EDITORIALS

John J. Oliver, Jr.
Chairman of the Board

Frances M. Draper
President

Mother's Day 1990

The world of commercialism has made it easy to honorably celebrate Mother's Day. All that is necessary, is to purchase the proper floral arrangement, piece of jewelry, or have dinner at an ultra-fancy restaurant.

Of course, this simply satisfies the surface requirements for the day without addressing the real reason for the establishment of a day to honor mothers — and grandmothers.

A heartfelt expression of love oftentimes is a greater celebratory gesture than any display of materialistic glitz and glitter merchandisers want you to believe is important.

The first Mother's Day was observed in 1907 at the request of Anna Jarvis of Philadelphia, who asked her church to hold service in memory of all mothers on the anniversary of her mother's death. By Presidential Proclamation, the second Sunday in May was established as Mother's Day. (Pub. Res. No. 2, May 8, 1914).

For years, celebration of the day was a religious experience. In Christian churches, it was **de rigeur** to attend services wearing a red rose if your mother was living, and a white rose (or carnation) if she was dead.

Although activities were planned for mothers, especially in the case of large families, the focus began with church service and thus Mother's Day took on a special meaning to the recipient.

Mother's Day 1990 is the first in a new decade, and a chance to revert to the original meaning of the day, and a tightening of the familial relationship so vital to the structuring and shepherding of young people of today's world.

Mother's Day has a special meaning, for indeed mothers are special people.

DO THE WRITE THING:

Problems

When I first arrived in Baltimore not more than two weeks ago, I was happy to run across a newspaper that catered to and addressed the Black community.

And so I read the Baltimore AFRO AMERICAN with interest until I arrived at a half page ad on various Nabisco Products.

I am a firm supporter of divestment in and sanctions against South African, I was very upset to see an ad from a company, RJR Nabisco, that basically supports South Africa economically and its systemof apartheid in a newspaper that supposedly addressed the Black community.

I wonder do you know RJR Nabisco is a company that invests in South Africa?

JETUN BAILEY

Terminology in 1990 Census

I write to you requesting investigation as to why, in 1990, the term "Negro" is used in the new census form currently being distributed. This is an insult to all Black/Afro-Americans.

We have fought diligently to abolish this degrading terminology from our race. And now, decades later, the United States government has the audacity to dig up and formally distribute this insult.

Could this be a ploy to purposely offend our community, thus encourage members to not return forms and, in turn, miss out on proper representation in America?

Please investigate and bring this offensive blunder to the attention of the public and, most important, the attention of the United States Government. We cannot risk not being counted!! It is the responsibility of the American government to address our community respectfully!!!

A CONCERNED & INSULTED BLACK AMERICAN CITIZEN

Driving 'Miss Daisy'

I am "up to here" with these people who think the world owes them a living. I am 74 and still work full time for a pittance, but I like my job.

I have worked three jobs, seven days a week, as a waitress. I know many people who couldn't make it on one salary. So they worked two jobs. Now it's work the system, not a job.

Don't tell me I am wrong. One panhandler told me he made $100 to $150 a day panhandling. And here Mr. Savage (Cong. Gus Savage) acts as if its worse to be a chauffeur to a cantankerous old lady. Mr. Freeman as Hock was never subservient. He was always dignified and manly, which was the whole point of the story. When we left the theatre we were weeping, it was so moving.

It was a job to learn to love the old lady and me him.

We need to teach our young people the value of honest work, working to do the best we can. I am not looking to be published, I just like to get on my soap box even if no one listens.

Ed.'s Note: This letter was handwritten and signature is omitted.

Congratulations

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you and your staff for the excellent job you displayed on Wednesday, April 4 at the Great Blacks in Wax reception for the Black Press.

Through your unceasing passion for exellence, dedication, and the preservation of our rich past, you and your team of professionals produced an exceptional exhibition/program that will plant a significant "seed" in the minds of those generations to follow.

Please extend my compliments and appreciation to everyone responsible.

GRANT WILLIAMS, JR.

G. James **Fleming**
Public Affairs Commentator

Looters pay up after hurricane

Every corner of the world learned, last September, that looters of all ages had been running rampant all over St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands. Some news reports called the state of affairs anarchy.

Men and women were pictured on TV taking away from stores, or carting away, everything — fruits and vegetables, small can goods, larger appliances and, sometimes, the entire display rooms of furniture.

The commentators said: "Everything has been cleaned out."

From the beginning there were voices in St. Croix which rebutted, saying the TV had over-reacted and, further, that much of the small goods taken away were "given away" by the business people, who believed they were covered by their insurance because of the devastation.

Whatever the explanation, however, no one denied that there was looting.

Be that as it may, or may not, there is now another side of the looting story — a side unexpected and not heard of elsewhere before.

The "other side" is that several of the looters, many without identifying themselves, have paid for the goods they looted, without any pressure or any real threat from the law.

How surprised some merchants were to find a note, with some green money attached, expressing regrets for what had happened during the extremities of Hurricane Hugo.

* * *

Thanks to the *Daily News* of the Virgin Islands, it is now known that one couple, "While cleaning up their ransacked shop, were astonished to find a dozen promissory notes from people who had taken items from the store after the Hugo shock on September 17."

Other residents "including realtors, business people, a lawyer, even a V.I. senator, began stopping by to confess, that, they, too, had taken things from the store and would pay for them...."

The latter shopowners, natives of Danvenport, Iowa, had made up their minds to close shop and return to the mainland, but the re-visits of the looters "makes me feel great that there are some honest people in the world," said Hal Longer, while his wife, Mary, added, "It restores my faith."

The Longers have decided to continue making their home in St. Croix, according to reports.

One other business place found an IOU, scribbled on an envelope. It said, "I took four boxes of cigars. I am one of your regular customers. I will pay you when I see you. — Bill."

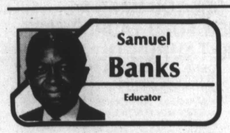
On the back of the envelope some one had written "I took some, too." — Don."

A grocer, located in an opulent East End section of the island, said after he reopened his store, some people "wanting to make amends" approached him. Unidentified, one of the former looters, handed the shopkeeper $27, "for the six tins of pipe tobacco." "Best of all, he has a smile on his face every time he comes back to the shop," according to the businessman.

* * *

Why is there looting. What makes a looter?

It simplistic terms, a looter is like a member of a mob — any kind of mob. And a mob, without rhyme or reason, behaves in a manner quite different from how the individuals, one at a time, would act without the reenforcement of the mob.



Samuel **Banks**
Educator

Class of 1990: Quo Vadis?

The members of the Class of 1990 will enter, in a real sense, the "best of times and the worst of times." However, the opportunities for personal fulfillment, challenge, and being able to soar to the heights far outweigh the negatives, gloom, and pessimism.

The knowledge, skills, perspectives concerning a larger world order and coping skills, if you apply yourself, will enable you to achieve success. The time is now at hand whether you are a high school or college - university graduate to become serious about your career goals and life. Congratulations to all of you.

As I reflect on each of you in the Class of 1990, I am reminded, as you march to the sonorous, majestic, and exhilarating strains of Elgar's "Pomp and Circumstance" and Mendelssohn's "War March of the Priests, among other stirring music, that my annual "commencement column" and columns for the start of a new year, are two of the most difficult columns for me to write.

The difficulty flows from the fact that I seek in each of the seasonal columns (i.e., commencement and start of a new year) to address in a personal and substantive way what I believe to be pivotal and urgent in addressing short-term and long-term issues of immense moment, value and consequence for us as Black people.

The central thesis, however, in all of my columns affirms a fundamental and simple proposition: We must use our intellectual skills, talents, and physical mass to push forward and upward for full manhood - womanhood.

Now that you have begun the "begin of the beginning" as represented in your graduation, it becomes critical and a categorical imperative that you put into operation the overarching and paramount purpose of education. The purpose, simply stated, is service.

Our nation and world through your adherence to rational processes for resolving societal conflicts, solid and distinctive preparation, assumption of church, civic, and community responsibilities and duties and drive and initiative should be a better place.

In brief, you now have the opportunity to make a happy and enduring difference in the life of your community. I dare you, in your exuberant, ebullient, and exciting tender years, to accept the challenge.

The historic ills of racism, sexism, religious bigotry and poverty continue to bedevil and trouble our nation and the world.

I hope that you will not spend your energies simply engaging in vacuous and extravagant rhetoric regarding institutional - societal ills, but will utilize your knowledge, skills, and distinctive abilities in conceptualizing the implementing action - oriented programs which will strike a blow for equality of opportunity for all, societal justice and a more caring and sharing social order.

You, in your tender years, pulsating with energy, unusual abilities and daring, can make a telling and lasting contribution in bridging the socio - racial chasm in our nation and accelerate socio - economic human possibilities and equity for all.

In the spirit of your launching into the deep and making a happy difference in our nation, I propose three points for your consideration:

I. Dare to believe in your roots. — The highly revered and esteemed Dr. Carter Godwin Woodson, universally regarded as the "Father of Black History," believed that if a people did not know its history it would become a "negligible factor in the thought of the world."

Self - esteem, a positive self - concept and personal steadiness and stability. in a frenetic and rapidly changing social order, flow from one having a sense of where he/she and his/her people have come and a sense of one knowing where one is going.

Know your history and take pride in it. Always bear in mind to be Black, Proud, and Prepared does not in anyway mean that you are against any ethnic - racial or religious group.

Two books that would be very valuable reading at this point are James Comer's Maggie's American Dream and John Johnson's Succeeding Against the Odds.

II. Immerse yourself in the total life of the community. — As you pursue your career choices, marriage, and family life and vertical mobility, make a determined effort to give something back to the community. Always know, even the midst of your present euphoria and joy, that you did not achieve your objective by yourself.

Countless persons as represented in parents, family members, teachers, administrators, members of the clergy, civic and political officials, among others, helped you to join the world of letters.

Now it falls to you to show your gratitude and appreciation by giving something back to the community. The philosophical and ethical - moral imperative is clear: "To whom much is given much is required

I challenge you, in your tender years, to become an advocate for children and youths who are the recipients of shoddy and unequal education, persons afflicted with AIDS, boarder babies in hospital, the homeless, persons suffering from substance abuse (i.e., drugs) and alcohol and the dispossessed and poor in our midst. The challenge is real and urgent.

III. Maintain your hopeful and irrepressible spirit.

It falls to you, and in your tender years, in an age pulsating with high technology and cybernetics and an eroded sense of community to affirm and manifest hope, optimism and the promise of better todays and tomorrows.

I challenge you to believe that you can create a brave and harmonious new world order. Now is the time to act.

The Afro-American
MEMBER The Audit Bureau MDDC NNPA UPI

COMMENTARY & OPINIONS

Ron **Daniels**
Vantage Point

Environment not a White issue

The Twentieth Anniversary of Earth Day was an event which received widespread publicity in virtually every aspect of the media. Informative educational features aired on radio and television and in depth articles ran in magazines and newspapers nationwide.

The issue of saving planet earth appropriately received serious focus as the evidence mounts that the environment is in serious and dangerous disrepair.

That the public paid attention at all was a triumph for the environmental movement. With dogged determination the environmental movement has blossomed to the point that "green" is now near the top of the American Agenda and world agenda.

What I found striking and alarming about Earth Day, however, was the noticeable absence of a significant African American presence at the various forums, debates and events associated with the Earth Day activities.

Overwhelmingly the complexion of the Green movement in America is White. It is as if Black people feel that the green issues are not pertinent to our survival and development as a people.

Some of this lack of an active presence by African Americans in the green movement can be traced to the 60's and 70's. With the advent of the Black Power movement large numbers of White activists no longer felt that there was a meaningful role for them in the civil - rights movement.

Many White activists turned their creative energy to organizing around nuclear disarmament, peace and the environment. There was a tendency to isolate these issues from the immediacy of the civil - rights agenda and the interest of Black people.

Because the initiative around these issues was principally carried forth under White leadership, African Americans increasingly came to perceive peace, disarmament and the environment as "White issues."

It occurs to me that it is time to correct what is obviously a misperception. Saving the environment is a Black issue too.

African Americans must be clear that global warming, ozone depletion, acid rain and toxic waste in the land and rivers are not phenomena which will spare African Americans simply because of our skin color. Environmental destruction means human destruction, including Black people in America and the world.

In fact African Americans and Third World people have an urgent stake in saving and preserving the environment. Within the United States African American and poor communities seem to be disproportionately targeted for toxic waste dumps and Africa and the Third World are increasingly seen by the west as : dumping grounds for toxic waste.

Similarly it is the land, resources and forests in the Third world which are also being disproportionately ravished in the interest of profit for national and multination corporations and giant developers.

The madness of materialism from capitalist exploitation in the west and mechanical Marxism in the east must be stopped if the human race is to survive.

African people need not take a back seat to anyone as it relates to an appreciation for nature and the environment. Within traditional African society there was a definite value placed on the need to be in harmony with nature and the importance of maintaining the delicate balance in the chemistry between human beings and the environment.

It is precisely this harmony and balance which is being jeopardized by greed and materialism. The unfolding of the modern commercial and industrial revolution and the acquisitive drive for "progress" has led to the sacrifice of nature and the environment in the interest of achieving the "good life."

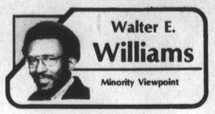
The victims of this progress cannot allow this insane trend towards universal self - destruction to continue.

Green is Black and Black is Green. African people are once again challenged to afro - centrically search our own past to discover the basis for the solution to a problem which threatens the very survival of humankind.

The spiritual and ethical values which lead our ancestors to have a wholesome and healthy respect for nature and the environment must be our guide as we join in and indeed assume a leading role in perserving the planet.

Saving the environment is not a White issue. African Americans and Third World people have too much at stake to lay back and let others lead on this issue.

The future belongs to the developing peoples of African and Third world. But there will be no future if all we inherit is an overheated, toxic waste infested and disastrously polluted planet.



Walter E. **Williams**
Minority Viewpoint

Crusade casualties

Common sense and decency are always the first casualties of moral crusades. Frustrated by the drug menace, decent Americans stand ready to sacrifice any personal liberty politicians pledge to be effective in the anti - drug crusade.

Hints and proposals coming from the Bush administration include: shooting down unarmed private planes suspected of transporting drugs; posting naval blockades; surveillance of bank accounts;

Performing warrantless searches and seizures; and placing National Guard patrols of our neighborhoods.

Drug Czar William Bennett has weighed in with the idea of suspending habeas corpus and even suggested that beheading drug dealers might be "morally plausible."

Many proposals border on totalitarianism; others must have their origins in the madhouse, such as the proposal that our government annually purchase the entire Colombian coca crop and sink it at sea.

Coming in a close second, in terms of lunacy, is the Bush administration proposal to subsidize Colombian non - coca crops — the thought being the peasants might instead export sugar to the United States.

The effect of either proposal would be to drive up the price of cocaine thus making coca production even more lucrative.

On top of that, President Bush's plan to provide U.S. markets for Colombian sugar, would be opposed by the U.S. sugar lobby which seeks to keep foreign sugar out in order to charge us higher prices.

In fact, much of the success of the foreign drug business is attributable to our sugar industry's success in getting Congress to impose sugar tariffs and quotas.

Here are my predictions for the drug war. We are going to get increasingly entangled in the domestic affairs of other nations.

There's going to be increasing corruption of public officials and legitimate businesses, more innocent bystanders shot in gang wars, continued undermining of respect for law, billions of dollars in property losses, more government intrusions into the lives of law - abiding citizens, and billions upon billions in federal spending on the drug war.

The only clear gainers will be drug leeches — experts, enforcers, researchers, and bureaucrats who use the misfortune of addicts as a means to higher income.

This scenario is easily visualized by watching reruns of "The Untouchables," featuring Robert Stack as G-man Eliot Ness. Every episode of this Prohibition - era serial featured Ness smashing kegs of whiskey and jailing a mob boss.

But sure enough, the next week there'd be more whiskey kegs to smash and more jailed mobsters.

The government never won the war against alcohol. They simply drove up its price, lowered its quality, corrupted officials and legitimate businesses, and got innocent bystanders shot in gang crossfire.

Our new Eliot Ness, Bennett, faces the same scenario; maybe he'll star in his own series.

It's a poor bargain to kiss our liberties goodbye in the war on drugs, or to create conditions where druggies, hell - bent on destroying their lives, must destroy innocent lives.

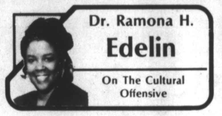
It's also a poor bargain to provide conditions for the corruption of public officials.

Much of our drug problem is the result of several decades of official assaults and the undermining of authority and traditional values of the family, church, and schools. We must put an end to that attack.

Moreover, we must consider other solutions, including some form of drug decriminalization.

Above all, whenever politicians speak of their war on drugs, we should remember the outcome of their past wars like the wars on poverty, illiteracy, and urban blight.

Years and billions of dollars later, the problems are worse than they were before the declaration of war.



Dr. Ramona H. **Edelin**
On The Cultural Offensive

Our mothers

African America owes an eternal debt of gratitude and love to the women who have, very often single - handedly, birthed, raised, housed, fed, nursed back to health, protected, socialized, educated, fought for and perpetuated our race at great personal sacrifice and in the face of conditions meant to systematically dehumanize, disenfranchise and debase our people.

In fact, all mankind owes a debt thatcan never be repaid to the African woman, who was the first earth creature to will herself human, and is therefore the mother of all.

Once a year, we all stop to remember and pay tribute to our mothers; and what is it that we must say in the context of the African American cultural offensive?

Our mothers have not only protected their wombs, as all women must, so that we could continue to be born and to survive as a people. They have also been forced to protect their bodies, minds, children, homes and communities from rape, devastation and murder of all forms.

Our mothers have not only set the standard for excellence in home - making, they have also created wherewithal, employment and markets for themselves and their families when only enslavement, servitude and poverty were meant to be their lot.

Our mothers have not only remained modest and beautiful in the teeth of a media dragon that would crucily caricature them as bestial and hideous, they have also gloriously transformed the fashion, hair, entertainment and artistic idioms through their oneness with Mother Nature's own inimitable colors, textures, sounds and movements.

Our mothers have not only remained steadfastly spiritual and faithful when others have cried out to God Himself that He had forsaken us; they have also lived and taught us, day - by - day, by example, the great mysterious wisdom that the Ancients, our ancestors, have left us.

Sojourner Truth taught us the meaning of truth with dignity. Harriet Tubman taught us how to make the decision to be free, and to free others. Mary McCleod Bethune taught us to educate ourselves. Mary Church Terrell taught us the form and content of public protest.

Shirley Chisholm taught us the meaning of political inclusion. Winnie Mandela taught us how to keep the flame of revolution burning even in the face of separation, imprisonment and the death of children.

Camille Cosby taught us how to sponsor the development of our group even from the apex of wealth and personal privilege. And there are so many other women — ancient and modern — whose names we must call out together, with praise and gratitude.

Today, as we face new challenges to our group which are as extreme, and perhaps even more insidious than those of our past, and as most of our women are raising their families alone, let us study and learn from the practical wisdom, as well as the noble and legendary strength, of our mothers.

Let us remember how they raised us, with hands-on, firm and unshakable love. Let us remember how they taught us about life, told us stories, gave us examples, showed us both the truth and the consequences.

Let us particularly note that, when our mothers withheld their intimate favors until after they were married, more of our women were married and more of our men were gainfully employed so that they could support their families.

Let us recall how our mothers always talked with their mothers about the decisions, problems and opportunities of life, and gained insight and courage from them.

Happy Mother's Day, my dear sisters — and may the strong, clear, virtuous and victorious spirits of our beloved Mothers be ever with us, as we continue in the way of our ancestors toward the new millennium.

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

But he just can't learn!

How many times have teachers said, "He can't learn." This is said about children in kindergarten and children in the first five grades of public school.

There may be many reasons why a child has difficulty in learning, but of course, he can't learn if he is the victim of lead paint.

Despite diligent efforts on the part of health officials, many victims of lead paint go undetected and the condition is revealed only when the child shows real physical disorders. In my city of Baltimore, 42,000 children are crippled for life because of lead paint.

You will find comparable numbers in every large city with substantial Black populations. I have not heard of any city in which there is a comprehensive, targeted program to combat and eliminate lead paint.

In most cities, there are fragmented efforts to end the curse of lead paint. If we know about this menace to children, why haven't we done something about it?

I called five friends who are elected officials in five different cities and in response to my query, all responded that landlord interest prevents the passage of effective legislation.

In Maryland, Delegate Sandy Rosenberg introduced legislation which would have required the State Department of the Environment to adopt regulations governing the conditions under which a lead hazard to children exists, and the procedures to be followed in abating a lead violation.

The legislation passed the Maryland House of Delegates overwhelmingly but under pressure from landlord interests, it died in the Senate Committee to which it had been assigned.

Lethargic, listless and, most often unresponsive, little Robert sits in the second grade class room, a victim of lead paint. That's why he can't learn.

"He just can't learn." "Oh! She is a slow learner." "This child must be put in a special education class because of his learning difficulties."

How many times have we labeled and stigmatized our young children with such phrases?

Yes, the youngster can't learn, or has difficulty in learning if he or she is the victim of poverty. The Report of the National Commission on Children should have shocked every adult in this nation.

It revealed that 20 percent of all children in America live in poverty, but the number is far greater for Black children, something close to 45 percent.

What does poverty do to the life of a child? Some such children cannot sleep well at night because of a fear of rats, because of the incessant sound of dripping water, because too many children are forced to sleep in a bed crowded with other children.

Children of poverty often know what hunger is. Most often, their diets are lacking in nutritious, healthy foods. If they have gas and electricity, there are times when those services are turned off, and there are documented cases of food poisoning from eating unrefrigerated food.

Children of poverty often lack the kind of parenting required to build character; to establish values; and to create incentives.

The parents of children in poverty frequently become so overwhelmed by the cruel grip of poverty that, though they may want to be, they simply cannot be good parents, they too have been destroyed by poverty.

It violates every Judeo - Christian principle, ethic and law to permit 20 percent of this nation's children to live in poverty. Poverty is cruel and cancer gnawing at the vital organs of this nation.

There are those who predict that in the future, America will be in economic jeopardy because of a lack of skilled workers; but it is highly unlikely that children in poverty will grow up to be skilled workers.

There are those who lament over the high cost of providing services to people in need. Among us, there are those who fear the loss of values in America.

Poverty most often does not instill values, the struggle to just survive daily is inimical to the teaching of values. Children of poverty will not grow up to be the adults who will reinstill a strong value fabric in this nation.

The Report of the National Commission on Children is a damning indictment of America. These words were spoken thousands of years ago, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven."

We have made a hell on earth for 20 percent of our children.