Baltimore Afro-American

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The Nativity

(According to St. Luke 2, 1-21)

1. And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.
2. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.)
3. And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.
4. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:)
5. To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.
6. And so it was, that, while they were there, the says were accomplished that she should be delivered.
7. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.
8. And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.
9. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.
10. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.
11. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.
12. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.
13. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,
14. Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.
15. And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.
16. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.
17. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning the child.
18. And all that heard, wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.
19. But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.
20. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard, and seen, as it was told unto them.
21. And after eight days were accomlished that the child should be circumcised his name was called JESUS, which was called by the angel, before he was conceived in the womb.

Christmas holy day

The Christmas holiday season is the biggest one of the year and the most troubling for many people. It is a religious holiday second only to Easter in importance in the Christian calendar. Yet, many elements have entered into Christmas that threaten to obscure its real meaning.

The pressures of giftgiving have grown to monstrous proportions with many people grudingly presenting gifts to those they don't really care for. There is also the pressure to give gifts of appropriate value to persons and stress related to going into debt to buy Christmas presents.

Far too much emphasis has been put on the figure of Santa Claus who has convinced children that the purpose of this season is to lavish them with toys and other things.

Still, some good elements of the season remain, such as families gathering together and settling differences for the sake of family unity.

The central meaning of Christmas remains a religious one, the coming of the Messiah according to Christian doctrine. The Messiah was to come to bring peace and justice to the world and a new covenant between God and mankind.

The joy of Christmas is supposed to come from the knowledge that Christians have the promise of God to send a deliverer to humanity a promise that has been fulfilled.

In the midst of all the other frenzied activities that take place during the Christmas season, it would be good if everyone would reflect on the original purpose for celebrating the holiday.

Fire danger season is here

It is one of the cruelest ironies in existence that during the Christmas Holiday Season, a time when families should be joyous with their loved ones near, is a time in this city when fires frequently take human lives and dampen the season for far too many families.

There are many reasons why there are so many fires during this time of year. Baltimore weather becomes cold during November and December necessitating more heat. Often, those too poor to keep warm through central heating methods rely on ovens and electric heaters that can touch off a fire if they are placed near flammable material.

This time of year often forces more people to crowd into homes for economic reasons and a fire that breaks out in a home has more potential victims.

Far too often, homes that experience fires have smoke detectors but they are without batteries or the battery is dead. A battery is a small investment when compared to human life.

The AFRO urges its readers to practice great care in preventing fires before they claim lives or valuable property. Exercise care with holiday lights and Christmas trees. Make sure all smoke detectors are in working order. Be especially careful after parties to make sure that no smoldering cigarettes are left in furniture cushions where they can burn long after party givers have gone to bed.

Make sure candles and matches are not handled by children, and check on persons who have had too much to drink so they won't smoke in bed or start a fire in the kitchen.

With care, everyone can have a safe holiday season.

AFRO reader speaks out

An an avid reader of your paper, reading both the Tuesday and Friday editions each week, I feel a need to express my opinion. I grew up reading the AFRO and have watched it go through numerous changes, including personnel, format and style.

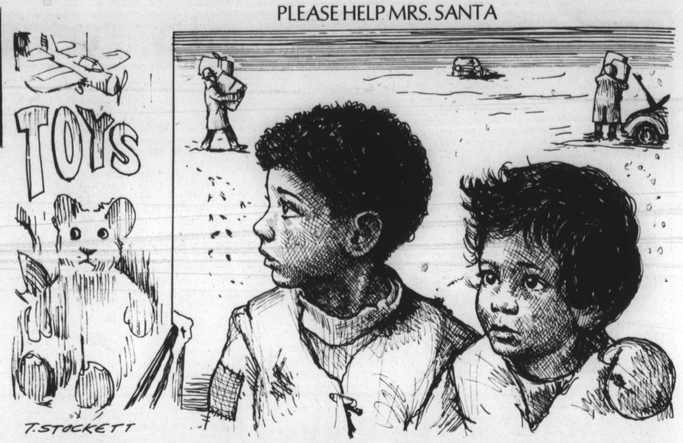
Unfortunately, the AFRO's main problem, in my opinion, remains to be corrected. That is, the articles need to be proofread thoroughly before printing. As a secretary, I am well aware of the importance of proofreading articles for accuracy and have repeatedly found typing errors.

Recently, I took a small sample of both former and present AFRO readers in my office, asking their opinion of the AFRO. The general consensus was the AFRO provides information with depth and insight that other papers lack, particularly when reporting articles important to the black community but that there are too many typing errors.

In order to continue satisfying your regular readers and to possibly recapture former readers, you must address this important issue. Thank you for a paper that provides what no other can; articles written for and about blacks.

PATRICIA JUDKIN

PLEASE HELP MRS. SANTA



Anthony Armstrong

Account

Everybody is concerned about the quality of the Baltimore City Public Schools, and well they should. If anything is crucial to the health and welfare of our school age citizenry, it's the worth of the education they receive. Among such concerns has to be the policies and quality of individual schools within the system.

Looking at something as big as the city school system and examining it as a whole is a tough job, for even education experts. For the parents of city school students, the job of judging the policies and quality of the system is an almost impossile task.

Parents don't have the measuring rods to judge schools, and getting objective criteria to work with is not an easy thing to do. Just like anything else, the whole is only as strong as its weakest link.

All over the system, there are excellent things happening, and there are terrible things happening. Yet, to know where the good is and where the bad is takes a storehouse of information that probably no one parent could ever amass.

So how does one know what is happening in the schools, in general, and in a specific school in particular? You say, "Ask"! O.K., let's ask some questions.

Question number one: What is the best school in the system? the experts will be quick to tell you that the questions is not a proper one. They will tell you that every school has some strengths and some weaknesses.

That's fine, but what about an answer to the question, and if it can't be answered, why?

Second question: what are the ten most important factors in determining the quality of a specific school within the system? Are there different measuring rods for different schools? if so, why are they different, and what are the differences.

Question three: How is money allocated to specific schools; do they all get the same consideration based, say, on student count, or is there some other criteria, like need, used to make these determinations?

What responsibility does the system have to educate a student? Is this responsibility a legal one, a regulatory one, a moral one, or a combination of all these?

Can a student be arbitrarily Poly, or Western, or The School of the Arts?

All these questions, and more, should be raised by parents, and the answers ought to be forthcoming in a way that the laymen can readily understand. Today, lots of parents don't ask questions because they are too trusting of the system. Is this trust well placed, is this trust deserved?

One thing is for sure, education is a shared responsibility. Even under the best of circumstances no parent can leave the education of their children entirely to the public schools.

For, much of what children must learn, in order to succeed in the American social and economic environment of the future, must and should be learned at home.

It is not fair for parents to expect that a public education system, based on the concept of educating the least gifted student to fully address all the needs of all students. There just isn't enough money, talent, or time to insure such a thing.

Given this, parents must be at least as important as any school teacher in providing the education of our children's need. If parents do not help then there is no way the system can do it all; if parents do not help then they cannot point a finger at the system.

Yet, even when parents do help, the job of educating our children is still, to a major extent, the job of those people we pay to do it.

One of the most interesting things about public education in America today is the decrease in attention paid to public systems and the increase of attention paid to private ones. This is no more true than in large urban areas where significant numbers of the students are black.

It is no accident that funding for public education, from all sources, has dropped as the number of black children in those systems has grown. In all such cases the one factor that remains constant is the factor of race.

Few educators want to admit it, but the commitment to public education seems inexorably tied to a number of blacks (and poor people) attending such schools. As the number of blacks increase, the amount of money tends to decrease.

If not this, then public education systems find other ways to restrict and limit the quality of education afforded black students. All kinds of special schools started popping-up within the systems.

Following this, selection methods by which students are welcomed into these special schools, begin to change in ways that are hard to explain using any other final factor but race.

I, and any parent with students in our public school system, would be very curious to know the racial make-up of schools like Poly, Western, the School of the Arts.

In a school system that is 85 percent black students, I would be very interested to know the racial composition of these "gem" schools. If their numbers are out of line with the 85 percent total figures, I would be curious how such a thing could occur using any other ultimately determining factor but race. Wouldn't you?

If you were to ask what the racial make-up of these schools were, say in your role as a parent, you would find that no one really wants to talk about these things. Why, what, if anything, might school officials be hiding, and why?

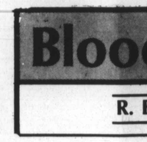
The day, sadly, has not passed when our society still places undue emphasis on things like who your parents are, what complexion (light or dark) is the skin of a black student, what texture of hair they might have, how well dressed.

The day has not passed either, when decisions about who goes to what school is not influenced by the old who-you-know factor.

So, Mr. and Mrs. Somebodies child is accepted at a better school, not because the student has shown his ability or aptitude for that school, but because the student happens to be Mr. and Mrs. Somebodies' child.

In the meantime some student who is capable, who does have great potential, but is from "the wrong side of the tracks," gets left out because of some accident of birth.

The average American cannot pay for a private school education for their children. The public school is where our kids must go; we must stop accepting excuses and begin to make educators (and parents) accountable.



Bloodnotes

R. B. Jones

Native Son

Say it isn't so ... not Richard Wright's "Native Son." Hollywood, that temple of trivialization of real issues and real feelings, has decided that it had to vandalize "Native Son" and the movie is coming out soon.

To say the selection of that book which seared the consciousness of the American reading public in 1940 is bizarre is only a half truth.

In the era of Reagan and the revitalization of the myth of white male macho, a story about a ghetto youth who kills a rich white woman and stuff her in a furnace is not the kind of film that will perk up the spirits of white moviegoers.

On the other hand, that epic chronicle of black male brutality, "The Color Purple" drew tears, rave reviews and that long green across America without a hint of the mammoth while male brutality of the movie's time period.

"Purple" convinced Hollyweird that there was a paying audience for moral condemnations of black male brutes, especially since so many of the creatures inhabit the death rows of this nation. Perhaps juries won't be so reluctant to recommend the death penalty after two hours of viewing "Native Son."

Alice Walker's novel was castrated for the screen and it is highly likely that Wright's novel will be neutered as well. "Native Son" is an examination of the destruction of an inner city black youth by the racism of white society.

Bigger Thomas is a man trapped in an oppressive situation that he could not escape. Poor, uneducated, member of a despised caste in either the first or second most racist society in the world, he is full of rage that his petty career of crime cannot release.

"Native Son" is a novel of hate. White society has institutionalized its hate of blacks into a system that crushes Bigger. He internalizes that hate and feels it toward his family and his girlfriend and his crime partners.

The whites in the novel who see themselves as benevolent are really just a racist as the klan that Bigger's family fled to the bitter streets of a Chicago ghetto.

The liberal whites who employ him and the leftist daughter and her communist boyfriend who insist on treating Bigger as equals are all treating him as an object of social experimentation, not as a person with feelings and opinions.

The pressure becomes too great and Bigger commits an act of violence which on the surface makes no sense. It was inevitable and it unleashes the full racist fury of white society against Bigger and all blacks in Chicago.

It will be interesting to see if this upcoming movie will capture the central message of the novel. "Native Son" had a successful run on Broadway starring Canada Lee and directed by Orson Welles, but the movie couldn't be made in the U.S. and Wright made it in South America. He played the role of Bigger himself.

I happened to see the movie on a double bill with "Shaft" at the old Harlem Theater and Wright was not as great an actor as he was a novelist but the movie conveyed the central message of the novel. Despite its flaws, the movie was chilling.

Since the American cinema will never show black rage or hatred of an oppressive system as legitimate while its major motivation is money and undergirding the values of the social system, it is not likely that the true message of "Native Son" will come through.

One of the major reasons the movie is being made is to cash in on the hunger created by "purple" for black audiences to see black themes on the screen. The hunger is great.

Hollywood is also counting on the popularity of Oprah Winfrey, the prototype suffering "sister" of the large and small screen.

Although Whoopi was supposed to be

Continued on page 5

G. James Fleming

Gifts for the season

Suppose you, dear reader, had the power to distribute Christmas presents, to correct, change or improve the condition of yourself and your fellow-human beings?

Or, suppose you were asking Santa for the choicest gifts to bring you and his world, what would be on your wish-list?

Each man and a woman, each boy and girl would have a different list; so would the rich contrasted with the poor; so, also would senior citizens compared to teenagers.

Despite a season filled with little wars and rumors of war, and tarnished with scandal in high places, most people would undoubtedly start off with the good, old, traditional wish for "Peace on earth, goodwill among all peoples."

This illusive dream, repeated year after year and century after century, is still central to all of man's future-always to be wished for.

Then, peace in the family. In our busy, confused, economics-oriented urban life, the strains are telling on the old-fashioned family life, and divorces are now at such a high peak, among all classes of people that, by action if not in words, marriage and the complete family, living under the same roof, is becoming obsolete. It seems that no one is inclined to try and "get along" or "to patch things up."

Peace in the churches is included next because even one case of a congregation taking its minister into court, for one reason or another, is setting too much of a bad example of divisiveness to the rest of the community.

Congregations "splitting up" most often is the outward and visible sign that love and goodwill has been replaced by bitterness and illwill.

Any list at Christmastime must also wish that we would, in the years ahead, rededicate ourselves to better and greater care of our elderly and of our children. Both seem, in these days, to be considered "excess baggage," to be ware-housed in one kind of shelter or the other.

The economic system compels us to resort to day-care centers and nursing homes, it may be true, but it does not compel total abandonment of love and caring for parents and, yes, children.

The public schools. Nowhere, in our society, are there more disappointments, more heartbreaks, more neglect on the part of government, more surrender of families to "the system."

In few areas is a wish for improvement, for enlightenment, for an "about face" more needed, starting with smaller classes and increased parental interest in big city schools.

Many of those young people who should be in schools, or should have been, are now in our jails and prisons. Here, too, do we find a need for a spirit of goodwill, translated into programs of training, education and rehabilitation.

Studies and other documentation, galore, testify that much re-thinking, backed by action, must be done in the entire field of criminal justice.

— —

To more proximate interests, the wish list of thousands upon thousands of people would include a plea for the opportunity to earn their daily bread. Despite the presidential speeches of a better economy, there are still many thousands of men, women and adolescents who cannot find work.

This inability to earn a living is a major contributor to broken families and shattered lives because of layoffs, the closing of plants and technological displacements. "Displacement of people" leading to "industrial orphans," to borrow from a radio commentator.

Leading any list might be one wish about which, somehow, most people feel hopeless. That is the wish that our government could find a way to stamp out the traffic in addictive drugs — an international curse.

Not that parents, clergymen, teachers and political leaders do not have an important role to play. They do, and they are scarcely starting early enough, but saying "no" not enough at this stage; the government must step in — seriously and massively.

Finally, a wish for the new governor of Maryland and the new mayor of Baltimore City, that they will receive the gifts of leadership, administrative skill and compassion so as to infuse their people (all our people) with the spirit of Peace on Earth and Goodwill to All Throughout our City and State."

Networking and survival

Question: Can you name a barber, beautician, dentist, doctor, lawyer, carpenter, seamstress, plumber, electrician, manufacturer, computer salesman, real estate agent, insurance agent, any black businessman or woman who attends your church, belongs to your sorority or fraternity or any other social or civic group like the Masons or Elks?

Question: Where are they loaded?

Question: When was the last time you used their product or services or sought their expertise in solving a problem?

If you're feeling a little foolish about now, join the crowd.

Despite the fact that there are hundreds of black businesses in the District and many more around the beltway, the folks who talk about such nice subjects as "Buying black" and "economic development in the black community" come up short when it is time to put their money where their mouth is.

The NAACP with its Dollar Day and other groups like the Muslims and the AME Church have shown that when the black community spends its money first with its own before it circulates in the larger community, all profit.

If you belong to any organized group which demands you pay yearly dues, buy tickets to luncheons and dinners to support charitable affairs and sometimes requires an additional contribution for a building fund or the rehabilitation of a building — then you as a businessman should insist that that organization support the hand that feeds it.

One way many groups have met this challenge is by developing business directories or speaker's directories which can be used not only by those seeking goods and services but also by schools and colleges who must find role models to talk during career days.

Some groups have on their agendas regular times for the exchange of community announcements and once or twice a year invite their members — who are in business — to display and talk about their good services.

And we would be less than candid if we did not say that the best way is to advertise these goods and services in the black press.

If more members of the clan are to improve their lot, a strong networking system is again needed. Networking was the key to our survival during slavery times.

It is the key to survival today.

Get your organization to stop complaining about what we don't have and start finding out what strengths it has within its own group. Share that list with others in the community.

Then every man, woman and child would know the black merchants in his or her community and hopefully would say "Yes I shop or trade there."

—Native Son

(Continued from page 4)

the chief martyr of that tearstained "Purple" movie, but her rather mediocre slaps were nothing compared to Oprah's pistol-whipped, crippled, half blind character.

Winfrey's role as the long suffering mother is not that big, but her name is a selling point and selling is what it's all about.

I would advise everyone to read "Native Son" before the movie comes out. Hollywood distorted "The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman" and "The Color Purple" and I am not in the least hopeful that it will do the same to "Native Son."

The essay Wright wrote about the evolution of the character is insightful. Read "Black Boy" and "American Hunger" Wright's autobiographies for insight into how Bigger Thomas was conceived.

It is no coincidence that Hollywood chose "Native Son" to film at this time.

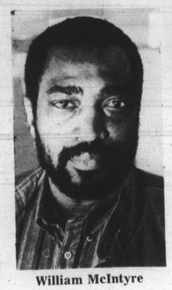
They can make Bigger a symbolic of all the discarded black youths that haunt America's cities. By showing him as a dangerous animal who turns on his liberal benefactors, this movie can be used as an attack on social programs and every facet of liberalism.

Am I being paranoid? I think not. Who would have ever thought that a movie about black people's lives in Georgia from 1901 to 1943 could cover two hours without the words "lynching," "klan," "segregation" or "jim crow"?

"Native Son" is a title full of bitter irony and that spirit infuses the book. I doubt that it will infuse the movie. I hope I'm wrong but I seriously doubt it.

—AFRO SURVEY—

Do you think President Reagan Knew?



William McIntyre

James Hood

Charles Brown

Dorothy Finney

This week the question to the man and woman in the street is, "Do you feel that President Reagan knew the entirety of the Iranian-Contras arms scandal?"

William McIntyre, 42, steelworker, "I feel that Reagan was knowledgeable of the whole deal and he was just trying to make a buck."

— —

James Hood, 64, retired, "It looks like to me a man in his position should have known something about what was going on. Right now, I'll just be glad when he finishes his term."

— —

Charles Brown, 67, retired, "I think Reagan is just a crook, just like Nixon was. He is just like the average criminal on the street. He just has a higher position.

— —

Dorothy Finney, 18, file clerk, "I think Reagan knew about everything. He is supposed to be running the country, so he's supposed to keep an update on what's going on."

— —

Eva Carey, 19, payroll clerk, "I think Reagan is lying. This had to be important and it seems that the president would know. How could he not know?"

— —

Derrick Bryan, 36, machinest, "I feel like the president knew about it because it seems that since he is president he had to know. I think it's something like Watergate."

— —

Vanessa Holmes, 21, unemployed, "I beleive he had something to do with the whole situation. Usually, if it has something to do with the government, Ronald Reagan played a part in it. He's trying to make the public think something else.

— —

Rene Hill, 27, page, "I feel that all the facts aren't in yet, so I can't say whether Reagan knew or not."

Eva Carey

Derrick Bryan

Vanessa Holmes

Rene Hill

Max Johnson

Political Viewpoint

Baltimore's veteran Comptroller Hyman Pressman's sudden blush and then almost as quickly extinguished mayoral race entry over the weekend might add some implications to the shaping chief executive bids, but hardly anything not already suspected.

Actually, it was almost overshadowed by Gov.-elect William Donald Schaefer's further General Assembly directives — this time to the City delegation.

Schaefer unveiled an imposing array of his proposed fiscal legislation, some old, some new, and then wondered out loud where all the money would come from.

Nothing new there in his money-wise tightness.

If not so smothered though, the Pressman declarations might have given more attention to at least three shaping directions in the early stages of next year's mayoral campaigns.

First came further indications that Schaefer black supporters are keying behind Council President Clarence Du Burns for an initial elective term as mayor, though Schaefer remains noncommittal in this respect.

Kurt Schmoke and Robert Embry, the other two Democratic candidates generally known now, haven't received Schaefer public acknowledgement or comment of note either, though Embry is a longtime close friend of the gov.-elect.

Pressman, who has held the comptroller post in City Hall since initial election in '63 and is widely known and generally liked in the black community, said he took second thoughts and decided not to cause any "division" among the community groups supporting their respective candidates.

He hastened to add, however, campaign money presented a problem. But, a key factor stands that he was influenced by a top black businessman who heads a group of Burns supporters, to remain again as a candidate for comptroller.

Pressman also revealed that he would accept such a spot on one or all the three Democratic mayoral candidates' tickets if offered, but is currently leaning toward that of Clarence Du Burns.

Opposition of note has risen. Councilman Thomas J. S. Waxter (5th D.) has stated he will bid for Pressman's seat.

Assembly Del. John W. Douglass (D.-45), a Pressman black opponent in the '83 campaign and known as a knowledgeable fiscal authority, says he'll do it again if he fails to get the nod as State Treasurer.

The Waxter proposed opposition spotlighted a pending vacancy in the 5th D. City Council delegation, come next year's municipal elections.

Up until Norman Reeve's victory in 1979, the politics of this district has been confronted by non-black political force including those of the late James (Jack) Pollack.

This once powerful organization is now headed by his son, Morton Pollack, attorney and realtors top executive. (They haven't won a seat since the early 70's).

Mrs. Iris Reeves is the district's lone black council representative, having been initially appointed following the death of her husband, who was elected with the token support of the Pollack organization, and first of his race to be accepted as a candidate by this faction.

More importantly, he was the first of his race to represent this heavily populated district in the City Council.

Along with the Protestant Waxter, the third seat is held by Mrs. Rochelle Spector, who lost a bid in the past elections for a state senate seat.

Earlier this week, P.A. Tatum, AFRO staffer, reported that Walter Dean, former AFRO reporter, member House of Delegates '70-'82, college professor, might consider bidding for a 5th D. Council seat, if he didn't have to oppose an article done some weeks ago, Tatum said.

The Waxter bid for comptroller and his statement that he would not seek reelection would seem to open the door for Walter Dean, a proven, competent lawmaker.

Death of George Murphy

This is to acknowledge the passing of the late George B. Murphy.

Mr. Murphy was known to me personally, as a loyal and dedicated activist, who was also a scholar and a gentleman. We are proud of his history of struggle and achievement for us as Afro-Americans, as well as for all freedom-loving people throughout the world.

I marched with him during Dr. King's 'March on Washington,' picketed the South African Embassy during the 70s and rallied at Malcolm X or Lafayette Park on numerous occasions. He challenged congress and Capital Hill, and tenaciously confronted injustice throughout the labyrinth of the bureaucracy, corporate or private sector.

George Murphy was a tireless and valiant soldier for peace, freedom and justice. He stood tall, and fought hard for self-determination wherever human rights were violated. We shall miss him, but he leaves an inspiring legacy of commitment and noble achievement.

The angels and ancestors have assuredly welcomed him.

We extend our condolences to you, and the entire Murphy family.

NIA KUUMBA-WOODFORK,
President - Unit 26
American Legion Auxiliary

Thanks to AFRO

On behalf of the Free South Africa Movement, I would like to thank Charles Lewis for writing the editorial piece entitled, "South African Protests Pass Second Year" (The Washington AFRO-AMERICAN, Dec. 6, 1986). I read the article with much interest and the Free South Africa Movement is honored by it.

This piece is a continuation of The Washington AFRO-AMERICAN's concern and effort to inform the public on the necessity of a free and just South Africa.

RANDALL ROBINSON,
Executive Director.

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.

DEC 1986