EDITORIALS

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THE VOICE OF BLACK AMERICA SINCE 1892

Black Caucus

It appears this is not the season to be a black politician. The Larry Young case is unfolding daily, and we awaken each dawn with some new revelation which leaves even larger shadows looming over Young's once bright star.

Del. Nathaniel Oaks is defiant in the face of charges that he misused campaign funds, and there is already talk of an appeal if the charges hold up in court.

Even as this column is being read, members of the Maryland Legislative Black Caucus are convening in retreat to map strategy for the future. But the group, sadly enough, appears to be black by accident and a caucus in name only.

And therein lies our problem. There never was a season for a black politician in this nation. Traditionally blacks in the leadership ranks have come under closer scrutiny and have ahd to overcome greater odds to succeed. It has never been an easy road, and that path, despite the large numbers of black elected officials, may actually be harder today than it once was.

Simply put, we have the numbers, but we lack the cohesiveness. There are reported that members of the Caucus actually tipped news reporters off to the Young imbroglio, and are privately chortling with satisfaction that Young's career now is in jeopardy.

But, to paraphrase John Donne, the bell may toll eventually for those who are laughing.

Numerically, the Caucus is at its strongest. But unfortunately, physical weight does not translate into political avoirdupois.

Especially when the members of the fragile coalition called the Caucus fail to present a united front.

Whatever becomes of Oaks and Young, one fact is already clear. Without real cohesiveness in the so-called Caucus, black politicans will continue to twist slowly in the wind-isolated creatures in a society which has never really come to take them seriously.

The Rowan report

There is fault on both sides in the Carl Rowan shooting incident.No matter how the case comes out, there is little doubt that race is an issue.

Syndicated columnist Rowan shot a teenager who had taken a pre-dawn swim in his backyard pool and refused to leave.

There were other teenagers in the group who had invaded Rowan's privacy.

The police first charged the teenagers with trespassing but later dropped the charges.

The victim—Carl Rowan—who sought to defend his Northwest Washington home now faces charges of having a gun that was not registered.

Did the teenagers commit a crime? Yes. But they were not charged... Why? Because they did not break the law? No. Because they are white? Yes?

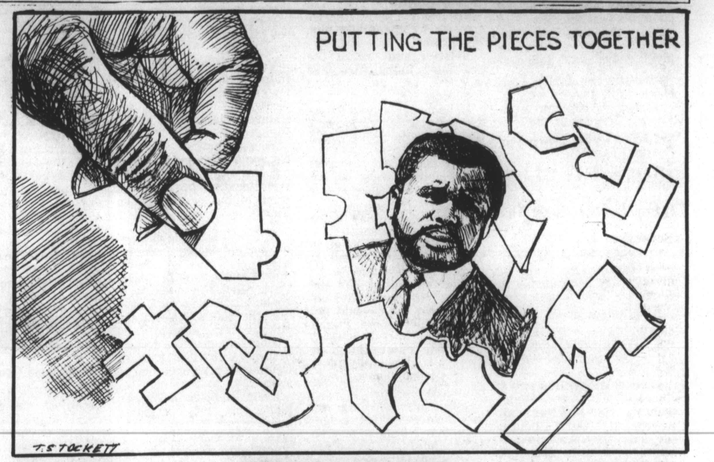
Did Rowan break the law defending himself? Yes. Was he charged? Yes. Why? Because he is black? Yes.

We admit that Carl Rowan at times has been able to live in a colorless society. And that, in the past he has bent more toward the white society than the black.

But unfortunately, this is the United States of America which carries a label of being a Democracy except its black citizens. In the USA we have a dual criminal system. If the parties are all of one color, a fair and equitable trial can be expected.

If one party is black and the other is white, our system says that the black whether criminal or victim — will not get a fair shake.

We sympathize with Rowan in his new spotlight of victim turned criminal but remind him that the Lord might be trying to give him a message ... that when you get too far away from your roots, someone, somewhere will bring you back. For in America, the color of your skin determines how American you are.



LETTERS

Black Role models

Dear Editor:

The black community will always have positive black male and female role models. However, their effectiveness in the black community is often underestimated by the media.

The assumption that positive black role models do not dominate the black community any longer is based on the state of the black family and community intra-structural imbalances, but we should be cautious in stigmatizing the entire black male population in our rural and urban communities.

Today's rural and urban black communities are experiencing the same societal changes that take place every twenty years in America; teenagers encountering social realities in unpleasant surroundings with a sense of not being accepted as a part of the broader society.

These feelings enhance low self-esteem and lack of respect for our social system and its rules. Black families appear to be experiencing the severest penalties of our youths' "Revolution of the Minds."

Teenagers who will not wait or discipline their abilities to think will not produce positive solutions to balance the complexities of social interaction (peers, authority figures, parental guidance).

Older blacks are confused and sadden by the lack of cultural unity, but continue to seek out that black role model who may be a pastor, business leader, teacher, or politician for answers.

Many other black role models are not consulted or mentioned, because their job titles or work is not looked upon as prestigious.

The black barbers, tailors, auto repairmen, tire repairmen, corner store owners, etc., are the frontline positive role models that must constantly compete with negative elements in our communities.

Some community leaders fail to recognize these "soldiers," or to give them support. Nevertheless, these strong and determined businessmen continue to risk their lives and businesses to promote independence in our communities.

They, also, refuse to surrender to the quotes made by some politicians that "there are no positive black role models in the communities." Why not highlight these black heroes and promote their positive images and contributions to the community?

The "myth" of no black role models is not the answer to our communities' shortcomings, but can be used to enhance the negative view of black males in our communities. Many of today's black youth are not interested in black men who accept less glamorous jobs. This attitude causes them to shun these hard-working individuals whose knowledge and wisdom could give insight into many complex and confusing societal changes.

The task of explaining the dilemma of the black man's struggle in rural and urban communities does not require a special certification. Refusing to leave these communities demonstrates their determination to withstand all odds.

Positive black role models are in abundance in every aspect of the black experience.

Maybe we should start recognizing these black men who continue to affirm their cultural heritage in a meaningful fashion for our black youth.

Larry K. Harcum
M. Ed., Rehabilitation Counseling
Juvenile Counselor

Thanks, AFRO

The Baltimore Branch NAACP thanks the AFRO-AMERICAN Newspapers for your recent sponsorship of our Baltimore Summit Breakfast. The Breakfast featured a unique community forum on critical issues facing our city. We are proud of the success of this project and are looking forward to making it an annual event. We could not have met our goal for this event without the AFRO's participation.

Our guests were especially appreciative of the free Oriole tickets the AFRO gave away. In addition, AFRO coverage and advance articles gave the Breakfast maximum exposure in our community.

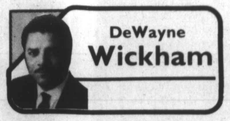
We commend the AFRO for their support of this event. We thank you again and hope to work with you on other projects in the near future,

George N. Buntin, Jr.
Executive Secretary, NAACP

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. Write

Baltimore Afro-American
628 N. Eutaw Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21201



DeWayne Wickham

Sharpton adds smoke to fire

Al Sharpton is the weak link in the Tawana Brawley case.

A preacher without pulpit, the Brooklyn-based minister and FBI informant has become the central character in the public circus that now surrounds the black teenager's accusation of abduction and rape by six white men late last year.

While the merits of the Brawley's claim have yet to be tested by a court, or even a grand jury, Sharpton has dominated recent news coverage of this racially sensitive case—appearing to be chief among equals of the three men who serve as advisers to the family of the 16-year-old girl from Wappinger Falls, N.Y.

Allowing Sharpton such a role in the Brawley case may forever deny us a full airing of the truth about what happened to the black teenager during her four-day disappearance in November.

It also ultimately may cost his partners in this strange affair, attorneys Alton Maddox, Jr., and C. Vernon Mason, their law practices.

What is certain is that Al Sharpton has managed to refocus the attention of the media, and apparently federal and state investigators, away from Brawley's claim of rape and sodomy at the hands of six white men to the questionable details of his own activities as a New York activist and street hustler.

For months now the three men—Sharpton, Mason and Maddox—have mounted a highly public campaign to get New York governor Mario Cuomo to name a prosecutor of their liking to the Brawley case.

To press their demand they have refused to allow the black teenager or her family members to cooperate with investigators, a tactic which has frustrated state officials.

They have charged that some law enforcement officials participated in the rape and abduction of Tawana Brawley and that others are involved in a cover-up of the alleged crime.

When the grand jury investigating the case subpoenaed Brawley's mother recently she showed up outside the courthouse with the family's three advisers.

While Maddox and Mason went inside to confer with a judge, Sharpton held sway outside flanked by a security force of Black Muslims.

From his bungled attempt to effect a citizen's arrest of a local prosecutor for allegedly roughing up a blind Brawley supporter, to his more recent decision to lock Tawana's mother in a church indefinitely rather than allow her to serve the 30-day contempt of court sentence she received for refusing to appear before the grand jury, Sharpton has seized center stage in this comic tragedy.

As the point man in a case that presents more challenges to the courts and politicians of New York than to the six men who allegedly violated Tawana Brawley, Al Sharpton is an easy target.

Earlier this year Newsday exposed him as an FBI informant and The Village Voice labeled him a "filmflam man." Whether any of these labels stick, the fact of the matter is that Sharpton wears them well.

A larger than life caricature of a fire and brimstone black preacher, Sharpton seems obsessed with the celebrity that the Brawley case has brought him.

He struts about in front of television cameras and before waiting reporters with the arrogance of one who is self-possessed of the truth.

Nearby Mason and Maddox scurry in his wake in an often hapless attempt to get some notice from a media much more infatuation with the quick wit of the colorful preacher than any of their legal notions.

When recently Perry McKinnon, a former Sharpton aide, came forth to claim that Brawley's three advisers know her story to be a hoax Sharpton stormed before television cameras in a masochistic frenzy to deny the allegations.

A few days later Sharpton was once again in the spotlight, this time to refute the claims of another man who charged that he had been hired by Sharpton to wiretap his home and Mason's office.

The purpose of the wiretaps Samuel McClease contends was to provide Sharpton with a way out of the Brawley case as it now appears to be coming apart at the seams.

And, if all this is not enough, it's been reported that Sharpton has not filed income tax returns for several years—news of which caused him to say that he will go to court to force the government to explain why blacks should be taxed.

Sadly it seems that Al Sharpton may get his day in court long before Tawana Brawley.

The Afro-American
MEMBER
MDDC NNPA UPI

COMMENTARY & OPINIONS

Kweisi Mfume
U.S. Congressman

Handgun crime must be curbed

Several weeks ago, an area newspaper ran a front page photograph of an elderly black woman whose facial expression was that of a person racked with excruciating pain.

One could almost hear her cries rising from the newsprint.

The accompanying story explained that her agony was wrought by the death of her beloved 15-year-old grandson. He had been shot to death with a handgun.

Between 1968 and the spring of this year, the lives of Robert Kennedy, John Lennon, Marvin Gaye, and 500,000 other Americans were snuffed out by handgun bullets.

May 1988 will be remembered as the month when local, state, and federal officials made significant inroads towards ending the proliferation of handguns among criminals and reducing the number of senseless tragedies.

With the Police Department estimating that there are 90,000 handguns in its jurisdiction, Baltimore County officials recently launched what is hailed as the nation's first comprehensive local program to reduce handgun violence and promote handgun safety.

The 18-month Handgun Violence Reduction Program is using prepared ads, public service announcements, editorials, brochures, an information hotline (889-GUNS), and the inclusion of materials in the public school curriculum to spread the word that it is everybody's responsibility to help address these critical issues.

Baltimore County is serving as a role model for local governments' efforts to combat the proliferation of handguns, and Maryland has recently become a shining example for the states.

Introduced as legislation by Delegate Ralph Hughes, Maryland's new law — which takes effect on January 1, 1990 — will establish a nine-member commission to determine which handguns are legitimate for sport, law enforcement and self-protection, and outlaw the rest.

It also calls for the prohibition of so-called plastic guns, those weapons not easily detected by airport and courthouse metal detectors.

Just as Baltimore-Washington International Airport and the courthouses throughout our state must be on guard for the possibility of terrorist attacks, so must all similar facilities throughout the country.

Mindful of this fact, in May, both houses of Congress also approved legislation to ban plastic guns.

The Senate's version of the bill would make it mandatory for airports, federal courthouses and other federal security checkpoints to install state-of-the-art metal screening devices.

The differences in the two versions of this legislation are currently being reconciled so that a final draft can be forwarded to the President for his signature.

A University of Maryland study revealed that 73 percent of the state's residents are pleased with Maryland's new law. Nonetheless, the rallying cry for tougher handgun measures is not unanimous.

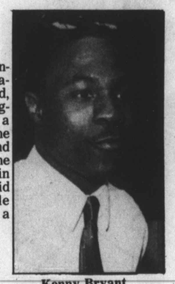
The Carl Rowan incident notwithstanding, some gun advocates are claiming that any restrictions on handguns violate rights guaranteed by the Second Amendment to the Constitution. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Tougher laws restrict criminals. The legislation's sole aim is to reduce the availability of "Saturday Night Specials" among those who intend to use them in the commission of crimes.

The thousands of them that find their way into our communities, in foo many instances, are finding their way to hoodlums who ultimately find their way to us.

AFRO SURVEY
Can Young bounce back?

Kenny Bryant - Financial Planner: "His reputation is somewhat tarnished, but people usually recognize that you've done a good job. I feel that he should be given a second chance. I like him, he's one of the black leaders in Maryland. If Schaefer did the same thing people would naturally give him a second chance."

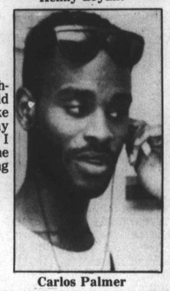


Kenny Bryant

Nathalie Daniel - Legal Secretary, Attorney General's Office: "I'm sure it will have a lasting effect on his career, but yes, I think he can be saved."

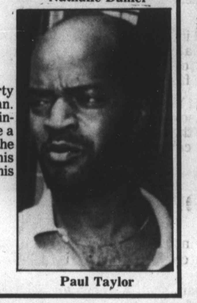
Nathalie Daniel

Carlos Palmer - Fashion Designer: "I would guess yes. If someone like Oliver North can, I'd say yes. Before this week I didn't follow it. I guess he had a reason for saying those things."



Carlos Palmer

Paul Taylor - Property Manager: "I think he can. I think he's a strong individual and he has done a lot of positive things in the community. I hope this doesn't take away from his strength in Annapolis."



Paul Taylor

Anthony Armstrong
Political Consultant

Borrowed ideas

This is a form of Marshall Plan, and if it can work for the Soviet Union it can work for Harlem, New York, or Oldtown, Baltimore, or Watts, Los Angeles.

That's right, the Soviet Union.

The plan is now being put forth by some American businessmen who see hugh potential in the Soviet economy, potential that will not be realized if a kind of Marshall Plan is not put in place to help the Soviets.

The main condition for launching a similar plan in America's cities would have to be the reduction in illegal drug activity. Drug reduction and economic venturing are logically linked, and the two negotiations should be carried on concurrently.

The end product would be reduced illegal drug activity, with all its positives, and economic revitalization of areas and people that have been all but forgotten about.

Outside management teams could run the ventures in joint participation with area citizens. The results would produce enclaves of efficiency, and hope within now hopeless, blighted areas across America.

Poor areas certainly need capital for revitalization, but they need an infusion of entrepreneurial and management skills almost more than they need capital.

For most people caught in poverty, it is their lack of understanding of market mechanisms, as much as the lack of money, that keep them poor. The drug dealer amassing large amounts of cash is an example.

His problem is often what to do with all the money. So he buys every manner of consumer goods, having to sell more drugs to keep the cycle going.

Private investors would be attracted to participate in the joint venture by the spector of profits from the ventures themselves, but also by the prospect that as legal ventures grew the illegal ones would subside - thus opening whole new investment opportunities.

The ventures could start small, grow into full assembly plant operations, and finally to state-of-the art technology development and service firms.

These ideas, put forth most recently by Americans to aid the Soviets, and their economy, could be used to strengthen economic opportunities for a whole class of poor people right here in America, who view only drugs as their ticket to survival.

Charity, especially when it's profitable, still starts at home, or at least it should. This plan doesn't ask to be given anything; it is an equity investment plan that seeks to get, and what investors would get are profits and the reduction in totally destructive illegal drug activity.

Like welfare, however, there's a problem. Everyone decries the welfare mess, but few of the individuals and businesses who wind-up on Thursday with the money Miss Nancy Welfare got on Monday want to see anything about welfare changed, except, perhaps, to give Miss Welfare (and this themselves) more money.

For many people, and I don't mean the addicts or the street dealers, the drug problem provides all kinds of financial advantages.

Just think how the sales of automobiles (especially luxury ones), jewelry, clothing, and all manner of consumer goods would be affected downward were there no drug profits to buy so much of these things.

Legalization, of course, would keep the money flowing. All it would do is change whom the money flowed to.

The addicts would still be addicts, but dealers would no longer create so much violence to have the profits.

In fact, as this crazy theory goes, there would be no dealers, except, of course, the state. In ecomonic parlance this amounts to no more than a massive redistribution of wealth away from individuals and to the state.

Most of the money, much the way state run lotteries do now, would come from the poor, in this case drug crippled individuals; but relatively little of it would find its way back into the communities from which it was taken.

It's another massive withdrawal of dollar resources with no comparable deposits being put back. This is no solution at all.

Solutions exist, but they require the will of those who believe in the people to implement them.

Because the private partners in these ventures would have to put up the equity in the form of money before the venture could obtain any loans, those partners would have veto power in the new investments. Control would revert to the people in the urban areas doing such venturing, once the projects become profitable.

Thus each investment would have an experienced foster parent whose power would fade as the projects matured. The government would act as general overseer, insuring fair play by all the parties.

The assistance would not flow directly to the needed areas; to do so would waste most of the money because the individuals in those areas do not, by themselves, know how to invest the funds most efficiently.

Instead, the new investments would be channeled through underwriting joint ventures, which could borrow from an Urban Recovery Bank set-up to make such investments. The loans would be repaid from the profits made from such enterprises.

America's poor areas cannot get rid of the structures of their almost totally consumption — based economics without aid from outside those areas. What has been produced is a kind of economic reign of terror for urban American, and its poor people.

The needs of those blighted areas and their residents is so much greater because of the economic devastation wrought by taking so much money out, and never putting it back.

The domestic recovery plan would provide needy urban areas with financial aid tied to reductions in illegal drug sales.

It needs to be clearly understood that little in the way of solutions to our drug problem is going to occur without significant assistance from government, but especially from private investment in America's ghettoes.

The government assistance could come from funds recovered from illegal drug operations, and from the savings in social and health costs brought on by reductions in drug use. Private investment would come from business people looking to make a profit.

The savings and recoveries would provide the public resources, profit motive the private resources, and the transformation of poor areas into productive ones would provide the justification.

Samuel Banks
Educator

Independence Day

In a few days, across the breadth and depth of our nation, over 250 million Americans, black, white, red and yellow, symbolizing a rich and luminous human tapestry, will be involved, in varying degrees and forms, to celebrate 212 years of American independence.

For 35 million black Americans, as we join in the jubilant resounding and powerful affirmation of freedom, it will not be lost to us, amidst the exultant, festivities, and flowing and gradiloquent oratory, that we made, against trying and awesome odds, the mighty leap of faith and tenacity from human bondage and degradatin, withstanding theDeclarationof Independence and the Constitution, to freedom and promise.

We, as black Americans, as we observe as American citizens, Independence Day 1988, from whence we have come.

It is instructive, valuable and imperative in terms of historic continuity vis-a-vis Independence Day, that we remember the poignant plea and admonition of the redoubtable and audacious Frederick Douglass 136 years in Rochester, New York in Corinthian Hall:

Of this fundamental work, this day is the anniversary. Our eyes are met with demonstrations of joyous enthusiasm. Banners and pennants wave exultingly on the breeze. The business too is hushed. Even Mammon seems to have quitted his grasp on this day. The ear-piercing fife and the stirring drum unite their accent with the ascending peal of a thousand church bells. Prayers are made, hymns are sung and sermons are preached in honor of this day; while the quick martial tramp of a great and multitudinous nation, echoed back by all the hills, valleys and mountains of a vast continent, bespeak the occasion one of thrilling and universal interest — a nation's jubilee.

This independence day, 136 years after Douglass's stirring and soaring address, 35 million Black Americans find themselves in a powerful and unsettling ambivalence as they witness for freedom engulfed by exclusion, denial and ubiquitous racism.

In point of fact, in the "land of the free and home of the brave;" Freedom still is not free and enjoyed, in reality, for all 250 million Americans. A recognition and understanding of this inescapable, empirical and historical reality cannot and must not be shunted aside or lost in oratorical pontification and obfuscation on Independence Day 1988.

I recommend two urgent and pivotal categorical imperatives that we as black Americans should pursue with vigor, unflinching resolve and doggedness on Independence Day and beyond:

I. DEMAND EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE AT ALL LEVELS, PRE-KINDERGARTEN THROUGH HIGHER EDUCATION

High quality education is the key to the salvation of our people. Education, to date, for over nine (9) million black and Hispanic children and youths enrolled in urban public schools has been education for passivity, docility and failure.

We must be uncompromising and insistent to all power elites, whatever the political or economic form, that we shall not sacrifice another generation of black and poor youngsters.

Each voting and caring black citizens, especially in areas such as Baltimore, Washington, Newark, New Jersey, among other urban centers, where they constitute clear majorities must become vocal and practicing risk-takers and advocates for the dispossessed and excluded.