

U.S. social agenda is floundering

The social agenda of our country — by which I mean civil rights, feminism, etc. — has floundered in recent years. The leaders of these movements have lost their way by replacing vision with visibility and questions with quotas. Two recent events illustrate this.

In Chicago on Aug. 27, about 500 representatives of community and church groups gathered together to reach a consensus on which black candidate they should support in the upcoming mayoral race.

It was a perfectly normal meeting — but for one reason. Symbolically at least, they slapped a “No Whites Allowed” sign on the door. Even more disheartening are the comments of Lu Palmer, a political organizer who arranged the meeting.

“We make no apologies,” Palmer is quoted as saying in *The New York Times* on Sunday, Aug. 28. Unless blacks come together themselves, he warned at the start of the meeting, “it could lead to the election of a white and a reversal of everything we have strived so hard to attain.”

To their credit, the two leading black candidates declined to attend and many leaders in Chicago condemned the meeting. But it took place and I believe it represents a broader movement. Our social agenda has changed from trying to create equal opportunity to trying to gain and keep power at the expense of others.

Part of the problem is that social activists need to

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THE DILETTANTE

relearn the lessons they've been teaching. Take for example Ellen Goodman, a syndicated columnist and leading feminist. She recently wrote a long article for *The New York Times Magazine* decrying the “death of feminism.”

In that article, Goodman talked about her experience of being named editor of a major newspaper. Naturally, she brought onto her staff like-minded women. Goodman then writes in laughably archaic terms about how she waited for the women to “humanize” the male corporate structure and turn its competitive atmosphere into one of bonding and sharing.

When this didn't occur, when the women acted just like men — some marvelously, some competently, some greedily — Goodman was disillusioned and disappointed.

What is this? People who vote for a candidate simply because of the color of his/her skin? People who believe all men are aggressive and competitive and all women soft and sensitive? And these are the people *leading* the fight? It's as if we have to start all over again.

Michael Giltz's life is one big mass of contradictions.