

## Forum

### Judge Hastings: Justice on trial

NEW YORK -- Can an outspoken Afro-American federal judge receive justice in the United States of America?

Can the United States Senate provide a venue for a fair trial for Judge Alcee Hastings?

Will the Afro-American community as well as millions of others who believe in the pursuit of justice sit idly while another travesty and racial injustice occurs against Hastings?

These questions need honest answers. The truth is that it will be very difficult for Judge Alcee Hastings to receive justice because of his race and because of his activism on behalf of the poor and downtrodden from his judicial bench. Ironically, the House of Representatives has accused Judge Hastings of judicial impropriety arising out of the same circumstances of which Hastings was found not guilty by a Florida jury.

On July 10 or shortly thereafter, the United States Senate has scheduled the Hastings trial. Interestingly and in contradiction to established procedure, Hastings will not be tried before the full Senate but by a group of 12 Senators who will ultimately make a recommendation to the full Senate concerning Judge Hastings' impeachment. Although Judge Hastings has not been found guilty of any crime or wrongdoing, the Congress of the United States is proceeding to prosecute and persecute him.

Are there racial overtones in this case? Yes, we believe that racism and political vengeance are

the major determining factors in these proceedings. Judge Hastings was the first Afro-American to be a United States District Judge in the state of Florida. He alone prevented the Reagan administration from

forced to defend himself in the context of a tremendous financial inequity. The vast resources of the government are now being stacked against a judge who still believes in the cause of justice for everyone



#### CIVIL RIGHTS JOURNAL

By BENJAMIN CHAVIS JR.

deporting thousands of Haitian refugees, and Judge Hastings, as a federal judge, openly criticized U.S. domestic and foreign policies. There is a vendetta against Judge Hastings.

The civil rights community and the church community cannot afford to remain silent. When the Hastings trial begins in Washington, the Senate chambers should be filled beyond capacity and every effort should be made to communicate to the Senate that justice should be done in this matter. In fact, a fair trial for Judge Hastings would be no trial at all because he has already been tried once and found not guilty.

It is reported that the government has spent between \$12 and \$15 million in attempts to impeach Judge Hastings. Although the government has provided no resources to Judge Hastings to defend himself against these renewed allegations, he is being pressured to abide by an almost impossible schedule of trial dates. Thus, Judge Hastings is being

without racial discrimination. Yet the economics of these proceedings also point to institutionalized racism.

Please write the following 12 United States Senators and let them know your support for Judge Hastings: Sens. Jeff Bingaman, Patrick Leahy, Davis Pryor, Richard Bryan, Jay Robert Kerrey, Joseph Lieberman, Arlen Specter, Dave Durenberger, Warren Rudman, Christopher S. Bond, Flade Gorton and Conrad Burns.

Judge Hastings is a fighter and even though the cards appear to be stacked against him, he has refused to surrender. The Hastings trial is a situation where the judicial system itself will be on trial. Justice demands fairness and an end to the persecution of Judge Alcee Hastings.

Benjamin F. Chavis Jr. is executive director of the Commission for Racial Justice of the United Church of Christ.

### Doing the right thing, Spike!

There is a short, skinny, relatively unattractive young man who wears glasses and dresses like a bum, and I've come to admire him immensely.

His name is Spike Lee, and his latest film "Do the Right Thing" is a must see.

Many Afro-Americans have tried and failed to break down the racial barriers that are ever prevalent in the movie industry. Afro-American actors and actresses have complained often about the lack of serious roles for blacks.

Hollywood tends to stick with stereotypical portrayals of black life, that is during those rare occasions when it is willing to employ Afro-Americans.

If we're not doing comedy, we're either cops, pushers, addicts, prostitutes or domestics. Things are not likely to change until more Afro-Americans are doing the writing, directing and producing.

Thank heavens for Spike Lee. He has persevered despite tremendous odds. His movie "School Daze," released early last year, grossed \$14.5 million and was Columbia Pictures biggest money maker.

Before "School Daze," Spike Lee's first major film "She's Gotta Have It" won the best new director award at the Cannes Film Festival and the Los Angeles Film Critics' new

generation award. The film grossed \$8 million.

Spike Lee isn't just making films; he's making waves. His films have dealt with very difficult and sensitive subjects.

In "School Daze" he tackles the almost taboo subject of light-skinned blacks vs. dark-skinned blacks. He

and Ossie Davis play memorable roles in the production, but several talented new actors make their debut.

Through his films, Spike Lee not only presents the reality of black culture, but he also provides much needed work for black talent that is going untapped by Hollywood.

It's fascinating to be able to



#### THE RIGHT VIEW

By ANGELA D. WRIGHT

challenges Afro-American involvement in Greek organizations and explores the subject of politically apathetic college students. He also makes a statement about black male/female relationships.

His most recent endeavor, "Do the Right Thing," is a cause and effect examination of racism in a Brooklyn, N.Y. neighborhood. Despite the tension that is evident throughout the plot, there is an underlying theme of love and the importance of communities.

Spike Lee's characters are real and vulnerable. His message is unmistakable and the plot is full of surprises.

Long-time favorites Ruby Dee

watch history in the making -- and Spike Lee is making history as no one ever thought it could be made. More importantly, he has not compromised his cultural upbringing in order to do so.

He makes Hollywood accept him on his terms. The name of his company, Forty Acres and a Mule Filmworks, speaks volumes about his commitment and motivation.

In my opinion, he is the best thing to happen to the movie industry in a long time. At the young age of 32, Spike Lee has a lot left to give, and maybe one day he will be able to give young Afro-American children their own "Lucy" to love.

### Issue is fairness

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petitive. None of those arguments are persuasive.

No one disputes the fact that increasing employer payroll expenses would mean some lost jobs at the margin, but few economists think the toll would be more than 100,000 and many believe it would be less.

The teen worker argument is also flawed. Teen-agers make up only about a fourth of minimum wage workers. Two-thirds are women and almost four million are heads of households. About 4.5 million men, women and children live in families in poverty where the head works at the minimum wage. The minimum is so low that a full-time worker can work all year round and still be below the poverty line.

As for the competitive argument, if the minimum applies to all employers they'd still be competing on level ground, so that one won't wash either.

Balanced against the marginal negative effects of a higher minimum are major positives. Poor families with workers would have higher incomes. Teen-agers from low-income families would be better able to help their families out of poverty.

And the biggest plus of all would be that the drift to greater inequality in incomes would be slowed. Our system would be more fair, and fairness is the bedrock of any system. Anyone who doubts that need only look at the way the communist countries' leaders are being challenged because of the unfairness of their system.

Yet another flaw in the opposition to the higher minimum is the belief that it would ratchet wages up throughout the economy and fuel inflation.

In fact, the minimum wage -- even the higher one passed by Congress -- is too low to have a per-

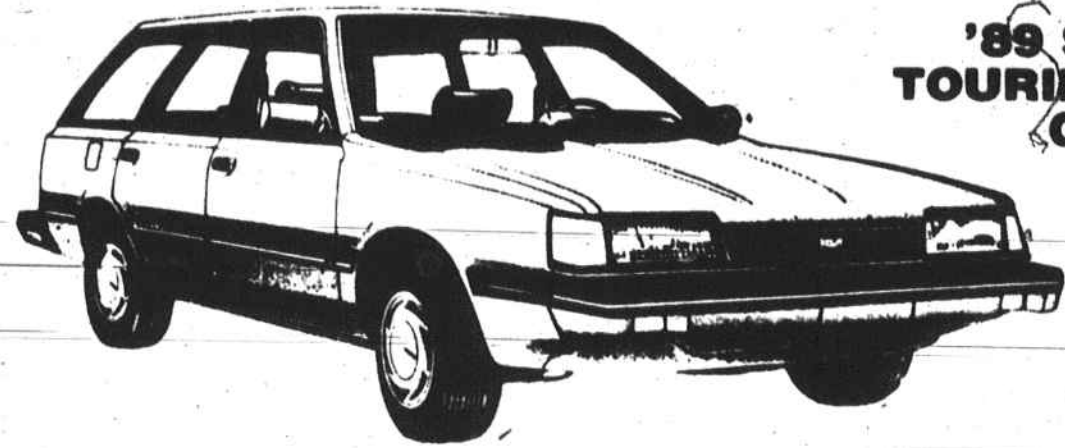
ceptible effect on inflation. And so many employers are exempted from the bill's requirements that most small businesses and non-profit organizations would not have to pay it.

The market dictates higher wages anyway. The slowdown in the growth of the labor force has led many low-wage employers to boost their wages beyond even the new higher minimum. So opponents of the higher minimum are driven by ideology, not reality.

It is unconscionable to tell low-wage workers in poverty that their work shouldn't pay enough to let them climb above the poverty line, while at the same time pushing a measure that would let affluent taxpayers cash in on lower rates for capital gains.

John E. Jacob is president of the National Urban League.

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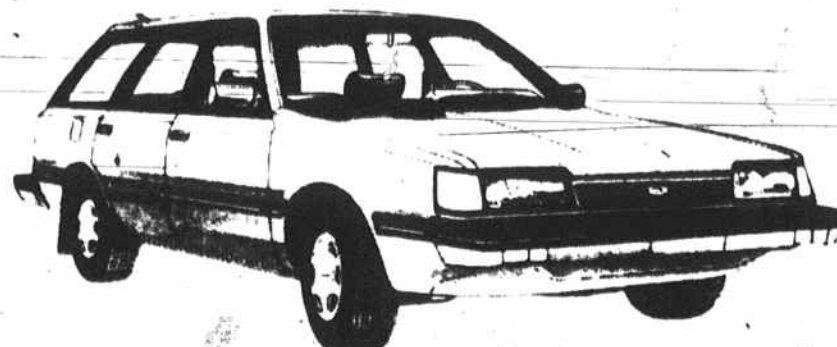
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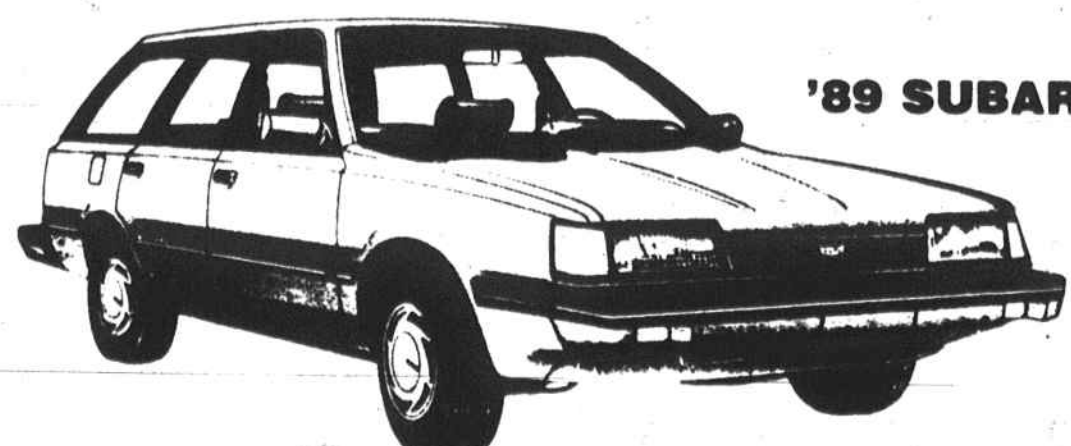
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