Black History Month

Black tragedy—children having children

By Yvonne Whaley

The advent of the 80's highlighted some serious considerations as to the health of the traditional family structure for America's 28.6 million Blacks. only 41% of Black children lived with both parents, while almost 50% of those under 18 years of age were living in households headed by women.

An even more disturbing and frightening statistic: close to 60% of the children born in this decade were born to unmarried women — many themselves under eighteen.

Why is this so? There are a number of reasons, but the most often cited is economics. Black unemployment has remained high in spite of governmental statistics that seem to state the opposite.

While those statistics out of Washington do admit to higher teenage unemployment figures, the true figure for many Blacks is 47%! And — prospects for many of the Black youth are exceptionally dim — many are virtually unemployable. Our economy has shifted to a technological one requiring skills that hosts of young Blacks do not have, and are educationally unequipped to get.

In addition, companies are moving into industrial parks in suburban areas, making it difficult for urban Blacks to get there. Thus, with the father of her unborn child unemployed, there is little reason for a pregnant girl to marry.

Furthermore, with one of every six young Black men in jail, others strung out on drug addiction along with the inordinate incidence of early death among Black males, there are few marriageable men. Black women outnumber their men by 2-1.

How then are these new young families supported? Some women work, and their mothers or grandmothers are responsible for child care. Some receive public assistance — food stamps and/or welfare checks validate their existence.

Those families on public assistance (commonly called welfare) with underaged children also receive assistance from an agency whose primary clientele are those children.

One notion that flies in the face of fact is that welfare is an incentive for unmarried women to have children. If this were true, then those states having more generous benefits should have higher birth rates.

This is just not so. Research has also shown that most recipients received benefits for a short time. Only one in four children from families heavily dependent on welfare applied for benefits upon leaving home.

All of this may become moot, for there is an ever-growing pool of unwed mothers under 18 years of age. This, of course, is most destructive to the traditional values found within the strong extended family that has been the backbone for Blacks since the time when oral history was our major form of communication.

Children should learn their values, discipline, and responsibilities from their parents, but without a male role model, many teenage boys grow up without knowing what a father is supposed to do or be. In some households, three and four generations live together with no males exhibiting permanency or available for the young to look up to in a positive, constructive way. Great-grandmothers are young as fifty are not so unusual anymore.

The effects of such living arrangements are far-reaching. Some mothers are burdened with negative feelings about their circumstances and take it out on their children. Verbal and physical abuse becomes a lifestyle that can lead to alienation.

Male children (and to a lesser degree — female children) can then turn to a life of crime or drug and/or alcohol addiction. Girls, hungry for affection, become pregnant. The cycle is endlessly repeated.

What can be done about this?

The single, most important factor is education. When we speak of education, it is not just in the area of basic skills, although they are extremely important and necessary in order to achieve.

Education, though, has many facets that impact upon an individual's self-esteem. It provides the ability to communicate effectively verbally or in written form, to seek job opportunities, to comprehend information, and to have and make viable choices and decisions. Lack of education thus limits an individual's chances to function in a society that demands an ability to process information productively and creatively.

Traditionally, we think of education as something we get in school. This is true as far as it goes. Children also process information from home, the street, the media — and they're getting mixed signals. The media constantly stress sexuality — teenagers are encouraged to "turn it on" — "give it up" — "get it on" just "don't hang on to it."

The theme of love to a love-starved girl living in a fantasy world of softness and gentleness while her reality is a vermin infested crowded tenement, makes her extremely vulnerable to any sweet-talking young man who walks into her life.

Let's get back to the schools. The public schools, especially in the urban areas of this country, have sorely failed our youth. They will continue to do so unless community leaders, churches, social organizations, etc., make demands upon the system. Curricula must be designed that not only focus upon the 3 R's, but technology, life and family, and the consequences of early pregnancy.

One school district in Chicago received national attention when it addressed the issue of human sexuality through their health program. This program included dispensing of birth control information and devices to the students upon request.

While it was a highly controversial approach, statistics show that it may be impossible to prevent a sexually active youth from continuing the practice. The administration thus felt it wise to launch a strong offensive against children having children.

Preliminary findings appear to justify this unusual approach — more students are remaining in that high school to finish their education — fewer pregnancies have been documented.

Some of the consequences of early pregnancy have already been noted. Perhaps the most detrimental to the survival and strength of our race is the weakness of so many of the newborn to underage mothers. Poor prenatal care often produces babies with birth defects or increases the incidence of high infant mortality.

Inadequate postnatal care can handicap a child for the rest of his life. Poor nutrition often stunts the child's growth both mentally and physically. It is not surprising that the majority of children in pre-school programs, such as "Head Start," are children from unwed mothers or mothers who are heads of households with limited funds. Many of these children have had unacceptable socialization and must learn how to function in a group.

It has been said that one of the problems of Blacks is that we have no common culture; the only thing uniting us is the fact that our ancestors came from the same continent. If this is true, we need to ensure our youth that we care enough about them to see that they are equipped to enter into the mainstream. They must be motivated with realistic goals, counseling and a support system that will boost their self-esteem.

No longer must we allow young girls to seek an identity or validate their existence through a defenseless child who is doomed to repeat its mother's or (often unknown) father's mistakes. It is incumbent upon those of us who have, to show those who haven't, how to get "it."

This is most delicate for some of us. We still can adopt that field/house slave "altitude"). As one young man so succinctly asked his caseworker, "Are you gonna give me more of that social worker b. . . s. . ., or are you gonna help me?"

There are a number of national Black organizations that are doing just that. Notable among them are The National Council of Negro Women, The National Coalition of 100 Black Women, The March of Dimes, The Children's Defense Fund, and The Association of Leagues.

For more information on how to combat teenage pregnancy, contact any of the mentioned organizations.

In addition, working through your own church, social or fraternal organizations, form a group within your own community that incorporates that which has worked elsewhere, and your own community's uniqueness.

We must create a groundswell; mount an assault upon a system that has perpetuated perhaps the greatest threat to the future of all Blacks, early pregnancy, or children having children. It is also critical that we encourage young people to stay in school — or to return to finish an interrupted education.

It is true — the more education a woman-child has, the lower her chances of delivering an out-of-wedlock baby. For the future of our children and the strength of the Black family, we must reverse the trend.

—Buppies

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within the group for their "partners" skills or expertise and get insurance coverage through group participation.

Indicators point to the fact, then, tnat Black, urban professionals are serious about their commitment to the old ethnic of continuing the struggle for equality and elimination of oppression.

They work with community groups to make this a reality; even though, for many of them, racism is more subtle and therefore, for some, easier to ignore.

While their real world may include communing with nature at resorts, they're not above grabbing a bite at the corner hot dog cart, rocking at the Apollo, teaching a course at the local community college and donating that salary to the UNCF, Urban League or NAACP. One bright young interviewer said, "Yes I'm a member of the buppies — to me it means 'By Uplifting Poor Black People I Exist Safely'."

The first child born in the White House was James Madison Randolph, son of Thomas Mann Randolph and Martha Jefferson Randolph, daughter of President Thomas Jefferson. He was born in January, 1806.

sued as an avocation.

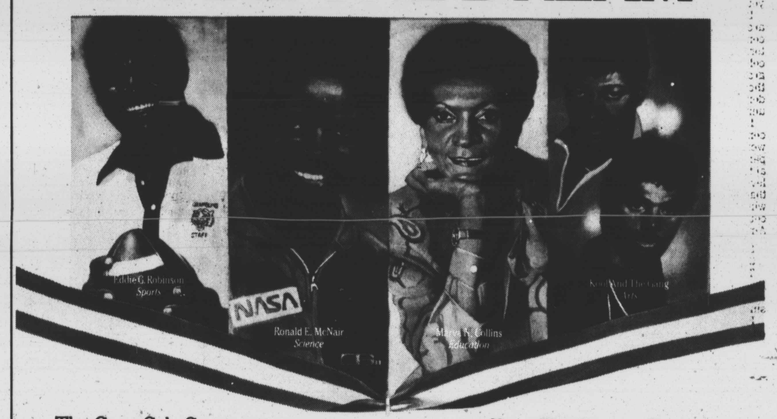
Entrepreneurship is another popular topic at the conferences, and it is often the most well-attended of all the workshops. There are at least two reasons for this.

With weakened government agencies such as the Civil Rights Commission, plus diminishing interest or outright hostility towards "tokenism," more young Blacks are willing to accept the risks in owning their own businesses.

Some individual entrepreneurs have banded together to form a professional corporation that takes a multifaceted approach. While the more realistic motive for creating such an organization is to service the (Black) community under one roof, such umbrella organizations allow the individual member to receive the benefit of increased marketing opportunities and exposure at a lower cost.

In addition, they may barter

SHARE THE DREAM



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1 NO PURCHASE NECESSARY. Enter this sweepstakes by completing the entry form in this advertisement or write on your name, address, city, state, zip code and phone number on a 3"x5" piece of paper. Mail your entry to: Black History Month Sweepstakes, P.O. Box 92211, Atlanta, GA 30336. All entries must be received by April 15, 1987. Enter as often as you wish, but each entry must be handwritten and in a separate, stamped envelope. Entries or envelopes that have been printed by machine or computer are unacceptable.

2 There will be a random drawing from among all eligible entrants for these prizes: Two grand prize winners of four year scholarships, up to $25,000 total each; five first prize winners (one in each of the states residing in the Northeast, Southeast, Midwest, Southwest and West regions of the U.S. as determined by the sponsor, see Rule #7) of four year college scholarships, up to $10,000 total each; 5,000 second prize winners of Black trivia games; 1,000 third prize winners of commemorative Jackie Robinson posters. The Coca-Cola Company will not be responsible for lost, misdirected or late mail. Drawing will be conducted by Homework Fulfillment Center, 5945 Woodsong Trail, Dunwoody, GA 30338, an independent judging organization whose decisions are final. Drawing will take place on April 30, 1987. The winners will be notified by mail within 90 days after the drawing. The odds of winning depend upon total number of entries received. By entering, state and local taxes are the responsibility of the winner. By entering, winners or assignees consent to the use of their names and/or likenesses for promotional purposes without additional compensation.

3 Winners of scholarships may assign the scholarships to someone else (assignees) who must visit it in accordance with stated rules. Prizes other than the scholarships may not be assigned or transferred by winners to other people.

4 No substitute or cash in lieu of prizes or scholarships. Winners of scholarships will be required to execute an affidavit of eligibility and sign a release.

5 Winners or assignees of scholarships must respond within 21 days after being notified that they are winners, otherwise another drawing will be held and new winners selected.

6 In order to receive the scholarship, each winner or assignee is responsible for obtaining admission to his/her scheduled college or university if admission is not obtained within 12 months, or winner refuses the prize, a second drawing will be held and the same rules will apply.

7 Each winner or assignee of scholarships must begin using scholarships no later than 18 months from winning date. The scholarship must be used at one of the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Education (NAFEO) institutions. You may obtain a complete list of NAFEO schools, and a listing of states comprising the Northeast, Southeast, Midwest, Southwest and West regions mentioned in Rule #2, by sending a stamped self-addressed envelope to NAFEO Schools, P.O. Box 68502, Atlanta, GA 30306.

8 Each winner or assignee of a scholarship must deplete the scholarship fund within four years from date of beginning use.

9 The scholarships will be presented to NAFEO, who will give it to the school selected by the winner or assignee. The school will pay for the winner's or assignee's tuition, room, board and books in accordance with the procedures normally followed by the college or university for dispensing scholarships to students. Total value of each of the two grand prize scholarships (first to receive $25,000, and the total value of each of the five first prize scholarships is not to exceed $10,000.

10 The sweepstakes is open to residents of the U.S., 18 years or older, except employees and immediate families of The Coca-Cola Company and it affiliates, bottlers, advertising agencies and the judging organization. OFFER VOID WHERE PROHIBITED AND SUBJECT TO ALL LAWS.

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Black History Month

—The Afro-American and the Constitution

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crease the numbers of Afro-Americans in northern and mid-western states that did not maintain separate systems of higher education.

Seventeen southern and border states including Ohio, West Virginia, Missouri, Pennsylvania, and Delaware established and maintained separate systems of higher education for black and white youths.

These states denied black students access to white institutions on the basis of race and consistently provided a separate and unequal system of black colleges and universities for the education of Afro-American citizens.

These institutions were allocated substandard levels of financial and educational resources in comparison to institutions maintained for the education of white students.

This issue would affect 45 historically Black public colleges and universities in 17 states. Seventy-five percent of black students who attend historically black colleges attend these public colleges. The graduates and political leaders of the black communities have attempted to preserve the racial identifiability of these institutions citing their important contributions to the development and training of black youth.

Black and Hispanic students are concentrated largely in urban community colleges. The 102 historically black public and private colleges produce almost as many graduates of 4-year colleges as the approximately 3,000 predominantly white colleges and universities.

Ironically, the very legal and constitutional principles which were developed as a way of expanding educational opportunity at the elementary and secondary level has been resisted for fear that they may be applied in a way which restricts a major avenue of educational opportunity for Afro-Americans.

Standards of Review Under the Equal Protection Clause

The scope and application of the Fourteenth Amendment has undergone significant revision since its adoption in 1868.

For almost a century after the passage of the 14th Amendment, judicial review of state action in effect meant deference to the decisions of government agencies and legislatures. Justice Jackson writing in 1949 stated that the government could not impose difference in treatment "except upon some reasonable differentiation fairly related to the object of regulation."

This constitutional analysis protected government action which could be shown to be rationally related to an acceptable government purpose. This "rational - relationship" analysis gave deferential treatment to governmental action provided the government action was rationally related to the purpose of the regulation.

Between 1954 and 1970, however, the Warren Court in cases related to issues of racial equality established two important new concepts as part of their equal protection analysis.

Those elements were *strict scrutiny* and *fundamental interests*. The applications of these two concepts over the past 15 years, as they have been applied to matters of racial discrimination and to social and economic legislation have had a profound impact upon the legal status of Afro-Americans.

The Warren Court developed the concepts of "strict scrutiny" and "suspect classifications" along side the rational relationship analysis. If the state action involved a suspect classification or had an impact upon "fundamental" rights or interests, the state action would be subjected to "strict scrutiny."

Once state action is subjected to strict scrutiny it can only be sustained through a finding that the state action is justified by a "compelling" state interest. The Warren Court determined that race was such a suspect classification.

In cases where the government uses racial classification for the purpose of implementing public policy, the strict scrutiny doctrine requires the court to undertake a vigorous search to determine if less restrictive alternatives are available.

This heightened scrutiny almost always results in a fatal review of the state action.

The language of the Supreme Court decisions in the 1970s suggested that wealth and illegitimacy were also suspect classifications. Supreme Court decisions between 1970 and 1985 were to determine the level of scrutiny to be given these classifications and also to determine whether classification based on sex and alienage were suspect classifications.

Fundamental Interests

Early on, voting rights, access to the judicial process and the right to move freely across state lines were determined to be fundamental interests.

Some Supreme Court decisions suggested that fundamental interests bore some relationship to the "necessities" of life. In the years between 1970 and 1985 a number of petitioners would attempt the application of the "fundamental interests" concept to housing, welfare benefits and education. The Burger Court moved to clarify and restrict the application of fundamental interest analysis.

In *Brown v. Board of Education* the Supreme Court had acknowledged the importance of access to quality education in attaining the other benefits of citizenship. The unamimous court said:

"We must consider public education in light of its full development and its present place in American life throughout the Nation . . . Today, education is perhaps the most important function of state and local governments . . . It is required in the performance of most basic public responsibilities, even service in the armed forces. It is the foundation of good citizenship . . . In these days it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an education."

This language led many to believe that education might be treated as a fundamental interest and due special treatment under the Fourteenth Amendment. If this were so then states and local government could be compelled to provide equal access to education to all citizens on an equal basis.

Initial strategies revolved around dismantling segregated school systems where Afro-American school children were denied educational access based on their race. Ironically, the determination of whether educational access constituted a fundamental interest would occur in a case where Mexican - American children were denied educational access based on the absence of wealth in their school district.

Large numbers of poor and minority children are denied access to quality education because of the way public education is funded. Because it is common to raise revenue for local school districts through property taxes, those children who live in poor school districts may find that much less is spent in support of their education than the amount spent on children who live in property - rich districts. This result occurs even though parents in poor districts often pay a higher tax rate than parents in districts with high property values.

In a law suit brought in the state of California, the State Supreme Court had found that denial of educational resources based on lack of property wealth was a violation of both the State and the U.S. Constitution. Education advocates in other states began to attack school finance systems in the belief that reliance on property wealth denied educational access to students who lives in poor areas in violation of the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. They believed that this reliance on wealth denied poor children access to a fundamental interest.

In San Antonio Independent School District v. Rodriguez, (1973) the Supreme Court decided that education was not a fundamental interest guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution.

The right to education, when it is set out as an established right, is usually found in state constitutions. Some state constitutions grant educational rights with some specificity while others do not mention education.

As long as the state provides the minimum level of education required by their constitutions, their duty to provide an adequate education has been met. Due to the wide range of standards set out in the 50 state constitutions, some school finance systems such as those in New Jersey and California were substantially overhauled due to successful legal challenges.

Others such as the educational system challenged in Texas have resisted legal challenge.

Neither do welfare benefits meet the fundamental interests test. In 1970, the Supreme Court, in Dandridge v. Williams recognized a distinction between economic and noneconomic rights.

The Court declined to extend the protection of the Equal Protection Clause to welfare benefits stating that "the intractable economic, social and even philosophical problems presented by public welfare assistance programs are not the business of this Court."

In that same year an attempt to establish a fundamental interest in "decent shelter" and "possession of one's home" failed when the Forcible Entry Statute in the State of Oregon was challenged.

That statute required a trial within six days after notice was served on a tenant and restricted the issue at trial to the determination of whether or not the tenants rent was in default.

In Lindsey v. Normet, the tenant refused to pay rent until certain substandard conditions were improved. The Court rejected arguments that "The need for decent shelter" and the "right to retain peaceful possession on one's home" were fundamental interests. Instead, the Supreme Court said:

..."We do not denigrate the importance of decent, safe and sanitary housing. But the Constitution does not provide judicial remedies for every economic and social ill. We are unable to perceive in that document any constitutional guarantee of access to dwellings of a particular quality or any recognition of the right of a tenant to occupy the real property of his landlord beyond the period of his lease without the payment of rent. Absent constitutional mandate, the assurance of adequate housing and the definition of landlord-tenant relationships is a legislative not a judicial function"

At this point, it would appear the "fundamental rights" are restricted to voting rights, the right to an even-handed administration of justice and the right to move freely across state borders without undue hindrance of the rights of citizenship.

The Search for Racial Motivation

In 1971 in Griggs v. Duke Power Co., the Supreme Court held that certain employment practices (the use of unvalidated tests) which had a discriminatory effect across racial lines were invalid under Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

The Court said that it was not necessary that the employer have the intent to discriminate. The Court looked to the purpose of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and found that legislation was devised as a means of assuring rights granted under the Civil War Amendments.

Under Griggs, test policies that had a disparate impact on racial minorities were not permitted whether or not the discriminatory impact was intended.

After the Griggs decision it was believed that public and private policies which could be shown to have a discriminatory effect across racial lines would also be prohibited under the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.

(To Be Continued)

—Living in poverty

Continued from Page 13

37% to 51%, unemployment from 9.5% to 24.5%, and female headed families increased from 40% to 72%. Babies born out of wedlock also have increased.

However, those births have not been balanced by births of married middle-class Blacks, because the latter has elected to have fewer children. This is a clear sign of assimilation and entry into middle and upper-class status

In this era of a rising economy, why does so much of the underclass depend upon the government for support?

Nicholas Lehman, writing in the **Atlanta Monthly**, believes that the Black underclass suffers from a sharecropper mentality. He even went so far as to develop an analogy between a welfare recipient and a sharecropper, for both depend upon the system for everything.

Having children perpetuates the status quo of both systems. Education and formal marriage is not a priority. Add substandard housing and poor fiscal management and both the welfare and sharecropper systems will tend to perpetuate themselves.

How did the under-class really develop? One theory is that when the poorly educated sharecropper moved from his rural home environment, the social structures that acted as an inhibitor to negative behavior, were removed.

Without a real support system in the urban areas (either south or north), it was inevitable that the family structure would collapse. When the middle-class left, the ghetto was without positive role models and leaders.

Disorganization began to grow with an increase in violent, "Black-on-Black" crimes. No one in the ghetto is immune from illegitimacy, illiteracy, drugs and high unemployment even if he is not an active participant.

When hunger, devastation and deprivation are constant companions, it is difficult to watch Dynasty, Dallas, or All My Children without comparing fantasy and reality and wanting some of the good life portrayed on the screen. The story lines often deal with the realities of the ghetto; illegitimacy, murder, and anger — become acceptable.

Unless strong, positive values are developed at home, many of the residents of the ghetto do anything to emulate their TV hero/ine. Just as Buppies (Black urban professionals) are members of the Now generation, so too are Guppies (ghetto urban poor). The difference is in the medium of exchange; Buppies use plastic, Guppies use steel.

Poverty must be overcome! To do so requires education and employment programs. It's obvious that the traditional public school has not been successful. Dedicated teachers with small classes in a motivating environment — one that's bright, colorful, and non-threatening, must replace the dreary holding pens that pass for schools.

Discipline must be enforced; but here again, the focus should be on developing self-discipline. Supplies, tests, — all kinds of materials that are written in relevant language must be used. Expensive? Yes. However, when you match the $5 thousand cost of these changes annually against the $25 thousand it costs per year per inmate — which makes more sense?

Industry might be involved in helping to eliminate the deepest poverty. It's ironic that jobs at the bottom (fast food chains, supermarkets, etc.) that pay minimum wages go begging. Nobody wants to work for $5 per hour when drug dealing can buy a car (or at least the down payment) in a month.

Again — positive images must be developed. When self - discipline and deferred gratification are learned, many will be willing to go on to higher education, or at least have enough potential for corporations to become willing to take a chance on hiring and training the ghetto resident.

Pride in living accommodations is difficult when your residence is a "welfare" hotel. In every city, there are enough city-owned houses or apartments that can be converted to habitable dwellings at a lower cost than using hotels.

It's understandable that the latter may be a stop gap measure, but little appears to be done to indicate that the hotels are anything but permanent. 60 Minutes had a program on welfare hotels in the spring.

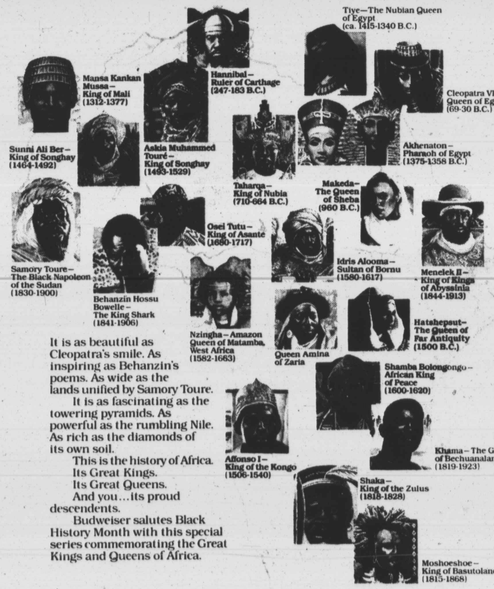
Far from shaming city fathers in a large eastern city into making apartments available to the welfare recipients, that city just shipped out numbers of ghetto residents to another hotel in another state!

Once these things are done, the backbone of the people must be re-examined for strength — the family. Group counseling and workshops in parenting, consumerism, rights, hygiene, home economics, politics, intragroup dynamics and values must be mandated.

Again, it is crucial that the group leader be sympathetic but firm and hold the absolute respect of the members of the group. This again is education. They must be educated on the power of the vote; and exercise that power.

When Black political clout is shown in Washington, more programs that are essential to eliminate the crippling effects of poverty will be instituted. Once more the cry of "Black Power" will be heard, and pride — a positive self-image, and the elimination of poverty will be the legacy of each of us to those yet unborn.

Shedding Light on the Dark Continent.



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