EDITORIALS

John J. Oliver, Jr.
Chairman of the Board

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President

THE VOICE OF BLACK AMERICA SINCE 1892

Lost opportunities

Much attention has been generated this week over the legislative activity in Annapolis surrounding the so called "Smokers Civil Rights" legislation.

Much of the debate evolves around the issue of whether or not support of this so called "civil rights" legislation is an affront to African Americans of this state in light of the inadequacies of the existing Human Relations law which are amplified when such law's provisions are compared to those of the proposed "smokers" legislation.

Although we agree that there clearly is a dramatized need for protection in situations where individuals in some counties of this state are unduly harassed as a result of exercising their private right to smoke, we believe that the proposed legislation to protect the smokers of this state is less of an affront to the African American citizens of Maryland, when compared to the existing Human Relations law, than it is an example of our legislator's abject failure to seize a golden opportunity to redress the clear inadequacies of the existing Human Relations law.

At a time when the sensitivities of those who otherwise seem totally immune to the need to have a quick and unambiguous redress for discriminatory wrongs appeared to be just right for refocusing through the time-honored American tradition of political compromise; our legislators have chosen instead to ignore the administrative and procedural maze represented by the current Human Relations law in their race to jump on the powerful Tobacco lobbyist bandwagon supporting this bill.

WE ARE DISAPPOINTED that our representatives failed to leverage the "smoker's Civil Rights" bill into more effective civil rights protection under the existing inadequate and very often frustrating Human Relations law.

For their failure to keep their "Eye on the Prize," we all are left with another lost opportunity.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR:

Contrary to the arguments recently advanced editorially, House Bill 1239 and Senate Bill 729 neither equate the plight of smokers with that of the victims of invidious racial or ethnic discrimination, nor provide smokers with more swift or certain relief than that available to persons protected under the state human relations law.

Employer policies which purport to regulate non job related, off worksite, lawful conduct of employees, constitute unwarranted impositions on employee rights.

Enforcement of such unjustified policies through threats of or actual discharge or suspension, or by extracting from prospective employees concessions of their personal liberties as a condition of employment, should not be permitted. It is the prohibition of such conduct that is the subject of the pending legislation.

No, the right of an individual to smoke is not the same as that of an individual to be free from racial or ethnic employment discrimination.

The issue, however, is not how an individual exercises his or her personal freedoms, but rather, whether an employer should be permitted, without just cause, to wrest them away on the penalty of discharge. Prohibiting such conduct no more encourages smoking than prohibiting mandatory polygraph tests encourages employees to tell lies.

Nor does the fact persons whose rights are violated would have the right, without administrative review, to seek legal redress suggest that these persons are afforded greater relief than those who must first pursue their claims, administratively. Administrative oversight and relief was intended as a benefit, nor a burden.

The thought was that by creating and empowering a governmental unit dedicated solely to providing a forum for certain kinds of complaints, and to provide relief for proven violations of certain rights, notice would be served that the elimination of the prohibited conduct, and eradication of its lingering effects, were matters of the highest priority.

Victims of this kind of prohibited conduct are equipped with a full arsenal of investigatory tools, including subpoena power, at no costs to them. Victims of the conduct prescribed by the pending legislation, on the other hand, must fend entirely for themselves.

Clearly, those who argue that the pending bills grant remedial priority to smokers turn both legislative intent and logic on their heads.

ROBERT F. DASHIELL, Esq.
Representative of Philip Morris, Inc.

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

Drug Czar for cities?

William J. Bennett, the new drug czar, has indicated that his first target effort may be Washington, DC. If the facts that are presented about Washington, DC are accurate, it is clear that the time has come for decisive action against drugs in the nation's capital.

We are told that there have been 118 murders in Washington, DC so far in 1989, almost all of them drug related, and according to Mayor Marion Barry, most are confined to certain sections of the city.

We are further told that 90 open drug markets are operating in Washington, DC — the sale of narcotics being made on the streets.

If these reports are true, then it is time for decisive action against drugs in DC, but it is also time for that same kind of action to take place in Detroit, New York, Chicago, Baltimore, Los Angeles and in other cities.

If Bennett proceeds with his plans to make Washington, DC his first priority, there are certain historical facts which may have affected his decision. First, the U. S. Congress was extremely reluctant to grant home rule to the District of Columbia. When it finally did, it did not give complete independence.

The District of Columbia Committee of the Congress was given rather broad powers to review and affect the District's government policies, especially the budget for the District. Former, Congresswoman Edith Green established "federal enclaves" in Washington, DC over which the local government would have no control.

I cite these historical facts to show that the Congress has never been kindly disposed towards an independent District of Columbia and still maintains that attitude.

Congressman Stan Parris of Virginia has often attempted to bully the local government, and recently, threatened to decimate the DC budget request if it banned discrimination against homosexuals.

At a recent State hearing, Senator Rudman launched a tirade against the DC Government and threatened that unless something was done about the murders and the drug traffic, that "some members of the Senate would want to reconsider home rule (independence) for the District of Columbia."

He went even further by saying that, if necessary, he would propose a federal constabulary to patrol the streets of Washington, DC.

When William J. Bennett served as the Secretary of Education in the Reagan Administration, I was almost in complete disagreement with the policies he attempted to formulate and implement.

However, as drug czar for the nation, he has made two statements with which I completely agree.

First, he stated that it may take as long as twenty years to win the war against drugs. He is right because it took at least that long for the drug epidemic to reach its devastating dimensions.

Perhaps, Bennett has no knowledge of Congressman Adam Powell, night after night, addressing the U. S. House of Representatives, urging that the federal government take action against the drug epidemic in Harlem that began decades ago.

He warned that unless the government acted, the drug problem would spill out of the confines of Harlem and would poison the entire United States. He was right, but the Congress never acted to end the tragedy in Harlem.

I also agree with Bennett when he advises that the war against drugs will not be ended until the demand is dramatically reduced or eliminated.

He is absolutely correct! The traffic in drugs increases no matter how many arrests and convictions are made. The demand is there!

It will remain there and, or will increase until the funds are provided in sufficient amounts to wage a full-scale propaganda war against drugs — not a hit or miss kind of thing but an intensive propaganda war of long duration.

That will cost, but isn't it worth it? The demand will be there and, or will increase until we provide jobs with decent wages for all who want to work. That will cost, but isn't it worth it?

G. James **Fleming**
Public Affairs Commentator

Arts school a pacesetter

Part I

A delightful TV documentary highlighted the curriculum of the Baltimore School for the Arts, not too many days ago. (WMAR 2).

It colorfully reviewed what the nearly 600 students are specializing in — music, art, sculpture, theatre and the dance. But it did even more.

It recalled that this is not a run of the mill school. It is not open to "whosoever will." It pre-examines and screens all applicants. It admits only those who demonstrate some extra talent and burning desire in one of the arts.

The school goes an additional step. It expects and exacts, also, an equal interest and application in the usual 4-year academic program, for those on the high school level. Blowing a trumpet well, or beating those drums, or even singing is not enough. The academics count, too.

Most demanding of all, students must remain after regular classroom hours, for rehearsals and practice sessions. As one expresses it, uncomplainingly, "It's practice, practice all the time."

It's tough getting into the Baltimore High School for the Arts (BHSA) and its tough remaining there.

* * *

Founded in 1980, the results are shown in its performances and its graduates are welcomed into colleges and performing companies from coast to coast.

It is fascinating just to sample the list of places where these former BHSA students are now enrolled, or from which they have graduated: Morgan, Howard, Bennington, Boston U, California Institute of Arts, Catholic U, Cleveland Institute of Arts, Curtis Conservatory;

Dance Theatre of Harlem, Fashion Institute of Technology, Goucher, Harvard, the Johns Hopkins, Loyola of Baltimore, Yale, New England Conservatory.

(To Be Continued)

Anthony **Armstrong**
Political Consultant

Roots 2000

"Back to Africa." It's a distant call, both in time and space, made by those words. One hardly hears about Africa anymore, if you don't count apartheid.

Libya even gets reduced press, and this after the shooting down of their jet fighter and reports about a chemical plant set to produce lethal nerve gases.

Here and there we're revisited to the starvation horrors occurring in the Sudan, but we only get sporadic pictures and they don't impact enough to invoke much outrage.

Necessity is mostly economic; and a 21st century reappraisal of economic matters clearly indicates the need, brought on by changing times, to sow new seeds in soil all over Africa.

People go home because whatever they build, or where, everything begins and ends there. Besides, it's impossible to build a nation in the water or the air, and certainly not in another's land.

A strengthened African-American presence in select African nations could have the boomerang effect of providing us with economic leverage here in America.

The more one watches international economic politics (it might be better termed economic "powertics"), especially in America, the more one has to be convinced that African-Americans have no win here, unless we have recognized, measurable, and increasing wealth elsewhere. Where else, ultimately, but "home"?

Ironically, the Africa apart from Middle East entanglements and the unnatural affairs of apartheid is little heard from, or heard of, at all.

While the world beats a path abroad, among its neighbors, it also relishes returning home. Multinationals range everywhere but they remain Japanese multinationals, European multinationals, American multinationals, etc; all still tied to acknowledged national bases.

Yet, we hear nothing from home. There seems little that is newsworthy about Africa; and African-Americans, who have been away from home for centuries now, have not found our way back.

To build wealth requires an infrastructure to generate, receive, and redeploy small pools of resources in order to build even larger ones.

It would not be bad "powertic" to put in place an African Stock Exchange; allowing the pull of capital to the best business prospects to influence the competitive improvement of the entire business and commercial environment, as entities compete for investment capital.

It is more than just conjecture that African-Americans must also have the presence of our natural nations, just like all the other groups that ply the globe.

It makes just as much sense to begin building the economies of those nations, through new, 21st Century, equity roots.

Global economic activity is not happening completely without contributions from what is the world's richest naturally occurring collection of resources.

The resources are flowing away from most of Africa; flowing to others. African-Americans should see the strategic danger in this transfer of basic wealth, position ourselves to redirect the outflow to ourselves, and complete the circle by reinvesting in our only true natural resource - Africa.

The Afro-American
MEMBER
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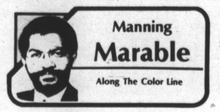
COMMENTARY & OPINIONS



Manning **Marable**
Along The Color Line

The real price of healthcare

About 37 million Americans have absolutely no medical insurance. Roughly one third have incomes below the poverty line. Most are among the working poor, employed in blue collar, semiskilled or unskilled jobs.

Many earn the minimum wage or less, just enough to survive but not enough to pay for regular visits to the doctor and dentist. A disproportionately high number are African-Americans and Hispanics.

This aspect of the medical care crisis is increasingly being debated in governmental and public policy circles. But viable solutions are hard to find.

During the presidential campaign, candidate George Bush endorsed a plan which would permit low income workers to pay to enroll into Medicaid.

But after his election, Bush's advisers warned that the proposal would cost the federal government billions of dollars, because the contributions wouldn't cover the full costs of medicaid for the new recipients.

Sen. Ted Kennedy and Cong. Henry Waxman are leading the effort to pass a bill requiring corporations to provide health coverage to nearly all employees.

Meanwhile, the corporate bosses are protesting that such typically liberal programs would cut into profit margins, forcing lay-offs and cutbacks in production.

And they point to the figures indicating the spiraling cost of maintaining current medical programs for employees.

For example, one recent survey of over 2,200 firms of all sizes found that medical costs increased by 13 percent in 1988 over the previous year, averaging $1,568 per employee, excluding dental costs and medical costs for retired employees.

The workers paid for approximately one fourth of their medical payments, while the employers covered the remaining costs.

In another survey of 1,600 companies by A. Foster Higgins and Company, last year's medical costs increased 19 percent; when dental and retiree expenses were added, total annual costs per person amounted to $2,354.

Most large businesses have tried to get out of paying these huge health insurance bills by cutting benefits.

In the late 1970s, for example, seven out of ten businesses with medical plans paid about 100 percent of all hospital bills for their employees; today, that figure has dropped to only 34 percent.

Bosses are telling their employees to stop smoking, lose weight, reduce their consumption of alcohol, and to monitor their general health, in order to cut costs and to reduce absentee rates.

Partially, this push comes from a more health-conscious awareness, but it is essentially motivated by economics.

By the 1990's it will be very hard for younger employees and low income workers to find jobs which provide any adequate measure of medical or dental support for themselves or their families.

The costs of illness are rapidly being transferred from the well-to-do to those who can least afford it.

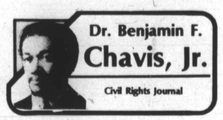
What is the real price Americans pay without a comprehensive, national healthcare policy? One aspect of the crisis is the failure to deal with drugs.

Three years ago, New York City had 200,000 cocaine addicts and regular users; today, that figure has soared to 600,000 cocaine addicts and regular users; today, that figure has oared to 600,000 addicts.

Thousands of young people, mostly blacks and Hispanics, are killed in drug-related violence. The solution is not simply more police, but a comprehensive approach which includes expanded, government supported drug-related, counselling and health education.

A similar situation exists in terms of environmentally - related diseases, including many forms of cancer. The failure to advance a comprehensive health policy contributes to the [illegible] of premature deaths annually.

The right to health, which includes free or affordable medical and dental care, should be considered a democratic entitlement, equal to the right to vote. We must develop a major political offensive to expand healthcare rights and opportunities for all Americans.



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

Howard students' victory for the movement

Reminiscent of the successful student protest of the late 1960's and early 1970's, Howard University students recently staged a successful sit-in protest around a number of justice issues.

There are many who believe that African American students of today are not as aware or involved in what was called "the freedom movement" which reached its peak in the 1960's.

Student leaders of Howard University and their student supporters proved this belief to be incorrect, however.

The protest not only was successful in getting new commitments from the administration to improve financial and administrative procedures, but also the administration of the university has committed that there would be more African American studies courses and other curriculum changes demanded by the students.

One central demand that was achieved by the students was the calling for the resignation of Lee Atwater, chairman of the Republican National Committee from the Board of Trustees of Howard University.

The students concluded that Mr. Atwater had a record of racial prejudice and bias against the African American community because of the role he played in the election campaign of President George Bush.

You might recall that during the 1988 election, the Bush campaign was accused of racist political advertisement to attract white voters who had anti-African American viewpoints through its sensational use of the Willie Horton ad. Atwater was chairman of the Bush election committee.

Yet one of the aspects of the Howard University student sit-in was that it appeared to have learned some lessons from the past which enabled the protest to be effective.

For example, the students' demands were very specific, which facilitated the negotiation process.

Secondly, the students wisely had their own security detail which kept the situation from becoming violent. They also had a team of attorneys working with them.

We are also aware that the Mayor of Washington, D.C., Marion Barry, played a key role in preventing the Washington, D.C. police from storming the building that was occupied by the students.

Likewise, the Reverend Jesse Jackson was instrumental in assisting the negotiation process.

It is our hope that the officials at Howard University will learn something from this protest.

Students who are trained and educated to think and act objectively and reasonably will not tolerate administrative insensitivity and bureaucratic lethargy.

My comments are not meant to throw stones at Howard University, but, speaking as an alumnus, I was greatly dismayed that University officials were so slow to deal with legitimate student complaints.

Thus, the victory of the Howard University students is a victory for the cause of justice.

It is our hope that this will signal a rebirth of the kind of student activism and leadership that is so desperately needed in the African American community.

REP. GUS HAWKINS:

Nurturing forceful, unified voices

In most of our inner cities we see the fabric of our society being unwoven. We see the despair of homeless children and families. We see unemployed Americans who have given up looking for jobs that don't exist in their community.

We see a growing number of single heads of households; mainly women, who want to trade dependency for self-sufficiency.

We see children growing up in poor housing and receiving inadequate health care. We see law abiding citizens endangered by the incessant barrage of criminal activity. Where does it end we ask?

The federal government must be a vehicle to address these concerns. But with limited resources and a burgeoning deficit crisis, we must reach out and seek a solution which brings everyone into the process.

A total solution will mean state and local agencies must shoulder the burden, and private corporations who need skilled workers to sustain their progress, must join in as well.

Crime in the inner cities is perhaps the most vexing of these problems. Certainly, federal programs like Head Start and compensatory education have helped.

Schools with inspired leaders which project high expectations for their students can make a difference. Community-based organizations have done a solid job of providing social services and hope.

The second congressionally passed drug bill, which includes a component I authored aimed at providing alternative programs to prevent gang involvement, will help.

We must choke off the menacing amount of drugs flowing into our streets through better law enforcement measures. We must also provide the proper education to deter drug and alcohol demand by our youth.

Targeted job training programs, aimed at high risk youth ought be expanded in the current Job Training Partnership Act, which my Committee on Education and Labor will examine this year.

We must keep the pressure on if we are to correct these social inequities. This team effort could encompass the following activism:

— a monthly meeting of elected officials (federal, state, local) to discuss a concerted plan of action;

— the establishment of community councils, organized by neighborhood areas, that would operate as a monitoring unit to identify problem areas;

— an educational council, comprised primarily of concerned parents, to work with school officials to improve education conditions, academic performance, and overall morale;

— an expansion of the volunteer efforts of esteem building groups such as sororities, fraternities, social/community organizations and various religious denominations.

Using the advocacy power of these forceful and unified voices, we can command a greater degree of responsiveness to the problems of the inner cities. Instead of pointing fingers — we need to link arms, and stand united.

Every month the Department of Labor issues the widely publicized rate of unemployment. This official rate, however, does not include what is sometimes referred to as "discouraged workers," or workers who have given up looking for work that does not exist.

The Labor Department does include them in a separate statistic — independent of the official rate — known as "discouraged workers." The estimated number of discouraged workers is around 1 million.

If these workers were counted in the official labor force, the national unemployment rate would be 6.5 percent — an increase by ratio of 20 percent and 1 full percentage point above the official rate.

Another overlooked condition is the over 5 million part-time workers who are seeking full-time jobs. These "involuntary part-time or "part-time for economic reason workers," receive little if any media attention. About 20 percent of this group of workers is actually living in poverty.

Even the official statistics, with or without the discouraged worker figure, are not an accurate picture. In cities like Oakland, Los Angeles and Detroit, the true unemployment figure, especially for minorities, far exceeds the official city-wide jobless count.

Because of this "hidden unemployment" factor we must strengthen our effort to address the problem of joblessness in America. It is also important to point out that most of the "new jobs" which the Reagan Administration boasted about creating, were mainly low wage, service sector type jobs.

Many of these jobs have no fringe benefits, such as health care coverage or leave policies. They are jobs which people accept because they have no choice — but want to get out of it, if they get the chance.

Ruth **Jenkins**
Sob Sister

'Reading, 'riting, 'rithmetic: a plus

Never thought we'd see the day when any of the harmless little 'Three R's' (readin', 'ritin', 'n' 'rithmetic) might become 'hazardous to your health.'

But that's the way it is today, what with life-threatening edicts being issued against imaginative authors. Terrorism used as a literary critique seems to be a little much. Offered a book he doesn't like, why can't a fanatic "just say 'no'"

We had a career choice of lion tamer, racing car driver, bullfighter, mountain climber, bronco buster, sword swallower, or skydiver. But we like to live dangerously, so we became a writer.

But we're courageous; we'll not be scared off the best-seller lists. We'll write and read what we please. 'Cause our occupational insurance protection covers attacks by extremists and elephant stampedes.

We learned to read at a tender age. In kindergarten, we were taught the difference between the hallway door signs which said 'Garcons' (boys); and the others which said 'Filles' (girls). Thereafter, we got all A's in sex education classes.

Also, as a youngster, we were tricked into liking the library. Lured by its window displays of fascinating reading materials. Like by its window displays of fascinating reading materials. Like comic strips, racing forms, bathroom joke books, crossword puzzles and suggestive lyrics.

But once we got hooked, mean old librarians gave us only dull stuff. Thesaurus, dictionary, encyclopedia. Books on history, literature, science, the arts, theology and philosophy. Oh yes, and political patty-cake pap.

Still we're glad we can read. So we don't miss out on secret codes, tax loopholes, palimony legalities, ransom notes, pre-marital contracts, detour directions, bargain sales ads, doctoral dissertations, smoke signals, government gobbledegook and computer screw-ups.

Oh yes, and our Best Beau's collection of Playboy Magazine. Which he buys strictly for the inspirational interviews. Like with Martin Luther King (January 1965 issue). And with Jimmy Carter, who admitted at that time that he 'lusted' in his heart.

Reading also gives us insight. Into the hand signals of irritable drivers exchanging insults in a traffic tie-up. Especially when one mouths "Read My Lips."

Long ago we read that an apple was what got mankind booted out of the Garden of Eden. And that forbidden-fruit fiasco was to blame for his punishments ever since.

So how come man is just now badmouthing the apple because of harmful preservatives? After millions of years of polishing apples for the boss, bribing teachers with shinny apples and eating one a day to 'keep the doctor away'?

Here's hoping some fearless daredevil will write something to encourage the doctor to make housecalls again.

Since critics react
Both pro and con
Safest writer is
Author ANON.