Baltimore Afro-American

OPINION

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Christmas story

The Gospels say nothing as to the day of Christ's birth, and the early church did not celebrate it.

In time, however, the Christians of Egypt came to regard Jan. 6 as the date of the Nativity, and the custom of celebrating the birth of the Saviour on the day gradually spread until by the Fourth Century it was universally established in the East.

By the end of the Third Century, the Western church, which had never recognized the 6th of January as the date of the Nativity, adopted the 25th of December as the true date, and in time its decision was accepted also by the Eastern church.

The Why of Christmas

What consideration led the church to institute the festival of Christmas? One writer tells it quite frankly. It was the custom of the Egyptians and Syrians to celebrate on Dec. 25 the birthday of the Sun, at which time they kindled lights in token of festivity. In these celebrations, Christians also took part.

Paganism and Christianity were rival faiths. The issue between the two hung long in the balance.

Eventually, the Christian fathers took counsel and chose to celebrate the birthday of Jesus on Dec. 25, in order to transfer the devotion of the heathen from the Sun to Him who was called the Son of Righteousness.

Astarte, the Egyptian Goddess who conceived and bore a son on that day, for us became the Virgin Mary.

Many Faiths Besides Christianity

Follow, in order to insure happiness His life has taught us.

In this column for many years at Christmas time, we have published the story of the birth of Christ as it is told in the second chapters of St. Matthew's and St. Luke's gospels.

In a shrinking world we must note there are many religious faiths other than Christianity and that the followers of these do not regard Christ as Christians do.

But among these faiths Jesus is revered, as a teacher. His teachings are respected, and those who contrast themselves in nearest accord with Christian faith are welcomed and admired alike by Chinese, Indians, Africans and the Australian islanders.

The Christ Child

Suppose it is appropriate this year to emphasize not so much the tiding of Christ's birth, but the manner of man He was.

The Christ Child was humbly born, even by the standards of the poor people of nearly 2,000 years ago.

He grew to manhood in a carpenter's home, and eventually went about the country preaching and teaching the simple doctrine that people should live peacefully together, deal fairly with each other and respect one another.

The Answer to Fear

He had the answer to fears such as grip many a home in this period. Fear that there shall not be enough oil, or gas, or food, or shelter.

Said He, God feeds the sparrows and the ravens. He clothes the lily. He numbers the hairs on your head, how much more will he protect and keep you?

He had the answer to race prejudice (St. Luke 6:22, 23):

"Blessed are ye when men shall hate you and when they shall separate you from their company and shall reproach you and cast out your name as evil.

"Rejoice...leap for joy...your reward is great in heaven...for in like manner did their fathers unto the prophets."

He counseled that a good rule to follow, in order to insure happiness and contentment, was to do only those things unto others that you would most desire they do unto you.

He picked 12 associates from the ranks and by the power of His personal conviction transformed them into an organization which has carried on victoriously for 19 centuries.

While He preached non violence, He was no coward. He condemned evil and hypocrisy, whipped money changers out of the temple, defied the majority when it was wrong, and did not cringe or beg for mercy when those who called Him a radical hanged Him to a cross.

But even as He died He found the inward peace that He preached. He forgave His enemies, who, he said, did not understand Him.

This is the simple and beautiful story that will be told all over the Christian world this week. But not all will heed it.

For men still believe that peace comes by conquering others instead of themselves.

They haven't heard the Christmas message aright. It's peace for men of good will. It's more blessed to give than to get...to stand firmly for principles than to compromise...to hate evil rather than evildoers.

Today we say to our country: End racial segregation of black people and follow Jesus would say. Do unto others as you would have them do to you.

But we know the way. We can pray that the blessed benediction of peace will come upon America and we can work and fight until free people can walk gracefully and gladfully in the lasting faith this one has taught us.

From the writings of Dr. Carl Murphy.

Season of hope and stress

By Dr. Samuel Banks

The season of Christmas has historically evoked an aura, all too fleeting, of hope, euphoria and a restless yearning for peace throughout the world. This season, to be sure, is no different, but the elemental spirit of hope is mated and sobered by the disquieting and perturbing stresses and strains of human suffering, deprivation and denial of opportunities in our land and in the world community.

Nowhere is the situation more visible and fraught with peril than in the United States insofar as the vast majority of 31 million black Americans are concerned. It is demonstrably clear that a conservative and reactionary national mood and the election of President-elect Ronald Wilson Reagan, while not an occasion for panic-ridden, are occasions for profound unease and consternation. The collective backs of 31 million black people, except for a few ceremonial sycophants and genuflectors, are pushed to the wall. This, tragic as it is, is the collective and saturnine state of black Americans as we celebrate the birthday of Jesus in a lowly manger in Bethlehem over 2,000 years ago.

The unquenchable and indomitable spirit and love of freedom which guided our forbears in the antebellum period and to this point, firm and undaunted faith in the power of God to right ancient wrongs and a fierce determination to assert our human potential will, if we don't panic and turn to despair and self - pity, enable us to survive the current human pressure cooker. We must, as in the past, dare to affirm hope in the midst of pathos, love in the presence of hate, courage in the face of stark adversities. We must, in short, permit no one to turn us around in our seditious and unremitting struggle for equality of opportunity, dignity and human fulfillment.

As we ponder the hopeful promise and meaning of Christmas 1980, it may be useful to consider the pertinence of a fearful and incisive challenge offered by Frederick Douglass in 1862:

"It is vain that we talk of being men, if we do not the work of men. We must become valuable to society in other departments of industry than those servile ones from which we are rapidly being excluded. We must show that we can do as well as they (i.e., whites). When we can build as well as live in houses, when we can make as well as wear shoes, when we can produce as well as consume wheat, corn and rye...then we shall become valuable to society. Society is a hardhearted affair. With it the helpless may expect no higher dignity than that of paupers. The individual must lay society under obligation to him or society will honor him only as a stranger and sojourner."

Christmas 1980 constitutes a time when black America must make a sacrificial resolve, given the prodigious unmet socioeconomic needs, to affirm hope and human possibilities. Then, too, we must rise above our collective suffering and denial to witness to the world in the timeless and priceless tradition: "Peace on Earth, Good Will To Men."

To The Community and All who Made The AFRO'S Mrs. Santa Campaign a Success

MADELINE MURPHY

Purloined city corporations

And so at this Christmas tide, the tangled web of the City trusteeship rears its ugly head to warn us that deceit is part and parcel of what is happening with this $100 million quasi-public corporate system of the City of Baltimore.

Recently a couple, who worked closely with the city trustees, applied for and almost got a loan for a private dwelling, an apartment, and were so sure that they would have no trouble in getting the loan, that they gave notice to the tenants to vacate within a month.

It is instructive here to mention that despite whether the loan was to be obtained from a variety of funds that would make it legal that the revelations of the press merely point out that even the look of impropriety raises the fear of the absolute power of the Mayor and trustees over millions of dollars of this city, directed without checks or balances.

With the recent resignation of one of the trustees, Lawrence B. Daley, what is hoped is that the City Council, through the handiaiden of Mayor William D. Schaefer, will find its backbone and act as representatives of the people to bring to light the machinations of this gigantic slush fund.

It is ridiculous that the Board of Estimates does not even know how these funds are managed or what entail. It raises the old saw about power corrupting and absolute power corrupting absolutely.

When we see, also, that the mayor is more interested in mortar than in people, in national aquaria, in the development of nightclubs and other attractions for downtown in his "play pen", the Inner Harbor, banking on what he perceives to be a bottomless pit of gullible consumers; that he becomes only negatively concerned and angered when money is found and when Mr. Daley suggests that it be directed toward the real needs of the lower income potential home buyers, we must recognize that the shadow government he has formed is there to serve a dictatorial purpose-a desire to have things his way, the people be damned.

The anger he felt over the revelations from Lawrence Daley, that there were enough funds held by the trustees to develop low interest mortgages to low income home buyers also shows that he feels no compulsion to level with the citizens about how much of their money these corporations sit upon, even if they have to be taxed to the hilt because of their ignorance.

Only when there is a threat of cuts in Department of Social Services funds—money, in the main distributed by the state; only when he can give an impression of caring for the poor without cost of his private domain, does he show a trace of humanism. And then only when he sees the spectre of social unrest that must come from hungry mobs of people who have faced deprivation and racism far too long.

So Merry Christmas to all you spare and "fontos" who go along with this warped idea of how city government should be run and to hell with the helpless community in league with these purloined corporations, is important.

In another vein, someone called recently to say that what we need to do is to establish food kitchens and clothing outlets all over this town to begin to make our contributions to the poor and needy blacks every day not at a time when the Christmas spirit dictates that we must.

While we talk about developing stronger political unity, we must also understand that before we can register the masses to vote, we must also care for their needs outside of traditional agencies all of the time.

We must develop a network, like the precinct leaders of old, where we find out what families are in trouble, what families could stand a little help, what families need sustaining care.

Lest we be too eager to develop black economic programs that again benefit a small group of entrepreneurs, we must be warned that in free enterprise, the profit motive overrides the humanistic spirit of cooperation and community concern about the disadvantaged as witness the mayor's performance.

Perhaps at Christmas when we are magnanimous in our giving, we might find ways to extend that magnanimity year round, so that our black grass roots supporters will be prepared to fight measures that will have a long lasting affect upon the survival of our total community.

It is quite evident, given the history of a pandering City Council, the hardnosed mayor, that we cannot expect much from them in the way of reform.

But we cannot wait for the mayor to act nor stand by and let our people suffer through hunger, cold and blighted housing.

LETTERS

Black churches, white architects

Dear AFRO:

Last month The Sun printed an article regarding the "largest church to be built in the City since 1959." The article said that "The New Shiloh Baptist Church with more than 4,000 members is the largest black Baptist congregation in Baltimore."

It is significant to note that this largest black church congregation has hired a white architectural firm for the design of its new facility.

As the 1979-80 president of the National Organization of Minority Architects, I have had the opportunity to visit several minority architects and their communities throughout the U.S. It is disheartening to see similar examples of black communities approaching non-minority architectural firms for their significant projects. This is true even when those communities have minority owned firms who are award winners for their architectural designs.

This ecumenical act of color blindness is well known in the black community. In fact, except for the American Indian, our black communites externalize their commerce in more instances than any other ethnic group. The majority community is well aware of this attitude of non-support.

In the religious community many of our Black churches recommend non-black architects to their sister churches and further, their national bodies also recommend non-Black over Black architects for Black churches.

Does anyone know of a black architect recommended by a black congregation or by a national church body to a white congregation? I know of no such recommendation in the Baltimore area. Even our municipal bodies have used their influence to have white architects assigned to black community projects.

Let me put some perspective to my comments. Nationally, there are roughly, 50,000 licensed architects and of this number there are less than 1,500 licensed minority architects, which is less than 3 percent. Per population statistics indicate that while there is one licensed architect per 4,400 total U.S. population, there is only one licensed minority architect per 15,000 black U.S. population.

And, "minority" includes all architects who are of black, Hispanic, Asian, native American and South Pacific backgrounds.

In Baltimore, there are only five black owned architectual firms, one of which is a branch office. The comparable population statistic is one black architectural firm for each 100,000 black population, and one licensed black architect per 35,000 black Baltimore population.

Let me hasten to add that I do not criticize the white architectural firm hired by Shiloh Baptist Church. His business is designing religious and other facilities. However, the church not only hired an architect from outside the church's ethnic community, but a firm which is located in Baltimore County, a county which has a well known history for ignoring the black community and for not hiring minority architectural firms.

For those who might say there are not enough black owned firms in Baltimore. It is not surprising that there are no more firms when one considers that our community is not 100 percent in support of their own firms. That support is critical. For it is only with that support that I can maintain my role as a model for future architects from the black community. To maintain our visibility for our community we must be supported by it.

There are some notable examples of determined support from Baltimore's black church congregations in favor of hiring black Baltimore architects. Among them are Union Baptist, Fountain Baptist, Bethel A.M.E., Douglas Memorial, Berean Baptist, Pennsylvania A.M.E. Zion, and St. James Episcopal.

I have had personal experience with some of these congregations' support for hiring black owned architectural firms when there was a concerted effort against their hiring from powerful members of the white community.

President-elect Ronald Reagan has said during his presidential campaign, that he will support those ethnic communities which can exhibit a demonstrated record of organization and self support. Continued federal support may depend upon how well our black communities and institutions demonstrate an infrastructure which has a significant degree of self sufficiency.

And finally, for those who may declare my comments to be racist and sour grapes, what I have written above is purely factual. My firm, the Leon Bridges Company, has been relatively successful in Baltimore, and our success has largely been due to substantial support by my community.

However, when there is so much negativity regarding the Nov. 4th election results and what seems to be a move to the Right in this country, isn't it queer that our community doesn't look to its own first?

If my comments seem to be racist it is because some members of our community appear to be living in theage of "white is right, brown can stick around, and black git back."

The time is now, to step up into the 20th century and support our own community. When every other ethnic group is doing this, why can they point the finger of racism.

If my comments seem to be sour grapes, it is only that I am disappointed that not one of the Baltimore black architects were interviewed.

LEON BRIDGES

Support black architects

Dear AFRO:

The recent letter by black architect Leon Bridges puff'shedhere and in the Morning Sun is a timely expose of the continuing thoughtlessness and economic naivety of many people who exercise leadership roles in our community.

Far too often, even in the 80's, blacks seeking services have the attitude that good service can be secured only from white producers, when the really of our condition should dictate that even if we have to accept less than excellent service, we shall spend our money with black business or non-black business which is meaningfully involved with the black community.

Nevermind that much of black income is derived from nonblack sources. The means by which we shall achieve respect as equal partners with other Americans economically is by acquisitive solidarity, earning from others what we can, then using and developing that to become indispensable suppliers and producers in the general economy.

DAVID E. SLAUGHTER

New Year wish —strong NAACP!

By G. James Fleming

In this season of best wishes for the New Year, this season of resolutions and prayers, this column has one wish that takes priority above all others, so far as the public sector is concerned.

That wish, which crowds out all others, is that, somehow, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) could win back its former stature, its former respect, its former influence. And this goes also for the local branches, including the Baltimore branch.

This pondering over the fate of the NAACP is not an emotional looking backwards to the "good old days" of W.E.B. DuBois, James Weldon Johnson and Walter White, nor a wish for the CRISIS as the same trenchant voice it was from the founding of its parent organization in 1910 up to World War II.

Nor are we ignorant of the fact that time changes. We are not unmindful either, that new faces and new institutions emerge out of the inevitable change.

No one can deny, however, that the United States and black America need the historic NAACP. Both the nation and its black citizens are in dire need of an organization with the commitment, the brains, the flair for organization, the reputation for integrity, and the experience—all of which were synonymous with the NAACP during its earlier and best years.

There was a time when if the NAACP spoke, presidents, governors, and congressmen listened—even if they did not always do the association's bidding. There was a time when newspaper editors and reporters turned first to the NAACP to ascertain the thinking and the agenda of black America.

Most important of all, there was a time when most aware black Americans "swore by" the NAACP even if they did not support it adequately, except in periods of extreme racial crisis.

To be honest, this is not so anymore, not only because there has been a revitalized Urban League on the national level, a Daniel Webster-type orator like Jesse Jackson of PUSH, a meteoric John the Baptist type like Martin Luther King, Jr., and the happy rise of the Black Congressional Caucus and the legislative black caucuses in the several states.

Somehow, apart from the rise of new advancement movements, the NAACP has lost much of its punch. It may be that it has not re-tooled fast enough, or it has not sold itself and its new programs effectively enough, or it has not been able to attract the charismatic leadership which this age of television seems to demand.

Whatever the reason, there is a feeling abroad that the NAACP is today only a shadow of its historic self. Whether one visits Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Detroit or Baltimore, one gets the same impression.

Baltimore is best known to this column. No one who knew the Baltimore branch NAACP during the long, celebrated presidency of Dr. Lillie M. Jackson could truthfully hold that the branch has lately had the same character, the same sense of program and direction and the same clout.

Like several other branches, it might boast of its "many-faceted" program, which translated means almost anything in almost directions—trying to but not making headway in any.

The vacuum which has been left by the present-day NAACP and its branches is not being filled by other organizations with the same capacity for seeing projects through, for matching brains with brains, legal skill with legal skill, political savvy with political savvy.

Or it may be that blacks believe, mistakenly, that they have made so much progress they do not need a strong, fighting, trustworthy NAACP.

It will be too late to rebuild the NAACP after the Ku Klux Klan, the White Citizens Councils, "the Moral Majority" and 100 other similar oppressive groups have come into their fullest power, when such groups, repeating history, have taken over the Congress, the state legislatures, the city and county councils, the courts, the editorial offices and the corporate stockholders' meetings.

A Proclamation of Support

of the

N. A. A. C. P.

and an Invitation to be Present

on the Occasion of Our

Jubilee-Passover Celebration

Sunday, January 4, 1981 - 4 p.m.

- The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People is an integral part of the American Scene.
- It has struggled valiantly and continues to struggle for the poor and disenfranchised. It enjoys the approval of fair-minded people everywhere.
- A complete recital of its accomplishments is unnecessary. The N.A.A.C.P. has made great men and women and great men and women have made the N.A.A.C.P.
- As a people, we are what we are because the N.A.A.C.P. spoke for, protected for, sued for and demonstrated for us, when we were powerless to do so for ourselves.
- As long as one injustice is perpetrated against the hurting poor and especially Black people, the work of the N.A.A.C.P. must go on.
- We therefore proclaim SUNDAY DECEMBER 28, 1980 as N.A.A.C.P. Sunday.
- We propose that every single church and community organization solicit an offering from the people of God for the support of the Organization on that Sunday.

We invite the community to rally in great numbers at the:

Prince Hall Masonic Temple

Eutaw Place and Lanvale Street at 4:00 p.m.

Sunday, January 4, 1981

to celebrate our Passover-Jubilee
and to give financial and moral support to this worthy Insitution.

A.M.E. Preachers Meeting
Baptist Clergy in Action
Baptist Ministers Conference
Black Coalition - Maryland State Troopers
Black United Methodist Preachers
COPE '83
Funeral Directors and Morticians Association of Maryland, Inc.
Hiram Grand Lodge, A.F. & A.M.
African-American News and World Report
Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance
Monumental Bar Association
Myra Grand Chapter, O.E.S.
Naomi Grand Chapter
Prince Hall Mason of Maryland
Vanguards for Justice - Baltimore City Police
The Vulcan Blazers
AFRO-AMERICAN Newspapers