EDITORIALS

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THE VOICE OF BLACK AMERICA SINCE 1892

Bishop John Bryant

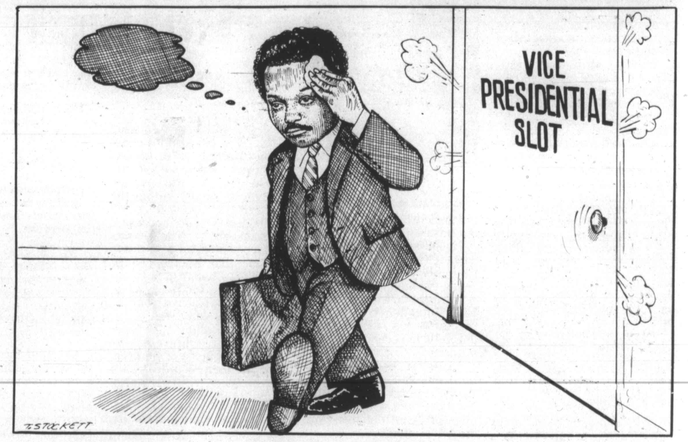
There is joy and jubilation at Bethel AME Church this week, for news has come that their pastor, the Rev. John Bryant, has been elected bishop by the General Conference meeting in Ft. Worth, TX earlier this week.

The campaign for this high church position is the culmination of many months of arduous work by many, many parishioners and friends of the affable young minister.

Actually, the campaign can be likened, in small part, to that of political campaigns, for there were cheerleaders, buttons, placards and literature employed to bring the message to the conference that Rev. Bryant deserved to be bishop—and they support him.

We add our congratulations, and realize with a note of sadness that this elevation means he will be leaving Baltimore as he takes up his new assignment in West Africa. Although it won't happen for a while yet, his driving force will be missed.

One of his parishoners summed up best when she declared: "Wher ever there are great works to be done, God always sends a great man to do them. Bishop John R. Bryant is one of those men."



Open letter to Dukakis

By Delegate John W. Douglass

Few people can really appreciate the pain that black men are forced to endure in this country. And nothing better demonstrates this than the shabby treatment that Jesse Jackson had to endure at the hands of Michael Dukakis, the democratic nominee for president.

I have always been a proponent of the Nixon dogma, i.e., "watch what men do, not what they say." By this standard, clearly Dukakis' actions show that he really doesn't respect Jesse as a black man and what he stands for.

Jesse is clearly the most influential black man in America, loved and adored by an overwhelming majority of our black countrymen. Yet Dukakis treated him with utter disrespect, and a lack of courtesy. Everybody knew that Jackson wished to be considered for the Vice Presidency.

Indeed, this amassing almost 1,300 delegates, his running second in the democratic primary sweepstakes, even his beating Dukakis in many states, earned him the right to be considered honestly and conscientiously.

Yet Dukakis' treatment of Jackson was not even transparently fair, it was utterly disrespectful and disgusting. His staff interview of Jackson for the Vice Presidency was clearly a formality—he never even seriously considered Jackson.

Indeed, his actions say clearly that he had made up his mind as to his Vice President even before the final meeting with Jesse. For no sooner was the interview with Jackson complete, Dukakis was on the phone trying to reach Lloyd Bentsen to make him the offer.

He didn't even have the courtesy to notify Jackson before his decision was made public—Jackson had to learn of it the next morning through a group of reporters.

And there stood Jackson, embarrassed, being badgered on all sides by reporters as to his reaction to Dukakis' choice. He could only stand tall with dignity and say "no comment." Dukakis had not even shown him the common decency of notifying him of his choice.

As Jesse stood there facing those reporters, I knew and felt his pain for I have been there. I have been there as have legends of other black men. There stood Jackson, too "proud" to show his pain, too "controlled" to let it bother him, yet all the time aching inside.

I know the thoughts that must have swirled inside Jesse's mind. I know the pain that must have gripped and torn at his bowels. I know the feeling of vengeance that he was constrained to hide. Yes, I share Jesse's pain for I, too, have been a victim of such shabby and discriminatory treatment.

When I endeavored to become Maryland's First Black Treasurer, the House Leadership, steered by the Speaker, in order to prevent me, a black man from obtaining that position of power, pulled one of the oldest games in town—they went out and got a white woman and got her elected.

Never mind that that white woman had never even been interested in becoming Treasurer. Ability and credentials mean nothing—as in Jesse's and my case—what counts is the color of a man's skin.

What's worst, in the Dukakis case, not only did he treat Jackson with utter disgust and contempt in failing to show him the courtesy of notifying him, he rubbed Jesse's face in it by appearing at the NAACP Convention with Bentsen in tow.

But the greatest pain is not the shabby and discriminatory treatment Jesse had to endure in Boston. No, the greatet pain is known that black America will do nothing about it.

The towaway problem

If parking on private property is a crime, why aren't the police or another government agency enforcing the law?

And if parking on private property is not a crime, why should anybody be towing? How is it that a private company can seize one's vehicle and deny access thereto?

What is the crime? What is the punishment? Is the crime as severe as the punishment? I feel the seizing of property (valued sometimes in excess of ten thousand dollars) for a single parking violation is a bit desperate.

What is your vehicle worth? Should it be held ransom for a hundred dollar parking fine? (Bring it in cash, too, my friend.)

Y'know, during this whole thing, I haven't been towed. My customers have been and so have many first-time visitors to the area. Do you think they'll return soon? The lack of adequate parking in a city that promotes tourism is both a disgrace and an irritant.

No one has brought suit in this matter because of the legal costs. People won't sue over a hundred dollars or so? Would you? Would you really go through with it? Well, neither will anyone else.

The law at this time does not protect the public. It ignores the repeated fleecing of the unsuspecting. When I installed a public address system to warn people who might not see the lone, unlit sign on one particular lot, the system was vandalized and the speaker stolen. Three speakers have since been stolen, and people are still being towed.

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

It's a small wonder that we've become a nation of scofflaws. The scales of justice just aren't balanced anymore.

DICK S. MARTIN
Owner, Club Charles

Racism and police

The institution of law enforcement in this country was built by white males. They have always been the front line troops in depriving black people of their human and civil rights. Therefore, it is an inherently racist institution.

Most black people, if they join the police force, will not only receive law enforcement training, but lessons in oppressing black people as well.

Some of our white and even black police disrespect, and curse our people, even with the word "n---r." This is unacceptable to the black citizenry. Why racism is so widespread on the police force, because they have no program, to remove or publish racist law enforcers, or to screen out people with racist tendencies, before they are hired. The reason they have no program, because racism is inherit from top down (command structure).

As a result of this lawless permissive behavior: Black men in cars are being continually harassed, by being stopped. Similar harassment takes place on the street as well.

When being arrested, police purposely cause injury or try to aggravate the injury of a suspect. A black woman, emotionally disturbed, discharging a rifle is shot in the face on Reisterstown Road. A suspect running from a stolen car is shot in the back, in the back alley of Pulaski Street.

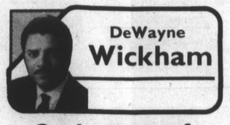
We do not train and pay cops to abuse, disrespect, mistreat, or murder people. We pay them to restrain and lock-up people, in order to take them before a judge, to be punished by the laws of the land. We pay police only to use lethal force in appropriate circumstances, "not to take revenge on people they hate."

Some blacks might say, with all the crime we have in our community, we don't have time to worry about "racism" and "abuse," by the police. Well, we should be concerned.

If they (police) abuse, mistreat, or murder a suspected criminal because of race. They will not differentiate between law-abiding black people and non law-abiding. Racism has no boundaries.

We need a law where if a distraught person is held-up in a house, relatives, or friends must be called in as a last ditch effort, to save the person as well as a civil review board to protect our citizens from the racist tendencies of the people who are supposed to protect us.

JERRY LIN DAVIS



DeWayne Wickham

Sad state of Dems treatment

Washington—The time has come for black voters to consider the Republican option.

While such an idea might seem blasphemous to millions of blacks who have invested all of their political capital into the party of Franklin Roosevelt and Jefferson Davis, it is an option that can be no longer ignored.

For far too long, black Americans have been sheep-like in our dedication to the Democratic party, opting to support all but its most bigoted candidates over any Republican opposition.

This blind allegiance has won blacks the label as the Democrats's "most loyal constituency," but no political victories of comparable worth.

Of this nation's 26 Democratic governors there is not a single black. And none of the 54 Democrats who serve in the U.S. Senate is black, in fact the three blacks who have served in the Senate—two during Reconstruction and one this century—have all been Republicans.

More important, the Democrats have never nominated a member of its "most loyal constituency" for either of these two major offices.

The political aspirations of black Democrats have been capped off at the level of City Hall and the U.S. House of Representatives — election to which, with few exceptions, comes in political districts dominated by blacks.

In other words black voter support of the Democratic party has resulted only in that which we have been capable of doing for ourselves, our unflinching party loyalty notwithstanding.

To say that we have been taken for granted by party officials is a gross understatement. To explain why we have clung so long to the political skirts of Democrats would require painful self analysis.

What is becoming clear however to a growing number of blacks is that we need to lift our self interests above those of the Democratic party.

More than a decade ago actor Ossie Davis addressed a meeting of the Congressional Black Caucus and offered its members this admonition:

"We have no permanent friends. We have no permanent enemies. We just have permanent interests!"

It is a warning that has been lost upon millions of black voters who have checked little more than a candidate's party affiliation before casting their ballots on Election Day.

This is not a call for blacks to leave the Democratic fold en masse for the still questionable embrace of the Republicans. The party of Abraham Lincoln we must always remember is also the party of Ronald Reagan.

No political strategy that simply involves a decision to vote as indiscriminately for Republicans as we have voted for Democrats can serve our best interests. What he must do is shed the largely unproductive label that our support of Democratic candidates has brought us.

Blacks voters have got to begin to make intelligent decisions about political candidates that go beyond party considerations.

We must be open to the possibility that a George Bush may offer us greater rewards for our vote than a Michael Dukakis.

This year, two blacks will compete for U.S. Senate seats in November's general election, one in Maryland and the other in Virginia. Both men are running on the Republican ticket.

Two years ago Michigan Republicans nominated Bill Lucas, a black county executive, as their gubernatorial candidate.

Though unsuccessful, his campaign demonstrated that the GOP has a greater willingness than do Democrats to offer blacks for major political office.

There is no sorrier example of the Democrats's abuse of their black constituency than the treatment Jesse Jackson has received in this year's presidential campaign.

The black Baptist preacher finished first or second in 46 of the Democratic primaries and caucuses. He won nearly 7 million votes.

His massive voter registration efforts in the past are credited with electing a Democratic majority to the Senate in 1986. And he more than any other person will be called upon to get out the Democratic vote in November's presidential election.

Yet for all this, Jackson was not even afforded a timely telephone notification from Michael Dukakis of his selection of Texas Sen. Lloyd Bentsen as his vice presidential running mate—a position that Jackson had courted.

For strategists in the Dukakis campaign the "Jackson factor" was of little real consequence in picking a running mate for the Massachusetts governor. More important to them are their efforts to pull less committed white southern voters back into the party fold, a worry that gave birth to the Dukakis-Bentsen ticket.

Given all of this, black voters must now decide the true value of being the Democratic party's "most loyal constituency."

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

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COMMENTARY & OPINIONS

Kweisi Mfume
U.S. Congressman

In pursuit of fair housing

We pursue the "American Dream" in a variety of ways, but our goals are the same. We all want adequate health care and nutrition for ourselves and our families. We want our children to have access to the best possible education that the school systems can provide. And we want—and demand—equal access to housing.

The House of Representatives recently moved the nation one step closer to achieving that equality by passing the Fair Housing Amendments of 1988. The vote was 376 to 23.

These amendments would make sweeping changes in the Fair Housing Act of 1968. Approved by Congress a few days after Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination, the 1968 law became a focal point of President Johnson's Great Society programs.

The results of the federal government's inability to protect citizens against discrimination in housing have been horrendous. A recent HUD survey revealed that two million instances of housing discrimination occur every year.

Minorities in metropolitan areas stand a 48 percent chance of discrimination when seeking to buy homes, and a 72 percent chance when seeking to rent. In addition, 25 percent of rental housing is unavailable to families with children.

The fair housing amendments are intended to pour concrete into the holes of the 1968 law. This long overdue measure—which is supported by realtors and civil rights groups—would give HUD the right to directly enforce the Fair Housing Act.

HUD would be authorized to sue violators of the law on behalf of victims of discrimination.

If conciliation between the parties in a case fails, HUD would file charges on behalf of the victim in cases where the agency believes that discrimination occurred.

HUD would then pursue the matter on behalf of the aggrieved party before a jury or an administrative law judge.

Administrative law judges would be empowered to levy civil fines on violators ranging from $10,000 for first-time offenses to $50,000 for three offenses within a seven year period.

In addition to strengthening the enforcement of protections, H.R. 1158 also broadens the range of groups who are covered by anti-discrimination safeguards.

While an amendment to the Fair Housing Act to prohibit discrimination on the basis of gender was approved in 1974, handicapped citizens are still without the protections they need and deserve.

H.R. 1158 would rectify this omission by prohibiting housing discrimination against the handicapped. In addition, most new multifamily housing would have to meet minimal standards to allow access and use by handicapped persons.

It is already more difficult than it should be for parents to find affordable housing for their families; the added insult of discrimination is intolerable. H.R. 1158 would ease this burden by prohibiting discrimination against families with children under 18.

We should never abandon our individual conceptions of the "American Dream" and all that they might entail. Strengthening the Fair Housing Act through the passage of H.R. 1158 proves that the House of Representatives supports the pursuit of those dreams.

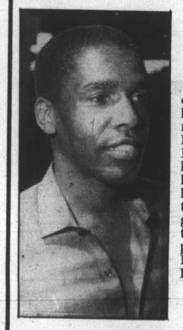
We insist even more, that through hard work and determination, the dreams we have for ourselves and our families will come true.

AFRO SURVEY

Do you think Jesse Jackson got a fair deal?

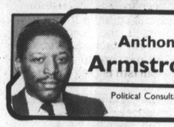
Harold Williams, 30, security guard and artist: The only thing that I don't agree with is the fact that everyone knew about Dukakis' decision before Jackson and he had to find out from a reporter. One thing about Jackson's personality is that he tends to turn a lot of people off with his arrogant attitude. I think he did get a fair shake.

Liz Barnes, 30, promotions director: Yes. He got as fair a deal as you get in politics. It's smart for Dukakis to include him in his cabinet because he has a lot of good ideas, especially concerning health and education.



Travis Winkey, fashion expert, I think he should have been considered a bit more. I don't think that the Democratic party or the Republican party would have voted for him because he is black, but he could have done a lot for the ticket. Although the media gave some reasons for who they selected, I would prefer to see Jackson. But I will support the Democratic ticket anyway.

Barbara Evans, 40 plus, self-employed: I feel that he got a fair deal. Dukakis knew that he could not win with Jackson, and he's out to win. Society is not ready for a black president or vice-president.



Anthony Armstrong
Political Consultant

If I remember correctly, Martin Luther King had numerous acts of civil disobedience. The then presidential candidate, John F. Kennedy, telephoned Mrs. King, in Atlanta, to inquire about MLK, and to find out if there was anything that he, JFK, could do to assist.

Word of the gesture got out, and soon the revelation that Kennedy had called Mrs. King, concerned about her husband, became a national news story.

Not only did Kennedy show that he valued the life of one black man, through his action, he showed that he valued the lives (and votes) of all blacks. Whether just good politics, genuine concern, or both, he common courtesy shown by Kennedy went a long way toward cementing the black vote for him.

Blacks went to the polls in record numbers, and no one could suggest that it was anything but the huge turnout of black voters that got JFK elected President of The United States.

That was 1960. In retrospect it seems so much longer ago. Back then blacks were America's favorite minority; and yes, back then black votes could insure victory in a race for president.

This is 1988, and there are no more gestures of concern, blacks aren't America's favorite minority anymore, and the presidency can be won without large numbers of black votes.

Reagan proved as much in 1980 and again in 1984. Conversely, Walter Mondale lost the 1984 race after having received substantially all the black votes cast. Yet, even had twice the number of black votes been cast for Mondale, he would still not have won.

The hard truth is that blacks can no longer decide who will be president, except in the closest possible contest like the one we had in 1960. It was Camelot back then; now it's little more than baloney and cheese at the home of the nominee.

Black voters will have a tough time adjusting to the new reality of our reduced weight in presidential politics. While we ponder our role the democratic nominee enters the real campaign thumbing his nose not just at Jesse Jackson, but through Jesse Jackson, at all black voters.

In the coldly calculating manner of a Harvard trained MBA (Dukakis is, in fact, a Harvard trained lawyer), Michael Dukakis has determined that he can be president with or without the votes of blacks.

The Dukakis camp doesn't even see it as a winning strategy to appear to be working too hard to court any black votes.

The Dukakis strategy speaks loudly to what the man, and the men around him, think of us; and, perhaps, most telling, what they think we think of ourselves.

Baloney and cheese

I recall similar situations here in Baltimore, when a certain white politician wanted to give the impression of being sensitive to issues that effected black voters.

She would invite a few select blacks to her Bolton Hill home; and, invariably, the refreshments would be baloney and cheese. She would placate her black guests; and after a couple of hours, or so, would hustle them out.

She had usually succeeded in what she wanted not through negotiation and compromise, but through the very act of having the blacks in her home.

She knew for most of them, just being invited would be enough to win their support. Thus, in return for just a feeling this politician got what she wanted - and this is a district that is 70 percent black.

Nationally, Dukakis used much the same ploy, inviting Jackson to his home during the 4th of July weekend. I'm not suggesting that Jackson was overly enamored by the invitation to the Dukakis' Brookline home; but for still too many of us such an invitation is all we need as mental proof that we're taken seriously.

After all, for many blacks an invitation to the home of a white person is proof positive that we're something very special. For too many of us, still, that's all we think we need to know.

Black voters will now be expected to forget the slights and the condescension shown to all through Jesse Jackson, and vote for the democratic ticket. It's as if we don't vote for the democratic ticket that somehow we'll be un-American.

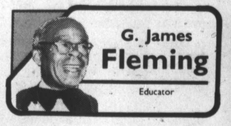
If Dukakis should lose in November someone will want to say that he lost because we blacks didn't vote for him, or didn't vote in large enough numbers to top the votes received by Bush.

We're expected to be loyal democrats. To not be so is tantamount to being an ingrate. Ingrate to whom? I image republicans were were saying the same thing back around the time of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, when blacks were preparing to leave the party of Abe Lincoln, the great emancipator.

Yet, isn't politics the game of "what have you done for me lately"? Black voters have no need to feel guilty about wanting to be viewed as more than just one big collective political assumption.

People should vote as they see fit, and past history shouldn't already set the 88 vote in cement.

Once something becomes completely predictable it ceases to create much energy toward having it. The votes of black people fall into this category. Perhaps, then, if Dukakis thought he had some work to do to earn our votes those efforts would include more than an invitation to this house. After all, such invitations usually only involve baloney and cheese.



G. James Fleming
Educator

Best wishes as Dems meet

Regardless of party affiliation, all Americans should be wishing that the Democratic National Convention, to begin Monday in Atlanta, will be a success — dynamic without being vitriolic, argumentative without being uncompromising, political without being suicidal.

For the welfare of the nation; for the long run, rather than the short run; an eventual meeting of minds, a closing of ranks, a magnanimous give and take, and a recognition of the promise of a "Wait until next time" attitude are among the best wishes that we can extend.

Whichever way our political loyalties go, it must be remembered that the next president of the United States will emerge from one of these two conventions, from either the Democratic or the Republican Party.

All citizens — black, white and all others — should also be in exultation that, in this country, now more than ever, there is a vigorous two-party system, with more opportunity than ever open to all.

The nomination of Alan Keyes as the Republican candidate for the U.S. Senate from Maryland, is the latest sign of how fluid the political system is. What is happening in the South, so far as blacks rising in politics, is another even more vivid example.

• • •

The most outstanding and invigorating happening, however, is the almost miraculous upward mobility of the Rev. Jesse Jackson, to the place where he is the runner-up in the Democratic race for the president, by vote of all Americans; where he will be given prime-time treatment by the program makers; and where he will have a voice as to who will be the nominee for vice-president.

Jesse Jackson can "make or break" the Democratic convention. Or, more specifically, Jackson's supporters can contribute to a closing of ranks or they may even desert their leader and insist — in more ways than words — that their hero and patron saint be given more recognition, status and office than Gov. Dukakis believes he can, politically, give.

Jackson has promised that he, personally, will offer no "confrontation" at the convention, which can be interpreted to mean that he will abide by the majority vote of the body, whether he is voted down or whether he wins. The most he has said against the platform, as presently drafted, is that it is "bland."

On the other hand, he and Mrs. Jackson spent the Independence Day weekend as the house guests of Gov. and Mrs. Dukakis, enjoying New England hospitality and appearing publicly at a Boston Pops concert.

That scarcely looks like the makings of a personal vendetta in Atlanta.

From Jackson's past and all he has said during the campaign, he intends to work to strengthen and expand the Democratic Party, just as he did notably in 1984 and 1986, when he continued significantly to give the Democrats the majorities they have in the Senate and House of Representatives.

In a realistic sense, in addition, Jesse Jackson has no place else to go, politically speaking. He is at home only in the Democratic Party. If he should be the instigator of the kind of rough-and-tumble convention as in Chicago in 1976, he will be done for, in having influence and voice in the councils of the Democratic Party.

He must go into the convention, however, with his maximum strength, representing more than himself but a coalition constituency of substantial numbers. That is the best strategy, the best politics.