Baltimore Afro-American

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Easter Week miracle

Baltimore has been struck by a number of tragedies this year relating to fires in the home. These fires are the most frightening because they often take place while the occupants of the house are asleep and very vulnerable.

The ugly specter of arson has appeared this week and such actions should never be allowed to go unpunished. Arson is a more cowardly form of murder than shooting an unarmed victim. Most times a gun wielding killer will have to face the victim and look into the eyes.

Arson is a crime of sneak attack. It is both cruel in its form of killing, smoke flame and if the victim is not fortunate enough to die while asleep, a terrifying awareness of the approach of death.

The arson fire that destroyed a house on Auchentroly Terrace took two human lives and added to the list of atrocities committed by one human being against another. Yet in the midst of malice and violence a miracle occurred.

Two children survived the blaze, hidden in a closet. What they did was against every rule that fire experts would give for what to do during a fire. It was natural that they would react this way since children instinctively try to hide from danger whether it be under the covers or in a closet.

Some would say the children were lucky while others would say that they were the beneficiaries of divine help like the three brothers who were tossed in a furnace in the Old Testament story.

However they were saved; their survival brings joy to Baltimore, especially during the Easter Season.

Easter Sunday hope

This Sunday marks a very special day on the Christian calendar. Easter marks the day that Jesus was resurrected from the dead bringing hope to his followers for the forgiveness of their sins.

Easter is the most joyous day of the year and many Christians wear new clothes on that day to symbolize new life. Easter is married somewhat by fighting in the Mediterranean and the killing on the streets of Baltimore.

It seems that the message of peace and love that Jesus taught still escapes many people on the planet. Still, hope remains, for that is the message of the Easter Season.

The despair of the crucifixion which was very deep among Jesus' followers was replaced two days later by intense joy when the news of the resurrection was spread among them.

The message of hope is needed at this time when the very social fabric of this nation seems to be unraveling. There is intense suffering in America in the midst of plenty and it is unjustified. There seems to be a callousness abroad that approves of poverty in the wealthiest nation in human history.

The beauty of Easter is very much needed at this time because hope is always a healing force in the world. This world could use a great deal of hope and help right now.

Pressure on South Africa

The recently rally against racist South Africa's system of apartheid demonstrates that there is still an identity and solidarity with oppressed black South Africans. The rally, organized by the AFL-CIO, was one of many throughout the nation in major cities. This is a tribute to Transafrica's Randall Robinson who first organized demonstrations at the South African embassy.

The initial marches awakened the conscience of América and is now known as the Free South Africa Movement. The marches were thought to be a temporary fluke but since have attracted individuals from all walks of life, including many congressional leaders and our own Congressman Walter E. Fauntroy.

TransAfrica's Robinson told an AFRO reporter that the marches would continue indefinitely and would target firms that do business with racist South Africa. Currently the Movement has urged a boycott of Shell Oil Company which does a volume business in South Africa. Many cities and American businesses along with prestigious schools have revised their policies toward South Africa because they fear censure and do not want to appear supporting that oppressive government.

Many cities also have declared a moratorium on doing business with South Africa which has had to reschedule its loan payments with major American and European financial institutions.

The government of South Africa meanwhile announced a few cosmetic changes which would give the impression that apartheid is moribund or a relic of the past. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Apartheid is still alive with its oppressive tentacles restricting the lives of black South Africans.

Recent reports allege that young black defenseless children have been shot in the back for boycotting schools as a method of protest against the system. Black prisoners, it is alleged, have been victims of excruciating torture, including brutal beatings, electric shock treatment and whippings with hands tied.

Perhaps the most bizarre case since the Sharpville massacres is that of Steve Biko, a black leader who was beaten beyond belief while in police custody. This shocked the world to know that a so-called civilized country could inflict such inhumane treatment on a defenseless human being.

The unbelievable aspect about South Africa's terrorist tactics against its black citizens is that it has barely caused a ripple on President Reagan. When questioned by reporters he attempted to offset such tyranny by blaming the African National Congress, a black nationalist organization, as the catalyst. So far Reagan has only issued tepid rebukes and reluctantly imposed partial economic sanctions.

When Chester Crocker, the administration's African expert, made a mistake and called the ANC freedom fighters, he was roundly rebuked lest he offend South African government officials. Yet our president displays vivid concern about human rights abuses in the Philippines and Haiti. The two toppled dictators were without doubt the most vicious tyrants in existence because they consistently plundered their nation's resources for personal use.

In the process ordinary citizens were and still are denied basic human rights while living in abject poverty.

The difference in the three situations is that the Philippines and Haiti tyrants were oppressing individuals of the same ethnic origin. While in South Africa a white minority government wantonly denies black South Africans God-given rights with relentless ferocity and with covert assistance from a number of Western powers. The black citizens of South Africa are human beings and have a sacred right to struggle for freedom because they have the same desires and needs of their counterparts in and out of their country.

They are a brave and courageous group facing truncheons and lethal bullets constantly but they have no intention of submitting and with outside help from pressure groups show all signs of continuing their fight for liberation against overwhelming odds.

Parron J. Mitchell

Democracy vs. Autocracy

Since the Reagan Administration came into office in 1981, it has sought to change the traditional role of government, not through numerous seemingly covert actions destroying general public access to the means of government accountability and by barricading the free flow of information and ideas.

Walter Karp, a contributing editor of Harper's conducted a comprehensive analysis of these subtle but significant positions taken by the Reagan Administration and has offered a chronological account entitled "Liberty Under Siege."

This insightful composition reveals quite disturbing observations about the "Reagan Revolution" which has attempted to elevate the powers of the presidency while undermining the Constitutional powers vested in the Congress, the courts, and the American people.

The following chronicle highlights the largely ignored events reported in Karp's article.

Under the guise of eliminating government waste, President Reagan, in 1981, abruptly interrupted the preparation and distribution of government publications, official reports, bulletins, and pamphlets by declaring a moratorium.

In the midst of the largest arms buildup in history, it might surprise some that among those suspended publications was the Central Intelligency Agency reports on "U.S. Soviet Military Dollar-Cost Comparisons."

Other suspended publications included the "Survey of Income and Program Participation," which assesses the effects of the Administration's welfare policies; the "Annual Survey of Child Nutrition," the "Annual Housing Survey;" and several bulletins on occupational health hazards; just to name a few.

The New York Times reported in the same year that the White House had structured key advisory panels to avoid the public meeting rules of the Advisory Committee Act. Additionally, the White House issued new guidelines to allow agencies of the Executive Branch to evade public accountability provisions of the Administrative Procedure Act.

At the expense of the media's right to know, and consequently the public's right to know, the President has inferred a fictional "right" of the Executive Branch to decide which matters are confidential and may therefore, be withheld from public scrutiny.

In October of the same year, the Administration submitted legislation to Congress to "reform" the Freedom of Information Act, which has served as the primary vehicle for the accountability of government.

One "improvement" suggested by the Administration would make it more difficult for the public to discover how the agencies of the Executive Branch are enforcing health, safety, and environmental laws.

In 1982, the President signed an executive order creating a new and extremely vague category of classified technical data which effectively suppressed private research both on the campus and in the laboratory and enabled the government to reclassify documents that were previously in the public domain.

In 1983, the President proposed new accounting rules for thousands of private organizations that receive federal grants to require all such organizations to forfeit federal funds if they speak out on public affairs.

Justice Department guidelines issued in March of 1983 put all Americans who are "political in character" within easy reach of police surveillance.

Later in May, the President fired three members of the six-person Civil Rights Commission for actually monitoring the Administration's nonenforcement of civil rights laws.

In November 1984, the Defense Department issued a directive to every Pentagon official to withhold from the public all technical data," including and pertaining to "contractor performance evaluation" (fraud) and military hardware test and evaluation results (waste).

At first glance, one might wonder if the Administration has something to hide.

Should the President have the power to withhold from the American people whatever he thinks it best for the people not to know? Without freedom of information, can the American people judge for themselves the costs and benefits of the Administration's policies?

Will Americans be able to hold the Administration accountable for gross mismanagement and wasteful spending? Can this exalted power of the presidency be properly construed from our Constitution?

I think not.

Anthony Anderson

Political primer — one

There's an old phrase that goes something like this: "to assume anything is to make an ass of you and me."

The phrase is especially applicable to politics. Black voters have lost more to assumptions than anything else and, we stand to loose still more if we continue to play to role of the donkey.

Things that I have long assumed were clear to black voters are turning up in conversations and, I am learning that many of these political facts are not known.

One would assume that everyone knows the name of the President of the U.S.A., Ronald Reagan; the Vice President, George Bush; the two U.S. senators from Maryland, Charles McC. Mathias, Jr. and Paul Sarbanes.

I've always assumed that most people, and certainly voters, knew that they lived in, first, a city councilmatic district, then a state legislative district and, thirdly, a U.S. congressional district.

The fact that Maryland sends eight members to the U.S. House of Representatives is also something I assumed most people knew.

I also assumed that the citizens of Baltimore knew that if, for any reason, the Mayor cannot or will not serve that the President of the City Council automatically ascends to the office of Mayor.

No vote, no discussion, no nothing; if the Mayor leaves office the President of the City Council becomes the Mayor. A situation like this is upon us.

It's no secret that Mayor William Donald Schaefer is running for Governor; it's also little known that he is going to be elected Governor. When that happens the President of the City Council, Clarence "Du" Burns, will automatically become the Mayor of Baltimore.

Having a black Mayor is something most blacks in Baltimore have wanted (and many feel deserve) for a long time. We will have one, for all practical purposes, the minute all the primary votes are counted in September of 1986, this year.

For the first time in the history of this city, a city that was incorporated in 1797, Baltimore will have, by charter (the city's constitution), a black man in the chief executive position.

It's then that the real "fun" will start. For, in politics, like war, it's one thing to take the hill and another thing, entirely, to hold it. The real trick for the black citizens of Baltimore will be holding the hill; in other words keeping what we will have gained, in the face of attempts (by blacks as well as whites) to take it back.

If you think for one minute that some very powerful forces in Baltimore want to see this city run by a black man you are sadly mistaken. Not only do they not want a black Mayor (a black anything for that matter) but, they don't want a Baltimore that is populated by a majority of black people.

As evidence, no one builds $125,000 condominiums for black people, because the average black person, in Baltimore or anywhere else for that matter, can't afford to pay for them. But back to pure politics.

It is a fact of political life that no group gives away its political power. We have made this point a number of times in this column and, we hope, that with everything you're going to hear in this coming election season, that each of you remembers this basic rule.

If you do remember, what you'll be able to see, through all the smoke of politics, is the importance of keeping the black Mayor. It will be very easy to lose him if we're not careful and smart.

There is already too much talk about running two black candidates in the 1987 Mayor's race. To permit this to happen would be stupid, that's right stupid. Anyone can see that if two blacks get into a fight over which one will be elected Mayor, in 1987, neither will be Mayor.

Very simply the other side would run a viable candidate right down the middle, between the two blacks, and the white would be elected. This is basic arithmetic. There are not enough black votes in Baltimore to have them split up between two black candidates for Mayor, without thereby assuring the election of a white.

What the blacks of Baltimore ought to be making very clear is that we are not going to threaten the loss of the black Mayor we'll already have, by 1987 (by virtue of "Du" Burn's becoming Mayor when Schaefer becomes Governor).

If we really use our heads we will work to elect ten members to the Baltimore City Council. Fact is that the Mayor, any Mayor, can do nothing without the approval of ten votes from the city Council.

So, in reality the power in city government is really with the council. Ten votes there can start or stop anything. Let's keep what we'll have, and get some more.

This is political primer - one.

Auto insurance problems

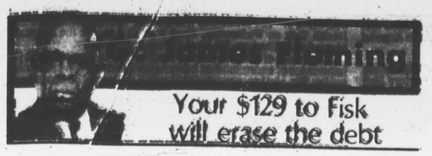
The problem of high automobile insurance in the State of Maryland is being addressed at the 1986 Maryland General Assembly.

It would be to your advantage to contact your representatives in the General Assembly to express your feelings if you are concerned about the high cost of automobile insurance in the State of Maryland.

I am sure you are aware that there is a great deal of difference in the amount city dwellers pay for auto insurance in Maryland verses people of other areas in the state.

You may find out who your General Assembly representatives are by calling 396-5553.

MARY AIKEN



Dollars & Sense

Your $129 to Fisk will erase the debt

Fisk University has worked out a unique and challenging scheme, through which its alumni can wipe out the university's once-crippling debt — with little hurt.

Each alumnus and alumna is being asked to contribute just $128.98 between now and May 1986 — by the annual Commencement.

The scheme should work; it will result in a total pot of $800,000 — the entire balance on Fisk's backbreaking indebtedness.

The $129 is asked for is a bargain when measured by what Fisk can contribute to black young people for generations yet unborn, just as it has served and contributed in the past.

Nearly everybody knows of Fisk's difficult days not so long ago, when it came pretty near to closing its doors for all time — after well over 100 years of being a high quality institution of college-level learning for the education of black Americans, and for all others, whomever will.

But Fisk University has been saved, due to what will go down in history as the brilliant stewardship of Dr. Henry Ponder, its new president, and the rallying of thousands of white and black contributors, with a good showing from Nashville itself.

The alumni have already raised nearly $1,000,000 and the once death-threatening debt has been reduced from $2,000,000 to less than $1,000,000. But even this relatively small amount is costly to Fisk and a burden that prevents the university from moving forward as fast and steadily as it should.

President Ponder puts it as it is, thus: "I am convinced we must remove all remaining debt before the end of this fiscal year so that we may begin to pay current year's expenses with current year's income. Not only would we eliminate the additional paperwork and administrative costs resulting from past due bills, but we would save the interest we are required to pay on these debts. This money could be used for immediate and pressing needs of the institution." President Ponder continues:

"Currently, we must operate the institution and pay off the debt as we are able, all from our very limited funds. We continue to maintain balanced budgets, but stringent economies are necessary. If we are to do things which must be done — repair the physical plant, rebuild the endowment, enhance our curriculum and student life — the debt must be removed."

This column would like to extend the appeal of Dr. Ponder beyond the Fisk alumni. Certainly, there must be many, many families who will be prompted to contribute also, regardless of their college loyalty and affiliation and whether or not one went to college.

Fisk University which has given so many stalwart black leaders and "servants of the people" to the nation should not have to depend on its alumni alone, some of whom are recent graduates and not yet really earning; others will be dead by the time this column is printed.

Gifts of "Friends of Fisk," however small, will add up and, further, they will augment the contributions of Fiskites which are under $128.98.

When it is considered that, in less than two years, Fisk has reduced past indebtedness by 50 percent, this alone should be a striking incentive to other friends to give more — a modest sum for most people.

The dollars required just to meet interest is money not going for the main business of a college; yet, debts, mean interest to be paid. Wiping out the last vestige of this debt also means more monies received by Fisk — tuition, gifts, grants, etc. — will be used for its main business.

One of the marks of First Class Citizenship is the opportunity, not only to support one's kith and kin and one's own institutions. True first class-ness is to reach out and give a boost and a helping hand to those groups and institutions that are not intimately related to the giver.

Furthermore, increasingly, black Americans must — and are expected to — support their race-related institutions, just as other ethnic groups are doing. None deserve this support more than Fisk University.

Fisk alumni should certainly answer the call of President Ponder: the rest of us should, also — it's only $128.98. Now, reach for your checkbook. Mail check to: Fisk University, Nashville, Tenn., 37203. "You'll be glad you did."

Bishop's daughter says 'the time for marching has just about passed'

"The time for marching is passing; the time for talking is passing; the time for stones is passing."

With these words, the slender young woman in the colorful South African costume held more than 300 American teen-aged girls and their teachers spellbound recently as she compared the American Civil Rights Movement during the past 30 years with the ongoing struggle for her people to secure their basic human rights.

She spoke with authority as well as eloquence: she is Mpho Tutu, the youngest daughter of Anglican Bishop and Nobel Prize winner Desmond Tutu, a celebrated leader of South African resistance.

The students at Regina High School, a Catholic girls' school in Hyattsville which draws its integrated student body from Prince George's and Montgomery Counties and the District of Columbia, knew, in the words of Regina faculty members and Catholic chaplain at Howard University Rev. Russell Dillard, that they were witnessing" ... something special here today."

Miss Tutu is a senior electrical engineering student at Howard and was accompanied by the university's Episcopal chaplain, the Rev. Dr. E. Nathaniel Porter.

She acknowledged that there are similarities between the two movements and that South African blacks have adopted many of the methods and strategies employed the American blacks during their struggle. She also pointed out, however, that substantial differences exist.

America's black citizens constituted a minority whose rights were being abridged by the establishment, but these were rights which were guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States.

Black Americans, therefore, could appeal to a general public and to a government which were morally disposed to be outraged by the brutality which these citizens encountered when they sought to obtain what was rightfully and lawfully theirs.

Furthermore, a free American press documented both their efforts and the violence which met their passive resistence to injustice.

South African activists are also encountering brutality, on an even greater scale, but their country's constitution is specifically designed to deny them their basic rights.

The white population, moreover, is kept largely uninformed of what is happening in the black townships and "homelands." They are dependent on a single, state-owned television network and on newspapers which are increasingly forced into self-censorship by the fear of being banned or of losing vital advertising revenue.

MISS MPHO TUTU

Finally, a substantial percentage of the white minority in South Africa (whites constitute only 25 percent of the population) is firmly committed to preserving its privileged position by any means possible.

After a brief opening statement, Miss Tutu spent approximately a half hour answering the many questions which the Regina students posed.

Asked what motivated her to speak out against apartheid, Miss Tutu stated, "No black person can live under that system and not feel compelled to fight it."

Speaking of the mood in South Africa on her most recent home visit, last summer in the weeks following the imposition of the state of emergency, she spoke of having seen more funerals, less self-censorship, and much more anger than she had seen six or seven months earlier. She declared that her was also "... a stronger sense that the space left for negotiation was dwindling rapidly."

The students, some of whom had participated with Dr. Dillard in the demonstrations at the South African Embassy last year, asked how South African blacks felt about western nations and citizens disinvesting themselves from corporations which do business in and with South Africa.

In response, Miss Tutu cited two recent polls by the Times of London and the Gallup organization which both established that nearly three quarters of the country's urban blacks supported such a policy. This support comes despite the fact that urban blacks would be the first to feel the loss of jobs and other hardships which such a policy would impose.

Questioned about non-violence and her own attitudes about armed resistance, Miss Tutu pronounced herself, "Like my father, a peace-lover, not a pacifist."

After stating that, "There's a point at which people grow tired when, everytime they go out to protest, they are up for martyrdom," she acknowledged the difficulty in arming South Africans to an extent that would prevent them from simply being massacred if they attempted armed resistance against one of the strongest armies of the African continent.

Training and organizing blacks within South Africa under the apartheid system also presents seemingly insurmountable obstacles.

Throughout her prepared remarks and the discussion which followed, Miss Tutu urged the girls to stay informed about what was happening in South Africa, even though the government there has not severely curtailed the access of foreign journalists and television reporters.

She reminded them of the effects of last year's protests, especially on an American administration reluctant to employ anything other than what she termed "hand-slapping" measures against the South African government.

She especially urged them, in addition to educating themselves and others, to keep the pressure on the American government through continued public protest designed to force the United States and other western nations and institutions to impose very real sanctions against South Africa.

She asked if they dared to do less against a regime which has denied basic human rights to fully three quarters of its population.

She concluded, in response to a question, "No, the situation is not getting better; it is getting worse. No, the people are not losing hope. Despair is a word we haven't learned yet. We may learn it eventually, but I hope we never do."

The Regina student body and faculty rose in a standing ovation as Miss Tutu and Fr. Porter left the gymnasium to keep another appointment.

Those long associated with the school could not help but be struck by the fact that this very room had served as a rest station for some of those coming to Washington in the late 1960's to participate in the Poor People's March led by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

Indeed, the spirits of those long ago demonstrators must have joined in the ovation.

— AFRO SURVEY —

How do you plan to spend Easter Sunday?

Anthony Bacoat — Vonderher Skinner — Diane Fitzgerald — Sheryl Sessoms

This week the question to the men and women in the street is, "How do you intend to spend Easter?"

Anthony Bacoat, 18, reservist, "I plan to go to the Harbor. I am planning to eat at Phillips, then go to Odell's. I may go to church with the family, but I haven't decided yet."

Vonderher Skinner, 19, unemployed, "I plan to go to the harbor. I think that I'll take some pictures. First, my daughter and I will go to church, then I think that I will go to the harbor."

Diane Fitzgerald, 20, student, I have no plans for Easter. I don't celebrate Easter. I feel that it is a holiday for children—the Easter bunny and all that."

Sheryl Sessoms, 21, dental assistant, "I don't plan on shopping. Maybe I will go to church. Then, I guess that I will go to the inner harbor and walk around. I don't plan on doing anything with the family. Everyone is grown up and gone."

Terry Johnson, 18, model, "I really don't know. I'll probably celebrate with family. I guess I'll go to the park or something."

Andre Bradey, 23, student, "I plan to have dinner with the family. Then me and my girl will just "cool" out for the rest of the evening."

Mark Gray, 19, student, "I'll probably be in Atlantic City with my lady, hanging out with some of my friends who work on the boardwalk. I'll go to church on Good Friday being Catholic. I don't want to go on Easter with everyone who hasn't been to church since last Easter."

Samara Lomax, 27, model, "I am going to church on Sunday. Then, I'll have a birthday party for my daughter. My daughter will be five years old on Good Friday."

Terry Johnson — Andre Bradley — Mark Gray — Samara Lomax

Bloodnotes

R. B. Jones

Blaming the victim again

I stayed up late Tuesday night to watch CBS' pious documentary "The Vanishing Black Family" because I missed it the first time it was shown. I knew without watching that it was going to be another exercise in blaming the victim.

The current vogue the conservatives are enjoying has made it even more fashionable to blame black people for social problems that have origins beyond their control.

The tone of the program, like the host, had a pseudo-caring note to it. Rev. Bill Moyers spoke with amazement and obvious alarm about the large number of households among black people headed by single mothers.

Naturally, Moyer took his cameras and his crocodile tears to Newark, New Jersey, a city that has about as many social ills as Beirut, Lebanon.

Moyers found a number of black women raising children without husbands and he also found a very confused young man who has fathered six children by four different women without benefit of employment or much concern for how the children fare.

The host also interviewed young men about the danger of the streets and how most of their peers could see no future other than life on the streets.

At the end of the program Moyers interviewed a police officer who worked with young boys, many of whom have no father in the home and a woman social worker who attributed the problem of single parent homes entirely on the black community's own laxity.

Moyers presented a cleverly slanted program that did not deal with the root causes of any of the problems. The show played in Peoria because it gave white Americans absolution for all the manifestations of racism such as job discrimination, unequal education, unequal justice and unequal health care.

Moyers told white America that there is no need to try to help "those people" because they can't be helped. All they want to do is live in their violence plagued ghetto, rutting and reproducing like the the jungle beasts that they are. Moyers gave white America reinforcement for all its most treasured and long held notions about race.

Comforting notions are not necessarily reality. The reality of these people's lives was not dealt with. The reality of many black teenagers is that they have attended urban school systems that have been underfunded, overcrowded and designed to fail them.

They have the highest unemployment rate of any group in the country and when they reach adulthood with the educational handicaps they have already suffered they will be at a disadvantage in the adult job market.

The unskilled jobs that their parents and grandparents had access to are being exported to Third World Countries. When this fact is added to the phenomenal number of discrimination incidents involving employment incidents involving employment, reported and unreported, the job scene is bleak for black teenagers.

What these young people lack in many cases is a sense of hope. The girls have little hope of finding a mate with a viable employment future, so they settle for the momentary pleasure.

In a society where manhood is measured by money and sex, these young men denied access to money except for the underground economy often turn to sex as an affirmation of manhood.

What Moyers and many others did not deal with is the fact that these young people like their white counterparts are victims of a society with immature attitudes about human sexuality and an appalling unavailability of information on and access to contraceptives for young people.

This is a society where sex education classes in school and sex surveys raise storms of protest while the lack of teachers, textbooks and supplies goes uncommented on for the most part.

Yes, the black community bears a responsibility for its actions, but where are the community leaders who have the resources, the ideas and the stamina to address a problem that has origins beyond their control?

The problem is rampant in the white community though to a lesser extent, but their greater economic resources and their control of the media make the problem seem to be one that primarily exists in the black community.

Moyers and his network made brownie points with the right wingers that have intimidated many people in this country by exploiting the oppression and despair of some young black people in Newark, but they have not shed any light on the problem.

Blaming the victim is comforting to white America but like the "Rocky" and "Rambo movies it doesnot reflect reality and it does not bode well for the future of this society.

1986