	10
Fairly well	57	65
Rather poorly	22	17
Very poorly	6	3
Don't know/no answer	5	5

## Public Attitudes Toward the Benefits versus Problems of Regulations

With respect to EEO regulations:	1982 %
Benefits outweigh problems	53
Problems outweigh benefits	40
Don't know/no answer	7

## Public Attitudes Toward Employment of "Special Groups"

Groups which are being treated fairly as employees:	1974 %	1982 %
Blacks	59	55
Women	48	51
Other minorities	24	45
Older employees	18	29
Homosexuals	11	27
Disabled	NA	37
Hispanics	NA	32
Refugees	NA	24

### Groups which are receiving less than fair treatment:

Older employees	45	47
Homosexuals	30	29
Women	21	32
Blacks	19	21
Disabled	NA	42
Other minorities	NA	25
Hispanics	NA	25
Refugees	NA	24

### Groups which are receiving "too much" consideration as employees:

Blacks	39	15
Homosexuals	8	17
Women	6	4
Other minorities	5	8
Older employees	NA	24
Refugees	NA	24
Hispanics	NA	12
Disabled	NA	3

NA = Not asked

personal skill and self-reliance—to meet the new, more constricted economic outlook, while at the same time retaining the gains made by the social agenda of the 1960s.

Out of this new climate, YSW research has identified several broad social and political themes, or trends, which are emerging in the 1980s and are likely to influence the future of civil rights issues.

1. *A Strategic Approach.* Perhaps the most important of these themes is a new emphasis on strategic, or entrepreneurial thinking. Manifestations of this new approach are increasingly evident in the marketplace, where traditional retail outlets are being bypassed by consumers in favor of undersellers; para-professionals are being consulted instead of professionals; buying in the underground economy is becoming an increasingly legitimate way to shop; and barter is now perceived as both respectable and feasible. It is also evident in the workplace, where the professional manager is

coming under increased scrutiny and efforts are being made to restore entrepreneurial thinking.

It is evident, as well, in the political arena, where activists, for example, have responded to their shrinking influence in Washington, D.C. by adopting a broad array of tactics, including boycotts, referenda, political action committees, litigation and stockholder initiatives. The return of the boycott as a potent civil rights tool is undoubtedly in sync with this strategic trend, as are political strategies by blacks, women, Hispanics and the elderly to increase their political clout via such methods as voter registration drives and political action committees.

Commenting on the large black voter turnout in the Philadelphia and Chicago mayoralty elections, for example, Louis Harris notes that "the power that any group or combination of voters can get is in direct proportion to the degree to which they are a marginal difference. By virtually

# SELECTED YANKELOVICH, SKELLY AND WHITE, INC. DATA ON CIVIL RIGHTS ISSUES

Public Attitudes Toward the Treatment of Minorities (Beyond EEO)	1979	1982
Beyond EEO, the type of treatment minorities receive today is:	%	%
Equal or better	52	51
Less than equal	40	44
Don't know/no answer	8	5

Public Attitudes Toward the Treatment of Women (Beyond EEO)	1975	1982
Beyond EEO, the type of treatment women receive today is:	%	%
Equal or better	52	51
Less than equal	51	43
Don't know/no answer	8	6

Public Attitudes Toward Seniority and Layoffs	1975	1982
Should workers be laid off strictly on a seniority basis or should adjustments be made for minority employees?	%	%
Strict seniority basis	56	71
Adjustments should be made for minorities	27	21
Don't know/no answer	17	8

Public Attitudes Toward Reverse Discrimination	1977	1982
Reverse discrimination is a:	%	%
Serious problem	44	31
Minor problem	36	47
No real problem	13	18
Don't know/no answer	7	4

## Priority Areas for Businesses To Help Fill Gaps Left by Shrinking Government Budgets\*

	Government Officials	Activists Leaders	Corporate Executives	General Public
	1982	1982	1982	1982
	%	%	%	%
Job training/retraining	92	86	76	63
Discrimination against minorities	59	76	50	20
Discrimination against women	53	73	46	21
Pollution control	51	68	35	48
Education	39	35	57	45
Cultural events	39	32	50	12
Drug abuse	37	27	35	31
Infrastructure maintenance	20	24	4	23
Medical care for the elderly	12	12	9	39
Medical care for the poor	8	14	7	31

\*Partial list

doubling the size of their turnout, which is an enormous increase, by having a vote which goes in one direction, blacks can obtain an incredible degree of influence over the outcome of an election." The "gender gap" has also emerged as a critical political phenomenon whose impact is expected to grow.

In this new climate, there will be continuing pressure on

civil rights groups, individually and collectively, to develop new and innovative strategies to find a niche and prove that they can "win" in a competitive environment. This suggests that the moral "outrage" of the 60s and 70s will probably have to give way, in whole or in part, to strategic and tactical thinking. However, the need to develop strategic approaches can also present new and exciting opportunities,



and there is already evidence that civil rights organizations are seizing these opportunities.

2. *The New Meritocracy.* An important element of the values revolution of the 1960s and 1970s, stemming from the psychology of affluence, was the rise of the egalitarian ethos rooted in the conviction that in an era of unbounded economic vitality, economic and social well-being should be accessible to all segments of society. Now, with the recognition of new economic realities in the 1980s, egalitarianism is giving way to an emerging meritocracy orientation. This perspective rewards competence and achievement, and—rather than seeking to equalize all groups in society—allows those who have “earned” a certain status and position to actively seek or create mechanisms which distinguish themselves from others.

One implication of this shift in perspective is that while the public continues to support equality of access to the benefits of American society for all groups, there is little support for efforts which try to insure equality of outcome. For example, a 1980 report on public attitudes toward women, prepared for the President’s Advisory Committee for Women by the Public Agenda Foundation, found that the public supports stricter enforcement of anti-discrimination laws in order to give women an equal chance in the workplace, but they are reluctant to support any further steps such as quotas or “special efforts.”

“When it really comes down to it,” concludes the Public Agenda, “the public leans toward ability and experience—rather than any type of preferential treatment—as the main considerations in getting jobs.” A commitment to fairness (and support for a government watchdog role to insure fairness) remain strong, but not a commitment to equality.

3. *A New Socioeconomic Agenda.* The economy has become, and is likely to remain, the key issue of the eighties. Recognition of serious economic problems has pushed economic growth and recovery to the top of the national agenda. While social agenda objectives have not disappeared, they are being positioned within a new orientation which stresses cost-effectiveness. Benefits are now being measured against costs and less against abstract ideals. In effect, the 1980s are seeing a new mix of expectations—a “blending” of the economic and social agendas.

In many instances, the social agenda is being redefined in economic terms. Thus, for example, our surveys find a continued expectation that business has a responsibility to help minorities, women and the elderly. The focus of this expectation now centers around the area of employment—hiring, promotions, training, part-time work and ending mandatory retirement as a company policy. There is also an expectation that business should be providing capital and technical assistance to businesses owned by minorities and women. The recent growth of women’s groups and networks aimed at expanding the opportunities of women in business is an example of the blending of the social and economic agenda, as is the decision by civil rights leaders to pursue new strategies aimed at shifting the focus of the civil rights movement from political to economic advancement for minority groups.

4. *Self-reliance.* Underlying many shifts in the social climate is an emerging public interest in “taking control.” Disenchantment with “big government” and a desire for “checks and balances” are eroding the dominance of government in the public policy process, leading to more sharing of responsibility among a variety of policy actors. For the public, this translates into interest in more self-reliance—and less looking to government and other institutions—in areas where individual control is feasible. Two such areas which emerge from YSW surveys include more self-reliance on the part of the public (a) as consumers in the marketplace, where we have seen the emergence of a “smart shopper” who is increasingly watching out for his or her own interest and looking less to the Federal government, and (b) as employees in the workplace, where we have seen rising demands for more employee participation in decisions affecting them.

Examples in the civil rights arena can be found in the form of the efforts to increase black self-reliance—via Operation PUSH’s drive for “economic reciprocity” and the NAACP’s “fair share” program, both of which are aimed at leveraging minority purchasing power to increase minority owned franchises and distributorships in such industries as soft drinks, fast food, beer and autos—and in the women’s movement via the growth of women’s businesses, women’s networks and women’s philanthropic organizations.

5. *Gap-filling.* An important social climate theme, which began during the latter part of the Carter presidency and has grown during the Reagan Administration, is the growing expectations of business “gap-filling.” YSW surveys indicate that both the general public and leadership groups expect that the private sector in general, and business in particular, will step in and help fill the gaps left by shrinking government budgets. At the top of the gap-filling agenda are job training and retraining. But YSW surveys reveal that there is also a strong expectation—particularly among leadership groups (e.g., government officials, activists, the news media)—that efforts to end discrimination against minorities and women should be a key gap-filling goal for business, as well. Interviews among senior corporate executives find that business also sees that as an important area for gap-filling.

In the final analysis, YSW research would suggest that corporations which have begun affirmative action programs and other programs to assist minorities, women and the elderly will probably continue these programs in the years ahead, if only for reasons of enlightened self-interest.

These are certainly not the only examples of social change which is likely to have an impact on civil rights issues, but they are indicative of the new climate which is emerging and the new environment in which the civil rights movement will be operating in the 1980s. Even a cursory inspection of the activities of civil rights organizations suggest that there is a clear recognition of the need to adapt new strategies and new approaches. There is a new focus in America on “winning,” and civil rights organizations appear to be at the forefront of those who are accepting this challenge. ♦



# CIVIL RIGHTS

## And The Changing Congress

by Roger Davidson

**N**early twenty years have passed since Martin Luther King's dream took concrete form on Capitol Hill—and since that quintessential heartland Republican, Everett McKinley Dirksen (and most of his colleagues) decided civil rights was an idea whose time had come.

The United States Congress rediscovered civil rights in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Between 1870 and 1957 only one major civil rights measure, women's suffrage (1920), emanated from Capitol Hill, after years of intense struggle. In the decade following the 1957 Civil Rights Act—which created the Commission on Civil Rights and broached the voting rights question for the first time since Reconstruction—six major enactments and one constitutional amendment became law.

It is time to take another look at civil rights in a changing Congress. How were those 1960s enactments achieved? What legacy did they leave on Capitol Hill? What does the "new Congress" mean for future civil rights enactments?

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For some 30 years after the start of the New Deal, Capitol Hill was a minefield for civil rights legislation. Minorities, to begin with, were not much in evidence on Capitol Hill. Only four blacks and two Hispanics served in the House in the 88th Congress (1963–1964). Twelve women served in the House, and two in the Senate. No committee staffs or informal caucuses devoted themselves exclusively to minority causes.

In the post-World War II era, Congress was a stable institution. The average Representative had served nearly twelve years, the average Senator about the same. Three congressional institutions—powerful committees, entrenched chairman, and the seniority system—conspired to thwart civil rights legislation.

It was an era of committee government. The standing committees were either incubators or graveyards of legislation; if they buried a bill, little could be done to rescue it. "Outside of traffic," remarked Will Rogers, "there is nothing that has held this country back as much as committees."

It was also an era of strong committee chairman, or "barons," often supported by their opposite numbers on the minority side. Newcomers had to serve apprenticeships and wait their turn at leadership—if they lasted that long. As Speaker John McCormack counselled, "whenever you pass a com-

mittee chairman in the House, you bow from the waist. I do.”

Many committee barons were free from—or, perhaps a generation behind—national political tides. The Democrats under Roosevelt and Truman developed a liberal national agenda. Their social goals, including civil rights, were voiced, especially after 1948, by presidential candidates and platforms. Yet from the mid-1930s through the mid-1960s Congress was led by a coalition of southern Democrats and conservative Republicans. Democrats nominally controlled the two chambers all but four years during this period, but the congressional wing of the party was quite at odds with the national wing. For one thing, southern Democrats comprised half or more of the congressional party well into the 1950s. Rural House districts, north and south, were boosted by failure to reapportion—a situation finally remedied in 1964 by the Supreme Court’s one person-one vote ruling (*Wesberry v. Sanders*).

Southern Democrats enjoyed a seniority-conferred bonus favoring areas that consistently reelected their lawmakers. Even during the 1957–1966 decade, southerners held 62 percent of the House chairmanships with only 41 percent of the Democratic seats.

Most early civil rights bills found their way to the Judiciary committees. While the House panel proved no obstacle for civil rights proposals, the Senate panel was a different story. It was far less hospitable to civil rights bills than the chamber as a whole. Its three senior Democrats—James Eastland (Miss.), John McClellan (Ark.), and Sam Ervin (N.C.)—were among the chamber’s most conservative. The committee could be bypassed, but only with the floor leaders’ cooperation.

When the 1956 civil rights bill (H.R. 627)—a wide-ranging measure foreshadowing the 1964 Act—came over from the House, pro-civil rights Senators tried to pry it away from the Senate Judiciary panel. First they tried to prevent the House-passed bill from going to committee, but before they knew what had happened the bill was referred. Then they tried to submit a resolution discharging the bill from Judi-

ciary. Under parliamentary rule, such a resolution must wait for a new “legislative day,” but for several weeks the Senate recessed instead of adjourning, to sidestep such a resolution. Unanimous consent to offer the discharge resolution was denied. Then Senator Paul H. Douglas (D-Ill.) moved to adjourn the Senate for five minutes, after which a new legislative day would permit the discharge motion. Led by Majority Leader Lyndon Johnson and Minority Leader Everett Dirksen, the Senate crushed Douglas’s motion by a 6–76 vote. Leaving the Senate chamber, Douglas arrived at the Senate elevators and told an aide: “Punch that button three times [the signal that a Senator is waiting] and let’s pretend we’re Senators.” Then Douglas went back to his office and wept.

The next year a much watered-down bill was enacted. (Eventually, Johnson and Dirksen became heroes for passing civil rights bills in the 1960s.)

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### **In the 60s, the Capitol Hill civil rights coalition was broad and bipartisan.**

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In the House another obstacle to civil rights bills was the Rules Committee, a sort of traffic cop between committees and the House floor. The chairmen, “Judge” Howard W. Smith (Va.) and later William C. Colmer (Miss.), were archfoes of civil rights legislation. In 1956 Smith held the bill for three weeks until a majority of the committee members demanded that he schedule a hearing. Later he abruptly adjourned the hearings, and supporters had to insist that he reopen them. Although Speaker Sam Rayburn “packed” the Rules panel in 1961 to pave the way for President Kennedy’s New Frontier program, the leadership’s edge remained narrow.

Another pitfall was the Senate filibuster: Senators’ cherished right of unlimited debate, unless and until a special majority (then two-thirds) votes for cloture to stop debate. Two-thirds of the filibusters launched before the 1960s were aimed at civil rights bills, and all of them succeeded in stalling

the measures. Even the threat of “extended debate” was enough to sink proposals.

How did historic civil rights measures surmount these obstacles? To crack the ingrained institutional barriers to civil rights legislation, massive pressure for congressional action had to come from the outside. Citizens recoiled from continual television images of peaceful demonstrations for basic rights being turned into brutal routs. The 1964 Civil Rights Act was preceded the year before by the Birmingham clashes, where local officials were seen by a national television audience using police dogs and hoses to prevent blacks from assembling; the August 1963 “March for Jobs and Freedom,” the largest demonstration ever held in the Nation’s Capital; and the assassination of President Kennedy. The 1965 Voting Rights Act was prefaced by confrontations in Selma, Alabama. These morality dramas aroused moderates on Capitol Hill, who exerted the force of their numbers and leadership posts to overcome the traditional legislative roadblocks.

Presidential leadership was strong and positive. Outlines of the 1964 Act were voiced by President Kennedy. After JFK’s death, President Johnson, a southerner and a master of legislative tactics, took command. White House pressure and lobbying propelled the cause.

On Capitol Hill, the civil rights coalition was broad and bipartisan. A major ingredient in the House was support from William M. McCulloch (R-Ohio), ranking Republican on Judiciary. Working hard among his colleagues, he helped sell the bill to mainstream GOP members.

The Senate reflected the same bipartisan support. Key to the strategy was President Johnson’s friend and former Senate colleague, Minority Leader Dirksen (R-Ill.). Once Dirksen had honed the bills to his satisfaction, he could be counted on to bring along most of his Republican colleagues.

The Senate Judiciary Committee was still the steepest hurdle. Because its chairman, Eastland, had never willingly reported a civil rights bill, his committee had to be contained or by-

passed altogether. The 1960 Civil Rights Act had been reported from the Committee on instructions from the Senate; the 1965 Voting Rights Act was referred to the Committee with instructions to report it within 15 days. The panel was bypassed altogether for the 1957 Act, as well as the 1962 anti-poll tax amendment. The 1964 Act's public accommodations section was referred to the Commerce Committee.

Strom Thurmond (S.C.) conducted a 24-hour filibuster against the 1964 Act—an old-style solo stemwinder. That same year, he wrestled Texas Democrat Ralph Yarborough to the floor outside a committee room where the bill was ready for markup. Thurmond was trying to prevent Yarborough from entering to give the committee its needed quorum. The then-61-year-old South Carolinian won the wrestling match, but Yarborough was rescued by the committee chairman to make the quorum after all.

Once past all these hurdles, the 1960s Acts were approved by wide margins. The 1965 Voting Rights Act, for example, passed the House 333-85 and the Senate 79-18. In the final vote, scattered southern support appeared: five southern Democratic Senators and 33 Representatives voted for it.

The 1982 Voting Rights Act extension shows both close parallels and striking contrasts with the original enactment. As before, a strong bipartisan coalition stood behind the bill. The White House and Justice Department played key roles in both cases, though in opposite ways—leading and goading in 1965, holding off until the final bargaining in 1982.

House passage was easier in 1982 than in 1965. The Judiciary panel drafted a strong bill in 1982, and the Rules Committee chaired by Richard Bolling (D-Mo.) supported it. (Henry J. Hyde of Illinois, ranking Judiciary subcommittee Republican, at first opposed the bill but switched to support it after listening to testimony.)

Attention in 1982, as in 1965, was focused on the Senate. A total of seven Judiciary members opposed the House's provision that electoral results, regardless of "intent," could trig-

ger challenges to voting arrangements. The committee and subcommittee chairmen (Thurmond and Orrin G. Hatch of Utah) were opposed, but they promised prompt action.

A compromise was eventually crafted by Senator Robert Dole (R-Kan.). Mediating between the White House, Justice Department, and civil rights advocates, he produced a modified version that retained the House's "results" test but spelled out how the test could be met. This version was reported by the committee, 14-4. Six of the ten committee Republicans supported it.

A conservative filibuster was threatened; but with 75 co-sponsors, the Dole compromise could not be stopped. A series of floor amendments were offered by John East (R-N.C.), all but one of which were rejected. A filibuster by Helms and three others stopped, and a day later the Senate passed the bill by an 85-8 margin. To avoid further delay, the House simply accepted the Senate version.

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## The White House played key roles in passage of the 1965 and 1982 Voting Rights Act bills—though in opposite ways.

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Bipartisan support for voting rights appeared stronger in 1982 than in 1965. Southerners supported the measure in large numbers: among southern Democrats, 71 Representatives and 14 Senators voted "aye." Changing political and social patterns accounted for some of the support; so did a rising tide of black voters in the South. Civil rights groups, too, showed unity and skill in lobbying the issue.

Like the nation itself, Congress has changed dramatically in the last two decades. Notwithstanding its reputation for inertia, Congress has been transformed as radically as any of our governmental institutions. The changes have touched nearly every nook and cranny—members, procedures, structures, and informal "rules of the game."

In many ways, the Congress that ex-

tended the Voting Rights Act in 1982 was very different from the Congress that enacted the original bill in 1965. Those changes are instructive for civil rights and for other legislation as well.

*Different Drummers.* Not one of the authors of the 1960s civil rights bills remains in the House or Senate. The major players—Johnson, Dirksen, Douglas, McCulloch, and others—have all left the scene. Indeed, only 12 Senators and 38 Representatives of that era still serve in Congress.

Not only the passage of time, but an unusual turnover of personnel—what journalist David S. Broder calls "the changing of the guard"—has taken place. The World War II generation is being replaced by politicians socialized during the Vietnam War and nurtured by citizen activism in civil rights, environmentalism, and consumerism. Members today are younger and have less seniority than their counterparts a generation ago—partly because of higher turnover and briefer careers.

*Broadened Representation.* Slowly but significantly, minorities and women have increased their ranks in Congress. Now there are 21 blacks, 11 Hispanics (including two non-voting delegates), and 24 women (including two Senators).

Adherence to the one person-one vote principle in House districting has curbed rural overrepresentation. (The Senate, by constitutional design, remains a very different story.)

More important, minorities and women are significant forces at the polls. Black voter registration almost doubled between 1965 and 1980 in the states covered by the Voting Rights Act; nationally, black registration stands at about 60 percent, compared to about 43 percent two decades earlier. Hispanic voting is also on the rise, although reliable figures are hard to obtain. Traditional southerners now actively court black votes in seeking reelection.

*Rise of Subcommittee Government.* Within the two chambers, power is widely scattered. A series of House reforms in the early 1970s limited chairmen's powers and buttressed the role of subcommittees—of which there are now some 150. Similar leavening oc-

curred in the Senate, although its committees have never been as independent—as witness the ways Chairman Eastland could be bypassed.

Subcommittee government offers a variety of platforms for airing policy alternatives and pressing legislation. By my informal count, as many as 20 House subcommittees are potential forums for such issues—either from their jurisdiction or their chairmen's interests. Five of these panels are chaired by blacks, one by the Delegate from Guam. Perhaps ten Senate subcommittees fall into this same category.

*Old Roads Unblocked.* At the same time, some of the old roadblocks to civil rights enactments have been torn down. "The hostile Rules Committee with its bag of delaying tactics," as Bolling called it, is no longer hostile or delaying. Quipped Rules member Shirley Chisholm (D-N.Y.): "The Rules Committee has come a long way, baby."

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## Barely visible two decades ago, congressional caucuses now number nearly 80.

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The Judiciary panels are also intriguing cases. Ever since the 1960s civil rights battles, Democrats have ensured that House Judiciary has a solid liberal majority. Not only is this intended to remove barriers to civil rights proposals, but to erect barriers to such constitutional amendments as those on busing, school prayer, or abortions.

Even in the 1980s, the House Judiciary panel is more liberal than the chamber as a whole — largely because its Democrats include some of the more liberal House members. On its Civil and Constitutional Rights Subcommittee, chairman Don Edwards (D-Calif.) and his Democratic colleagues comprise a solid liberal phalanx.

The Senate Judiciary Committee has hovered nearer the ideological center. In the 1960s, its leaders were foes of civil rights bills, and its membership somewhat to the right of the whole chamber. This persisted into the 1970s, when the committee moved slightly to

the left of the Senate average. Its strong civil rights advocates included Chairman (1977–1981) Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.), Birch Bayh (D-Ind.), who chaired the Constitutional Amendments Subcommittee from 1965 through 1980, and liberal Republican Charles McC. Mathias (Md.).

Put in the driver's seat in 1981, Republicans were determined to steer Judiciary on a different course. With several newcomers, the panel moved rightward with the chamber as a whole. Senator Hatch took charge of the Constitution Subcommittee. Chairing the full committee was Thurmond, who had switched parties in 1964 and was now the most senior Republican Senator. Yet committees mirror the party ratio in the full Senate, where the GOP's edge was 54–46. Because it already had at least two GOP moderates, the panel could not be tilted enough to ensure New Right control or prevent potential centrist bipartisan alliances.

Filibusters still mark Senate floor deliberations, but with certain differences. No longer are they simply hurdles for civil rights bills. None of the 11 pre-1964 civil rights cloture votes succeeded; after 1964, few failed. Filibusters now aim at a variety of measures. They can be, and regularly are, shut off by cloture votes—now requiring three-fifths rather than two-thirds vote. However, "post-cloture filibusters" can be mounted by introducing numerous delaying amendments to be considered after cloture is invoked in an effort to wear down frustrated Senate colleagues.

*New Caucuses.* Another development, barely visible two decades ago, is the proliferation of informal groups or caucuses. Nearly 80 such groups now exist.

The Congressional Black Caucus, organized in 1971, is one of the most active of these informal groups. Limited to black Members of Congress (all of them House members in recent years), the CBC maintains a high level of unity in voting—not only because its members are blacks, but because they agree on a wide range of issues. The group has a staff and is well financed. Outside the House, it has won promi-

nence in the civil rights community.

Other groups include the Hispanic Caucus, the Caucus on Women's Issues, two Irish groups (Friends of Ireland; Ad Hoc Committee for Irish Affairs), three caucuses on children or families, a Fair Employment Practices Committee, and several other groups that sometimes organize and lobby on civil rights matters.

*Increased Workload.* Representatives and Senators work differently than they did 20 years ago. By most indicators, their workload is higher than ever—though some indicators, like hours in session, floor votes, and number of bills enacted, have recently tailed off.

During the 88th Congress (1963–64), 666 measures were enacted into law; the average length of the statutes was three pages. The last Congress (1981–82) enacted 377 public laws averaging 12 pages. Meanwhile, executive-branch regulations—measured by pages in the *Federal Register*—grew fourfold over the same period.

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## Many of today's civil rights battlegrounds are outside the halls of Congress.

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In other words, fewer new laws are being enacted, but these are more complex and usually embrace many titles. Most confer wide Executive discretion. Although Congress retained some control through provisions for approving or vetoing Executive actions, the recent Supreme Court ruling declaring the congressional veto unconstitutional may mean that new laws will be even more detailed than they are now to make sure the Executive branch does what Congress intends. Meanwhile, the older civil rights laws still produce reams of Executive regulations and court rulings.

Thus many of today's civil rights battlegrounds are outside Congress and the lawmaking process. Debates over the meaning of affirmative action, tax advantages for schools that discriminate, or even the autonomy of the Civil Rights Commission—all these have been fought as much outside as inside

the halls of Congress.

*Expanded Staffs.* Congressional staffs are several times larger than they were in the early 1960s. Personal, committee, and subcommittee staffs make it possible even for very junior members to obtain enough information on legislative issues to sway legislative results. Rarely did this happen in the old days.

Congressional support agencies, too, have expanded missions. The Congressional Research Service (CRS) answers inquiries and conducts research upon request of members, committees, and staffs; their researchers include civil rights experts. The Government Accounting Office (GAO) conducts audits and studies of government programs.

These staff resources—in addition to expertise available from labor, religious, and civil rights organizations—mean that Congress does not have to rely only upon information fed to it by the Executive branch.

*Diffused Responsibility.* Civil rights issues are scattered in other ways, too. Omnibus or broad-spectrum civil rights enactments, which dominated the 1957–1965 period, are less prominent on today's civil rights agenda. (The Equal Rights Amendment is a conspicuous exception.) Civil Rights issues tend to be appended to other issues or programs, which increases the number of committees with jurisdiction over civil rights legislation.

Some 280 measures pertaining to civil rights were introduced in the 1981–1982 sessions. About a quarter of them were referred to the two Judiciary panels. But the others splayed out to nearly every standing committee in the two chambers.

Gender distinctions in insurance went to the Banking committees, in the military to Armed Services, and in Federal employment to Senate Governmental Affairs or House Post Office and Civil Service. Patients' rights under Medicaid went to the tax committees; workplace discrimination to Education and Labor; handicapped persons' rights to several panels; privacy to House Commerce or Senate Governmental Affairs; world human rights issues to Foreign Relations/Foreign Affairs. And so on.

Many bills are referred to two or more committees—simultaneously, in parts, or in sequence. One 1981 bill, The Economic Equity Act (H.R. 3117), covering spousal pension benefits and gender-based distinctions in government jobs and benefits, was referred to no less than seven House committees. As often happens with such multiple referrals—which place a premium on timing and coordination—the bill remained tied up in committee.

*Ambiguity of Issues.* Finally, as civil rights issues are split into scores of discrete issues, legislators profess to find them ambiguous and difficult. As Majority Whip Thomas S. Foley (D-Wash.) expressed it, issues seem more complicated than when he arrived in Congress in 1965: “. . . Fifteen years ago, the civil rights issue facing the legislators was whether the right to vote should be federally guaranteed for blacks and Hispanics. Now members are called on to deal with more ambiguous policies like affirmative action and racial quotas.”

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## As civil rights moves from general principles to specific applications, it competes with other values.

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Does all this signify the end of the civil rights era on Capitol Hill? Probably not. The impulse toward civil and human rights still runs strong in Congress, as reflected in the 1982 bipartisan coalition for extending the Voting Rights Act. But as civil rights moves from general principles to specific applications, its course becomes far more difficult to track—or predict. It competes with other values, and lawmakers have a tough time picking their way among these values.

No doubt Congress will be faulted for slowness or inconsistency in handling such issues. But seasoned observers have learned that Congress is never very far behind—or for that matter ahead of—the nation's center of political gravity. As one Missouri Representative put it, “Congress is a mirror in which the American people can see themselves.” ♦

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# Close Up

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## Rev. William Sloane Coffin: Theology in Action from Montgomery to Harlem

by Michael P. Harris

**I**t has been 22 years since the Rev. William Sloane Coffin, who was out to break the back of segregation and challenge a whole way of living, was first arrested on an interracial freedom ride in Montgomery, Alabama. At the time he was 36 years old and had been University Chaplain at Yale for three years. Today Coffin is living and working at the edge of New York City's historic—and sometimes infamous—black ghetto, Harlem. As senior minister at Riverside Church, an institution scarcely less prestigious than Yale, which he left for Riverside six years ago, he continues his church role.

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**“When you have such large problems as racism, poverty, and war, the church can't retreat from the giant issues into the pygmy world of private piety.”**

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During the generation spanning Montgomery and New York, Coffin made scores of headlines and infuriated thousands of pious citizens by practicing in the streets what he preached from his pulpits. In the Vietnam era, he was convicted along with Dr. Benjamin Spock for assisting young men in disobeying draft laws. That conviction was later overturned on appeal. Then he made a controversial trip to Hanoi in 1972 as part of the “Committee of Liaison” to bring home three POWs who had been released by the North Vietnamese. And in

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*Michael P. Harris is the religion reporter for Time magazine.*

1979 he was one of four clergymen chosen by Iran's Revolutionary Council to go to Teheran at their own expense to conduct Christmas religious services for the hostages held in the American Embassy there. He enraged many members of his Riverside Church congregation the Sunday before he left when he compared President Jimmy Carter's call for economic sanctions against Iran to President Lyndon Johnson's bombing of North Vietnam. But although those incidents, mostly anti-war and international, were the headline-grabbers, the clergyman has been even more outspoken about civil rights at home. Today he has not even begun to think of retiring from the fray.

Coffin's home base, Riverside Church, was founded in 1929 with Rockefeller family money which today is worth more than \$40 million. This hefty endowment makes it possible for the church to take the lead in the sort of progressive Protestantism for which it has become famous since the time of its first senior minister, Harry Emerson Fosdick, the World War II pacifist. Yet Coffin makes it clear that in his mind, at least, and contrary to the theology of some other clergy, there is no real conflict between being active in civil rights work and being a minister in the church.

I always think that to some degree, at least, the world sets the agenda for the church. When you have such large problems as racism, poverty, and war, the church can't retreat from the giant issues into the pygmy world of private piety. One of the worst forms of greed is the greed for salvation. The Bible doesn't call on us to save our souls so much as to transcend ourselves. If we transcend ourselves and try to be vehicles for God's love, then we will

certainly be concerned with the significant issues.

Racism, poverty, war—Coffin's trinity of evils—is the same for him today as it has been for a quarter-century, but he sees it rearing up in new, ugly disguises. Coffin knows that racism, for instance, still infects large parts of American society; he has not abandoned his work to eliminate it. Even at Riverside Church, which is 35 percent black, he makes it clear that complacency is the devil's tool. So Riverside has established a caucus which monitors affirmative action practices, making sure that the church's ministers are black and white, male and female. Church members are expected to carry the same attitude with them into their own work places. Says Coffin: “If they work in a law firm, they should see who the senior partners are and what the hiring practices are. If it's garbage collection, or anything else, the same applies. There's a place for the churches to work through their own people.”

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**“Now the guy can come up to the lunch counter, but he doesn't have the money to buy the hamburger.”**

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The 1980s are unlike the 1960s in fundamental ways, however, and pose new problems. A quarter-century ago the civil rights agenda, which was fundamentally aimed at eliminating *de jure* racism, determined itself; the tactics of fighting in courts and legislatures were clear and well defined. Now, according to Coffin, American society is up against “classism,” which is not as clear-cut an enemy. Classism takes into account a per-



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son's poverty as much as his race in order to form a prejudice. Classism seems very much like racism inasmuch as a great percentage of poor people in this country are black or belong to other ethnic minorities. Coffin acknowledges that once a public policy has been identified as racist, the path through the courts and the legislatures offers the most promise for change. Classism, he believes, poses a more intractable adversary.

Race and class are fused in this country today. We found out in the 1960s that it was easy to desegregate, but how are we going to turn the country around so that poor folk get jobs, decent housing, and hospital care? Now the guy can come up to the lunch counter, but he doesn't have the money to buy the hamburger. The fight is going to be much more economic than it was in the 1960s. We're finding that class is a much tougher nut to crack than race. Let me illustrate. Educated blacks are doing much better nowadays. The number of blacks going into Ivy League schools, for instance, is way up. In New York City, if you're black and well-educated, you can get a job. But if you're poor and black, you're worse off than you were before. If you're poor and white, you're rapidly losing ground.

Coffin contends that besides putting their muscle behind the continuing struggle to integrate and to eliminate poverty, the churches can play a unique role in solving the new problems of the 1980s. A quarter-century ago, during the early days of civil rights activism, churches contributed to the movement in some very important ways. They provided

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workers with meeting places which were more or less immune from the incursions of hostile elements, who were often the local government officials. It was also easier for churches to keep the movement nonviolent than it might have been for another organization. And leadership for the black community came very largely from ministers and preachers, particularly in the South. Today, churches are providing the same sort of support, but more on a local level. Says Coffin: "Lacking a national leader like Martin Luther King, church activities tend to be more local than nation-wide. For example, the only massive housing program in New York City, the Nehemiah Plan, is run under church auspices in Brooklyn. The plan has been put together by an ecumenical effort which has created a Saul Alinsky-type organization. They're appealing for more funds and the city has promised to put in its share. The organizing instrument throughout has been the local churches, both Catholic and Protestant."

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**"Lacking a national leader like Martin Luther King, church activities tend to be more local than nation-wide."**

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Coffin sees such projects as decent housing for the poor, who in New York are to a great extent black and Hispanic, as real civil rights issues. The same goes for food and clothing. Riverside sponsors a food plan and the people who come are almost all black or Hispanic. Coffin considers charity a part of the proper role of the church. But he is also prodding society at large for some justice. "There's no money in New York for public housing, not even to repair the



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# Close Up

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elevators in the older buildings. The answer to the homeless is not shelters, but homes. That's obvious. That's a civil rights issue."

Problems that derive from racist policies and attitudes, such as desperate poverty and deep alienation, have not gone away: they have been subsumed under the new heading of classism. Strangely enough, however, another ominous shift in attitude has taken place. For what were once our problems have these days become our solutions. Coffin illustrates his point tellingly:

We stretch people out on a bed, like Procrustes in the Greek myth. But our bed is an economic bed. If these people don't fit into our economy, then we lop them off. We put them in a ghetto and don't do anything for them. The ghetto is no longer a problem; it has become a solution. The same with prisons and drugs.

Prisons used to be considered a problem, but now they're a solution. Yet the evidence is all in: building more and more of them, as we're doing, doesn't reduce the amount of crime. Still, that's where we put the expendables. Visit Rikers Island\* and you'll find that almost everyone of them is poor, uneducated, black or Spanish-speaking. Drugs also used to be thought a problem, but the attack on drugs has been minimal. We've not deliberately sponsored ghettos, prisons and drugs, but we're tolerating them and not doing anything about them in any significant way.

The third member of Coffin's trinity of evils, war, is different from race and pov-

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\*Located in the East River separating Manhattan and Queens, and holding more than 7,000 detention and sentenced inmates, Rikers Island is the nation's largest prison complex. *Ed.*

erty, but no less a civil rights issue in his mind. He has made world-wide disarmament his own number-one issue and Riverside Church's disarmament program, which is run by Cora Weiss, another veteran of Vietnam war activism, is known throughout the country as the best program of its kind within the religious community. In the 1960s, some civil rights leaders tried to dissuade Martin Luther King, Jr. from speaking out against the Vietnam war, fearing that he might thereby divert attention away from the real issues confronting black Americans. King proved them wrong when he showed the organic link between black liberation and ending the war. In like manner, Coffin today believes that not only are the inhabitants of this planet on the road to "blowing themselves to kingdom come," but the money being fed into the maw of arms production is money that could be used to put food into the stomachs of the poor and roofs over their heads.

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**"It's discouraging to think that progress is a pendulum, that points have to be made and remade."**

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Nevertheless, necessary as it is, the process of forging the bond between civil rights and the arms race is slow, encumbered by an inherent mistrust that grows from past experience. Says Coffin:

My black friends have been slow in getting on the arms issue because there's no way you can guarantee that even if you did stop the arms race that the money would come in here to Harlem. It didn't come after World War II, it didn't come after the Korean War, it didn't come after the Vietnam

War. There's a kind of psychological objection on the part of poor folk to join with the white, middle-class because they don't see the whites coming on their agenda. The guarantee will take a terrific political effort.

Coffin also strongly supports civil rights efforts for other minorities besides the poor. The church has the same obligations toward the civil rights of women and homosexuals. In the gay community, it is a question especially of protection from violence, whether from the police or from the community, and of getting a gay rights bill passed, an unsuccessful enterprise now for many years in New York City and this year in the New York State legislature. Such a bill would guarantee the same rights in housing and education that other groups have.

Coffin, tireless in his efforts, always enthusiastic, criss-crosses the country on speaking engagements, urging others to work for his projects. Yet he still shows some concern that the enthusiasm generated will not carry into the future and that a period of disillusionment will set in. "We all like to think that progress is an arrow," he remarks. "We like to think that points won should stay won, that battles fought should stay fought. It's discouraging to think that progress is a pendulum, that points have to be made and re-made. Many people went through a very strong period of disillusionment. And disappointment is likely to set in in places like Chicago, which has elected a black mayor, and Philadelphia, which might. There's not much that a black mayor can do because there's not money to do it with." Still, if progress is a pendulum, as Coffin would have it, his own energies are more like an arrow heading right for a target always kept firmly in sight. ♦



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# SONGS

## That Moved The

# MOVEMENT

by Bernice Johnson Reagon

**F**rom 1955 to 1965 the equilibrium of American society was racked by waves of social and political protest. Black people engaging in massive civil disobedience served notice on the nation and the world that they would no longer tolerate the abuses of American racism. The civil rights movement heralded a new era in the Black American struggle for equality.

The movement spread throughout the South. Initial organizers were Black college students who set aside their studies to work in segregated rural and urban communities. They received support from local leaders who listened to them, housed and fed them. Sharecroppers, ministers, hairdressers, restaurant owners, independent business people, teachers: these were the first to try to register to vote, apply for a job or use a public facility previously reserved for whites.

The response was swift and brutal: economic reprisals, jailings, beatings and killings. Nonetheless, the movement grew, pulling recruits from all segments of the Black community and forcing change in legal, political and social processes. But its essence lay in the transformation of a people.

I grew up in Dougherty County, just outside of Albany, Georgia, in a community steeped in Black southern cultural traditions. From the late 1950s through the mid-1960s, I celebrated and participated in the wedding of our traditional culture with our contemporary struggle for freedom. All the established academic categories in which I had been educated fell apart during this period, revealing culture to be not luxury, not leisure, not entertainment, but the lifeblood of the community. My culture, my traditions had come alive

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*Editor's note: At the request of the author, the word "Black" is capitalized to indicate a national culture and people.*

for me as they shaped the context of the civil rights movement.

As a singer and activist in the Albany movement I sang and heard the freedom songs, and saw them pull together sections of the Black community at times when other means of communication were ineffective. It was the first time that I experienced the full power of song as an instrument for the articulation of our community concerns. In Dawson, Georgia, where Blacks were 75 percent of the population, I sat in a church and felt the chill that ran through a small gathering of Blacks when the sheriff and his deputies walked in. They stood at the door, making sure everyone knew they were there. Then a song began. And the song made sure that the sheriff and his deputies knew *we* were there. We became visible, our image of ourselves was enlarged when the sounds of the freedom songs filled all the space in that church.

Music has always been integral to the Black American struggle for freedom. The music culture of the civil rights movement was shaped by its central participants: Black southerners who had been steeped in oral tradition. The freedom songs, while later captured on tape, sheet music and commercial recordings, truly came to life. They were developed and used, within the context of Black tradition. The power of the songs came from the linking of traditional oral expression with everyday movement experiences. Charles Sherrod, field secretary of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), bears witness to how music galvanized the first mass meeting held in Albany, Georgia in November, 1961, into a moral force to be reckoned with:

The church was packed before eight o'clock. People were everywhere, in the aisles, sitting and standing in the choir stands, hanging over the railing of the balcony, sitting in trees outside the window.... When the last speaker among the students, Bertha Gober, had finished, there was nothing left to say. Tears filled the eyes of hard, grown men who had seen with their own eyes merciless atrocities committed.... And when we rose to sing "We Shall Overcome," nobody could imagine what kept the church on four corners.... I threw my head back and sang with my whole body.

But while Albany, Georgia energized a powerful singing movement, song as an expression of power and communal unity emerged as early as the 1955 Montgomery, Alabama bus boycott. After Rosa Parks' arrest for refusing to let a white man take her seat on a bus, Black leaders called a one day bus boycott on December 5, 1955. It proved 95 percent effective, and signaled the approaching end of legalized racial segregation in public places. That night the Black community crowded into Holt Street Baptist Church. Martin Luther King, who had been elected leader of the Montgomery Improvement Association, later recalled the singing: "The opening hymn was the old familiar 'Onward Christian Soldiers,' and when that mammoth audience stood to sing, the voices outside swelling the chorus in the church, there

was a mighty ring like the glad echo of Heaven itself."

While old songs would continue to be given new life throughout the movement, new songs began to appear as the boycott continued and reprisals became more severe. After 89 leaders were arraigned for allegedly organizing a boycott, they walked to the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church. Writing for the *Nation*, Alfred Mound described the scene:

With the spirit and ingenuity that has characterized the leadership of this historic movement, Reverend Martin Luther King offered a new hymn for the occasion, set to the tune of "Old Time Religion." The stanzas went like this:

*We are moving on to victory  
We are moving on to victory  
We are moving on to victory  
With hope and dignity  
We will all stand together  
Until we all are free*

Indeed the blending of "Old Time Religion" with a new determination to achieve racial equality is the essence of the boycott.

The meeting that day closed with the singing of "Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen." Here were two songs, both a part of black traditional sacred music repertoire: One, "Old Time Religion," was updated to address an immediate need of the movement; the second, "Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen," was sung in its traditional form. On many occasions, the new moved from the old in the midst of movement activity. These transformed songs, used in conjunction with older songs, effectively conveyed the message that the Black struggle had a long history.

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### **Our image of ourselves was enlarged when the sounds of the freedom songs filled all the space in that church.**

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Montgomery also saw the use of songs and songleaders to mobilize the movement. Mary Ethel Dozier Jones, a member of what would become a highly regarded trio of songleaders, talked of her involvement during that period:

I was a member of the trio before the movement. I was in elementary school; in 1954 I was ten years old. Pretty soon after the first mass meeting in 1955 we started singing for the Montgomery Improvement Association. We were doing songs of the movement, "This Little Light of Mine, I'm Gonna Let It Shine." "We Shall Overcome" came later. We would make up songs. All the songs I remember gave us strength to go on.... It was kind of spontaneous; if somebody started beating us over the head with a billy club we would start singing about the billy club, or either that person's name would come out in a song.

The Montgomery Gospel Trio, made up of Jones, Minnie Hendricks, and Gladys Burnette Carter, later went to the Highlander Folk School in Mt. Eagle, Tennessee and met Guy Carawan. They appeared at a Carnegie Hall benefit for Highlander Folk School in 1961. A recording of their music was made by Folkways Record Company.

This progression of songs arising from a rich communal tradition, moving into protest forums, then to supportive concert stages, connecting with the budding folk song revival gathering steam in the Northeast and culminating in recordings that reached national audiences throughout the '60s, would occur again and again.

The sit-in movement brought young Black college students into the Movement in droves. The first Greensboro, North Carolina sit-in, on February 1, 1960, sparked national and international attention. While other sit-ins were staged all over the country, this form of non-violent resistance was especially successful in Southern cities with large Black college populations.

Out of the pressures and needs involved in maintaining group unity while working under conditions of intense hostility and physical threat, the sit-in movement developed its culture—and music was its mainstay.

During the early sit-ins, music was not usually a part of the actual demonstrations. Sit-in leaders wanted to avoid being charged with rowdiness or uncouth behavior. Most demonstrations were carried out in silence. This aspect was not missed by the media. The Richmond *Newsleader*, which published an editorial after demonstrations began in that city, said:

Many a Virginian must have felt a tinge of regret at the state of things as they were reading of Saturday's "sit-downs" by Negro students in Richmond stores. Here were the colored students in coats, white shirts, ties and one of them reading Goethe, and one was taking notes from a biology text. And here, on the sidewalk outside, was a gang of white boys come to heckle, a ragtail rabble, slack-jawed, black-jacketed, grinning fit to kill....Phew! It gives one pause.

So the songs of this period came out of the group meetings, rallies and workshop sessions, while silent marches continued throughout the early months of the movement. Still, John Lewis, Nashville, Tennessee sit-in leader and later chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), explains why, even then, singing sustained marching:

At the rallies and meetings we sang. One of the earliest songs I remember very well that became very popular was "Amen."

*Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen*  
*Freedom Freedom Freedom Freedom Freedom*

This song represented the coming together, you really felt it—it was like you were part of a crusade, a holy crusade.

You felt uplifted and involved in a great battle and a great struggle. We had hundreds and thousands of students from the different colleges and universities around Nashville gathering downtown in a Black Baptist church. That particular song...became the heart of the Nashville movement.

There is a close correlation between the changes which songs underwent during the Nashville struggle—the most highly-organized sit-in movement—and those that were heard during the Montgomery bus boycott. "Amen," a traditional Black sacred chant with a one-word lyric, was chanted over and over again. The melodic statement was musically simple and each lilting cycle of "Amens" was triggered by a leader who sang:

*Everybody say*  
*Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen*  
*Let the Church say*  
*Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen*  
*Let the Deacons say*  
*Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen*

The power of this traditional song came from the richness of Black harmonic techniques and improvisations in choral singing. With the Nashville situation, it gained a new force by being wed to a dynamic social upheaval. A simple word change from "Amen" to "Freedom" made it a musical statement of the ultimate national goal of the student activists. In Montgomery, the changing of words in the song "Old Time Religion" to "We Are Marching on to Victory," which occurred after the leaders had been arraigned by the local law officials, can be equated with the singing of "Amen" in Nashville after the return to the church from a round of sit-ins. In both cases, the activists were returning to a haven after a confrontation with the system they were seeking to change. Many times it appeared that songs went through lyrical changes when the protesters needed to affirm their commitment to continue in face of seemingly insurmountable odds.

The first movement songs, such as "Amen," issued from the musical tradition of the Black church. Soon after the Nashville sit-ins began, however, a group appeared that was to become the prototype for local amateur rhythm and blues groups which were formed on most Black campuses of that day. The "Nashville Quartet" differed from other rhythm and blues groups in that its songs were statements of their current political and social struggles. Joseph Carter, Bernard Lafayette, James Bevel and Samuel Collier, members of the Nashville Quartet, were students at the American Baptist Theological Seminary in Nashville. For their freedom songs they used the melodies and arrangement techniques of contemporary "rhythm and blues" hits which were played on the college jukebox or their favorite radio station.

The rhythm and blues tunes of the sit-ins were heavily influenced by the "soul" music of Ray Charles. Born in Albany, Georgia and blind since birth, Ray Charles reached

national prominence in 1954 and throughout the next decade stayed on the record charts. His songs—a rich blend of gospel and blues laced with his earthy, graveled, textured voice—launched the sound that came to be known as “soul.”

Soon after the breakthrough in Nashville—the city-wide integration of lunch counters—James Bevel and Bernard Lafayette took the tune and chorus lyrics of Charles’ “Moving On” and produced a song about the approaching demise of the Jim Crow system of segregation:

*Segregation’s been here from time to time  
But we just ain’t gonna pay it no mind*

*It’s moving on—It’s moving on—It’s moving on,  
It’s moving on  
—Moving on Moving on Moving on*

*Old Jim Crow moving on down the track  
He’s got his bags and he won’t be back.*

It was through the Nashville sit-in movement and the presence of Guy Carawan from the Highlander Folk Center in Mount Eagle, Tennessee that the song “We Shall Overcome” became the pre-eminent movement song. The song was brought to Highlander during the 1940s by white tobacco workers on strike at the Charleston, South Carolina Reynolds Tobacco plant. The striking workers, at Highlander for a workshop in union organizing, reportedly told Zilphia Horton, then Highlander’s director of music and the wife of director and founder Miles Horton, that this was a song sung by Black members of the union local on the picket line. Horton added the song to her workshop repertoire. She taught it to Peter Seeger in 1947 and it was published in a People’s Song Bulletin in 1949.

But Nashville students were not the first movement activists to hear the song. Guy Carawan recounted an incident at a Highlander workshop in 1959, attended by people from Montgomery where the song was pressed into service:

It’s amazing what strength this song has. It’s just unbelievable sometimes how it can bring people together. One night in 1959, a group of about 60 of us had assembled at the Highlander School. It was the end of a workshop, and we were having punch and cake and seeing a movie. The local police and sheriff burst in. You see, Tennessee officials were always trying to break up the school—they considered it subversive—and a couple of years later they succeeded. Well, for an hour and a half they forced the people—some of them students—to sit in the dark while they went through rooms and searched suitcases and bags. Somebody started to hum “We Shall Overcome” and someone else took it up. Then from a Negro girl—a high school student (Mary Ethel Dozier) from Montgomery, Alabama—a new verse came into being. Sitting there in the dark, this girl began to sing, ‘We are not afraid, we are not afraid today.’

From workshops at Highlander, to rallies or sit-in activi-

ties, “We Shall Overcome” traveled to a gathering on April 15–17, 1961 at Montgomery’s Shaw University of over 200 sit-in leaders with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). At the end of the first evening, Guy Carawan began to lead songs. When “We Shall Overcome” began, everybody stood and joined hands and from that point on it was the signal song of the Movement.

*We Shall Overcome  
We Shall Overcome  
We Shall Overcome Someday  
Oh, Deep in my heart, I do believe  
We Shall Overcome Someday*

Of this song, Reverend Wyatt T. Walker, Second Executive Director of SCLC wrote:

One cannot describe the vitality and emotion this hymn evokes across the Southland. I have heard it sung in great meetings with a thousand voices singing as one. I’ve heard a half dozen sing it softly behind the bars of the Hinds County prison in Mississippi. I heard old women singing it on the way to work in Albany, Georgia. I’ve heard the students singing it as they were being dragged away to jail. It generates power that is indescribable. It manifests a rich legacy of musical literature that serves to keep body and soul together for that better day which is not far off.

As the sit-in movement was gaining momentum, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) launched the “Freedom Rides” (busloads of volunteers whose goal was to desegregate Southern institutions) from Washington, D.C. to New Orleans. In Anniston, Alabama, the first bus was burned. The second bus was mobbed in Birmingham, Alabama and CORE decided to end the trip. The Nashville students immediately initiated a call for volunteers to take up the trip. That bus met with violence in Montgomery, Alabama but it continued on to Jackson, Mississippi—where they were promptly jailed. But that didn’t stop them from singing.

The Anniston, Alabama violence occurred on Mother’s Day, May 14, 1961. A song made popular by Harry Belafonte provided a musical framework for a freedom song that told of the event. “The Banana Song” became “Freedom’s Coming And It Won’t Be Long.” The first verse began with the Riders’ reception in Alabama and ended with the jail sentences handed out by the courts of Jackson, Mississippi.

Chorus

*Freedom, Freedom, Freedom’s comin’ and it  
won’t be long.*

*We took a trip on a Greyhound bus...etc.  
To fight segregation, this we must...etc.*

*We took a trip down Alabama way  
We met much violence on Mother’s Day*





*Violence in 'Bama didn't stop our cause...  
Federal marshals come enforce the laws...*

*On to Mississippi with speed we go...  
Blue-shirted policemen meet us at the door...*

*Judge say any local custom shall prevail...  
We say 'no' and we land in jail...*

*Hey, Mister Kennedy, take me out of my misery  
Evil segregation, look what it done to me.*

James Farmer, Executive Director of CORE, rejoined the Riders and ended up in the Hinds County jail along with the others. He wrote new words to a song he had heard in Chicago during the late '40s, "Which Side Are You On?" That song had been written during the Harlan County, Kentucky coal mining strike by Florence Reese when the local "goon squad" entered her home in search of her husband who was a strike leader. The new lyrics by Farmer explained who the Freedom Riders were, what had happened as a result of their actions, and their need for "men" instead of "Uncle Toms."

*Don't Tom for Uncle Charlie—Don't listen  
to his lies  
Us Freedom Fighters ain't got a chance—Unless we  
organize*

*Which side are you on boys  
Which side are you on boys  
Which side are you on boys  
Which side are you on boys*

The songs poured forth as Movement activity increased. In Albany, Georgia during July and August, 1962, over 1,000 demonstrators were arrested. At the height of tensions, Federal Chief Judge Tuttle of the Fifth District Court of Appeals issued an injunction banning further demonstrations. Reverend Ralph David Abernathy, assistant to Martin Luther King, told the mass meeting audience about the injunction. Then a song began—"Ain't Gonna Let No Injunction Turn Me Round," based on the spiritual, "Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Round." The song went on for several minutes and each time a new name was added signifying an obstacle that would no longer halt the struggle. "Canaan," the goal identified in the last line of the traditional version, was changed to "Freedom" at the Albany meeting.

*Ain' gonna let nobody  
Turn me 'round, Turn me 'round,  
Turn me 'round  
Ain' gonna let nobody  
Turn me 'round  
Keep on a walking, Keep on a talking  
Marching up to Freedom land*

The music of the Albany movement attracted national at-

ention. Robert Shelton, folk music critic of the New York *Times*, had journeyed to Albany and written several articles based on music he heard there. One of those pieces captured the power and vitality of the movement music in a quote from SNCC Field Secretary Charles Jones:

There could have been no Albany movement without music. We could not have communicated with the masses of people without music and they could not have communicated with us... But through songs, they expressed years of suppressed hope, suffering, even joy and love....

Out of the Albany movement came the decision to form a group of traveling singers. The Montgomery Trio, the Nashville Quartet and the CORE Freedom Singers had succeeded in making music and song an integral part of the movement. Now the SNCC Freedom Singers (Cordell Reagon, Rutha Harris, Charles Neblett and I) would strengthen that unity and expand its reach. Beginning in the winter of 1962, we traveled the country carrying news of the movement and building needed support.

The Freedom Singers' concerts were full of songs and commentary from the jails, rallies and marches of the Southern movement. We sang *acappella*, as the music was sung in the South. Due to the folk music revival sweeping the country during the sixties, the Freedom Singers and their musical techniques received national attention. A review of a concert at Carnegie Hall featuring Mahalia Jackson stated that:

Even if the quartet was not dealing in matters so urgent as the topical freedom songs of the integration movement, it would be outstanding for its singing. The unaccompanied voices, the rhythmic drive and the sense of convictions put the Freedom Singers in the top level of American folk groups.

The Freedom Singers are the ablest performing group to come out of what is perhaps the most spontaneous and widespread singing movement in the world today.

We stimulated an increase in unaccompanied singing among folk artists who tended to be extensions of their guitars and banjos. The Freedom Singers were invited to the Newport Folk Festival in 1963, the closest thing the folk-song revival has had to a "National Convention." Almost every top performer or performing group there included an *acappella* selection and a freedom song in their presentation.

Topical songwriters, also a product of the folksong revival, increasingly incorporated issues raised by the civil rights struggle into their work. Songs by songwriters like Bob Dylan, Tom Paxton, Phil Ochs, Len Chandler and Eric Anderson reflected specific aspects of movement activity, as well as events and ideas that in a more symbolic way addressed the nature of the crisis gripping the nation. Bob Dylan's "Oxford Town," written in the fall of 1962 when James Meredith's entrance into the University of Mississippi resulted in a riot, is illustrative:



*He went down to Oxford Town  
Guns and clubs followed him down  
All because his face was brown  
Better get away from Oxford Town*

*He went around and around the bend  
Come to the door and he couldn't get in  
All because of the color of his skin  
What do you think of that my friend*

*Oxford Town in the afternoon  
Everybody singing a sorrowful tune  
Two men died under the Mississippi moon  
Somebody better investigate soon.*

Birmingham, Alabama had long been a strong center of gospel music, so when demonstrations exploded in the Summer of '63, it was to the songs of Carlton Reese, director of the Alabama Christian Movement Choir that the leaders and community turned for inspiration.

One of Carlton Reese's widely used songs was "Ninety-nine and a Half Won't Do." The lyrics of this song proclaimed a commitment to completing a task and an awareness that nothing less than total involvement in the struggle was required. Reese kept the standard gospel text intact:

*Lord, I'm running trying to make a hundred  
Ninety-nine and a half won't do  
5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30  
won't do  
I got to make a hundred  
and try to get thru.*

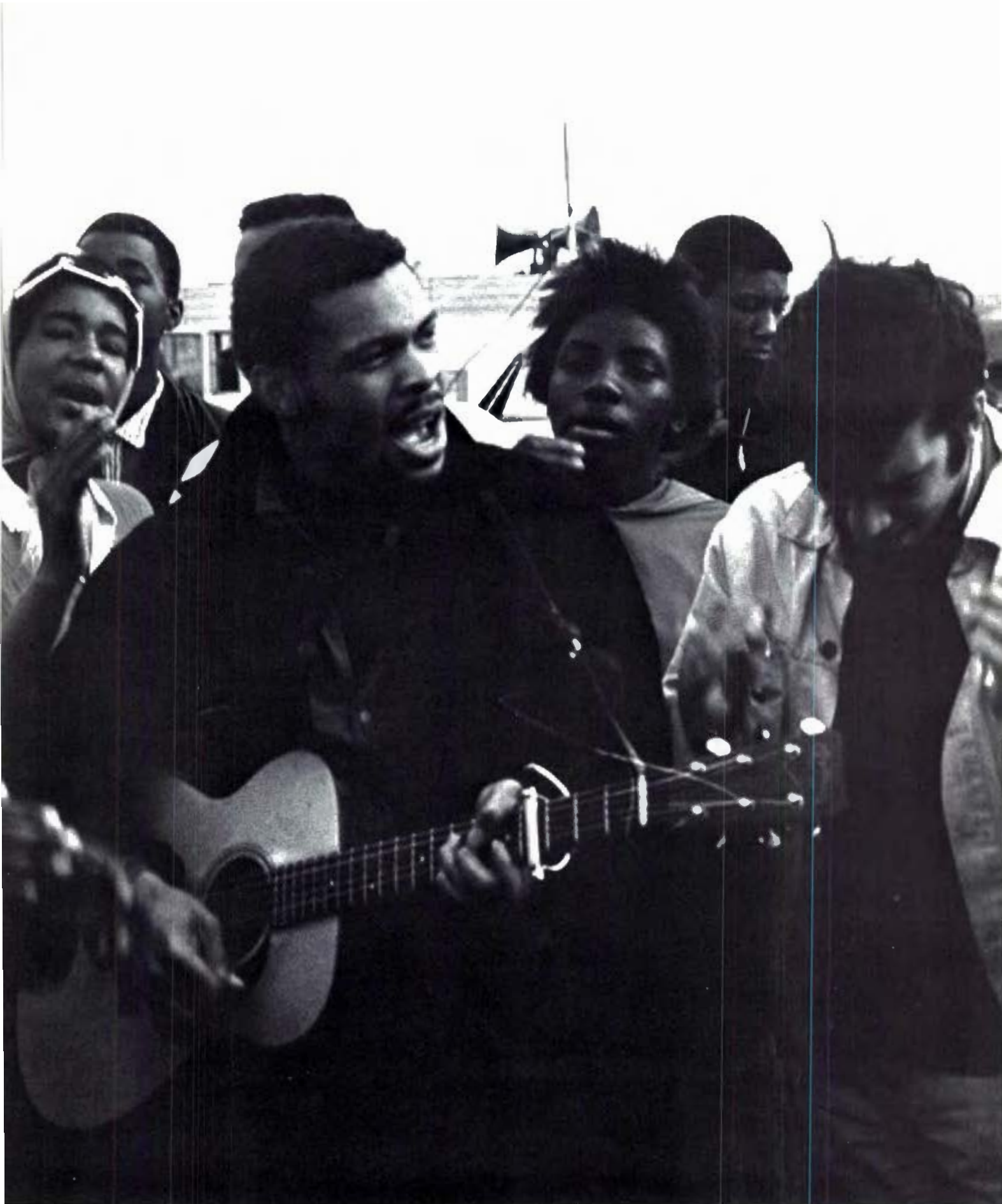
Birmingham represented a new level in street demonstrations. The use of children in its D-Day March on April 30, 1963 was severely criticized in the press. The response by

the authorities was unequalled in its brutality and violence. One of the most dynamic songs out of Birmingham grew out of the use of dogs and fire hoses against peaceful demonstrators by Sheriff "Bull" Connor, who instantly became the visible symbol of the unleashed wrath of white segregationists. This song, together with stark images of the event captured by television crews and photojournalists, stirred the nation's conscience and infused the movement with new determination:

*Ain' scared of your dogs  
Cause I want my Freedom  
I want my Freedom  
I want my Freedom  
Ain' scared of your dogs  
Cause I want my Freedom  
I want my Freedom now.*

Another pivotal musical statement, this one born of the Mississippi experience, eulogized the death of Reverend Herbert Lee, an early supporter of the 1961 voter registration drive. "We'll Never Turn Back" became the theme song of Mississippi and actually was sung more often than "We Shall Overcome." Its message was that despite the civil rights movement workers' responsibility for endangering local people—whose support of the movement automatically made them targets for physical abuse—there was no turning back:

*We've been buked and we been scorned  
We've been talked about sure you're born  
But we'll never turn back  
No we'll never turn back  
Until we've all been freed  
And we have equality  
We have hung our heads and cried*





by Diane Camper

# Quiet Victories

## *On The Mediation Front*

In 1973, black police officers in Atlanta, Georgia were dissatisfied with the department's recruitment and promotion efforts. But after the Afro-American Patrolmen's League filed a class action suit in Federal court charging the city with racial discrimination in employment, the Fraternal Order of Police intervened on behalf of white officers seeking protection against "reverse discrimination."

The case languished in court for seven years. Finally, the presiding judge, Charles Moye, asked the Justice Department's Community Relations Service (CRS) to mediate the case. Within six months, five CRS professionals had mediated a settlement, including a recruitment plan and remedial relief for black and white officers. As a result of the settlement, a damaging hiring freeze that had been imposed by Judge Moye was lifted as the traumatic child killings were being uncovered in the city. The cost of litigation: \$382,000. The cost of mediation: \$20,800.

As CRS director Gilbert Pompa describes his agency's work, "We're merely facilitators. We maneuver parties into a negotiating posture, we provide technical assistance, and then they reach an agreement." And Atlanta mayor Andrew Young reports matter-of-factly, "Almost all civil rights action that has been successful

has ended with mediation."

From the early days of lunch counter sit-ins to present day disputes involving employment and housing discrimination, mediation has been a valued technique used to settle civil rights disputes. Generally, a less costly and less time-consuming method of resolving conflicts than litigation, mediation relies on skilled use of the gentle art of persuasion. James H. Laue, a former CRS official who now directs the Center for Metropolitan Studies at the University of Missouri, gives the following definition of mediation in the *Handbook of Applied Sociology*:

Mediation involves a third party (often called a 'neutral') who is acceptable at some level by all the disputants and whose major role is to help the negotiations process work. The ultimate goal of mediation is to assist the parties in reaching a mutually satisfactory solution to their differences. The mediator carries no formal power or sanctions into the situation; he or she is there because the parties have allowed access.

Long used as a method of settling labor-management disputes, mediation seeks to avoid the adversarial posture of litigation. "It's a whole different perspective on problem solving," says Lester Wolff, president of the National Academy of Conciliators. "Courts put people through a recipe or formula. If you meet all the elements, you win. If the other guy does, then he wins. It's a win-lose situation. In mediation, you

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can get not just what the recipe calls for, but a synergism where you have baked a bigger pie. It's a win-win situation.

As a mechanism for "winning" civil rights struggles, mediation has become more involved over the years. During the turbulent protests of the mid-1960s, mediation involved "simply attempting to keep the lines of communication open" between black and white protestors and hostile southern officials, according to Laue.

In 1965, Laue became a liaison between the Montgomery, Alabama police department and several hundred protestors led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The police worried about their ability to protect Dr. King at a particular point along a planned march route, but Dr. King and his Southern Christian Leadership Conference refused to re-route the march. The solution: at the vulnerable point in the march route, Dr. King fell back from the front of the line to a point several rows back, and the march proceeded without incident.

Earlier, in Birmingham, Andrew Young recalls that a committee of one hundred white businessmen became the city's mediating body, and, by deciding to let a number of demonstrators drink from water fountains and sit at lunch counters, "they negotiated an agreement that was against the law—and made it work."

Although the purpose of mediation is to help negotiate a solution to a problem that satisfies all parties, mediation is generally most effective when the parties are perceived to be of equal stature.

"With mediation, there has to be a parity of relationships," asserts one CRS veteran. But when President Lyndon B. Johnson's invitation to, "Come, let us reason together," led to the creation of CRS as part of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, civil rights proponents were more often not in a posture of parity with their adversaries. For that reason, Roger Wilkins, who as head of CRS from 1966-1969 was the first black assistant attorney general, did not view mediation as a viable mechanism and admits to turning the agency away—at least for a period of time—

from its original focus on mediation.

"My theory was that, considering the temper of the times, mediation was not what was called for," says Wilkins, now a senior fellow at the Institute for Policy Studies. "The agency was set up to mediate disputes in southern communities. But almost immediately, I turned it to doing community organizing work in northern ghettos. We tried to give a patina of legitimacy to community-based and grass roots organizations. We became the advocates of minority—black and Hispanic—organizations in large urban areas. It was my judgment that what was called for wasn't a question of mediating disputes between two parties, but alleviating the deprivation of the poorest minorities in the cities."

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### **"Without the teeth of the system, mediation can't work."**

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While trying to function in northern communities in those early days, one CRS official admits that the agency was "flying by the seat of its pants.... You couldn't walk up to the sheriff and say, 'Can we work this out?' There had to be more fact-finding, data-gathering and evaluation."

Since 1973, CRS has shifted its emphasis back to mediation, honing its expertise to become the Federal government's premier mediator in civil rights disputes. In one particularly dramatic success, CRS mediators helped pave the way for the election of the first blacks to the Cairo, Illinois City Council in nearly a century. Cairo, one of the most racially polarized communities in the country, had failed to elect a black to city government since before 1900, and blacks had been fighting the city's at-large voting system in court for six years before the case was referred to CRS in 1979.

Without proof of intentional discrimination by the city, the black plaintiffs would have had a difficult time convincing a court to change the voting system. But after a few weeks of mediation, the parties agreed to such a change. The mayor and one council

member were elected at-large, and five remaining council members were elected from single member districts, two of which were predominantly black. Two blacks now serve on the Cairo City Council, but without the mediated settlement, the long-simmering political frustration of blacks there would have been exacerbated.

Despite such successes, advocates of mediation stress the importance of having court action as a fallback position. "Conciliation is clearly ineffective unless you have the threat of a lawsuit lurking in the background," argues Glenda Sloane, a housing expert at the Center for National Policy Review at Catholic University. Adds Lester Wolff, "Without the teeth of the system, mediation can't work."

In its infancy, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission gained experience in conciliating employment discrimination cases, but it was considered a toothless tiger until it was given litigation authority in 1972.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development has learned a similar lesson after fifteen years of conciliating housing discrimination complaints under Title VIII of the Fair Housing Act of 1968. The act only allows HUD to refer cases to the Justice Department for prosecution if a landlord or real estate broker engages in a pattern of discrimination, leaving individual victims who are dissatisfied with the conciliation process to take their own cases to court.

Because of lengthy delays in the conciliation process, many frustrated complainants simply give up on the system and drop out. In fiscal year 1982, HUD successfully completed 1,070 conciliations out of 1,339 attempts. During the same period, however, HUD received over 5,000 discrimination complaints.

HUD's record in the fair housing area has long been less than stellar, but Congressional efforts to make it easier to process fair housing complaints failed in 1980. With Congress continuing to show interest in this issue, HUD Secretary Samuel R. Pierce and Attorney General William French Smith recently proposed amendments to the Fair Housing Act that would au-



thorize the Justice Department to file suit on behalf of individual victims of housing discrimination once conciliation efforts fail and to seek civil penalties against violators. "This keeps the burden of enforcement where it belongs, on the Federal government, rather than on the individual victim," Pierce said in announcing the proposed amendments.

It is because the Federal government has ultimate responsibility for enforcing civil rights, that the Reagan Administration's selective enforcement of civil rights laws encourages skepticism about the value of mediation in such a hostile climate. "If we're thinking about how to make the Federal laws work better, we'll have to get back to a point where the people responsible for enforcing those laws really believe in them," says William L. Taylor, director of the Center for National Policy Review. "To talk about mediation and conciliation in a context where people don't believe the law will be enforced is really useless."

Even in the present climate, however, all is not lost. Galen Martin, executive director of the Kentucky Human Rights Commission, sees mediation as a secondary line of attack. "I have a fundamental belief that the problems of discrimination in our society are so pervasive and so damaging, that where government has the power to deal with discrimination, it should not be talking about mediation," says Martin. "Only in the civil rights arena does government try minuscule efforts on a monumental problem. But when you have no enforcement power or no will to enforce the law, then mediation is your weapon."

By his own estimate, Martin's agency conciliates 90 percent of its cases, after conducting impartial investigations. Sometimes that system is more than adequate. After a female employee charged a local distiller with sex discrimination, the Kentucky Human Rights Commission conducted a lengthy investigation and detailed its findings in a fourteen-page letter to the company.

"Once [the distiller] had those fourteen pages, they decided to conciliate," says Martin. The woman received an

\$8,000 settlement. "Hardly any person could just walk in and get that kind of settlement," Martin insists.

But sometimes that system is less than adequate. At one major coal company, new female miners were subjected to an initiation rite of having heavy grease spread over their bodies. Sighs Martin, "You don't expect that you're going to mediate that kind of thing."

While mediation has been generally successful in school desegregation and prisoners' rights cases, as well as housing and employment cases, it cannot be viewed as a substitute for effective enforcement of civil rights laws nor as a panacea for unclogging the court system.

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### **"You never mediate away someone's civil rights."**

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"Mediation for the sake of mediation can lead to the formulation of unethical agreements," warns a CRS veteran. "You never mediate away someone's civil rights." Similarly, Bobbie Butler, outgoing president of the International Association of Official Human Rights Agencies, cautions that when mediating discrimination cases, "We should always be looking at what is really best for the victim. If you're just looking at how many cases you can resolve, then it's easy to sell people down the drain."

With these caveats in mind, mediation in civil rights cases is still a valuable tool. Pointing out that nearly all civil disturbances have been triggered by a police incident, Gil Pompa sees CRS continuing to mediate disputes between police and minority communities. Pompa also sees debates between the educational establishment and the minority community over "quality" education and the "economic anxiety of minorities in the age of 'high-tech'" as fertile ground for mediation in the future.

Mediation is already being used in the struggle over economic rights. When Jesse Jackson, president of Operation PUSH (People United to Save Humanity) threatened to withdraw the

black community's support for Coca-Cola products, the giant soft drink manufacturer and the civil rights activist sat down and, in effect, mediated an agreement to increase minority involvement in the company's business dealings.

In 1980, mayor Richard Hatcher of Gary, Indiana signed a "negotiated Investment Strategy Agreement," drawn up with the help of local, state and Federal officials and designed to secure and coordinate a series of public and private sector commitments to improve the quality of life in Gary. The agreement outlined goals for improving housing, industrial, transportation, recreation and other facilities in the city and ended years of fractured relations between Gary and the state government and between that city and U.S. Steel.

In an interesting twist, the protestors of yesterday have become the mediators of today. When 500 whites marched on Atlanta's City Hall to protest the construction of a road through their neighborhood to the Jimmy Carter Library, mayor Andrew Young assured them that he "wasn't going to turn dogs and fire hoses loose on them," and invited representatives into his office to talk. Young set up a series of town meetings, and, while the road is still being built, the disgruntled community has been able to air its grievances.

Young's most unusual confrontation came last year when a dozen black transvestites occupied his office. They were concerned about police harassment and the killing of one of their colleagues by the police. "I served them coffee, listened to their problems, and we worked something out," recalls Young. The mayor agreed to a full investigation of the killing and the addition of a transvestite representative to the committee which served as a liaison between the gay community and the police force.

Says Young with a smile, "I just figure everything needs to be talked over and you can use mediation to achieve results without disruption." A more concise rationale for mediation of civil rights disputes would be hard to find. ♦

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# Employment Equity and Euro-Ethics

by Gene Ruffini

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**B**efore I jump with both feet and a flailing of figures into this article about job discrimination and white Euro-ethnics, let me tell you about my old neighborhood, the way it was back in the 1930s and 40s.

Among other things, my old neighborhood in the Mott Haven section of the South Bronx in New York City was a spawner of saloons. The Eire and the Shannon were the two most popular with my crowd and, as the names indicate, the area had a large Irish population.

But there were also a fair number of Italians, like myself, and some Germans, Jews, Scotch and Polish as well. In short, it was a well represented ethnic neighborhood, part of the city's mosaic.

We were "Micks," and "Guineas," "Kikes," "Krauts," and "Polacks," tough appellations then, but used without rancor, a jocular recognition of differences among people who were first and second generation Americans.

We did more than get along. We were friends and we wouldn't have known the meaning of the polite term "Euro-ethnic," which sociologists and

political scientists like to use today, nor would we have used it even if we did know. All of us lived in "Old Law" tenements, which took their name from the city building codes which existed at the turn of the century. They were five-story walkups, sturdy buildings of 20 apartments, built shoulder to shoulder, and could be found all over the city.

Today, most of the tenements are gone and rubble has taken their place. What devastated buildings remain are lived in by people, brown and black, even more poor than we were. My crowd has moved on. The members of that crowd became a pharmacist, a doctor, an insurance salesman, a cab driver, a professor of engineering and an unskilled factory worker. I became a journalist. Others on the periphery of my group, or whom I heard about, became cops, firemen, postmen, union leaders, ordinary blue collar workers, or crooks.

Okay. You can see what I am leading up to. How is it that a bunch of guys from the same economic level (we were all poor as hell) entered so many different kinds of occupations including those which allowed some of us to move into higher income careers? An easy response is that this is a land of opportunity. But that would not answer why some also didn't rise higher in pay, perks and prestige than we did.

First off, we must recognize the obvious: economic opportunity has histo-

rically been related to the state of our national economy. I don't think that anybody can seriously argue that Euro-ethnics (it is a catchy, all encompassing term, nice for headlines, so I'll use it) are frozen into certain jobs or certain classes, given an economy where jobs are relatively plentiful. In a depressed economy, however, everybody finds it hard to get or change jobs. Still, what about those who don't move up or who don't rise as high as their abilities appear to indicate they might be able to during good economic times? Is this a result of bad luck? Some personal flaw? Discrimination?

The answer is all of the above. For one thing, in many cases, those Euro-ethnics who didn't move up—just didn't want to. They didn't try. It was too much trouble to make the effort to move up, especially when they thought they could make a living in traditional and relatively stable jobs. In other words, they kept their horizons low and maintained a low profile, the better that way to avoid the pain of any failure. And for those who did try to move up, they found that certain professions were hostile to the intrusions of darker-skinned Catholics or Jews from Eastern or Southern Europe.

And then there was a Catch-22. The more they fought and battled to reach the top, the tougher it became because discrimination became more and more of a factor. Yet, many made it. Just as many blacks and Hispanics make it be-

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cause they fight. To be sure, as a general rule, blacks and Hispanics start lower on the economic ladder than whites do. And in addition, everything that was just said about white ethnics could be said about blacks and Hispanics. Those who want to struggle up, can do so and they better themselves. (Affirmative action programs—or reverse discrimination as white ethnics put it—angers some white ethnics, but more of that later.)

But the first rung on the ladder, for a person of any race, religion or creed, is education, and family background and pressure is a big part of that picture. For illustrations, I go back to my old neighborhood. For instance, we guys from the old neighborhood who went to college as a way to climb the ladder, didn't do it on our own. We were pushed incessantly by our parents, the first generation Americans who realized that education was the way up and out of the ghetto. They saved hard-earned dollars to put us through. Or we went to free city universities. And some of us worked full time at other jobs while we matriculated. Most who didn't go to college in those days just weren't pushed. On the other hand, some were encouraged to go into their fathers' trades or enter the civil service. Both were considered "safe." The Great Depression had left an indelible impression and many parents felt that family members should help support or find jobs for each other

if need be. Civil service jobs, such as those in the police and fire departments, were eyed as Depression-proof havens by many job seekers from such families.

Another factor influencing some of my group to stay on the lower rungs was their general antipathy or indifference to education altogether, an attitude passed on by those parents who had been peasants in Europe and who remained peasants in their thinking here. All this sounds simplistic, and of course there were other factors—economic, emotional, intellectual—hindering our mobility. But in the main, it boiled down to how much a price we and our families were willing to pay for education as the surest way up the ladder in this society.

For instance, in researching this piece, I spoke to Dennis Marciniak of Buffalo. At this writing, he has been out of work since he was laid off from the Ford Motor Company's Woodlawn plant in July 1981. A vocational school graduate, he had been a production line welder working on Fairmonts and had worked for Ford since 1973. His father worked for a company making auto parts and his grandfather, born in Poland, worked as a mechanic. Three generations of blue collar workers living in a heavily Polish area; a blue collar almost placed around Dennis' neck at birth. Why didn't he remove that collar? Why *should* he? The Ford Motor Company jobs were there, were

within easy reach, seemed secure, were what everybody else around him seemed to be doing and offered the promise of good money with overtime. He's single, but if he were to get married, he said, "I'd like my children to go to college. I wouldn't want them to make the same mistakes I did."

Marciniak's choices, of course, reflect a classic dilemma faced by second and third generation Americans: which traditional cultural values to preserve for one's continued emotional and spiritual sustenance, and which to modify or discard for a better economic future? But this is an essay on the integration of Euro-ethnics into the American economy, so a quick look at how and why their immigrant forebearers became "blue collars" when they hit these shores is in order.

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### **Dennis Marciniak had a blue collar almost placed around his neck at birth.**

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It's important to remember that few would-be European immigrants to the New World could afford an ocean voyage in the time of sailing ships prior to the 1860s and for the majority, the trip was possible only if they traveled in the hold of a cargo vessel returning from deliveries in Europe. Since most U.S. trade up to then was with north-

ern and western Europe, those were the points of mass migration to the United States. Eastern and southern Europe were bypassed.

The Irish came to the northeastern U.S. on lumber ships, worked jobs that called for unskilled labor, then spread out from the northeastern centers by taking jobs on railroads and canals, settling in towns along the routes. Helped by their knowledge of English, some also took advantage of skills in political organization, honed in the struggles against the British, and entered into politics and government. Many Germans debarked at New Orleans on ships that had unloaded cotton at Le Havre. They then traveled up the Mississippi on empty river boats where they settled in places like Cincinnati, St. Louis, and Milwaukee.

With the coming of steamships, immigration patterns were no longer tied to trade routes and the price of passage was cheaper. The number of immigrants rose from five million before the Civil War to ten million in the next 30 years and to 15 million in the following 15 years. By 1907, 81 percent of the immigrants were from southern and eastern Europe. Too poor to afford travel inland, they settled in northeastern cities.

The shift in areas of emigration also coincided roughly with economic needs in the United States. Roughly speaking, as the 19th century drew to a close, dependence on craft skills lessened as mass-production techniques were perfected and a market for unskilled workers increased. So, in addition to where they landed on these shores, the skills they brought with them also determined what kind of work the immigrant and, very often, their descendants settled into.

In the 19th century, for example, many Welsh went into anthracite mining and tin plate manufacture. Scots went into bituminous mining and Cornishmen into copper and lead mining. The English contributed to the iron, steel and textile industries. Germans went into traditional crafts and beer-making, Scandinavians found work on Great Lakes boats and Russian Jews in the needle trades. But by 1907, the low paid, heavy work in northern industry

and transportation was being done by immigrants from southern and eastern Europe. For instance, Slavs and Italians made up more than 80 percent of the common labor in the Carnegie Steel Company.

Some recent Canadian studies have focused on the question of why a number of second or even third generation Euro-ethnics remain in their fathers' occupations or are slow to climb the economic ladder. The studies indicate that while there are many contributing factors, including prejudice and discrimination, much depends on which step of the ladder the Euro-ethnics started. Here too, the fewer advantages a father had, the fewer he could pass on to his children. In addition, the propensity of new immigrant arrivals to cluster together turned out to be a hard-binding glue. The more they stayed together and refused to leave their communities to venture into the outside world, the slower was their climb up the ladder. Moreover, the longer they stayed in their lower paying jobs, the harder it became to break out.

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### **The case for discrimination against Euro-ethnics begins when they move up and compete for white collar jobs.**

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But many did break out, and these days, with the wealth of public education available at various levels of higher education, it becomes easier all the time. Education is a prime reason for much of the success of Jews in America. They arrived penniless, powerless and persecuted, but now Jewish family incomes are the highest of any minority group in the United States.

Many first generation Italian Americans worked as laborers paving streets or as peddlers selling fruits and vegetables off pushcarts, according to Jean Rossi, managing editor of the *Providence Echo*. The father of Mario Cuomo, the first elected governor of Italian descent in New York State, arrived in the United States in 1926 and dug ditches and cleaned sewers. Many

Italian Americans were farmers, and others worked on railroad jobs. "But once the first generation became established, they saved money for their children's education and the second generation did get to go to high school and college," said Rossi. "Here in Rhode Island, we have a high-proportion of Italian Americans. And they really stretch across the board from laborers to those in top positions."

Boreslaw Eierzbianski, editor of the Polish American *Nowydzienik Daily News* in New York, said he does not think that Poles are being treated any differently from anybody else these days. "We're doing pretty well," he said. His words are echoed by an editorial writer at the *Polish Daily Zgoda* in Chicago who said that Poles have advanced up the economic ladder and are now "working on every level" of business, the professions and government.

Census figures tend to reinforce the argument that Euro-ethnics are doing okay today. A 1979 census report on ethnic minorities listed their overall median family income as \$15,800. Here's a sampling of the breakdown by groups: Scottish, \$20,000; German, \$17,500; Italian, \$17,000; Polish, \$17,500; English, \$16,900; Irish, \$16,100; French, \$15,600; Spanish (immigrants from Spain, Latin America and the Caribbean), \$10,600; and "Other," \$13,800.

But what is especially revealing is that the figures for families with partly Euro-ethnic backgrounds are higher, which would reinforce the argument that cutting the roots aids economic growth. The median income for families of partly Polish origin, for instance, is \$20,000, the highest of any ancestry group.

The Census report also buttresses the value of education as a way of getting a boost up the ladder. The report observes that "about 81 percent of Scottish-ancestry males 25 years old and over 78 percent of Scottish-ancestry females in this age group were high school graduates." However, the proportions of persons of Italian, Polish and Spanish origin who had completed high school was lower than the national average. Just when Euro-

ethnics would appear to be doing well in America, though, another set of statistics shows that a high percentage are in blue collar jobs and that they are relatively uneducated and are not heavily represented in the professional classes. This is particularly troubling to John Kromkowski, president of the National Center for Urban Ethnic Affairs, who argues that because of a lack of statistics, government and other social agencies focus little of their public spending on retraining Euro-ethnics for higher occupations. Furthermore, it becomes difficult to prove cases that may have all the appearance of reverse discrimination when hard data are lacking.

Whatever pain felt by Euro-ethnics over their relative lack of economic mobility is heightened when they realize they are stuck in the very industries where jobs have been vanishing forever because of bad times and overseas competition. Such pain is acute particularly in the north central and northeastern states with older industrial plants, where it is estimated that 66 percent of all Euro-ethnics live. In this competition for dwindling industrial jobs, it is understandable why blue collar Euro-ethnics feel threatened by employment programs aimed largely at increasing the numbers of blacks or other minorities in these and other jobs. The Euro-ethnic blue collar worker, having overcome much of the overt discrimination of the past, sees affirmative action programs as covertly discriminatory—and aimed at him.

Sure, in these turbulent economic times, Euro-ethnics and others in depressed areas are stuck, but the question remains, why didn't second- and third-generation Euro-ethnics, who had more opportunities than their forefathers, move out when they had the chance? The answer is they didn't want to. They were comfortable where they were, thank you. It doesn't behoove Euro-ethnics to cry discrimination in a situation like that.

But there *is* a case for discrimination against them, though, when they move out and start to move up and begin to compete for white collar jobs. Ethnic leaders are bitter about the phenomenon in which blacks or other

non-white groups are allowed to leapfrog up the ladder in front of Euro-ethnics. As one Euro-ethnic leader told me, "It used to be what took three or four generations to accomplish, people expect to happen in one or two." And as a former reporter in radio and television, I remember with what chagrin I heard news directors tell me, "If you were black, I would give you the job in a minute, but you know how it is." I knew how it was alright. So does Leonard F. Walentynowicz, former executive director of the Polish American Congress. Here's what he said in a paper submitted before the 1979 U.S. Commission on Civil Rights Chicago Consultation:

There has developed over the years, a belief that numerical disparity alone requires "affirmative action" to "lock" each of the favored groups into almost every job category, particularly those jobs reflecting upward mobility.

One prime example is the appointment of Federal judges, where tremendous effort has been or is being made to appoint blacks, Hispanics and women, but no effort is being made to appoint Polish American and other ethnic Americans, even though a cursory examination of the judicial lists will reflect a dearth of individuals from those groups.

As we have repeatedly stated, we take no offense and we generally support members of the favored groups striving to improve themselves, provided we also are treated fairly and given the same consideration. Essentially, that is our problem in the area of employment—we are not being treated fairly, nor are we given the same considerations.

In the same vein, a report issued by the National Italian American Foundation in 1980 noted:

The lists (of Italian American appointments to Federal courts and to high level positions in the Executive Office of the President and Cabinet agencies) reflect a lack of Italian

Americans in just about every area. Several interesting notes come to mind: More Italian Americans are bankruptcy judges than higher level district judges. States with large Italian American populations have small representation in the district courts. The Departments of State and Energy have small numbers of Italian American senior staff. There are very few (three) Italian American assistant secretaries.

Similarly, a 1974 report prepared by the Institute of Urban Life in Chicago and the National Center for Urban Ethnic Affairs studied directors and officers of the 106 largest Chicago area corporations, more than half of which were included in the 1972 *Fortune* magazine list of the largest corporations in America. The report found that 36, or less than three percent, of the 1,341 directors and 52, or less than four percent, of the 1,355 officers were of Polish, Italian, Latin or black ancestry, even though these four groups made up about 34 percent of the Chicago area population.

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## **As Euro-ethnics reach towards management levels, reverse discrimination becomes a particular galling wild-card.**

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A 1981 study of the 806 top corporations listed in the *Forbes* magazine index of companies by the Commission for Social Justice, the anti-defamation arm of the Order of Sons of Italy in America, showed that of 29,021 officers and directors, 935 or 3.2 percent were identified as having Italian surnames; 15 or 2 percent of the companies had an Italian American as chairman, chief executive, president or vice chairman; 174 or 22 percent had at least one Italian American sitting on their boards of directors; 372 or 46 percent had at least one Italian American officer in a top management position; and 447 or 44 percent had either a member of the board or a top executive of Italian ancestry. The report went on to say: "The results suggest that while

large corporations are willing to promote a few key Italian Americans as officers or even board members, they are still collectively underrepresented in the corporate world based on their relative population.”

I don't think there is any doubt about the validity of his argument, despite a recent Sunday *New York Times Magazine* cover article that said that Italian Americans are “coming into their own” and “have stepped out, as it were, and become prominent players with national impact as well as a national following, taking the initiative in crucial political and social issues.”

As an Italian American, it is nice to read things like that. But as one who has gone through some difficult periods in the past, and is not through with them yet, I had a somewhat jocular reaction to the article. It reminded me of the old joke about the fighter returning to his corner during a bout to be told by his trainer: “You're doing great, kid. He's not laying a glove on you.” The fighter replies: “Oh, yeah? Then you better watch the referee, because someone is beating the hell out of me.”

As an Italian American professional, I have been subjected to incidents of discrimination while working for newspapers or networks where I was among the new boys on the block—evidenced in actions, but more so by words containing the sting of bias.

I also recall a story told by the Italian American editor of a national magazine. A colleague of the editor liked to hold his arms over his head in surrender fashion and ask people what that signified. Then he would tell them it represented the “Italian army on maneuvers.”

The jokester walked into the office of the Italian American editor one day with his arms so positioned and asked him the inevitable question. The editor replied: “Michelangelo painting the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel.”

His colleague's dumb joke was part of the parcel of stereotypes that both blue and white-collar ethnics still have to struggle against. These stereotypes tend to make them objects of disdain within the higher echelons of management. For instance, a study released in

May, 1982 by the Commission for Social Justice concluded that “television portrays Italian Americans as uneducated, holding low status jobs and unable to speak proper English.” On the other hand, more and more Italian Americans are beginning to be portrayed in a positive light in television and films and the stereotypes are fading. This indicates to me that, while things can be better, Italians have been and are being more rapidly assimilated and accepted in American society.

Euro-ethnics can move out of the blue collar class if they make the effort. The key words are education, struggle and perseverance. The same can be said for non-white ethnics.

But as ethnics reach toward management and executive levels, they can expect heavier resistance toward them because the prizes are fewer and more valuable. Any weapon that can be used against them, will be used. And reverse discrimination becomes a particularly galling wild-card.

My own reaction against such resistance is to try harder, echoing that statement often heard by ethnics of all kinds, “I have to work twice as hard as the next guy to make it.” The “next guy” in this case, I take to mean anybody who is not of the same ethnic, racial or religious class or, to put it another way, who is of a “favored” class.

But I still think that if class lines can be eliminated through education and assimilation leading to familiarity and understanding, then ethnicity will be rendered largely irrelevant in terms of the competition for jobs. On all sides, there will have to be a willingness to accept, to change and assimilate. And I don't mean that by doing so one has to adopt everything about the dominant culture in this nation. Assimilation is neither subjugation nor elimination. In my definition, it means being an American, in every sense of that rich, plentiful, rhetorical and variegated word. And, more than ever, all Americans are free to move in whatever direction they wish, if they are willing to equip themselves with the best skills—and that includes moving up, if they are willing to fight like hell for what they want. ♦

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# The Media

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## Blacks On TV Soaps: Visible But Neutralized

by Sherry Bryant-Johnson



**P**erhaps, in a backhanded way, the slings and arrows of outrageous imagery sculpted the black soap opera character. Black soapers are the antithesis of every negative, racist stereotype. For them there is no shuffling of the feet nor watermelon wide grins, no malapropisms or being on the punchline end of a joke, no unbridled libidos or dancing with "natural rhythm." Straight-by-the-book cop Ed Hall ("One Life to Live"), straight-laced lawyer Didi Bannister ("Edge of Night"), straight-from-the-streets Jesse Hubbard ("All My Children"), indeed, each of soap opera's

recurring black characters is a credit to the race.

They have been ever since token blacks first intergrated those melodramatic WASP strongholds during the heat of the civil rights movement and at the height of Sidney Poitier's brief reign as Hollywood's Black Prince. Legal secretary Peggy Nolan, Dr. Hank Iverson, and Nurse Loretta Allen slipped into the lily-white Sturm und Drang of "Another World," "The Doctors," and "Love of

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Life" without so much as a "We Shall Overcome" and institutionalized the persona that persists with only minor variations almost 20 years later: the hard-working, intelligent, middle class black professional with moral sensibilities befitting a Puritan. Laundered of any vestiges of a black heritage, they were the human equivalent of Oreo cookies—black on the outside, white on the inside.

What Clifford Mason wrote in a 1967 *New York Times Magazine* article, "Why Does White America Love Sidney Poitier So?", is still an apropos critique of the black presence on continuing dramas, "...it is a schizophrenic flight from reality and historical fact that makes anybody imagine, even for a moment, that the Negro is best served by being a black version of the man in the gray flannel suit, taking on white problems and a white man's sense of what's wrong with the world."

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## Black characters on daytime dramas are consumed with white problems and have few of their own.

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Black characters on daytime dramas go far beyond simply taking on white problems—they are consumed with them. Only on "Another World" do businesswomen and perennial rivals for the same man, Quinn Harding and Henrietta Morgan mind their own business (at least as much as possible in a soap)—or even have much business of their own to mind. "Another World," with its relatively large cast of black characters with their ethnicity intact, is the exception in daytime drama. The relegation of blacks to the back burner is the rule on the other programs. Having few problems of

their own, such characters as Claudia Phillips ("General Hospital") and Clay Tynan ("The Guiding Lights") would be reduced to thumb twiddling if they weren't privy to the convoluted machina-

tions of the white storylines. When one white character murders another or organized crime muscles into town or spies and counterspies threaten the security of the Free World, it is the black

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## Visibility is a Many Splendored Thing

As an autobiographical novel, Han Suyin's *Love Is a Many Splendored Thing* was a best seller. As a 1955 movie starring William Holden as an American war correspondent and Jennifer Jones as his Eurasian love, it was a hit. But as a soap opera, "Love Is A Many Splendored Thing" didn't quite wash. The Anglo American boy meets Asian American girl story didn't sit too well with the network or the audience back in 1967. A behind the scenes shakeup transformed the program into a more conventional sudser faster than you can say "sayonara."

Nancy Hsueh's role as Mia Elliott may have been given the bum's rush, but it represented the high point in non-black minority visibility on the soaps. While authentic Afro-American perspective has yet to be integrated into these daytime dramas, Asian, Hispanic, and Native Americans are almost completely segregated out of them. In thirty years, fewer than 20 have been featured as anything more than extras or characters with less than five lines to utter. Even these roles have been short-lived, secondary, and woefully infrequent ones like Kim Douglas ("Days of Our Lives"), Dr. and Mrs. Sam Yee ("As The World Turns") and Ramona Gonzalez ("Ryan's Hope").

Ironically, A Hispanic American played one of soapdom's most beloved characters. Santos Ortega acted on "As The World Turns" from its debut in 1956 until his death in 1976. However, he was Pa Hughes, the patriarch of the Anglo American Hughes clan.

Hispanics playing Hispanics have not fared as well. A Case in point was Alicia Nieves on "Ryan's Hope." Several years ago Ana Alicia Ortiz (currently Melissa on "Falcon Crest") played the poor but honest secretary to wicked tycooness, Rae Woodard. She was the sole support of younger brother, Angel, and near-girlfriend to Irish cop Bob Reid. In less than a year she had objected to her boss lady's shady machinations and was shipped out of Ryan's bar. Gone with her was the first and last promising Hispanic American role on daily serials.

"All My Children" didn't so much as grace Mrs. Gonzalez with a first name. Last summer Gloria Irizarry played landlady cum surrogate mother to runaway Jesse Hubbard and Jenny Gardner. *TV Guide* (May 28, 1983) reports that one viewer wrote to her: "Twelve years I have watched "All My Children" and I've never [before] seen a Hispanic character, not only on this soap, but on any other soap."

This fan wasn't far wrong. When it comes to minorities of color, daytime TV is black and white TV.

S.B.-J.



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## The Media

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cops, Abraham Carver ("Days of Our Lives"), Calvin Stoner ("Edge of Night"), and Frank Lewis ("The Young and the Restless") who investigate. Usually they sleuth in tandem with a white partner who gets more airtime, gets the girl, and gets most of the credit for cracking the case. "General Hospital's" black social worker, Brian Phillips, "Days of Our Lives'" bartender Danny Grant, and "All My Children's" Nancy Grant entwine themselves in the white character's Gordian knots simply by commiserating, giving sage advice and offering brown shoulders to cry on.

Ironically, the apotheosis of black do-gooding is one of the few characters not mired in a middle class, mild-mannered rut. Jesse Hubbard is a surly soap opera version of a street kid with a criminal past. He recently eloped with bourgeois princess Angie Baxter and her insistence on keeping it secret emsnarls him in his own embroglio. But in two years on "All My Children" this apparent ghetto hooligan has been television's staunchest defender of white womanhood. His best friend is the beautiful but tragic white teen, Jenny Gardner. Hubbard has snatched her from the sleazy grip of a would-be rapist, been falsely accused of rape after knocking down her malicious nemesis, rescued her from a pornographic film ring, slept chastely near her in a cramped New York coldwater flat for an entire summer, and reunited her with her boyfriend—all the while thoroughly neglecting his romance with seemingly the only black girl in Pine Valley.

Thus, serialland's black characters are segregated in a dramatic ghetto. Endowed with unimpeachable virtue, they are too saintly to be sullied by the illicit romances, the murders, the blackmail, the dirty secrets that inject intoxicating

pizzazz into daytime drama. Canonized as helpmates, they are perpetual second-stringers. As black actor and former soaper John Danelle explains, "The major problem is that the storylines that they get for black characters are not treated in depth nor do they run as long as the storylines of white characters."

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### **The number of blacks in soaps has doubled without any improvement in the quality of their roles.**

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White women characters are portrayed as homebound chief cooks and bottle washers and corporate chief executive officers. They are wimps, they are villainesses and every possible personality variant in between. Neither are the elderly typecast as dodderers or settled-in-their-ways grandparents. The over-50 set are equal opportunity romancers, connivers, and sufferers. Timely issues such as abortion, surrogate mothering, incest—even robots and computers—find their way into daytime stories. In programming with such a liberated air about it, the strict parameters drawn around blacks and the near exclusion of other minorities of color seems a screaming inconsistency—until you consider the escapist nature of the daily serial.

Thirty million Americans don't just "watch" soap operas. They voyeuristically take on the dilemmas of the denizens of Port Charles or Pine Valley or Oakdale to forget real problems. More than movies or prime time television, soap operas breathe life into comforting myths. Love always finds a way, good triumphs over evil, and skin color—not culture, not heritage, not access to op-

portunity—is the only difference between blacks and whites (and that doesn't count). The world of the daytime serial is also a fantasy world that neutralizes fears. So spouses thought deceased return from the grave, the paralyzed walk again, and the blind see. And blacks care more about giving aid and comfort to their white buddies than they do about affirmative action or school desegregation.

Blacks on soap operas fulfill the same role in these anxious 80's as Poitier did during the hot summers of the 1960's. According to Thomas Cripps in an article "The Dark Spot in the Kaleidoscope: Black Images in American Film,"\* today's soaps only permit "...the presentation of Negroes to whites in disarming situations," thus enabling them to intrude "...into the white world without threatening it."

Black representation in recurring soap opera roles has almost doubled from three years ago when the Concerned Black Artists for Action protested that a mere 16 of daytime's 350 contract players were black. This slight increase in quantity has not been accompanied by any positive change in quality.

Will black characters ever reflect their heritage? Will they star in more compelling storylines? Will dimension be added to their personalities? The answers to these questions depend on the ever-changing cadre of producers and writers responsible for their creation. Those who care will have to tune in tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow... ♦

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\*Published in *The Kaleidoscopic Lens: How Hollywood Views Ethnic Groups*, edited by Randall M. Miller, 1980, Jerome S. Ozer Publishing Co.

### Scaling the Corporate Heights

by Bebe Moore Campbell

**BLACK LIFE IN CORPORATE AMERICA**

George Davis and Glegg Watson  
New York City: Anchor Press-Doubleday, 1982. 204 pp. \$14.95.

**WOMEN AT WORK: A PSYCHOLOGIST'S SECRETS TO GETTING AHEAD IN BUSINESS**

Sylvia Senter, Ph.D.  
New York City: Coward, McCann and Geoghegan, 1982. 304 pp. \$13.95.

**THE BLACK MANAGER, MAKING IT IN THE CORPORATE WORLD**

Floyd Dickens, Jr. and Jacqueline B. Dickens  
New York City: American Management Association, 1982. 333 pp. \$9.95.

The civil rights movement, energized by the smoldering urban rebellions of the sixties, led to a monumental victory for all Americans: passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Because the newly formed National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders asserted that discrimination in education and employment were the underlying causes behind the rallying cries of "Burn, baby, burn," a concerned and committed Federal government pressured previously segregated colleges and universities to begin to admit American minorities and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission forced corporations to integrate their professional staffs. At the same time, the women's movement created a generation of females who were demanding their chance in big business. The result was the creation of two new entities in the American business world: the minority and female corporate manager.

Twenty years after the Civil Rights

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Act, the number of women and minority managers is still small when compared to white males. The few who are present are often shunted aside to dead end, powerless positions, sometimes paid less than their white male counterparts and their performances often judged by stereotypical criteria. Most of the newcomers reach whatever corporate heights they attain against all odds and certainly without the tender coaching of a mentor. Some minorities and women experience culture shock, isolation and alienation on the job. Racism and sexism, though no longer blatantly displayed, silently erode the self-confidence corporate novices desperately need to succeed at their jobs. It is safe to say that women and minorities, like white males, are willing to conform to the standards of big business in exchange for its rewards: a substantial paycheck and the opportunity to advance as far as their abilities let them.

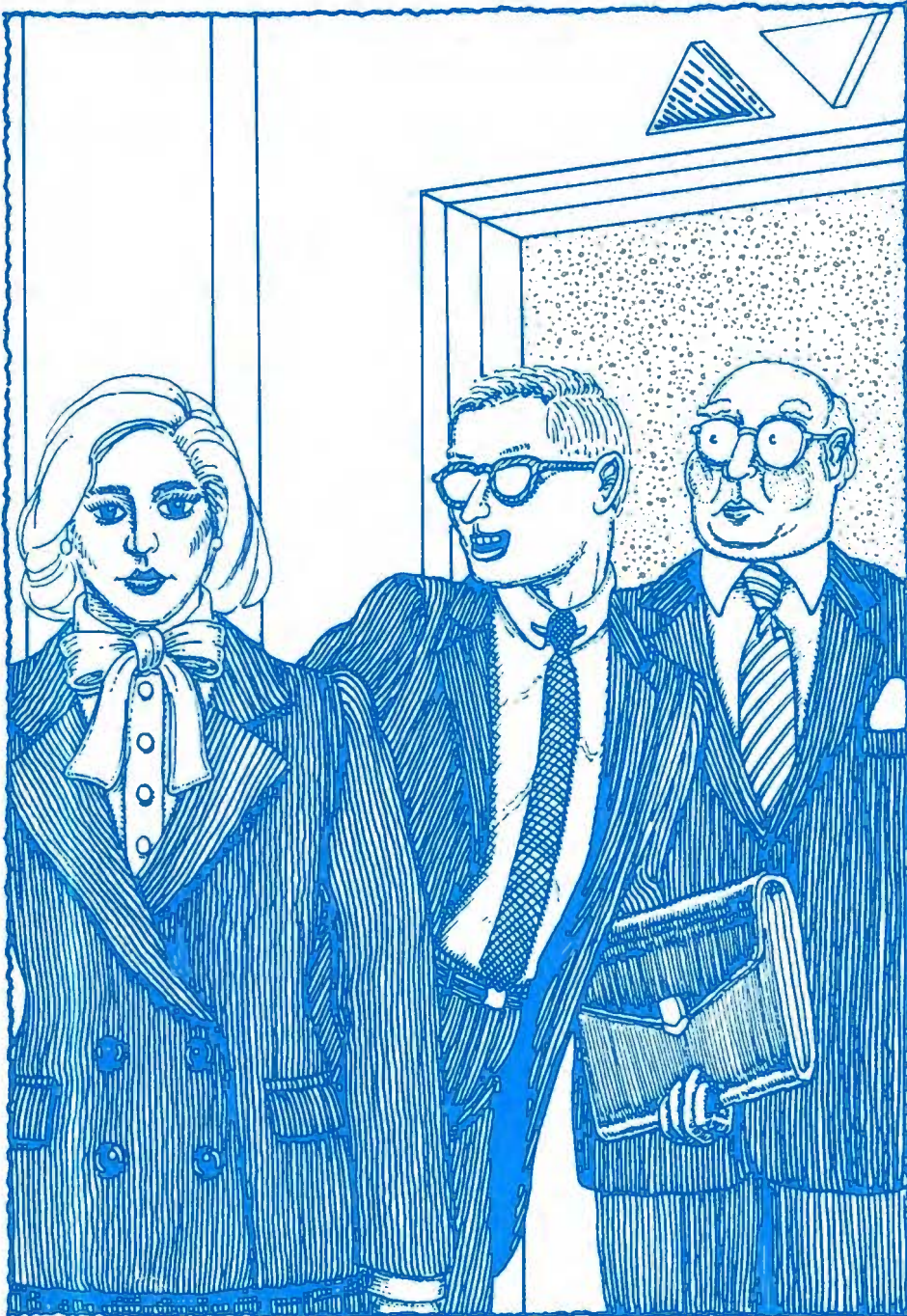
The corporation, with its endless deadlines and backstabbing politics can be a highly tense arena for all. Obviously, there are white males who don't fit the mold. It cannot be denied that white executives suffer heart attacks, alcoholism, depression and chronic fatigue because of the stress of their jobs. Yet, big business is even more frustrating for minorities and women who must make even more personal sacrifices than white males, and for fewer rewards. After submerging their cultural/sexual selves, they learn a painful lesson: regardless of their talent, there is a limit on how far they can climb up the ladder.

The current political climate and retrenchment on civil rights contribute to the slow progress of white women and particularly minorities. Such a political climate fosters the erosion of affirmative action. Recently, white Boston firefight-

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## In Review

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ers sought to override affirmative action mandates when a city budget crisis forced layoffs among their ranks. Although the percentage of women and minority firefighters was not what courts have dictated it must be, the largely white firefighters union wanted layoffs based solely on seniority, a move that would have destroyed most of the the affirmative action gains. The minority firefighters were also organized, however, and when they decried the union's action, money was found in the Boston till and the laid off firefighters were re-hired. While the Boston case doesn't involve professionals in big business, minority and female professional managers are even more vulnerable to the last hired, first fired syndrome because they are not organized. Company cutbacks during the recent recession have seriously reduced the numbers of those newcomers throughout the nation.

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### **Racism and sexism silently erode the self-confidence corporate novices desperately need to succeed at their jobs.**

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Ironically, even as the sparse numbers of women and minorities are further reduced by the "last hired, first fired" credo of economic decline, several books have been published which attempt to document the presence of blacks and women. While a weakness of these books is that they do not discuss the impact of the corporation on all minorities, most notably Hispanics, they do address some of the general issues that confront the "different manager," and in some cases, offer guidance that might be helpful to all corporate newcomers.

*The Black Manager*, by Floyd and Jacqueline Dickens, is a hopeful, enthusiastic book, one that boldly asserts that blacks can successfully scale corporate heights if they learn how to manage the racism of others and channel their own rage into positive productivity. The Dickenses believe that all successful black managers experience four managerial phases that ultimately lead to corporate rewards. The entry phase finds blacks anxious about fitting into big business. In the adjustment phase, blacks discover racism at work and react with frustration. Planned growth, the third stage, represents a period of funneling anger into constructive activities, while during the final success phase, blacks learn to sublimate their emotions and manage the racism of others. This, say the Dickenses, leads to enhanced job productivity with the rewards of promotions and increased responsibilities. Using a prototype, Jack, the authors relate the ups and downs of his corporate career and succeed in humanizing their academic model. Perhaps most valuable, the authors offer concrete strategies for commonly encountered situations dealing with racism on the job.

Heralding "liberation" as women's open sesame to the executive suite, *Women at Work* bills itself as a psychologist's secrets to getting ahead. Comparing the childhood conditioning of the "average" sports-minded, team-playing boy with the "average" nonathletic, house-playing girl, author Sylvia Senter contends that the frustrations women find in big business may occur because they were reared to be passive, fearful of risks, ladylike and unable to give orders: the antithesis of the successful, hard-driving businessman. Using case histories that describe office situations

involving women who are too nurturing, too nonassertive and too fearful of rejection to be effective businesswomen, the book briskly sets about the task of modifying the ineffective behavior. Employing the use of mental imagery, gradual painless exposure to intimidating situations, deep muscle relaxation and negative thought-stopping, the psychologist instructs women on how to tackle barriers to their corporate success.

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### **In their final managerial phase, blacks learn to sublimate their emotions and manage the racism of others.**

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*Black Life in Corporate America* is a book about attitudes, both black and white. Authors George Davis, a journalist, novelist and college professor and Glegg Watson, a manager with Xerox, interviewed more than 160 black and white managers and executives to glean insight into how the first generation of black managers are faring and to gauge their impact on big business. In down to earth language, the black managers of the sixties describe the tokenism of that decade, while newer recruits of the seventies and eighties speak of the conservative climate in the nation and the trickle-down effects on their companies, of stinging backlash coupled with cutbacks. Cloaked in anonymity, candid black managers who have survived and, in some cases, succeeded in big business, talk about the day-to-day pleasures and problems of their jobs, relationships with superiors and subordinates, the clash of corporate culture with their own cultural values, the price they

pay for staying and why they pay it. Whites discuss their feelings about the newcomers and their strong resentment of what they term reverse discrimination. Finally, like the Dickenses, Watson and Davis assess the successful black "corporation swimmer" and lay odds on the perpetuation of the species in waters that are troubled.

Those troubled waters can no longer be ignored, because the devastating ripples are felt throughout the corporation and the nation. Behavior modification, such as offered by the Dickenses and Senter, certainly has its place and, without a doubt assist minorities and women in becoming functionally successful managers. Yet, any how-to book which implies that in order for women and minorities to succeed they must transform themselves, and either become more like the person in power or go to great lengths to appear less threatening to him puts even more pressure on the victims of oppression. The newcomers are told that in order to be more acceptable, they must diffuse their cultural/sexual selves, which is pragmatic advice in today's business climate. The pity is that if channeled properly, those melting pot qualities might bring a fresh perspective to a stale environment and improve the overall performance of their companies. In reconstructing themselves to conform to the exacting standards of the old guard, they are denied the opportunity to present themselves at their best and white males are robbed of the chance to do what they've never truly done: compete evenly with everyone. The energies of many minorities and women are wasted as they strive not to excel, but to fit in while those who attempt to do both, tragically burn out. The end result is that everyone is encouraged to maintain a mediocre performance for the

sake of preserving the old guard's comfort level.

The Dickenses' book redeems itself by acknowledging that their intent is to guide the novice through the tangled web of corporate racism to security of fulfilled professional ambitions. Theirs is, quite simply, a survival manual, and an excellent one.

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### **Many minorities and women burn out as they strive to both excel and fit in.**

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The Senter book, on the other hand, with its chiding tone, gives only cursory allusion to sexism, even the still-existing effects of it—the most evident being the small number of women wielding power in executive suites. In its ingenuous presentation of how young boys played on sports teams while girls play house, it completely ignores the fact that the corporate world is a very well organized male team that simply doesn't want girls to play. The male power structure has the authority to politically intimidate, not promote and even fire women. In the current political climate, a weakened and overloaded EEOC may not be able to make a difference on their behalf.

Neither the Dickenses nor Senter spend time challenging the status quo of big business or pointing out the weaknesses and inefficiencies of the current system. The unrefutable truth is that the men in charge of corporate America don't want women and minorities to transform themselves and succeed; they want them to go away. The Federal government is the only legal impetus behind the integration of big business and without its continued vigorous support, very,



very few newcomers will rise to become corporate policymakers, the only people who can truly affect change, and even the gains that have been made in the past 20 years may well be eroded.

An attitudinal study such as Davis and Watson's book underscores the weaknesses and strengths of this nation's corporations as viewed by the people who run and work in them. Candid conversations with white managers reveal that many of the old guard resent the intrusion on their territory by what they perceive as "quota filling" minorities, while black managers speak of feeling cut off from the mainstream of corporate life. This book girds minority managers with emotional preparation by giving them a frank view of the attitudes they may find on their jobs and insight as to what personal toll those attitudes may take on them. It can only be assumed that forewarned is forearmed and that the next crop of minority professionals, and women for that matter, may avoid undue corporate stress by preparing for it. Interestingly, the book also reveals the stresses and strains white male managers are subject to, not just in dealing with the newcomers, but primarily in coping with the inflexible, competitive, dog-eat-dog climate inherent in big business.

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### **America needs more newcomers in its executive suites who aren't black, brown, yellow and female clones of white males.**

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More documentation is needed to augment what this book clearly implies: the rigid, caffeine-laced way Americans conduct business, not *who* is conducting

it, lies at the core of the poor corporate productivity problems and is at least partially responsible for this nation's plunge into the 1981–83 recession.

America needs more newcomers in its executive suites who aren't black, brown, yellow and female clones of white males, but have retained the attitudes and values that will complement rather than merge with those of the old guard. This can only happen in a numerically significant way if the current Federal policies of retrenchment on equal opportunity and affirmative action are turned around and the "last hired, first fired" credo is waived during these difficult economic times. Minorities and women must be recruited, promoted and valued. ♦

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