OPINION

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The General Assembly

We have given considerable thought to the upcoming term of Maryland General Assembly and the important role of the 20 black legislators who will serve us there.

Our black assembly persons and senators are a powerful but small sum of the Assembly's total membership ringed by 168 white lawmakers.

When they work toward common goals and present a united front in Annapolis they get amazing results seeing as how they are hugely outnumbered.

When they are unable to submerge individual actions to the totality, when they bicker over minutia, and when they go off on solo dog trips, they are less than effective.

That has been proven historically.

This 1979 crop of black legislators, however, seems a mature body of great potential.

Both old and new hands are politically astute. Most have been in office long enough now to know the ropes, understand trade - offs and realize that delivering to their constituencies is the real bottom line in the performance of their duties.

It is this bottom line that concerns us.

In the past the 90 - day session has been for a few legislators from our community little more than a long vacation out of town.

We call no names, we indict no one, but since we now have a thoroughly seasoned black legislative caucus, we will be evaluating our representatives on their ability to deliver the goods to the folks back home.

We will not be content with merely reporting resolutions that are all pomp and puffery.

We will not be content with reporting bills offered by our representatives that sound great on announcement but once the initial hurrahs are sounded are permitted to die in hopper.

We have noted with interest the myriad of kindnesses, favors, services and arrangements white legislators are able to deliver each Assembly term for their individual constituents and we expect no less from our lawmakers.

We have noted with interest and concern the kinds of legislation passed which is to the economic benefit of counties and municipalities within the state and we expect the kinds of political acumen which enables such largesse to flow into our community.

Advisers close to President Carter have been careful not to rule out a depression in America and soon.

Which means desolation and more problems for black citizens.

We expect much more from our black legislators than ever before because little has changed for the better for too many of the people they are elected to serve.

Our coverage of the 1979 General Assembly will emphasize the battles our legislators wage for us. And win.

All else, charges, role - playing, ritual, is secondary and of little moment.

The color of Jesus

Black scholars such as the late J. A. Rogers and Dr. Carl Murphy, the pioneering editor and publisher of the AFRO - AMERICAN Newspapers, long ago tried to educate America to the realities of Christianity's origins.

These two men, and others more recently, have dared suggest that Jesus was a black man from the desert of Africa's northeast.

They reported to us the truth of this origin of The Savior and presented us with evidence that Europeans themselves at first considered Jesus and his earthly parents, Mary and Joseph, as black.

Shrines and cathedrals across the bottom half of Europe still have statuary, illustrative materials that show Mary, the Madonna as a black woman, her babe as a black child.

Thus it has been an AFRO tradition on the high Christian holidays to remind all who will listen that Christianity is a religion indigenous to our mother Continent.

The desert tribes are not the only dark people. Egyptians are north Africans.

Even with the cross - migrations between Southern Europe and Africa that resulted in lighter - complected peoples in the Tigris - Euphrates region, now called the Middle East, it is genetically and geographically impossible for Jesus to have been the pale blue - eyed Anglo - Saxon depicted in art and iconology since the Dark Ages.

The Jesus who walked this earth was a man of color.

That fact should give black Christians added sustenance as the birth of Jesus is celebrated on December 25.

The Lottery

It is official. Black Marylanders, proportionately, invest more of their money in the State Daily Lottery, than any other group.

Low - income blacks, we must add.

But if any of this money is returned in any form to the people whose bets fill the state lottery coffers, it has escaped our attention.

Congressman Parren J. Mitchell is correct in his statement the week that the state lottery is a "rip off" of black people.

On the eve of Christmas and of the General Assembly's convening we think it appropriate that lawmakers give careful thought to legislation which provides that those who invest most heavily in the lottery realize its benefits.

With a state treasury surplus, and with those lottery dollars piling up hour upon hour, we think it criminal that this money not be put back into communities with the very serious socio - economic needs.

As it stands black lottery players are paying out to the state and getting nothing back from the state.

It is a situation that must be changed.

Sparrows Point layoffs?

It looks grim for Bethlehem Steel workers. Lay offs are almost a certainty if anymore shipbuilding contracts to the company fall through.

And as 1979 nears if the steel industry, being an accurate barometer of the nation's economy, slumps, we will have a preview of what will be happening to our economy in months to come.

At present, if the local Bethlehem situation is an indicator things could be quite grim.

Mrs. Santa

Contributions to the AFRO Mrs. Santa fund continue to come in even as the campaign nears its final hour.

This means, that as ever, our community never neglects those of its families in direst need during the holiday season.

We thank all who have given, individually and organizationally.

We also remind those who still intend to share and care that Mrs. Santa will be accepting contributions through January 1.

Have a cool Christmas

The Christmas holiday in America, with its emphasis on gift giving, and family togetherness puts tremendous pressure on folks.

It is also a time when lonely people feel more lonely.

And so Christmas often brings out the worst in folks although it is a holiday which celebrates life, goodness.

Consequently, across the land, there is a rash of family violence, suicide and mayhem.

Poor fathers rob to get money for gifts.

Estranged parents fight to the death over who gets custody of the kids Christmas day.

Drunken drivers kill themselves and others on the highways.

Media workers, although not entirely cynical, call all of this tragedy "holiday madness."

Much of what occurs could have been avoided.

We offer these notes of caution.

If you are involved in a sensitive domestic situation, think of your children, avoid discord, and put your own ego and temper on the shelf.

If staying home could lead to trouble, spend the night in church which will not hurt you a single bit.

If Christmas means stealing, going into debt, or other risky actions, you will be of no value to anyone broke or in jail.

If you must drink, drink at home and give your car keys to a non - drinker to hide from you until you've got yourself together again.

If you will be by yourself over the holidays call a city agency, senior citizens organization, single parents organization, and the like, and seek out companionship. Don't stay to yourself.

Such actions will help you and your loved ones have a cool Christmas and many more holidays to come.

A LITTLE ABOUT A LOT: MADELINE MURPHY

Variations on an old theme

By Madeline W. Murphy

I suppose I've talked about this, written about it, argued about it many times before, but with your indulgence, I must do it again. Just call it variations on an old theme.

Because I'm scared.

Scared that if the young among us, the 25 - to 45 - year old group don't stop just making the scene, "three piecing it," working, ending, pushing and shoving their way into the system without looking back or reaching down to pick up a brother, we shall be hell bent for destruction.

It is not unusual at this time of the year so see the newly arrived young middle class using that unbiquitous credit card all over major department stores. Stores, I might add, that wouldn't even take our money 24 years ago.

Yet the measured tones of "I'll take this;" "I'll take that" play counterpoint to the cadence of the "Twelve Days of Christmas" — subliminal urgings to give, give, give!

Younder what they think, or how they feel about all those young people — a whole army behind us — 36 percent unemployed black youth between 18 and 25, who fill our jails with desperation, or rip off purses, break into houses.

As the discos fill during the holidays, as the night scene becomes crammed those noting — seen and being seen — where will our consciences come into play?

(While the true spirit of Christmas is sadly recessed or salved by a few baskets to the needy, while we become more insulated with the victimization of crass commercialism?)

(While we swoop into our cars, garages, club basement with all the things we've always wanted for ourselves, our kids, but have never been able to get?)

At the same time, if all our creditors called in their markers, the chilling fact is that every man, woman and child in the United States would a average a debt of $4,300! Could we pay it? On demand?

And with inflation (paying more) and recession (wholesale job layoffs), calling in billions outstanding from plastic honey, mortgages, car notes, etc., might not be a far fetched possibility.

And now President Jimmy Carter, alleging that his first priority is to curb inflation with wage and price controls, and the OPEC nations raising oil prices 15 percent, sort of boxes the populace into a statistic salary situation, while beating and utility bills, food and clothing, will continue on the double digit inflationary spiral moving toward a treble tab.

Then too, how many cars, how many furs, gold chains will be enough?

Conspicuous consumption reaches a saturation point.

The addiction to be on stage all the time loses its luster.

The emptiness one feels at that point merely reflects the penalty of self - gratification.

Further, if what Dr. Frances Welsing, noted black psychiatrist, said recently is true, then we are not in a position, as black people even to classify ourselves. Those in power, the classifiers, decide who and what we are.

So the Bakke case shakes the foundations of affirmative action in colleges, while the impending Weber case before the Supreme Court challenges affirmative action on the job.

And thus all that we have accumulated can be taken away, and our so - called middle class status will be merely a snare and a delusion.

Subsequently, what this will mean, is that if we turn our backs on our less fortunate brothers, we don't even insure our own precarious place!

For so long as racism reigns supreme; as long as one black mother has to go on welfare; one child goes unfed, one house unheated; one son in jail, out total worth is diminished. Multiply that by the hundreds of thousands suffering and we are indeed in precarious times, bereft of all human dignity and self - respect.

Perhaps it is the time then that these affluent members of black America look upon the real plight of all black Americans. That we pledge now at Christmas (where peace and good will heretofore have shallow promises) to propose solutions to the problems of our black brethren; that we resolve for the New Year to become participants in the passing parade of possible solutions (narrowing the gap between haves and have-nots); rather than the passive spectators who've become part of the "Looking - Out - For - Number - One" generation (a sure road to separate but equal obliteration).

Merry Christmas or Happy Kwanza, whatever!

MONEY MATTERS

Year-end tax planning

This article is from the Maryland Association of Certified Public Accountants.

At year - end most of us look for ways to reduce our 1978 taxes, but under certain circumstances, this could be a poor strategy.

Not always a good idea to seek ways to cut taxes? That is right, or so advises the Maryland Association of CPAs, which points out that if by saving on '78 taxes you boost your taxes in '79 or '80, you could end up with a net loss.

For that reason, say the CPAs, sound tax planning must be based on prospects for the years ahead as well as events of the year just past. The goal is to level off the peaks and valleys of taxable income to avoid the much higher tax rates that go into effect when earnings soar.

Thus, a tax plan begins with the preparation of a personal financial statement. Essentially this consits of two documents:

A listing of all assets and obligations, with the difference between them indicating net worth — a balance sheet.

A listing of all additions to or subtractions from net worth over a period of time — a funds statement.

To project your tax prospects into the future, a third personal financial document can be most useful: the cash flow projection. This is a listing week by week or pay period by pay period, of all the money you expect to receive from all sources, and what payments you will have to make.

With this information in hand, the end-of-year steps consist of timing income and deductions to make them fall in the year when they will do the most good or cause the least harm.

Such control is easier for business owners on the accrual rather than the cash basis. They can commit the company to paying an employee bonus on '78 earnings, for example. Even if they don't actually pay it until '79, if the commitment is made this year, that's when the deduction can be taken.

Maintenance work can be now or put off, according to the tax picture. The same with replenish of plant operating supplies: stock up now, or make do until after the first of the year.

When should you sign the contract for work you'll be doing or for work that will be done for you? It makes a big difference tax - wise.

On inventory, consider writing off items whose value has sagged.

Bad debts? Can you establish that the debt went bad in '78? You must have made a signous effort to collect to establish the worthlessness; should that effort be made now or later?

And what about the investment credit: Will you be more in need of that 10 percent of the purchase price of productive equipment now or in '79? (You have your choice, for the credit, due to expire, has been made permanent.)

Those are some of the year - end tax planning opportunities for business people but other individuals — even employees — are not without ways to control their tax liabilities, too.

For example, a person on the cash basis can prepay or not prepay for repayment of a debt before the year's end, can speed up or delay payment of deductible expenses such as contributions and certain state or local taxes, or can have dental or medical work done either now or later.

Your filing status (single, married — filing jointly, married filing single and head of household) can have significant effect on your tax rate. And while no one would marry or divorce, let's say, to change his filing status, a person living apart from a spouse for an entire year could qualify as a single taxpayer or as a head of household.

Or perhaps there is someone who would qualify as your dependent if that individual did not provide more than half of his own support. But what is support? Not savings or investments, life insurance premiums or taxes — they are not support for tax purposes.

So if your can arrange it that the individual devotes a good part of his income to those, while your contributions pay for meat-and-potato items, you could still get the exemption.

As indicated earlier, though, sound tax planning goes well beyond year - end adjustments. A good tax plan extends over a lifetime, and takes into consideration long-range income expectations, family growth, as well as disposal of the estate after death.

One of the most urgent long - range tax planning needs for many families is acquiring the wherewithal to pay for children's higher education. Simply putting the money aside in a special savings account or investment is not enough (although a majority of families lack even that much of a plan). As the fund builds over the years, its income, added to yours, can be depleted by taxes.

The goal should be to protect the fund's earnings from such tax erosion. Put the savings or investments in the children's names, so that any taxes would be assessed at their much lower rate; in most cases they would owe no taxes at all.

Or set up a temporary trust, under which they receive the income from a fund you have put aside for a specified number of years. They, not you, owe whatever taxes may be due and at the end of the trust period the principal reverts to you.

A professional tax adviser will be able to help set up comparable arrangements for easing the tax burdens that accompany these and other family financial moves.

The earlier a tax plan is formulated and put into operation the more effective it is likely to be.

—LETTERS—

'Where do I go from here?'

Dear AFRO:

In February 1976, Chief Judge Edward S. Northrop of the U.S. District Court sentenced me to a 10 - year regular adult sentence.

In the process of handing down his decision, he stated to me and my wife that I had decided to take advantage of a bad situation by furthering my education and preparing myself to be a useful person when I am permitted to return to society.

I arrived at this decision because my wife had just given birth to our first and only child, a son.

Judge Northrop said if I continued to further my education and learn a trade, he saw no reason why I shouldn't be paroled in two years providing I didn't violate the rules of the institution.

I arrived at Lewisburg in March 1976. In my first interview with my caseworker, I was told that because of my charge, the guidelines were set at 46 to 55 months. But if I participated in educational programs and learned a trade as the judge suggested, I would most assuredly be paroled within the minimum of my guidelines.

So with the suggestions of Judge Northrop and my caseworker a constant part of my thoughts, I proceeded. I had studied for and received a GED diploma while I was at Baltimore City Jail awaiting trial.

My first step toward becoming a husband and father my family could be proud of was to enroll in the food service management program. Having had previous experience in cooking, I applied for a job in the foodservice department where I also entered the cook's apprenticship course from which I will receive a certificate for achieving 6,000 hours required to be classified as a qualified cook.

I started at the very bottom and stayed with it until I had worked my way to the highest position an inmate can achieve in that department.

As a result of their appreciation of my work, my supervisors wrote several good conduct reports to my caseworker on my behalf and stated their belief that when the time came, providing I was eligible for parole, I would be an asset to my environment.

With the exception of one minor infraction, I maintained a perfect record since my arrival here. To accompany the GED diploma in food-service management, my certificate from the cooks' apprenticeship course, I am presently enrolled in a psychology course. I am also in the process of earning my Associate of Arts degree.

On Dec. 4, 1978, I appeared before the U.S. Parole Commission for my hearing and was told by that commission that "in spite of my educational achievements," "in spite of my work achievements," in spite of recommendations from my classification team, unit managers, work supervisors, and in spite of the good words Judge Northrop spoke of me, non of it was good enough to warrant that I be paroled.

Had I not been advised by Judge Northrop and my caseworker to perform these achievements, I still would have done so because there is no way that I could ever want my son to experience the life I have lived and the only way I know to prevent it is to change. I have to change. Otherwise, how would I be qualified to tell my son when he is heading in a negative direction?

The Parole Commission say they feel I should serve another two years. If I am not ready to return to society after 38 months, I am certainly not going to be ready another two years from now.

In August, the AFRO ran a column by Marion Banfield which asked why when we are released, why do we reject our families and society and return to these conditions.

One of the major reasons we return is because we aren't treated fairly. Upon arrival here at Lewisburg, we are told if we participate in academic and vocational training programs, and keep a good record, we will be recommended for parole when we become eligible.

Well, I followed their instruction and suggestions to the letter only to be told that it is all for naught.

Where do I go from here?

Right now, even at age 39, it is going to be difficult to find a job but not impossible. But two years from now, when I am 41, it will be, if not impossible, very close to it.

I am not seeking any special favors. I am not seeking something for nothing. I am asking for what I and the officials of this institution feel that I have earned.

I don't want to return to this or any other institution but if I am denied the chance to use the education and trade I have trained for these past three years, how can I provide a decent and respectable existence for my family and myself?

For the last time, where do I go from here?

RANDOLPH MCCOY SR.

Warning to Barry

Now, it is up to Marion Barry to turn those pre-election thoughts and visions into things.

He repeatedly asked black voters to come to the polls, so don't make our first trip our last. Let's see Mr. Barry take the boards off the houses, show us a better quality of corporation management, exemplify the leadership needed for a black-turning-white city.

Our trust is not only in Barry's hands, it's in every step he takes. We don't need duplication of big-government, what we do need is fresh ideas, accompanied by manesfestation of policies followed by genuine leadership.

Martin Luther King is dead with no answers, unemployment is up with no solution, inflation is here with no goodby. Help solve these problems, Mr. Barry and you will have succeeded in making my vote count.

VINCENT H. JONES

Beware rumors, gossip!!

Dear AFRO:

We think you should be aware of the conspiracy that is out to spread false rumors about the black leaders in this town and elsewhere.

You need to know that one of our sons was paid $200 to be a part of a rumor about a black preacher in this town. All he had to do was call a list of numbers and repeat "Did you hear so and so . . ."

We understand that after they finish spreading lies about preachers they intend to discredit black politicians.

What they want to see is the image of our strong black men dampened.

Our people need to be told not to listen to sensational trash and gossip.

We don't need another Patterson case.

We need our black men.

NAME WITHHELD UPON REQUEST

AFRO welcomes letters

The AFRO welcomes letters from its readers. Letters should be brief and must bear the writer's name and address. All letters will be given consideration for publication.

G. JAMES FLEMING

NOW AND THEN

Orioles and the city's heart

By G. James Fleming

If one has been listening the past several weeks, one cannot help noticing that it is sports that has a hold on our city's heart. More specifically, it is the orioles baseball team.

The ups and downs of "The Orioles" are more important than most other ups and downs. The condition of our public school system; the battle over inflation; the rise and fall of the dollar on the world's money markets; and the spread of drugs among pre - teenagers — all these take third, fourth or fifth place to the Orioles. A close second is the Colts football team, of course.

When have 55,000 or 10,000, or 5,000 gathered in auditorium or stadium on behalf of their children's education, or to learn how they can help the government in arresting inflation; or to protest the laxity in halting the spread of marijuana and hard drugs throughout greater Baltimore?

Or when has weaknesses in public agencies, in general, brought on the kind of wholesale griping as is shown by the fans when the Orioles or the Colts drift into a slump?

There are even people who never miss an Oriole or Colt compeition but who cannot force themselves to vote on any election day.

This column has no fret with those who like sports or who have other demanding recreational habits. Even the most staid columnist cannot resist the excitement of an approaching World Series!

But, it cannot be denied that a people can be measured by the games they play and the sports they indulge in, especially the sports they support with their money.

People can also be measured by how they react to their favorite sports and how differently they react to every other call on them. (How important it is to remember not to program anything important for the hours a pro baseball or football game is being televised or being played locally?)

Another yardstick is the wages and salaries a society is willing to pay to different categories of those who serve or entertain them

Examine the pay of pro baseball and football players and their coaches, as compared to symphony members and their conductors, or the pay of opera singers, or to college professors and their presidents.

It might also be asked when has a university invested as much in its debating team as in its football team or its basketball team — both college sports with an eye on the pros?

Leaving the United States for a while, how do you measure the concerns of the Spanish or Mexican people, as seen at their bullfights, compared to many other areas of Mexican and Spanish life?

Again, this is no tirade against sports, especially now that professional sports has dropped the color line. These musings are now here only because of the mourning and "cussing" going on ever since it was published (not for the first time) that the Orioles might change hands from Baltimore owners, headed by businessman and philanthropist Jerry Hoffberger, to a syndicate led by William E. Simon, former Secretary of the U.S. Secretary.

Some fans have declared themselves as if treason were about to be committed; others verbalized that the team would be very different "if it is based in Washington" or even if it plays a few "home games" 39 miles away from the "Charm City."

None spoke of the taxes Baltimore might lose, or even of the inconvenience of traveling to Washington — no more inconvenience, of course, than the plight of Washington area fans who now travel to Baltimore.

After all that, we too, would like the Orioles (and the Colts) to remain in Baltimore!

CHRISTMAS NOTE — "Now and Then" joins the rest of the AFRO family in wishing a joyous Christmas and a Happy New Year to all our readers.

FOR ALL WE KNOW

ELIZABETH M. OLIVER

By Elizabeth M. Oliver
City Editor

PARAGRAPHS LEFT OUT OF LAST WEEK'S COLUMN INCLUDED SEVERAL MORE OF OUR Men of Maryland. Soooooo, since most of those already named have clipped the list for their records, we'll ask you to add these:

BISHOP MONROE H. SAUNDERS, for his first - in - history Creative Learning School on the grounds of the old Samuel Ready School on Rte. 40.

CORRIGAN VAUGHN, who makes the list of distinguished Maryland Men at age 12. This junior high school pupil is cited for deep concern for his people and wide knowledge of those things which could lead to full citizenship.

FATHER JON SULLIVAN, rector at St. Mary's Chapel on Paca Street, for his bringing into historic prominence the life of Sister Elizabeth Lange, the black woman founder of the Oblate Sisters of Providence, the first order of black nuns in the world.

JOHN PETERS, the late president of Freedom House, who spent his latter days in the cause of freedom and raising the standard of the inner city.

REV. WILLIAM JOHNSON, for his endless good work as the chaplain at Provident Hospital and in his Turner Station church.

COMING EVENTS include the late Winter Freedom Banquet of the Hawaii Chapter NAACP. My daughter, Marsha R. German, the newly elected vice - president and chairman of the dinner party has secured the consent of Baltimore's Rev. Alfred Vaughn, Attorney Juanita Mitchell and Clarence Mitchell Jr. to appear on the program as guests of the membership.

They'll be on that Island of Eternal Summer with VIP accommodations a week or so. Mrs. Vaughn's also a guest.

MARSHA was brought up in the Baltimore NAACP youth movement and has a priceless citations signed by Dr. Lillie M. Jackson.

LET'S SKIP CHRISTMAS except to wish all my friends of my 25 years at the AFRO a Merry Yuletide.

NEW YEAR'S EVE and Day are included in what we call the Highest Holy Holiday of the Christian world.

A LOOK AHEAD at 1979 reveals some interesting notes: JAN. 1 marks the beginning of 1979 and beginning of the 204th birthday of the US of A. It corresponds to the 6692 year of the Julian Period.

1979 is 2732nd anniversary of the founding of Rome.

JAN. 1 begins the 2639th year of the Japanese calendar.

JAN. 1 was established as the beginning of the year in English - speaking countries by the British Act of 1751. Before that, the new year began on March 25.

JAN. 1 is the day the earth begins a new orbit of the Sun and by the time 1979 is over we will have travelled 583,416,000 (whew) miles in the 365 days. Therefore, New Year's Day is called Everyman's Day.

1979 is the 7th year of the 10 years (1973 - 1983) designated by the United Nations General Assembly for all peoples on earth to promote respect for human rights and eradicate discrimination.

1979 (Jan. 5) marks the 11th Assassination Anniversary of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy and Jan. 15, the 44th birthday of the late Dr. Martin Luther King.

JAN. 3 every year marks the opening of Congress. The Constitution (20th Amendment) says Congress shall always meet on noon on the 3rd day of January.

CHRISTMAS lasts until Jan. 5, the evening before Epiphany, the 12th Night, the end of the medieval Yule festivities and the end of Twelfthtide).

JAN. 6 is Three Kings Day, a major Christian festival observed in many parts of the world with gifts, feasting, lighting the last time of Christmas lights and then the burning of Christmas greens. The 12th and last day (Jan. 6) commemorates the visit of the Three Kings to Bethlehem. JAN. 1 of course is a national legal holiday and if you have to work you get double, piggy - back pay.

FRIDAY, Jan. 13 comes on SATURDAY. (T-hee)

JANUARY is Read - Your - Seed Catalogue Month by the fire and dream of April showers to come.

BY THE WAY, Dec. 21 (Thursday) the days and nights were the same length and then the earth started rolling toward Spring and longer days. How About That? On Dec. 21 the earth stood still, they say.

FEBRUARY, 1979 has Valentine's Day, national festival of lovers, on Wednesday. It's also Black History Month, February is. And, Feb. 28 Lent begins.

SPRING BEGINS at 12:22 a.m. EST, March 21.

EASTER is April 15, running kind of late, "almost May."

APRIL 13 is a Friday. July 13 is a Friday. That's all.

CHRISTMAS, Dec. 25, 1979 is on a Tuesday.

ASIDE — Mao Tse - Tung, founding father of the Peoples Republic of China, was born Dec. 26 (next Tuesday) 1893 and died Sept. 9, 1976.

1979's Total Eclipse of the sun comes on Feb. 26 and Total Eclipse of the moon on Sept. 6.

DO YOU HAVE a coffee vending machine where you work? Free coffee (instant) should be supplied. The boss is supposed to take the commission and put it in a Petty Cash fund for employees. Does he?

JAN. 10 opens the Maryland General Assembly at 10 a.m. and witnesses the swearing-in of the new members.

BETCHA it snows that week. The swearing in of a new governor (Jan. 17 - Harry Hughes) always comes in deep snow and sub - freezing weather.

BUS LOADS of school kids arrive complete with teachers and if the senior citizens of this state have arrived back from the fabulous vacations they are taking all over creation, they'll be in Annapolis by the bus-loads.

HAVE YOU EVER seen the likes of it? Senior citizens are having a ball this holiday season, trips of all kinds, everywhere.

ELZIE STREET is one proud father. His son, Det. Andre Marvin Street of nine years Police Dept. service, made sergeant Thursday.

1979 marks the coming of the old Wash Board into the Antique Category. Anything over 50 years old is considered an antique.

1979 will witness early retirement for more school teachers than ever in history. Why? The kids are too bad to handle and the pressure of Paper Work is killing. (They say).

CHRISTMAS DAY, thought — Don't go to bed on a full stomach. Why? It takes about seven hours for food to digest. Your system has a big job to do. Circulation during sleep cannot keep digestion going the right way and the risk of a "stall" is very real.

Physicians claim sleep after a big dinner can slow down the heart and brain to Zero and guess what, you could wake up in The Glory Land.

ADVICE — eat a light dinner before sundown and stay awake, on your feet, for at least seven hours.

RESOLUTION FOR 1979 — Try to find something that has never been done before — invent something — maybe you can make the Millionaire Class before 1980.

I'LL WRITE TO YOU from Hawaii. Meantime, have a Happy Christmas and look forward to your glorious new year. - EMO.

—MORE LETTERS—

Bring prayer back to school

Dear AFRO:

The importance of prayer being put back in schools that haven't already done so is a great need because of the damage that has been done in schools and society since prayers and the Bible have been taken out of schools.

They rejected God and accepted the devil and all his evil devices. You don't have to go to movies, the theater or look at television to see murder, rape, theft and robberies, drug traffic, prostitutes, kidnapping, etc. If you don't find it in society you can find it in school.

The graves are filled with short lives as well as long graves, jails are overcrowded.

The African servants were brought to Jamestown in 1619 by the Dutch, but were sold as slaves because of the color of their skin and not the contents of their character.

Our ancestors toiled and worked hard for nothing but when they refused to work they were whipped like animals.

Our ancestors prayed and sang songs to the glory of God from their hearts and believed one day that their people would be free. Now we are free to come and go as we please to school, church, etc.

It was grace that brought us safe thus far and grace shall lead us on, not drugs, alcohol, murder, etc.

Don't be a slave to these sinful deeds but trust in the Lord with all thine heart . . .

The church and home are two improtant places where prayer should be taught to children at an early age so they will be respectable young men and women in school and society.

MINISTER C. HOFFORD

Clearing the air, again

Dear AFRO:

It had not been my intention to belabor our gubernatorial discussion, but several statements by Donna Sellers (in her letter of Dec. 15) impel me to reply.

I did not "miss the point," Ms. Sellers, relative to "standing behind our black brother, Dr. Aris Allen."

But by so doing, you would have been placing at the helm, a man whose civil and human rights record appealed more to KKK'ers than to human beings; a man who would have immorally ridden to victory on the capable coattails of a black man.

With the exception of a similar political party, the two men were gross ly incompatible and, Dr. Allen, despite his deep concern for his people, would have exercised meager influence in a Beall cabinet.

I rushed anxiously to reread my letters to which Ms. Sellers replied, and found not a word that would or should have caused her or anyone else to characterize me as "anti - black."

My neighbors, in my entirely black neighborhood in Southwest Baltimore (in the inner city) were unequivocally incensed, and suggested a rebut "mightily" and "thunderously."

I suggested I be tolerant because, I felt positive that you, Ms. Sellers, had never read my letters on various topics affecting black citizens in publications over the past several decades. Several have appeared in the AFRO - AMERICAN.

I deeply regret that you found it necessary to impugn my character, Donna, but I am willing to charge it to emotion.

And I am prepared to assist you in clearing the air and record.

I am proud to have joined and marched with the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in 1963 and, to have been present when he delivered his stirring "I have a dream" speech at the Lincoln Memorial.

I humbly submit that you make contact with Rep. Parren Mitchell, Judge Milton Allen, Dr. Gilbert Banfield, Mr. Chuck Richards, Mr. James Beckwith, some of the prominent black leaders who are familiar with my many activities.

There are others, too numerous to mention here.

I am proud of my credentials as a just and concerned human being. Donna, who has fought for civil and human rights since an early age, and if there is "fanaticism" within me, Donna, it is for truth, principle, justice, morality, ethics, freedom and liberty.

LEON PEACE RIED

Criticizing criticism

Dear AFRO:

Rep. Parren J. Mitchell and City Councilman Clarence H. "Du" Burns object to the telephone company policy of sending armed guards with repairmen into city homes after dark.

Their objection disturbs me, given the fact of our violent times, and the company's desire to be prepared to prevent harm to its personnel and property damage.

I feel the company should be complimented, not criticized, for taking precautionary steps.

What, in common decency, do these gentlemen suggest be done? Are they ready, able and willing to accompany the repairmen, with or without pistols?

If they have a better solution, why don't they flat-out say what it is?

Anyone can criticize — that's easy — as Samuel Johnson said: "Criticism is a study by which men grow important and formidable at very small expense."

B. J. SMALL

State work —Kool-Aid?

Dear AFRO:

When I see my co - workers, myself included, time and time again harassed and some resigning, I am pressed to ask the question.

Do we as U.S. CITIZENS AND RESIDENTS OF THE STATE OF Maryland have a right to be employed by the state of Maryland?

If yes, then why are we expected to bend our backs, do a bojangle soft shoe, laugh when there is nothing to laugh at, be talked down to by token blacks, looked down on by low character whites and spied on by homemade lieutenants, one of whose speciality is threatening to lock up blacks, all of which is taking place in a state institution where I am employed.

This position is constantly being forced down my throat (a different flavor of Kool - Aid) but I keep spitting it out.

ELLEN PRINCE

Go slow when picking a dentist

Dear AFRO:

In the coming months, you will see much that has to do with advertising of dental services.

The Maryland State Dental Association is concerned that an unwary public may be lured into dental offices only because of low fee factors.

Therefore, we urge the public to exercise the utmost caution and restraint in the selection of a dentist.

Dentistry is to a large extent a very personalized and intimite relationship between the patient and his dentist. This relationship becomes even more trusting when the dentist refers the patient to an accredited specialist for those special situations.

Fee alone should not be the sole standard or reason for this selective process.

Laurence E. Johns, D.D.S., President,
Maryland State Dental Association

Unscrupulous devil

Dear AFRO:

Nine hundred and eleven unconsciously seduced men, God's wisom and truth committed suicide at the command of an unscrupious devil by the name of Rev. Jim Jones.

Who else would withhold the pure spiritual message of God back from those that came seeking it, only to feed them an unnatural message designed to make them more physically and mentally weak while he became rich in wealth and materialism?

Some will say what about the good things Jones did for his people? I say, everything we thought was good in the beginning turned out to be a foundation for the Hell in Guyana.

Jones' plan was full of trickery, deception and false worship.

Jones tricked his followers into believing he could cure people with internal cancer - using chicken livers and human blood, then he told married couples that it was against God's divine law to engage in sexual relations - than the devil would call the wives and commit adultery and fornication.

Jones also told his followers that he was God in the flesh and that they must worship him and only him.

There were 912 lost bodies in Jonestown, the twelfth was the unscrupulous devil Jones. Jones was not and will not be the last of the false prophets.

The true believers must seek out these devils in sheep clothing and shine the light of God's truth on them. We can do this by studying the spiritual and moral life of the messengers or prophets that the creator blessed with the divine universal wisdom (David, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad of 1400 years ago. May the peace and blessings of God be with them.

Watch out for those unscrupulous devils with those physicalized messages, they'll get you hung up on physical images and have you in love with stone, statues and themselves.

A true spiritual teacher and leader will always put God first and his prophets second. They'll also teach you about the spiritual force that was embodied within each of God's prophets or messengers. They'll also teach you about their moral nature.

KENNETH T. RAGIN

Back to God?

By Adimu Khary

The writer is a graduate of Princeton University and is currently in the Morgan State University master's program. He is associate editor of the MSU Spokesman newspaper.

The recent tragedy in Guyana has created a furor. The murder-suicide of 900 people in a jungle retreat has provided material for a number of sermons and some fundamentalist Christians scarcely hiding their glee, have used the incident to show that the last days mentioned in the Bible are here.

Other cults were quick to disassociate themselves from the practice of mass suicide.

Coincident with the Jonestown horrors, a local paper carried a lengthy article on the movement of young people back to their traditional faiths recently and the impression was given that since the demise of the social change movements of the 60s there is no longer any stigma attached to organized religion.

Of course the issues that made the 1960s a time to criticize all existing institutions are still present, more frightening because they have grown worse.

People are searching desperately for some psychic anchor, a spiritual refuge from the uncertainty that plagues America as it wearily stumbles towards the twenty-first century.

There are many currents to this movement, some are seeking peace of mind through pop psychology, meditation and other self-help programs.

The most populous wing of the movement for peace of mind is the branch that preaches "Back to God." The phenomenal growth of the "born again" movement in Christianity with its enthroned Presidential hopeful, turned court jester Eldridge Cleavor, has become a tidal wave.

The "born again" marvel in the white community seems to be coinciding with the resurgence of the Klan but of course these two movements are unrelated?

Contending with the "born again" movement are the cults. Cults are off shoots of mainstream religions, usually founded by single leaders who modify the orthodox religious beliefs because of "divine revelations."

These cults usually attack mainstream religions as either deserters of the true faith or false teachers. This is very easy for cult leaders to do because the issues raised in the 60s such as racism, imperialism and sexism, exposed the moral shortcomings of traditional religious institutions.

Another important factor in the success of cults in attracting young people is the discipline and immersion of the self in the collective will.

An individual who feels a nagging sense of worthlessness and inadequacy can through discipline, hard work and submission to the leader gain a sense of purpose and value.

No group in this society has had its self-worth more severely bastered than black people. We are insulted constantly on television, we are swamped with pictures of a white Jesus Christ. We are betrayed by a president who received overwhelming black voter support but is unable to relieve the unemployment that crushes our spirit. Still Carter vetoes U.N. sanctions against South Africa, the arch enemy of black liberation.

We have seen our leaders imprisoned unjustly or assassinated. Our meager gains from the civil rights movement are savagely attacked and pseudo-scientists are raising the cry of black inferiority all across the land. With such a bleak state of the nation facing them it is not surprising that many black people have turned to God as a refuge in this time of trouble.

The most frightening aspect of the Back to God movement in the black community is its substitution of concentration on the individual and the soul of the neglect of the pressing social and political problems that are staring black America in the eye at point-blank range.

Whether Christian or Muslim, orthodox fundamentalist or cultist this religious upsurge has implicit in its doctrine, that humans are basically sinful and unworthy and the only way they can become whole creatures of righteousness is through the surrender of the self to God.

One fundamentalist Christian told me in reply to my question about when God was going to relieve the suffering of black people both here and in South Africa, that if was not the color of a man's skin that made him an oppressor but the sinful condition of his heart.

The only cure for sin is to be born again which brought to my mind a quote by psychiatrist Erich Fromm who observed that "Religion is a search for faith in something else because one has failed to have faith in oneself."

Unwarranted fear and obsession with hell and eternal life, I feel, direct the energy and the mind away from the explosive problems that have not been solved here on earth. Black people in this world are in a life and death struggle and saying "God's ways are not man's ways" will not stop Rhodesia from bombing refugees in Mozambique, nor will it keep the Klan from harassing Afro-American people in Tupelo, Miss., or Woodlawn, Md.

Even when participants attempt to make the Back to God movement address social questions they are hampered by the idea tha God will make it all right in the end. People fight harder when they don't expect the cavalry to come charging over the hill.

If people must join the Back to God Movement, let their religion be like that of Nat Turner, John Brown, Harriet Tubman, Henry McNeal Turner, Martin Luther King, Fannie Lou Hamer and Malcolm X.

They were religious but they had the compassion to work to alleviate the suffering in this world.

If God is in all of us as believers say, then they can move with power and wisdom to reconstruct America.

Unless black people who are going back to organized religion and those who never left make themselves a force for human liberation and bitter enemies of social injustice, they will prove Karl Marx correct in his statement that "Religion is the sigh of the oppressed, a heartfelt cry in a heartless world, it is the opiate of the people."

Hopefully the Back to God Movement in the black community will not become a move back to our being passive victims of oppression.

Check into cults

Dear AFRO:

The black communities of the United States should be very upset over the mass murder of over 500 or more black women, man and children in the Guyana massacre.

We should all be asking President Carter to call for a full investigation of the murdering of so many people and to ask why so many people would leave this country and no one knew anything about it.

If one Jew wants to leave Russia it is on the front pages all over this country.

The CIA and the FBI knew all the moves that the black group made. Why didn't they know that all those people were leaving this country with a mad man