EDITORIALS

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THE VOICE OF BLACK AMERICA SINCE 1892

Firehouse veto

The Baltimore City Council failed to muster enough votes to override the veto of the measure which would have kept three firehouses open until a study could be made as to the efficacy of closing them.

There is an old adage in politics which states, "If you don't have the votes, don't call the measure to the floor." This is exactly the situation that existed in this matter, thus there was no council meeting prior to the deadline for overriding the veto.

While the political infighting was going on, relative to this issue, one of the major objections to the closing of three firehouses has been relegated to the back burner — how would the replacement firefighting operations impact on the neighborhoods where firehouses were being closed?

It is difficult to conceive that any mayor, elected by the people of a city, would be so crass and unfeeling as to deprive his electorate of vital city services. While emotions dictate that the loss of the firehouses would have a deleterious effect, the true nature of the shift in fire coverage is, at best, an educated guess.

Another factor which has not entered into a major discussion, is what happens if the study group says that closing the fire stations is a mistake. Since the closings were prompted by budget considerations, is it possible to re-establish them, should the occasion warrant.

We must assume that a preliminary study was made before the closings were announced, and that the in-depth study is expected to verify the initial one. We hope that it does, it certainly would be an embarrassment if it didn't.

Racism on the rise

That racism exists is no secret. It has reared its ugly head through the centuries, taking many forms. This decade has seen racism against the black community erupt into flagrant abuse.

The Maryland state police have reported more than 67 incidents of overt racist acts in the state, in a year. Baltimore City is just recovering from the shock induced by the bigoted treatment of the non-white family which moved into the Hampden area.

Not forgotten either is the disturbance in Hampden at the elementary school in the area where black children were bussed amidst neighborhood protests.

In most cases, white youths have been blamed for many of the racist acts, with too many white parents tsk-tsking the actions as merely pranks of the young.

When it becomes necessary to post a 24-hour police guard to insure the safety of residents who are minding their own business, then it is time for the community to be aroused — both black and white.

There is usually a segment of the white community which decries these racist activities, but too often they are silenced for fear of reprisals. In the 20s and 30s, there were race riots in a lot of cities in the north.

One result of these altercations was the flight to the suburbs by many whites. Those unable to "get out" were forced to subdue their racist inclinations in an effort to co-exist. The resurgence of many hate groups has emboldened these white inner-city residents to a pitch where perpetrating dastardly deeds is acceptable to them.

Radicalism on either side, black or white, may not be the answer. The time has come for community groups to move to the forefront and actively practice some of the precepts they have been preaching.

The inbred nature of racism will probably not be erased in the foreseeable future — but if a start isn't made — it will never end.

Problem of the new car

On Friday, July 8, 1988, I purchased a brand new 1988 Eagle Premier from Antwerpen Sabb located at 6440 Baltimore Nat'l Pike, Balto., Md. 21228. I left the dealership about 8 p.m., went a half city block to Hunan's Restaurant to eat dinner.

We left the restaurant about 9 p.m. The car would not start. I telephoned Antwerpen's. I explained my problem to a male. He transferred me to someone else. I again explained the problem. He said it was probably the battery and he would have someone there within ten minutes.

Tony of Custom 24 hour Rollback and Towing Service (Rt. 40 & St. John's Lane, Ellicott City, Md. 21043) came and after several attempts was finally able to hot shot the battery. I was told to sit there and let the car run for twenty minutes and to call the towing service again if I couldn't make it home. This was done.

I made it home; and went out Saturday, all day driving, with no problem. This brand new 1988Eagle Premier has 27 miles on it and I live 5 miles from the car dealership.

Sunday, July 10, 1988; I went out to go to church and this brand new 1988 Eagle Premier with 27 miles on it would not start. I traded my 1980 Toyota, which sounded bad but always started and ran beautifully, for this $15,665.00 vehicle which has failed to start on two occasions before it was in my possession for 48 hours.

My stomach has been upset and I have had diarrhea because of this situation. I had purchased five new cars in my lifetime and have never had something like this happen to me. I know many other people who purchased new cars and I have never heard of anything like this.

I bought a new car because I was always afraid of used ones. My present job takes me on the road a lot and I need a car I can depend on to take me from one place to another.

I asked Antwerpen's to cancel the sale. I want my 1980 Toyota Corolla and my down payment. The Eagle Premier is not useful to me. I need a car I can depend on.

Early this morning, I telephoned Custom 24 hour Rollback and Towing Service. Talked to Tony. He'll pick up the car around 11 a.m. telephoned Antwerpen, talked to the sales manager. I told him I did not want the car. I couldn't use a fix or repair daily. He told me I would have to come in and he would take care of me. We both know the problem is not the battery. Something is draining the battery.

Went into to Antwerpen's. The sales manager nor the salesman were available. The receptionist told me I would have to talk to a guy who was talking to another dissatisfied customer. He told me that they would fix the car; that a car had a thousand wires in it and one could be loose or something.

I stated I did not want a new car that had to be fixed. I can't use a car that has to be fixed or repaired daily. He told me there was nothing I could do about it. I couldn't turn the car back in.

The car has 27 miles on it. Ten when I purchased it and five miles to get home; that's a total of 15 miles. This brand new 1988 Eagle Premier had given 12 miles of service and they tell me there is nothing I can do but pay for it.

I telephone Mercantile Bank and Trust. I asked them not to accept the contract from Antwerpen's. He said they would buy the contract from Antwerpen's regardless of what I said. I said even though I don't have the car and I'm not going to pay for it; you are telling me you will buy the contract anyway. He said, "That's right, unless Antwerpen cancels it."

I then telephoned the Consumer Protection Agency who also said there was nothing I could do, I had to let Antwerpen fix the car. At least he said he was sorry.

I worked hard all of my life, have A-1 credit, have always tried to do the right thing and I can be taken advantage of like this in America and it's all legal. If this is the law, the law should be changed. I beg that this situation and this law be investigated and subsequently changed.

BERNELL A. BAILEY

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
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DeWayne Wickham

That speech of Jesse's

ATLANTA — It was hours before Jesse Jackson was to offer what many thought would be the major address of the Democratic National Convention, and Rims Barber already had passed judgment.

"This is the culmination of a lot of dreams, and maybe a few nightmares," he said as he looked across the many rows of empty seats to the stage from where Jackson would speak.

It mattered little that he did not know what Jackson would say, this white man from Mississippi was certain of the speech's impact.

For Barber, a Jackson delegate, and thousands of other people who later crammed into the Omni Coliseum the words were less important than the event. Jackson was to be the keynote speaker at a political convention that he has come to dominate, and Barber knew the moment would be special.

"For the first time, America actually considered the thought that a black man might be president," he said, his words punctuated by his slow speech.

"Once you think about something once, then it is no longer a queer idea . . . and so today's dreams and nightmares are able to become tomorrow's reality."

Four years ago, Jesse Jackson sought the Democratic Party's presidential nomination. Then he was seen as a protest candidate, his Rainbow Coalition consisting almost entirely of black voters. Much has changed since 1984.

This year he mounted a campaign for the White House that won him the backing of nearly 7 million voters in primaries. His support among white voters tripled. And if only for a fleeting moment after his surprising victory in Michigan, many other white Americans were forced to consider seriously the possibility of a black president.

When party officials slated him for a keynote address at this convention, it was in recognition of his growing influence among Democratic voters.

As the time neared for Jackson to speak, the restless crowd was pregnant with expectation. The floor of the arena was transformed into a sea of red and white posters that carried just the single word: "Jesse!"

Near the foot of the speaker's platform, three white men unfurled a large banner proclaiming "Farmers for Jackson," in silent tribute to his growing constituency.

Then as Ray Charles was heard to sing "America the Beautiful," Jackson made his way to the podium as delegates cheered the arrival of this man who has become in this election year the conscience of the Democratic Party.

For the moment it seemed there was nothing that divided Jackson from those assembled before him, a majority of whom would vote the next day to name Michael Dukakis as the party's presidential nominee.

Jesse Jackson had waged a surprisingly effective campaign to become this nation's first black president and while he came up short of his goal, this night the delegates were of no mind to treat him like a defeated candidate.

It was a scene I thought America would never reveal in my lifetime. There was a slight tremble in my hand as my pen sought to capture the essence of this historic event. My eyes were made wet by a surge of emotions.

Back in 1975, I was in Cincinnati when a small group of blacks unsuccessfully tried to get Rep. Ronald Dellums to lead them in a third party bid for the presidency.

The members of the National Black Political Assembly were convinced that blacks would never be considered for the nation's highest office by either of the major political parties.

Now as Jackson spoke, the California congressman stood near me on the convention floor, his eyes fixed approvingly on the man at the podium.

"He has made every effort to be inclusive and to move from protest to mainstream politics," Barber had said earlier in the day. Now it was Jackson's chance to plead his cause.

"We meet tonight at a crossroads, a point of decision. Shall we expand, be inclusive, find unity and power, or suffer division and impotence?" Jackson asked rhetorically.

"The greater good," he offered in answer to his own question, "is the common good." His was an appeal to the broad spectrum of those who call themselves Democrats - a challenge to the ideological left and right to seek a "common ground" in the fall campaign for the White House. Jesse Jackson the country preacher had now become the political teacher.

And when he was done, the arena erupted into celebration. Music played. Songs were sung, and the stage parted in front of Jackson as hundreds of his supporters surged forward in an effort to meet their candidate for presidency of these United States.

"It was just fantastic," Barber said to me over the din, "I'm exhausted now but I can't wait to get out here and start campaigning...", his last words were drowned by the noise.

Later I would wonder whether he was talking about this year's general election or some future presidential campaign of Jess Louis Jackson.

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

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COMMENTARY & OPINIONS

Kweisi Mfume
U.S. Congressman

More setbacks in Haiti

Haiti is in the news again for all the wrong reasons. Last month, President Leslie Manigat was deposed as head of the Haitian government by a military coup led by Lieut. General Henri Namphy.

Addressing his military supporters and the Free World, Gen. Namphy proclaimed that he is again the head of state and that his government is committed to working with its people to ensure peace and tranquility.

Ironically, these words of promise and hope were expounded by the man who held a powerful position within the despotic Jean Claude Duvalier regime and who oversaw the violent and controversial elections that brought former President Manigat to power several months ago.

Most foreign policy analysts seriously doubt that Gen. Namphy has ever wanted peace and freedom for the people of Haiti.

His two year stint as the leader of Haiti's ruling junta, following the departure of Duvalier, clearly showed that he favored the benefits of the military status quo.

For example, although Gen. Namphy officially disbanded the notorious paramilitary force known as the "Tonton Macoutes," he did not disarm this secret organization or punish any of the well known thugs affiliated with it.

During last November's election day massacre, citizens and foreigners caught in the cross-fire blamed the Tonton Macoutes for the violence that ensured an outcome in favor of the military junta.

Moreover, the slow and inactive role of the Army in providing protection and security for the brave voting populace underscored the question of whether the military was ever sincere in its efforts to turn Haiti's government over to civilian rule.

With the recent coup, the Haitian political quagmire took another ironic twist. President Manigat had relieved Gen. Namphy of his command on June 17th, accusing the General of insubordination for having reassigned Col. Jean Claude Paul instead of firing him.

Col. Paul, who was indicated in March of this year by a Florida court on drug trafficking charges and was loyal to President Manigat, remains a key figure within the Namphy government.

Today, the people of Haiti are no closer to democratization than they were under "Baby Doc" Duvalier of his late father. Monstrous remnants of the Duvalier regimes still control the political levers and threaten to further destabilize the poorest nation within the Western Hemisphere.

To make matters worse, U.S. Intelligence reports that a growing number of Columbian drug traffickers have been moving into Haiti in recent weeks, forging ties with corrupt military officers and turning the country into a major base for the transporting of cocaine into the United States.

On a more violent note, on July 11th, popular human rights lawyer Lafontant Joseph was brutally murdered in the first apparent political killing since the military regained power.

Once again, the people of Haiti need our democratic leadership. Yet, partly as a result of having been humiliated in its efforts to oust Panamanian strongman Manuel Noriega, the Reagan Administration has made it clear that it doesn't plan to make any substantive steps toward assisting them.

Such passivity on the part of the American government may pave the way for brutality and totalitarianism to loom large over our beleaguered Caribbean neighbor for many years to come.

AFRO SURVEY

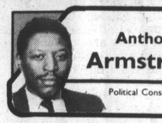
What is your favorite spectator sport?

David Farmer, 36, salesman, I like baseball. I like the Orioles, but I also like to watch golf because of its serenity and peace, and also the pretty green fields.

Ronald Johnson, 25, salesperson, I like football because it's a contact sport. Actually, I like to play more than I like to watch, but I prefer watching the television version over going to a game because of the replays, close-up shots, and listening to the commentators' perceptions of how the game is played.

Nichole Terry, 19, salesperson, I like to watch basketball because I like to look at guys' bodies running down the courts. I also like seeing three-point shots.

Alphonso Jones, 25, shoe salesman, I like football because it gives us a chance to let out our private aggressions. There has been a need for man to have an outlet for these aggressions since the early days of the Romans. I played in high school, and the ambience brings back a lot of memories of being in the huddle.



Anthony Armstrong
Political Consultant

Slavery, colonialism, toxic waste

There is really no point in recounting the horror of the African Slave trade. The dastardly mess as been over, now more than a century and a quarter, at least in the law.

Talking about European goe-political colonialism in Africa is of little value either; since other than South Africa and Namibia, all the other nations on the continent are in one phase or another of independence.

However, dumping millions and millions of barrels of toxic waste on the shores of a number of west African countries is a current issue, and does require further revelation.

If there are any bloodstains to tie these otherwise separate occurences together, in place and time, it would be the fact that each phenomenon, both then and now, was aided and is being abetted by Africans themselves. (Already you might be saying, "What else is new?")

Reports are now filtering out that detail how European and American companies are using west African nations as the dumping grounds for tons and tons of waste, waste those companies are forbidden from and probably would never dream of attempting to dump or store on their own shores.

The problem has become so acute that just one series of contracts would have allowed the eventual dumping and storage of as much as ten percent, or three million tons a year, of the toxic waste output of the entire European Community in one African nation alone, tiny poor Guinea-Bissau.

Some of the waste dumped so far has proven to be radioactive; in other cases it has contained some of the most poisonous substances known to man, including the dread polychlorinated biphenyls - PCB's.

The stuff is being deposited near rivers, fishing grounds, villages, and towns of unsuspecting and often illiterate peoples, who are working for as little as $2.50 a day unloading the "barrels of industrial sin."

Some enlightened Africans have taken to calling the entire criminally insane practice "toxic terrorism." How could such a thing ever get started, even in the most backward of African's nations in, this, the 20th Century?

The unraveling of the previous question has two threads, but only one answer. One thread if the total disregard for anything African, including its peoples; the other thread is the international human nature of Faustian greed.

Yet, the answer cannot be mistaken: the answer is that some, few, African leaders — just as was the case in the slave trade and just as was the case in the European colonization of Africa — will agree to anything, imaginable or unimaginable, that will give them a few drops of the white man's snaked venom. Strong language, but true!

Think of it; usually in secret, without the consent of anyone but themselves, some officials in Nigeria, Senegal, The Congo, Liberia, and virtually every nation along the western bulge of Africa and south to Zaire, have permitted this inhuman and environmental holocaust to occur.

For what? For a few more nairas (the Nigerian currency) to fill their Swiss bank accounts, to ride in a Mercedes-Benz, to purchase more cheap shiny suits from London or Paris; and for the swagger to go on uttering "my father tribal chief," to European businessman who can't stand the sight of them; but who, like the devil, will deal with anyone.

Many of the dumping contracts have been cancelled after the knowledge of them became public, and a number of the African and European reprobates were jailed. In one case an American freighter. The Banya, loaded with incinerator ash intended for dumping in Guinea-Bissau was turned back, and now finds itself and its filthy cargo anchored in international waters off the coast of Delaware.

In other cases perfectly legitimate vessels and cargoes from some of the offending countries have been forced to remain in African ports, until previously dumped toxic waste has been picked up and returned to the point of origin.

Again, however, only after newspaper accounts of the dumpings have come to light.

For many in Europe and America, Africa still seems mental light years away. Although some of us poke condescending fun at the people we insist on placing beneath us, we African-Americans shouldn't; because we allow similar wrongs to be perpetrated on ourselves by our own.

Our problem may not be toxic waste, and only because American laws permit less of such tragedies; but African-Americans are plagued by the same kind of treachery as those living in an African village.

It seems the other side still knows that can buy some of us for the same things that our misguided and self hating continental brothren are willing to accept.

Perhaps it's because they and we believe the world is so big, that African peoples — here and there — are so numerous (and cheap because we are) that to cause the destruction of many will leave enough unharmed that no one will notice the contracts with infamy.

Instead of mad lion disregard, African style, ours,' in America, comes quoting phrases like. "I'm the only black on my job," or, "my child is the only black in his or her school."

What'll we do? We can't use the firing squads, ala Africa. In America exposure doesn't even work to purge us of Oreos. It seems it's every man and woman for themselves.

Yet, is it, really? Public shame and denunciation may not work; but public pressure still can. For those who are elected officials there is still the scathing rejection of the vote. For those not elected there is the social prison of being utterly and completely shunned.

Though rarely used, there is jail. Yet, if all else fails we can remind our Judases that it was people like them who made slavery work, who made colonialism so successful, and who are, by their current actions, our toxic waste.

G. James Fleming
Educator

Guts, gumption assets of Jesse

What does the Rev. Jesse Jackson have that the rest of us does not have?

Guts and gumption (in addition to brains) is the principal answer.

He dares to venture, to challenge the unchallengeable, to be unreasonable, to be daring and "overbearing." He dares to attempt that which may not be polite and proper in the eyes of the less courageous.

He believes that a "rainbow coalition" can be organized for what is right. He also believes there is moral justification for his program.

When other activists think they have reached the limits of the lawful, he presses forward a little bit more without being unlawful. When others get timid after a while, he seems to have no fear, as he compares himself to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Medgar Evers and even to Jesus.

Other candidates for the presidency, past and present, have bowed out gracefully once they have lost the primaries, but not Jesse Jackson. Instead, he held his worshipful followers together and continued campaigning.

During the primary races he repeatedly announced that he was running for only one office, that of president of the United States. Once Gov. Dukakis became the winner, Jackson switched at once to being a candidate for the vice-presidency—without batting an eye.

Others might have hemmed and hawed, but not this 46-year-old Baptist preacher/orator par excellence. He pressed on. By the time of the Democratic National Convention, he was still an active candidate for both the offices of president and vice-president and actually had himself nominated for the presidency, more or less for historic reasons.

No advice, at anytime, that he had gone "far enough" stopped him. In fact, he even suggested a "partnership" presidency with Dukakis, although he explained this away as a semantic misunderstanding by the Dukakis people.

It took guts and gumption to have travelled this potentially pot-holed road to have reached this far—a history-making epic story for America and for black people everywhere.

This politics of guts and gumption will make it extremely difficult for the Rev. Mr. Jackson to abide by the compromise and joint agreements arranged between him and Gov. Dukakis.

By his very nature, the Rev. Jackson cannot be positioned or packaged. He cannot be stopped by tradition or custom; he has no respect for the way "things have always been done." As long as he can say, "This I have done within the law," he feels empowered to carry on.

Then, too, he declares a moral imperative in all he does, even if some of his goals presently maybe non-productive, politically speaking.

As others, endowed by their Creator with similar gifts, Jesse Jackson is the embodiment of his crusade. In his convention speech he pointed to his works as "Mine is a mission."

Thanks

Thank you for the splendid coverage you gave Delta Sigma Theta Sorority's Diamond Jubilee convention last week.

The news desk people, assignment editors and reporters were great. Delta Sigma Theta is more than 175,000 college-trained women nationwide with such influential members as Shirley Chisholm, Barbara Jordan, Lena Horne, Leontyne Price, etc.

In reporting their marvelous Diamond Jubilee convention, you displayed outstanding sensitivity, awareness and professionalism.

Thanks again.

LILLIAN CALHOUN