EDITORIALS

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Rowan and the racial angle

Considering the pounding he is taking from those who view him as a gun-control hypocrite, it is understandable that columnist Carl Rowan prefers not to see the case of his shooting and slightly wounding a young white man to be treated as a big racial issue. Rowan used an unregistered gun his son left him.

While it won't go into the history books as a big racial case, many people have expressed the opinion that the reaction to the incident and how it came about would have been considerably different had Rowan been white and the wounded youngster and his friends been black.

The young man who was shot in the wrist when Rowan said he lunged at him, had been engaged in a swimming party in Rowan's pool without benefit of permission to be on the property. The party took place after midnight. Police found beer containers and marijuana cigarette butts lying around. Rowan's window had been tampered with. Two of the young invaders eventually were charged with illegal entry.

The public, which should be concerned about this admission, is told through the media that suburban police apparently don't get too upset about such property-invasion night excursions. And the public likewise is told through the media that the young people who engage in these illegal affairs find it more fun when they are drinking heavily. That creates fear in pool-owners' minds.

Until the public reacted, there was almost no serious and responsible criticism of the trespassers' dangerous folly. The media glossed over it. Officials glossed over it. Some suburban police were quoted as saying they don't even make arrests in such cases.

AFRO readers, and some who are not AFRO readers, have gone on record in support of the view that a lot more flak would have been thrown up had young black men and women been caught in a white family's pool under similar circumstances.

If those who see dual standards reflected are wrong, the problem is that it's another fallout, another price, of living in a society in which race still has too much influence.

Failed contra policy

At last, the handwriting seems to be on the wall for the U.S.-created and financed contra forces that have been killing their fellowmen in a no-win war which at best serves to destabilize the Nicaraguan government and nation.

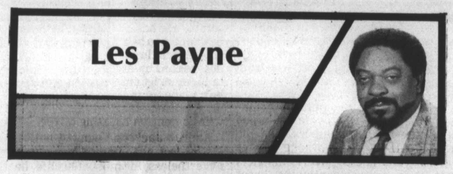
Some in the Reagan administration call the contras freedom fighters; others see them as mercenaries more often picking on helpless rural villagers than waging direct war on the Sandinistas. For their efforts, the contra fighters' families were being paid from $200 to $1,000 a month — while the per capita income in the country was less than $1,000 annually.

The self-serving contras, including the remnants among them of the old Somoza dictatorship, are carefully calculating the future on the heels of the Reagan administration's ongoing disaster in Panama.

All the Americas south of the United States have been shocked and disturbed by the Reagan administration's callous, heavyhanded battering of the people and economy of Panama in a futile attempt to bring down a drug-running dictator who not too long ago was helping the administration get lethal weapons to the contras against the will of the Congress and people of this country.

The Nicaragua experience seems to reaffirm the thinking that it might be the better idea to strive harder to encourage poor Third World nations to practice democracy by assisting them economically and showing them the great benefits to be derived from our form of governance than by engaging in costly, bloody attempts to force the issue.

Les Payne



Remembering Soweto

Hector Pieterson was the first black South African to fall to police gunfire in what came to be known as the Soweto uprising. That was a dozen years ago Thursday.

It sounded like a great story to me then, but only a story. I was educated in America and thus knew little about Africa, to say nothing about its liberation struggles. I had heard vaguely about the Zulus and the Mau Maus, but nothing, I found out later, approaching the truth.

At first word of the Soweto unrest, I was finishing a book on the Symbionese Liberation Army, on which I had started reporting for my newspaper in 1974. The West Coast revolutionary band that assassinated Oakland schools superintendent Marcus Foster and kidnapped Patricia Hearst had occupied a large place in my journalistic practice. I had tracked up hill and down dale trying to understand Donald David DeFreeze and his group of underemployed white revolutionaries.

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In the early stages of my SLA pursuit, a Los Angeles activist queried me about Nelson Mandela, Robert Sobukwe and the Sharpeville Massacre. I was as ignorant of these South African landmarks, I'm embarrassed to say, as I was of the dry Sea of Tranquillity. More ignorant, in fact, for I had heard of the dry sea.

"Why should I be covering South Africa with all the social unrest occurring in this country?" I recall saying, with monumental provincialism and stupidity.

At any rate, within hours of the Soweto outbreak, I applied for a visa to report on the disturbance. With the help of Arthur Ashe and a few tricks of my own, I cleared the special hurdle Pretoria places in the lane of African-American reporters seeking to cover that republic. Within four months — it took white reporters only two weeks — I was en route to Johannesburg.

Nothing I had read, or experienced in Tuscaloosa, prepared me for South Africa.

Not much given to subtlety, the Boers are a Nazi iron fist inside a racist mailed glove. Never during the months I've spent in that republic have I noticed white South African, Boer or English-speaking, relate to a black as a human being. On those rare occasions when they smile in the presence of Africans it is only to reveal iron teeth.

In 1976, the South African struggle was waged by school kids, like Hector Pieterson, who were killed by the hundreds. They began by rebelling against the government insistence on Afrikaans as the language of the 2.5 million Boers oppressing them. It is spoken by no one else on the planet.

Soon enough, of course, the rebellion broadened to involve adults in a nationwide movement against the entire superstructure of apartheid.

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When I arrived in October, the ashes were still smoldering. The government said 250 black South Africans had been killed, but I documented a death list of at least 850. My reporting earned me the jury's selection for the 1978 Pulitzer Prize for International Reporting. However, instead of giving the prize to the jury's number one selection, the advisory board took it away from me and gave it to the fourth-place finisher.

The advisory board, I might add, is housed at Columbia University, which at that time had students picketing for the school to divest from South Africa. So much for conflict of interests.

In addition to anointing me a Pulitzer Prize-losing reporter, my dispatches also incurred the anger of the South African government. I have since been barred from the country. However, using tricks of my own, I re-entered that republic in 1985 and wrote about the latest unrest.

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During Soweto, the children's rebellion helped black South Africans overcome their fear of the gun. Since that time, with rent strikers, union organizing and boycotts, blacks have been struggling for economic as well as political gains.

Several groups protested this week for Soweto Day, June 16, to be made an official national holiday. The strike leading up to the commemorative day saw more than a million workers stay away from work. The key irritant was the government "emergency" clampdown on all anti-apartheid activity.

Under the emergency conditions, the media, foreign and domestic, are severely hampered in their attempts to inform the world of the Boers' crackdown. Even reporting the effectiveness of the ongoing strike is considered subversive under the government's rules.

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Meanwhile, Hector Pierterson was mourned last week by Africans who placed wreaths at his grave. A simple tombstone with a raised fist presides over the ground where he lies buried. The oppressed majority continues to direct its energy against the apartheid superstructure. Black leaders have always said that the liberation struggle against the Boers would be long, bloody and ultimately successful.

The statement on the tombstone of Hector Pieterson reads:

"Time is on the side of the oppressed today, Truth in on the side of the oppressed today."

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Ruth Jenkins

SOB SISTER

Summertime living easy, if...

Summertime and the living is easy — that is, if you can get the top off your bottle of life-sustaining pills.

That's the consensus of our senior citizen neighbors who discuss such world issues at their daily caucus in our apartment house laundry room.

They speak with the solemnity of Solomon who is Biblically pictured as the wisest man of all time. But they think they have more smarts than Solomon. Cause he got suckered into taking on 700 wives and 300 concubines.

These sages are also gearing to give some other Biblical characters a run for their money: those long-livers like Methuselah who reached the age of 969. (Probably keeled over while trying to blow out the birthday cake candles).

Well, our friends are counting on the fact that today's elderly have so many life-prolonging advantages. Like washing machines, air-conditioning, waterbeds and chicken soup. Oh yes, and microwave ovens to heat the cans of chicken soup.

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On the other side of this coin is the exasperating pill-bottle tops. Patients could wish that the medications were as effective as the child-proof, tamper-proof seals on the bottles. While trying to open the bottle, a person could die of his ailment, or heart strain, or even old age.

What set them off on this medical pet peeve was the new Catastrophic Health Care Bill which will expand Medicare benefits. But there's a catch herewith: Recipients will have to bear the full cost of these gains.

This subject draws SRO crowds to the laundry-room talkfests.

Management may have to take out the washing machines to make room for chairs.

Well, we know whereof they gripe. One prescription directs us to take two tablets each morning. So we have to get up at 6 a.m. to try to get the bottle open before the noon whistle blows.

Seems like there's some conflict of control here. The doctor proposes the medication and then the pharmacist disposes against it. Puts a top on the bottle which, like a good Christian, "shall not be moved."

We're gonna get a legal opinion about ain't that malpractice of some sort. We're gonna ask the medic who has been sharing an office suite with our favorite female pulmonary specialist. During our short hospital stint he peeped in on us one day in her stead. His bedside manner was so charming that we offered to double pay his bill for the visit.

(Now that we are well, we plan to withdraw this rash offer. We'll contend that we were delirious at the time).

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The point however is that this physician has been practicing law on a part-time basis for six years. Last week he decided to give up the medical profession and devote full time to legal ailments.

Wonder if that one encounter with us drove him to throw in the towel. Or the stethoscope as the case may be. We wish him luck. Unlike shyster lawyers, he won't have to chase ambulances for business. Being also a physician, the ambulances will deliver the business to him.

We were exhausted this morning from wrestling with a bottle cap which instructs, "Press down while turning, to open." When we stopped to rest, along came our neighbor's meddlesome little grandson.

Without reading the instructions (we're not sure he can read yet) he set the bottle on the table upside down. Pressed down and turned it. Darn if the top didn't come off, spilling pills every whichaway.

That kid is living dangerously. If he humiliates us once more like that, he's gonna miss his kindergarten graduation ceremony.

We don't mind tackling a bottle seal
When the reward is specific
Like leading to a dose of champagne
Whose side effects are terrific

COMMENTARY & OPINIONS

MEMBER MDDC NNPA UPI

John Jacob

TO BE EQUAL

Next step in AIDS crisis

The National AIDS Commission was born in controversy, drifted aimlessly, got a new chairman in Admiral James D. Watkins, and has now fulfilled its mission with flying colors, issuing a report that can serve as a belated blueprint for national action against the most serious public health threat in memory.

At the heart of the Commission's report is the strong insistence that discrimination against AIDS virus bearers and victims be prevented. The report calls for federal anti-discrimination legislation that bans bias in both the public and the private sectors.

That's a bold step — and a long-overdue one. A few years ago, the Justice Department actually issued an advisory memo that said "fear of contagion" is enough to legitimize discriminatory behavior against AIDS carriers, despite considerable evidence that it hurts both AIDS victims and the nation's efforts to prevent the spread of the disease.

The report correctly suggests that AIDS will spread unless there are valid studies to track the extent of the disease, along with education, testing and counseling. Such programs depend on citizen cooperation, and that's going to be hard to come by if people know they face discrimination in employment, housing and health care support services based on a positive test result.

Without a strong national and anti-discrimination policy, people just won't come forward to be tested and, if found to carry the virus that could develop into AIDS, would be denied counseling and care.

So it's not just compassion for the victims of the disease that makes anti-discrimination steps necessary — it's also in the national self-interest to ensure that AIDS does not spread further.

The report points out that, since AIDS is a blood-borne disease, carriers need not be isolated to protect others. There's no reason why they can't stay on the job, retain their housing, and be treated just like anyone else.

The Commission says what most people should know but don't — that in most settings, there's virtually no risk of direct exposure to bodily fluids that contain the virus.

Despite this, discrimination against AIDS victims and carriers is rampant. Recorded complaints of discrimination are rising fast, and they reflect just the tip of the iceberg — far more instances go unreported.

The Commission also wants AIDS education beginning in elementary school — a basic step toward preparing youngsters to escape this dread disease. And advertising efforts, along with other public education programs, are recommended.

Special measures should be taken to educate minority communities about the facts on AIDS, because increasingly, that's where the greatest danger lies.

The minority AIDS toll is mounting, primarily because of poverty-induced overall health deficiencies and of the dangers of contracting the virus from infected needles used by drug abusers.

The homosexual community has organized itself to provide education and care for its members, and the rate of AIDS victims among gays is slowing. But ghetto poverty districts are experiencing a continuing threat to public health by the spread of AIDS.

That's where the biggest potential payoff for education and public health programs is.

The President should immediately sign an executive order banning discrimination against AIDS bearers and victims, and launch a massive anti-AIDS education campaign.

Walter E. Williams

MINORITY VIEWPOINT

Liberal hypocrisy? What's new?

First, there's Bernard Goetz, New York City's "Subway Vigilante," who shot some black youths who threatened him. Now, some 230 miles down the road in Washington, we have a copycat in the person of syndicated columnist Carl Rowan who's been dubbed the "Jacuzzi Vigilante."

The Washington AFRO reported Carl Rowan was awakened about 2 a.m. by someone he thought was "messing with the bedroom window." Rowan got out of bed, called the police, and while waiting for them he shot one of the intruders in the wrist. According to Rowan, he gave three warnings, and when the intruder, an 18-year-old named Ben Smith, lunged at him the columnist pulled off a shot that ended up in the youth's wrist. The youth later challenged Rowan's account of the incident.

It appears that Smith and his 19-year-old girlfriend had decided to visit Chevy Chase, one of Washington's most exclusive neighborhoods, to make uninvited use of Carl Rowan's backyard pool and Jacuzzi. Speculation has it that Carl, burdened by the stupor of sleep, mistook the early morning frolicking as someone "messing with the bedroom window."

With a missing piece or two, this is a mirror image of the Bernard Goetz case. Among the differences is the fact that the Subway Vigilante was white and shot a black, while the Jacuzzi Vigilante is black and shot a white. Both vigilantes believed their lives were being threatened. But after this, the mirror breaks. For starters, following Goetz' deed, he was arrested and bound over for a jury. Then the entire civil rights establishment fell upon him with every weapon in its arsenal, even blaming the Reagan administration for the rise in racial violence. In Rowan's case, he has neither been charged nor arrested; moreover, the civil rights establishment has not yet charged Reagan.

Maybe hypocrisy broke the mirror. In several city neighborhoods, virtually abandoned by police, citizens have launched self-help anti-crime efforts. Back on April 27, Rowan decried these efforts in the Washington Post: "It seems incredible that black people, so long the victims of mob rule and lynch parties, would now be applauding anti-drug patrols that can only be described as self-glorifying vigilantes." The Jacuzzi Vigilante went on to preach, "The people who legally wear law enforcement badges and operate under the restraints of Miranda and a hundred other Supreme Court decisions are the ones who ought to enforce the law."

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But the hypocrisy doesn't stop there; Carl Rowan is a staunch advocate of gun control. According to the Washington Times (6/15/88), in 1985 Rowan called for "a complete universal federal ban on the sale, manufacture and importation of handguns [except for police and military]." His enthusiasm no less diminished in 1986, when our Jacuzzi Vigilante said, "The gun lobby continues to work the White House and Congress to the point if guaranteeing that almost any nut in any neighborhood can turn his house into an arsenal."

I believe Carl Rowan, Bernard Goetz, and anyone else who is being threatened has the right — and duty — to protect himself, his family and his property. It's the hypocrisy of it all that's hard to swallow. Liberal elites like Rowan think one set of rules and restraints should govern the masses, while they themselves are exempt.

They seem to think the masses should idly put up with lawlessness, while they live in the law and order of exclusive neighborhoods. They think the masses should have their children's education destroyed by the public school establishment while the children of the elite attend either top quality public schools or exclusive private ones. They think guns should be taken away from, or at least registered by, the masses while they keep theirs unregistered as Rowan did.

This kind of hypocrisy is by no way new. Tyrants down through history have always favored strict controls for everyone else and freedom for themselves. So what else is new?

Distributed by Heritage Features Syndicate

Ethel Payne

BEHIND THE SCENES

Spotlight on Mayor Andrew Young

When the gravel sounds for the opening of the Democratic National Convention on July 18, the eyes of the world will be on the mayor of Atlanta, Andrew Young. It is a formidable task to host a gathering in which the destiny of the nation is riding on what the chosen delegates from the 50 states and the U.S. territories will do in nominating a candidate for the next president.

Past experience shows that some mayors did not fare too well in the role of host. Twenty years ago, Chicago was the site of the worst maelstrom in history. The Vietnam War was grinding to an ignominious cease fire while the anti-war movement was at its peak. President Lyndon Johnson announced his decision not to run again, but he shifted the albatross of a shameful conflict to the shoulders of an honorable but hapless hopeful to succeed him, Vice President Hubert Humphrey. Richard Nixon who was denied the prize by John F. Kennedy in 1960 swept into office on a wave of rebellion.

The mood in the streets outside the convention hall and the big hotels on Michigan Avenue was reflected in the eyeball to eyeball confrontation between Mayor Richard Daley's police and the defiant young, chanting slogans. It was a bad time for the country. A snarling Daley went into the history books as a symbol of repression.

This time around, the climate may have changed, but as Andy Young says, "Of course there will be demonstrations. There wouldn't be a Democratic Convention without some." He has a blueprint for what he expects to be a lively, but smooth confab. Atlanta's police force, augmented by extra security units, is under strict orders not to provoke, but to be firm in controlling the demonstrators and the hecklers who will be bent on creating havoc.

Andrew Jackson Young by nature is a modest, self-effacing individual; nevertheless, for most of his life, he has been in the center of social upheaval and political turbulence. He shared with Martin Luther King, Jr. the travails of violence against non-violent peaceful change as promulgated by the man who made the nation look in the mirror of bigotry and repel at the ugly image reflected. When King was assassinated, Young was at his side. Later, he went to Congress, but gave up his seat to become Jimmy Carter's ambassador to the United Nations, only to be impaled by the hysteria generated after he tried to hold a private talk with the representative of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

After a brief hiatus in private life, he returned to the arena of politics, and was twice elected to his present post. That will end in 1989, but he is testing the waters for a possible shot at the governorship of the once cradle of the Confederacy, the grand state of Georgia.

In a recent interview with him at his Atlanta office, he talked candidly about the 1988 presidential campaign, his experiences in the civil rights movement, the candidacy of Jesse Jackson and international relations. Here are some excerpts from that discussion:

Question: "Mayor Ed Koch of New York has asked why you and Mrs. Coretta Scott King have not endorsed Jesse Jackson for the presidency. What's your answer?

Young: "He didn't really ask. He made an accusation which was totally unfounded. I made it very clear that I was not going to get involved in anybody's campaign directly, mainly because as host of the convention I wanted to stay neutral.

"I also had an understanding with Jesse that the thing I wanted to do was to make sure that we were not just in his campaign, but that we were also a part of the whole process of revitalizing the Democratic Party. It wouldn't make sense for Jesse to be the only one talking about South Africa while the other candidates let that become the Jesse Jackson agenda. In the interest of the black community and poor people, we had to have all the candidates responding to those issues. I wanted to be free to relate to all the candidates on these issues.

"The only way that you can get them carried over to the next administration is to get them into the program while they're running for the nomination and the election. I have maintained a dialogue with all of the candidates.

Question: Back to the sayings of Mayor Koch: He seemed to be saying that there were bad feelings between you and Jesse. What's your response to that?

Young: "Koch was implying that I had questions about Jesse's character and that just simply was not true. He also tried to make a big thing about what happened on the day that Martin was assassinated. I have always said that was totally irrelevant. Even those who are criticizing Jesse now didn't see any problem with it at the time.

"When we left Memphis and went to Washington, we got together and voted Jesse the mayor of Ressurection City (the Poor Peoples' Campaign). If we had had any hard feelings against Jesse we wouldn't have made him the spokesperson for the campaign. You remember, Chauncey Eskridge (Chicago lawyer, now deceased), Chauncey was always upset about that. Years later, he mentioned this to Barbara Reynolds (author of the book, "Jesse Jackson, the Man, the Movement and the Myth") and that's how it got into her book. But that was mostly Chauncey's concern. He and Jesse never got along because until Jesse came along, Chauncey was Martin's man in Chicago. He wanted Jesse to work under him and that just wasn't going to happen, so they never really came together.

"Jesse's only problem was with people trying to control him. I never tried to control him, so I never had a problem with him. I did have problems with those people in the SCLC (Southern Christian Leadership Conference) who tried to control me.

"There were no hard feelings between Jesse, Coretta and me over Martin's assassination. As for the convention, I frankly think that the decisions inside are going to be controlled by him. He will have earned the right to have some impact on the package that will come out of the process and will be given to the public. A lot of the decisions are going to be up to him. I don't see myself as having a role in that.

Question: "Paul Kirk (chairman of the Democratic National Committee) seems to be writing off any possibility that Jesse could get the second spot on the ticket when he says that the second spot does not necessarily go to the runner-up.

Young: "I think that it's not going to be Paul Kirk's decision. It will be Jesse's to a certain extent. He has earned a place in the hearts of people and in the hearts of the nation, and that has essentially been entrusted to him because he has expressed a concern and a program for dealing with the problems of poor people, black people and working people. His leadership depends upon delivering something to them. It's not a question of what the party does for him because whether there's a Republican or Democrat in the White House, Jesse is going to be all right.

"The question is what about those people he has inspired? What are they going to do? and the only way that they will do well is if there is a Democrat in the White House. Jesse has to find a way to get a Democrat there. It would be a great risk if he were to be on a losing ticket. If the ticket loses with him on it, he will be blamed just as Geraldine Ferraro was blamed for the defeat of Walter Mondale in 1984."

Question: What if he's not on the ticket and a lot of people will be angry and frustrated? What happens then?

Young: "But he's not the issue. It's the people who are the issue. They are his constituency. Geraldine Ferraro would have been a United States senator from New York, if it had not been for the scandal that erupted around her husband, and still follows her family. Not only did it ruin her, but it set the women's rights movement in politics back. It would be a natural disaster for Jesse to be on a ticket that loses. There's a long list of vice presidential candidates who were on losing tickets and are now forgotten—Sarge Shriver, Tom Eagleton, William Miller with Nixon in 1960 and Bob Dole with Gerald Ford.

"You know we just can't afford to have another four years of Republican appointments. It's the thing that's killing the cities and black mayors. This is the only administration, Republican or Democrat over the past 20 years, in which there is nobody in Washington that I can call, and get some help on jobs, water, pollution, you name it. I used to pick up the phone when Nixon was in and get Bob Brown at the White House or Sam Jackson at HUD; but I don't know of any black now who has some clout in the Reagan administration.

"I will say, however, that to the limit of his budget, which has been cut to the bone, Sam Pierce (currently secretary of Housing and Urban Development and the only black cabinet officer) he has tried to help us with the airport, but I don't know of anybody else. I'm very worried about the kinds of judges we will get, whether they will be of the same philosophical belief of Robert Bork. Blacks showed their strength in the 1986 election by giving the margin needed to regain Democratic control of the Senate. That's how we were able to defeat the nomination to the Supreme Court of Judge Bork by Ronald Reagan. That is why it is crucial for blacks to make their political power felt stronger than ever in this election."