

PREFACE

Take a look at America today. The Country is entrenched in the deepest economic recession since the Great Depression. Meanwhile, Ronald Reagan, in the guise of savior, cuts social services while the needy starve and castigates the unemployed while factories close their doors forever. Upper class and corporate America receive the larger tax breaks and incentives to produce, which are intended to “trickle down” benefits to the rest of us . . . eventually.

Access to institutions of higher learning is limited by Reagan Administration cuts in federal assistance. Repeatedly, Reagan assures us that the “truly needy” will be unaffected. Yet the truly needy are affected and tolerance wears thin.

In addition, our black and brown brothers, fleeing oppressive regimes or just looking for better lives, are turned away unwanted from American borders. Those immigrants that do enter are pursued and harassed while their European counterparts live in relative security.

Since the 1970's, after the greatest victories in Civil Rights had been won, many of those who fought so long and hard disappeared. Those who remained seemed to stop struggling, becoming complacent, apathetic and selfish. As a result, the Civil Rights movement lies dormant—dormant at a time when there is so much to fight for. Minority lawyers are much to blame for this condition, for we can make a difference.

We frequently hear that our “black leadership” “is out for themselves,” “does not care about Civil Rights” or “does not worry about us because they have it made.” Minority lawyers would vigorously defend against such accusations; yet, each of us is touched by the truth in the words. The public misjudges us. Nevertheless, the fact that they do reflects our own inadequacy.

As lawyers, we share the responsibility for community leadership in the campaign for Civil Rights. Though we remain among the most highly educated and upwardly mobile, we hesitate in contributing further. The social consciousness and commitment prevalent in the 1940's, 1950's and 1960's appear considerably less so today. We have lapsed into a condition where our personal wealth is more important than our social equality. Yet conservatism, racism, and Reaganomics confront us daily and we can have no personal security while equality is unattained.

American minorities have a false sense of security. As lawyers, we have access to the legal system and we have the tools to succeed in making changes. Our people need us, as they have throughout the struggle, to use our skills to protect the rights we have won and to continue to pursue equality. Minority lawyers should strive for personal success. However, in our pursuit of personal gain, we must acknowledge our responsibility to aid in the struggle and then contribute our resources because true success is impossible while our brothers and sisters are oppressed.

The black legal community, therefore, must now begin to make a difference. We must express ourselves politically. We must utilize our ever increasing intellectual and financial resources in aiding our brothers and

sisters in any way we can. Additionally, we must fight for unlimited access to public resources and private opportunity, and for the respect which we deserve.

The publishing of the *Black Law Journal* is intended to inform and document the course of our struggle. In this issue, Cheryl Tompkin explores the problems of the Haitian refugees seeking entry to the United States. She points out the hypocrisy in American immigration policy and examines the frustration of the homeless Haitians. Another important article by Karen O'Connor and Lee Epstein reviews interest group involvement in employment discrimination cases. Furthermore the issue contains a comment, written by Charles Edward Donegan. This work will be of particular interest to law students and professors. It focuses on techniques found successful in enhancing the minority law student's academic experience.

The *BLJ* will continue to fuel debate and spark controversy by publishing topical, incisive and thoughtful material. The *Black Law Journal* persists in this manner so that none of us will lose sight of our goals thus keeping important issues and our struggle alive.

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