

# Civil Rights: Ten Years After King

By REV. JESSE JACKSON

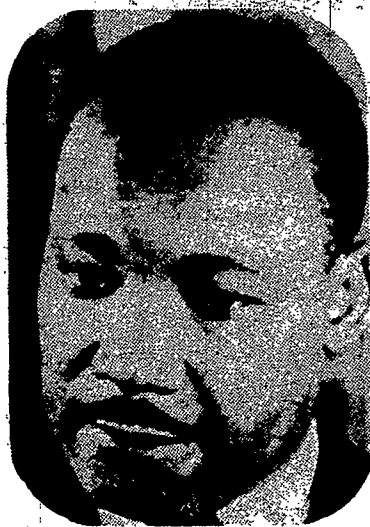
April 4 marks the tenth anniversary of the death of Martin Luther King Jr. Like others who prodded the nation's conscience in somewhat too penetrating a manner, Dr. King died by an assassin's bullet. The strange and bitter circumstances surrounding his death and that of Robert Kennedy suggest that there was a concerted effort "to assassinate the nation's conscience," to quote the words of Dick Gregory.

Ultimately, the question is not who, but what killed Dr. King. There is no doubt that by the Spring of 1968, the nation had reached an immense watershed. The resources for change, so evident in the late 50s and early and middle 60s, were now on the verge of bankruptcy. The Administration's proposed "guns and butter" policy proved a gross miscalculation since funding for the so-called War on Poverty was completely subordinated to the financing of one of the gravest military debacles in the nation's history. Dr. King realized this would be the case and relentlessly urged the nation to alter its course, and reconsider its priorities. Ten years later, we are still in the shadow of the Vietnam era. The nation has done nothing to alter its priorities, as is evidenced by the President's request for a \$126 billion budget for defense — a peace time defense budget.

At the same time, there is utter confusion and little direction from the White House on the critical issue of development of a comprehensive urban policy.

In terms of action, the civil-rights movement is a mere shadow of its 1960's vibrance. It has shifted — in that respect — from its role as conscience of the nation, to joining the national consensus, if such can be said to exist. The times have changed since Dr. King's massive onslaughts against segregation and so, accordingly have the strategies of the movement.

Yet, through this painful period the movement is undergoing a form of maturity that is both healthy and meaningful. Vernon Jordan's pointed critique of the Administration's failure to meet the urgent needs of



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its most loyal constituency, black Americans — made a significant impact upon the White House and the policy planners who shape the Administration's strategy. Again, the NAACP's Benjamin Hooks has launched an irrefutable and penetrating commentary on the gap between Administration promise and performance on such crucial issues as unemployment, housing and urban policy.

There is a new sense of unity among the various spectra of the civil-rights movement that had been absent in recent years. The substantial presence of the Congressional Black Caucus adds another dimension to the movement, since it means that we now have an effective, if small, bloc of persons engaged in the legislative process on the national level. The Caucus has a particularly gifted and effective leader in Parren Mitchell, who worked relentlessly to put the economic plight and concerns of blacks on the nation's legislative and public-policy agenda.

Among the matters that must be considered in assessing the current state of civil rights are the following:

- The focus of the movement has expanded from civil rights in the form of legislation to silver rights in the form of economic equity and parity. In seven of the past eight years, the position of blacks with respect to whites, economically, has at best proved static.

In 1970, black median family income was 61 per cent of that claimed by whites. In 1976 and 1977, it was essentially the same,

after nearly five straight years of decline. Indeed, in 1975, a year when 363,000 blacks were added to poverty rolls due to unemployment, economist Andrew Brimmer stated that the black community lost some \$45 billion in total economic growth and benefits.

While black income has increased in absolute dollar amounts it has moved backward in terms of reaching parity with whites. The dollar gap between white and black income has widened by over \$1,250 since 1969. Moreover, unemployment among blacks remains, two years after the so-called economic recovery — at catastrophic rates. It is reported by the Department of Labor to be higher than it has ever been since the Second World War.

- Blacks have little economic equity outside the labor market. They own fewer than 2 per cent of the businesses, and claim less than eight-tenths of one per cent of the business receipts. The gap in capitalization of black businesses has grown every year since 1969. It now stands at over \$163 million.

Those businesses hire less than three-tenths of one per cent of the nation's employees. One of the more alarming realities is that there are fewer black firms organized as corporations now than there were in 1969. This, of course, suggests the highly exposed position of these firms, the majority of which are sole proprietorships with fewer than five employees. The receipts of the top 100 black companies in the nation would rank about 320 on the Fortune 500. The combined receipts of all registered black companies do not equal the sales of General Motors or Ford, at present.

- The massive drives conducted by Dr. King moved blacks in; the challenge now, is to move up — or to gain, through affirmative action. Dr. King was very perceptive of the implications of the movement's accomplishments up to the final year of his life. He also was sensitive to the needs for the application of compensatory measures to overcome the ravages of racism. After a brief period of impressive gains in the area of affirmative action, reaction has set in. It has



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taken the form of code words like "reverse discrimination" and "preferential treatment" which are actually calculated to become opinion shapers by the press and mass media.

The enemies of affirmative action are also mounting a mass attack in the form of litigation to cripple or eradicate affirmative action. From the classic initial case: DeFunis v. Odegaard, to the recent Bakke v. Board of Regents, the objective is the removal of affirmative action programs. The press and mass media have "hyped" the public to believe that the issue is blacks, other non-whites, and women who are going to be permitted to advance at the expense of the white male.

Philosophically the argument is transparently

ridiculous. No majority determining public policy would deliberately impose a disadvantage upon itself, or permit others' advancement at the expense of its own control. The truth is, that despite the plea of Bakke, there has been a 30 per cent increase in enrollments in medical schools since 1969, and a 64 per cent increase in the enrollment of white males.

Since the filing of the Bakke case, the Institute of Health Resources Development and the Health Policy Action Council report a 9.1 per cent decline in first year black medical school enrollments. The annual statement (Medical Education in the United States) of the AMA notes that of 174,000 medical doctors, fewer than 7,500 are black. Again of some 37,000 medical residents, fewer than 1,500 are black, and there are five major medical specialties where there are no blacks at all.

In that same vein, we would note that there are 25 per cent fewer black college enrollees than there were four years ago. That blacks are light years away from equity and parity can be gleaned from the following: blacks are fewer than 2.5 per cent of the nation's attorneys; fewer than 1 per cent of its architects and engineers; one-third of one per cent of its science specialists; 2.4 per cent of its corporate officials and managers; less than 3 per cent of its college and university faculty; only 3 per cent of its electricians; 2 per cent of its carpenters; less than 8 per cent of its

secondary school teachers; only eight-tenths of one per cent of the nation's publicly elected officials.

While there is one white physician for every 649 white persons, there is now one black physician for every 15,000 black persons. While there is one white dentist for every 1,400 white patients, there is one black dentist for every 8,900 black patients.

In our struggle for silver rights, blacks find that loss of jobs and opportunities is symptomatic of a total conspiracy to gut the cities, where we are now in substantial numbers. A report by the U.S. Commission of Civil Rights discloses that just since 1966, black population in urban areas has increased from 69 per cent to 76.5 per cent. The vast majority of that population is in the inner city, as black population in suburbs has increased from only 4 per cent to slightly more — 7 per cent.

Finally, black civil rights leadership has an obligation to give all of this nation's people, particularly its minorities and poor, a vision. Our people, in particular, must be challenged to excel — since it is excellence or extermination. We must excel because doors once open to us are closing — and we must excel because competition is keener.

If the movement and its leadership rise to this challenge, a total generation can be saved and the nation redirected from the destructive collision course it has presently pursued.

## The Christophers Name New Director

Paterson, N.J. (RNS)— Father John T. Catoir, personnel director of the Paterson Catholic diocese and a popular speaker and columnist, has been named director of The Christophers, the mass media organization based in New York.

late Father James Keller, M.M., The Christophers work with the mass media to "encourage each individual to try to change for the better the world we live in." Their message is addressed "to people of all faiths and of no particular faith."

Maryknoll to direct the organization. Father Keller, who died in 1977, retired in 1969. He was succeeded by another Maryknoller, Father Richard Armstrong, who resigned last year. A search committee has been interviewing candidates for a new director.

Father Catoir is the first priest from outside

A priest with a varied background of achievements, Father Catoir, 46, holds a doctorate in canon law and spent 10 years in marriage tribunal work. He gained a reputation as a spokesman on church marriage legislation.

## Cancer Drive Aide Named

Mrs. Lyn Buerman has been named residential chairperson for the American Cancer Society's 1978 crusade, according to W. E. Loebman, Monroe County unit president.

conducting the Cancer Crusade during April.

In 1973, he became the first full time personnel director for the Paterson diocese and served for two years as president of the National Association of Church Personnel Administrators.

Mrs. Buerman, product marketing manager for Xerox, will be responsible for the coordination of more than 12,000 volunteers

Assisting her as area coordinators will be Mrs. Barbara Shore, Mrs. Lucy Mooney, Mrs. Marcella Setzer, Mrs. Gail O'Keefe, Mrs. Donna Wegman. The drive aims to raise \$140,000 and to deliver lifesaving information to each residence.

Happy Easter  
FROM THE  
FOLKS AT  
STAR...

Star  
MARKETS