Baltimore Afro-American

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Feeding the homeless

It seems that the political divisions between the dischanted segment of the black leadership in Baltimore and their old nemesis Mayor William Donald Schaefer run very deep and they almost ruined an effort by the Junior League to bring desperate city elements together to aid the homeless.

A breakfast gathering was held this week to kick off fundraising efforts to help Project Shelter, an umbrella group made up of a cross section of races, religions, and political persuasions.

At the meeting, the old political wounds which have not closed were aggravated. Once again questions were raised about the mayor's priorities and his sensitivity to the needs of the poor. The mayor claimed that he was the object of unfair criticism and animosity.

A black minister reportedly raised objections to the mayor's remarks and to what some perceive as the "user" of the black church which has always helped the poor.

Despite the disagreements, which are healthy as long as they dwell on issues and not personalities, a unified effort in behalf of the poor is a good thing. The administration in Washington is attempting through its budget proposals to strangle the last bit of life from human services programs and state and local Governments alone can not make up the difference.

Hopefully, some compromises of a lasting nature can be worked out between these forces on this particular issue. Also, it is hoped that Mayor Schaefer will be a little less thin-skinned. He has won four terms as mayor and he is considered the favored candidate for the next gubernatorial election. He can afford to be more patient with his critics. The homeless need everyone's help.

Police cutbacks

When Baltimore City Police Commissioner Bishop Robinson went down to Annapolis this past week to lobby for additional funds from the state government to avoid the possible layoff of 556 police officers he was attempting to keep the momentum of the war on crime going.

Recently released figures seemed to indicate that the war on crime is beginning to turn in favor of the citizenry. Neighborhood involvement is increasing and people seemed to be more prone to get involved as evidenced by an anonymous couple that helped a policewoman in distress recently.

Commissioner Robinson's war on drug traffickers has also yielded some results and it would be the height of folly to cut back on the number of officers at a time when the fight against crime is showing signs of success.

Hopefully the General Assembly will provide the additional funding needed to keep the police force at its present strength. Baltimore can not be used as a magnet to draw tourists and new businesses if it is a crime ridden urban wasteland. Cutting back on police protection will send the wrong signal to the criminal element.

Also the mindset will develop that the city can get by with fewer police each year in the same manner that New York's police force declined from about 35,000 at one time to about 20,000. The result has been unsafe streets and a national debate over vigilantism.

Baltimore can avoid that situation with supplemental police aid.

Tony Brown's Commentary

The economic issue

Since the Reagan avalanche fell on Walter Mondale and the political aspirations of most Afro-Americans last November, there has been a conspicuous quiet.

Professional Reagan-haters are off of page one and an embarrassed acceptance of the president's second term is frozen into reality. No bold new plans are being offered by the old leaders and the new "rainbow" coalition has set.

Black progress is still being debated, but little is forthcoming. There is even a paucity of plans for parity. Right into the middle of this non-debate walked the Council for a Black Economic Agenda.

Speaking for this group of mostly independent Blacks, Bob Woodson made a lot of sense. "Creating greater wealth and ownership opportunities for Blacks is a must and also necessary for the country's continued growth."

"The people experiencing the problem have to play a primary role in its solution," he added. It's really no mystery that those statements sound good to me. I say the same thing at each and every opportunity.

Bob's group wants to promote Black business formation by increasing the supply of risk capital. To do this, they would ask the federal government to encourage investments with tax write-offs and an assortment of incentives.

Woodson called the last 20 years of social programming an "alms race."

"Over the past 20 years, there has been a 25-fold increase in the amount of federal dollars being spent to address the needs of the poor, and yet we are told that the Black community is in danger of having a third of its members become part of a permanent underclass," he explained.

The Council was promptly labeled as usurpers in a bid to replace the traditional liberal Black leaders.

In a subsequent broadcast, President Reagan joined the debate. Blacks who criticized his policies come from organizations that are no longer necessary he suggested. "There is a tendency to keep the people stirred up as if the cause still exists. And I think there is some of this going on."

Some of it may be, but that is not true in general. Most Blacks do not dislike the president (72 percent describe him as "prejudiced") because of the NAACP's leaders or the Urban League's latest "State of Black America."

They dislike his job performance (82 percent) because they were left out of the economic recovery.

And whether Mr. Reagan acknowledges it or not, race is the deciding factor in the relative distance between Blacks and Whites.

Those leaders of traditional groups are wrong to attack Woodson's group. If other Blacks want to be leaders by developing plans that work and will benefit Black America, we are all better for it. Our investment should not be in personalities, but in results.

Which is why I don't think the Council's plan will make a substantial difference. To the best of my knowledge, this new plan seems to be a basic appeal to the government to change the condition of Blacks.

I fail to be convinced that the government is as likely to help these independent Blacks help other Blacks as it is inclined to continue the "alms race," as Woodson calls it.

Anthony Armstrong

The Bay

It's Summer now. You're stopped at the toll gate on the Western Shore, waiting to pay to cross the Bay. You've rolled all the windows down, for a time forgetting the artificial cool of your car's air-conditioner in favor of the unmistakable freshness of a bay breeze.

You're on the West-to-East span of the Bay Bridge now, travelling along on the longest and highest suspension bridge anywhere in the world. The William Preston Lane Memorial Bridge, as the bay bridge is formally known, is the ribbon to a world shaped and controlled by the great body of water it spans.

Once off the bridge, a bridge that almost thirty years after its construction still reaps fear and awe from people who have crossed it hundreds of times; you're on the Eastern Shore.

Have you ever walked gleaming black asphalt roads, so hot from the Sun they burn your naked feet, yet turn Summer sneakers into earthly clouds?

You probably haven't seen The Bay on a balmy Summer night in July, as a full moon hangs low over the horizon and the sound of crickets orchestrate the background for the constant low and silky sound of the Chesapeake.

Nor have you ridden its tranquil surface one minute to be tossed violently up and down the next; as the Bay suddenly reveals its more deceptive self: becalmed one minute; capable of lightning fast turmoil the next.

You've never lost an uncle to it, the result of careless action that the Bay has always announced—clearly-it will not tolerate.

I remember my mother saying to the older boys in our family, "Go down to the water and bring back breakfast". The Bay would yield its opulence so easily: fish and crabs, the best in the whole world. Names like White, Bevins, Webster, Harris, Jones; names like Pocomoke, Nanticoke, Winona, Wicomico—this is the bay I know.

The Bay is full of nostalia but looking only to the past will surely spell prolonged harm to the great water way. I, we all, must update our feelings to confront the forces that threaten The Bay today, and those that impact its future.

The Cheasapeake Bay is the largest body of water of its type in the whole world (like other bays, being surrounded on three sides by land).

Left alone, The Bay would flush itself like an efficient piping system; constantly receiving new clean water at its northern most end, and spraying out dirty water, at its southern "mouth"—into the Atlagtic Ocean.

But like a pipe, even a huge pipe, the Chesapeake Bay can only flush so much dirt out because it can receive only so much clean water into its system, from the Susquehanna River.

When too much trash collects in the pipe, The Bay, as the result of ever increasing amounts of organic and inorganic liquids and solids, placed there by man; the pipe becomes clogged, largely because the new and purer water flowing into it remains generally constant.

Add to this the increasingly polluted water flowing from the Susquehanna; and the two problems (what we humans put-in and what naturally flows-in) act to overwhelm the Bay's natural ability to cleanse itself.

When this happens, as it has, everything and everybody in and around the body of water is seriously affected.

Fish die or refuse to enter the Bay at all, nature's food chain is disrupted, whole families find their survival threatened and, the beauty of the water becomes more and more only surface deep—like a beautiful woman rendered rotten inside by avarice; this time not of her own choosing.

We probably won't lose The Bay; for such a terrible thing would have consequences greater than if we killed-off half the animal species in the world.

Regional legislation is now on the books (in Maryland, Virginia and Pennsylvania) to begin the long road back.

The Critical Areas Commission, led by Judge Sol Liss, has begun very important work to, first, understand The Bay and, second, to make recommendations on how all of us can become involved to save it from more trauma.

The commission has the political clout to make a difference and the governor has placed his strong support behind their bipartisan efforts. City Council President Clarence H. "DU" Burns is also on The Critical Areas Commission and, if his comments are any indication, the commission has a tough job in front of it.

The real job, though belongs to all of us Marylanders. The Chesapeake Bay is ours now; the Indians left it to us in excellent condition. We must become more conscious about its health; because its health is surely our own.

Commentary

Remember the causes

By Gus Savage
Member of Congress

Two highly publicized recent events vividly demonstrate the current tendency to concentrate almost exclusively on the effects of the ills in our society while showing little concern for the causes of these ills.

I am talking, of course, about the New York City incident where a white gunman shot four Black youths on a subway when they allegedly tried to force him to give them five dollars and the Chicago incident where an elderly Black man shot and killed a Black youth who reportedly, along with a companion, attempted to rob the elderly man at gunpoint.

Both cases have been blown so out of proportion by the media that one would think these cases are the forerunners of a noble crusade designed to turn the streets of our cities into paradises on earth.

I have nothing against the "Subway Vigilante" or the "Chicago Vigilante" eventually going free, as long as their acts were committed within the bounds of time-tested, self-defense regulations and their innocence or guilt determined in accordance with established procedures.

To tell the truth, I would support whole-heartedly an "open season" against street crime, as long as such a crusade was launched as part of a balanced program to combat both the cause and effect of violence in our society.

But I do object, and object strongly, against this one-side establishment-directed, media-hyped campaign to blind the collective public eye to the causes of violence while turning a spotlight only on the symptoms.

As rampant as crime is in our communities, we must never forget that this criminal behavior is the result of a greater crime — devastating unemployment that is destroying family values, undermining our unity and sense of common purpose, and producing a Black underclass that is lurching out of control.

In the face of these facts, much more is needed than a shading of our eyes from the causes of our despair.

Imagine, for instance, medical researchers suspending their efforts to find a cure for cancer just because the dreaded disease occasionally can be sent into remission by the use of various radiation treatments; or cardiologists discontinuing their search for a natural method of preventing high blood pressure just because they have discovered drugs which render the effects of the disease less damaging.

I am not attempting to downplay the dread of violence in our communities, or in the nation at large. I realize that just as kidney disorder resulting from high blood pressure treatment can appear to be worse than the original ailment, so does a robbery victim tend not to think about the deprivation of the youth with the gun in his hand.

Too often symptoms assume an identity of their own and appear to be more harmful than the cause from which they sprang.

However, in reality, such is not the case. It is still true, as the old folks used to say, if you kill the root, the tree will die.

So as we develop programs and engage in projects to combat crime, let us not forget to mount political and economic campaigns against the causes of this social ill, forever remembering that the establishment, the eternal enemy of the people, will do everything in its power to make us, the victims, blame ourselves for our plight.

The other class of '85

By Marian Wright Edelman

What lies ahead for the half-million teenage women in this country, many of them black, who will have babies during 1985? We can't afford to accept the obvious answer of not much.

The facts tell us that most of these young women will lead troubled lives: this year, five years from now, and 20 years from now. Young mothers often drop out of school, work at low-paid, menial jobs, and fight losing battles for child support, decent child care, and employment. Statistics show that black young women are even less likely than white teenagers to recover their footing after having a baby too early.

Yet each year, 500,000 teens have babies, 160,000 are black. Thirty-five thousand are 15 and under. We know the rest of the story — families forced into poverty, children barely surviving on welfare and food stamps, teenagers who turn to crime and drug addiction.

Families headed by young females under the age of 25 are the poorest of the poor. Among whites, the poverty rate is 32.5 percent; among blacks, a staggering 84 percent.

Before we write off 1985's new mothers, let's take another look at their statistical destiny, It is really inevitable? Must we con tinue to accept the high long-term cost it will exact from them, and from us?

I don't believe so. Not if parents, church and school officials, community leaders, and government at all levels step in and provide timely assistance.

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.

Samuel L. Banks

Necessity of risk taking

The overwhelming re-election of President Ronald Wilson Reagan provides compelling clarity, directness and urgency in terms of a rapid intensification of the siege for 37 million black Americans. While it is true that Hispanics and impoverished whites, too, will suffer privations and distress, Black Americans will endure, as in times past, the larger burdens and denials.

In spite of the surge of feckless and self-serving black apostates led by Clarence M. Pendleton, Jr., chair of the United States Civil Rights Commission, Tom Sowell of Stanford University and Walter Williams of George Mason University, among other rank opportunities, the Draconian economic and political measures of the Reagan Administration, in time, will relegate them to the perilous plight of the majority of black Americans.

After the short-term exploitation of the black opportunists, the prejudicial and harsh socio-economic policies will engulf the current black opportunists who now occupy the spotlight.

It is, to be sure, painful and troubling to have blacks who should know better in a position of serving as willing tools in a subordination and besmirching of their own people.

All of them know that without affirmative action programs in place, equal opportunity in education and housing and provision for effective health care that a majority of 37 million black Americans, as was indicative of other ethnic and racial immigrants in the past, will not be able to make their way and have socio-economic sufficiency in the American body politic.

No other ethnic or racial group in our nation could have entered the socio-economic mainstream of our nation without equality of opportunity, Federal subsidies (i.e., Morrill Act, Homestead Act, Smith-Hughes Act, "GI Bill," etc.) and other Federal and state support.

Moreover, none of the other groups had to endure the brutalizing and dehumanizing effects of slavery and societal exclusion and rejection. Even now, a majority of black Americans experience the socio-political policies of rejection and exclusion.

It is within this historical context that we as black Americans must be about the business of risk-taking for our survival, collective dignity and progress.

The proposals set forth in President Reagan's $97 billion budget provides abundant evidence that black Americans, Hispanics and the poor will bear the brunt of the budget cuts.

It, too, is clear that black middle and upper income groups will also be adversely affected. The message is clear and urgent: The factor of color places all of us in the same boat.

The tragic and lamentable reality is, as the historical record shows, that the majority white society during a period of fiscal austerity will not make a distinction in terms of educational standing, prominence or social status. What will be crucial will be the extend to which a group has power and is willing to utilize it for group benefits.

The stirring, incisive and dramatic address made by Frederick Douglass on August 4, 1857 in Canandaigua, New York gives evidence of the necessity of struggle and power:

"Let me give you a word of the philosophy of reform. The whole history of the progress of human liberty shows that all concessions yet made to her august claims have been born of earnest struggle. The conflict has been exciting, agitating, all-absorbing, and for the time being, putting all other tumults to silence... If there is no struggle there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom and yet deprecate agitation are men who want crops without plowing up the ground; they want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters."

Douglass proceeds to delineate the inexorability of struggle:

"This struggle may be a moral one, or it may be a physical one, and it may be both moral and physical, but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will. Find out just what any people will quietly submit to and you have found out the exact measure of injustice and wrong which will be imposed upon them, and these will continue till they are resisted with either words or blows, or with both. The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppress. ...Men may not get all they pay for in this world, but they must certainly pay for all they get."

I believe that the 59th annual observance of National Black History Month offers a most propitious opportunity for black Americans, especially black middle and upper income groups, to be heard for high quality education, decent health care, full employment and care for the elderly and the poor.

There are still too many affluent black Americans, locally and across our nation, who are victims of a conspiracy of silence and are seldom heard from except for bread and circus and ceremonial activities. At a time of enormous crisis, we must, as a collective people, end an almost veritable obsession with "boogeying down" and frivolous conviviality.

Vincent Harding in his widely read and seminal work, There Is A River, speaks of the "risk of hope." The placidity and passivity to an immense degree that grips Baltimore's black intelligentsia and affluent must be overcome if we are to maintain the viability, vitality and integrity of our historical roots.

This means a firm insistence on high quality education, unequivocal support for full employment for black adults and youths, care for the elderly, decent housing and consistent support of black entrepreneurial interests and businesses. Activities of this type will give concrete and vital meaning to Harding's "Risk of Hope."

I urge you to let your voice be heard for an improved socio-economic and political order for all. Dare to be a risk-taker and act in support of a just, humane and caring social order.

AFRO SURVEY

Do happy hours encourage excessive drinking?

Lisette Willis

Donald Parker

Madeline Gordon

Raymond Short

This week the question to the man and woman in the street was, "Do you think happy hours encourage excessive drinking?"

Gloria Carter, 49, housewife, "Yes. A lot of people cannot handle the freedom of access to so many drinks. They drink a lot, leave, get in a car and have an accident. I think it should be illegal.

Melvin Carter, 49, policeman, "No, it does not cause excessive drinking. Most people go to a local bar, and they drink probably the same amount as usual. Happy hour does not make them drink anymore. Most people are able to control their own intake. Happy hour should not be illegal because it does not change drinking habits."

William Youngs, 25, direct care worker, "I think it does. Drinks are cheaper and customers buy more. It should really be illegal. It would stop the consumption of so much alcohol. People would save money and not pay the full price for the same amount of drinks they might buy during happy hour."

Barbara Tilman, 26, assistant manager, "No, happy hours do not cause excessive drinking. First of all, the age group that has accidents are teenagers. Older people are more responsible for their actions. They know how to control their consumption."

Lisette Willis, 19, social worker, "I think it depends on the person. Happy hour has nothing to do with it. It should not be illegal. I don't think happy hours are responsible for accidents and other things."

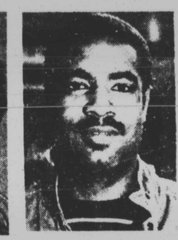
Donald Parker, 34, busdriver, "No. I think the person that drinks is going to drink whether it's a happy hour or not. Most people will not get drunk just because it's cheaper to do it during happy hours. People are able to control themselves. Happy hours should be legal. I would not like a law at all that banished them."

Raymond Short, 64, retired, "Yes they cause excessive drinking and should be illegal. Happy hours cause people to over do it. I figure if they could control themselves, it would be alright, but you know that has not proven to be the case."

Madeline Gordon, 36, state reviewer, "Probably yes. You are encouraged to drink more when prices are less. I do not think those happy hours should be illegal though. The person has to control his own intake. There are just some things the law cannot control."

Melvin Carter

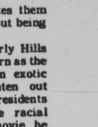
Barbara Tilman



William Young

Gloria Carter

Soundoff



R. B. Jones

Murphy in Movieland

At the outset of this column, I will answer one set of critics who are sure to object to my following assessment of Eddie Murphy's movie career. Yes, I know that Eddie Murphy is a multimillionaire and I am not. Yes I am aware that "Beverly Hills Cop" is the top grossing movie in America. Yes, I am aware that millions have gone to see the movie and have liked it.

Murphy is a millionaire, but that does not exempt him from criticism. There are many drug pushers who are millionaires, but they are also profiteers from other people's misery.

As for box office attendance conferring legitimacy on a movie, one only has to be reminded that "Birth of a Nation" a 1915 film by D.W. Griffith was popular also and it etched almost indelibly in the American mindset the motion that blacks were brutal rapists who hungered after white flesh and buffoons incapable of self-government and sensible participation in a "democratic" society such as the United States of America.

Numbers of people and large amounts of money do not necessarily indicate morality or rationality. That is the premise by which I will analyze Eddie Murphy's film career.

Murphy rose to prominence as a cast member on the second version of "Saturday Night Live." He moved from bit player to unquestioned star of the show in a brief period.

The qualities that made him stand out on the show were a certain brash style of comedy, that allowed white viewers to observe the dreaded urban black youth at close quarters without being vulnerable and allow black viewers to see one of their own make it while seeming to be assertive with white society.

Murphy's parody of Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood was frequently funny, juxtaposing the idyllic tame-setting of Fred Rogers' show with the bleakness of ghetto life in New York. However, the segment began to deteriorate into a very stereotyped image.

Another talent that shot Murphy to the top was his ability as a celebrity mimic. He can imitate singers such as James Brown, Stevie Wonder and Michael Jackson with an uncanny ease. The vocal quality of his imitations is usually very accurate.

Unfortunately, too often on the television show he relied on stereotypes such as Velvet Jones the pimp and the Little Rascals character Buckwheat.

Murphy's movie career began with the surprise hit "48 Hours" which launched Murphy into stardom. In that movie lay the troubling elements of his film career which came into full view in his latest movie "Beverly Hills Cop."

Murphy played an incarcerated armed robber who helped Detective Cates, played by Nick Nolte track down Murphy's former heist partner who is also a cop killer. Murphy's characterization consisted mostly of the same brash behavior and language that dominates his stage act. He was cocky, street-smart and profane.

His character was also a black man who had no connection with the black community. In the movie he had no black acquaintances, friends or family. He was a black man moving in a white world with uncommon ease, yet his personality reflected ghetto cultural patterns.

The only black person he interacts with in the entire film is a rather beautiful young black woman. Murphy's character asks her for a quicky in the midst of his hunt for the killer and his loot from a robbery. She accepts his proposition in a very farfetched sequence, but then the movies have a history of portraying black women as easy prey for anyone who asks for sexual favors.

In Murphy's second movie "Trading Places" he portrayed a street beggar who becomes the subject of a cruel experiment. He is placed in the home and job of a young corporate officer and the young white executive is forced into a life of street hustling. Murphy and Dan Ackroyd join forces to turn the tables on the two rich brothers who used them to settle a bet and become millionaires themselves.

Once again, Murphy is a lone black man in a totally white environment. He seems to have no friends and no family. Again he has no woman. Murphy is once again the profane non-threatening black who gives white viewers a sense of peaking over the wall that separates them from black urban life, without being in any danger.

His latest venture "Beverly Hills Cop" follows the same pattern as the others, making Murphy an exotic figure who helps straighten out problems that plague the residents on the other side of the racial barrier. In his newest movie he finally has a friend, but it is a white man. His only other black contact is his police department commander. A viewer of this film from another planet would assume that there are no black women in America and almost no black men.

Throughout the movie which is highly improbable at best in terms of storyline, Murphy has no purpose other than helping white people solve their problems. He has no life of his own.

Mr. T. who is not the epitome of scholarship and profoundity said something very incisive when he responded to a reporter who questioned his wearing of so many gold chains around his neck. He said, "I wear chains to remember my ancestors who were brought here in chains. The only difference is that my chains are gold because I'm a higher priced slave."

During the early stages of black participation in Hollywood, actors like Stepin Fetchit and Mantan Moreland played stereotyped roles because they had no choices, but Eddie Murphy's clout as a top box office draw should give him some choices.

At the very least Murphy could give some black actors roles in his movies. His pictures are whitewashed except for his portrayal of a wisecracking black savior of white America.

I do not expect any socially redeeming messages from his films because to date he has shown little or no social consciousness, but the least he could do is have a few black characters in his movies so that black actors can get a little work.

With the deterioration of Richard Pryor into a neo-slave in the "Fey" and the portrayal of Eddie Murphy as a butler for incompetent white policemen or the pawn of the idle rich there is little in the film industry that black people can point to and say, "There are some positive images of us on the screen."

Of course one could wait a decade for another movie like a "Soldier's Story." I suggest going to the theater.

Letters

Inclement weather school closings

Education is a vital activity in the lives of children of this city. Educators have a responsibility to conduct learning activities each and every scheduled school day. As educators, we serve as role models who influence the development of life patterns and behaviors of students. Our behavior conveys a message to students as strongly as our words.

The decision to close schools due to inclement weather is taken very seriously by the Superintendent. While the Superintendent considers the conditions in the entire metropolitan area, the decision to close schools must be based on those factors which are unique to the operation of the Baltimore City Public Schools.

The procedure for closing schools is as follows:

Before 5:00 a.m., the Department of Transit and Traffic advises the Superintendent on the condition of the streets, on weather forecasts, and the availability of bus service. The Superintendent considers this advice and weighs safety factors. The Superintendent then makes a decision. If the schools are to be closed, this decision is relayed to appropriate persons for dissemination to the public.

In the instance of a change in weather conditions after school sessions have begun, the Superintendent receives advice as noted above. When conditions warrant an early closing, the Superintendent notifies appropriate staff immediately.

Parents must make individual decisions regarding the attendance of their children.

I sincerely hope that this statement clarifies the procedures for school closings due to inclement weather and request your continued support in emphasizing to our students the importance of education.

Alice Pinderhughes