EDITORIALS

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THE VOICE OF BLACK AMERICA SINCE 1892

Nelson Mandela, inspiration

Nelson Mandela turned 70 last week. His birthdate was celebrated in Poolsmoor prison in Cape Town, South Africa. It was his 25th year in this prison, but his spirit and flame continues to be an inspiration to black South Africans.

His wife, Winnie Mandela, along with his daughter, Zindzi and granddaughter Zoleka were allowed a 40-minute visit with him in the prison last Saturday. Accompanying them was Robert Brown who will be handling the business affairs for the Mandela family.

The Mandela story is a mystery to many blacks in this country, who are ignorant of the background of this hero of the masses. As a member of the African National Congress, in 1944, he was active in the attempts to have the hated "pass" laws outlawed.

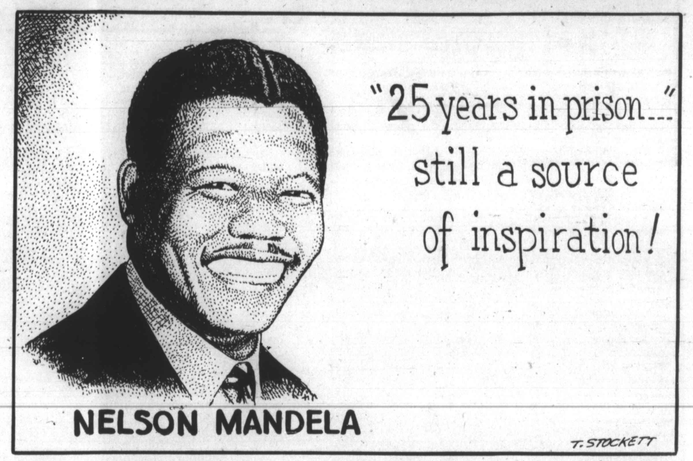
In 1952, he headed the "Defiance Campaign," from which over 8,000 were arrested. After becoming president of the ANC, he was barred from public meetings for over five years. Nothing daunted, he became the organizer behind the scenes in the struggle.

He was arrested again in 1962 and sentenced to five years imprisonment, three for incitement to strike, and two for illegal exit from the country.

It was while serving this term that he and seven others were charged with plotting violent revolution in what has become known as the Rivonia sabotage trial.

He is still considered a threat by the South African authorities, and despite pleas from around the world, remains imprisoned. His life story is an inspiration for those caught up in the struggle for human rights.

The name — Nelson Mandela — occupies a special niche in black history. Young people should be forced to learn his story.



Ruth Jenkins

SOB SISTER

July: Full of fantasy, festivity

July is the highlight month for America to parade patriotism by dynamic displays of fireworks and fervor. To honor heroes and to exalt idols.

Regrettably, it's not so easy to come by heroes and idols nowadays.

In this behavioural age of 'I-am-not-a-crook-until - and-unless-the - evidence-is-reincarnated.'

With misconduct revealed as running rampant. In political circles, in military, religious, sports, educational, entertainment, and civic and professional arenas. In federal, state and municipal offices; in many areas of public service and public trust.

One hesitates to ask a youngster anymore what he/she wants to be when he grows up. You breath a sigh of relief only if he chooses "cowboy" or "Indian." Cause no shocking scandal has rocked these categories—at least not lately.

When the founding fathers separated the colonies from British tyranny, they knew they had done good. So there followed more "separatism." Evidently intended to limit dissention, disruption, contention and corruption. And to provide platforms for protestors to choose up sides:

Separate church from state; President from Congress; Democrats from Republicans; the men from the boys; rabbits from magician's hats; fingerpaint from living room walls; unmatched socks from each other; stubborn shopping carts, computers, and the IRS from everybody. Oh yes, and fishbait from whistlebait.

And there's more. Today's solons are trying to separate women from credit cards; calories from our daily diet; music lovers from rock song lyrics, kiddies from X-rated telephone services; baseball managers from umpires; cigarette smokers from fingernail-biters; gamblers from two-minute boxing bouts; and a fool from his money.

Oh yes, and you from whatever looks better on the other side of your fence. Now if only someone could separate the leadership wheat from the chaff.

But let's not stray from the focus on what makes America great. Aside from the Christmas-in-July department store sales.

In "Remember - when?" days, Hometown, USA celebrated Independence Day in traditional style. With eloquent speeches, school bands, fraternal lodges, nurses' units, picnic goodies, talent contests, tugs of war, ball games, peanut scrambles, barbershop quartets, balloons, banners, flags and fireworks. Oh yes, and beat - the-heat hankies, soda pop, brief showers, ants and romantic boy-girl strolls.

Today's big city festivities have been updated and punched up. Like Philly's July 4, "Freedom Festival." Reflecting a "melting pot" society. With features great grandpop was not privvy to as an eager-eyed youth in Peter-Pan collar, straw hat and high-button shoes.

We have only two dissentions about the Independence Day observations, U.S. military units should not be permitted to participate in local parades.

Their precision performance, smart uniforms and erect bearing put the other marchers to shame. There must be something somewhere in the Constitution which prohibits our warriors from humiliating stouthearted but shuffle-footed fellow patriots — especially on such an auspicious occasion.

Our other discord pertains to that rousing rendition of "America, the Beautiful" by the marvelous Ray (bless his heart) Charles. We appreciate that this stirs strong stars-and-stripes sentiment across the nation.

But we beg to differ, not with the sentiment, but with the statement of this particular version.

Ray sings out that ". . . America, America, God (done) shed His grace on thee . . . And crowned thy good with brotherhood from sea to shining sea.

That may be the ideal, but not the idea of this chorus. Ray's interpretation gives the mistaken impression that God's "brotherhood" blessing has already been bestowed on beautiful America.

Let's separate the fact from the fantasy. There is no "ed" on the word "crown" in that sentence. Actually, the lyrics express a hope for America. The same "I Have A Dream" envisioned by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

The hope is ". . . America, America, (may) God shed His grace on thee . . . and (may He) crown thy good with brotherhood from sea to shining sea.

Les Payne

Jackson's medley of greatest hits

The rafters may still be rattling from Jesse Jackson's big speech which, like all too many sermons, had the virtue of lifting spirits but the vice of being untrue.

The virtue of the 51-minute recitation, which soothed the powerful more than it sated the powerless, has for many months rung from every suite and street corner. The rambling speech was a medley of Jackson's greatest hits, most sang better at other concerts, but embellished this historical moment with tricks borrowed from Caruso as well as the Fat Boys.

It took about 20 minutes for the good reverend to get his component parts going, but when he did, he made them coo and bellow, he made them twitter and wow.

As in 1984, Jackson had the impossible task of representing the "locked out" while reassuring those who locked them out. The latter, on both occasions, received the better blessing from the black presidential candidate. What whites recall with pleasure about Jackson's San Francisco speech, blacks remember with horror.

In his "Hymietown" apology, Jackson blamed it on the heavens with a phrase lifted from a gospel song: "God is not through with me yet." Whatever modifications remain to be done on Jackson, it is clear the Lord will not handle the work-order. Whites looked hopefully upon this contrite 1984 Jackson as mature; blacks considered him an embarrassment.

Playing to the powerbrokers this year, Jackson, in a bit of wishful thinking, declared that he and Gov. Michael Dukakis were on common ground. Amazingly, he also reasoned that despite quite different paths to these shores, the duo, and their African and Greek descendants, are politically co-existing now under the same fig tree.

"His foreparents came to America on immigrant ships," Jackson cooed. "My foreparents came to America on slave ships. But whatever the original ships, we are both in the same boat now."

Jackson's poetry leaped far ahead of the American reality.

As the son of Greek immigrant parents, Dukakis is the newly crowned presidential nominee of the Democratic Party with a clear shot at the Oval Office.

As the descendant of immigrants who arrived here in 1619, Jackson and his brethren with presidential aspirations are still barred from the White House because of the color of their skin.

Nowhere during this campaign season was Dukakis told that he could not become president because he was Greek. Everywhere Jackson drove his presidential caravan, he was told that, other qualities notwithstanding, his color was a hindrance.

Furthermore, Democratic Party leaders who embraced Dukakis despite his ancestry rejected Jackson because of his. This was tested most severely when Jackson shocked the world and himself by winning the Michigan primary.

Party leaders, led by Democratic Party Chairman Paul Kirk, felt compelled to signal the faithful, already organizing a "stop Jackson" movement, that despite his brilliant showing the civil rights leader would never be offered even the vice president slot.

All this, is not to minimize Jackson's remarkable achievement this year, but to consider the obstacles no Greek and every black presidential aspirant yet must face in this republic. These obstacles are not cleared by merely declaring in a party convention speech, as Jackson did, that they no longer exist.

Shortly after Jackson's speech here, veteran Jackson watcher Vernon Garrett, a Chicago columnist, observed that throughout his years of social agitation, Jackson has never really scared white power brokers.

Instead, the civil rights leader has mastered the art of confiscating the weapons from protesting blacks, brandishing himself — what Eldridge Cleaver used to call the "n....r rench" — and finally striking a personal deal often at the expense of those whose cause he co-opted.

The success of jackson's brand of "mau-mauing" is due to his keen sense of timing, his courage and his bold and knowing reach for stage center. When sitting across the bargaining table from the corporate baron, media mogul or presidential nominee, Jackson, despite, and perhaps because of, his magnetism, knows just how strongly to repel and when, finally, to attract.

It appears that in exchange for his personal inclusion in the Democratic party's activities at the highest; albeit non-elected, level, Jackson decided to mask somewhat the exclusion of blacks from the real levels of power: president, vice-president, party leader, etc.

In an analysis of how blacks deal with white power, Shelby Steele, in the current **Harper's** magazine, lays out two basic approaches. The "bargainer," he says, citing jazzman Louis Armstrong, "grants white society its innocence in exchange for entry into the mainstream."

Citing Miles Davis as the opposite type, Steele wrote that the "challenger," holds "that innocence hostage until his) demand for entry (or other concession) was met."

Jackson moves back and forth between the two positions, Steele wrote, making it difficult for whites to either reject or accept him. "Many whites see Jackson as a challenger by instinct and a bargainer by political ambition."

With his campaign speech, Jackson's personal political ambition once again got the best of him.

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John Jacob

TO BE EQUAL

One of the prime tasks of the next president will be to repair the safety net—the social programs that have been drilled full of holes over the past eight years.

Traditional wisdom says that the damage done the safety net program is the fault of Washington alone. That's largely true, but the states bear a heavy responsibility, too.

Means-tested programs are largely financed by the federal government, but run by the states. The most familiar safety net program, Aid To Families with Dependent Children, is one such program.

According to a recent analysis of safety net programs by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, in 32 states the maximum cash benefit under AFDC for a family of three without other income is less than half of the poverty line. Obviously such benefit levels are nowhere near what is necessary to support a minimal standard of life.

Unemployment insurance is another key safety net program that's declined. A decade ago over forty percent of the jobless received state unemployment benefits. Last year, just over thirty percent did.

MEMBER NNPA UPI

COMMENTARY & OPINIONS

Ethel Payne

BEHIND THE SCENES

Manhattan and beyond

NEW YORK, NEW YORK — It's the home of the Statue of Liberty and Mayor Ed Koch. In between those two absolutes (the ultimate symbol of freedom) and (the bizarre) lie five boroughs, Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, the Bronx and Staten Island, and more millions in population than several European countries.

The amalgam of ethnicity, cultures and socio-economic strata is even more complex. There are more blacks of West Indian extraction than any other city in the nation. Jews who dominate the political and financial structure include Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, Sephardic, Hasidic, you name them. There are Greeks, Armenians, Italians, Irish, Poles, Germans, Chinese, Koreans, and ah yes, the Japanese.

The Essex House on Central Park South is or was for years, the symbol of old New York money and the aristocrats. It is still prestigious (the prices tell you that) but there are profound changes. Check into a room and the first things that catch your eye are the exquisite, authentic Japanese prints on the wall. Open the desk drawer and there along besides the standard Gideon bible is "The Teaching of Buddha."

Cross to the bureau and there among the spread of information about hotel services available is a slick color brochure entitled "The JAL Collection of Fine Hotels." It is a quick reference guide for the 1988 and it is a display of Nikko Hotels International.

JAL (Japan Air Lines) is featured and it tells you that "every 3.3 minutes, a Japan Air Lines flight is taking off or landing at one of our 60 destinations in 34 countries." Inside are photos of luxury hotels in the Americas, Europe, and the Middle East, Asia and Japan, including cities in Canada, Edmonton, Alberta; Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto and Vancouver. Then there are these U.S. sites, Anchorage, Alaska, Atlanta, the Ritz Carolton, two locations; Austin and Dallas, Texas; Boston, two in Chicago, two in Houston, Texas; Los Angeles and Newport Beach, California; In Manhattan, the Pierre and the Essex; San Antonio, Texas, Santa Barbara, California, San Francisco, Seattle and Washington, D.C.

To say nothing of Hawaii and Mexico, Oceania and Pacific, it is mind boggling. Sit in the lobby of the Essex and you watch wave after wave of Japanese tourists checking in and out while the money goes back into the Japanese economy. The language is foreign but the money is U.S. The yen is safe and secure. The visible hotel management is white Anglo-Saxon, male and female as are the models in the brochure. There are a few black waiters in the restaurant and there is a mixture of Latino and black maids and security personnel. Sit long enough and you will notice the quiet presence of very business-like Japanese, and you know that this is where the bucks really stop.

It has been 40 years since I landed in Tokyo, Japan as a newly-arrived Army Service Club Hostess under the Occupation of the defeated country. The occasion of my arrival was auspicious - the worst earthquake in 36 years hit the island of Honshu. That was my introduction to a subdued populace, a proud people who endured humiliation with stoicism while they began the long journey back to dignity and now economic superiority. Bricks out of mud, lemonade from lemons, soap from ashes, all of these ways to overcome adversity, the Japanese have used judicious which leads me to wonder when in the world are we as black people going to stop tap-dancing for "The Man" and begin to recycle all those black dollars going into the white and Asian pockets back into our own shattered economy? First, a reminder to the Congressional Black Caucus for its upcoming annual celebration week in Washington when millions of dollars will be generated during the frenzy of socializing and pontificating. Second, try a little listening to Minister Louis Farrakhan and his teachings to the Nation of Islam. If you don't like the whole menu, you don't have to swallow it, but there is something very digestible in what is being served up as a means of economic empowerment. I hear a lot of talk about blacks not being monolithic; that should be individualistic, diversified, I think is the term. Well, that's election year talk when our leaders are telling us that we should continue to follow the Democratic banner because this is what is in our best interests. Well, that's what has got us in trouble. We are overdiversified, while the monolithic Japanese are colonizing white America and leaving black America to settle into its own bottom layer dregs. Do we need an earthquake to jolt us out of our complacency?

Enough of sermonizing for the time being. Now for a few notable items. Rumour around New York is that the Rev. Al Sharpton, he of the Tawana Brawley case, has booked 300 rooms in Atlanta, courtesy of U.S. intelligence agencies and the Bush campaign connection to bring his followers to the site of the Democratic National Convention where Mayor Andrew Young and his Atlanta police will have their hands full controlling the demonstrations intended to embarrass the Democrats and give a televised image of chaos . . .

At a special ceremony held at the Tavern on the Green restaurant in Central Park, the great diva Beverly Sills, who retired from the Metropolitan Opera 10 years ago to take over the ailing New York City Opera Company, was inducted as an honorary member of Delta Sigma Theta. She was sponsored by Delta Soror Betty Shabazz, widow of Malcolm X and a faculty member of the Medger Evers College in Manhattan.

Noted for her candor and cheery disposition, Ms. Sills had some eye-opening comments about the state of American politics. She doesn't like what's happening to the system and what it is doing to the country and she blames the whole mess on men who control the power structure, make wars, determine the lives and fate of people from Nicaragua, Angola, Mozambique and South Africa to other parts of the world and in the process are indifferent to the misery and death they cause.

She says that the vast majority of white collar crimes are committed by males and that corruption is rife. "Women could do a much better job. They would not tolerate the corruption that we are seeing now." Does that mean she would become a political activist, maybe even run for public office?

"No, not necessarily," she said, but she is leaving her options open. Beverly Sills is 59. Her physician-husband is 71 and not in the best of health. She is a mother who empathizes with other mothers and fathers of handicapped children. she has two, who have been able with care and love to overcome their problems and are now grown and independent.

After almost a half century in the arts - she started out as a child prodigy in theater and concert, she's ready to move into another phase of lifestyle. She announced her resignation from the directorship of the opera company to become effective soon.

"After 3,000 operas and countless concerts, I'm ready for a break. The company is sound financially. I've raised the money to pay off the debts and put it on a five-year budget that carries it over without any worries. The next five-year plan comes up in 1990. At 60, I don't want to be drawn into another back-breaking cycle of fund-raising."

"As for what I intend to do, I will be active in promoting women for public office. We need more of them in Congress and at the state and local levels. It should not be a threat to men. It should be a partnership.

Manning Marable

ALONG THE COLOR LINE

The Bentsen mistake

Although Jesse Jackson managed to dominate the news at the recent Democratic National Convention in Atlanta, the most significant event to transpire occurred several days before the gathering.

Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis's selection of conservative Texas Senator Lloyd Bentsen for the Vice Presidential slot represents a potential watershed for the progressive wing of the Democratic Party, and a fundamental challenge for the Rainbow Coalition.

In the days shortly before the Vice Presidential selection, there was considerable speculation that Ohio Senator John Glenn would get the nod. A popular Midwestern politician, the choice of the former astronaut would have guaranteed Ohio's electoral votes, and possibly the votes of Michigan and Illinois.

Glenn was also strong in the south on ideological grounds. But there was also speculation within all the confusion in the Dukakis camp that the V.P. selection would not be made at the expense of maintaining cordial relations with the Rainbow Coalition.

A few observers thought that Lloyd Bentsen had an outside shot at the Vice Presidential offer, but many dismissed the prospects of Dukakis moving so far to the right on his national ticket.

After all, Bentsen represented the "Tory Wing" of the conservative faction of Democrats in the Congress. He was a passionate supporter of aid to the Nicaraguan Contras, a motley crew of anticommunists, terrorists and drug smugglers. Bentsen advocated prayer in the public schools; Dukakis was opposed to this. Bentsen supported the B-1 Bomber; Dukakis was against the bomber. Bentsen embrace, and Dukakis opposed, the 1981 Reagan Tax Cut, which gave billions to the rich from the paychecks of the middle class and the poor.

With the possible exception of Sam Nunn, Bentsen was surely the most conservative Democrat in the U.S. Senate. Although he had defeated Bush back in 1970 during his initial race for the Senate, there was absolutely no guarantee that Bentsen could carry Texas for the Democrats in 1988. Moreover, Bentsen was little known across the South, unlike Nunn or even Al Gore of Tennessee.

But Dukakis's staff gave several basic reasons for the selection of Bentsen. The first was rooted in history: no Democratic candidate for president in the twentieth century had ever won without carrying the state of Texas.

Secondly, Bentsen is fluent in Spanish, and would be able to assist Dukakis in reaching the growing electoral bloc of Hispanics across the Southwest. But the most important factor considered by Dukakis was the ideological perspective.

The addition of Bentsen to the ticket sent a message to the Party's powerbrokers, to Wall Street, and to executives in petrochemicals, construction, real estate, high tech, and other growth sectors of the economy. It proclaimed, in no uncertain terms, the return to power and prestige of the "Reagan Democrats" within the corridors of power.

Dukakis was stating: "I'm a man you can do business with. I'm not an ideologue of the left, but a pragmatist of the center." More to the point, Dukakis was issuing a racial statement by selecting Bentsen: "Despite Jesse's unprecedented victories in the caucuses and primaries, the controls of the Party are firmly in the hands of the right and center."

Sometimes the way in which problems are handled is more significant than the content of the problem itself. Dukakis's problem was to inform Jesse in a timely fashion that he wasn't being selected. This wasn't a surprise to Jackson. But the manner in which Dukakis permitted the media to dump the news on the Rainbow Coalition's candidate was, deliberately or not, also perceived as a racial statement.

The "Duke" was stating that Jackson had no right to the normal courtesies one would anticipate within power politics. The Rainbow's successes were written off in a preemptive fashion. And behind the scenes, Dukakis's key advisers whispered that a racial snub of the Country Preacher might produce thousands of white, conservative male votes. The New England technocrat had found a neoDixiecrat approach to the dilemma of Black activist politics.

The real question which remains unanswered is whether the liberal/left forces behind Jackson will recognized that their recent ostracism was not based on personality differences with Dukakis, but actually represented a strategic shift by the Democrats to the right. Blacks and progressives can be taken for granted, so long as they have no other alternatives except to embrace the National Democratic ticket.

Parren J. Mitchell

FORMER U.S. REP.

Fall Supreme Court session

When the Supreme Court, now dominated by conservative jurists, begins its fall term, it will hear several cases which could have a profound effect on civil rights.

It will hear the Richmond Minority Business Enterprise case (MBE) and the Michigan Preferential MBE case. It will also reconsider a case which has been a potent weapon for victims of racial discrimination.

Throughout the years, as I have spoken around the country, I have warned that the hard fought for civil rights gains, we as blacks have made, are not locked in concrete, that they are always vulnerable.

I have further warned that there are right wing political forces in America which are determined to weaken or destroy those gains, and they don't care how long it will take to accomplish this.

During my time of service in the Congress, there were repeated attempts to water down or eliminate civil rights laws and affirmative action. For the most part, those attempts were thwarted.

The Reagan Administration, from its beginning has shown an arrogant contempt for civil rights and affirmative action, and has done its best to destroy both. Fortunately, in most instances, the evil intentions of the Reagan administration have been stymied.

The Supreme Court has announced that it will reconsider a precedent which holds that a victim of racial discrimination can seek punitive damages against private parties.

That 1976 precedent, based on a statute enacted during the Reconstruction Era, has been repeatedly used as a guide in literally hundreds of civil rights cases.

There have been no legal challenges to the precedent, not even in the instant case before the Court. It was the Court itself which raised the issue for reconsideration.

From its very beginning, the Supreme Court has had its deliberations guided by the principle of **stare decisis**, that is, letting the standing decision, the earlier precedent established by the Court be considered as settled law.

It is the rare, rare case when the Court reconsiders or reverses a precedent. But this Court has announced a reconsideration.

Justice Blackmun was quoted in a national publication as having said "I am at a loss to understand the motivation — to reconsider an interpretation of a civil rights statute that so clearly reflects our society's earnest commitment to ending racial discrimination." The majority of the Court voted to revisit settled law.

No one knows how the court will vote when it hears this issue, but the mere fact that it has announced its intention will cause immediate grave problems for the victims of racial discrimination.

The victim of such discrimination in housing, if he or she can get into federal court (which courts are now dominated by Reagan appointees), may well be advised that the lower federal court will not take action pending the outcome of the Supreme Court's reconsideration.

The victim of racial discrimination in employment may well hear defense attorneys request that the court not hear the case until after the Supreme Court acts.

Blacks, or other minorities, who have won damage suits, may have to wait a long time for their money because lawyers will petition the court to stay payments until after the Supreme Court completes its reconsideration of the 1976 precedent.

It's possible, of course, that the Court will let the precedent remain intact. On the other hand, should the court reverse itself, a major blow will be inflicted on the cause of civil rights.

Apart from activist techniques, historically, Blacks have pursued four strategies in our quest for civil rights. We have sought relief in the legislative halls; we have sought aid and assistance from the U.S. Department of Justice; we have petitioned the President for help; and, if all else failed we sought out the U.S. Supreme Court, a bastion of protection for civil rights.

Now an enormous, massive question mark looms over the U.S. Supreme Court. Will it fail us?

Is the Court's action the embryonic strategy to reconsider the Fair Housing Act of 1964? Is its action the first foray against the Civil Rights Act of 1964?

I have begged, pleaded with black people to shake off the apathy and indifference which immobilize far too many of us. We must begin again, at once, to support financially and in other ways, the organizations which are central to the protection and implementation of civil rights.

We must stop, right now, this foolishness of pretending that the civil rights struggle is over. Like a prophet of old, I have warned time and time again that the struggle for civil rights will never end.

I pray that this latest action by the Supreme Court will shock us into facing reality.