

FOREWORD

By JULIAN BOND

We live in the United States in a large white male-dominated business world. As Black people today go in quest of ways and means to achieve economic stability, we find ourselves groping with more questions that will directly affect our people and communities in the 1970's.

The questions that most affect our lives are the ones that have been created from the day the first white man set foot on what he was to call America. From that day to this we have been treated as if we were only living and surviving at his pleasure and discretion. We have never been allowed to enjoy the comforts that we built for him . . .

We have had to endure physical and verbal abuse, take hand-me-down housing, raggedy pawnshop furniture, third- and fourth-hand school books, debilitated automobiles for transportation and spend exorbitant bus, train, and subway fares to get to jobs that never provided dignity or decent wages when we got to them. Yet we are told still we have to pull ourselves up by our bootstraps. This is a cruel suggestion for people without any boots at all.

*But we survived. We wear our battle scars proudly and we continue to mobilize our people to obtain the right to a decent life where our culture, our beauty, our soul can be reflected in the kinds of ways necessary to make our communities whole and stable.**

THE CURRENT STATE of Black politics is one of heightened consciousness but steadily decreasing and contradictory activity.

While the number of *Black voters* increases annually, the number of *Black voting* goes down every year. This situation is particularly traceable to the similarity between the two major parties, and the inability of third or fourth parties of the left to articulate a "Black" platform; it is also due to the failure of Black political activists to offer Black people a realistic view of what power is in America, what can be gained, and what cannot — through participation in electoral politics, and what the political options are from moment to moment.

Power in America is different things at different times. In a Presidential election year, with no existing viable, national Black political structure, power lies in influencing who the party nominees will be and who the winner will be in the eventual contest between two Anglo-Saxon men. In other elections — depending on the numbers of Blacks in the individual political unit — power becomes the ability to win, to defeat a greater evil, or to help a lesser one.

Over the longer range, political power national for Blacks will lie in our ability to deliver on the rhetoric of the past decade, and our ability to forge a coalition with the other dispossessed citizens of this land. It is additionally foolish when most Blacks see themselves as "natural" Democrats.

What is required is the ability to organize the Black electorate from the smallest level to the top, to be able to cast that vote as a unit, to be able to direct that vote in a synchronized fashion for or against the propositions that hurt or help the Black people.

That is political power — the ability to make meaningful choices about one's own political future and whether this choice is exercised in choosing a Black sheriff in rural Alabama, or in choosing a white President of the United States, the choice must be made on the basis of what is good for the masses of us.

*This quote is from *A Time to Speak, A Time to Act: The Movement in Politics* by Julian Bond.

