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Chicken George to reopen

It is always sad news when a thriving minority business goes under. Chicken George, the fast food store chain which parlayed tasty chicken into a national chain of franchise and company-owned stores, went out of existence in 1986.

Chicken George experienced great initial success but ran into a number of problems that saw the company rise and fall between 1979 and 1986.

It was announced this week that another black company has purchased all the assets, machinery, equipment, trademarks, patents, secret formulas and franchise agreements of the failed food chain.

The firm that purchased Chicken George is Hill and Sons Management Corporation, a Baltimore firm that owns Garwyn Medical Center, a chain of Amoco gas stations and some residential properties. They plan to reopen the once popular fast-food outlets.

It is good that a local minority firm purchased Chicken George. A reopening of the stores will provide a number of jobs for young people and hopefully after the company gets its footing it will be able to provide other franchising opportunities for black entrepreneurs.

The initial success of the fast food chain indicates that there is a market for its products. Good management and promotion can make it successful again.

It is good that a black firm was able to take over for the defunct company, perhaps black entrepreneurship is getting strong enough so that failing black companies can be purchased by other black companies.

Mayoral power

It seems that many people feel that no mayor of Baltimore should ever accumulate the kind of power that William Donald Schaefer accrued.

Before he left office to become Maryland's 58th governor Schaefer himself disbanded the city trustee board that had been involved in so many financial dealings and was referred to as "The Shadow Government." He felt it had served its purpose.

The loss of the city trustees cut down on the maneuverability of the incoming DuBurns Administration. Now Councilman Tim Murphy has introduced several bills that would transfer a number of mayoral advisory committees to a proposed City Council Office of Municipal Operations.

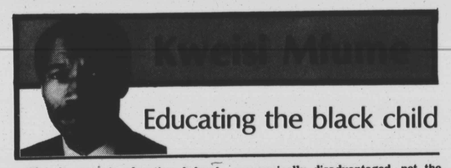
This office would swallow the Mayor's Office of Cable Communications, Mayor's Advisory Committee on Small Business, Mayor's Office of Manpower Resources, Mayor's Coordinating Council on Criminal Justice and the Mayor's Advisory Committee on Art and Culture.

If Murphy's bills pass there will be a definite gradual shift in power away from the mayor to the City Council. It is not clear at this point how much support the Murphy bills have among other City Council members. He was the sole sponsor the bills.

This seems to many like the perfect time for the Council to assert itself since Baltimore's legendary Mayor Schaefer has departed the scene and an unelected caretaker will be occupying the office until municipal elections are settled this fall.

Hopefully this will not become a divisive racial issue in the council or the city in general. Already this paper has received calls that suggest that it may be an attempt to curb mayoral powers now that Baltimore has its first black mayor. The same thing happened when the city got its first black superintendent of schools in 1971.

However this could be a simple attempt to win back some of the power the mayor's office has taken from the council. Whatever the reason for the bills they will be watched closely along with all aspects of the council's relationship with its former leader who now occupies the mayor's office.



Educating the black child

When it comes to education, federal assistance can be thought of as the great equalizer. It fills the resource gaps and guarantees equal access to educational opportunities without regard to race, sex, physical or mental handicap.

For about the past 20 years, give or take an off-year, the federal government has assumed a leadership role in the education of the children of this nation. That intervention is essential if we are to ensure that poor and minority children in America have as equal an opportunity as anyone to achieve in the classroom and in life.

But attitudes are changing.

This Administration seems determined to abandon both its leadership role in education and that as the great equalizer. Instead, it wants to undo all that has been done in the past to remedy educational imbalances generated through poverty and disadvantage.

Witness the Reagan Administration budget for fiscal year 1987. This proposal is an expansive hit list that targets for crippling, if not extinction, educational initiatives that take into account poor and minority students at the elementary and secondary level.

No one is being spared — not the economically disadvantaged, not the physically handicapped and certainly not minorities.

The administration's FY '87 plan calls for major reductions in overall education spending so that proposed cuts will impact from kindergarten to college.

Headstart, an early childhood development program that has since 1965 helped compensate for the many disadvantages suffered by low-income children, will be so altered as to (1) limit a youngster to just one year in an early education program and, (2) stunt funding.

The school voucher plan is another Administration incentive. It glistens on the outside as a boon for poor parents, but is insidious in its substance.

On the surface, the voucher system seems to offer economically disadvantaged children new access to quality instruction by offering them greater choices among schools. A parent could simply take the voucher that allegedly would be the equivalent of the cost of education and "shop" around for the school of their choice including those in the private sector.

In reality, the plan would crumble the economic undergirding of the public school system robbing it of the resource funding base needed to help students in that system achieve their fullest potential. The voucher amount which averages $600 would not come close to the cost of buying an education at most private institutions.

All in all, total education funding in fiscal 1987 will be reduced to $15.2 billion, down from the $18.4 billion appropriated for last fiscal year. And when you figure in proposed cuts under the Gramm-Rudman balanced budget plan (to achieve a balanced budget by the year 1990), education spending would be reduced by yet another few billion dollars.

It's crystal clear. This administration's priority is not the education of poor and minority children. And sadly, we've walked this road before in other administrations.

With all of this in mind, the Congressional Black Caucus has adopted as its year-long theme, "Educating the Black Child." In so doing, we will place the issue of public education squarely before the nation's consciousness to call attention to its urgency.

We must make the public education system work. We must make it accountable to those who use it, who wish to benefit from it. We must invest our resources in making the system work for us, our children and ultimately our community.

Start simply by getting to know your children's teachers. Studies have shown that teachers are more responsive to those children whose parents they know. It's human nature. Get to know your school board. Get to know your political representative. Help demand that the system functions for all of us.

Bloodnotes

R. B. Jones

Bits and pieces

Sunsets Once again the black community is up in arms with the Baltimore Sunpapers or a group some elements of the black community are up in arms.

It seems that the editors and other powers that be down on Calvert St. made a major boo boo when they ran a series on drug kingpin Little Melvin Williams during the week that Martin Luther King's Birthday is celebrated.

The protestors feel that it was a slap at the black community that the series touting Melvin as a hero in the inner city was run when the black community was trying to emphasize the positive accomplishments of Dr. King.

Elements of the church community became involved and a massive demonstration took place outside the Sun last Sunday afternoon. Sunpapers management referred to the timing as insensitive, but they defended the newsworthiness of the five part series.

Watching the demonstration gave me mixed feelings. I understood the outrage at the timing of the article, but I also understood why the Sun did what it did.

The Sun has a long history of treating black people with contempt. It has never been taken to task for it and so the tradition persists. I was interviewed for a job there a few years ago and the editor doing the interview asked my heartfelt opinion of busing to achieve integration.

He also asked me could I do a negative story on Parren J. Mitchell or any of his illustrious family members. He told me the reason they don't like to hire black people from Baltimore is because they have grown up admiring these Mitchells and Murphys and so they can't be objective about them.

I was insulted, but not surprised. I asked the editor was he referring to a true, negative story or just a negative story about a leading black figure.

I have spent time pouring over Baltimore newspapers as old as an 1821 edition of the News American's predecessor and I did not notice any hint of objectivity as far as black people are concerned.

As I looked at the old papers in the Maryland Historical Society Library all I saw was very negative references to black people with no attempt to be objective.

I saw very little objectivity on the part of the Sun when in 1974 picturesof rampaging whites on South Fulton Ave. beating black motorists did not show up often, but a couple of years later when the city police went on strike and there was widespread looting, pictures of black looters showed up frequently.

There are countless instances of that kind of news bias.

The employment of blacks in power positions at the Sun is almost nonexistent, yet the NAACP hit the bricks in front of the Sun for several weeks in 1984-85 and more blacks in power positions was one of the demands then.

The white power structure in this city only responds to power, potential or actual. They figure that the protestors will run out of steam after a while and business will go on as usual.

It happened in 1985 with a token settlement. The next year the Sun was up to its old tricks. I think they are probing to see how far they can go with the massive political changes that are looming in this city.

They probably want to reassure themselves that the black community continues in its relative slumber.

What the black community must understand is that the only solution to the problem that it is currently having with the Sunpapers is the hiring of black management personnel who are not alienated from the black community in Baltimore for positions of real power.

Anything less will continue the cycle protest and settlement that is frustrating and ultimately unproductive.

King Holiday blues I must admit that I am tired of the Martin Luther King, jr. Holiday already. When it wasnot in the hands of federal authorities I could tolerate it more.

The endless repitition of "I Have A Dream," the unconvincing renditions of "We Shall Overcome" and the obscuring of the focal point Dr. King's life have become tedious.

Most renditions of "I Have a Dream" leave out the first part of the speech that charges that America with failure to live up to its promise and the warning inherent in the message.

All we hear in January is talk about little white boys and girls and little black boys and girls sitting down together at the table of brotherhood. I sat at tables with little white children in North Carolina until I reached an age when they thought it was time to teach me about inferiority.

Besides they didn't want me lurking around with rape fantasies about little white girls.

We're always had intimate contact with whites, especially in the south. What King did was alter his thinking and make adjustments. He grew. He started out leading integrated marches for voting rights and public access.

At the end of his life he was organizing an integrated march to demand an economic restructuring of society to eliminate poverty. When King began lending his prestige to a movement that challenged the basic notions of capitalism and questioned America's imperialist foreign policy, he was assassinated.

The King of 1968, the crusader for economic justice is played down and the King of 1963 is played up. Will our children ever learn about the fully developed Martin Luther King?

Personally I could care less about the federal holiday because the federal government itself wanted King dead. The people who have inherited the mantle of King's sworn enemies now give pompous and insulting speeches in his honor.

George Schultz, secretary of state and one of the architects of America's murderous policy in Central America stood in King's old pulpit, spoke on brotherhood and joined hands while singing "We Shall Overcome."

It was an insult to what King stood for and what made it worst, King's wife was there partaking of the charade.

Was Shultz singing about overcoming the government of Nicaragua or was he singing about overcoming the African National Congress in South Africa?

If the oppressors of the people that King died for are to be featured in tributes to him they would never have given when he was alive, then I can do without the third Monday in January. It's a mockery anyway.

Letters

Paen of praise for Du Burns

To "Du" or not to "Du," that is the question. The answer is, to "Du." We applaud, we congratulate and we are honored that Clarence "Du" Burns is our first black mayor. Hats off to "Du."

This historic occasion gives all of us a unique opportunity to demonstrate our love and respect for each other at a time when love and respect takes a back seat to hatred and self righteousness.

It gives us a chance to examine ourselves and to test our convictions. His rise from the darkest corner of our community to light house of city government is parallel to the immigrants who came to our country and made it to the top.

When such is the case, these immigrants are honored and in many cases receive world-wide attention. Is it too much to ask the same for one of our own.

There are many in our community who are dissatified because Mr. "Du" Burns is not an educated man. The fact is, he is educated, but in terms which many of us do not understand.

History books are filled with accounts of men and women, who, without an education in its narrow sense, have made it to the top of their chosen fields and politics is no exception. You are educated you should know.

"Du" Burns is a chapter in political science. Unfortunately the elements of this chapter do not appear in books. You are invited to join the ranks of those who know that politics is a game, the rules of which are defined but obvious when the majority of us support the player with the best hand and that's Clarence "Du" Burns.

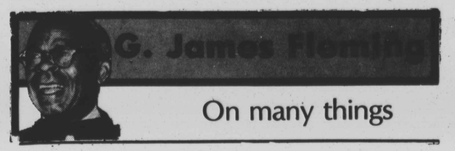
In conclusion you are reminded to remember the words of that unknown poet who said, Press On - Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not. Genius will not, Education alone will not. Persistence and Determination alone are Omnipotent.

Yes, Clarence "Du" Burns has his Ph.D. in Persistence, Honesty and Determination.

Inez A. Chappell
Baltimore, Maryland

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.



G. James Fleming

On many things

It's too bad that it has taken threats of closing five branch libraries to get some people, and some organizations, interested in these branches and aroused over the conditions of their operation.

Several months ago (in April) this column called attention to problems of the Enoch Pratt Free Library system, recognized its magnificent contributions to the city and state, and pleaded that, in the expenditures for the needed renovations of the central building, the neighborhood branches not be shortchanged. That column said:

"It is to be hoped that as new funds are invested in the main building that the scattered branches will not be forgotten, and that they will be provided with the means and the manpower and womanpower to 'sell' themselves and their services."

The column also urged that ways be found "through innovative programs and community involvement, to keep libraries open and to breathe the breath of life into them."

If Baltimoreans had shown their interest earlier, they would have busied themselves, also, into insuring that client behavior (largely among adolescents) be greatly improved, thus helping libraries to attain their highest purpose.

If Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., could have spent his birthday here last week, he would have had reasons to be pleased and reasons to be very disappointed with the progress in civil rights and in the USA since he died, by assassination, in 1968.

He would have been exhilarated by the outward and visible gains made by blacks in politics. From a handful of elected public officials in the South in 1964, there are now over 6,000; from a few mayors to about 290, including the mayor of Birmingham, New Orleans and Atlanta.

He would scarcely believe that Mississippi had elected a black Democrat, Mike Espy, of Yazoo City to the U.S. House of Representatives, from the same district which oncce also sent Senator James Eastland, racist of the highest (or lowest) order, to Washington.

He would be surprised that Virginia, queen of the Confederacy, had elected Douglas Wilder, a black Democrat, as its lieutenant governor.

But he would have been depressed over the growth of the black underclass; the impact of drugs on black youth; the resurrection of the Ku Klux Klan; the high rate of black unemployment; and the campaign of the Reagan administration against those civil rights gains already won by blacks.

* * *

Are the churches doing enough to discourage teenage pregnancies and to diminish crime?

Church news and church advertising in the newspapers, including the AFRO, do not furnish proof that such is the case. There are no sermon topics, no revivals, no special drives targeted at teenagers and at those who may be victims of drugs.

No overwhelming campaign, either, over television and radio, bringing hell and damnation, or just the plain facts of life, down on our young people.

* * *

Blacks can easily join the Jewish people in their dismay and resentment over John Cardinal O'Connor's elevation of Hitler's holocaust to be "an enormous gift that Judaism has given the world."

Despite the cardinal's philosophic explanations, that elevation is unacceptable, not only to Jews but to all people who condemn genocide, whether glossed over as a "gift" or something else.

Blacks hurt, also, because it is not so long ago that many American preachers were describing slavery as a gift of God, bestowed on slaves, to christianize and civilize them.

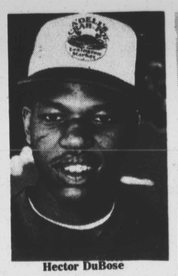
* * *

We must not forget to extend warmest congratulations to now mayor Clarence "Du" Burns, who became the chief executive of Baltimore City three days ago.

The first black to hold this high office, his ascendancy should warm the hearts of every man and woman who has had to start "from the bottom" in hopes of making it "to the top;" everyone who, without being born with a silver spoon, has made the American dream come true.

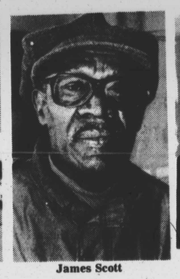
—AFRO SURVEY—

Does racism still exist?

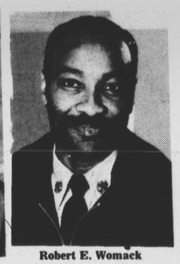


Hector DuBose

Charlene Harvey



James Scott



Robert E. Womack

This week the question to the man and woman in the street is, "Does racism still exist?"

Hector DuBose, 19, fast food worker, "Yes, it exists. It's in some places like the South."

Jeanette Walker, 27, cashier, "Yes, I think so. In certain jobs when you have the same type of skills as whites, the whites end up getting the job. It's happened to me several times".

James Scott, 61, city sanitation worker, "Yes. I've seen racism happen at work."

Robert E. Womack, 35, Mass Transit Administration policeman, "It's evident. You can see it with the rallies people are trying to have and how other people oppose it. Racism has never disappeared. It has always been around."

Nathaniel Walker 37, educator, "You know it does exist. You can see it in some of the guidelines that are set up to keep us from succeeding, on entry tests to college and the criteria for certain jobs, where we live. Racism will never happen if you have education and credentials. They can't stop you from doing what you want to do, if you have those."

Charlene Harvey, 25, cashier. "Yes, it exists. It's a gut feeling. It's hard to explain, but I know it still exists."

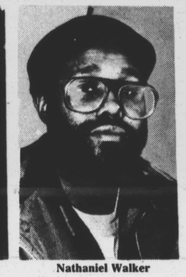
Ryan Bailey, 29, fish cutter, "No, not really. Because times are really changing. People are beginning to get along with each other not like it was years ago."

Pat Williams, 38, Social Security Administration worker, "Yes, definitely. Because in job opportunities and housing, they sometimes try to discriminate against you."

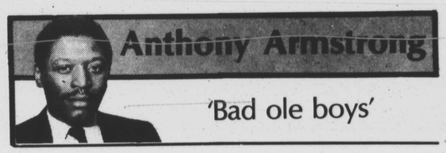
Ryan Bailey

Jeanette Walker

Pat Williams



Nathaniel Walker



Anthony Armstrong

'Bad ole boys'

Well, here we go again folks. The Ku Klux Klan is again reminding all of us that none of us are secure enough in our Constitutional freedoms to relax the fight for the inalienable rights of every American — even them. Frankly, in their own demented way, the KKK is a useful bunch of "bad ole boys."

After all, who can ask for more than an enemy who telegraphs their entire strategy? No question about it, the KKK stands-up and shouts loud and clear, "we don't like n----s." Strange word, that word; I haven't heard it uttered outright for a long time now.

To tell the truth, I haven't heard it for so long, I thought the word had become extinct — you know like the Do-Do Bird or the Sabre Tooth Tiger. I want to thank the klan for starkly renewing some realities that have never gone away, but, instead, are now only spoken privately.

You know, it sometimes takes an outside influence to redirect some groups toward a particularly desirable goal. The KKK does a fine job of reminding all of us that we had better get back on a certain track, if our group is ever going to reach what we say is our desired destination.

Now, there'll be someone reading this article who'll say, "who in the world needs to be reminded that Klan style racism is still alive, well, and growing in America?" Well, based on our actions in the last couple of decades, I submit that we, black Americans, very much need to be reminded. Furthermore, we are well past the time when we should have started to do something concrete to turn mindfulness into action.

Quiet as it's kept, I'm not at all upset that there are racist people in this country. What I mind is the sad fact that too many "good Americans" practice their racism. Racism, as you know, is a linear phenomenon; it tends to work up or down a line, as opposed to horizontally.

In other words, it expresses itself in a manner where someone sees him or her self as either above or below another person or group. Some whites are racist because they feel they're better than any black — naturally.

On the other hand, suppose a group of new immigrants just arrives in this country. They could well develop racist ideas for the exact opposite reason — they see themselves, at least initially, as not as good as, say, the blacks they might encounter.

Racism is, then, a learned response, and people new to America quickly learn the socio/racial pecking order. They learn that no matter what their economic or educational status, in relationship to black Americans; in America the black man is perceived to be below them, to be below everyone except another black. This is a mental trick designed by those who wish to fan the flames of America's on-going class struggle.

It is not the KKK, however, that is the teacher here. Most white Americans wouldn't be caught dead openly associating with the obvious racism of my such group. No, American racism is far too sophisticated to use such overt tactics. Herein lies the awful danger in our plight. Herein, also, can be found the dubious value of a group like the KKK.

What the KKK does so very well is remind us that they are but only the open blatant front guard for much of the rest of white America. None of this need or should be surprising to black Americans. The fact, however, that it appears to be indicates that we prefer the false comfort of our illusions, until, that is, we are smacked in the face, anew, by the same problems that haunted our mothers, fathers, sisters, and brother, before us.

Not only are the problems the same ones your great, great, great grandfather dodged in the cotton field; more troubling, still, has been our lack of a solution matrix for these problems.

How in the world can and will the perceptions, attitudes, and actions of whites change about us, if that is our goal, if we don't do the kind of things necessary to change those perceptions? And even if these things don't or won't change, is it because we don't and haven't done the things that cause people to change, even against their will?

The attitudes and actions on the part of whites about us should be left to them to grapple with. Yet, people are funny; they have this thing about letting others succeed alone. People will most definitely let you fail by yourself, but they generally like to be a part of anything that succeeds.

We black Americans missed a major opportunity, after the success of our moral struggle. Back then, in the 60's and early 70's, we should have seized the mantle of that period and used it as our springboard to economic victory.

Instead, what we seemed to do was wallow in our newest opportunity — the right to eat a hamburger at the same sitting with whites. We had integrated, you know black and white together, and all that stuff.

The goal seemed no more than the right to be with white people — Oh, how we like to be with white people. We built nothing to speak of, we invested in nothing durable, we traded all our family trump cards for their sickening and unhealthy narcissism, that only leads to self, self, self, me, me, me.

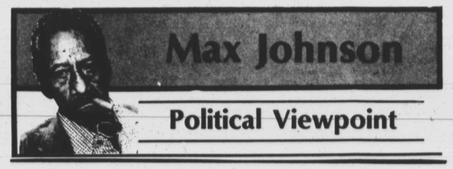
Over and over again I've tried to shake us from the cement of our fear and self denial. Time and time again, I've attempted, through this column, to yell, "no one is going to insure our success in America but us." No one else should be asked.

Yet, here in 1987 we're still asking for one more allotment of food stamps, one more section-8 housing certificate, one more gimme, gimme, can you spare. When will we ever learn, "that ain't no where?" No one's attitudes are going to change about us until we change our attitudes, and actions, regarding ourselves.

This business of always being the consumer, never the producer. This tendency we have to always look for something for nothing. This syndrome of, "they kept my great, great, great something in slavery and now they owe me my forty acres and a mule."

This vicious cycle of, "I'm not worth anything, so why should anybody, especially white people, treat me like I'm worth anything." Finally, this refusal we have to pay for our own collective well being.

Don't look for the average white person to remind us of how little they think of you and me; there's too much "gaming" for that. Thank God, however, for bad ole boys.



Max Johnson

Political Viewpoint

Dual observances in Maryland and Baltimore of the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King are spotlighted also, to a somewhat lesser degree, by some select noteworthy occurrences surfacing on the black political scene locally and in the state's Capitol.

The whole scenario could quite easily be labeled coincidential and be given cursory attention as such. There is nothing new or really totally unexpected, other than the atmosphere created.

Nonetheless, they are all history-making in their respective black political arenas — likes of which will hardly ever be seen again, or even anticipated during a King remembrance period.

Involved here are Mayor Clarence "Du" Burns, State's Attorney Kurt Schmoke, Sen. Clarence Blount (D.-41), Del. John Douglass (D.-45), and the 4th D. City Council two vacant seats.

Foremost, of course, is that Burns became during this period Baltimore's first black mayor, though he has been serving since November in the interim seat of Maryland's now new Gov. William Donald Schaefer.

Nothing new that he is campaigning to win election on his own in the fall ballotings. Nothing new either, that he has strong support of powerful black business interests and key black Schaefer political allies.

But, state administrative gubernatorial changes require turnovers during this period, and Burns was moved up and into the spotlight at this opportune time.

Schmoke, only other black Democratic mayoral candidate to date, has been unofficially campaign headquarters — thus openly pitting his candidacy against this city's first black mayor who has yet to win election to the office himself.

It's highly doubtful this political picture will arise again with two black mayoral candidates surfacing under similar conditions anywhere in the foreseeable future.

Blount moved into the distinguished spotlight during the King period under similar state statutes, setting up organizational guidelines for a new General Assembly taking office.

He became the first of his race in the State Senate to be named chairman of a top standing committee — Economic and Environmental Affairs.

Blount is a strong ally of Schaefer, and is generally conceded to be the top black representative lawmaker in Annapolis, He has been a member of the Senate since '71.

Though he has held, in recent sessions, committee vice chairmanships and a floor leader post, the environmental chief spot is undeniably a racial breakthrough in that upper chamber.

Douglass basks in a similar but somewhat smaller portion of the King observance period, also under General Assembly regulatory procedures.

Recently he entered his bid for the open state treasurer seat on the State Board of Public Works.

Nothing new here either, nor in the facts that he is a black House of Delegates member and a recognized authority in fiscal matters.

However, Douglass has just lost in a three - candidate bid for the treasurer, but the loss wasn't totally unexpected though he had gathered six votes shy of the second place candidate with 41. The winner emerged with 109 in the secret balloting with three no shows.

Douglass's loss isn't spotlighted here, but rather is fortitude and self-esteem of capabilities to make a racial breakthrough for the post.

Racial advances are made because people "have a dream."

Baltimore's 4th D. City Council vacancies moved to attention under the King observance umbrella the past weekend, when Councilwoman Agnes Welch, the third member still seated, said she had come to an impasse in attempts to have the two vacancies filled because of political bossism interference charges.

The vacancies are the seats of Kweisi Mfume, elected to Congress the past November, and Michael Mitchell elected in that balloting to the State Senate.

Neither has officially come forward with his nominee of his respective replacement, though such would usually be expected and so honored by Council colleagues in comparison districts.

Nothing new here. The situation has been revealed at length in AFRO news stories.

Now, Councilwoman Welch says she is naming a nine-member committee of community leaders throughout the affected district to recommend nominees for the two vacancies.

This long-brewing, politically amateurish situation has shoved itself to a cubious spot under the King observance umbrella in a nonenvious position.

It's the area where there is repeated — "We will overcome, we will overcome someday."

JAN 1987