

Forum

Immoral State of the Union

Millions of Americans were tuned to their television and radios to hear the President of the United States deliver the 1991 State of the Union message to the nation. President George Bush began the speech by emphasizing, "We stand at a defining hour." To our dismay much of what the President had to deal with was the United States' attempt to "redefine" the world in terms of American "supremacy"

example of freedom and democracy." Bush further asserted, "But we also know why the hopes of humanity turn to us. We are Americans; we have a unique responsibility to do the hard work of freedom. And when we do, freedom works." The problem is that Bush's understanding of the scope and range of "freedom working" is too narrow and exclusively Eurocentric. For Bush,

the United States as the model for the rest of the world to follow.

Freedom does work. But the reality for African-Americans and the many other racial and ethnic communities in the United States is that our struggle to experience limited freedom and justice in America continues to be a painful reality permeated with racism.

The President says that the 21st century will be the "American Century." If it is true that much of American foreign policy emerges out of domestic policy, then the handwriting is on the wall. The global community will become more racially as well as geo-politically polarized.

The rich will get richer and the poor will get poorer. Those with the highest degree of lethal technology will rule those of less technological advancement.

Human biology, however, is replete with the fall of empires. No nation should seek to be "the super power" of the world. The present situation in our nation is full of social contradictions. But one thing is certain immoral behavior at home and abroad will not bring a lasting justice nor peace.

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By BENJAMIN F. CHAVIS JR.

and domination of the emerging "new world order."

We challenge the self-idolatrous and self-righteous tone and substance of the State of the Union speech. The immorality of the Persian Gulf War as well as the immorality of the growing suffering of millions of poor persons throughout the nation cannot be concealed by the President's latest attempt to assert, "America has served the world as an inspiring

the emerging "new world order" began with the reunification of Germany and the democratization of eastern Europe.

Yes, we are also pleased to see a greater sense of democracy spread throughout Europe. But Europe is not the whole world and neither does the rest of the world revolve on an European axis.

Most African-Americans were stunned by the arrogance of the President proclaiming his vision of

Recognizing black warriors

Black History Month traditionally focuses on the contributions African-Americans have made to the nation, and on various aspects of black history.

With war raging in the Persian Gulf it should come as no surprise that more attention is now being paid to the significant black role in

integrated environment, so too can all the nation's institutions.

And it's as important for Americans to understand the black progress in the military did not happen without successful struggle driven by black insistence on equal opportunities.

During World War II, as in pre-

African-Americans to risk their lives under the banner of freedom and democracy while withholding both from blacks. And blacks rallied round that tarnished flag, not only to fight the enemy, but to fight for the respect denied them in a racist society.

There were in a long line of earlier black generations who believed their sacrifices on the battlefield would win a greater measure of freedom and respect.

When the Civil War began, Frederick Douglas urged blacks to join the Union Army despite the Constitution's enshrinement of slavery and the government's refusal to attack slavery until long after the start of the war.

His advice, as strange as it seemed to many, was vindicated by outstanding black battlefield performance helped lead to the abolition of slavery and the adoption of the Reconstruction amendments to the Constitution.

So too, the sterling performance of blacks in World War II played a role in leading President Truman to issue an executive order integrating the armed forces in 1948 — a measure that was also made possible by black voting strength in the north.

It's hard today to see General Powell smoothly running a press conference or to see our integrated fighting units, without realizing what a long road black people have traveled — and how far we have yet to go.



TO BE EQUAL

By JOHN E. JACOB

America's military. Well over a fourth of the U.S. forces in the Gulf are African-Americans, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff — the operating head of all the armed forces, is a black man, General Colin Powell.

The U.S. military is probably the most integrated institution in the nation. It's far from perfect — blacks are still disproportionately found in the lowest ranks.

But of how many other institutions, especially in the private sector, can it be said that the chief decision-maker is an African-American? And how many routinely have whites working for blacks, taking orders for blacks, and reporting to blacks?

It's important for all Americans to understand that if an institution as traditionally rigid as the military can make the giant leap toward a more

vious wars, the armed forces were strictly segregated. Black troops fought under white officers and many were forced into construction, transport and other backup services in which they shared the danger but not the glory.

But they compiled an extraordinary record. Black marines helped win the battle of Saipan, black tank units defeated German troops in Austria, and black soldiers helped with the Battle of the Bulge.

The most famous black fighting unit of World War II was probably the 99th Pursuit Squadron, the air force unit that helped bomb the Germans into submission. Many of those " Tuskegee Airmen," as they were called since they began their training at Tuskegee Institute, went on to assume key leadership roles in the postwar world.

American in the 1940s asked

War adversely affects black progress

Everything about the unnecessary war in the Persian Gulf has a disproportionately adverse affect on African-Americans. African-Americans are disproportionately represented in the military and on the frontlines in the Persian Gulf because we are disproportionately disadvantaged in the United States.

And yet there seems to be coherent policy and no serious national commitment or will to solve the crisis.

A major reason for this lack of policy and commitment is the complexity of those who are disproportionately locked into poverty within the inner city urban areas. Black and Brown people are overwhelm-

Times, 1/27/91). The "peace dividend" which held out the hope of providing the much needed resources to invest in education, housing, health care, infrastructure development, environmental clean-up and greater energy self-sufficiency is being wasted on this mad misadventure in the Persian Gulf.

The ultimate impact will be greater than the loss of the peace dividend. There is the prospect of further reductions in spending for domestic social programs as this nation is forced to come to grips with the consequences of the war. A number of other severe problems are mounting even as our attention is diverted to the Persian Gulf. It appears that another \$50-\$80 billion will be required to continue the S&L bailout over the next two years. And now comes the alarming revelation that the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) is also in serious trouble as increasing numbers of commercial banks face bankruptcy. It is estimated that \$4 billion will be required to shore up the FDIC this year and \$23 billion by 1995. With the ravenous



VANTAGE POINT

By RON DANIELS

When the long awaited and inevitable ground war begins it will be the African-Americans who will be disproportionately coming home in those dreaded body bags.

What will African-Americans who survive this war find when they come "home." An economy that is in deep recession and inner-city African-American communities which will still be ravished by poverty, crime, drugs, violence, and NEGLECT. As a recent New York Times series put it, urban centers are faced with a worsening crisis.

ingly the victims of poverty in America's inner cities. We are all supposed to "stand together" as "Americans" in the prosecution of war in the Persian Gulf. But white America seems unwilling to save the united front in a war against poverty as a patriotic duty.

The war in the Persian Gulf will adversely affect Black progress for years to come. As Georgia Congressman John Lewis put it, "you cannot spend \$1 billion a day to fight a war and still deal with the problem at home" (New York

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