EDITORIALS

John J. Oliver, Jr.
Chairman of the Board

Frances M. Draper
President

One of four Black males

It has long been suspected that a disproportionate number of young Black males is out of the mainstream of society, and under supervision for criminal violations.

A report, based on an analysis of 1989 figures from the Bureau of Justice Statistics, concludes that one out of every four Black young males is under control of the criminal justice system, meaning they are in prison, jail, on probation or under parole.

The 11-page report, entitled "Young Black Men and the Criminal Justice System: A Growing National Problem," was prepared by the Sentencing Project which says that 609,000 young men, ages 20-29 is the targeted group.

The statistics reveal that one in 16 Whites, one in 10 Hispanics are under criminal justice system control. As for women, the report said the figures show 2.7 percent Blacks, one percent of Whites and 1.8 percent of Hispanics are in the category under discussion.

Besides simply crunching numbers, the report said the figures challenge the "get tough" approach as a crime deterrent. It is pointed out that the prison population has tripled since 1973. The anti-drug strategy currently is likely to result in even higher rates of incarceration of Black young males.

The evidence points to a policy which is not working as a way to solve the crime problem. The report offered several recommendations for helping the situation. Included are developing dispute resolution processes and making available more counseling for youthful, minor and first-time offenders.

In addition, other alternatives include providing more restitution and community service, intensive probation supervision and community-based corrections programs. The final word in the report states flatly: "Jail and prison should be sanctions of last resort for offenders who cannot be diverted from the system."

The harsh reality in all this is the definitive statistical statement of facts which bear out the growing feelings of those concerned with the advancement of Blacks into the world's mainstream. The diminuition of the role of the Black family in the growth process is borne out in the report.

There is no simple solution — but now that we know, efforts should be redoubled to find ways to combat the trend. Everyone must be concerned — it is vital for Black survival.

Telephone caller ID

The problem of obscene or crank telephone calls has plagued telephone customers for many years. There are instances where repeated calls over an extended period have frustrated hapless victims who are powerless to do anything about them.

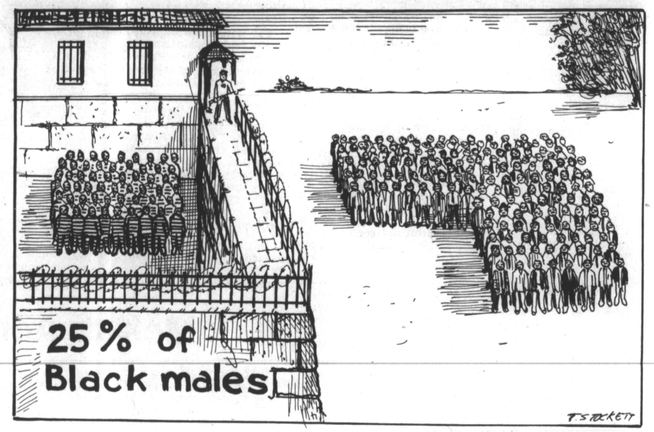
Now comes Caller ID, a service which lets customers know the telephone number of an incoming call. The number of the caller is shown on a display box which must be purchased from a separate equipment vendor.

The idea is not new. Actually, the service has been available in parts of Maryland since October 1989, and over 2,000 people are using this service to manage unwanted calls. Caller ID has been in operation in New Jersey since 1987.

Seems like a simple matter, but the idea has hit a snag. Three bills introduced in the 1990 session of the Maryland General Assembly would restrict the operation of the Caller ID service. At issue is the restriction proposed which would provide blocking out of non-published numbers from the service.

This would, of course, completely thwart the effectiveness of the Caller ID concept, and render the service easily surmounted and useless.

We support the Caller ID concept, and view efforts to defang its usefulness as against the public interest.



Parren J. Mitchell
Former U.S. Rep.

Jesse made the right move

Jesse Jackson will not seek the office of the District of Columbia. For many reasons, I think he made the right decision. To have done so his national and international image would have been diminished, thus also diminishing his political clout.

I had hoped he would have made the right decision. Of course he has the talent and ability to serve as mayor, and, indeed, his charrismatic personality could possibly have had a salutary effect on some of the social pathologies (murders, substance abuse) that plague the city.

It is the history of the "independence" of the District of Columbia which weighed heavily on my mind as I hoped that Jesse Jackson would not run for the office of mayor.

As you leave the Baltimore Washington Parkway to take the Kenilworth Avenue exit into D.C., there is a large sign that reads "Washington, D.C. — The Last Colony." The history of events that lead to "Independence" for Washington caused that sign to be posted by irate residents.

When the congress approves "independence" for the District, it imposed certain restrictions which frustrate, irritate, and to a large extent, hamper the power of the local government.

Former Congresswoman Edith Green, a democrat from Oregon, amended the legislation to establish "federal enclaves," which, in effect, barred the city goverment from having any jurisdiction or power over those federal enclaves.

To illustrate the point, Capital Hill and federal enclaves have their own police departments and D.C. police cannot enter those areas except when there is a formal request that they be permitted to do so.

Before "independence", Congress controlled the budget for the District, and continues to do so today. The congressional District of Columbia committee approves the budget and therefore can exert considerable political pressure on the city.

Many fine members of Congress such as Con. Ron Dellums and Con. Julian Dixon served on the DC Committee, and strove to protect the independence of the city government.

However, some members of the committee are pre-reconstruction ERA in their thinking and post-Reconstruction era in their heavy handed activities on the committee.

When the local government proposed a gay rights protection law, Congressman Stan Parris of Virginia threatened to deny the D.C. budget unless the proposal was scuttled. Only after it was dropped was the budget approved.

When D.C. "independence" was approved, it permitted one U.S. Representative for the city, but denied that representative the right to vote on national legislation. Thus, sadly, Con. Walter Fauntroy can participate in congressional debates; serve on congressional committees; be a congressional delegate on international trips; but he does not, cannot vote on legislation before the whole U.S. House of Representatives.

To add salt to the wound, although the District of America has a larger population than several states, it is denied representation in the U.S. Senate. The District of Columbia should have two U.S. Senators, and given its population composition, both would be Black. Is it any wonder the sign on Kenilworth Avenue reads "Washington, D.C. — the Last Colony?"

Some members of congress regard Washington as a congressional domain. One congressman, railing against the murder rate in the District, demanded that the militia be called in to patrol the streets of Washington.

As mayor, Jesse Jackson would not only have been required to appear before the D.C. committee to defend his budget, but he would also be required to testify before the committee on any issue on which the majority of the committee voted to hold a hearing.

As a debater, Jesse Jackson can more than hold his own against anyone. However, I also know that the anti-DC forces on the committee would push for frequent hearings on almost any issue so that they could seize the chance to attempt to humiliate, embarrass, and berate him. In short, they would use hearings to show that Jesse Jackson had been "brought to heel" and the press would eat it up.

No Jesse Jackson did not need that. The larger the shadow you cast, the greater is the desire of your enemies destroy you.

LETTERS

Autobiography of Malcolm X

When Malcolm X died twenty-five years ago, I was nine years old. All I knew about him was his supposed hatred of White people. I decided I was going to find out more about him when I saw a televised documentary featuring him on the "Eyes on the Prize" series last month.

I had heard about his Autobiography years ago, but never was inspired to read it until now. It's the first non-fiction book that I didn't want to put down. Some books are heart-warming, but this book was gut-wrenching, I've never read a book that's ablaze with such fervent fierceness, fire, and fury before. I can believe he really was 'the angriest Black man in America.'

Having read this book, I can conclude that he was not, as I had always heard, a hater of White people and a proponent of violence towards them. What he tried to do was expose the stark naked truth about the cruelties that Whites had committed against non-Whites.

The racial violence that swept across some of America's cities during the summer of 1964 was not instigated by him. It was, as he observed, a result of the laws' failing for so long to protect African Americans from the rampant injustices they suffered at White people's hands. He told the truth when he said more rioting was to occur.

Malcolm X's interests extended way beyond racial matters. He said he was interested in just about everything; in fact, he was a walking library. I marvelled at his brilliant intellect. He had an intensely powerful command of the English language. I don't think there was any area of history, science, literature that he couldn't discuss confidently.

It's hard to believe he had only an eighth-grade education. I think I'm not exaggerating when I say he had one of the greatest minds of this century. Twenty-five years after his assassination, I'm just now mourning what was taken away too soon.

DEBORAH M. MOSELEY

Case for affirmative action

As a middle-aged White male, whose own family got free medical care, unquestioned access to higher education through the GI Bill, who shared in the social uplift of the New Deal, I support affirmative action for those who are still left out.

A few years ago, my wife and I — as a direct result of preferential breaks for homebuyers-were able to buy a small house. The Federal Government, as every home owner knows, pays large portions of the interest for the first home buyer. That's affirmative action, a special break for a special group under special circumstances. It is affirmative action for realtors, banks and for middle class buyers with small savings.

Tenants and renters never get that break even though poor people, who also pay taxes, share the burden of the special program. The majority of homebuyers are middle-class Whites.

Recently, Mitch Snyder, a community activist, gave an address to a fairly affluent group. He asked members of the audience who lived in "Federally subsidized" housing to raise their hands. Nobody did.

Then he asked homeowners to identify themselves. Almost everyone raised a hand. Then he pointed out that homeowners are subsidized. The U.S. Treasury gives up to $46 billion each year to homeowner deductions in a system that predominately benefits people who earn more than $50,000 a year.

Tax breaks for home buyers may not be wrong. This is not the issue. What is wrong is the smug psychology of some middle class Whites who take advantage of all kinds of breaks for themselves while denying affirmative action for the most oppressed areas of society. The principle of affirmative action is vital to all of us in society.

Millions of White Americans keep deposits in local Savings and Loan Institutions— the very banks that just got a massive preferential bailout from (of all people) the conservative opponent of affirmative action, President Bush.

The preferential $160 billion bailout for a select body of mismanaged banks was announced the same month that the Rehnquist Court struck down set-aside affirmative action contracts for qualified Black businesses in the heart of the old Confederacy. There was no outcry about the qualifications of the bank executives who squandered billions. The White male bankers got their affirmative action on demand.

In accepting social programs for our families and children, we are all bound together in a vast network of affirmative action, mutual-support systems we take for granted. It is hypocritical, profoundly wrong, to call affirmative action for minorities "racism in reverse" while treating affirmation action for bankers, farmers, home buyers, and White men of power as "entitlements."

Mr. Rockwell is an assistant professor of history and philosophy at a university in Texas.

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COMMENTARY & OPINIONS

Manning Marable
Along The Color Line

'Glory' Black History struggle

The history of Black America has always been, fundamentally, a struggle to be free. Enslavement and racial oppression were more than physical restrictions and the use of coercion against a people.

Domination could only be achieved when the mind and spirit, as well as the body, was controlled and broken. More than a century ago, the slaves came to understand that their freedom could only be achieved if they assumed an active role in the struggle to liberate themselves, mentally and physically.

Freedom handed down from above to the oppressed, is no freedom at all. Freedom is only real when the oppressed themselves, through their own initiative and inner strength, shatter the chains of bondage.

This is the central message of "Glory," a historical drama depicting the ordeals of a Black regiment which fought during the height of the Civil War.

The film is based partially on the actual letters of Union Army Colonel Robert Gould Shaw (played by Matthew Broderick), who trained and led the Massachusetts 54th Regiment in a devastating assault on Fort Wagner, South Carolina, in July, 1863.

The son of wealthy abolitionists, Shaw was convinced that African-American troops, if properly trained and equipped, could exceed the performance of White Northern troops.

As the film unfolds, there is a synthesis of sorts between this abolitionist-inspired belief in the equality of Blacks and Whites, with the African-American desire to strike a personal and collective blow against the evils of slavery.

The wisest decision of "Glory" director Edward Zwick was to focus the heart of the film not on Broderick's character, but instead on four fictional Black men, who are used to represent the divergent personalities with the 54th Regiment.

Denzel Washington portrays A Nat Turner/Malcolm X style character, a Black man whose back has been bloodied many times by the slaveholder's lash, who fights in order to settle scores.

Morgan Freeman plays the regimental sergeant, a former gravedigger who fights because of his willingness "to die for freedom."

Jihmi Kennedy portrays a rural and illiterate ex-slave, but a crack shot; and screen newcomer Andre Braughter does an excellent job as a New England educated, middle class Black man, who finds his roots and identity by bonding with his fellow Black soldiers.

The device permits a largely White audience to see both the diversity and humanity among the African-American soldiers, who have volunteered into the Union Army to liberate their brethern in the South, as well as themselves.

Through the ordeal of conflict, in battle against White slaveholder officers, the Black soldiers become active participants in the struggle for freedom.

This is not to suggest that "Glory" holds up to historical examination. As American films go, it is generally very good, particularly the detailed accuracy of the battle sequences. However, it is short of the mark within the framework of Black social history.

"Glory" provides many examples of White racism within the ranks of Northern troops and officers, who refused to accept the idea of Black men carrying guns. But this racism within the military was simply a reflection of bigotry within the entire Northern society and political establishment as a whole.

Lincoln didn't free the slaves with the Emancipation Proclamation as a Humanitarian gesture, but solely as a military decision to disrupt the South's labor supply.

The war was widely unpopular among White Northern workers, and they targeted their grievances by making Blacks scapegoats. On July 13, 1863, only days before the gallant and bloody assault by Black troops on Fort Wagner, the White working class in New York City rioted against the city's Black population.

Hundreds of people, mostly women and children, were killed; thousands more were left homeless For Black abolitionist Henry Highland Garnet, who was nearly killed in the race riot, these were "Dark and terrible days."

One of "Glory's" most moving sequences which depicts Black troops rejecting discriminatory wages beneath those of White soldiers is also historically accurate, but insufficient.

The Enlistment Act of July, 1862, had set the pay scale for White privates at $13 per month vs. $7 per month for Black privates. The 54th Massachusetts refused any pay for more than a year, and the policy of discriminatory wages was finally reversed in 1864.

However, many other Black troops protested the policy as well. In the 3rd South Carolina all-Black regiment, Sergeant William Walker mobilized his fellow soldiers, stacking their rifles and refused to fight under the Jim Crow wages. Predictably, Walker was court martialed and shot.

Finally, "Glory" gives the audience the false sense that Black troops were an exception to the rule in Civil War combat.

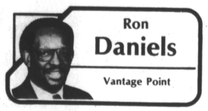
Actually, a total of 180,000 Blacks fought in the Union Army by the end of the war. More than 38,000 died, a 40 percent higher casualty rate than for White Northern troops.

Blacks fought in over 250 separate engagements, beginning as early as the fall of 1862. There were also scores of Black officers, including abolitionists Major Martin R. Delany and Captain P.B.S. Pinchback.

Ex-slaves, both women and men, worked as spies behind Confederate army lines. African-Americans, civilians and soldiers alike, were not passive witnesses in the struggle for freedom.

Despite these weaknesses, "Glory" makes a substantial contribution to our awareness of the role of African-Americans in the conflict to abolish human bondage.

Dr. Manning Marable is Professor of Political Science, and Sociology at the University of Colorado, Boulder.



Ron Daniels
Vantage Point

Pan Africanism

In portraying the reaction to the release of Nelson Mandela, a national network television broadcast captured the Rev. Calvin Butts, the brilliant, progressive, young pastor of the historic Abyssinian Baptist Church, speaking from his pulpit in the heart of Harlem.

In expressing his joy that Mandela was now out of captivity, Rev. Butts said "We are an African people," whatever affects African people anywhere, affects African people everywhere.

Rev. Butts was thus upholding the philosophy and principles of pan-Africanism; the concept that African people throughout the world must unite and work together for the development of our African homeland as a basis for the development and progress of African people throughout the world.

The concept of pan - Africanism has been a constant current within the stream of Black political thought in America. It did not take long for the idea to emerge from among the captive sons and daughters of Africa in America, that America was a hostile territory where African people were unwelcome except as slaves.

Despite the ruthless attempt to brainwash and de-Africanize African people in America, a craving for Africa persisted in the hearts and minds of at least some of the people of African descent in this country.

Martin R. Delany, Wilmot S. Blyden and Bishop Henry McNeal Turner were among the 19th century African American leaders who extolled the virtues of ancient African culture and civilization and articulated visions of what Blyden called "Pan-Negroism" as a strategy to empower and restore Black people to their position of historical greatness on the world stage.

In the early 20th century W. E. B. Dubois actually convened a series of pan-African conferences and congresses where African people from around the world discussed the current situation and focused on the future prospects for Africa and the race.

And of course pan-Africanism was the cornerstone of the philosophy and movement of Marcus Garvey who emphatically proclaimed: "Europe for the Europeans, Asia for the Asians and Africa for the Africans at home and abroad."

In the latter half of this century it was Malcolm X who stood apart from the civil rights leaders in stressing the pan - African and international dimensions of the struggle of African people in America. Malcolm constantly reminded us that we might be a minority in America, but that we are a majority in the world.

For those who ridiculed the idea of identifying with Africa, Malcolm bristled "why you left your mind in Africa."

On the African continent, it was Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, President of Ghana, who most forcefully projected the vision and ideology of African unity and pan-Africanism as vehicles for the liberation, empowerment and development of Africa and the African diaspora.

With the call to Black Power, Black consciousness and nationalism in the 60's and 70's pan-Africanism gained a certain currency and popularity among movement activists.

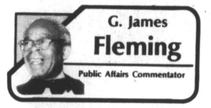
Leaders like Kwame Ture (formerly Stokely Carmichael) of SNCC Jimmy Garrett of the Center for Black Education, Owusu Sadaukai (Howard Fuller) of Malcolm X Liberation University; Imamu Amiri Baraka of the Congress of African People and countless others pressed pan - Africanism and the concept that "we are an African people" to the forefront of the Black liberation movement.

There was a genuine belief during this period that pan - Africanism was essential to the survival and progress of African people in Africa, America and throughout the diaspora.

This upsurge of Pan - Africanism produced organized efforts to provide political and material support for Africa. Organizations like Pan - African Skills successfully convinced skilled African Americans to lend assistance to various initiatives, institutions and enterprises in Africa. The Southern African Support Project (SASP) was also organized to provide concrete material support for projects in southern Africa.

On the political front boycotts were directed at U.S. corporations doing business in southern Africa like Gulf Oil (Angola) and Polaroid (South Africa). The Gulf boycott, which was spearheaded by a young man named Randall Robinson, had a great impact. Of course Randall Robinson would later become the Executive Director of Trans-Africa.

This influential lobby for Africa and the Caribbean can also be said to be a product of this period of pan-Africanist ascendancy. Last but not least African Liberation Day, as an African American focal point for education and political mobilization around Africa, was first organized in 1972.



G. James Fleming
Public Affairs Commentator

GIs will need

Do you remember the G.I. Bill of Rights? Or do you remember how your parents told you what the G.I. Bill of Rights, of the World War II and Korean War era, did for them?

As the United States eventually and drastically reduced its manpower in Europe — both military and civilian — the impact that some 300,000 to 400,000 returning men and women will have on the country can scarcely be imagined or overstated.

Added to these thousands, will be additional hundreds of thousands — nearer to millions — in defense and related industries who will also be displaced and without work or livelihood.

Some — both military and civilian — will find themselves unemployable. Others will find that, regardless of their training or past experience, the country - at - peace has no place for them.

Still others will be victims - in - reverse of the new technologies — technologies that have run away from their grasp.

Whereas, in and after World War II, G.I.s — veterans — largely consisted of males, this time there will be many more thousands of women, regular enlistees, who will also be out of work or living only on meager pensions.

* * *

The G. I. Bill of Rights became law in 1948, and detailed benefits which would be available to veterans of the United States' armed forces who served in World War II and, later, in the Korean War.

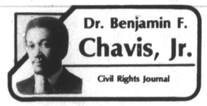
These benefits — all at government expense — included opportunities for training in all fields and at all levels, from the most elemental to the most advanced; from the purely "vocational" to the most highly professional; from the orthodox to the questioningly sophisticated.

The bill also provided guaranteed government loans for homes, farms and businesses, and job training and counselling.

* * *

Money alone, however, is not the only route towards satisfying our new veterans of the Army, Navy, Air Force and related branches.

The private sector alone cannot meet the needs of the flood of veterans and their families, together with the dislocation of the millions of industrial workers. Short of full employment, there will be a crying need for a modernized, expanded GI Bill of Rights.



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

Liberia needs liberation

The West African nation of Liberia needs to be liberated from the senseless fratricide that is now engulfing this nation. During the last several months, more than 100,000 Liberians have had to flee their homeland to avoid the bloodshed and killings.

The global community needs to speak out more forcefully against the brutality and repression of the aspirations of the people of Liberia, by the government of Liberia, led by the ruthless General Samuel K. Doe.

Reports that are now coming out of Liberia from Liberian refugees attest to the growing accounts of vicious indiscriminate acts of violence by the Liberian Army against the people of Liberia, in particular innocent women and children in civilian areas of the country.

The thirty million African Americans here in the United States especially need to be made more aware of this impending crisis and need to be more involved in helping to resolve the conflict and stop the merciless killing of African people by some Africans who are being controlled and financed by foreign interests. Toward this end, a little history would be important to note.

Liberia was formally founded in 1822 by Africans who had been slaves in the United States. The Congress of the United States and at the time U.S. President James Monroe, provided the money and transportation for these "freedmen" to go back to Africa to set up a U.S. style African nation.

In 1847, Liberia with U.S. aid and support. became Africa's first so-called post-colonial independent republic.

There were, however, some obvious problems in the historical development of Liberia as a nation. First, there were hundreds of thousands of Africans already dwelling in the land now known as Liberia.

Secondly, many of the so-called "freed U.S. slaves" were preconditioned to think they were better than the indigenous Africans living in Liberia.

Thirdly, there were some authentic African nationalists resettled in Liberia, but many of them were prevented from organizing the majority native population.

In sum, the historic strategies of, "divide and conquer" and "manipulate and exploit" were put into operation in the development of Liberia with the complicity of some Africans both resettled and native.

Of course, this history caused over the years an enormous resentment by the natives of the region to all those who had come to disenfranchise and exploit the native population.

Thus, in 1980, Samuel Doe of one of the indigenous tribes, led the overthrow of the Liberian government and has ruled Liberia since 1980. The problem is that Mr. Doe has seemingly forgotten the history of indignity that he sought to replace.

Today General Doe with full U.S. support of his army, is killing his own people throughout Liberia. Tragically, the main interest of the U.S. government appears to be the same as it was 168 years ago: "divide and conquer" and exploit the riches of the land for U.S. economic and strategic interests.

Once again, American foreign policy toward Africa is a sad and tragic commentary. We must raise our voices loud and clear in protest fo the massacre of hundreds of people in Liberia, Samuel Doe and his regime stand as a moral insult to the dignity of humanity.

Kenneth B. Noble of the **New York Times** documented in interviews with some of the Liberian refugee victims the escalation of the brutality.

Several days ago in the small town of Butuo, Liberia, Noble reported that Mrs. Mindo Paye and her family were asleep in their home when Doe's uniformed armed forces attacked them.

Mrs. Paye's son and husband were killed by the soldiers and her 11-year-old daughter was severely wounded. Mindo Paye cried out. "They just shot us like animals." This incident unfortunately exemplifies the current situation in Liberia.

There is no justification for fratricide. Doe has exposed his own incapacity to rule or lead Liberia. There will soon be another popular uprising in Liberia, but the next time the target will not be the "elite" of Liberian society, it will be Doe himself.

The liberation of Liberia has been too long coming into being, but it will be coming sooner now than later.