EDITORIALS

John J. Oliver, Jr.
Chairman of the Board
Frances M. Draper
President
THE VOICE OF BLACK AMERICA SINCE 1892

Dealing with AIDS

Much has been said and written about the current AIDS epidemic raging across the world, but the inescapable fact is that the problem won't go away by itself, although many of our leaders have ostrich-like, adopted that approach.

The fact is, we must accept reality, AIDS is here, and we have to deal with it. How, is the matter at issue. Many leaders have said that education is the best way to deal with the problem.

However, it was pointed out that warnings of the dangers of smoking tobacco were widely publicized. And education campaign to alert everyone to these dangers had the highest priority—yet millions of people turned a deaf ear to the pleas.

Granted that education is a part of a process to deal with AIDS, it must be complemented with such practical applications as addressing the problems of astracism people and families of AIDS victims have to deal with on a daily basis.

It is distressing to hear of the attitude of some clergy towards the disease, calling it in some instances "just reward for sin." Some churchmen are loathe to even use the word "condom" in dealing with their congregations.

In our opinion, the church should take a leading role in helping to solve the many problems attendant to controlling AIDS. Working in conjunction with the many social agencies addressing the problem will hasten a mindset which urges precaution and preventive methods.

We happily note that in many communities, a positive approach has been taken in an effort to halt the spread of AIDS among IV drug users. Packets of bleach or alcohol for sterilizing needles has been made available to the unfortunates who are unable to steer clear of narcotics.

Thus, it can be positively stated that education, coupled with a practical approach to recognizing the problem, can lead to a path toward eradication of this deadly menace. Talking about it from pulpits, platforms and desks can only help.

Once upon a time, using the word syphillis would cause a censor-like bleep in polite society. The same is true today using the word condom—but this can change—it must.

New School Superintendent

A round of applause to Dr. Richard C. Hunter, the city's new school superintendent, for vowing to decrease the number of high school students who elect to drop out of school.

Baltimore's drop-out rate is a horrendous- 50 percent, meaning only one out of two secondary students will go on to get their high school diploma.

How Dr. Hunter plans to curb the drop-out rate, no one knows, but it is necessary, to prepare our students to become successful in life in this highly technical and information-oriented society.

The drop-out rate is not the only problem Hunter must deal with, but it is a crucial one. The superintendent must also develop methods to improve education in the city, by giving students access to updated texts, computers, and qualified and motivated teachers and smaller class sizes.

The children need to know someone cares.

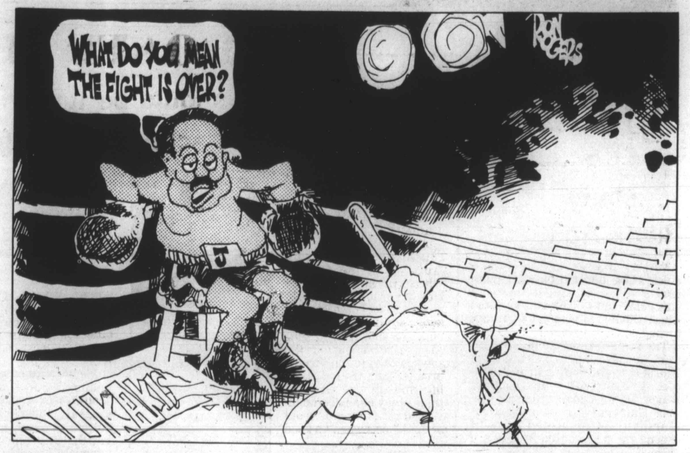
By stating he plans to reduce the drop-out rate, Hunter is saying he cares.

It will be interesting to see how "Hunter's priorities fit with school board president Meldon S. Hollis', and the mayor's plans to improve the schools.

Hollis has stressed the need for arts in city schools as a priority; Mayor Kurt L. Schmoke supports reduced class sizes as a first step.

Already, Hunter has targeted the dropout rate as a solution to Baltimore public schools, troubles.

We applaud this approach, and urge him to continue on this path.



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

The AFRO-AMERICAN
628 N. Eutaw Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21201

Solutions to drug problems

Solutions to drug addiction, in America cannot be seriously addressed without a frank and honest consideration of the social conditions which have led to the crisis. (Painful as such an analysis may be — the continuation of the drug status quo is infinitely more painful to Americans.)

If such conditions had been imposed on us by some foreign power (say the Russians) or by some "foreign" ideology (say communism) they would already have been discussed, dissected and analyzed ad nauseum.

Current efforts to deal with drug addiction clearly are not working. And although the country owes showing the courage and imagination of raising the issue for serious analysis — merely to legalize drugs won't eliminate the profitability of pushing drugs, nor will it make them less easily available.

I propose that we reverse both of these entities through the following approach:

1) Government to form an absolute monopoly to produce and distribute all presently illegal drugs, as well as tobacco products — and all such private distribution to remain or become illegal.

2) That this be done through the creation of a politically independent, well funded, commission, selected entirely by non-profit drug treatment and prevention centers, health care trade unions and nurse and physicians' professional organizations,

3) The commission would set the price, or give drugs and needles (much as it now does for methadone) at public health clinics where full and free treatment would be both available upon demand — without delay — and actively encouraged.

4) The commission should oversee a well financed educational program both to discourage experimentation with drugs, and to seek treatment.

The results of such a program would quickly:

A) end profits to the distributor or pusher;

B) end the further spread of AIDS through intravenous needle sharing;

C) end the need of addicts to commit crimes to support their habits;

D) end the impurities and variations in potency which overdose and kill;

E) de-romanticise the Super-Fly image of wealthy drug dealers to ghetto youth;

F) reduce the profits of organized crime, the CIA, and of the Contras — and of the murders these entities commit;

G) take much of the glamour out of experimentation with drugs;

H) reduce markedly the expense of law enforcement agencies and hospitals;

I) reduce the environmental danger fron over use of herbicides.

A. ROBERT KAUFMAN

Long time AFRO reader

I must congratulate you and your staff on a commendable newspaper. The content is substantive and provides a wealth of information on a diverse plane. As a result, the paper is second to none and ranks among the leading newspapers in this country.

I can remember reading my first AFRO-American in 1969, upon my arrival in Baltimore. My husband and I, being regular readers, have observed its progression to this level. I must add that my traveling and writing experience, coupled with my journalistic background, allow me the opportunity to feel comfortable in my assessment.

DORIS BROWNING AUSTIN

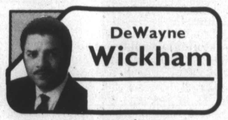
Coverage appreciated

On behalf of the Baltimore Club of the National Association of Negro Business and Professional Women's Clubs, Inc., I wish to express my deep appreciation for the presentation of a certificate of merit, news article and photographic coverage, of our Annual Founders' Day Observance and Awards Luncheon on May 21, 1988.

It gave the public an opportunity to learn of our chapter's work as well as to highlight the unique roles of committed individuals who use their talents to make important contributions to our community.

A special thanks to Mrs. Pattie Hodges Berry, for honoring our invitation as Dais guest and for bringing such warm and sincere greetings which were received enthusiastically by the audience.

JENNIE M. JENKINS



Tim Reid — angry black man

LOS ANGELES — It would be easy to dismiss Tim Reid as just another angry black man. The streets of America's cities are overrun with middle-aged black men barely able to suppress the rage that burns within them.

They are the remains of once promising souls, the tattered shells of black teenagers who survived the human cesspools that many black ghettos have become.

For them there are few distinctions of substance to be made between the neighborhoods they have been made to endure and the Russian gulag.

But Tim Reid is too complex a person to wear any one label well. In many ways he is the model of success. An accomplished television actor and producer, Reid recently finished filming a movie in Canada with Don Johnson.

For nearly a decade now he has earned a steady check for his work on the television shows "WKRP in Cincinnati," Simon and Simon," and most recently as the star of "Frank's Place" on CBS. In Hollywood he is the rarest of breed, a successful black man!

But success had done little to still Reid's anger, it has only made it possible for him to get beyond "me" that most of us are stuck on.

"The black man is an endangered species," he told me, his anger barely disguised by the softness in his voice. The troubles of the black male—that monolith of those who are turned off and locked out by this society — is a recurring theme for the 43-year-old actor.

And it is the media, Reid contends, that is the deadliest of poachers!

"You see, the black man has always been revealed as a threat or burden to the welfare of our society. Those are the only images that we get in abundance in the media.

"It is important to know that the images we put out there become role models for many people," he argues. "If you want to save black men you've got to give them positive images."

It was the search for "positive images" that led Reid last year to "Frank's Place." He and his partner, Hugh Wilson — the two share the title of executive producer — wanted to create a program that offers television viewers some "real reflections" of black lifestyles.

Unfortunately "Frank's Place" didn't catch on with television viewers last season, most of whom turn on their sets each day in search of something that falls far short of positive black images, and it's uncertain whether the show will return to the airwaves this fall.

That's too bad because Reid says the show has positive images to spare.

"The reality," he contends, "is that there are people around this country, both black and white, who are like the characters on 'Frank's Place.' "

Beyond that Reid has little to say about his ailing show, he wants to talk instead about other solutions to our most troubling problems.

He'd rather talk about "Stop the Madness," the anti-drug abuse music video that he wrote and produced a few years ago. Stemming the flow of illegal drugs into our neighborhoods and the veins of our children is his obsession.

Next month Reid will travel to Ohio to meet with a black man who has adopted 35 black children — hard to place youngsters who were probably destined to spend their youth in foster care homes or the custody of state officials.

"I just want to spend a few days with him," Reid explains. "I want to find out what makes him tick, what keeps him going."

A Hollywood star who is willing to help raise money for a worthy cause is no longer a novelty. But Reid is much more than a benefit performer.

He is a survivor of the social tragedy that claims thousands of young black men daily and more than anything else he wants to pull some others out of the mire he escaped.

Earlier this year he bought the movie rights to the book "Brothers," which is based on the 1987 NEWSWEEK article about the lives of 10 black men who grew up together in a Chicago housing project.

"I could have been anyone of those kids," he confesses, "anyone of them who made it ... or who failed. In that story is the plight of black men."

More than just an angry black man, Tim Reid is someone who is trying to make a difference.

DeWayne Wickham's column is syndicated nationally by the Gannett News Service.

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COMMENTARY & OPINIONS

Kweisi Mfume
U.S. Congressman

. . .Many Rains Ago

While many of us were celebrating our nation's birthday earlier this week, a great American was celebrating his own. Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall turned 80 on July 2nd.

The son of country club steward and a teacher, Baltimorean Thurgood Marshall, after completing his studies at Douglass Senior High School, attended Lincoln University in Pennsylvania. Marshall distinguished himself among his classmates by being a shrewd debater.

He earned a B.A. degree, and graduated cum laude in 1930. The next three years were spent at Howard University's Law School where the foundation was laid for what was to earn him the distinction of being the 20th Century's most renowned legal advocate for civil rights.

One of Marshall's first triumphs against racial segregation in public schools occurred in 1935 when he won a suit against the University of Maryland Law School.

The case resulted in the institution admitting its first African-American law student. After becoming a member of the NAACP — where he eventually served 20 years as the Executive Director and General Counsel of its Legal Defense and Education Fund — Marshall quickly wrapped up a succession of other civil rights victories in several states.

Traveling from court room to court room in the segregated south, Marshall recalled life as a lawyer under Jim Crow by saying, "There was no place to eat and no place to sleep. We slept in the car and we ate fruit."

The 1954 Supreme Court case that, culminated in the civil rights lawyer placing his most indelible mark on society in *Brown v. Board of Education*, in which it was unanimously decided that segregated public school facilities could not be constitutionally sanctioned.

Last year was a special one for those of us who revere Thurgood Marshall because, after years of refusing most requests for speaking engagements and interviews, he used two very public forums to express his views on several important issues.

In an address focusing on the Bicentennial of the U.S. Constitution, he pointed out that the document's famous phase, "We the People," intentionally excluded African Americans and women. In addition, he argued that any commemoration of the Constitution's existence should be done with reminders of "hopes not realized and promises not fulfilled."

In an exclusive television interview with journalist Carl Rowan, Justice Marshall recalled the impetus for the 1935 case against the University of Maryland Law School. He explained that, "... they wouldn't let me go to the law school because I was a Negro and ... I decided I'd make them pay for it.

On African Americans having been short-changed as members of American society, he told Carl Rowan that, "... I have come to the definite conclusion that if the United States is indeed the great melting pot, the Negro either didn't get in the pot or he didn't get melted down."

It is impossible to ignore the irony of Justice Thurgood Marshall having been born so close to "Independence Day." Thanks to him, we have come a quantum leap in making the Fourth of July meaningful for **all Americans.**

Belated happy birthday, Justice Marshall. We look forward to honoring you on **July 2nd** for many years to come, ... and we thank you for keeping the faith, many rains ago.

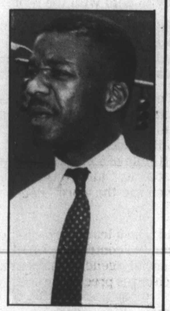
AFRO SURVEY

What should be top priority of the new school superintendent?

Mary Allen 26, programmer. I think his emphasis should be on educating and getting drugs out of the schools. When parents send their kids to school, they should be able to feel comfortable and confident that their kids are safe from drugs. Also, increasing arts in the schools will give children a broader perspective about life and all the different things they can become involved in. Taking arts out of the schools wasn't a good idea.

Mary Allen

Julius Mackey, 28, public relations specialist. Special education should be the top priority. Special education requires a great commitment, but it is harder to get teachers to teach in that area than others. Reducing class size in special education classes is more important than in other classrooms because some teachers can handle a large class, but special ed students require more attention. Arts and music should also be accentuated so that students can be culturally literate. Ensuring that the schools have adequate supplies should also be a major concern.

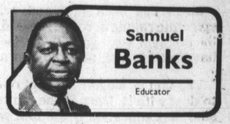

Julius Mackey

Cordice Saunders

Cordice Saunders, 30, sales manager, I think the superintendent should give due consideration to the quality of teachers. Academics are most important and decreasing class size would certainly enhance the learning climate.

Al Cover

Al Cover, 52, engineer, I don't live in the city, but I can say that its up to the superintendent to provide better education for the children in the schools. I think kids have to grow up with an appreciation for the arts. It should be secondary to academics to make a well rounded adult.



Samuel Banks
Educator

Black America under siege

The current educational, political, social and economic status of 35 million black Americans depicts, in graphic, painful and palpable terms, a condition being under siege or studied exclusion from the mainstream of the American social order.

No amount of pettifiggery, expensive and extravagant euphemisms or paeans to how far black folk have come by the white media, print and electronic and white power elites here in Baltimore and throughout the nation can obscure or shunt aside this clear and present reality.

Statistical data from Federal, state or local agencies provide unassailable evidence that black Americans, with the exception of native Americans are at the very bottom of the socio-economic and educational totem pole of the United States.

The great and historic leap from slavery to freedom has resulted, since 1865, in the societal outrages of Jim Crow practices, segregation, antilocution by whites (i.e., use of obnoxious and invidious racial epithets) and widening and intensified ghettoization or cramming black citizens into indecent, unsafe and unsanitary housing.

All of this has gone forward notwithstanding the passage of the 1957, 1960, 1964 civil Rights Acts and the 1965 Voting Rights Act and the 1968 Fair Housing Act. There are ample laws available to protect the human and civil human and civil rights of 35 million black Americans. What is tragically missing is an absence of will, commitment and monetary resources.

The dogged and tenacious refusal of the Reagan Administration now in its waning days, to enforce civil rights legislation has given encouragement to white reactionaries and racists to resist just and equitable affirmative action for blacks and minorities, frustrate and impede efforts to provide equality in housing and push prior efforts, largely by the late 1950s and 1960s, to provide equal and desegregated education to over nine million black and Hispanic Americans to a distant backburner. This grievous and lamentable state of affairs exists and continues because of the general apathy and acquiescence of most white Americans.

The shameful and vicious verbal abuse and acts of violence visited upon the Eric Boyce-Beys here in Baltimore who exercised their constitutional right to move into the historically all-white Hampden section, the burning of a cross, a Klu Klux Klan symbol of hate in East Baltimore, the desecration of a Jewish synagogue in Silver Spring, Md.;

And the vitriolic and cruel racial epithets by a white manager of a country club in Howard County directed against a black official in Columbia, Md., who was negotiating for the use of the facility for an NAACP dinner are chilling and egregious manifestations of racism, intolerance and bigotry.

The factor of resistance and hostility to black Americans, as expressed in both overt and covert forms, to an overwhelming degree, reflects the present state of our nation.

The passage of amendments to the 1968 Fair Housing Act, containing stronger provisions for enforcement and penalties, constitutes a ray of hope for the deghettoization of Baltimore and urban centers and regions throughout our nation.

As we monitor and insist on prompt and vigorous enforcement of the Fair Housing Act, we must, too, move simultaneously to insist upon full employment for all citizens, high quality and equal education, humane, fair and affordable health care for all and support, in their senior years.

Anthony Armstrong
Political Consultant

The port of Baltimore

The trip across the Atlantic Ocean from England to the Mid-Atlantic coast of the United States is about 3,500 statute miles. Once here, however, the economics of shipping start to do funny things.

I can vividly remember grammar school lessons about Baltimore and our world famous port; how it is naturally protected, being tucked so nicely up into the equally famous Chesapeake Bay, and how it's located some 200 miles inland.

Here in Baltimore we sit atop a land formation known as the Piedmont Plateau, after a region in Italy. It's a flat expanse of land running along the Atlantic Plane just east of the Blue Ridge and Appalachian Mountain ranges.

If there was ever a place to put a harbor it's Baltimore; and for hundreds of years when sailors spoke of dream ports they often spoke of Baltimore's.

In recent years we've become so in love with the glistening success of the Inner Harbor that many of us land-lovers forgot about the other wonders of the extraordinary Port of Baltimore.

As a boy I use to sit around listening to the men who left home before the sun was up, and returned around four o'clock in the afternoon, from their work on the docks. They were often big guys and brave too; and many of them had been Navy men who just couldn't get the sea out of their blood.

Most of them didn't want to either. It was something magic, almost noble, about the work they did; and no matter how tough the work got the men who performed it day after day just seemed to get tougher.

Even with the huge cranes that tower over the docks, and those little nugget like fork lifts that scurry about like busy beavers, it was and still is the brains and muscles of the men that got the work done.

There were codes of behavior that governed the waterfront, and no labor contract was ever anymore adhered to then those unspoken rules. If you worked on the docks you worked by those codes, and the need for any outside policing was deemed to be the stuff of sissies who had no business in the union halls and watering holes of the stevedores.

Just as women for centuries were considered bad luck on ships at sea, so too were they considered off-limits on Baltimore's docks, except as purveyors of hot food and hotter coffee.

It could be a romantic life and it was often a dangerous life, where the slightest mistake could leave a man dead, smashed to a pancake under the weight of a fallen cargo box.

When the work was steady, and things could fluctuate like a jib boom not tied down, the money was good, real good—consisting that formal education was the last thing a man needed. Yet, there were few stupid men on those docks. Working around the water doesn't allow for stupidity, too much can happen too fast.

And like the professions of the firefighter and the police officer, jobs on the docks tended to be handed down from father to son.

Everything changes. Now it's not unusual to see women actually working side by side with the men. Instead of pure brawns much of the work is now aided by fancy electronics and computers.

Almost everything is now containerized. Yet, perhaps the biggest change is the fact that Baltimore's port is in a life and death struggle with other ports along the coast; and Virginia is providing as great a challenge as any of these. One look at a map of the EastCoast will tell you why.

Baltimore, for all its advantages, is still 200 miles up the Chesapeake Bay, which means just that much more sailing time and that much more expense for shippers. In shipping, the cost to port is everything — save sailing time and you save money.

Also, if you cut sailing time to port you can cut turnaround time out of that port, and back to sea with another cargo. On this score Virginia is starting to loom large.

At the very entrance to the Bay sits Norfolk—or more properly, Hampton Roads—and if the cargo is coming from Europe, the Soviet Union, or the far East, Virginia sits there, first, like a big "welcome" sign.

In recent years Baltimore has done much to compete better, by improving its docks and offering more flexible rate structures for international shippers. Yet, we can do nothing about geography, and on that point the Virginia ports seemed to enjoy Mother Nature's favors.

The port of Baltimore won't die, but no longer is there the assurance that we will enjoy the kind of favor that seemed to be the natural right of the port of Baltimore.

Just as we did with the Inner Harbor, making it into one of America's premier vacation spots, we can do with the port. It's going to require huge amounts of money, almost symphonic cooperation between the city and the state of Maryland, and it wouldn't hurt, either, to have each of us learn a little more about, as now congresswoman Bentley used to say, "The Port That Built A City."

Love affairs can die if they're not constantly renewed, and many of us have had a long running love affair with the port. Now it's time to remember how good the port has been to us—the men and women who work around her, and those of us who've benefitted from their work.

So again, when people speak of ports they will mean the gem at the crown of the Chesapeake—The Port of Baltimore.