EDITORIALS

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THE VOICE OF BLACK AMERICA SINCE 1892

Jackson snub hurts Dems

The hoopla and hurrah has started in Atlanta where the Democratic Party will go through the motions of choosing a presidential candidate which has already been decided upon.

The events surrounding the choice of vice-presidential candidate Bentsen, has had the effect of driving a wedge into the solid ranks of the party, albeit minute at this point, but nevertheless vulnerable to escalation.

The black community, whether they are Jackson supporters or not, feels outraged. Many knew that the majority of white voters would not support a black on the ticket—painful though it was, it had to be acknowledged.

Thus, the ignoring of Jackson's bid for the vice-presidential nomination while unpalatable to some degree, was a bitter pill, but must be swallowed. Many accepted that.

But the ignoring of Jackson, coupled with the insulting manner in which the notification came, without even giving the Jackson forces the courtesy of a personal announcement, prior to the public one, was the cause of beginning reassessment of loyalties.

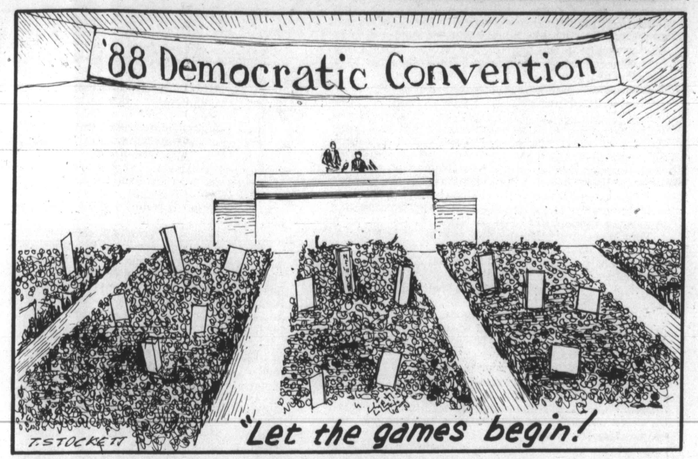
It has been likened to the case of the Baltimore Colts football team, which went to Indianapolis. Although it was known that the Colts would be leaving, the manner in which Irsay moved the team in a midnight, sneaky maneuver left a bad taste, which still lingers.

As expected, the republicans seized on this, purporting to show that the democrats were merely using the black voter, and had little respect for them.

Party unity is the underlying theme of the Democratic Convention, and it is expected that when the banner-waving and posturing reaches its apex on the final day of the Atlanta doings, the party faithful will be publicly avowing enternal allegiance to the party.

But, all that glitters is not gold. A seed has been sown which has started a dissenting train of thought in black democrats. Although minute, it is still there. The Dukakis forces would do well to pay more than lip service to voice of the black voter.

Despite the feeling in some quarters that "they'll pout for a while, then fall in line," the answer might be found in the "Porgy and Bess" song, "it ain't necessarily so."



CONGRESSMAN AUGUSTUS HAWKINS:
New bill strengthens civil rights enforcement

Over the last eight years the Reagan Administration has diluted the federal role in civil rights enforcement. They have done this in a number of ways: appointments in key civil rights agencies of persons with doubtful credentials and opposed laws they were hired to carry out; lack of funding to monitor and enforce affirmative action compliance; and stacking the Supreme Court with conservative minded judges.

I have recently introduced legislation to strengthen anti-job discrimination requirements for federal contractors and create an $850 million per year education improvement fund to help train the nation's workforce for the next century.

The bill is entitled "The Federal Contract Compliance and Workforce Development Act of 1988" (H.R. 4903). Brifely, the bill's main provisions are:

** Codification of Executive Order 11246.

Executive Order 11246 was issued by President Johnson in 1965 to prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex or national origin in Federal contractor workplaces and requires contractors to use affirmative action.

The new bill roots firmly in law, this Executive Order. Over the last 8 years the Reagan Administration has monkeyed around with this Executive Order 11246 and has danced around its provisions. By making it law, the Order will be less subject to wrong interpretations of its true intent and mandate.

The bill also establishes a new Office of Assistant Secretary for Federal Contract Compliance in the Department of Labor, creates a new simplified affirmative action reporting form and eases workers' efforts to file job discrimination suits.

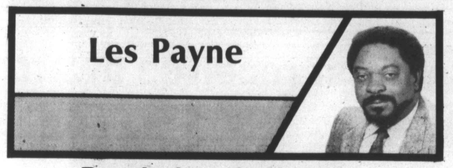
** Education Improvement Fund; H.R. 4903 creates an education improvement fund financed by assessing all Federal contractors at one half of one percent of the contract amount.

The fund would provide scholarships for higher education students to pursue careers in which minorities and women are underrepresented, such as engineering, chemistry, etc.

The fund would also provide grants for the elementary and secondary level for school districts to enhance teacher training and student development.

We already know that some U.S. companies are at a competitive disadvantaged because they must use graduate students to do calculations usually done by high schoolers in Japan and other countries.

It is simply in our national interest to train students now for future jobs so we can achieve a leadership position in the global marketplace. Corporations will benefit in the long run from their contribution to the fund since they will have a much larger pool of trained workers to choose from.



Les Payne
Pondering the blues

The death of Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson gives pause to ponder the future of the blues, that neglected idiom so vibrantly a part of the American experience.

The scratchy phonographs of my Alabama childhood were alive on Sundays with gospel music and the other six days with the blues. I could not avoid hearing the blues, but I never bothered to listen. It didn't matter, I discovered as a young man, when the blues came back to me.

The blues took a measure of our lives and our loves, and gave them good weight. It also gave them hope. I didn't realize this until I saw how the misnamed blues got my Aunt Lizzie through the day with her head held high.

Painter Romare Bearden was never more animated than when he instructed the unknowing about the real message of the music. The best blues, said Bearden, a close best friend of Bessie Smith, deal with life's complexities with the subtlety of a Bach fugue.

With the old blues artists dying out, the music these days is being sustained, in part, by apprentices who know nothing of the lives behind the songs they sing and play. It is this thin line that separates the performance from the artist.

The greatest blues artist of my childhood was Muddy Waters, whose death five years ago stirred me to a tribute.

Waters was born McKinley Morganfield, a rather august-sounding moniker more befitting those performers attempting years later to make his holy fire their own than the artist born on a plantation in Rolling Fork, Miss. Young Morganfield would emerge from the nearby creek, caked with Mississippi mud and, in due course, a new name.

"My first instrument, which a lady gave me and some kids soon broke for me, was an old squeeze—box accordion," Waters told **Rolling Stone.** "The next thing I had in my hands was a jew's-harp. When I was about 7, I started playing the harmonica, and when I got 13, I was playing it very good.

I should never have given it up! But when I was 17, I switched to the guitar and put the harp down. I sold our last horse for the first guitar I had. Made $15 for him, gave my grandmother $7.50, I kept $7.50 and paid about $2.50 for my guitar."

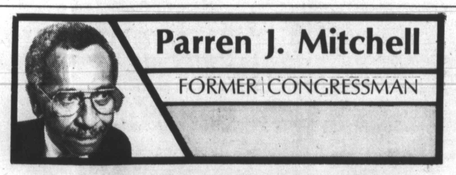
Along the way, Waters had been playing at barbecues and fish fries for walking-around money. His early muic schooling had him wailing the delta blues, staples like "Dark Road Blues," "Catfish Blues" and "Walking Blues." His later influences were gaints such as Willie Brown, Robert Johnson and Sun House — "The top man in my book," said Waters.

Growing up on Stovall Plantation, Muddy Waters, without any real promise of reward, prepared himself as an instrument for expressing the pain, the agony, the down-home sweet joy of growing up black in the delta — beneath the underdog.

Waters saw music as a lever, a weapon for gaining respect and lifting himself up out of his condition in Mississippi, where dirt farming was not a possibility but (ital) the (unital) possibility.

"I didn't like farming," Waters said. "I always expected my guitar could beat driving tractors, plowing mules, chopping cotton, drawing waters."

In liberating himself, Waters set free the pent-up spirit of a downcast people. When it came time to do the plantation owner's work, the young Waters rambled of to answer his true calling. "I rambled all the time," he said.



Parren J. Mitchell
FORMER CONGRESSMAN

U of M. Administration Bldg.

Dear Reader, perhaps you should read the last paragraph of this column first and then go back to the opening paragraph. However, I beg you to read the whole column, I am almost desperately trying to deliver a message.

On May 17, 1988, the Administration Building at the University of Maryland was named in honor of my late brother, Clarence Mitchell, Jr., who had served on the Board of the University. A handsome bronze plaque is affixed to the outside wall, and the dedication ceremony, held outside under a huge brightly colored canvas, was most impressive.

Many of the political luminaries of the past and present, were in attendance, as were some of the old stalwarts of the civil rights movement. I was working at my desk at home, when I came across the program from May 17th. I then decided to write this column about my own experience at the University of Maryland many years ago.

I do so because our young black women and men show an appalling ignorance about the black experience in America. So many of them don't know a single thing about the hundreds of black leaders at the state and local levels who bore untold hurt and sacrifice to move to create the climate that our young black women and men now enjoy. A climate that they take for granted; and still a climate made for them by the struggles of those blacks who preceded them.

The University of Maryland at College Park was ordered to admit me to its Graduate School. The College Park Campus had been rigidly segregated prior to that, and one official on the campus was reported to have said, "No black foot will ever crush the sacred grass at the College Park Campus."

Unlike so many students of today, I did not have access to an automobile, therefore, I had to take the Greyhound Bus from Baltimore to College Park. The bus stopped on Route One at College Park, and I had to climb the hill up to the area where my classes; the library; and other key buildings were located.

The first time I climbed the hill, dozens of students passed me, but no one, no one spoke to me. Not a single person said "Good morning;" or "Hi", or "Hello, how are you doing?" For me, it was a long, lonely ascent up the hill.

As my visits to College Park increased, some good things happened and some bad things happened. The first time I went into the students dining hall; as I moved towards where the food was served, and as I passed each table where the students were eating, silence fell at each table.

The eerie result was that portion of the dining hall was absolutely silent on the side that marked my entrance and my path to the food service area.

But then there was Dr. Hutchinson, a professor of anthropology, who invited me to his home to have dinner with his family. It was a warm friendly atmosphere marked by the antics of his "bad" little seven-year-old son, who after being sent to bed, came back down the staircase in his pajamas and proceeded to "moon" his parents and me.

Peter Lejins, who had established an international reputation as a criminologist, also befriended me, but was rigorous in his demands for an excellent performance.

In an economics course, the professor, whose name I do not recall, used the word "N.....ly." This evoked loud laughter from a goodly number of the students who thought he was using a racial epithet directed at me.

In a thousand ways during the next two years, I was made to feel unwanted and in a dozen ways, I was made to feel accepted. I got my Master's Degree from the University of Maryland at College Park. I was not a hero, nor were the scores of others who broke down racial barriers.

I must confess that I am puzzled and disappointed by the laid-back; blase; detached attitude of some of the post civil rights struggle generation, who don't even know the names of a half dozen local black leaders who fought overt racism, or, if they know a name or two, treat those names with disdain as being relics of the past.

One general in the civil rights struggle, but still proud of his sense of blackness remarked to me recently, "P.J., as we struggled throughout the years, did you believe that we would live to see the day when blacks repudiate their blackness, when they don't want to know our history, when," and he shook his head sadly, "they don't even remember my name."

I could not answer him, but I made a commitment to myself that I would use many future columns to tell "the story," and perhaps in its telling and re-telling, we shall become a stronger race of people, with increased pride in ourselves.

MEMBER NNPA UPI

COMMENTARY & OPINIONS

Ethel Payne
BEHIND THE SCENES

Diamonds on the Bay

SAN FRANCISCO—The cab driver shook his head in wonderment as he saw a covey of red and white clad women walking down the intersection of Post and Powell where the cable cars run. "I'll be seeing red and white for the next three weeks," he exclaimed.

With 8,000 delegates to the 39th Biennial Convention of the nation's largest black women's professional organization, it was understandable that this city of 800,000 residents should be awe-stricken.

Delta Sigma Theta was observing it 75th Diamond Jubilee celebration, and so it was fitting that celebrities by the dozen should come to pay their respects to "all those women!"

San Francisco, like many other big metropolis, is experiencing severe fiscal problems, so the presence of so large a congregation was sweet music to the treasury.

But there was an overriding interest in what would be happening on the political scene and the eyes were on Atlanta. Jesse Jackson paid a visit on Saturday and got the adulation of the delegates.

Andrew Young, Mayor of Atlanta, addressed the gathering on Tuesday, giving a modified approval of the announced selection of Sen. Lloyd Bentsen of Texas as the vice presidential nominee to run with Governor Michael Dukakis. He got polite, but skeptical applause.

But when the news came through later in the day of how Jesse Jackson got the news of the Bentsen pick second-hand from a news reporter who met him at a Washington airport, 8,000 angry women got all fired up with the red of their "coat of arms" turning to a blazing crimson.

Within hours, they gathered up 1,500 petitions, with a resolution which read:

"We, the members of DELTA SIGMA THETA, Inc., a public service organization of 125,000 college-trained black women are intensely interested in the convention proceedings. We support the platform of the Rev. Jesse Jackson and respect him greatly.

"We expect the Democratic National Convention officers, leaders of the party and delegates to accord him that same respect. "The telegram was addressed to Paul Kirk, Chairman of the Democratic National Committee and Governor Dukakis care of the Hyatt Regency Hotel, the Dukakis headquarters in Atlanta.

That expression of indignation over the callous way that Dukakis treated Jackson reverberated across the country. "Outrageous, insulting, disrespectful, arrogant," these were just some of the reactions.

All the glory of the primary trail that so energized millions of Americans into an emotional high was in tatters as the realization set in that once more white supremacy had triumphed over the hope that bigotry had dried up like a raisin in the sun.

It reminded me of a story that Louis Martin, a former political power-house in the days of Lyndon Johnson and Jack Kennedy used to tell about his native Savannah, GA.

He said there was a well-known character who used to frequent the lunch counter in the drug store in the colored section of the city. When he would go up to greet him, the gentleman would crook a finger and say, "Come here, son, 'Got something to tell you. White folks still in charge."

Well, white folks still want to be in charge of colored folks, treating them with the same plantation ideas of pre-civil war days, even though some old barriers have come down. When it comes to power, the unwritten rule is that this is sacred territory, for white males only.

The difference is that there is a growing feeling among blacks that frustrated as they may be with the arrogance of disdain, as Maxine Waters, the articulate assemblywoman from California says, "we're tired of beating on the door."

Waters gave a classic performance on the Wednesday "Nightline" show hosted by Ted Koppel. She appeared with former Governor John Connally of Texas, once among the almighty, but now a pathetic relic of the past, who jumped traces from the Democrats to the more conservative Republican side, only to be hoisted on his own petard.

He lost his vast fortune and had to go through the painful agony of watching all his property auctioned off to satisfy his creditors.

Still, Connally has enough of the arrogance left to try and teach an uppity black woman to stay in her place. He wasn't prepared to be demolished by her rapier-like wit.

Waters wasted no time in annihilating him, but went straight to the point. Dukakis was rude, insensitive and careless. Jesse Jackson's constituency was not prepared to accept this. They would strategize and take decisive action at the convention and they would not be placated.

To which Connally rebuked her, or attempted to, by saying that blacks would get over it; this was only temporary. Waters shot back with a "Then you don't understand. It's a new day."

Connally, "don't overplay your hand . . . I've been in politics for 40 years."

Waters, "Maybe you've been in politics 40 years too long, Governor, and you've lost touch with reality. "It's a new day."

Earlier in Delta proceedings, Andy Young said in his remarks, that it is in the interest of blacks to support Michael Dukakis in his choice of Senator Lloyd Bentsen as his running mate. "This election is going to be decided by the sleeping Americans who will wake up in October and decide that it is time to make a choice.

"The ticket has to appeal to that strata of voters . . . The most important thing is for us to win in November. I think Bentsen on the ticket gives us a chance in Texas and beating George Bush in Texas can mean the election."

But this kind of reasoning means that maybe Andy Young is also out of touch with reality. He has the demeanor and disposition of his great friend and mentor, Martin Luther King, Jr.; but even the late civil rights leader may not have accepted the effrontery of Dukakis in calling Jesse Jackson after the fact and gratuitously asking, "have you heard yet?"

Walter E. Williams
MINORITY VIEWPOINT

It ain't that true

Gorbachev having done his job of convincing us "there can be peace in our time," let's look at some other untruths.

Government condemns a property for public use, like a road, and offers to pay us its "fair market value." Is the fair market value just compensation?

The average lawyer, trained in legalese gobbledygook, will ask such questions as: What the property cost you? Or what is the selling prices of comparable properties?

Then, he'll announce, "The fair market price for your house is $80,000."

The overlooked question is: If the house was worth the market price to you, why would you still own it? I don't sell my house at the market price because it's worth more to me now than the money. It's the same with everything.

The "Blue Book" says your car's market value is $6,000. Why don't you sell it? Obviously, you keep it because the use of the car is worth more than the market price.

So how might we tell what something is worth to a person? One way is to offer higher and higher prices and see what price the individual voluntarily accepts.

I can just see some lawyer or politician saying, "Williams, if we had to depend on voluntary sale of property, we'd have a heck of time assembling land for public use."

What about the conservationists' and environmentalists' tales about this or that species being in danger or extinction. To add to our worries they tell us we're running out of fossil fuel.

You can get all shook up about Chicken Little stories but I'm going to spend my worry time worrying about Gorbachev's designs.

Predictions that we're running out of fossil fuel, like oil and gas, are suspicious too. In the 1920s some oil experts said we had only 10 years of proven oil reserves left. But a funny thing always happens: As the price of oil rises somebody always proves that there is more oil.

Similar predictions were made about coal. But at today's usage, there's enough coal for 400 years. I'm not saying fossil fuel is limitless, but we have a heck of a lot of more than the experts say we have.

Remember the October, 1987 stock market crash, in some circles called the 25 percent readjustment? What I remember most are the congressional hearings on programmed trading, and political pronouncements on how to make the market more orderly.

Congressmen have more nerve than a brass monkey Here we have men who can't balance a budget, who load future generations with debt, create unprecedented deficits, and don't even know how billions of our tax dollars are being spent, telling Wall Streeters how to keep financial order.

If that's not blind egoism or arrogance, I don't know what is.

Congress doesn't have a monopoly on hypocrisy and arrogance. The Reagan administration ran on the platform of reducing federalism. Now they want to fight the drug war by using federal power to do things like canceling driving licenses of drug offenders.

Would someone in the White House tell me how regulating state motor vehicle driving laws, like state speed limits, is a constitutionally permissible federal function?

It ain't true.

Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.
CIVIL RIGHTS JOURNAL

The Iranian tragedy

The senseless destruction of an Iranian passenger airliner off the coast of Iran by the United States Navy is another tragic example of the failure of U.S. foreign policy in the Persian Gulf.

President Reagan continues to assert that "the only U.S. interest in the Persian Gulf is peace." Yet, the increased military presence of the United States in this region has only added fuel to the fire of the war between Iran and Iraq.

The killing of 290 innocent civilians, many of them children, who were passengers on the Iranian aircraft does not appear to be enough to get the Reagan Administration to change its posture and involvement in this war. A nation cannot keep the peace by making war.

We remember in 1983 when the Soviet Union mistakenly shot down a Korean passenger airliner killing 269 civilians. President Reagan was quick to describe the Soviet Union as "an evil empire."

Referring to the Korean airline tragedy, Reagan stated "What can we think of a regime that so badly trumpets its vision to peace and global disarmaments and yet so callously and quickly commits a terrorist act to sacrifice the lives of innocent human beings?".

If the Reagan presidency has a distinguishing characteristic it is its ability to point a blistering critical finger everywhere except at the White House.

The first sentence of Reagan's statement concerning the Iranian airliner was "I am saddened to report that it appears that in a proper defensive action the USS Vincennes this morning in the Persian Gulf, an Iranian airliner was shot down over the Strait of Harmuz."

The key phrase "a proper defensive action" exposes the President's trigger-happy, shoot-first and think-later foreign policy.

Jesse Jackson was correct when he stated that this unnecessary tragedy was an example of "guided missiles and a misguided foreign policy."

A staff report of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee recently warned: "There is mounting evidence that shipping in the Gulf is less safe now than before the U.S. naval buildup began and chances for mishaps are high."

Senator Brock Adams of Washington told the **New York Times** that "We have no strategy in the Gulf... what we have is a prescription for disaster."

The quest for peace anywhere in the world must be done within the context of securing justice and freedom. Rather than making the priority just to get oil out of the Persian Gulf at all costs, the priority of the United States should be to insure that justice and self-determination be guaranteed to all the nations of the region.

The F-14 fighter jet that the U.S. Navy says it thought was attacking the USS Vincennes is an airplane that the Iranian Airforce originally got from the United States. If the United States continues to spread weapons of mass destruction all over the world, then sooner or later, some of these weapons will surely be used against the United States.

Every single human life is precious. The actions of the United States in the wake of the Iranian airline crisis exhibit more concern for protecting the image and the position of the U.S. military's presence in the Persian Gulf than taking appropriate measures to prevent future tragedies from occurring.

If peace is to come to this region the United States must go beyond admitting to "an understandable mistake."

All U.S. military presence should be withdrawn from this region except those forces that would be a part of a United Nations peace keeping force. Only then will peace have a chance in the Persian Gulf.

COMMENTARY

Reverse of rule sought denying medal to blacks

By Chester A. Higgins, Sr.
NNPA News Editor

WASHINGTON, D.C. — One hundred and three Congressmen have joined Rep. Joe DioGuardi (D., N.Y.,) in pressuring Defense Secretary Frank Carlucci to reverse a lower level Pentagon decision refusing to grant the Congressional Medal of Honor to any Black Americans from either the First or Second World Wars.

The Congressmen sent a joint letter to Carlucci asking him to serve justice and reverse decisions by lower ranking officials in both the Navy and Army. Dio Guardi and Rep. Mickey Leland (D., TX) are leading the congressional effort to grant Black World War I hero Sgt. Henry Johnson, of the Army, and Black World War II hero Dorie Miller, of the Navy, the nation's highest military honor.

Although more than one and a half million blacks fought in those wars not one has been awarded the Medal of Honor. In 1987, Dio Guardio and Leland introduced legislation to correct the injustice by opening the statue of limitations for the two specific servicemen. Both the Army and the Navy announced in May that they would oppose the legislation.

Both black servicemen are outstanding candidates for the honor. While on sentry duty in May, 1918, Sgt. Johnson and another soldier were attacked by a German patrol of 12 soldiers. Sgt. Johnson's comrade was wounded and captured in the attack.

Despite being wounded by gunshot and a grenade, Johnson, a native of Albany, N.Y., repelled the attack by rifle fire and hand-to-hand combat with a knife.

He was credited with killing four enemy soldiers, rescuing his wounded comrade and also capturing a stockpile of enemy weapons, despite his wounds. For his bravery he was the first American to receive France's highest honor— the Croix de Guerre. He died in 1930. There are no known surviving relatives.

Miller, a native of Waco, TX, was serving aboard the U.S.S. West Virginia in Pearl Harbor when, on December 7, 1941, his warship came under attack by the Japanese Air Force. After his captain was mortally wounded on the bridge, Miller risked his life to drag him to a place of greater safety.

He returned to the deck to man a machine gun, shot down two attacking Japanese aircraft, and did not abandon his post until ordered to do so later in the battle.

Miller's actions are all the more remarkable because of the fact that he was a mess steward, the only duty available to blacks in the rigidly segregated Navy at that time. He had no training in how to fire machine guns. He was later presented the Navy's second highest honor, the Navy Cross. A warship, the U.S.S. Miller was also named in his honor in 1971. It is currently docked in Newport, R.I.

Miller was killed in 1943 in line of duty aboard the U.S.S. Liscombe Bay, along with a crew of 700 following a Japanese torpedo attack. He is survived by his brother, Arthur Miller, of Waco, TX.

In his letter to Carlucci, Dio Guardio wrote: "It is time, Mr. Secretary, as a matter of fundamental justice, to change this oversight. Many medals have been awarded after the five-year limitations statue has expired; we need to correct this as soon as possible.