EDITORIALS

John J. Oliver, Jr.
Chairman of the Board

Frances M. Draper
President

THE VOICE OF BLACK AMERICA SINCE 1892

One For All

Much excitement surrounds the issue of whether the Barclay School should be permitted to establish its own curriculum, independent of that of the city's.

The superintendent of schools should not be denied or be precluded from treating each school as an essential block of the complete and total picture.

We applaud the intent of outside organizations to improve the educational level of our schools.

We strongly believe, however, that such forms of charitable largess should at all times be accomplished through strict and close association with the superintendent's overall program. Any well intentioned project which otherwise impedes, or decreases the superintendent's ability to raise the level of the entire system, should properly be discouraged. Superintendent Hunter will be judged on the quality of the system as a whole, **not** by the improvements rendered to a select few.

A Question of History

We think clearly that the Urban League proposal for the Orchard Street Church is a good one. The League has continuously been in the forefront of the struggle against discrimination, a theme consistent with the historic significance of Orchard Street Church which played an important role in the black struggle from slavery.

Residents in the Seton Hall section, where the church is located, were shown the proposal at a meeting this week, and overwhelming endorsed the League's plan.

Although the final decision on the acceptance of the proposal (there are two others) rests with the city, we concur with community residents, and further believe that the significant public role long played by the Urban League in fighting for improving the plight of urban minorities should clearly entitle the Urban League to occupy this memorial to the struggle of all black people.

Parren J. Mitchell
Former U.S. Rep.

Organizing to protect, enhance

Following the Supreme Court decision which held that the Richmond, Virginia minority business law to be unconstitutional, communities across the nation were confused, directionless and disorganized. People wanted to do something but either they did not know what to do or else they did not know how to do it.

It was clear that one centralized leadership was needed to give direction; to coordinate disparate effects and to develop commonly shared strategies.

Civil rights organizations, advocacy groups, the minority business organizations and others chose the Minority Business Legal Defense and Education Fund (MBELDEF), which I chair, and the NAACP Legal Defense Fund to serve together as the national clearinghouse to assist the communities.

Among other things, we are assisting communities in how to bring their laws into compliance with the Supreme Court guidelines or how to protect their existing laws if such laws are already in compliance.

I and Anthony Robinson, President of MBELDEF, are traveling all over the country rendering assistance. On Saturday, March 4, I was in Fayettsville, N.C. and on Monday, March 6, Attorney Robinson and I served in Philadelphia.

There, three organizations - The National Association of Minority Contractors (NAMC), The American Contract Compliance Association (ACCA) and MBELDEF held a workshop and seminar on "developing state and local initiatives and strategies to defend present laws and ordinances and to provide new fact-finding on present economic discrimination."

This was an exciting, challenging, educational experience. Participants, for the most part, came from New York. New Jersey and Pennsylvania, but one participant came from far off Texas.

In the morning session, Robinson gave historical information on the Richmond Case - the legal precedents and pitfalls, the need for a sheltered market for minority businesses, the legal initiatives required (both short-term and long-term) to protect MBE laws, and other related topics.

That afternoon, Ralph Thomas, Executive Director of the National Association of Minority Contractors, spoke on gathering statistics - what is required, and how to gather it at the federal, state and local levels, the use of a standardized questionnaire, etc.

I, along with both attorneys; Robert Harrison, President of ACCA; and Hamilton Bowser, President of NAMC, were peppered with questions from the participants who wanted hard, specific information and strategies to take back to their local communities for implementation.

It was a stimulating, encouraging and productive hard day of work. There is no doubt in my mind but that it will yield significant benefits to the minority business community.

The National Bar Association, which has been unstinting in its support for the work of the Fund, will host its national meeting at the Stouffer Hotel in Baltimore on March 17th and 18th. NBA has been kind enough to give MBELDEF a day in which we can share legal strategies with its attorney members.

How to handle the situation in which our opponents seek temporary restraining orders against minority business laws. Should our opponents have to prove in court that they have suffered personal injury as a result of MBE laws? That all-day session should also prove to be provocation and stimulating.

We can expect these kinds of sessions to continue for the next year. This is the kind of hard working in planning and organizing which must be done if we are to protect and enhance minority businesses.

It is so encouraging to see the spirit of mutual cooperation and support emerge. In this struggle, there can be no one leader nor can one organization serve as the sole, exclusive lead organization. The struggle in which we are engaged is larger than any one person or any one organization.

At each of these planning/organizing sessions, I stress three themes. First, the vast majority of white Americans do not want to share economic power with minorities.

That being true, second, the struggle for economic empowerment will be a demanding, arduous, long struggle.

The final theme I stress is that the only way we can prevail in this effort is by being tightly organized and working together in a spirit of mutual support, maximum cooperation and unity.

Kweisi Mfume
U.S. Congressman

Pro/foul ball

The owners of major league professional ball teams continue to refuse to offer management positions to black people. Each year when the season ends and the retirements are announced, the losers are fired, and the unhappy move to more appreciative front offices.

African-Americans are considered only in passing, only as a public relations gimmick.

When Frank Robinson was interviewed last November by *The Baltimore Sun's* sports columnist, Mike Litwin, Robinson had a dismally realistic perspective about baseball team owners who supposedly interviewed blacks for coaching jobs saying:

"I don't think any of them (owners) were serious. They can put on a big front about interviewing blacks, say the right things, but who gets hired? You hope the best man gets hired for the job, but the color of his skin is always white."

Losing white coaches like the Philadelphia Eagles, and now Atlanta Falcons' Marion Campbell, are rehired before proven winning assistant coaches who are black.

Former players without coaching experience like, Lou Pinella, Dal Maxvill and Ted Simmons are offered positions, but black players are experienced assistant coaches are not considered.

It's far beyond the time for accepting public relations stunts, it is time for black people to be given the jobs qualify for as coaches and managers for professional teams.

Football Commissioner Pete Rozell and former Baseball Commissioner Peter Ueberroth must do more than to let things stand as they are.

When this issue crops up at the regular intervals of beginning or end of a season these Commissioners lamely defend their policy or "constructive engagement" with team owners by insisting that they "apply pressure behind closed doors, but are unable to do more."

Obviously, this policy is totally ineffective and it is time to devise a new game plan. Owners consistently pass over viable black candidates for head-coaching positions.

These Commissioners certainly have some influence, and they should use it to combat the blatant racism of owners who refuse to hire competent managers regardless of race.

Owners formerly used the illogical argument that whites were always hired as quarterbacks because, "the bottom line is winning." Too few argued with this logic until Redskins quarterback, Doug Williams, proved that a good quarterback would win regardless of color, and suddenly the bottom line changed.

This faulty logic is still employed by owners who consistently fail to hire black headcoaches. Certainly the example of the National Basketball Association could and should be the model we emulate. To no one's surprise, racism is always illogical.

Since 1986 at least 10 openings for head-coach have arisen. No one of African ancestry has yet been hired. Commissioner Rozell has a 100% losing season (2 years running) in regards to his "attempts" to integrate the head-coaching position.

Former Commissioner Ueberroth's record is equally as dismal. Even the worst coach eventually realizes that continuing to use the same play, even when it continuously fails, is poor coaching.

Either the coach finds another play, or they are fired and replaced with someone who will.

If the standards of coaching are applied to the records of Commissioner Rozell and Ueberroth it appears crystal clear that football's and baseball's top job might also be in need of a personnel change.

G. James Fleming
Public Affairs Commentator

City that reads worth imitating

There are some mayors who become popular because they are great orators; others achieve popularity by playing firemen and dashing from alarm to alarm, in bright-colored raincoats and in red cars;

Others promote themselves through their capacity for clowning; and, of course, there are those who like to see their names on hundreds of public benches and trucks and in buses.

Nowadays, Baltimore is showing the country there is another way - a better way.

The incumbent mayor, Kurt Schmoke, has kept his campaign pledge to make Baltimore "the city that reads," and, by that priority, to give a boost to the improvement of education, generally.

From the night of his inauguration, he has not ceased to promote "Baltimore the city that reads," in speeches, on television and radio, on bumper stickers, in City Hall mailings and, of course, on public benches and trucks and in buses.

Even the younger members of the mayor's family have been enlisted in this campaign.

The schools and the citywide Enoch Pratt Library system have also enthusiastically joined in what has the makings of a real crusade.

Here's an idea and a project that should catch fire. It should not be a campaign only in Baltimore, but should be adopted in every city and in many Third World countries.

There is no copyright that prevent "Los Angeles the city that reads," or "Dallas the city that reads" or "Washington the city that reads," and many more.

Not the slogan alone, however, but the commitment, the programs and the collaboration to convert mere sloganizing into realities where most adults are able to read, and those who can read enjoy doing so.

In addition, in Baltimore and the other cities there is opportunity for many neighborhoods to establish "City that Reads" committees - each dedicated to promoting reading (and writing).

Here is a challenge for volunteers to get such committees going.

They may start very simply, even with the elementary textbooks of childhood years, or they may begin with regular reading of the daily and weekly newspapers, to be followed, in due time, with reading of magazines and books.

Even a family grouping may make up a "City that Reads" committee.

"Baltimore the City that Reads" and its counterparts can also be vitalized by the help from the electric and print media.

Repetitive "plugs" in these outlets would sensitize readers, viewers and listeners into the importance of reading (and writing) - for securing employment, for promotion on the job, and for lifting one's self up from the illiterate and semi-illiterate.

(As this is being written, it has just been announced that Barbara Bush, wife of the President, has formally launched her Foundation for Family Literacy, a private agency to spread literacy in the U.S.

"They who read together, stay together," paraphrasing popular advertising, may well be the password of those adults who read and learn with their children, for the sharing of age with youth and much experience with lesser experience.

Major responsibility rests with those most able, however, and upon the shoulders of such organizations as the public libraries, the fraternities and sororities, the churches and the teachers unions to make every city, "the city that reads."

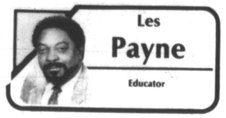
In other times and other instances, other slogans have shown how possible it is to attain goals. This has been especially so in sports and in time of war.

In many ways illiteracy is an enemy to those who cannot read. It is also an enemy to families whose breadwinners remain in the "underclass" because they cannot read.

Illiteracy is also an enemy to the nation because, in this technological age, those who cannot read, cannot contribute to national progress and prosperity.

Maryland, in the past, has become famous for many things. Let us all make it even more famous by carrying the banner everywhere to make every city the city that reads," and as we continue, also, to make and keep "Baltimore the city that reads."

COMMENTARY & OPINIONS



Les Payne
Educator

Learning racism the hard way

A Graduate of the School of Hard Knocks, Van A. Hayden has a busted nose and a new attitude.

Partying with a group of college friends in a Minneapolis hotel suite recently, Hayden ran into a piece of American reality he had been raised to deny.

Born to a black Chicago newspaper publisher and a white mother, he grew up in comfortable middle-income circumstances. But there were identity problems — and of class.

"It was real confusing," he said of his childhood. "I wouldn't recommend it at all. When I was in elementary school, I probably wanted to be white. Luckily, my mom recognized that it was important for me to be around other black kids."

Working as a newspaper reporter, Hayden now, at 25, seeks to become an actor. He had viewed himself, as do all too many of his peers, as a middle-class black immune to the pangs and oppression the "underclass" suffers at the hands of the state and its police.

In Minneapolis, that "underclass" resides on the North Side, with some members recently arriving from Gary, Ind.

This artificial black "underclass," supposedly permanent and numbering some 5 million nationwide, is a dangerous sociological misnomer. "Economically deprived" is what blacks once were called.

But during the revisionist Reagan years, the dominant white oppressive society, which continues to do the depriving, purged itself of its continuing historical responsibility.

By use of sociological hocus-pocus, picked up by demented liberals, the Reagan folks placed the blame for racial oppression on the shoulders of a hastily designated black middle class.

White Americans, unable generally to distinguish one black economic group from another, tend to be quite accepting of this new underclass" designation.

Unfortunately, so too are members of the so-called black middle class. In reality, they too, of course, are still economically oppressed in every way because of their race. Often they are but two paydays, some backtalk and a change of clothes away from this "underclass."

Van Hayden, and his friends, found this out the hard way.

On that recent night in Minneapolis, he and some 20 of his black middle-income friends hired a suite and threw a birthday bash. Round about 1:30 a.m. Three cops arrived on a noise complaint. Faced with routine stalling and backtalk, the cops called for backup, while spraying Mace and battering the youngsters around.

"One officer said something to me, I said something back to him," Hayden said. "He came running down the hall behind me, jumped me and bent me over the balcony railing, looking six floors down. He brought me back into the room and pushed me down on the couch. Then I saw another officer choking one of my friends and pulling her hair.

"Another woman was screaming, her baby was in the back room. She kept saying 'I got to get my baby, I got to get my baby.' The police were blocking her.

"When I saw what they were doing to the women, I said, 'Hey, there's no need to be pushing people around.'

"I started to get up from the couch, with the handcuffs. The officer punched me in my nose with his fist. (The police report, which exonerates the officers, says elbow.) Then blood started pouring out of my nose and everyone in the room started screaming. He started punching me in my stomach and crotch. The officers were referring to the women as 'b——s' and calling us 'n——rs.' "

After first refusing to give his name at the police station, Hayden came in for some special treatment.

"There was blood all over my face and shirt, and a nurse in a white jacket shined a flashlight in my face and said, 'He's OK' I was sure my nose had been broken. It had been broken before when I was swimming at the local health and fitness club.

"They took me into this room and at least Hennepin County deputies in brown shirts walked in together and ordered me to stand in front of this one big guy. I stood there and he knocked me down with a slap across the right cheek, and my nose started bleeding again.

"I was thinking these other officers were going to help me up but they pulled my green turtleneck over my head and started punching me and kicking me. I was on the floor getting beat. Then they threw me into this room. I was dazed and bleeding. I have the pictures to show how I looked."

During the roughing up at the police station, Hayden recalls the cops referring to his well-scrubbed group repeatedly as the underclass from Gary, Ind.

"Maybe it shouldn't have surpassed me," he said, "but I was raised to believe that the police were good guys, they were there to help you, law and order.

"In the 6th grade in Duluth, I was the first black police patrol captain (crossing guard). I was very proud. Everything I had been brought up to believe says that if this type of thing happened, you must have done something. We had done nothing."

The mother of one of the arrested young women who was repeatedly frisked and fondled complained loudly about police treatment of such "middle-class" African-Americans.

"Police messed with the wrong kids this time," she said. "Most people in the community know these kids. We brought up our daughter to be everything Americans are supposed to be. They are good citizens, good students.

"We try to do everything right — but it's not working."

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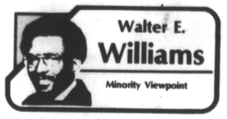


Walter E. Williams
Minority Viewpoint

Something doesn't add up

You've got to be worried when somebody says two plus two is four, but two minus two isn't zero. And the reason is simple: The fact that two minus two is zero is what makes two plus two equal four. Where's all this heading?

Think about it. President George Bush has proclaimed that my deposits, held in savings and loan banks, are backed by the full faith and credit of the U.S. government. But the secretary of the treasury has proposed that a fee be levied on my deposit to insure its safety.

My question is: Are my deposits backed by the full faith and credit of the U.S. government, or just by little old me?

The Treasury's proposal went down to defeat. And George Bush reiterated the point that my deposits are indeed backed by the full faith and credit of the U.S. government. But this time, the president proposed a $50-to-100-billion savings and loan bailout program.

Great, that is, if Congress got the money from the Tooth Fairy. But I get the feeling that eventually Congress is going to come back to me as a taxpayer.

So, Mr. Bush, I repeat my question: Are my deposits backed by the full faith and credit of the U.S. government, or by little old me?

The bottom line of the savings and loans debacle is that we're fooling ourselves if we think FSLIC or FDIC could ever begin to cover any guarantee in the face of the widespread banking calamity. In fact, if any other insurance company had any the characteristics of FSLIC or FDIC, its officers would be in jail.

And something else doesn't add up. We have a large trade deficit. Experts tell us we're a debtor-nation. And unless we give Congress greater control over our lives we will become a banana republic.

If politicians and experts know all that, how come the Japanese and the Europeans don't know it? They can't wait to get their hands on U.S. land, U.S. businesses, and U.S. stocks and bonds. Are they stupid?

No! They just know a good deal when they see one. It's highly unlikely that we are a debtor-nation. Bizarre bookkeeping practices by the Department of Commerce makes us look like one.

Foreign holdings in the United States are booked at today's prices. Our overseas holdings are booked at historical purchase prices.

In other words, an overseas Ford plant, built in 1950, shows up on the books at 1950 prices. Anyone who states the value of his home or property in 1950 prices must be either a lunatic or a con artist trying to pull a fast one.

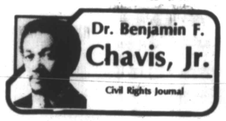
On the trade-deficit issue, there is a who-are-they, who-are-we question. We have a trade deficit when they (foreigners) sell more to us than we (the United States) sell to them.

It turns out that roughly 45 percent of our trade deficit is represented by goods sold in the United States, but manufactured overseas by U.S.-owned companies.

The other side of the we/they question is when Japanese-owned plants in the United States manufacture goods and sell them overseas. Should we worry about Japanese owning U.S. businesses and land? I say no; after all, they can't take it with them if they get mad.

Which brings us to another "nonadder." Ollie North has been charged with deceiving and lying to Congress. My question is: How come it is illegal for a person to lie and deceive Congress, but it's perfectly okay for Congress to deceive and lie to us?

Is this another law from which Congress has granted itself immunity?



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

Catholics condemn sin of racism

At the request of Pope John Paul II, the Pontifical Commission For Peace and Justice of the Roman Catholic Church has issued an 8,000 word condemnation of Racism as it exists throughout the world today.

The document entitled "The Church and Racism" affirms that racism is a sin and an affront to the Christian faith.

We are very pleased that the Catholic Church and its leadership are making this important pronouncement. Particularly in the United States where there has been a rise in overt acts of racist violence during the last ten years, this theological articulation against racism by the Catholic community is a welcomed event.

It is important that both Protestants and Catholics join together in denouncing the evil of racism which continues to plague the majority of the world's population.

The Pontifical Commission stated "Harboring racist thoughts and entertaining racist attitudes is a sin."

Beyond thinking racist thoughts and exhibiting a racist attitude, in one's personality, it is the acting out of these racist views in the social, economic, political, and religious spheres of life that causes violence and harm to millions of persons around the world. Yet, it is interesting to note that the Catholic Church is now saying that to even have a racist thought in one's mind is a sin. If this is the case then, as we say in the African American Church tradition, "Lord have mercy, there is a whole lot of sin going on!"

Interestingly the Catholic document affirmed "The most obvious form of racism in the strictest sense of the word, to be found today is institutionalize racism." The racism apartheid regime of South Africa was singled out as "an extreme case of a vision of racial inequality." Accordingly, the sin of racism in apartheid South Africa has been made constitutional under law. "The Church and Racism" pronouncement states that apartheid "is justified by an ideology of superiority of persons from European stock over those of African or Indian origin, which is, by some, supported by an erroneous interpretation of the Bible."

Given the fact that the Catholic Church is one of the fastest growing churches on the African continent, it is important for the leadership of the church to take a strong vocal and active position against the cruel manifestations of racism in Africa and in particular in southern Africa.

The Catholics were careful to footnote their involvement and contributions to the victories of the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960's in the United States. As we are attempting now to revitalize that movement for freedom and justice, it is our hope that the Church leaders of all denominations will join together anew for this great cause.

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

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628 N. Eutaw Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21201

Manning Marable
Along The Color Line

How black power was lost in Chicago

Part one of a two part series.

The victory of State's Attorney Richard Daley over black incumbent Eugene Sawyer for the Democratic nomination in Chicago's mayoral primary was not unexpected.

Sawyer was a dull, uninspiring candidate, and had no coherent or progressive program to address the city's problems in housing, health care, economic development or education.

But the margin of his defeat by Daley, a massive 101,000 vote mandate, is indicative of the broader political dilemma for black politics throughout the country.

Only six years ago, Congressman Harold Washington swept to victory in Chicago's Democratic primary and general election, becoming the city's first mayor to represent an insurgent coalition of blacks, Hispanics, and progressive elements of labor and the liberal white constituencies of the city's lakefront.

Now, the immediate question is: How was black and progressive power lost in Chicago?

When Washington became mayor, the majority of black elected officials, leading clergymen and many black entrepreneurs had opposed his initial candidacy. They believed incorrectly that it was premature to talk about black, brown and progressive electoral power in Chicago.

Washington himself was unsure whether to run, and it took a massive voter registration campaign in 1982 which made the mayoral race possible.

However, Washington was not vindictive in victory. He did not lead a campaign to oust Congresswoman Cardiss Collins from her House seat, despite her endorsement for Washington's opponent, Mayor Jane Byrne, in 1983.

He permitted machine hacks from the Puerto Rican, Mexican-American and African-American communities to join his administration, regardless of their past political records of compromise and accommodation.

Washington believed correctly that the pressure from the masses of nonwhite and progressive voters from below that such politicians could be "remade" or reformed.

This had been his own political trajectory and experience after his decisive break from the old Daley machine in the early 1970s.

When Washington was reelected in 1987, he failed to purge those elements within his coalition who were ideologically conservative, closest to the downtown business interests.

He also permitted blacks who had openly campaigned against him to retain their ward seats unchallenged. But the major error committed by Washington was the failure to groom a logical political successor, who would stand for his progressive, anti-machine principles.

Perhaps Washington felt that he would actually be mayor for another twenty years, despite his weight problems, chain-smoking, and generally bad personal health.

For whatever reason, when the mayor died of a heart attack, no one in his own coalition was prepared to move forward with a plan to maintain the essential coalition between blacks, Hispanics, and liberal whites which produced Washington's electoral victories.

The racist political machine of Edward Burke and Company, the heirs to the Daley organization, recognized one thing immediately: they could not elevate a white political leader into the mayor's seat in the aftermath of Washington's death.

This was impossible, given the majority held by the Washington coalition in the City Council. They had to split their opponents, selecting the weakest, most vacillating black leader who was willing to play the puppet's role, despite the fact that the majority of Washington's forces favored Alderman Timothy Evans to become mayor.

With white conservative support, Sawyer became mayor in a raucous City Council session besieged by angry black and Hispanic demonstrators.

And despite Sawyer's rise in the polls just before his mayoral defeat, the machine knew that a weakened, divided black community could never defeat a unified, well-financed campaign by one white challenger.

Daley's victory was partially won the night Sawyer became mayor.

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