EDITORIALS

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

Memorial Day 1990

Monday, May 28 is Memorial Day, as designated by Presidential proclamation which sets the observance of the day on the last Monday of May. The fixed date was put into effect in 1971.

The first Memorial Day was in 1948, and was originally proclaimed as a day of prayer for permanent peace. The day was also a time for honoring those who died in battle in defense of the country.

The day was used as a time to decorate the graves with flowers and for other memorial tributes to the dead. It is a time when families visit the grave site of their loved ones, and services are held at most veterans cemeteries.

Unfortunately, the original meaning of Memorial (or Decoration) Day has become somewhat suffused in the melange of publicity and hype emphasizing the beginning of the picnic and beach season, with barbecuing and romping in the parks the major focus.

Memorial Day has come to mean the beginning of the straw hat season, the beginning of the summer fun season, and a lessening of the spiritual values attendant to the honoring of the dead.

This is not to suggest that the gaiety and fun of the day be sublimated. Instead we feel that the true meaning of the day should not be overlooked.

One solution, as adopted by many families, is to hold morning memorial services, then join in the celebrations of the holiday. There is room and time for both.

The Council Coalition

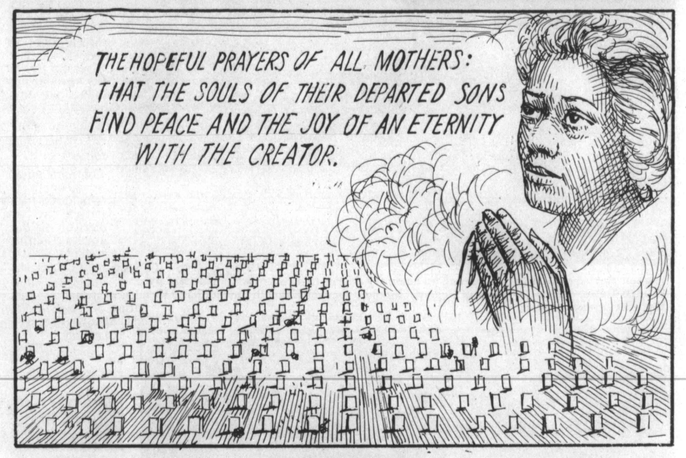
When drummer and bandleader Chick Webb was alive, the name of his theme song was "Let's Get Together." And this is what the Black members of the Baltimore City Council have done. They did not ask permission, nor consult with anyone except among themselves — they just did it.

And well they should, for in this city of a majority Black population, the struggle for a fair share in the economic development is sorely handicapped by a splintered representation in many areas.

Note that the liaison is called a coalition, not a caucus. A caucus deals almost exclusively with legislative matters. This getting together of the Black council members is to firmly address community needs with a concerted voice.

Despite the hoopla decrying this coalition as dividing the council along racial lines, such is not the intent nor the purpose. The inescapable fact is, for the Black community of Baltimore city to advance, it is vitally necessary that it get together.

This coalition is a start.



Samuel Banks
Educator

Sammy Davis, Jr. & Black America

Sammy Davis, Jr., by any standard of musical genius and virtuosity, was a masterful and compelling Olympian figure in our nation and throughout the world community.

He was, in reality, a marvelous and gifted man for all seasons as reflected in his consummate ability as a dancer, pianist, mime, actor star, and a peripatetic and unwavering ambassador for high human possibilities in our universe.

The universal appeal of Sammy Davis, Jr. as a musician - performer extraordinary transcended the narrow bounds of race, color, class, or religion. However, in spite of the universal appeal and acclaim that he enjoyed, Davis never forgot his historical roots.

He was a Black man in a White world, and, to the very end of his life in Beverly Hills, California, Davis knew and understood the pain of racism, exclusion, and institutional subordination which contribute mightily to the failure of a disproportionate number of 35 milton Black Americans to enter the socio - economic and educational mainstream of our nation.

The odds were heavily stacked against Davis achieving manhood and success in the American social order when one considers the poverty and racism which he encountered during his formative years in Harlem.

He was born in a Harlem tenement, never attended school, except for "tutoring" provided by his family as they made the entertainment circuit, unprepossessing in appearance and knowing full well, as was true of other blacks, that he was despised and rejected by the larger White society of the 1930's 1940's, and 1950's because of his color.

It was a combination of luck, chance, and fortuitous circumstance, in addition to his wondrous musical ability which enabled Davis to achieve phenomenal success and wealth against towering odds.

It was Davis's astounding ability to endure racial taunts, violence, traducement, and isolation, I believe, that he earned a special and distinctive place in the hearts and minds of his fellow Black Brothers and Sisters. He manifested the ancient and historic spirit of Black people as exemplified in "keep on keeping on."

There, too, existed amidst the bountiful love for Davis, an unsettling ambivalence or love-hate attitude because of some of his actions.

This ambivalence was shown by some Black Americans in terms of what they thought was the lack of visibility in the early phases of the civil rights struggle and his close political kinship with former President Richard Milhous Nixon in the 1970's when human and civil rights and socio - economic programs were being eroded.

The greatest source of anger came in 1972 when Davis publicly embraced President Nixon. Davis was later to recount his support for Nixon when he failed to support human and civil rights.

As Black Americans we can take special pride that God sent him our way and he never, even in fortune and fame, turned his back on us. To the very end, he was a proud, irrepressible, and fascinating Black Brother who lived beyond the confines of race and color.

Sammy Davis, Jr.'s life has distinctive value and meaning for Black children and youths trying to make their way in a world at war with itself. The lack of education, pervasive racism and the lack of acceptance in Davis's early years could not keep him down.

He knew, early in his career, the necessity of education anchor and enabler in his multifacted career. To this end, he utilized the process of self - education and extensive travel to cultivate his mind and refine his speaking skills.

The message for young Blacks is clear: Stay in school, develop your minds and bodies in a wholesome manner and work to achieve something of value with your God-given abilities. Each of us, in our unique way, can contribute to a better quality of life through preparation and positive action.

Sammy Davis, Jr. struggled incessantly and untiringly to remove the barriers to equal opportunity and social justice based on race, color, class, and gender.

Sammy Davis, Jr., is a towering man and force in our society, has paid his final dues.

LETTERS

Advisory committee

The Mayor's Advisory Committee on Art and Culture (MACAC) does not head up activities at the Morris Mechanic Theatre on Pier Six as was reported in the AFRO-AMERICAN on April 7.

An agency of the Office of the Mayor, MACAC is responsible for many cultural programs and projects designed to serve the arts community and Citizens of Baltimore. The most visible of these projects is the Artscape festival, in its ninth year, which has brought many notable performers and art exhibitions, free of charge, to the public.

Last year, over 50 per cent of the participants in Artscape '89 were minorities. Of the major art exhibitions, there were three minority curators. This year, minority participation in Artscape will increase over last year's figure. All of the arts curators, except one, are minority representatives.

Artscape '89 brought free to the public performing stars such as Martha Reeves, Grover Washington, Jr., Ramsey Lewis, Brenda Alford and the Morgan State University Jazz Band, Queen Ida and the Max Roach quartet.

In fact, MACAC met with representatives of the Baltimore AFRO-AMERICAN, last year, to discuss ways to reach their readership so they could know of the opportunities to participate in Artscape.

Artscape '90 will bring the likes of Roberta Flack and Chick Corea, among others, for the enjoyment of Baltimore's citizens, as always, free-of-charge.

Also, on April 7, Mayor Schmoke and MACAC conducted the First Annual Billie Holliday Vocal Competition in honor of the 75th Anniversary of the birth of Baltimore's legendary jazz great.

Over 1,000 Baltimorean's freely enjoyed the performances of 14 semi - finalists, all City residents, at The Walters Art Gallery. Mayor Kurt L. Schmoke presented awards to the three top finishers and the first place winner, Letitia Leigh, a graduate of Coppin State College, won a cash award and will perform at Artscape '90 on July 15.

The Mayor has in the past and continues to make certain that the African American Arts community is well represented in the cultural fabric of our City. We at MACAC are proud to follow the Mayor's lead in this regard.

ROBERT MURROW
Director of Public Relations
Mayor's Advisory Committee on
Art and Culture

The Oprah story

My letter concerns the title story for May 5, 1990. The article digs up the past trash of Oprah Winfrey, a leading African American journalist.

Apparently, the AFRO - AMERICAN wanted to get the dirt out first, since the article is taken from a *Parade* magazine article dated May 6, the day after the AFRO came out. But what is the point of delving into Ms. Winfrey's past?

The fact that she had a child at 14 years of age has no bearing on her career performance. This shooting down of our African American heroes provides only negative images; images in the past thought to be confined to the White press.

Perhaps the story had some news value (though not much), but it is not front-page material. Positive views on race and things which can be done to help our people out is what needs to be reported, not gossipy filler.

The only thing this type of hype can do is hurt Oprah. We should never be the ones to bring about the demise of our own figures in journalism. The role they serve is just too important. Please stop the self - destruction. Do not sell out our people to sell papers.

DAVID P. LINDSAY

G. James Fleming
Public Affairs Commentator

Never too much

Unfortunately, from now until September, our school children will be forgotten. At least, they will be forgotten in ways that will prove helpful to them when they return to the classroom.

For most parents and their children, summertime is a wasted time. It is a time for putting all books aside; for even forgetting that schools exist, vacation or no vacation.

Parents and adults are especially to blame. They try to see how much "fun they can put into their children's lives. The summer months usually mean sheer idleness for the children. Worse, this idleness is often converted into vandalism or crime of lesser or greater degree.

This is a warning to parents and those taking the part of parents. It's more than a warning. It is the part of a friend, who wants next September, and the next four years to come, to be as promising a June was; who wants our children's school days to become days of achievement.

* * *

This is no sermon against having fun; no campaign against a trip to Disneyland. Rather, these musings are an attempt to put in balance the lives of our children — a beginning, at least, in steering them in the paths of clear and high thinking.

An old copy book rhyme used to say "Satan finds work for idle hands to do." Just so, an idle summer finds ways to attract boys and girls to mischievousness, to juvenile delinquency, and to crime.

Parents and adults need to spend more time with their children — playing games with them, just chatting (conversing) with them, reminiscing, recalling the past of their families. All this builds strength in the family — the Black family where it is badly needed.

Interest should be kept alive by parents in classroom matters also in so far as parents and the adults are themselves able, and with the aid of teachers.

If our school age boys and girls are to stop being dropouts, and stop being at the end of the line in their classes, parents and adults must begin setting early examples of those habits which spell excellence in studies, especially English mathematics and science and excellence in good habits.

We owe it to our children — our young men and women of the oncoming generations.

* * *

Least this column be read as an indictment on all young people, we hasten to add that we are very much aware that there are countless thousands of youth who are not delinquent, who are not dropouts, and who are "holding their own" in schools and colleges and in earning a living. The accepted statistics, however, tell a sad story of teenage pregnancies, early dropouts, and frequent imprisonments.

Only an about face in the statistics will change this story, and the place to begin is in the home, beginning with the nurture, care, discipline and love of parents for their offspring.

AFRO Welcomes Letters

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:

**Baltimore Afro-American
628 N. Eutaw Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21201**

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COMMENTARY & OPINIONS

Dr. Ramona H. Edelin
On The Cultural Offensive

Just American?

No one is "Just American." Part and parcel of the meaning of the United States of America is that groups have come here from elsewhere and made the "land of freedom and opportunity" their home.

Even the Native American, trying nobly as he has, has not remained the same as he was before the other cultures arrived. Certainly the African American, whose enslavement in this land lasted for 250 years and whose continued exclusion explodes the myth of the "ethnic queue," finds no solace in the lie of national homogeneity.

The African American cultural offensive now underway encompasses a great deal more than the process of self - designation which has received unprecedented consensus among members of this group. Not semantics, or the changing of labels as one would change hats, but a serious effort to examine and renew the African American culture, is occurring.

The first step in calling forth and synthesizing African American cultural integrity, self - consciously and purposefully, was taken at the time of deciding to change our name. From this first step can come a full scale cultural offensive.

If the group decides to realize the full potential of this initiative, we can create the momentum, hope, solidarity and high positive expectations that we knew in The Movement years. We can create markets, work and jobs in our communities.

We can create unity around values and goals, and give ourselves and our children, a sense of purpose and common destiny. We can create a powerful, unified African diaspora and expand the vision of African people around the world.

Despite our circumstances today, African Americans are neither impotent nor ignorant. We are powerful and wise. It is the African American who has defined and enforced democracy as it is codified in American law.

If not for our unrelenting resistance to slavery and segregation, democracy in America would mean what it means in Europe still today; rigid caste and class limits, real power only for the royal blood lines and the wealthy, and the accepted inferiority of the common man and woman.

Because African Americans have never accepted this definition of democracy, all Americans pledge allegiance to "liberty and justice for all." Just as this noble past was in our hands, our future, and that of this nation, is also in our hands.

Now is the time for the African American culture to unify its leadership and plan its future. No matter who sits in the seats of political power, the problems in our neighborhoods and cities of poverty, poor education, drug infestation, business development and freedom are ours to solve.

Government at all levels has an important role to play, and as citizens and tax payers we should be certain that the vital role of government is fulfilled.

But it is we who must change forever our children's dwarfed perceptions of themselves; our teenagers' lack of self - knowledge and confidence; our men's inability to create work and markets for themselves and their families; our women's failure to be the moral and cultural fiber of our great race.

We need African American leaders from all walks of life — in every precinct, in every school, in every union hall, in every small business, in every home — who are ready, willing and able to unify around the issues necessary to our future, and prevail.

Americans, as a rule, have the blood of at least two continents flowing through their veins; and it is the powerful synergy of this experience and diversity that can yield authentic progress for the human race. America needs the success of its African American group's efforts to examine and renew its culture.

In just six years, at least 40 percent and possibly as many as 50 percent of all college - aged young people in the nation will be African American and Latino. The future of the United States as the world's leading nation, competitive again in the global economy, will depend upon this success.

If the nation can also do as President George Bush admonishes, and "leave that old, tired baggage of racial discrimination and bigotry behind," then our achievement as one, whole, competitive nation will be fulfilled.

Walter E. Williams
Minority Viewpoint

Social Darwinism

I've often lectured about the moral superiority of market forces just to have someone respond, "Sounds like you're advocating survival of the fittest or social Darwinism!" The accuser expects me to cower at his supposed moral superiority, but Williams says, "Yes, you've got that right."

Let's look at survival of the fittest. Let's begin by asking whether it's more moral to advocate the opposite, where it's the unfit who survive and the "fittest" perish? The implications are ominous.

The most incompetent doctors, airline pilots, and basketball players would have the prestige and money while the more competent would languish.

The businesses that serve us worst would prosper and grow while those providing better service would fall into the industrial trash heap.

Let's have a show of hands for that kind of world. In fact, that kind of world is impossible in the state of nature. But we can approximate it with government intervention.

Examples that most readily come to mind are public education and the U.S. Postal Service where incompetence prospers.

With unfettered market forces, these institutions would have bitten the dust long ago; it's only through government monopoly protections that they survive.

How about a less extreme alternative — peaceful coexistence between the fit and the unfit? This scenario is hard to imagine in the state of nature. Suppose we start out with some companies having efficient management and good workers, and others with inefficient management and sloppy workers.

From which group would you choose to make your purchases or investments? It's easy, the more efficient ones, since they most likely will have lower prices for a given quality and a higher return on investment.

If businessmen can deliver enough money and votes, or buy enough books written by congressmen, tariffs and quotas will be imposed on foreign - made autos, textiles, and sugar.

It is an adaptive process for changing environments where forms of behavior, most consistent with survival, are rewarded and those which are not are penalized.

Have you ever wondered why wealth tends to be found in hostile climates and poverty in hospitable climates? I came up with a possible explanation on my first trip to the Caribbean.

Mother Nature has a welfare system. Historically, in temperate climates, people didn't have to worry much. When they got hungry, they simply picked berries or climbed a tree for fruit.

Shelter was just as easy; just make a tent or throw some branches together. Little long - term planning, saving, or investment were required.

In hostile climates, like northern Europe, it was different; Mother Nature didn't joke around. If you hadn't begun chopping and storing wood by June and saving food by July, you were going to die that winter.

Thus, a future orientation which included saving and investment became nature's mandate for survival. It also became an institutionalized means to higher wealth.

In today's America, the unfit and social parasites have emerged as society's mascots. Productive people are held up to ridicule and taxed to death to support the unproductive. The long-term implications are ominous.

COMMENTARY:

By Sam Lacy

Uncle Sam

Under normal circumstances, this might be considered out of place here, since here is where the average reader looks for a discussion of a subject dealing with sports.

However, since the government has made a game out of baiting the public, it probably is alright to take a look at the phenomenon we'll politely refer to as the "Benefit Show."

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Not so long ago that one might be called "old folks" because he remembered, there was widespread operation of the so-called "street numbers game" . . . . It was run by a network of "backers" who paid commissions to a multitude of "runners" for writing up neighborhood "players."

Police in every city were on the prowl to catch any of the three . . . . They especially sought to arrest the "runners," feeling certain that they carried enough evidence on their persons that would lead to the apprehension of the "backers."

The street people operated in the shadows, constantly fearful of being caught and prosecuted . . . . Prosecuted by the very government forces who now are cajoling poor people to gamble their meager earnings on the "numbers game."

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Call it what they will, "Lottery," or "Lotto" or "Pick Four" or whatever, it still is plain and simple "numbers" . . . . the very same thing that was a crime a few years back.

Oh, they have lottery boards and commissions and various other high sounding bases . . . . And they refute critics like this one with the argument that the profits are used to fund such projects as education, housing and food for the underprivileged, etc.

Yet, the secondary levels in predominately Black schools remain well below the national average, 25-30 percent of the school buildings are substandard, and teacher-strikes (for decent salaries) crop in every section of the country.

The numbers of homeless grow by the month, and hunger is a big-city disease.

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Another argument contends that there is little difference between lottery and numbers, since the game is played by virtually the same people . . . . Therefore, the player is not hurt by one any more than by the other.

Hogwash!

The "street numbers" — though aimed at the same people — made no appeals with blaring music and sophisticated begging: ***"You gotta play to win,"*** and lately ***"The more you play, the more you win."***

The "numbers" merchants accepted bets in any denomination; they didn't make a dollar the bottom line.

In their day, a housewife could pilfer a dime from the market or laundry money and play ten "numbers" in the dream of collecting six dollars at the end of the day . . . . No dollars, ***pennies*** . . . . No advertising ***whispers***.

Therefore, no assurance to the kids that, if you live in the ghetto, it's okay to gamble . . . . It certainly can't be denied that this is the message they're getting via television and radio commercials and newspaper ads.

And at drug stores and convenience stores, 90 prcent of which are located in and around the poorer neighborhoods.

B.S. can stand for a college degree, for Business Science, for Benefit Show — or something else.

Ron Daniels
Vantage Point

Students join the revolt

As the world celebrates the release of Nelson Mandela, and the beginning of talks aimed at starting serious negotiations to abolish apartheid in South Africa, the situation of African Americans continues to deteriorate.

All across America a veritable epidemic of racial assaults is being unleashed against Black people at all levels. The drug crisis has provided a veil of legitimacy for growing police harassment, terror and murder in African American communities.

Racial incidents on college campuses are mounting, and racial attacks of the kind which occurred at Howard Beach and Bensonhurst are becoming increasingly more commonplace.

This alarming resurgence of racism and racial violence is unfolding within a climate where affirmative action and the gains of the sixties are also under attack. From the Supreme Court to the halls of Congress there are forces at work which are determined to turn back the clock.

There appears to be a prevailing view in White America that African Americans, with all their elected officials, prominent television personalities, actors, athletes and corporate executives have made it.

As a consequent of this misperception, there is a decided lack of national will to press forward with a national civil rights and human rights agenda.

There are increasing signs, however, that African Americans do not intend to become passive victims of this latest outbreak of anti-Black racist antagonism. A growing African American revolt against racism appears to be brewing.

Recently Prof. Derek Bell from the prestigious Harvard Law School announced that he was voluntarily leaving the faculty, and would not return until the Law School hired a Black woman to the faculty.

In taking his stand, Prof. Bell is in effect risking occupational death. His career is on the line. But Prof. Bell declared that, "I cannot continue to urge students to take risks for what they believe if I do not practice my own precepts."

It is precisely this type of courage which is required by Black men and women to inspire our people to fight back against racism and the blatant attempts to beat back Black progress.

Though Prof. Bell's stance received national notice, another action by Black students at Temple University did not make national headlines.

During the last week of April a late evening melee erupted at Temple when some White members of a fraternity falsely accused a group of Black students of kicking in the door to their fraternity house. The White students attacked the Black students with baseball bats and 2" by 4" planks.

When the campus police arrived, the Black students were hit with billy clubs and herded into paddy wagons as if they were the ones guilty of precipitating the incident.

Five White students were eventually arrested, but none of them were subjected to beatings with billy clubs, handcuffed or thrown into paddy wagons. A few of the Black students had to be treated for cracked ribs and broken arms.

Black student organizations and leaders came together in a united front to demand an apology from the university and further that charges be brought against the police officers for police brutality. A number of other grievances were also raised.

When the President of the university refused to meet with them or respond to their demands, the Black students and some Latino, Asian and White supporters took to the streets, more than 1,000 strong.

They blocked every major access road to the university in a massive act of civil disobedience. With this courageous stand, the students at Temple University joined the growing revolt against racial oppression.

Though the outcome of the struggles at Harvard and Temple is uncertain as of this writing, what matters is that African Americans are risking careers, academic standing, and putting their lives on the line to signal a determination that our civil rights and basic rights as human beings must and will be respected.

This is indeed a hopeful sign. African Americans must be forever mindful of the admonition of the great Black Abolitionist leader Frederick Douglass who said on August 4, 1857 . . . "Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never has and it never will.

Find out just what people will submit to and you have found out the exact amount of the injustice and wrong which will be imposed upon them; and these will continue until they are resisted with either words or blows or both. The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppress."

As we confront the dangers of this escalating crisis of racism, racial attacks and assaults on Black interests, our watch words must be . . . no struggle, no progress.