



**Smithsonian Institution**

*National Museum of African American History and Culture*

## **Delegate Magazine 1978**

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care of their families. The Municipal Health Service is the "family doctor" for these people. Providing essential health services at an affordable cost is crucial to the city's minority population.

While many agree that the much maligned Public Welfare System must be reorganized, the New York Urban League feels that we need to take a careful look at the impact of the welfare dollar on the economic life of New York City.

A random survey was conducted by the New York Urban League's staff on how welfare recipients spend their money. The figures show that 47.7% of public assistance grants goes for rent while the second biggest slice goes for food, 29.2%. For a more comprehensive look at these figures let us take a family of four on welfare in New York City. Every two weeks they would spend \$88.79 on rent; \$56.42 on food; \$20.14 on utilities; \$8.45 on telephone; \$14.94 on clothes; with miscellaneous accounting for \$5.61. The figures clearly indicate that landlords, grocery stores and utilities and public bureaucracies in housing and transportation derive much of their income from the city's welfare recipients.

The plea for much needed increased state and federal participation in relieving New York City's burdensome welfare costs hopefully will bring equal concern for the development of social equality for welfare recipients. It is significant that welfare recipients are the only participants impacted by the welfare system who do not have the opportunity to build enhanced personal image and improved financial condition. The welfare dollar flows totally and rapidly back into the local economy. A significant and regular transfusion of over 133 million dollars monthly into the local economy has a significant impact on many facets of New York City's economic life.

Crime prevention has always been a severe problem in the black community, and 1977 brought no change. From all indications, blacks are still not receiving adequate crime prevention services or equal justice from those responsible for enforcing the country's laws.

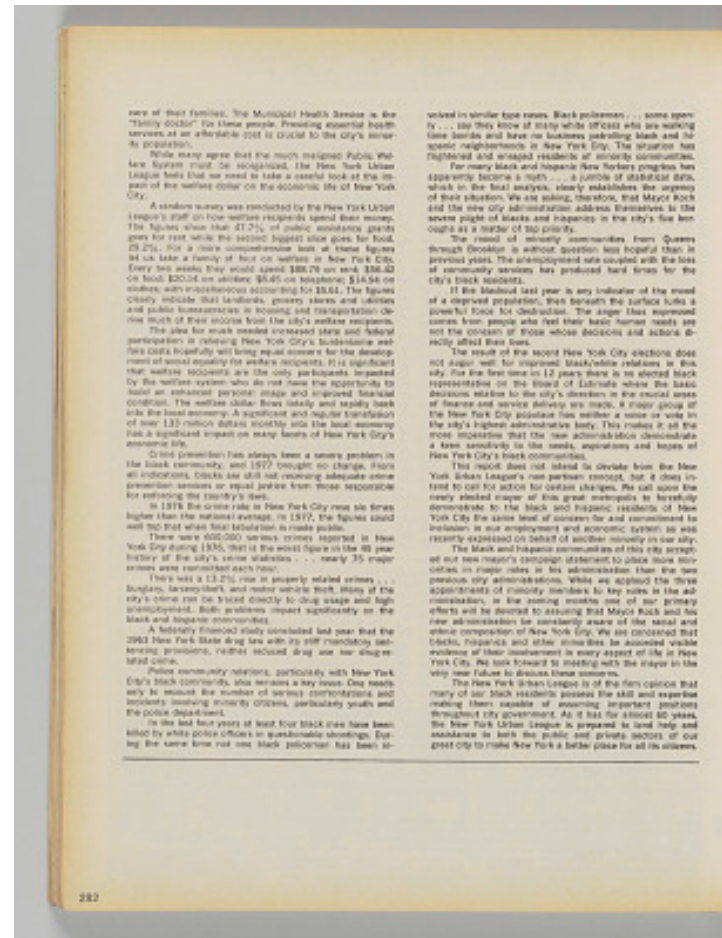
In 1976 the crime rate in New York City rose six times higher than the national average. In 1977, the figures could well top that when final tabulation is made public.

There were 600,000 serious crimes reported in New York City during 1976, that is the worst figure in the 45 year history of the city's crime statistics...nearly 75 major crimes were committed each hour.

There was a 13.2% rise in poverty related crimes...burglary, larceny-theft, and motor vehicle theft. Many of the city's crime can be traced directly to drug usage and high unemployment. Both problems impact significantly on the black and hispanic communities.

A federally financed study concluded last year that the 1963 New York State drug law with its stiff mandatory sentencing provisions, neither reduced drug use nor drug-related crime.

Police community relations, particularly with New York City's black community, also remains a key issue. One needs only to recount the number of serious confrontations and incidents involving minority



citizens, particularly youth and the police department.

In the last four years at least four black men have been killed by white police officers in questionable shootings. During the same time not one black policeman has been involved in similar type cases. Black policemen...some openly...say they know of many white officers who are walking time bombs and have no business patrolling black and hispanic neighborhoods in New York City. The situation has frightened and enraged residents of minority communities.

For many black and hispanic New Yorkers progress has apparently become a myth...a jumble of statistical data, which in the final analysis, clearly establishes the urgency of their situation. We are asking, therefore, that Mayor Koch and the new city administration address themselves to the severe plight of blacks and hispanics in the city's five boroughs as a matter of top priority.

The mood of minority communities from Queens through Brooklyn is without question less hopeful than in previous years. The unemployment rate coupled with the loss of community services has produced hard times for the city's black residents.

If the blackout last year is any indicator of the mood of a deprived population, then beneath the surface lurks a powerful force for destruction. The anger this expressed comes from people who feel their basic human needs are not the concern of those whose decisions and actions directly affect their lives.

The result of the recent New York City elections does not augur well for improved black/white relations in this city. For the first time in 12 years there is no elected black representative on the Board of Estimate where the basic decisions relative to the city's direction in the crucial areas of finance and service delivery are made. A major group of the New York City populace has neither a voice or vote in the city's highest administrative body. This makes it all the more imperative that the new administration demonstrate a keen sensitivity to the needs, aspirations and hopes of New York City's black communities.

This report does not intend to deviate from the New York Urban League's non-partisan concept, but it does intend to call for action for certain changes. We call upon the newly elected mayor of this great metropolis to forcefully demonstrate to the black and hispanic residents of New York City the same level of concern for and commitment to inclusion in our employment and economic system as was recently expressed on behalf of another minority in our city.

The black and hispanic communities of this city accepted our new mayor's campaign statement to place more minorities in major roles in his administration than the two previous city administrations. While we applaud the three appointments of minority members to key roles in the administration, in the coming months one of our primary efforts will be devoted to assuring that Mayor Koch and his new administration be constantly aware of the racial and ethnic composition of New York City. We are concerned that blacks, hispanics and other minorities be accorded visible evidence of their involvement in every aspect of life in New York City. We look forward to meeting with the mayor in the very near future to discuss these concerns.

The New York Urban League is of the firm opinion that many of our black residents possess the skill and expertise making them capable of assuming important positions throughout city government. As it has for almost 60 years, the New York Urban League is prepared to lend help and assistance to both the public and private sectors of our great city to make New York a better place for all its citizens.

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