Baltimore Afro-American

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Provident's future

Provident Hospital's woes are well known in Baltimore and the $1 million that Gov. Hughes has given to keep the institution going temporarily should be recognized as a stop gap measure and not an indication that the salvation of the hospital will come from external sources.

Trustee George Russell has taken his stand and announced austerity measures that are certain to provoke resistance from 1199E's workers. Russell has reduced the staff by 136 full time equivalent positions although he claims the cuts will not affect patient care.

The hospital has asked for a voluntary rate reduction of 10 percent and Russell has hired management expertise, developed a plan to update hospital equipment and devised various business plans.

He has also studied the question of linking Provident with another institution, with "concern for maintaining Provident's name, identity and role."

The sacrifices and changes that Russell is implementing are harsh in some cases and considered risky in others. He has been accused of being placed in charge for the purpose of overseeing the merger of Provident.

What is not evident at this time is what his critics and many other segments of the black community are going to do. Where are the parties who participated in the near fatal feud a few months ago.

The doctors have gotten the census of the hospital elevated somewhat. Where are their opponents? What fundraising efforts have they devised? What committees have they formed?

These people were tenacious when it came to opposing the doctors. Why are they not as tenacious in coming forward and leading an effort to save the hospital they almost ruined?

Are the large organizations in the community ever coming forward with money in hand. Where are the fraternal and sororal groups? Where are our churches?

The larger community is watching how the black community responds to a crisis that cripples the largest private sector employer of black people in the state. If we do not care for that which heals our sick and puts bread on our tables can we really care about anything at all?

The weaker Provident hospital becomes and the more it looks like an institution not worth saving the weaker the black community as a whole becomes economically and politically.

Indications have already been given of the attitude that may prevail if Provident goes under. Mayor Schaefer is a man who is apparently running for governor yet as was reported in this paper Tuesday he balked at the proposal by the governor that the city give half and the state give half of a loan to stabilize Provident.

The mayor reportedly said that the city had already given to Provident.

The black community's apparent apathy has apparently rubbed off on others. If the black community does not care about Provident, it does not care about itself.

Pendleton is out of step

The retrenchment policy of this administration to undercut civil right gains made over the last generation has been pointed up recently by two of the Reagan administration's handy men. Chairman Clarence M. Pendleton, Jr. of the U.S. Civil Rights Commission and Attorney General Edwin Meese, III are the point men.

Pendleton with characteristic bombast parroted his usual line that the administration is dedicated to equal employment but opposed to "preferential treatment" or quotas to redress the grievances of minorities. He made this preposterous double-talk on a recent television program with the white mayor of Indianapolis.

Mayor Richard Hudnut, of course, had the much more intelligent and rational argument for affirmative action because he contends that it is a logical and sensible method of addressing employment problems of black Americans, women and Hispanics. It has been established over and over again that this segment of our society has been denied equal employment opportunities by every devious method that could be devised.

Pendleton repeated every trite argument that has endeared him to neo-conservatives and alienated him from the black community. He is considered an apostate who has lost his roots and is rudderless without a harbor to pull in his oars. Since taking office he has uttered numerous illogical statements to support the administration's reactionary policy to wipe out programs that would benefit those without power or influence. It is conceded that Pendleton is less than an adequate administrator now that Linda Chavez has left the commission. Pendleton at one time was the darling of the lecture circuit when Linda Chavez was aboard because he was her puppet. She made policy and in essence told him what to say and how to say it.

Pendleton's guidance of the commission has floundered so disgustingly until a distinguished educator has resigned from the board that overseas the National School Desegregation Study. Political scientist Gary A. Orfield said the study was dominated by people opposed to urban school desegregation orders handed down by various judges. He added that the study's findings might be used to undermine desegregation programs already in progress. This is not only an indictment of Pendleton but also of the administration's sincerity despite its pious proclamations about equal rights for minorities.

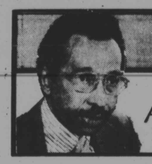
On the other end of the spectrum is Attorney General Edwin Meese III, a dubious legal authority at best. Meese belongs to what is called a conservative movement, actually a right-wing clique. Under Meese's leadership the Justice Department has intervened as a "friend of the court" in several civil rights cases that would reverse already established civil rights policy. As the nation's top legal officer he has so far proved shallow and superficial in contrast to several of his scholarly predecessors.

A recent speech by Meese before the American Bar Association drew unprecedented response from two Supreme Court justices. It is highly unusual for members of the high bench to upbraid an attorney general because his judical ability and temperament are supposed to be in the same orbit. Several Justice Department lawyers have been elevated to the high court, including Justice Thurgood Marshall.

Pendleton and Meese are vasals of what is dubbed the "Reagan Revolution." This movement apparently is out to dismantle federal government programs at the expense of those most vulnerable, school children, welfare recipients and obscure individual without influence or power. This is done under the board brush of conservatism which actually means entrenched racism.

On the other hand top government jobs are allotted to cronies as political payoffs and big defense contracts are awarded to big corporations. This trend also means decentralization of the federal government and returning unlimited powers to individual states. It is a known fact that states have in the past acted unfairly to minorities and maneuvered to deny elementary rights to this group with impunity.

This administration is self-righteous in proclaiming to champion civil rights all around the world, with the exception of South Africa, but its programs undercut the rights of minorities on the home front. Pendleton and Meese are the "hatchet men." Meese may well find a niche on return to civilian life. But Pendleton will be unacceptable to the lunatic fringe of reactionaries, and it is unlikely that he will be accepted in the black community because he will be regarded as a pariah who turned his back on his people for a few apples with gross arrogance.



Parren J. Mitchell

AIDS: progress and fears

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is caused by a virus known as HTLV-III which damages the body's natural immune system. It is possible to have the HTLV-III infection and not have AIDS.

A person infected with the virus could have three possible outcomes: no illness at all, mild non life-threatening illness, or AIDS.

Also, a person with the virus can carry the infection up to 4½ or more years (incubation period) before showing any symptoms of AIDS — if they come down with AIDS at all.

While infected with the HTLV-III virus, one can spread this virus onto others through the ways the virus is spread: unprotected sexual intercourse, oral sex, sharing sexual aids, sharing needles, and exposing of body fluids.

Those considered to have a high risk of contracting AIDS or the HTLV-III virus include homosexual males, bisexual males, intravaneous drug users and hemophiliacs.

AIDS has caused widespread public fears. There is fear of the disease and fear of those who have it. Insurance companies, city councils, school boards, employers, the military, health-care professions, labor unions, morticians, and churches are included in an ever-expanding list of those feeling the impact.

Some of these fears are justified, most are not. Nationwide injustices are occurring as the masses submit to this tyranny.

In Baltimore, an AIDS patient has filed discrimination complaints against 46 funeral homes after he found that these funeral homes would deny full burial services to a person who has died from the disease.

These funeral homes varied in what services they would deny — some would refuse to handle the body, some would not embalm the body, some would not permit viewing, and others would provide only immediate burial or immediate cremation.

In other areas, a 9-year-old boy — whose sister has an AIDS-related condition — reported to school one day to discover that half of his 200 fellow students had been kept home because of his presence.

Transamerica Occidental Life Insurance Company is conducting blood tests to detect AIDS exposure (HTLV-III virus) among people applying for large life insurance policies.

In Dallas, a major corporation now requires its cafeteria employees to submit to a blood test to determine if they have been exposed to the virus.

In Alexantria, a prisoner, after being arrested and taking a required blood test, was told he had AIDS.

Jail authorities disinfected his cell, destroyed his clothes and discarded his mattress. The prisoner was removed from the jail and sent to a clinic where it was determined that he did not have AIDS, but that his blood only showed exposure to the virus.

In Oregon, a hospital custodian refused to pick up an AIDS patient's laundry. In New York, a county jail inmate with AIDS — who had been charged with a felony — harassed people by spitting on them.

Officials were so anxious to get rid of him that he was allowed to plead guilty to a misdemeanor and released. He did not even have to appear in court because court officers feared handling him.

The need for reasonable responses is more critical than ever. But, fear stifles effort and paralyses initiative. The progress that has been made has been allowed to drown in this fear.

Many who affect millions of lives are making or considering changes in the way they conduct business.

Policy is being set at a time when there is a lack of certainty and agreement among medical experts and political and community leaders about how far to go in protecting the public health.

Focusing on the progress, rather than fixating on the most frightening possibilities, is what needs to be done. There is a reassuring bulk of evidence that shows the disease is hard to contract and guides us in ways to protect ourselves from contrating the disease.

The identification of the virus responsible for AIDS (HTLV-III) has made possible an effective blood antibody screening test and the updating of the AIDS case definition.

Use of screening tests for HTLV-III antibody on donated blood and plasma is successfully preventing the virus responsible for AIDS from entering the blood supply.

Fewer than 2% of reported AIDS cases have been thought to be transmitted by blood transfusions. Now, even this risk will be virtually eliminated with the application of this new screening test.

However, because the incubation period for AIDS can be more than five years, new cases of transfusion-associated AIDS can be expected to appear for some time in persons infected with HTLV-III before the screening test came into use.

In addition to its use in screening donated blood, it has been recommended that the test be used to screen blood and serum from donors of organs, tissue or semen intended for human use, and that the test result be used to evaluate the appropriate use of such material from these donors.

Data have also established that, where hemophiliacs are concerned, that hemophilia A patients treated with Factor VIII concentrates had a significantly greater risk of contracting AIDS than any other blood (or blood product) recipient group.

Recent adoption of heat (or chemical) processes to inactivate viruses, including HTLV-III, by U.S. licenses manufacturers of Factor VIII, together with the screening of the blood supply, have now virtually eliminated the risk.

Factor IX concentrate, used to treat hemophilia B, has only rarely been thought to transmit HTLV-III; however, a viral inactivation step is being added to its manufacturing process as well.

Thus, the discovery of the virus that actually causes AIDS has added to the progress of the battle against the fatal disease. The only hopes for curing AIDS are by attacking and destroying the HTLV-III virus or correcting the underlying immune defect.

Let us pray that we do attack and destroy the HTLV-III virus before fear and paranoia effectively attack and destroy us.

Anthony Armstrong

Eva, Paula and Carolyn

Eva Peron, you'll recall, is best known for a kind of Robin Hood strategy of taking from the rich to give to the poor.

Over the years of her active political life, in Argentina, South America, Eva Peron, a poor girl who became the wife of the legendary Juan Peron, was given the mantle of saint.

She earned the passion and the love of Argentina's peasant workers and native Mestizos because she cared about them when no one else did.

In the late forties and early fifties, in Argentina, poor people were being made all the poorer by insensitive government policies and the large corporate industrialist, who saw the people of Argentina as no better than the millions of steers that roamed the country's pampas region.

Eva Peron, remembering her own poverty and less than human treatment, spent her time tirelessly campaigning for the rights and the human dignity of people, that but for the grace and God and luck, she would have died among.

She was not unique in her attempts to help the poor but, no one before her (or since) was able to capture their frenzy with the devotion that she tapped.

People loved her for the same reasons the poor everywhere love a champion, who is caring and smart enough to turn caring into problem solving actions.

Eva Peron was beautiful and mysterious, she was smart and tough, she was compassionate but never foolish and, she understood how to work in the environment of a nation gone crazy with despotic carnage.

The closest thing to an Eva Peron that this city has ever known was a woman named Carolyn Stith. Carolyn Stith also won saintly praise for her work in East Baltimore that before her time shared too many of the characteristics of an Argentina, that only toyed with its poor.

Carolyn had been well trained in the workings of local politics and, with her considerable energy and intelligence she was able to have an impact greater than some elected officials.

They had the votes of the people but; Carolyn Stith had the hearts and minds of the people, particularly the poor, of East Baltimore.

When she died, prematurely and unexpectedly, the sorrow of her passing bordered on the loss and wonderment of that experienced by the peasants of Argentina, at the loss of their beloved "Evita".

Carolyn Stith lived such a full, although far too short, life because she understood that none of us come here to stay. She understood how really short life, on this Earth, can be.

Because she did understand so much, at such a young age, Carolyn felt that there would always have to be someone around to do the work of helping the poor, a group too many find too far gone to spend the time helping.

So what she did, and with the skill of a Dale Carnegie, was select and train a group of people, mostly women, who could take-up the banner of the poor and carry it forward. Her work was almost prophetic.

The brightest pupil of Carolyn Stith is a beautiful young woman named Paula Johnson. Carolyn had brought Paula into the fold years ago, when Paula was still not more than a girl.

Paula, at the time, was living in East Baltimore and, like so many other beautiful young ghetto queens, was being pulled and tugged at by every manner of man. At about the age of fifteen, Paula decided, partly infused by the commitment of Miss Stith, that she too wanted to be "a person that helped other people."

Her other motives were purely those of a smart young girl, who knew that "only people who are into something" spent long hours in the political arena.

Most of the people she was trying so hard to avoid, the constant stream of young men beggin' and trickin', would not want to spend their Friday nights putting together baskets for senior citizens to have at Thanksgiving and Christmas.

And so, in politics, the business of helping people, Paula felt she could find a refuge from the pressure.

What she found was a calling that caught her fancy and framed the rest of her life. By now, a grown woman, Paula Johnson has become, in the eyes of many people in East Baltimore, the twentieth councilperson, the fourth delegate, the person to see when you want something done.

She has the beauty of Eva Peron, the intelligence and human skills of Carolyn Stith, and the distinctive "don't trend on me" that is all her own.

People seem to trust Paula, maybe because she is always about doing something for them, and not, like some other public figures, always for themselves. Three cheers: Eva, Carolyn, Paula.

Samuel L. Banks

Morgan assessment & recommendation

Morgan State University continues to lumber along plagued by escalating internal tensions, travail and profound concern, both within and without, as to its institutional survival and solidarity.

Thoughtful and rational citizens who care about Morgan must subordinate personal and emotional reactions and must face the painful and urgent reality of Morgan's fitful dilemma.

In point of fact, a university cannot constrict and reduce critically faculty members and expect, simultaneously, to grow and achieve its institutional mission.

As a means of stimulating rational and vigorous dialogue and action regarding Morgan, I propose eleven (11) recommendations:

1. Immediate moratorium on projected 27 faculty terminations with 13 others to follow.

A demoralized, uncertain and insecure faculty cannot provide high quality and consistent education to Morgan's students. The termination of 40 faculty members over a two-year time frame, if executed, would be injurious of the quality of education at Morgan. Morgan's board of Regents and President Earl S. Richardson must seek alternatives to the unprecedented faculty reductions.

An alternative budget based upon demonstrable and special needs of the majority black population at Morgan, based upon historic neglect and shoddy education, should be formulated now for Governor Harry Hughes, the Maryland legislative Black Caucus and the Maryland General Assembly.

This, too, is congruent with Maryland's commitment to desegregation of higher education and the enhancement of predominantly black colleges and universities (viz., Morgan, UMES, BOWIE, Coppin). Alternative funding is a necessity.

2. Establishment of an aura of trust, collegiality, civility and openness at Morgan.

Dr. Herman Brown, a distinguished and nationally known educator and alumnus of Morgan, presently at the University of the District of Columbia, makes a cogent and sage point in terms of openness and full participation of faculty, students, staff, alumni and interested citizens in addressing Morgan's Board of Regents:

"Sets of institutionally defined controls and restrictive regulations tend to engender irritation and resentment rather than promote desired patterns of behavior. Mature behavior and collegial professionalism are fostered in a climate of expectancies characterized by openness, mutual trust, communication and support."

Dr. Brown adds a further observation: "Administrators, Board of Regents' members, faculty, staff and students alike must be free to apply themselves to their tasks with enthusiasm, diligence, responsibility and integrity. Freedom of thought, of research, of teaching is essential to Morgan State University and essential to a free society."

Dr. Brown is also the immediate past president of the National Alumni Association of Morgan State University.

3. Removal of the requirement that members of Morgan's Board of Regents be residents of Maryland.

"This provincial requirement restricts Morgan in attracting highly influential and talented Regents from throughout the nation.

4. Vigorous and sustained institutional outreach to increase student enrollment.

Expanded visitations to junior and senior high schools and use of the media will further this process. Faculty, staff, students and alumni should be utilized in this effort.

5. Establishment of distinguished chairs in discrete disciplines.

Proposals should be developed for the corporate community, both within and without. Maryland, to support this effort. A focus of this type will serve as a magnet in attracting capable undergraduate and graduate students.

6. Expanded academic fairs in various disciplines

The academic fairs would serve as a conduit in terms of familiarizing students in Baltimore and nearby school districts of the distinctive strengths and opportunities available at Morgan.

7. Sponsorship for university-wide forums which address major community issues.

Forums that address issues of public education, the elderly, health care, housing, unemployment and underemployment would serve to stimulate broader community interest and support.

8. Increased visibility to academic and scholastic attainments of Morgan's Students

The media, print and non-print, should be utilized copiously to highlight the accomplishments of Morgan's diverse student body. An effective and continuing process of networking with key contacts in the media, print and non-print, to achieve positive visibility for the students.

9. Increased visibility to Morgan's faculty and staff

Again, the media, print and non-print, should be utilized in order to highlight faculty-staff achievements, scholarly publications, academic interests and community involvement.

10. Energizing groups and broader participation of Morgan's alumni

One of the largest concentrations of Morgan's alumni is in the Baltimore-Washington corridors. Too many, however, through their placidity and passivity and almost veritable obsession with conviviality and baubles have forsworn Morgan. It is they who must give the impetus to a revival of pride, excellence and expansion for their Alma Mater.

11. Greater participation by Morgan's retired faculty and staff.

Those who have benefited from the advantages and opportunities of Morgan, in their well-deserved retirement, must now rally to Morgan in a time of enormous need. The witness of the retired faculty and staff, in concert with the current faculty, staff, students, alumni and interested citizens, is crucial at this point.

I firmly believe that each of the aforesaid recommendations is achievable and do-able. What Do You Think? You have the capacity through the use of the political process to move the eleven recommendations to fruition. Now is the time to make your views known as a taxpayer and voter to Governor Hughes, members of the Maryland Legislative Black Caucus and Leadership (Speaker Benjamin Cardin; Senate President Melvin Steinberg) of the general assembly and total membership that Morgan needs strengthening and expansion and not weakening.

I challenge you to make your voice heard now. A vibrant, dynamic and expanding Morgan State University is vital for progress and stability in Maryland and the nation. I urge you to close ranks for "fair Morgan" both for ourselves and posterity.

—AFRO SURVEY—

What does Thanksgiving mean to you?

Sheila Jackson

Sherman Patterson

Stephanie Bonner

Wanda Cook

This week the question to the man and woman in the street is "What does Thanksgiving mean to you?"

Sheila Jackson, 22, "Thanksgiving means the family being together giving thanks to the Lord that they are still together."

Sherman Patterson, 74, "Thanksgiving means a great holiday to me and when you give thanks unto the Lord. It is always a great holiday."

Stephanie Bonner, 25, "Thanksgiving means nothing to me because I am thankful every day of the year. Nov. 28 is a blessing. It is also a blessing if I am alive."

Wanda Cook, 21, "Thanksgiving means unity, family, and togetherness. It is also peaceful and everything is 'cool and crisp.' It is a time to thank God for all of our blessings."

Dru Robinson, 24, "Thanksgiving means a time when I can be with my friends and my family and reflect on all the blessings I have received from them and God."

Linda White, 30, "Thanksgiving means settling down with relatives and friends to enjoy a nice Thanksgiving dinner and giving thanks to God."

Sylvia Woolford, 54, "Thanksgiving means to me that I am grateful. It is a merciful act. It means to be thankful for everything all year-long."

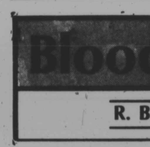
Ms. Elverta Salliey, 48, "I really don't know what Thanksgiving means, though I have a lot for which to be thankful. It means being alive, healthy, and able to see another year pass."

Dru Robinson

Linda White

Sylvia Woolford

Ms. Elverta Salliey



R. B. Jones

Bits and pieces

7th District Blues

If the field gets any more crowded in the 7th Congressional District, the entire ballot will consist of candidates drooling over the prospect of occupying Parren Mitchell's seat.

Rumor and rumbling indicate that Register of Wills for Baltimore City Mary Conaway is planning to run for Congress.

The more candidates who run and dilute the black vote, the more a white will be tempted to mount a strong campaign. With blacks dividing the vote more and more that 20 or 25 percent of the vote in the white community will affect the outcome of the election.

Lest black people get overconfident that the 7th District seat will remain in their possession, one need only remember what happened in Atlanta when Andy Young left Congress to become U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations. When he resigned a number of blacks ran and the seat ended up being won by a white candidate.

Blacks in Atlanta are supposed to be light years ahead of their Baltimore counterparts in political sophistication so if it happened there it can happen here.

North and South lies

I watched the hack portrayal of the events leading up to the Civil War as displayed in the miniseries "North and South" with amusement.

Once again the Southern Cause was represented by a benevolent, almost noble slaveowner who seemed to be an honorable man. That is the danger of such costumed distortions of history.

Like "Roots," another costumed distortion, the pernicious idea that slavery was not that bad was given once again.

Slavery was a system of forced labor based solely on the cooperation of the vast majority of the white population in keeping the black population subjugated by coercion.

The system of slavery used beatings, brandings, rape, mutilation, torture and every form of killing conceivable to terrify the slaves into cooperating with their captors.

There was no such thing as a good master. There were some less casually brutal than others or those who used others to carry out their brutal acts against the slaves,but their participation in a system that oppressed people made them part of the brutality even if they did not participate in the particular act.

Television sanitizes the slaveholders and that is as gross a disservice as the way that television sanitizes the crimes of the slaveholders's descendants.

No other system in human history was as brutal as North American slavery. No other crime against humanity cost as many lives. No other system in history with the possible exception of apartheid in South Africa dehumanized its victims so thoroughly.

Don't be deceived by slaves running around with shoes on and nice winter coats, slavery was a brutal, murderous exercise that used up black peoples' lives for the sake of profit.

I wonder why

I wonder why there are some women who have men falling over themselves to wine and dine them while many other women seem unable to get dates. This question fascinates me.

Many women say there is a man shortage and that finding a good man is nearly impossible so they have taken themselves out of the flow for a while. Some have been hurt while others have expectations that are very high. Some have decided for religious reasons to abstain from any physical relationship with a man prior to the marriage bed.

On the other hand some women that I observe seem to be the objects of very fervent male attention. This attention includes gifts, public displays of loyalty and affection and monetary gifts freely given.

These recipients of male devotion and attention are not perfect physical specimens nor do they fit any particular beauty stereotype.

Some of the magnetic women have vary glaring flaws while other women I know with almost classic beauty, and voluptuousness can't hardly buy a date. I wonder why?

Perhaps it is a matter of charm or some intangible sensuality that appeals subconsciously to the male hunter instinct. Whatever it is confounds the beautiful but lovely women, while the others live it up.

It's not a matter of temperament either because some of the surliest women alive also exhibit the magnetism to draw men like sugar draws ants.

If any of my readers can answer this riddle please write a line or two to me at the AFRO. I'd like to know the answer.

COMMENTARY:

'Mom and Pop' businesses

There is an old saying, " the more things change, the more they remain the same." This point is certainly driven home when we view the rapid takeover of small businesses, commonly called, "Mom & Pop" stores, in and around the black community by recently arrived Asians.

Prior to the recent take over of Mom & Pop businesses by Asians, these businesses were owned and operated by European Jews who came to this country shortly after World War II. They found in the black community a golden economic opportunity. First, because blacks had no desire to trade with each other, finding it more desirable to trade with anyone who was not black; and second, because black people were economically lazy in that we would spend more for inferior quality goods and services rather than going a few blocks where the prices were lower and the quality was better. Jim Crow (legal segregation), may also have played an important role in causing black people to shop and trade close to home.

There were at least two iron clad principles to which many of the Jewish merchants ascribed: one was that they had no desire for their children to take over their businesses when they retired. This hope was achieved, because their children have become doctors, lawyers and accountants. The second principle was that while they would trade and work the black community, they would rarely live in the community. This resulted in a period of several years when these businesses were closed down and remained vacant after their owners retired and left for warmer, more hospitable climates, e.g. Miami Beach.

If there was ever a time for blacks to go into business, it was during the hiatus (gap) between the retirement of Jewish merchants and the coming of the Asian merchants. Yet, few, if any blacks took advantage of this time period. One of the reasons which may account for this lost opportunity is the incredibly long hours one has to devote to a Mom & Pop business. In order to make a go for such a business, it has to remain open twelve to eighteen hours a day, six to seven days a week. Black folk have been conditioned to work a forty hour week, with all holidays and weekends off. Another unattractive feature about these kinds of businesses is that they are frequent targets for shoplifters and holdup artists.

I think however, that the most significant drawback associated with these kinds of businesses which makes them unappealing to blacks, is the fact that there is no prestige attached to owning and operating one. Black folk see more value and prestige in having a responsible position with some large white businesses rather than owning and operating a small grocery store.

Hence, the recent Asian invasion. Vietnamese and Cambodian refugees, with the help and blessings of federal, state and local government have seized the opportunity and filled the vacuum, which both time and the reluctance of blacks to become small business owners have created. It is indeed a sad commentary to realize that one of the first English words they will learn how to use is "nigger." They are also quick to despise, distrust and exploit their black customers.

The irony of this situation is that it didn't have to be this way. Mom and Pop's businesses are the backbone of American businesses and industry. They represent one of the major entrance points to entrepreneurship. Many, if not most, major businesses in America started out as Mom & Pop operations.

—By Sa'ad El-Amin

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.