EDITORIALS

John J. Oliver, Jr.
Chairman of the Board
Frances M. Draper
President

Black History Month

The Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History, Inc., celebrates its 75th anniversary in 1990. It is also the 65th anniversary of Black History Month. The association has set the theme for this year as: "The Father of Black History — Carter G. Woodson, A Living Legacy."

Carter Woodson was born in New Canton, VA, and attended Berea College, the Univ. of Chicago, Harvard and the Sorbonne in Paris. He and others organized the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History in 1915.

Since February 1926, February, the birth month of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass, has been set aside to recognize achievements and contributions by African Americans. It has gone through many different designations, Negro History, Black History, Afro-American History, Black Heritage and Black Expressions.

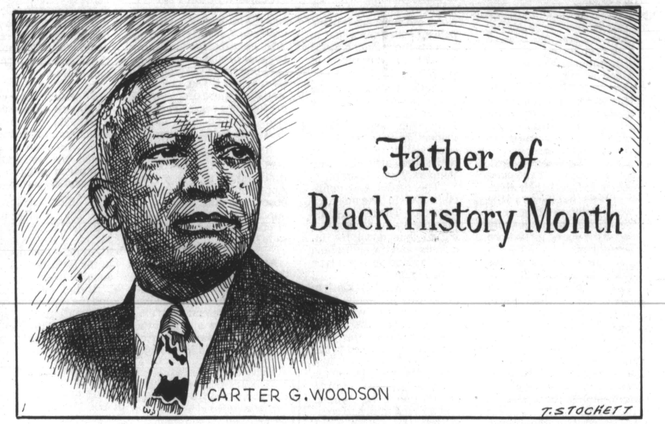
Initially, the observance period was for a week, but since 1976, the entire month of February has been set aside as Black History Month. The recognition of the month has spread to such an extent that there are many different organizations sponsoring Black History Month celebrations.

Amalgamated Publishers, Inc., national representations for over 200 Black newspapers, has announced the theme for its 1990 celebration: "Black Newspapers, the Roots of Black America."

This will form the basis of a series of articles and illustrations highlighting the Black press. Some of the expected coverage will discuss pre Civil War newspapers, the Black Cabinet, Black daily papers, among the many facets to be covered.

This is the time when the youngsters should be brought up to speed on their heritage, for one of the functions of Black History Month is to point out the positive side of history as it relates to Black people.

Of course, Black History should be a year-round project — but as a matter of practicality, at least let us recognize this one month dedication.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Objects to AFRO moniker

The term Afro-American has given us the connective thread to the homeland we have lost, a sense of pride in this development, and we are forever grateful to its perpetrators. However, for long term usage, I find the term Afro-American, divisive.

It excludes Blacks who are citizens of other countries, all of whom identified with and supported our Civil Rights struggles of the 1960s. Can we afford this kind of exclusion?

Following the Afro-American logic, should residing Black Cubans call themselves Afro-Cuban Americans? Or, should Black Africans living in the U.S. call themselves Amero-Africans? Dare we suggest that other foreign Blacks call themselves Afro-Englishmen, Afro-Frenchmen, or Afro-West Indians? Would it be prudent to call someone an Afro-Jew, or an Afro-Muslim?

And what would you call a Black Maoris from New Zealand, or a Black Aborigine from Australia? They, too, identified with the American Civil Rights Movement.

The word Black has only five letters. It is convenient, poetic, powerful, all inclusive, and not too long ago was considered "beautiful." It brings Black men everywhere into one common bond, with a sense of universal togetherness.

It is also evident that White Americans from South Africa, Egypt and Algeria could also call themselves Afro-Americans, all of which adds further confusion to the problem.

The term Afro-American also seems to violate the principals of Pan Africanism — the doctrine of such historic giants as W.E.B. DuBois, Kwame Nkrumah, and Marcus Garvey, which not only embodies economic and cultural cooperation of Blacks to achieve liberation, but also the universal brotherhood of Black men everywhere.

The term Afro-American seems to get in the way of that cooperation and brotherhood, and could become a tool for the petty separation of ethnic groups and nationalities that may hamper full realization of our dreams and aspirations.

J. ARCHIBALD HOLLAND

Credibility factor?

Dr. Guy R. Rankin's article on the Business Pulse page: "Black firms show slight gain in 80's," December 30, 1989, is either poorly researched or proof-read.

His statistics, 840,000 minorities in business in the U.S. growth to 1,000,000 businesses in a decade, and Black-owned from 339,000 to 496,000, represents a percentage growth of, respectively, 19.1% and 46.5%.

Contrary to Dr. Rankin's conclusions, this growth, if correct, represents an excellent achievement.

Dr. Rankin doesn't even mention OAS, which is one and one-half larger than The Maxima Corporation; and there are others who have entered defense contracting, research and development and electronics with a significant beginning.

His final two conclusions, that, "political power equals economic strength" and "established rules often exclude the minority entrepreneur" are definitely on target. It would help the credibility factor for Dr. Rankin to get his facts straight and for him to read **Black Enterprise Magazine's** BE 100.

LEON BRIDGES, FAIA

Continue the course

In the article about the actor Morgan Freeman (page B6, fourth paragraph from the bottom of the column). The first paragraph states that Mr. Freeman was born in Greenwood, MI.

The abbreviation MI is for the state of Michigan. Morgan Freeman was born in Mississippi. The abbreviation for that state is MS.

During the past three years I have worked diligently to convince my friends, relatives and co-workers to subscribe to this paper and other African-American newspapers and magazines. I used this newspaper when I conducted a workshop for junior high school students titled, "How To Read A Newspaper."

I am a former English teacher with a strong interest in journalism. The "AFRO-AMERICAN" to me is an important source of information for the African-American community. Please continue to pursue a course of excellence!

(MS.) DORIS L. GREER

Parren J. **Mitchell**
Former U.S. Rep.

Sound the small alarm

I had several alarm clocks in my home which I really do not need because I wake up, without fail, 5:00 a.m. each day. One is a radio alarm clock, the other is the old type wind-up clock, and yet another is a compact travel clock which has a beeping sounding alarm.

I think it is now time to set up, at least the small alarm for the Black community. The recent eruptions of violent racism demand this. Consider: skin heads: renewed Klan activities; cross burnings; bombs in the mail; harassment of Black officials; racism on campuses . . . its time to "sound the alarm."

Many in the White community will take offense at my call to sound the alarm. They will argue that these are isolated racial incidents which are perpetrated by individuals or small groups, and therefore, in no way reflect the state of race relations in America.

Many in the White community are so determined to block out the horrors of past racial violence and are intent on proving that "the race problem in America has been solved."

They point to the number of Blacks in high elected and appointed positions, and they marvel at the improved social and economic status some of our brothers and sisters now enjoy.

However, that delusional pattern of thinking, "the ostrich with his head in the sand" attitude can be very, very dangerous.

The nation of Columbia did not become the center for drugs for the world overnight. No, it started with a few who traffic in drugs, and they gradually infected the nation and the region.

The Communist witch hunts of the 1950's in America did not spring into being full blown to dominate the political process. No, the hysteria against Communism was initiated by a few fascist demagogues who gradually spread the poison which infected, temporarily, the American nation.

No, we cannot, we dare not attempt to deny the fact that racism is once again resurgent. The important thing is to focus on what triggered that resurgence and how we can quickly and effectively block it and reduce it.

Racism and racial violence require a certain kind of climate in which to spawn. Beyond any shadow of doubt, eight years of Ronald Reagan provided that climate. The constant and almost vitriolic attacks on affirmative action created the climate for renewed racism: "I can't go to college, they gave my place to a Black student. I can't get a promotion, they are giving the promotion I deserve to a Black woman."

"I struggle to keep my family going, but my tax money is being used for special programs for 'them.' " "They are taking over the government, and are beating us over the head." Ad nauseam, ad infinitum.

It was a diabolically cruel thing that the Reagan Administration did to America, which had been making steady progress in race relations.

Skin Heads, Klansmen and others of that ilk are dangerous, but that is somewhat diminished because of their stupidity. On the other hand, those who run our agencies of government, though not as stupid as the "low-lifers" constitute a real threat.

By refusing to accept or act on a complaint of discrimination in employment, they embolden the racists in our midst. By making it difficult to use the courts or by using the courts to deny equal justice under the law, they encourage racism.

Sound the small alarm! Demand that the leaders in the nation and the states again speak out on a regular basis to condemn and decry this renewed racism. It's one thing to publicly condemn an act of racial violence after it has happened, but it's quite another thing to do so as part of deterring racism and racial violence.

We must begin again the educational campaigns put on by governments, civic organizations and community organizations. At one point, there were posters, radio and television spots designed to condemn racism and to promote racial harmony. We must embark on a similar kind of sustained effort today. However, most importantly, Black people must shake off the lethargy which only permits us to lament racism and, instead, put on the armor which will enable us to attack racism whenever and wherever it rears its ugly head.

This way for Black Empowerment

Blacks and Jews

By Dr. Lenora Fulani

This past Friday night I moderated a forum on "Blacks and Jews in New York City." The speakers were two dear friends of mine; the Reverend Al Sharpton and Dr. Fred Newman.

Reverend Sharpton, the leader of the United African Movement, is a deeply respected working class hero in the Black community.

Dr. Newman is the person who has had the greatest influence on my own development as a working class African American leader.

A Jewish Marxist theoretician and activist with whom I have worked side by side to build the New Alliance Party, he represents a proud and principled tradition in the international progressive Jewish working class tradition.

It has repeatedly and ruthlessly refused to cater to the narrow sectarian politics of the Jewish establishment leadership nationally and internationally by speaking out unconditionally against Zionism.

These two leaders are hated by the powers that be and by those members of the Black and Jewish establishments who have chosen to do the dirty work of preserving the economic, political and social status quo.

Because Brother Sharpton and Brother Newman are troublemakers — dedicated to making as much trouble as they have to until there is justice for our people. I am very proud to have brought them together.

Here is some of what they had to say to the multi-racial audience of 500 people who came to the forum in downtown Brooklyn.

Dr. Newman: "Zionism is not a passive statement on behalf of the Jewish people; it is used to justify genocidal attacks on people of color the world over.

"I stand up proudly as a Jew and say that Jewish people — systematically destroyed in a vicious Holocaust by the powers of capital while the phony baloneys in Washington, D.C. allowed it to happen — the Jewish people of this world must not be participants in this same thing against people of color and the African - American community.

"As a progressive Jew I believe that those who have been victimized have the greatest imperative to stand up all the more in opposition to all destruction, to all genocide, to all murder. What progressive Jews must mean by 'Never Again' is 'Never Again' for all people, not just for Jewish people!

Reverend Sharpton: "Those who now sit together writing hit lists on people like Louis Farrakhan and me and Newman have never been in the trenches in any community, including their own. They have not fought for Jewish rights, let alone Black rights.

"They're not opposed to Black struggle: they're opposed to struggle, because they are part of the power elite that controls both the Black and the Jewish communities.

"If you're going to have real unity, you must have unity based on everyone's needs being satisfied. Mr. Dinkins was told to denounce Farrakhan, and he did. Distance himself from Sharpton, and he did. Run from Fulani, and he did — on more than one occasion!

"So what does it matter to have a mayor that is of your race if he cannot identify with your agenda, cannot be seen with your leaders?

"What does it matter to have the first Black governor in Virginia, when he's got to be harder on Blacks than his White predecessors were to satisfy some Zionists and some WASP slaveholders?"

Dr. Lenora Fulani is the chairperson of the New Alliance Party.

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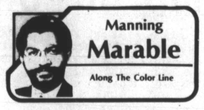
COMMENTARY & OPINIONS



Manning **Marable**
Along The Color Line

Might make right? Invasion of Panama

The American invasion of Panama was widely applauded on Capital Hill and by the media as a necessary step to ensure democracy and to check the international traffic of cocaine.

But after less than one week of fighting, the grim realities of militarism began to be measured: nearly 300 American troops killed or wounded. 1700 Panamanians detained, thousands homeless, massive social and economic chaos.

The total American occupation force exceeded 24,000, and the prospect of maintaining a military presence in the streets of Panama City to maintain civil order became startlingly real.

The Bush Administration expected a quick and clean military strike to decapitate a widely despised despot, Gen. Manuel Antonio Noriega, but was immediately bogged down into a quagmire of social disruption.

What had gone wrong in Washington's calculations?

For more than two years, the Reagan and Bush administrations have attempted to establish the political rationale to launch a military assault against the Noriega regime.

Weeks before the actual invasion, Bush had authorized the drafting of military plans, had rehearsed strategies, and had secretly moved tanks and helicopters into Panama.

The Bush Administration was waiting for a provocation, and when an American soldier was killed in mid-December, and Noreiga subsequently declared that a "state of war" existed with the United States, they had the excuse for action.

But the invasion and its wide popularity within the American public had obscurred some fundamental issues. Who is Noriega, anyway?

When Bush blusters on television against the Panamanian "director," he doesn't say that Noriega was a creation of the U.S.

Noriega was placed on the Central Intelligence Agency's payroll in 1976, when Bush himself was head of the CIA.

Noriega was considered a valuable ally to U.S. interests when he turned in narcotics smugglers operating inside Central America, and assisted American attempts to overthrow Nicaragua by supporting the Contras.

Only when the domestic war became a hot issue, and both Reagan and Bush were looking for foreign scapegoats to publicize their supposed commitment to fighting cocaine traffic in Latin America, was it decided that Noriega was expendable.

Both the media and the politicians tried to turn Noriega into a monster in the eyes of the American public. He was portrayed a cocaine freak, into voodoo, perverse sexual practices, and sadistic terrorism.

The same demagoguery used to attack Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran and Libyan leader Maummar el-Khaddafi was employed. In secret negotiations with Congress this fall, Bush obtained $3 million to finance a coup to overthrow Noriega.

Finally, when the troops were called in, to the patriotic drumbeat of the press corps, with flags flying, the American public could now accept the grim spectre of its sons and fathers coming home in body bags.

But two snags in the blueprint occurred immediately. First, the nation of Latin America, which had no love lost for Noriega, recognized that the U.S. has absolutely no legal justification in international law for sending in troops.

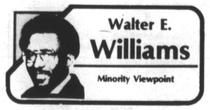
The U.S. backed the fascist dictatorship in Chile, responsible for the murders of thousands. The notorious death squads in El Salvador connected with the U.S.-backed regime, committed executions and rape with impunity.

But whenever a progressive government emerges, dedicated to the eradication of poverty, illiteracy, hunger, and U.S. economic domination, whether in Nicaragua today or Guatemala three decades ago, U.S. muscle and might is used to destabilize these states.

Almost unanimously, Third World countries recognized that their own interest were best served by condemning the U.S. invasion of Panama.

The second and still unanswered question is whether the Soviet Union, witnessing the U.S. military action in its so-called "sphere of influence," will use this as a pretext for repression of domestic nationalist and democratic movements.

Might does not make right, and the best step we can take to ensure democracy abroad is to demand that all U.S. troops come home.



Walter E. **Williams**
Minority Viewpoint

Creating Homelessness

Mitch Snyder, champion for America's homeless, sees government as part of the solution. William Tucker, Hoover Institute fellow, gets it right: Far from being part of the solution, federal, state, and local governments are the problem.

Tucker makes his case in his new book. "The Excluded Americans: Homelessness and Housing Policy" (Regnery-Gateway), excerpted in the Fall 1989 issue of Policy Review.

Since pre-Revolutionary War days, there has always been affordable housing for the poor. There were no government-funded low-income housing programs until the late 1940s.

How were poor Americans housed without the multi-billion dollar Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) programs? It's easy.

Most housing, whether for the poor or the middle-class, comes from the existing stock — used houses. Tucker says yearly construction comprises only 1 to 2 percent of the total housing.

Higher-income people buy new houses or migrate to other areas. This creates vacancies for those with lower incomes. Places like Harlem, Haight-Asbury, and downtown areas of most large cities, once occupied by the prosperous, are now occupied by those with lower incomes.

Tucker argues that housing built specifically for the poor is unnatural and leads to some of the worst housing available — often with projects being torn down in as little as 20 years.

Vacancy rates are a measure of the housing problem. The national average is 7.8 percent. In Boston, New York, Los Angeles, Washington, and San Francisco, rental vacancy rates are less than three percent.

Low vacancy rates provide the fuel for high housing prices, high rents, and low availability.

No-growth government policy is part of the blame. In some areas, residents protest construction of new developments. Thus, wealthier people, who'd buy the house, are restricted and there's one less house to filter down to a less-prosperous person. California's Redwood City no-growth residents even take to burning down construction sites.

Rent controls reduce housing availability. Ninety-five percent of all rental housing is owned by people with little capital.

When cities legislate rent controls, they drive down the return of renting to a point where owners often cannot cover operating costs plus a normal rate of return.

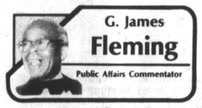
If owners can't get away with black-market prices, they let the buildings deteriorate and abandon them, rent to more "desirable" tenants, or take rental units off the market.

Zoning ordinances drive housing costs up by 20 percent or more. It may be nice to have walls with long burn times, zoned heating, a set minimum for floor space, and a cul-de-sac wide enough for a hook-and-ladder fire engine to do a u-turn, but its cost can mean that less well-off people go less well-housed.

Policy makers love to write laws to address problems they've created instead of getting rid of the mischievous policy. Rent controls give landlords incentive to convert units into condominiums.

Then politicians legislate anti-condominium conversion laws. These actions reduce the incentives for builders to enter the market. Then the politicians call for housing subsidies.

Politicians never change because they never look back at their last policy. Years ago, Congress took the federal bulldozer to low-income housing in downtown areas. They replaced it with high-income high rises and office skyscrapers. Now they wonder about lack of "affordable" housing in cities.



G. James **Fleming**
Public Affairs Commentator

Black business in the 90s

What will the 1990s hold for African-American business? More correctly, what will the new decade hold for African Americans in business?

Will there be an increase in the number of Blacks who are included in Forbes' 500?

Will there be more African-Americans sitting on stock exchanges?

Will **Black Enterprise** be able to list many more African-American-owned corporations in the upper levels of the millions than it has in the past?

Will profitable franchises-owned by Blacks — blossom over the land?

Will African-Americans make a place for themselves in neighborhood shops and stores?

While business is business and there can be no "Negro business" in these days, there is strong argument why African-Americans should be represented on every level of the business, economic, industrial, commercial and corporate life of the country.

This is in keeping with the pattern established centuries ago by every wave of Americans who conquered this land. The time for the African-American is here— not to be won by violence or through favors — but by the usual competition in the market place ("Not alms but opportunity" is an historic slogan of the Urban League).

By education, training, brains, and hard work, also, as exemplified by little Israel.

* * *

Compared with the beginning of World War II or even the 1990s, the number and spread of Blacks in corporate America is impressive, relatively speaking, although some critics point to the fact that these are mostly on the lower levels, like the 27th vice-presidency of one company.

But, from small acorn, tall oaks grow. Being "on the inside" is the important thing, while the needlers work to open more doors in more places.

The fear is that the threatened cutback in defense industries and by some corporations, such as IBM, will put hundreds, if not hundreds of thousands, of white-and-blue-collar men and women on the unemployment lines. Even more to be feared is that the 1990s will see a notable economic decline in the nation, due to the huge deficit situation.

If such happens, there will be a corresponding ripple reaction, affecting those Blacks who buy and sell homes, cars, insurance, and the like. More important, the educational plans of many families will be thwarted or ruined.

* * *

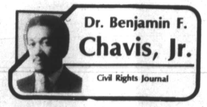
The African-Americans now in varied ranks of American business are there strictly on merit, with respectable credentials. As their tribe increases, this should mean a more "rainbow" employment pattern in the corporate life of the United States. These no-longer-pioneers should also help to undergird and expand American business, as they bring new insights and "new blood" into entrepreneurial and corporate life.

Some African-Americans will prefer being self-employed. For these, there is an endless raft of callings and occupations, many which offer lucrative rewards in addition to the psychological satisfaction of being their "own boss."

Economic wealth must pass into and through the hands of African-Americans, if they are to contribute healthily to a healthy American society — city, state and nation.

No one group of Americans should constitute the bulk of the nation's underclass. No one group should head the lists of the unemployed, the lowest paid, the highest urban dropouts, highest in prisons and the fewest enrolled in college. The list could continue.

The upward economic movement which started for Blacks in the 1990s, must gain increasing momentum, if the 1990s are to bring more inclusion and more opportunity to African Americans.



Dr. Benjamin F. **Chavis, Jr.**
Civil Rights Journal

Selma to Montgomery 25 years later

It has been 25 years since the historic Selma to Montgomery Voting Rights March.

In March, 1965, marchers representing the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) together with marchers from Selma and other Alabama communities successfully defied the violent forces of racism by marching across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma and headed toward the Alabama State Capitol, Montgomery.

When the marchers reached Montgomery, it was a triumph for the Civil Rights Movement and the national attention engendered by the determination of these marchers helped to pressure the Congress of the United States to pass the Voting Rights Act.

In March, 1990 there will be a 25-year Anniversary National Celebration of the Right to Vote.

During the weekend of March 1st through 4th of this year, thousands of persons will once again assemble in Selma, Alabama to celebrate the victory of the struggles and marches that led to the enactment of the Voting Rights Act.

This is very important because the celebration will occur at a time when the right to vote is being taken for granted in too many communities across the nation.

Many people died and shed their blood so that the right to vote can be extended to all citizens of the nation without discrimination due to race or socio-economic class.

We encourage a massive outpouring in support of the activities in Alabama during this historic observance. The whole nation should pause to pay tribute to the many who sacrificed themselves for the cause of justice and voting rights.

The National Right to Vote Celebration 25th Anniversary is being co-chaired by Congressman John Lewis, Rev. Dr. Joseph Lowery, Ms. Marie Foster and Dr. F.D. Reese.

We recall that John Lewis was one of the first to be brutally beaten by the Alabama State Police 25-years ago as he attempted to lead the march across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma to Montgomery.

Lewis at that time, was a leader of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. Yet, Lewis and the others, who were brutalized on what the history books have designated as "Bloody Sunday," did not let the racial violence and brutality keep them from making a successful challenge to the denial of voting rights for African Americans.

Ms. Marie Foster continues to exemplify the determination of the African American women of Selma who stood up victoriously 25-years ago as they helped to lead the march that was destined to change American history.

Now as a senior citizen, Marie Foster has affirmed her determination to march again to symbolize the necessity for vigilance and the need for everyone to continue to hold the right to vote as a precious human right.

We all recall the exuberant speech of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., at the conclusion of the Selma to Montgomery march on the steps of the Alabama State Capitol Building.

Dr. King reminded us then, "We must keep on marching for justice and for the right of all people to vote in this country."

Local Selma leaders, State Senator Hank Sanders and Attorney Rose Sanders and many others are now working hard to prepare to host many persons who will be travelling to Selma to participate in a series of workshops, seminars and rallies to be held in Selma, March 1-4, 1990.

A Special Youth leadership Training Session will be held by the 21st Century Leadership Organization on March 3rd and youth and young adults from around the nation are expected to attend.

It is important that the legacy and challenge of the struggle for voting rights be passed on to the next generation of leaders.

Most notably, a National Right to Vote Museum is now being established in Selma, Alabama as a living historical tribute to the voting rights movement. Contributions toward the establishment of this important institution can be sent to the National Right to Vote Museum, P.O. Box 2516, Selma, Alabama 36702.

The Rev. Dr. Joseph Lowery, the President of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference has announced plans to re-enact the march from Selma to Montgomery on March 4-8, 1990. We have come a long way but the final victory is still yet to be won.