EDITORIALS

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THE VOICE OF BLACK AMERICA SINCE 1892

Are you ready for riots?

Miami erupts during Super Bowl Week over the killing of a young cyclist and Meridian, Miss is in an uproar over another killing. The U.S. Senate readies its chambers for an impeachment trial of one of our finest — Judge Alcee Hastings, of Miami, Fla. — the Supreme Court whittles away at affirmative action and the dope traffic increases on every corner in every town and city, even on Sunday.

Are you ready to prevent these problems from being the beginning of what could be a long, deadly spring?

These questions are being asked by experts and the average John Q. Public this week as the nation settles down — after a week of inaugural partying — for a hard look at just where this country is as far as race relations and human relations are concerned.

There is no doubt that the black community is sitting on a powder keg.

And from incidents reported on our streets and highways, many fear it is not just the black community that is spoiling for a fight.

You can casually brush up against someone on the subway and you are lucky just to get a cold stare. And don't make an error in heavy traffic —that's when the horns blows and curse words fly.

If some sections of the white community — the skinheads, the KKK and others are ready to go to war — how can you expect the black community not to also be seething with discontent...don't they have more to be unhappy about? This might be true, but race riots won't solve the problem.

And it is time for the black community to understand why and to work to make sure riots must be curbed throughout the land.

Any war — racial or otherwise — will do more damage to the black community than to anyone else. Look around you and then ask some simple questions.

What existed in our communities before the riots of the 1960's?

What stands now in place of our own businesses, homes, churches and offices? Were the riots really just an outburst of people seething from discontent or were they planned and executed by certain parties in our country who needed our communities and businesses for those new high rises in order to attract whites back into the cities?

Who has gained the most from the riots and who lost the most?

Are we willing to let another decade of riots destroy the last vestige of what many have worked for these past 200 years?

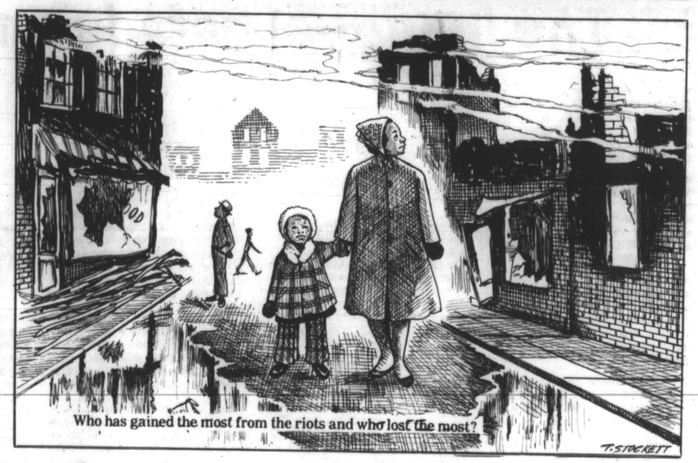
Full blown riots like we had in the 60's could destroy not just the ghettos but the stable middle class neighborhoods and our institutions like our black colleges.

If the drug heads are brainwashed and turned loose on their own community with the order to "get even", the resulting carnage could be just as damaging as a nuclear war.

Riots and looting that erupted in Miami could happen in your community and each community must plan now to stem the tide. If you think we are paranoid, sit there and do nothing. The men and women seen on television from Miami did little to calm the situation...the news media sought them out only because they would add fuel to the flame. The calming voices were muffled.

Who should speak if there is a Washington confrontation? Who should we insist on the media talking to in Baltimore, Richmond, Atlanta, Chicago, Detroit?

Is Jesse Jackson ready for this task? If not, who is? Marion Barry, Dexter Scott King, our bishops, clergy, or heads of civil rights organizations?



Who has gained the most from the riots and who lost the most?

Anthony Armstrong
Political Consultant

Politics aside

Like millions of Americans, I've been closely watching the most recent moves of both the supporters of abortion and their very racous antagonist, the Right to Lifers.

The abortion issue has provided us with the most heated controversy since the Watergate days.

Is it American's most important issue; even more so than the deficit, or the homeless, or peace with Moscow? It's hard to say.

Even while the Supreme Court has agreed to hear a case that could lead, finally, to the demise of *Roe vs. Wade;* whatever the outcome of that pending case the issue of abortion will not be going away anytime soon.

Abortion, for millions of women, (and indirectly for equal numbers of men) has fast become the leading method of birth control.

In 1988 alone preliminary figures show more than three million abortions having been performed; and those are just the ones we know about.

The Court will speak, soon, on the question of what role government has in the decisions of woman about when and whether to have children; and its decision will change a whole set of fundamental relationships.

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The court changed another set of fundamental relationships a few days ago. This time, in a case involving set-asides for minority owned businesses, the Supreme Court did something just as basic to this interest group as its *Roe vs. Wade* ruling will be to women.

What the court did was strike down a whole range of laws, passed in states and cities all over America, to redress the effects of past discrimination in the awarding of publically funded contracts.

Whereas the abortion issue affects women and men of child-bearing age all over the country, the issue of contract set-asides effect small business owners, especially African Americans, all across the land.

Not only did the Supreme Court find unconstitutional a Richmond Virginia set-aside statute; the Court, by its actions, rendered the whole concept of trying to remedy past injustices, by using set-asides, a dead letter.

The impact, though it might not cause as much noise, is just as devastating to African - American economic development efforts, as the attempt to throw out *Roe vs. Wade* is devastating to the aspirations of most women, to control their own bodies.

Yet, what's the issue of abortion, and the issue of affirmative action in business to do with each other? One is about life, the other is only about making money. Wrong.

Both issues, though certainly through different routes come back to the basic question of life—physical and economic. What joy is there in humanlife if there isn't also some economic viability; and vice versa.

The strange point to me, however, is that we'll shout loud and clear on one side or the other of the abortion question, but I expect little screaming to be heard about the economic abortion that the court has just performed.

For too many minority - owned businesses, the lost of set-asides will bring about quick, almost certain death. Now that the court has bludgeoned much of affirmative action with the overkill of a sledgehammer on a fly, will we be seing as much smiling as abortion causes frowns.

Yet, just as the abortion issue is too important to play politics with, so is the issue of assisting minority businesses to have the chance to become larger businesses.

Of course, the Supreme Court will never admit to playing politics with any issue, and certainly not this one. Now it's time to see what the real politicians do about restoring what the court has so completely undone.

LETTERS

A city that reads

I would like to commend Dr. Richard Hunter and the city school administration for their efforts to include parents, teachers, students and interested community members in the process of revitalizing our troubled schools.

I attended "The Night The Lights Went On" program at Western High and was truly impressed by the efforts undertaken to promote real dialogue around the numerous issues of concern.

The many workshops and the excellent presentations and recommendations provided on the fifteen major priorities should further understanding and enliven the debate on the means to bring about the necessary reforms.

It was very encouraging to see the openness with which issues such as parental involvement in schools, teen pregnancy, dropout rates and careers education were addressed. Such topics must be debated, considering their ultimate impact upon the future of our society.

The majority of priorities considered as critical by the parents, teachers and administrators alike appeared to be closely connected. The needs to reduce class size, reform the curriculum, provide adequate supplies and textbooks, raise teacher salaries, train teachers, and provide important student services all are related to the need for more government funding. I know this is not new, but it must be continuously restated.

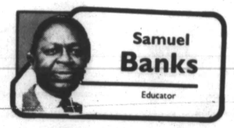
Our city has the lowest expenditure per student in the state. Without additional funds, how is Baltimore City expected to purchase the textbooks, computers and other resources necessary to educate our students effectively?

With uncompetitive salary structures, how will Baltimore recruit and retain excellent teachers? Further, class sizes cannot be reduced and special services provided if our government leaders mandate cutbacks.

Hopefully, the increased awareness brought about by this debate will motivate people to pressure our city council, state legislature, federal government and private foundations to provide the necessary funds to allow Baltimore City's school system to reach parity with our surrounding counties.

Mayor Schmoke has stated that education is to be our city's major priority. If Baltimore is to develop economically and become the "City That Reads," we will need equality of financing with Maryland's wealthier districts.

BOB BAER



Samuel Banks
Educator

Why Black History?

In a few weeks, across the nation, the annual ceremonial and instructional events connected with the February observance of Black History Month, will be in full swing.

To a large degree, regrettably, the annual trotting out of black history orations, paraphernalia and posturing, in a modified version of Shakespeare will portray: Much Fury and Little Substance.

As a means of preventing the annual Black History Month breastplate beatings and extravagant rhetoric, within the Baltimore City Public schools, the history, experience and contemporary problems and opportunities are incorporated throughout the history-social studies curriculum.

In terms of fact and historical reality, the history of black American is inextricably connected and interwoven in American and world history.

The overarching reason as to why black history is taught in the Baltimore City Public Schools, as should be true in other jurisdictions, is three-fold:

- A valid body of knowledge.
- Knowledgeable is researchable.
- Documentation is available to support the discipline.

These vital elements are necessary for any area of serious inquiry or study.

Dr. Carter Godwin Woodson, universally regarded as the "Father of Black History" and founder of the Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History in 1915 was the prime mover in terms of the universal popularization of Black Life and history.

It was he who started what was called, initially, Negro History Week in 1926, which was expanded to Black History Month in 1976 by the Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History.

Woodson often observed that a people that did not know and preserve its history would become a "negligible factor" in the world.

I believe, as did Woodson, that some of the essential elements in the serious study of black life and history should embrace the following elements:

• An understanding of Africa before the start of the slave trade by the Portuguese in 1441-1442. The focus should embrace the flourishing African Civilizations such as Mali, Ghana, Songhay, the Mossi States, Kanem-Bornu and others.

• The Middle Passage which involved the transport of over 50 million Africans to the Western Hemisphere and Europe. Well over one-third of the Africans perished during the Middle Passage.

• Slavery in the Western Hemisphere and black reistance, in many forms, to it.

• Achievements of blacks, against monumental odds, during the period of the slavocracy.

• Problems and achievements of blacks during Reconstruction John Hope Franklin's Reconstruction After the War provides a cogent, incisive and highly readable account.

• Participation of blacks in all wars in which our nation has been involved.

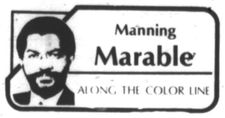
• Impact of the debates and leadership styles of Booker Taliafero Washington and William Edward Burghardt DuBois on black life and development in the American politic life.

• Problems, challenges, strategies, and opportunities of Black Americans. John Hope Franklin's From Slavery to Freedom, the best single comprehensive history, and Benjamin Quarles' The Negro in the Making of America are excellent sources.

In summary, to study, in a serious way, black history is to study the broad and essential sweep of the history of our nation.

All people, black and white, benefit from, knowing the multi-dimensional human strands which contribute to the richness and diversity of our nation.

COMMENTARY & OPINIONS



Manning Marable
ALONG THE COLOR LINE

Black against black violence

The urban ghettoes of America increasingly are becoming armed, military zones. Millions of people live in fear of being raped, robbed or mugged.

Thousands of homes are burglarized every week in black neighborhoods. Hundreds of our young people are being slaughtered in the streets and back alleys. And many of our high schools are now battlegrounds for drug pushers.

Between January and August, 1988, only eight months, 143 people were murdered in Miami, a figure which was higher than the city's total number of murders in 1987. Crime statistics from other cities are equally grim.

During the same period in 1988, New Orleans recorded 216 murders; Houston, 411 murders; Washington, D.C., 323 murders; and New York City, 1,231 murders. The vast majority of the victims are nonwhite males.

In the United States, a white male has a one-in-186 chance of becoming a murder victim. For all black men, the odds are one chance in twenty nine.

And for those living in Washington, D.C., the South Bronx, Chicago's South Side, or other urban centers, the murder rate odds for black males probably decline to less than one out of 20.

Urban violence frequently takes its casualties from the innocent bystanders, those who have no role in drugs, crime or murder. Two weeks before this past Christmas, a nine-year-old boy died in a Chicago public housing project because paramedics refused to enter the apartment building at night.

The paramedics later claimed that their ambulance was being hit by rocks and eggs hurled by local residents. The family of the dead boy disputed these charges, and filed a $60 million suit against the Chicago Fire Department.

Whether the paramedics were attacked or not, is secondary to the larger issue of the pervasiveness of urban violence. When postal workers, delivery workers, medics and other healthcare professionals are afraid to enter entire neighborhoods without police protection, then the quality of life for the population in that area must deteriorate.

Police argue that most of the recent violence is directly attributable to the proliferation of crack. The street trade in crack cocaine is so profitable that many gangs are now as heavily armed as police SWAT teams.

Witnesses of drug-related crimes often disappear; the arrests of thousands of young people who are low-level dealers has done little to keep thousands more from taking their places.

The flood of violence, however, can only be understood by going beyond the single issue of drugs.

Why does violence become the sole method for resolving conflict between so many young black men?

What is the long-term political and economic impact of violence within the national black community?

People resort to violence in their relations with each other when they devalue the humanity and dignity of those individuals with whom they are in conflict. Disagreements are inevitable within all societies.

But when people are routinely shot for less than ten dollars, or a young black man in Detroit can be murdered on a city bus for no reason, a very disturbing level of human alienation and social decay has been reached.

Black leaders must begin to address, squarely and forthrightly, this crisis of human values within our communities. Many social institutions such as churches and schools no longer exert the moral and social influence among younger blacks.

The economic crisis of poverty and unemployment directly contributes to the violence as well. When people cannot eat or clothe their children, they will steal to survive.

When crack dealers pay unemployed teens hundreds of dollars per day, why should they aspire to hold subminimum wage jobs?

A person without a job and who has been influenced by the rampant materialism of the dominant culture can be recruited into criminal activity.

The only long term, fundamental solution to the violence between black people is found within the strategy of community and group empowerment. People who are involved in political change, economic development and community-based reform movements do not destroy each other.

They channel their energies into the constructive acts of socioeconomic and political change, and their outlook on their friends, peers and neighbors also changes.

They seek to build local institutions and to equip others in the tools for political and social involvement, and in doing so, their understanding of interpersonal relations deepens.

If a person hates himself or herself, and has no appreciation for the culture and sacrifices of black people of previous generations, he or she will act in a criminal manner against other blacks.

To end the violence, we must organize ourselves from within.

Dr. Manning Marable is Chairperson of the Department of Black Studies, The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio.

Parren J. Mitchell
Former U.S. Rep.

Reagan's cheap shot

During the waning weeks of his term in office, Reagan has been honored, saluted, glorified and highly praised by his supporters. It would seem to appear that an attempt is being made to establish a national Reagan cult.

The obvious purpose of such a cult would be to pressure the Bush Administration into toeing the conservative line and to keep the Republican party anchored to the arch conservative political ideology that Reagan so fervently embraces.

Cults, a group of followers who have extravagant admiration for a person or a principle, can become pretty weird on occasion. Elvis Presley has his cult, which has turned Graceland into a "Holy Shrine" and now speaks about the resurrection (re-incarnation) of Elvis, the hip slinging singer.

Sweet Daddy Grace, an alleged black prophet, had his cult. Daddy Grace let his fingernails grow to grotesque lengths and his cult followers paid substantial sums of money for a sliver of his long fingernails. (Is it possible to keep 15-inch fingernails clean?)

Now with the development of the Reagan cult, will his worshippers pay large sums of money for slivers of wood that he allegedly cuts on his ranch? Will there be an annual Mecca to the California Ranch?

Even during his waning days, Reagan could not resist one last cheap shot at black civil rights leaders. The Reagan civil rights record is absolutely abominable. In the early days in office, he said he did not know that racism, discrimination existed in America.

Throughout his tenure in the White House, he rallied against affirmative action, failed to enforce civil rights laws, and fought against legislation to strengthen civil rights laws.

In his parting cheap shot, Reagan, in his response to a reporter's questions about his civil-rights record, replied to the effect that civil rights leaders were doing very well, prospering, and that they had to keep the civil rights movement alive for their own self-aggrandizement. How rotten can you get?

Leaders of civil rights organizations are pitifully underpaid. Those who serve on the boards of civil rights organizations most often serve without pay. Directors of civil rights organizations have exhaustive schedules, often working 18 hour days, and working on Saturdays and Sundays.

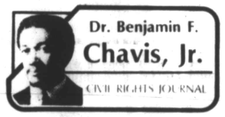
The demands are heavy and the rewards are few. They work. I don't think anyone would say that Reagan was a workaholic. In fact, there would be many takers in a wager in which the bet was that Reagan actually worked fewer than 40 hours a week.

We should not be fooled by the departing President's jovial, avuncular style as he made his cheap shot at civil rights leaders. During the eight years he sat in the White House, he and his subordinates constantly sought to drive a wedge between black leaders and masses of black people.

This was done by innuendo sometimes, by open criticism sometimes, and by lying about his record of achievement insofar as black citizens are concerned.

Reagan may have achieved some gains in arms reduction, but he did not help black citizens — he hurt us. Reagan may have brought inflation under control, but he did little to temper the racism in America. As a matter of fact, in his own cunning way, he encouraged it. Reagan may have made white America feel good, and he certainly did make Black Americans feel miserable.

Years ago when President Harry S. Truman kicked General Douglas MacArthur out as Commander in Chief, MacArthur, in his farewell speech said, "Old soldiers never die, they just fade away." "Cheap shot Presidents never die, they just lie away."



Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.
CIVIL RIGHTS JOURNAL

'A Raisin in the Sun'

African American History Month will begin on February 1, 1989 with a historic world premiere PBS-TV broadcast of Lorraine Hansberry's famous play, "A Raisin in the Sun." The American Playhouse will produce this new, uncut version of Hansberry's award-winning drama.

We encourage all Americans to view this television special not only for its educational value but also for its potential to help serve as a cultural antedote to the continuing rising tide of racism across the nation.

Robert Nemiroff, executive producer, is to be congratulated for selecting such acclaimed actors as Danny Glover and Esther Rolle to star in the film.

Lorraine Hansberry celebrated African American history by making history 30 years ago. "Raisin" was the first play written by an African American woman to reach Broadway and became the first commercially successful, serious black drama.

Moreover, Lorraine Hansberry, who died at age 34, was the youngest American, at age 29, the fifth woman, and the only African American to win the prestigious New York Drama Critics "Best Play" Award.

Concerning the impact of "Raisin in the Sun," James Baldwin once wrote, "Never before in the entire history of the American theater had so much of the truth of Black people's lives been seen on stage."

Now millions more will have the opportunity to view this historic portrait of the plight of African American family life.

We believe the timing of this new production is quite appropriate. First, because it is African American History Month. Secondly, this drama reveals that the struggle of African Americans to overcome the vestiges of slavery, segregation and economic exploitation is ongoing.

What Hansberry portrayed in 1959 is still true today in 1989. Yes, there has been progress, but there has also been regression. Racism is just as much a reality today as it was 30 years ago.

It is our hope that the viewing of "A Raisin in the Sun" will stimulate the kind of response across the nation that will enhance the struggle for racial justice.

Especially among young people there is a great need for an increase in awareness concerning the issues arising from the play, such as poverty and discrimination, and ethnic pride and consciousness.

We need a new generation of Lorraine Hansberrys. We have a new generation of gifted and talented youth. The question remains whether or not this generation will be inspired to achieve the heights of Hansberry.

"A Raisin in the Sun" reminds all of us of our mutual responsibilities to each other and to never accept injustice.

Les Payne

A year when stars fell

The end of the year inescapably seems to fix us either into a long stare backward or an optimistic glance 12 months down the uncertain road.

Before the weekend passes, we steal a chance to do both, occasionally at the same time. The seasonal audit, in newspapers at least, passes mournfully over those achievers who fell by the wayside. This year, someone pointed out, was not a bumper crop. Emperors, painters and even octogenarian song-and-dance men not only held on, but rallied.

A few bright stars, however, fell from my galaxy this year.

Romare Bearden, a modern master, put away his brush and paint on March 11. With his collages and impressionist's eye for color, Bearden had secured for himself a place among the front rank of American painters.

His loss is made all the more significant by his country's insistence always on degrading a man's achievements if he happens to have been born with roots in Africa.

Romare Howard Bearden was an artist. Period.

Another star fell from my sky in January, when Percy Qoboza, the legendary South African journalist, died of a heart attack.

Percy came into the world suffering. By choosing to practice journalism in the Boers' penal colony, he guaranteed for himself great pain and sorrow for the rest of his days. Qoboza suffered a great deal, and all of his black colleagues with him.

He willed himself to write the truth, and thus set himself up as an enemy of the state. Despite the truncheons, the intimidation, the midnight knock on the door, Qoboza maintained, to the end, his dedication to publishing the truth without fear and without favor.

A newspaper editor at the time of the 1976 Soweto uprising, Qoboza saw his staff of street reporters jailed without charges, sometimes for months on end.

It is dangerous reporters' business, this ferreting out the truth about the Holocaust the Boers are inflicting on the African majority—with the help and blessing of the Reagan administration and thus the American People.

During his time on this earth, there was not a more courageous journalist than Percy Qoboza.

Johnstone "Johnny' Makatini, a spokesman for the African National Congress, also died of health complications, in Lusaka, Zambia. Johnny, a short South African with flashing eyes, had a keen analytical mind, especially on the question of latter-day African colonialism that will not die without a bloody struggle.

Long before the anti - apartheid issue got heated for a few minutes in this country a few months back, Makatini was spreading the word to any group that would invite him. For a while, he worked at the United Nations as a special ANC representative, then he moved back to Zambia and worked on the front lines.

Voices like Makatini's are hard to silence and nearly impossible to replace.

And there were, of course, many others during the year, such as the pioneering television journalist Max Robinson.

Some may note that all of these luminaries I have cited were black. The white luminaries who died this year will be trumpeted to the high heaven in exaggerated tones for the coming weeks and their fifth, 10th and every benchmark anniversary to come.

The men listed here were underrated and misunderstood in life and they will be downplayed—if not maligned—in death.

But the year was not all death, of course.

It was on the domestic side an election year, with results so devastating that they were downright humorous.

Millions of words have been printed and millions more will be written in the coming year. But I offer a choice sampling printed in the New York Review of Books. Historian C. Vann Woodward had the following to say about President Ronald Reagan's legacy and the passing of the baton to his vice president:

"None of Reagan's 39 predecessors in the office, nor all of them taken together, left the country such staggering burdens of national debts, interest payments, budget deficits and trade imbalances, or left American industry, its banking system and education in such a crippled and uncompetitive plight.

"And it is doubtful that any of Reagan's predecessors bequeathed with his blessing and ardent support such a shallow-minded and unprincipled successor as George Bush—and such a vice president (J. Danforth Quayle) as the latter deliberately chose."

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