Baltimore Afro-American

Founded August 1892 by John H. Murphy Sr., 1840-1922. Published every Tuesday and Saturday by the AFRO-AMERICAN CO. of Baltimore City, Inc. Carl Murphy (1889-1967) Editor-Publisher (1922-1967).

Orchard Street church

Although the Committee for the Preservation of Orchard St. Church did not receive its Urban Development Action Grant to finalize the fundraising for the renovation of the historic church built by slaves, there is still a possibility that the $400,000 could still be forthcoming.

The grants are awarded three times a year and the church could possibly receive the money later on this year. However time is running out for this type of funding because the Reagan budget proposals include the elimination of UDAG monies.

According to committee member Marguerite Campbell, the committee has all but the $400,000 it requested from UDAG of the over $2,000,000 that will be needed to complete restoration of the church and its conversion into a black history museum and office building.

Many Baltimoreans had been wondering what was going on at the site because there seemed to be no work going on and the church was still boarded up.

Despite the denial of the UDAG request, Mrs. Campbell and the rest of the committee seem confidant that the project will be funded by UDAG or an alternative source. The landmark church must be preserved and the sooner the work begins the less weather and vandalism can drive up the cost of the project.

It has taken a long time, much too long, for the project to be completed, but then the day of jubilee seemed very far off to many slaves and that day like the reopening of the Orchard St. Church is well worth the wait.

Unjustified remarks

President Reagan has joined the unholy alliance that criticizes black leadership and thinks those leaders will roll over and play dead to demeaning statements that blatantly insult their intelligence and that of their supporters.

This was obvious in the president's recent remarks on a radio interview excoriating our traditional leaders when he accused "unnamed" black leaders of advocating two Americas, one white and one black. He evidently was referring to a report issued by the National Urban League which pointed out that there is valid evidence that indeed the nation is vastly divided along racial lines. Gov. Otto Kerner of Illinois issued such a detailed report more than a decade ago, but many influential authorities took no remedial measures and blasted the document as pure nonsense. Once again the president has displayed a vast insensitivity and ignorance concerning racial issues.

Former Democratic presidential candidate Jesse Jackson said Reagan has again shown his callous neglect, disregard and distance from America's minority communities. Urban League President John Jacob replied that the president's statement reflects a shocking ignorance of the importance of the black community's institutions.

To compound the insult Reagan later by-passed established black Republicans and met with another black group where he complained that his programs beneficial to blacks were being ignored. This later prompted administration black Republicans to hold a whining session at the home of Vice President Bush. These docile puppets complained about a lack of access to Reagan.

This is not new because black presidential assistants have never been influential as far as genuine policy-making is concerned despite high-sounding titles. The current White House aide is no more than a cipher and other administration blacks are at best middle-level workers who have little if any influence in the black community.

Reagan apparently assumes the outmoded notion that blacks and other minorities accept shallow and appealing generalities that sound good but when the air clears hopes are dashed into bitterness and distrust. If Reagan's policies and programs were beneficial, black leaders would echo his praises regardless of party affiliation. The president failed to cite the high unemployment rate, poverty levels, his reluctance to sign the voting rights act and his lukewarm attitude on a national holiday for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. He defamed the U.S. Civil Rights Commission and made it a political football with its chairman a "stoolie" subservient to a subordinate staffer who calls the shots.

These are obvious realities that the average black citizen can see and feel drastically despite contradictory rhetoric. For example, it does little good to hear of an improved economy when buying power decreases or disruption of education takes place because school program's have been cut and young adults who depend on loans have to start all over again.

Tale of two courses

This week's column was written by Bruce Gamble, chief legislative assistant in my Washington office. He is a graduate of the University of Louisville School of Business, served on Congresswoman Cardiss Collins' staff for 2½ years, and has earned an enviable reputation on Capitol Hill.

If one were to examine the American economy from the outside, without preconceived notions, one would first be struck by all the contradictions that have shown themselves in the structure of our modern society.

America produces enough food to feed its own population and still be the world's largest food exporter, and yet, poor children and old people alike could starve to death in our very midst as millions of Americans suffer the results of cruel and unusual cuts in social welfare programs.

We have the steel, clay, lumber, stone and other raw materials necessary to house all our citizens comfortably and yet the American dream of owning one's own home has become a faded memory of the recently matured baby boom generation.

We are watching hospitals, roads, bridges, and other structures crumble before our very eyes in metropolitan areas around the country, and yet we cannot get a consensus in the Congress to provide some 10 to 12 million unemployed, but willing-and-able-to the circumstances above to come to pass.

We have heard big business complain in the past that high taxes stifle their incentive to invest, but when their taxes were drastically cut by the Reagan administration, we watched them proceed to buy government bonds and each other's stock with their tax cut money, instead of the promised expansion or reinvestment.

Upon further examination, one would find widespread pessimism about the future of a nation built on optimism and hope. After careful scrutiny of the American economy, you might wonder how can a country with so many natural resources and obvious intelligence allow the circumstances above come to pass.

Neoconservatism — the ideology that swept into power with the Reagan Administration — argues that our current problems were bred by a "new class" of intellectuals and bureaucrats committed to the unrestrained growth of government and to taxing the wealth made by the "winners" in the marketplace struggle and distributing it to the less successful "losers."

This point is elaborated by a number of neoconservative writers who describe with great detail the liberal attempts to transfer income from the productive to the "unproductive" — with all the usual false images of welfare mothers on the dole and lazy teenage kids ripping off unemployment insurance.

If we look closely at the facts however, we will find the theory that the growth of government serves as a war on wealth is based on fallacy. In fact, the distribution of income and wealth in America has remained substantially unchanged for the past three and a half decades. At best, thirty-seven years of government expansion have managed to keep the distribution of income and wealth relatively stable and have even widened the gap between the rich and the poor since Reagan's first year in the oval office. This is hardly a victory for a sinister and powerful "new class".

A more common sense political explanation of government expansion, as observed by one writer, might be that, with few exceptions, people are against federal spending for everyone else's program but theirs. While 82 percent of Americans feel the federal government is "spending too much," 90 percent feel not enough is being spent on improving and protecting the environment; 93 percent want more spending on improving national health and 89 percent want more spending to improve the nation's educational system.

Reagan and his neoconservative followers would have us believe in the principles of an 18th-century agrarian society of small, independent enterprises; an economy regulated by the self-correcting laws of the marketplace, tempered by an assumed spirit of community and goodwill.

They would argue further that there is a natural distrust of centralized power and decision making should be made closer to home. Moreover, those who cannot compete in the marketplace — the handicapped and the less fortunate should be helped by the charity of their neighbors. The essential need for government, they claim, is for protection against military aggression, pestilence, and to keep the civil peace.

On the contrary, I would suggest that Twentieth Century Americans favor all modern government services and interventions that improve their lives — from social security to consumer protection. I don't believe the economic market "self-corrects" for adulterated food or water pollution, and most people that I know would rather have their old-age security a matter of right instead of depending on their children's luck in the marketplace or on the charity of their neighbors.

I maintain further that the growth in government is the result of a pure and simple Democratic decision and that federal spending was, for most of our history, and is in modern times, a sensible response to the growing problems of an interdependent and urban society.

As for the spending priorities of this administration, I would suggest that we have witnessed the evolution of the "broker state". The term "broker state" was coined in the 1940's by conservative columnist John Chamberlain to describe a haphazard tendency of government to award those groups that have sufficient political clout with spending programs and subsidies.

In future columns, I will develop my analysis of the broker state. Meanwhile, do not allow yourself to be blind-folded and force-fed the idiotic 18th Century "less government is better" proposition advanced by Reagan in his often eloquent speeches, and look very closely at who benefits from neo-conservative theory.

Anthony Armstrong

Tidbits

Tidbit number one involves the national anthem. You remember the national anthem; the song you hear sung at baseball games, bull roast and public school functions: "Oh, say can you see by the dawns early light - etc., etc?

Have you thought it strange that increasingly at black functions, the Star Spangled Banner, our nation's official song, is not sung?

What we increasingly and exclusively hear at such affairs is the song that has come to be known as the Negro national anthem, "Lift Every Voice and Sing", written in 1899, by a man named J. Rosamond Johnson.

Question: should we, a group of people struggling mightily to be full fledged Americans, sing only our song? Shouldn't we be singing the official national anthem too? In a nation of nations, does it make any sense to exclude ourselves from any aspect of this nation's substance?

Almost every nationality in America has its song. The Jewish community always starts its activity by singing the Israeli national anthem; the Polish sing their song, the Koreans theirs'.

We, the one group fighting so hard to be included, seem to be the only group that purposefully excludes the, "Oh, say can you see". I, for one, really don't see why - do you?

After a long wait, Ethel's Place is finally going to open. Ethel's Place is the brand new night club that is the brain - child of Jazz singer and Baltimore native, Ethel Ennis.

Ethel's Place is something else! The decor of the facility is as close to a classic 1930's night club as anything built in this city since, well, the 1930's. The food promises to be better than good and, if the premier is any indication of the style and grace that will characterize Ethel's Place, I suggest you get your lady (or man) and your jazziest outfit together and come on down.

You're going to love this latest Baltimore entertainment hub. Oh; and don't forget, Ethel's Place comes complete with Ethel Ennis. What more could Baltimore want, on the road to, again, being one of the nation's premier Jazz and entertainment meccas!

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One of the things that is most interesting to me is who reads the AFRO. You know, a lot of Baltimore's white citizens regularly read the AFRO, to learn more about our interest and events.

White people have said to me that the AFRO is the only source of news in Baltimore about the history, personalities and dynamics of black Baltimore. Oh, sure, they have their points of criticism but, by and large, the AFRO is an interesting and useful tool for these white readers.

The odd thing about this little piece of trivia is that these white people seldom voice the kind of uninformed criticism of the AFRO that seems to be the rather knee jerk reaction of many of Baltimore's black citizens.

Isn't it strange that many of "them" value our leading black newspaper more than many of us do? Maybe the difference is that these white readers are looking for news that they can't (or don't) get from any other source and, so many of us are looking for something to complain about.

We need to remember that if you go looking for negatives, you certainly can find them - in anything, including, certainly, a newspaper.

I met a man last night who is the classic example of the stingy person. This man and a good friend of his were joking about how "tight" some people can be. It appears, however, the joke was on him.

Imagine this, you have $70,000 at home under the bed and, all last year you were able to spend a whole thirty cents. That's right, thirty cents. Now that's "tight", with a capital "T".

Red faced and clearly embarrassed, our friend said, "Just because I have money doesn't mean I have to spend it". When was the last time you had some money and you found yourself so anxious to spend it that you wound-up wasting all of it.

We've all had the hot dollar that burned a hole in our pockets. Maybe we can learn something from a thirty cent-a-year man.

If nothing else, maybe we can learn something about cool places for hot money. Cool-it buddie, cool-it; the money that is. Want to borrow a glass jar?

About black matriarchs

I recently read an article in the AFRO-AMERICAN Newspaper dated January 19, 1985 entitled "Myth of Black Matriarchs" by R. B. Jones. An article conceived after overhearing a conversation while he was riding the bus, or as stated, "public transportation."

There is something very wrong when a reporter relies on verbal discourse he overhears in an interpersonal conversation between others in order that he may counterpoint his views on the subject in a newspaper article.

I have no real problem with this system of information-seeking, but a reporter riding around on public transportation eavesdropping on other peoples' conversations for the sake of journalistic deadlines is hardly my idea of a confident and well-polished individual.

His act was unethical. Especially when he failed in professional acumen to describe the spokesperson(s) or to color the scenario so as not to leave his readers in a quandary over whether the speaker(s) was-were young or old, unemployed or working, well - dressed or unkempt, well versed or illiterate.

These observations are always necessary when dealing with hearsay. It makes for a more credible source of reading and often validates any counterpoint mentioned.

How come Mr. Jones, who was obviously opposed to the views being expressed, had nothing to say at that very moment but later, and after dwelling on the situation for a while, could fill space in a newspaper article about it.

I would have been compelled to opine some sort of statement in order to at least bring some contrast to what was already being said if I shared his contrary certainty.

I hold a point of view very similar to the one that Mr. Jones sought so eagerly to undermine in his article. Yes, I believe that there is a problem in the black community which infers a black matriarchy is on the horizon.

And yes, I believe that the black man's vulnerability is concommitant in theory to the black woman's involvement in the feminist movement; And yes, I agree that Daniel Patrick Moynihan's "Benign Neglect" was written with obvious overtones of subversion to the black community;

Yet I also believe that most, after having read Moynihan's thesis, will agree that much of what was inculcated into that work was a true overview of black posture in these United States.

I missed the panel discussion scheduled at the main library on January 20th about this subject but I will make it my business to try and attend any discussions scheduled in the future.

R.B., the black community is biased enough already without having to contend with reporters, with exclusive rights to editorial pages, writing one-sided articles without a chance for the accused to defend themselves. This practice wreaks of yellow journalism.

Jerome A. Bunch

G. James Fleming

Reagan and traditional black leaders

It should be no surprise to black political "pros" and no surprise to "traditional black leaders" to learn that the Reagan White House has started, or is encouraging, a campaign to split black leadership and to have its own black spokespeople.

It was to be expected. The red-blooded do not "drop dead" in the face of criticism and opposition. Certainly the most popular and lucky president since Franklin D. Roosevelt, is not going to lick his wounds and slink off into desperation and desuetude.

So, President Reagan and his staff have recently given audience to non-traditional Blacks—mostly Blacks who have made a success of business—and have been using them as sounding boards.

The White House sees these men and women as the real representatives of black people who are "making it" in the rough and tumble of competitive enterprise, who are meeting payrolls, who have credit at banks, and whose children are in schools and colleges.

But, the Reagan planners go farther. They are painting a picture of the old-line leaders as self-seekers, nurturing and promoting the very problems they are supposed to solve.

In harsher terms, the White house holds that the "traditional leaders have not given President Reagan due credit for the racial plusses of his administration, because being "against" and "negative" is the way the "traditional leaders" justify their well-paying jobs.

There is always the legitimate question of who really speaks for black Americans. Their elected officials? The organized black ministers? The NAACP? The black press?

There must be a score of answers, but none would reply that "The White House speaks for us."

Similarly, no one organization, or all the organizations taken together, can claim the authority to speak for the entire black community. The count of the members of each organization, and their regular donors, tell part of the story.

Perhaps, there is room for more and other voices, and the Reagan people are intent on giving those voices exposure and status as "the other" or "the real" carriers of the message from and to black Americans.

Not to "drop dead" this time must be such organizations as the NAACP, the Urban League, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and the National Council of Negro Women. They certainly will not give up their leadership positions, they will not cease to reveal unpleasant truths, and they will not close their eyes, ears and mouths to short-term ugliness and wrongs only on the promise of betterment in the long run (People do suffer, starve and die even in the short run!).

These old-line organizations, however, may be forced to change their tunes, and balance their programs, in the face of an improved economy and a show of more black involvement in the higher levels of government and industry, and greater access to the benefits of all the society.

This change may be "forced" because there are countless black people—rightly or wrongly-who themselves believe that they are "better off" now than "before Reagan;" many who are "tired with people who never work;" some "sick of crime" (which tragedy, somehow, they expect Reagan to correct). Others glory in a flag - loving, shouting, upbeat administration.

"Problems" they are, preferably spelled in large, black letters, all admit. But the constituencies of the NAACP and the other organizations seem to want reports of "progress made" also; they are tired of "poor mouth" only.

—AFRO SURVEY—

Comments about Shake and Bake

Ernest Long George Miles Christine Wesley Melvin Harris

This week the question to the man and woman in the street was, "Do you go to the Shake and Bake Family Fun Center?"

Ernest Long, 38, counselor, "Yes, and I like Shake and Bake. It is conveniently located and the prices are reasonable. I am right satisfied with it. I was so glad they decided to move it to our community."

George Miles, 23, trackman, "No. I have never taken the time to go there. When I go skating I go elsewhere. I guess that's because somewhere else is where my friends go. I go with them."

Christine Wesley, 21, teller, "I go. It is nice and very convenient. It is neat and clean and modern."

Melvin Harris, 19, unemployed, "Nope. It is out of my area, and I do not skate or bowl. I heard the facility is nice, though."

Roland James, 56, painter, "It is a very nice center for kids. Unfortunately, it is not being supported. I think a lot of people are frightened of the neighborhood. I've been there and liked the center."

Tony Henson, 17, student, "It is fun. There are games and bowling and some great discos held there. Besides, it is in the area where I live, but even if it weren't in my area I'd go."

Patricia Roye, 19, salesperson, "No. I do not skate and never had an interest. I do have a lot of buddies that go."

Ralph Thomas, 24, correctional officer, "I have never been. I would go if I skated, however. I heard it is a nice place to go to."

Roland James Tony Henson Patricia Roye Ralph Thomas

R. B. Jones

Right or wrong

A columnist often receives criticism from readers and this is to be expected, especially if the writer attempts to analyze the crucial and not so crucial issues of the day.

Responses can range from the cooly logical to raging idiocy. Some responses offer a little of both. Many angry readers prefer to call up to vent their spleen, but the ones I cherish most are the ones who take time to write.

I recently received a letter by an irate reader that illustrated in one epistle all the illogic and emotionalism, couched very nicely in a pompous writing style, that plagues discussion of social policy in this country.

The writer severely criticized my contention that a black matriarchy does not and never did exist in this society. Instead of utilizing historical research to prove his point or citing statistics from researchers he made a generalization that was unsupported.

If the reader wants to disprove my contention then he will have to disprove such historians as John Blassingame, Herbert Gutman, W.E.B. DuBois, John Hope Franklin, Kenneth Stamp, Carter G. Woodson and sociologists such as E. Franklin Frazier, Robert Staples, Joyce Ladner, La Francis Rose and Andrew Billingsley.

My critic did not quote any of the research done by the Urban League, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Congressional Budget Office or any other sources that document the social and economic status of black people in America. All he could cite was the Moynihan Report which concentrated on pathological conditions in the black community without putting them in their proper context or acknowledging the external origins of the pathology.

Unsubstantiated assumptions hamper the progress of the black community. They set us at each other's throats while the real opposition watches and waits to pounce on the survivor.

In all categories that matter black women are at a disadvantage economically when compared with men. They suffer impoverishment more than men and their wages are still unequal to black men. The information is there for anyone to find who is interested in finding the truth rather than reinforcing misguided notions.

Another critic of my column who has my respect and admiration told me recently that I should not criticize a group of ministers attempting to tackle the United Way for what they believed to be discrimination in terms of funding black organizations. They felt that since much of the money donated to the charity comes from the black community, an equally large portion should come back to black community agencies.

I did not critique their intentions, rather I critiqued their tactics and their seeming lack of organization. They were not well organized and they did not state their case adequately to the AFRO which was sympathetic to their cause and assigned a reporter to the story.

I stated then and I reiterate now that black people do not need symbolic protests and vain gestures. At a time when traditional civil rights groups barely seem to be holding on; black conservatives have nothing to offer except patronizing pats on the head from white folks; black radicals are not strong enough at this point to challenge the other groups and the tide seems to have turned against us, unnecessary defeats are extremely harmful.

Blacks are beyond the point where we need protests for the sake of protest with no hope of victory. Also, repeated defeats will reinforce the notion, especially among the young that whenever black people confront the system they will be defeated.

It is no longer enough for black activists, especially experienced activists, to say that they are at least doing something. Something is totally inadequate compared with victory.

The purpose of this columnist is to evoke substantive discussion of issues that confront black people I will take a clear reasoned stand whether I'm right as I sincerely believe or whether I'm wrong in the eyes of my readers who will have to present factual evidence that I am wrong. If they do I will recant.

Right or wrong Significance of the sit-ins

Friday, February 1, 1985 is the 25th anniversary of a grass roots, massive, direct action movement that originated in the black community and spread like wildfire across the South.

It resulted in changes in American laws and practices that finally made the phrase "one nation...with freedom and justice for all" more than a mocking expression for millions of Americans of African descent both in the 1960's and forever since.

Four young men at North Carolina A & T College decided during one of their many all-night "rap" sessions that all the education in the world did not mean anything to them or any other black American as long as they could not get a cup of coffee at the local 5 & 10 cents store.

What rubbed salt in their psychological wounds was their realization that this same rejection would prevail in any place of public accommodation for African Americans.

On the other hand, any person of European extraction, even a Communist right off the boat, would be treated with human respect and dignity at a lunch counter, on trains or buses or any other place of public accommodation.

These youth, Ezell Blair, Jr., Franklin McCain, Joseph McNeill, and David Richmond, decided not to wait to receive the blessings of church leaders before taking direct action against injustice.

They saw too, that trying to combat the multi-faceted aspects of segregation on the basis of court case after court case was not only demeaning to blacks as human beings but it was equally obvious that it would be an indefensible economic and time-consuming burden on the very people suffering great deprivations already.

For freedom to have any meaning at all it must be a freedom human beings can enjoy now, not some time in the indefinite and always "just-out-of-grasp" future.

Thus once the logic and courage of these pioneers became widely known they were joined by thousands of others from the South's "Negro" colleges and public schools and street corner youth and their battle cry became FREEDOM NOW!

Thus it was the direct, massive confrontation of blacks, with some white supporters, that revealed the hypocrisy of a nation that called itself a democracy allowing a differential treatment of some of its citizens on the basis of the dark color of their skin.

It was such direct, massive confrontation tactics in the election field that also grew out of this student movement which exposed to the world the untenable stance of Americans pointing their fingers at other nations for not allowing its citizens to vote.

All the while, they themselves turned a blind eye to millions of black Americans systematically denied a chance to act on the bedrock principle of democracy—"One Man, One Vote," and all because they were born the "wrong" color.

It was the direct, massive confrontation by its young people with the ugly reality of a white, Christian church preaching the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man on Sundays.

Then turning its back on black Christians who were denied equal opportunity in this society by the meanness of spirit of white Christians who practiced racial discrimination daily against blacks and even had racial subordination written into law.

Many Christian churches had to decide then and there whether they were on the side of the oppressor or on the side of the oppressed as they claimed to be.

This then is the lesson of 25 years ago and that is that the high ideals of democracy and Christianity can only be put into practice by the massive, direct action of those deliberately and systematically mistreated in a Christian democracy.

Our African brothers and sisters may not wish to follow our patterns exactly nor should they be expected to.

As some African leaders recently told Sen. Ted Kennedy and are ready to tell Rev. Jesse Jackson and Rev. Leon Sullivan that they do not need other people to tell them how to fight tyranny in their own country, especially when they are in the majority.

They will, like any other people in the world, use any means necessary to become free now, in their own lifetime.

Their conclusions are irrefutable, history highlights the truth of their observations and the lesson of the relatively recent past of 25 years ago provides a beacon for how their fight for "FREEDOM NOW" may soon start.

It will start in an organized, planned way, their timely war against a country, the Republic of South Africa, that claims membership in the Christian and democratic family of nations but rules in reality from an openly avowed platform of white supremacy.

Phaon Goldman

The good news about Gray

By Marian Wright Edelman

In the Black community, the name William Gray is not exactly a household word. It will be. The new Chairman of Congress' influential Budget Committee, Representative Gray from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, personifies a new kind of political role model for our children.

The Black community has been fortunate to have strong, articulate leadership. Much of it has emerged, in significant part, from our churches. Throughout the decades long and still continuing struggle for justice in this country, the voices raised by Black religious leaders have drawn national attention to our cause. From Richard Allen to Benjamin Mays to Martin Luther King, to Jesse Jackson, they have also inspired millions of Black children to try harder, and helped hundreds of them to seek and gain political office.

Congressman William Gray (D-PA) comes out of this tradition. He is a third-generation Baptist preacher, a young man now in his forties who remembers the sting of his early experiences with racial injustice. In addition to being eloquent in the pulpit, Representative Gray has clearly become a major force behind the scenes in Congress. In the House of Representatives, composed of 435 members (only 20 of whom are Black), he won one of the most powerful committee chairmanships. This required consummate political skill.

In the next few months, Budget Chairman Gray will be playing a pivotal role in making the difficult decisions about where the government spends its money, in a year when there is growing pressure to cut the enormous budget deficit. The President and his advisors, anxious to cut many family support programs, will first have to get those cuts past Representative Gray.

Even more important, Congressman Gray's success is far from a fluke." The Congressional Black Caucus, of which Gray is a member, "has assumed a new prominence in the House," according to one newspaper.