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Morgan: Skilled acrobat needed

There are those who contend that the voluntary resignation of Morgan State University President Andrew Billingsley this week should provide an opportunity for the 117 - year - old institution to move ahead.

For us, Dr. Billingsley's withdrawal showed his strong commitment to the university, where he has labored for the last 8 years. His departure at this point in the university's development may be just a bandaid.

Dr. Billingsley was at the helm of the northeast Baltimore college when it was granted university status five years ago. He said at the time the school would make waves as a university, only to the extent its financial support was increased because too long it has received insufficient funds to support its mission, hire its faculty, attract scholars and students.

Historically, state funds were insufficient to maintain existing structures, initiate new programs, build facilities. Under Billingsley and its Board of Regents a 19-point action program was initiated to make the predominantly black facility a "high quality urban - oriented research university."

As Dr. Billingsley prepares to leave the Hillen Rd. campus on Feb. 15, he can point to a number of plusses—the new science complex supported by state appropriations of $22 million, —a step to increase the college's capabilities to increase grads with skills in high-tech fields.

In November 1983, ground was broken for the $3 million student dorm complex, a 312-bed facility backed by federal funds, the first new dorm in over a decade. Engineering funds, approved by the Legislature this session, will enable the university to compete in this field.

New student honors programs have been initiated, faculty salaries increased, and opportunities provided instructors and staff to secure additional degrees.

As captain of the Morgan U ship, Billingsley can take credit for the excellent new programs, proposed facilities and for designing, with the Regents, the 10-year program, so must the captain take the blame when the internal system of keeping accounts in the business department and implementing recommendations made by state auditors earn a "very poor" and "poor report."

This is a bit much for two years straight, is the view of the Legislative Black Caucus and other longtime supporters of Morgan who feel that this smokescreen area, if not corrected promptly, provides ammunition to short-change Morgan again.

The Board of Regents has appointed a committee to select an interim president until a permanent replacement can be made.

Knowing the history of the Morgan regime of Dr. Billingsley, who weathered all kinds of indignities and could not overcome the complaint that Billingsley, the scholar and author did not tend to see that his staff officers follow the guidelines in the fiscal area, it might well be the Regents will want to examine closely the requirements they list for the new president.

The current issue of The Chronicle Of Higher Education carries two pages of advertisements for college presidents, including one from financially stricken Fisk University.

In each instance, the requirement listed includes, "The President should be a person of learning, who is supportive of the institution's role in the community, and eager to achieve its fullest potential. . ."

The Morgan Regents might add to their ad, "a skilled acrobat, whose scholarly studies include development of business methods to help identify and direct staff and faculty who would tend to sabotage and disrupt any innovative measures to protect their tenured jobs . . . thus reflecting on and preventing the development of the institution and corroding its program of commitment to excellence, he must be able to walk a tight rope between staff, faculty, regents, alumni and elected officials."

University Hospital concerns

In the past month, our letters from readers have expressed concerns of black employees at the University Hospital in downtown Baltimore. Spokesmen for these state employees fear they will lose jobs and other benefits should the General Assembly approve transfer of the hospital's governance from the state to a private non-profit agency.

Hospital Spokeswoman Joan S. Shnipper's letter, published in early January, contends that a labor official's charge that black workers will lose jobs is "erroneous." She adds, "no layoffs are anticipated and "all employees maintain the protection afforded them under the law by their state employees status..."

Last week, Clyde Woods, writing on behalf of a citizens' group , Operation Life, says the hospital's appraisal is "dishonest," and charges, "blacks who work for the State have already lost numerous jobs to outside private contractors hired by the hospital..."

This is just one point of disagreement. The hospital spokesperson asserts the hospital under private control "will provide better health care for the surrounding community. . ."

The citizens' group counters it wants to see the hospital serve the entire community, not what it describes as the well-to-do community surrounding the hospital.

Some where between the two conflicting viewpoints are the facts. The Legislative Black Caucus' hearing on the hospital bill is set for Wednesday, Feb. 8, at 6 p.m., in the Senate Office building in Annapolis. Further inquiry will come by the House Environmental Affairs Committee, chaired by Baltimore City Delegate Larry Young.

These two public forums should be an excellent opportunity for citizens' groups to get answers to their concerns, and for hospital representatives to present their statistics.

Such figures should reflect whether University Hospital is an equal opportunity employer, as it contends, or whether it restricts blacks from administrative jobs, as citizens charge. And, if the latter is true, such profile will give the hospital a chance to review its portfolio and initiate steps to correct any shortcomings.

We think the public is entitled to a straightforward, factual picture about employment practices and other programs at University Hospital now, and its plans for the future under a private board.

Register to Vote, NOW

A good citizen is registered and prepared to vote. Baltimore area residents can register NOW and avoid last minute problems.

Deadline for registering for the May 8, 1984 Primary Election is April 9, but Churches and community groups can start encouraging new voters to get on the books NOW, and avoid last-minute problems.

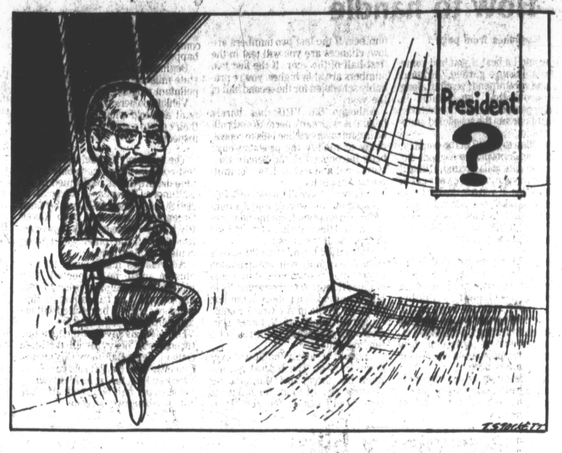
Register-to-vote applications are available at all branches of the Enoch Pratt Library. Persons may also register at the Supervisors of Elections, Fayette and Gay Sts.

Who must register: New voters who are 18, and who will be 18 by the General Election on Nov. 6, 1984. Adults who have moved here from another city and never voted before.

Persons who register and desire to vote in the Primary, must indicate party preference, Democrat or Republican. Independent voters can only vote in the General Election.

Note: Persons who have previously registered but have not voted in five years, must also register again.

Register now—it is not too early to get ready. For further information, call Supervisors of Elections—396-5550.



Parren J. MITCHELL

Public policy arena no places for theatrics

Well, once again we have been treated to yet another dramatic presentation by the highest elected official in this country. Many lessons tell us consistently that public policy formulation must be approached seriously and with a sense of commitment to the welfare of our citizens. Yet, the President of the United States took to the House Chambers last week, and with his State of the Union message, held strongly to this obvious obsession with ignoring realities and continuing in perpetual, polished stage productions which constantly present disproportionate burdens for blacks, minorities, youth, women, and low and middle income families.

The President's message has been pegged as, upbeat, sound, and perceptive, by those who share his warped sense of the country's current purported "economic upswing." However, those who would much rather tell the truth, and embark upon the implementation of policies to rectify the many problems induced by the current Administration, certainly have serious doubts about the covering up of reality by empty rhetoric.

Seemingly, the President's performance last Wednesday evening was marked by the disappearance of a few vital cue cards. Let's see. There was no mention of the five million Americans who have been added to the ranks of the poor in the past three years. There certainly was no real emphasis on the staggering $200 billion deficit which continues to cripple opportunities for national economic expansion. Perhaps the President wants to avoid the fact that he was elected on the promise to balance the budget by 1983, and yet, that year brought us the highest deficit in history. Lastly, there was not a phrase about the need to enact policies to address the reality that black unemployment continues to be blatanly disproportionate - an overwhelming 18 percent.

It is hard for me to comprehend a major address to the nation from our highest official, which ignores the fact that the enactment of the Administration's prevailing policies has made it virtually impossible for some two million young Americans to attend college. It is also quite difficult to imagine an assessment of the state of the nation which ignores the growing soup lines and the hunger (excuse me), I forgot that one of the leading cast members has loudly proclaimed that hunger just does not exist in this country). Well, maybe it does not in the world of tinsel, fame and continued stage productions.

Fortunately, many of us just were not taken by this latest Oscar-winning performance. There is no more accepting that the only way to get at that deficit and encourage economic expansion is to cruelly cut vital domestic programs, and leave the precious defense budget intact. There is not much tolerance for the continued loss of lives on foreign soil. And, definitely, there is a closed door on those prevailing policies which result in numerous tax cuts for the wealthy which are adding some $135 billion to that 1984 deficit.

Our dedication to sending our current public policymakers back to the Hollywood stage must be unyielding. In the interim, the Congress must stand strong against moves to provide awesome power to the President by way of adhering to his request for the line-item veto. The granting of this authority would provide yet another method whereby vital programs would be cut, and the defense budget would continue to escalate foolishly. Let's realize that the power to prevent another such performance is now in our hands. Let's ensure that a new Administration is put in place and save the theatrical productions for those arenas which do not set the policy agenda for our nation.

COMMENTARY

Corner Grocery

By Anthony Armstrong

Irvin's grocery store near the corner of Aisquith and Orleans Sts. was a little place with boxes all over the floor. There were the usual smells: fat back, dried fish, and soft coal in bags made of thick brown paper.

Irvin's was a dingy place where you could always buy on the previous week's bill. The "penny" candy was still a penny, the pound of potatoes always included two or three potatoes thrown in for good measure, and the fish was always suspect.

Irvin's was a corner store not unlike most of the merchants doing business in East Baltimore. The store was owned and operated by Irvin and his wife and they seemed to never go home.

The store was open everyday except Sunday, there was always a kid from the neighborhood working there (lucky dog). If you got caught stealing anything, you were barred out and your mother, upon finding out, would beat your butt before and after she paid Irvin for what you had taken. That was the 1950's.

Everyone knows that the marketing of food has changed from the dingy small stores owned and operated by jews, like Irvin and his wife, to dingy small stores operated by people named Lin and Chow and Sung and Park.

The Koreans are now the operators and a lot of people don't like it either. One complaint about the Koreans is that they only take, that they never put anything back in the communities from which they derive their income. People say the Korean stores are often magnets for drug dealers and other undesirables, and too many times, these people are right.

Much of the criticism of Korean merchants is sour grapes squeezed by people who are not smart enough to do what the Koreans have managed to do.

The Koreans do have some public relations work to do, however, what they need to do even more is learn something about the business of doing business in black neighborhoods.

What they need to do is take a bus, drive a car, or walk to the new Big "B" super supermarket just opened in the old Two Guys on Belair Road. The new Big "B" is quite a place.

Big "B" is a relatively new name for East Baltimore shoppers. The organization is one, however, that has done business in East Baltimore for many years. People know the name Brown's Supermarket; Brown's and Big "B" are the same people.

The Beckenheimers, who own and operate with Brown's and Big "B" Supermarkets are, pardon the cliche, legend in East Baltimore. Their manner of doing business combines the best of Irvin's old grocery store and genuinely avoids the worse of the Korean experience.

The Beckenheimers and their people have learned the delicate balance of doing business with us. They have been good business people inside and outside their supermarkets.

Just ask the little league teams in East Baltimore who paid for their game uniforms, or the number of people who have received a bag or two full of food free, or the mother who sends her son to the store for a loaf of bread, knowing that the bread is going to cost more then she has to give her son to pay for it.

The uniforms are quietly paid for by the Beckenheimers, the free food is contributed by the Beckenheimers, and the boy comes back with the loaf of bread. If the people at Big "B" are good corporate neighbors, they are even better merchandisers of food.

Their new and beautifully exciting food "palace" is the kind of commitment to doing business in East Baltimore that shouts loudly, "we appreciate your patronage, please come again."

The people at the supermarket are really very nice to do business with, they seem to never forget that the customer that ask them for help in finding the large Tide detergent are the same people who pay their wages. Most of the people working at the store are black.

This is important for the money, in the form of salaries, that these people earn usually finds its way into the black community of East Baltimore. The fact is even more important because sometimes blacks doing business with blacks can be an anxiety filled experience.

At the new Big "B" none of this tension is felt. Friendly, few businesses, either black or white owned, that have been willing to make the kind of investment in East Baltimore that this fabulous supermarket represents. For that reason alone, we ought to support the Beckenheimers, their skilled group of mostly black employees, and their commitment to East Baltimore.

The low prices are a great incentive to shop at this newest (and best) Big "B". Being treated as a valuable customer is another. Irvin and his wife would like this supermarket. The Koreans can learn something about how to do business with their black customers, and East Baltimore can't help but grow stronger, from the best food buy in town.

SAMUEL BANKS

Continuing crisis at Morgan State U.

Rational and thoughtful citizens must lament and be disquieted over the continuing human and educational traumas which beset Morgan State University. Over two years ago I addressed the situation at Morgan and concluded that tranquility and effective governance would not be achieved until significant structural changes were effected. The present turmoil at Morgan corroborates my position.

The time is long-overdue at Morgan to separate shadow from substance. In this connection, the overriding problem at Morgan is not President Andrew Billingsley. However, he is a part of the multifaceted problem. As the institutional leader there is a broad community perception that he is the chief encumbrance or barrier to unification and coherence at Morgan. This negative perception, widely held, makes it extremely difficult for Morgan to go forward under the present leadership. I expressed this view in several columns two years ago.

It is clear that Dr. Billingsley is a redoubtable, conscientious and capacious scholar, but, it, too, is equally clear, for whatever reason and-or reasons, that he has been able to coalesce and work effectively with the disparate groups within and without the Morgan community. While I personally rue the parlous and heartrending circumstances in which Dr. Billingsley find himself, I, too, rue the pain, divisions and uncertainty which engulf Morgan's faculty, staff, students, the alumni and the broader community. Morgan State University, given its historic importance to the immediate community, state and nation must be placed back on a vibrant and progressive track and maintained whatever the odds. I do not believe that this situation can now be achieved under President Billingsley.

I am of this persuasion for the following reasons:

1. lack of trust in his administration. Trust, the essential linchpin for effective leadership and governance in any institution or organization, has now eroded beyond resuscitation.

2. inability to coalesce and unify vital constituent groups. It is apparent that such vital groups as Morgan's faculty, students, alumni, legislators and community groups have, by and large, lost confidence, notwithstanding Dr. Billingsley's intellectual probity and accomplishments, to lead Morgan effectively.

3. eroded support in the Maryland General Assembly. The recent decision of the 24-member Black Caucus in the Maryland General Assembly removes a solid underpinning of support for Dr. Billingsley. The support of the 24-member Black Caucus in Annapolis is vital and crucial in fighting for and shepherding legislation and budgetary items through the legislative labyrinth. Its lack of support and recommendation to Morgan's Board of Regents leaves Dr. Billingsley, beyond a seriously divided Board of Regents, bereft of crucial and substantive support.

4. unfavorable audit reports and declining FTE's (i.e., full-time enrollment). Whatever the veracity and thoroughness of the state audits, there is a general sense that Morgan's fiscal house is not in order. Moreover, an equally troubling concomitant, is that student enrollment is declining. Consequently, faculty and staff cuts have to be made affecting the morale of all adversely.

5. lack of a spirit of collegiality and civility. The faculty, staff, students and alumni have all voted no confidence in Dr. Billingsley's administration. This development has resulted in friction, incivility and mean-spiritedness within the campus community.

The transcedent concern must be the salvation and forward-movement of Morgan State University. The present arrangement of distrust, schisms and division must not be allowed to continue. I hope that Dr. Billingsley will be permitted by the Board of Regents to leave with grace and dignity. The Board of Regents, given Dr. Billingsley's service, should be he amenable and his colleagues, appoint him a distinguished university.

However, it is painfully clear that the Billingsley presidency had to end forthwith. It is in Morgan's best interest that fresh presidential leadership is given a chance. FAIR MORGAN DESERVES BETTER.

SURVEY What black person do you admire most?

Rosita Merchant

Samuel Moses

Glen Plowden

Joyce Mitchell

This week the question to the man and woman in the street was, "What black person in the past or present do you admire most?"

Rosita Merchant, 35, entreprenaur, "Diana Ross. I love her glamour and excitement. I feel that all women should be glamourous. Diana takes care of herself and looks great for her age.

Samuel Moses, 63, carpenter, "Reggie Jackson. He is a clean baseball player. He's honest. He tried very hard to win the World Series. In that effort, he demonstrated the persistence needed in every black to succeed."

Glen Plowden, 21, musician, "Jimi Hendrix. He changed the course of music. I think he was the world's greatest guitar player. I am a musician, and I think his contributions to the music world have helped me."

Joyce Mitchell, 28, LPN, "W.E.B. DeBois. Mr. Dubois was an intellect. In those days, there were not many educated blacks. You need intelligence to compete in this white world, and I think an excellent use of it was demonstrated by DuBois."

Maurice Williams, 27, student, "Martin L. King, Jr. It was his conviction to God that allowed our expansion as a people.

Didi Hassan, 30, cashier, "Cicely Tyson. She made an impact on black and white America as an actress. She was the first black woman to wear braids as a national star bringing attention to a beautiful African trademark.

Patricia Roseman, 32, nursing assistant, "Martin L. King, Jr. He did a lot for black people. In fact, he changed the status of education and other opportunites often denied us.

Vance Morris, 22, management developer assistant, "Jesse Jackson. He showed that black Americans can be effective on an international scale. He put himself in the spotlight and attempted what most most hoped he would fail at and succeeded.

Maurice Williams

DIDI Hassan

Patricia Roseman

Vance Morris

PLAIN TALK:

About Car Seats

By Derrick Matthews, MD

As of Jan. 1, 1984 a new law came into effect making it mandatory for children under the age of three to have car seats. It was passed by the 1983 Maryland General Assembly. Most people have now become aware of it.

All children under the age of three are required to sit in a federally-approved safety seat when riding in an automobile. Children age three and four are now required to sit in an approved safety seat or safety seat belt.

The person responsible for compliance with this law is the driver for the vehicle (not the parent). The penalty for noncompliance is $25. In instances where a car seat is missing the fine may be waived if there is proof that a car seat has been obtained.

There are many good reasons for the law. Multiple studies have been done regarding car accidents and injuries in the age groups under the age of five. Every year in the United States the leading cause of death in the age group from one to four years is motor vehicle injuries. Between 70-90 percent of these deaths could be prevented with proper safety precautions.

Analysis was done in Tennessee in the late 1970's and early 1980's showing a three fold increase in proper usage of safety seats and seat belts after passage of their child restraint law. Correspondingly the number of deaths were cut almost in half. Studies in other states have supported these findings.

There is an additional benefit to parents. Children in car safety seats and proper seat belts tend to be more manageable, less complaining, and less disruptive. There is a greater feeling of security for them, and they seem to enjoy the ride more.

Safety seats often give a toddler a way to sit down and still see the world outside the car. Children are less likely to get car-sick in safety seats.

Because the children are more manageable and less disruptive and distracting, drivers are more attentive to the road. A study in North Carolina demonstrated that hundreds of accidents are caused on a yearly basis by distractions to the driver by unrestrained children.

One habit that parents should particularly avoid is that of carrying their children in their arms while riding. This is known as the "crusher" position. In a 30 mph crash, a 10 pound infant can fly from the arms with a force equal to falling off a three-story building.

If the adult passenger is not in a seat belt they will crush the infant between their body and the dashboard. In addition, most adults' arms tend to open upon a sudden stop because of the residual "umbrella reflex" which can remain until adulthood. Thus an infant in an adult's arm is poorly protected.

There are three kinds of safety seats. The infant seat faces backwards and is anchored by a seat belt. Infant-toddler convertible seats can be used in two positions and are strong enough to handle larger children up to 40 pounds.

They generally have a harness and/or a safety shield to help keep the child in place. The toddler seat faces forward and is just for children past 20 pounds and 12 months. Most parents choose the convertible seat since it involves only one purchase.

Some safety seats are easier to install than other and particular attention should be paid to manufacturer's instructions before buying. Some seats require a tether strap which can be difficult to install in station wagons and hatchbacks. Most parents favor safety seats without the tether.

All safety seats made after Jan. 1, 1981 are federally approved. There are a number of older seats still available, however; if there is any question about them there are a number of places to inquire. These include the health department, many hospitals and pediatricians,

Many persons are apprehensive about the cost of a car seat which is commonly between 25 and 60 dollars. They make excellent presents at baby showers and occasionally can be found on sale. Garage sales can be a source but parents have to be aware of the approved list before purchasing. There are also many loan-and rental programs conducted throughout the state by civic and charitable organizations and many hospitals such as Provident and Sinai.

Project KISS (Kids In Safety Seats) of the state health department conducts car seat education and loaner programs throughout the state. It helped to produce a consumer guide booklet on car seats available from the Department of Transportation and the Health Department.

There are many resources in the state for more information on car seats and car safety laws. These include Project KISS of the State Health Department (383-7290), the Maryland Department of Transportation Public Affairs Division (859-7308) and the Maryland State Police.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has an auto safety hotline for questions or concerns about particular car seats (1-800-424-9393). The American Academy of Pediatrics also has a toll free number for questions about car safety and car seats (1-800-323-0797) as part of its "The First Ride-A Safe Ride" program.

Adequate car restraint has amply demonstrated its worth in the protection of children in motor vehicle accidents. Because of this a Maryland law was passed in 1983 making restraint mandatory in 1984. Compliance with the law is not difficult; it can be beneficial to both children and parents. As a help to parents many organizations offer information and other means of aid; they can be easily contacted by telephone.

NAACP REPORT:

75th birthday celebration scheduled

By Magdalene Fennell

The Baltimore Branch cordially invites Mom, Dad, and all the kids to the 75th Anniversary Celebration of the NAACP. On Saturday, Feb. 11, a program commemorating the association's founding will be held in the auditorium of the Coppin State College, from 6-9 p.m.

Mark February 11 on your calendar, and make the celebration a family affair. Marjorie Green, chairperson, and her committee have planned a variety of activities for the occasion. Music, drama, awards, and refreshments all promise to make the evening a memorable one. And everything is FREE.

Arena Players under the direction of Samuel Wilson will present a salute to the founders of the NAACP. Through platform readings of excerpts from their speeches and writings, the players will highlight the men and women who organized the association on February 12, 1909.

The Forest Park Senior High School Choir, under the direction of Margaret Lindsay Johnson, will render musical selections, and the Fernando Allen Singers, directed by Fernando Allen will perform.

Celebrity guests will present awards to NAACP workers in eight categories — Membership, Voter Registration, Political Action, Outstanding Board Membership, Fundraising, Committee Chairpersons, and Community Volunteers. In addition, the Executive Committee will give special recognition to Enolia McMillan, recently elected national President of the NAACP.

The 75th Anniversary Celebration will also kickoff the 1984 Spring Membership Drive. Captains and workers are currently being recruited for that drive, and persons willing to serve can sign up that night.

Celebrity presenters of awards include Beverly Burke, Channel 13; Ray Bennett, Channel 2; Michael Moragne-El, WWIN Radio; Alice Pinderhughes, superintendent of public instruction; Bishop Robinson, deputy commissioner, Baltimore City Police Department; Jean Ross, V103.

Other notable guest presenters are: Pastor Naomi Durant, WAVE Radio; Judge Robert Bell; Councilwoman Iris Reeves; Dr. Hilbert Stanley; Delegate Elijah Cummings, Attorney Billy Murphy, and Dr. Oakley Saunders.

The accomplishments of the NAACP in the last seventy-five years are legion. From an obscure beginning "in a little room of a New York apartment," the association became the foremost agency for social change in the United States.

The Call resulting in the formation of the NAACP was issued on Lincoln's birthday in 1909. In HOW THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COLORED PEOPLE BEGAN, Mary White Ovington, one of the founders, states the Call exactly as it was written by Oswald Garrison Villard, president of the New York Evening Post Company.

Among other things, Mr. Villard Stated, "Besides a day of rejoicing, Lincoln's birthday should be one of taking stock of the nation's progress since 1865. How far has it lived up to the obligations imposed upon it by the Emancipation Proclamation? How far has it gone in assuring to each and every citizen, irrespective of color, the equality of opportunity and equality before the law, which underlie American institutions and are guaranteed by the Constitution?"

The NAACP and people everywhere who recognize and understand the modern-day subtleties of racial discrimination are still asking these questions.

The period following Black Reconstruction proved to be a night mare for the newly freed African-Americans. Political gains made by Blacks from 1867-77 during Black Reconstruction were wiped out by White terrorist groups such as the Democrats and the Ku Klux Klan.

This ugly mood moved North. By 1900, a Black was lynched ever day. Fear of a second Civil War swept the country. In 1908, after investigating a race riot in Lincoln's hometown of Springfield, Illinois, William English Walling and a group of Whites set out to create an organization that would stop this reign of terror. As a result, America's oldest largest civil rights organization, the NAACP, was born.

Oswald Garrison Villard, president of the New York Evening Post and the fifth member to join the group, issued a "call" for a conference on the Negro problem on the 100th anniversary of Lincoln's birthday.

In New York, plans were being made by the signers of the call to hold a conference on May 31, 1909. Dr. W.E.B. DuBois, founder of the Niagara Movement in 1905, which was composed of Blacks whom he called the "Talented Tenth", was invited to join the efforts of the Association. By the end of the conference, a Committee of Forty of Permanent Organization was selected.

Conspicuously, one of Black America's most prominent citizens, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, who also founded the anti-lynching crusade, was excluded from the committee.

Another prominent Black leader was also excluded from the elite committee of 40. However, in Booker T. Washington's case his absence stemmed from ideological differences between Dr. DuBois and the Association on how to achieve Black progress. Washington, President of Tuskegee Institute, considered By Whites to be the most influential Black spokesman in America, urged Blacks to abandon overt protest and to pursue practical trades. He recognized the very real dangers of rocking the boat. DuBois, on the other hand, advocated overt protest and radical change.

Tony Brown's Journal

In 1912, Americans were preparing to select a new president. Woodrow Wilson, a former president of Princeton University, defeated incumbent President Taft and former President Theodore Roosevelt. Wilson's election set the stage for an immediate halt to Black progress. By July of 1913, he had officially introduced segregation in government departments and refused to appoint a national race commission to study the conditions that stifled Black Americans.

The NAACP launched a full-scale battle against the rising tide of racism. Public sentiment for the social status of African-Americans was steadily decreasing and mob killings continued.

Added to the NAACP's troubles at this time were internal battles. Villard became incensed because of a perceived inability of Blacks to work together.

For the next few years, the NAACP intensified its efforts against "social orgy of cruelty" by declaring war against lynching. For the two year period of 1913-14, The Crisis magazine reported 154 lynchings. But, with ailing funds, organizational problems and little notoriety, the Association was less than effective.

However, obscurity would cease to be one of its problems in 1915. A vicious "anti-Negro film" was the term used by the Los Angeles branch to describe D.W. Griffith's "The Birth of a Nation." This film 1915 film adaption of Thomas Dixon's novel, The Clansman, glorified the Ku Klux Klan and portrayed the newly emancipated African as a lecherous, subhuman brute who would bring the South down to his inferior level.

In the film, the Black leaders of Reconstruction were shown as idiotic and uncouth clowns. In one scene, a beautiful White woman jumps to her death to escape a lust-filled Negro's attempt to rape her. In other scenes, the nightriders of the Ku Klux Klan are portrayed as saviors of White womanhood and of the South, never as the terrorist organization that it was.

Immediately, protest meetings and picket lines were organized around the country. The NAACP had launched its largest and most impactful protest to date.

Although successful in getting certain scenes deleted in a few cities, the NAACP was unable to get the film banned. But one very important factor did come out of this effort: The NAACP was now nationally-recognized and a formidable foe against social injustice to Blacks.

Despite this cinematic setback, 1915 proved to be a year of triumphs for the Association and the Black struggle. In an effort to foster racial pride; Joel E. Spingarn created a gold medal award to be issued annually for "the highest and noblest achievement of an American Negro." The Spingarn Medal was first awarded to Dr. Ernest Just of Howard University for his research in Biology in February 1915.

By 1916, the Afro-American population was again held hostage to the terror of lynching. The decade before the turn of the century—The Terrible Nineties—the South averaged nearly 190 lynchings a year. The barbaric rites of lynch mobs was an almost everyday occurrence. Next Week: The NAACP's crusade against lynching.

TONY BROWN'S JOURNAL, the television series, can be seen on public television in Washington on Thursday, Channel 32 at 10:3 p.m.; Friday, Channel 26 at 10:30 p.m.; Monday, Channel 31 at 11 p.m.; and on Saturday, Channel 32 at 6:30 p.m. Please consult listing.

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.