EDITORIALS

John J. Oliver, Jr.
Chairman of the Board
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THE VOICE OF BLACK AMERICA SINCE 1892

AIDS and black America

Over 50,000 people in this country have died from Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) in the United States since 1981, when the disease first began to be tracked.

Over 13,000 blacks have succumbed to the highly contagious disease. In Baltimore alone more than 800 blacks have contracted fullblown AIDS, compared to 667 whites.

In the black community, AIDS has been perceived as a gay, white, male disease. It has been relegated to a "behind closed doors" status, and thus not discussed nor openly talked about.

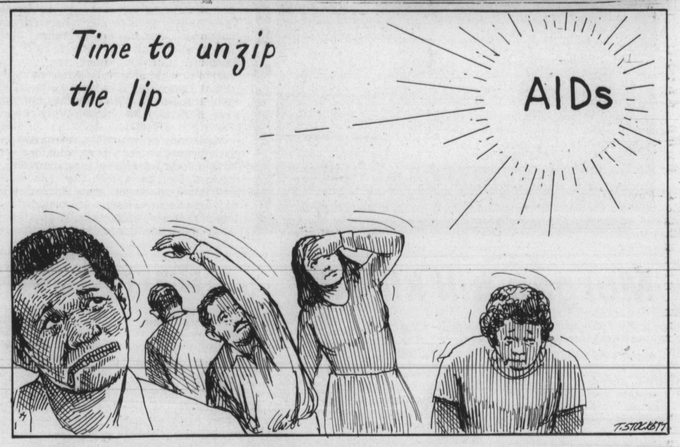
This is a mistake.

It is time to unzip the cap on the bottled-up information about this deadly killer disease. The clergy tends to either totally ignore the subject, or merely give token lip service to the existence of this menace among us.

National Public Radio has devoted the entire week's broadcast focus to the subject of AIDS. It has been carried on WEAA-FM and WJHU-FM in a series called "AIDS and Black America: Breaking the Silence."

The Health Education and Resources Organization (HERO) has been in the forefront locally of assisting AIDS victims, and spreading the word. This summer, the Baltimore AFRO-AMERICAN, Blue Cross and Blue Shield, Patuxent Publishing Co. and WJZ-TV will sponsor AIDSWALK '89 to help raise $250,000 for non-profit AIDS organizations.

It's time to unzip the lip, and get hip — to AIDS that is. Everyone is vulnerable — EVERYONE!



LETTER TO THE EDITOR:

Smokers Rights Bill

Jesse Helms would enthusiastically vote for the smokers' rights bill now before the General Assembly. Jesse Helms cares about protecting the tobacco industry. He doesn't care about protecting people from job discrimination.

That's what I said on the floor of the House of Delegates when I spoke in opposition to this legislation, House Bill 1239. The following is why.

Businesses must have at least 15 employees to be covered by Maryland's Human Relations Law, which prohibits discrimination based upon an individual's race, religion, sex, marital status, mental or physical handicap, or other factors. Every employer in Maryland would be prevented from hiring or firing a smoker under HB 1239.

People who claim discrimination under the Human Relations Law must first go to the Human Relations Commission before they go to court. Under HB 1239, a smoker could sue his boss right away, with no limits on the relief available. At the federal level, it took years to get this right in the fair housing area.

I applaud the AFRO for calling attention to this perversion of the civil rights laws.

SAMUEL ROSENBERG

* * *

The recently passed House Bill 1239 and Senate Bill 729, both dealing with smokers "rights" trivialized Maryland's civil rights laws. The bills juxtapose tobacco smokers, racial minorities, and women as protected groups. The Baltimore Urban League therefore recommends that the legislature re-examine these bills.

Some of the issues involved are:

- Is barring a smoker from being a firefighter comparable to barring a female from being a firefighter? Current anti-discrimination laws prevent the barring of females. Anti-discrimination laws should not serve the same purpose for smokers.
- Smoking has been called a physical disability, an addiction. Is this comparable to a non-smoker who has lost a lung because of uncontrolled smoking in a work situtation, for example?
- Presently a minority individual, in order to sue because of discrimination, must go through the Human Rights Commission, which covers racial and other acts of discrimination based on heredity.
- Under these bills, a smoker who feels discriminated against could sue for an injunction and monetary damages without going through the Human Rights Commission or any other group. This would seem to elevate the smoker above minority groups which were discriminated against.

Discrimination laws in Maryland protect conditions that are permanent in nature. However, House Bill 1239 and Senate Bill 729 regard discrimination to be against a voluntary, self-taught and self-inflicted habit which has been determined to be harmful not only to the persons who smoke, but also to people in the environment of the smokers. So harmful have been the effects that restrictions on smoking have been established for the welfare of the people.

If smokers do not conform to the new directives which are set for the smoker's welfare and the welfare of others, they should not have access to courts under discrimination laws when they violate restrictions.

The Baltimore Urban League is opposed to legislation that "entitles" smokers to the same anti-discrimination protection for minorities because there is no legitimate comparison.

BALTIMORE URBAN LEAGUE
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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

Ron Brown, Newt Gingrich

Ronald Brown, a black man, was recently elected as Chairman of the Democratic National Committee, the policy-making body for the Democratic Party.

Cong. Newt Gingrich, a Republican from the State of Georgia, was recently elected the Minority Whip in the U.S. House of Representatives. His job is to corral votes for the Republican issues but is also a policy-making position for the Republican Party.

Conservatives believe "that government is best which governs least." In other words, government should not provide jobs; or housing; or education monies. They argue that the private sector and the dynamics of society will solve all problems without the help of the federal government.

Conservatives believe equally as fervently in "strict constructionism," that which is not specifically spelled out in U.S. Constitution is probably unconstitutional.

For example, affirmative action is not specifically referenced in the Constitution, therefore, affirmative action is unconstitutional.

On the other hand, liberals hold that government has a constitutional mandate to promote the general welfare; and therefore, when all else fails, it is the duty of the federal government to intervene directly in meeting the needs of citizens.

Newt Gingrich, the Republican Whip, is an arch conservative and ardent supporter of the military spending. He is a highly intelligent person, but one who will use, shall we say, unusual tactics to make a point.

One night after the House of Representatives had adjourned, and members were making special order speeches, Gingrich pointed to the empty seats on the Democratic side and while the television was still on, demanded to know why the Democrats were not in attendance.

While the rest of the Republican leadership will seek compromise on legislation, Gingrich will seek confrontation. His strategy will be to force moderate Republicans to become arch conservatives like him, and to attack, attack, attack the Democrats. No compromise for him.

On the other hand, Ron Brown, Chairman of the Democratic National Committee, widely experienced and highly intelligent, must be about bringing the Democratic Party together. In recent years, it has become difficult to distinguish some Democrats' voting record from Republicans' voting records.

I did not think he would become Chairman. He was, for some, "too liberal"; "too close to Jesse Jackson" and "too much a part of the Kennedy faction".

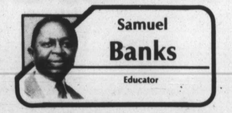
It is reported that one southerner threatened to secede from the Democratic Party if Brown were elected chairman. The same southerner needed a political favor after Brown was elected, which Brown gave him.

Brown will not be confrontational, he will be seeking consensus. He will not be ideologically inflexible, but will strive for compromise when it is required.

The conservatives of America struggled for 20 years to achieve a conservative-dominated Supreme Court. They achieved that objective.

Now, they seek to achieve conservative domination over the Congress. If they can force moderate Republicans to become arch conservatives and join forces with the conservative Democrats, (whose numbers increase with each election), they may well achieve that objective also.

If that should happen, I pray it does not, minorities; the poor; and the working poor will see hard, hard times. The record made by the conservatives during the past 20 years guarantees that if they wrest control over the political process, we will suffer.



Samuel **Banks**
Educator

Need for racial equity in schools

It is, indeed, a national tragedy and shame that 35 years after the momentous and historic **Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka decision** of May 17, 1954 the practice of equality of educational opportunity and fundamental fairness is a lamentable and grievous failure.

This situation prevails primarily because the majority white society, as a whole, has refused, except where required or mandated by law, to desegregate public schools and to share the human and monetary resources equally and fairly to all students enrolled in our nation's public schools.

The condition of socio-economic and educational in equality is exacerbated further by the rapid and systemic outmigration of highly affluent blacks and whites of suburbia and exurbia.

The end result for affluent black citizens, even in the salubrious and expansive areas of suburbia, are confined principally to demonstrably black and poor schools in close proximity to urban boundaries.

The farther one moves from the urban-suburban boundaries, the schools tend to be populated overwhelmingly by children of highly affluent whites.

Insofar as urban schools are concerned today in our nation, the vast majority of over eight million black children and youths in our nation's public schools are concentrated in segregated and largely impoverished urban schools.

This grim reality occurs notwithstanding the **Brown** decisions of 1954 and 1955 and other court and legislative remedies in support of desegregated schooling and equity.

A recent national study commissioned by the National School Boards' Association clearly corroborated, in vivid and telling statistical terms, a national retreat on desegregation and equity in our nation's public schools.

The five school systems ranked in the study as the most segregated were Miami, New Orleans, Burmingham, Memphis and Baltimore.

Since the **Brown** decisions of 1954 and 1955, we have lost three generations of black children and youths because of a national disinclination to provide, in fact, equity and equality of opportunity for all students.

The prevalence of rigid and unyielding housing segregation in our nation, in spite of the fair housing act of 1968, amended in 1988, offers little hope that relief will be provided for broad-based housing and school desegregation in the forseeable future.

It must be borne in mind that I am fully persuaded that black students need not be in desegregated schools in order to learn effectively and substantively.

I support desegregated education in terms of a basic operational pragmatism: Where white children and youths are enrolled the requisite supplies high quality curricula, equipment, support staff and human and monetary resources will be in place.

The final issue that remains in this matter is simple: **What will you do in your community for racial equity and equality of education opportunity. It is now up to you.**

Part II

G. James **Fleming**
Public Affairs Commentator

Arts School city pacesetter

The guiding mind and hands of the school are those of David Simon, a veteran in musical education, who ten years ago as enticed here from the Manhattan School of Music, New York City, where he had been dean for 12 years.

He is supported by a coterie of dedicated, simulating, hard - working teachers and practitioners — teachers with light in their eyes.

For the young men and women at the school, it must be added that they are an above-average disciplined and mature - minded group. Rigorous work seems to take adolescent mischief out of them.

One instructor shared with the TV audience that, in four years of teaching at BHSA, not once had he experience any behavior from a student that could be considered unbecoming or belligerent.

There have long been speciality schools and programs in the Baltimore public school system.

Polytechnic, for more than a century, has been a high school with an academic and natural science emphasis that enabled its students, most often, to qualify for the second year of college instead of entering as freshmen.

Western and City high schools, traditionally, have also been specialty schools — appealing to those purely liberal arts - minded and who are unwaveringly inclined to college, and who are not asking or expecting ease in their school years.

Some rural districts have included a high school with a specialty in agriculture, just as there have been some colleges which started out, at least, specializing in agriculture, too.

In Baltimore, the vocational technical high schools — Carver and Mergenthaler — are also specialty schools, aiming, in the technical area, for the same kind of highly motivated students that are attracted to the School for the Arts, Poly and western.

There are also classes within schools that specialize; thus there are classes "for the gifted," recognizing that some pupils (and their parents) are prepared to move faster or tackle more than the rank and file.

It is a flawed view of democracy to believe that the kinds of opportunities above - mentioned, are undemocratic because they cannot admit everyone — as long as they are open to all, or merit, and without discrimination based solely on race, creed, color, sex, national origin or previous condition of servitude.

where an outside foundation, business or committee helps to meet the costs of providing high quality education, all the better; the community benefits but, most of all, our children stand to gain.

The Afro-American
MEMBER
The Audit Bureau
MDDC
UPI

COMMENTARY & OPINIONS

Ethel **Payne**
BEHIND THE SCENES

Africare expands

The new momentum to shift from the nomenclature of black Americans to African Americans reflects the desire on the part of 30 million Americans to identify more closely with their roots.

It was Rev. Jesse Jackson who sparked the idea that it is time for a coming together of cultural and spiritual identity in the ongoing struggle for equality in America.

C. Payne Lucas, executive director of the 18-year-old technical assistance agency, Africare, sees that changing mood as the chance to expand the program of the organization by raising the level of consciousness about the continent and its problems.

"If you're African American you have to care about Africa in a meaningful way," Lucas asserts. "You can't just affect African garb and braids as a way of demonstrating pride. You have to understand the diversity and customs of each country and the particular needs.

"African Americans need to develop a collective response to those needs just as other ethnic groups identify with the countries of their heritage; yet take pride in their American citizenship," he added.

Recently, Africare unveiled an expanded program of outreach that is focused on recruiting more national organizations in the African American community and to encourage greater support from the private sector.

Currently, it gets a major share of its funds from the U.S. Agency for International Development. Melvin Foote, a staff associate, who has had broad experience in African countries, is director of Constituency Development.

In this capacity, he has established a network across the country of major African American organizations which have raised money and adopted projects in some 14 African nations. A sample of these are:

Links Inc., support for water wells and the launching of its Southern Africa Initiative to assist the Frontline Countries in the region in the sruggle against apartheid;

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc., a $100,000 contribution to Africare's African Village Development Program; Jack and Jill of America, Inc., a commitment to finance a $40,000 child survival project in the drought-stricken country of Mali;

Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, $100,000 "Partners for Africa" campaign to build food warehouses and other storage facilities in Africa;

The Shriners, (AEAONMS INC.) and the construction of a rural health clinic.

Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, "Project Africa," a program designed to assist women in Africa by providing grain grinders to reduce the work load.

Among the latest Greek-letter brganizations to come on board the Outreach Africa program is Omega Psi Phi Fraternity which has announced support for a range of projects to "project and improve the fragile African environment."

Africare will oversee the implementation of projects to address critical problems of soil erosion, loss of soil fertility and deforestation.

Ultimately these affect water resources, food production, energy supply, availability of housing materials, and other basic needs in rural Africa. The first country to be targeted is Chad. Other African countries will receive similar support in years to come.

Other organizations that have made commitments to Africare are, the Progressive Baptist Convention, National Association of Negro Business and Professional Women's, Clubs, National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, National Association of Bench and Bar Spouses, United Supreme Council and the National Alliance of Postal and Federal Employees.

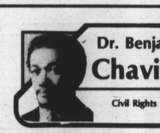
Africare's preeminent interest is on inducing self-help programs for independent African nations, struggling to become independent.

Thirty-two years after Ghana became the first country on the continent to break its colonial bonds, the developing countries are still wrestling with the paradox of wealth below the earth in mineral deposits and staggering poverty above ground.

The lack of technology and access to marketing techniques leaves these countries still dependent on western dominance in commerce and industry.

Thus, the organization is now engaged in two new programs focusing on training young, skilled African professionals who can return to their countries as leaders in development.

The first is encouraging wealthy individuals and corporations to set up training programs on site, teaching indigents to operate and manage projects such as wells and water resources, re-forestation, equipment maintenance, food production and storage and clinics where the scarcity of medical care is a critical need.



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

Miami crisis continuing

Most of the world has become aware of the deep racial problems and divisions that plague the city of Miami, Florida.

The recent documented cases of racially-motivated police brutality against African Americans in this city only serve as a backdrop for the growing racial tensions.

Aesthetically, Miami is a beautiful city with much promise for the future. Yet, behind the gloss is a multi-racial community that lacks the will to forthrightly address fundamental social, political, and economic issues.

Now that Miami is experiencing a large influx of Central American refugees, racial hostilities appear to be increasing to a crisis stage.

The **New York Times** recently revealed in a report that the educational system of Dade County where Miami is situated, also is not prepared to handle the more than 500 immigrant children coming to Miami per month.

Most of them speak Spanish. Ironically, there are now renewed calls for "English Only" legislation that would require that English be the mandatory language of local school systems.

Dr. Michael M. Krop, Chairman of the Dade County School Board has appealed to the President because "Bush says he wants to be the Education President."

Yet, the Federal Government is now in the process of making new budget cuts from programs designed to support local school systems like the one in Miami.

We are very concerned about the perceived tensions between the African Amercian and Hispanic American communities in Miami as a result of the social and economic implications of the rise in the local immigrant population.

Strategically the African American and Hispanic American communities should unite in a common struggle for empowerment.

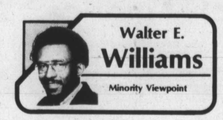
The future of Miami does not have to be a future of divisive racial confrontations. But, the handwriting is surely on the wall, and the necessity for unity and joint action has never been more urgent.

In fact, Miami will serve as a national barometer on the future of race relations in the United States. The "powers that be" in the Anglo-American community should not wait for the situation to explode.

The extent to which those in power are willing to share with those who are powerless is the extent to which a basis for dialogue and corrective action can be initiated.

It appears that the Bush Administration will not rush in and offer solutions for the acute problems facing the city.

Thus, local leaders across the lines of race and class will have to emerge to ensure the kind of social and political change necessary for empowerment and development of all of the communities of Miami, particularly those communities that have historically been oppressed and exploited.



Walter E. **Williams**
Minority Viewpoint

Private prisons

There were 300,000 prisoners in federal and state facilities in 1977. Then years later the prison population had nearly doubled. This crowding prompts callous judges and parole board to turn criminals loose to prey on the law-abiding public.

Long sentences are handed out just to placate the public and a few years later parole boards free the criminal. In some cities, criminals are sentenced, then told to go home and wait until there is room in jail.

Privatization can alleviate the prison facility crisis according to Prof. Samuel Brakel of the Northern Illinois University Law School in a paper titled "Privatization and Corrections," published by the Reason Foundation (Santa Monica, Calif.).

Brakel says, "The federal government should develop contract guidelines addressing taxpayer, prisoner, private provider, and public agency concerns."

There are already some 25 to 30 facilities, under private management, totaling about 3,000 beds. And there are preliminary contract awards to private companies for 2,500 beds in yet-to-be constructed facilities.

While private prison facilities play only a minuscule role today, they must assume a more important role as public facilities become more bogged down in the mire.

Despite the biggest construction push in the history of corrections over the last ten years, the U.S. Sentencing Commission estimates there will be a doubling of the prison population over the next decade.

The construction of a maximum security prison costs the public sector an average of $58,000 per bed. Medium - and minimum — security construction costs are $46,000 and $26,000 per bed respectively. On top of that, it takes about two-and-a-half years to build a prison.

Brakel's report shows that the private sector holds out promise for better prisons at a lower cost. For example, the Corrections Corporation of America (CCA) has developed impressive record.

Three years ago, CCA built a 350 bed minimum security facility in Houston for the detention of illegal aliens. It was completed in the space of six months at a cost of $14,000 per bed.

This compares quite favorably to the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) average of two-and-one-half years at $26,000 per bed.

Private prison management has had similar success in saving tax dollars in Hamilton County, Tenn., and Weaversvill, Pa. At least 10 states have enacted enabling legislation specifically authorizing private-sector provision facilities.

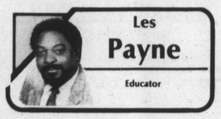
The only real question is whether prison privatization will be allowed to provide the answer to the problem, and that's a political hot potato.

The taxpayers' concern is that's a political hot potato.

The taxpayers' concern is that prison costs be minimized at no cost to humane prisoner treatment. The evidence from our brief experience with modern privately managed facilities suggests that these concerns are met.

The thornier issue has to do with the civil servants and bureaucrats who manage federal and state prisons. High positions in the prison system are political plums handed out to favorites.

Privatization means fewer political plums to dole out. Public employee unions aren't wild about privatization. Politicians easily caved in to their demand for higher wages, more fringe benefits, and easier working conditions because the higher costs are passed on to the taxpayers.



Les **Payne**
Educator

Message of hope from S.A. church

The nagging Easter Sunday question surrounding the South African Dutch Reformed Church is why wasn't this congregation at the top of Salman Rushdie's deity hit-list.

I suppose I should say here that I firmly believe in freedom of religion, up to the extreme limits of the endurable. I even support the right to worship of the Church of the Living Song, which, if memory serves, is distinguished by the single tenet mandating the faithful to consume once a week a meal of red wine and chateaubriand.

Not surprising, the founding prophet of this sect received his sacred revelation while serving a long sentence at a California maximum security prison.

In recent times, the Dutch Reformed Church has been a prime force preserving South Africa's state religion of apartheid. This, of course, does not historically distinguish this church from the other major religions of the world.

Most have falsely set their followers apart as a chosen people. However, other religions, having drawn blood in bygone ages, have settled into a sort of middle-aged respectability.

They still loathe nonbelievers and hold themselves superior, but with their mouths they urge tolerance and respect for the rights of man.

The Dutch Reformed Church continued to preach what it practiced.

Since 1948, when the Nationalists came to power in South Africa, the Dutch Reformed Church has boldly preached its theology of racial separation.

Always attributing apartheid to "the will of God," the church has worked closely with the secret power arm of the government, called "The Broederbond."

Recently, the Afrikaner church reportedly confessed its sins of apartheid and, days later, withdrew that confession.

"We confess with humility and sorrow the participation of our church in the introduction and the legitimization of the ideology of apartheid and the subsequent suffering of people," read a formal statement from the church after a week-long meeting of its leaders near Johannesburg.

Apartheid "cannot be accepted on Christian ethical grounds, because it contravenes the essence of reconciliation, neighborly love and righteousness," the statement said.

Black and mixed race members of the related - though - separate Dutch Reformed Mission Church hailed the statement and called for civil action to counter apartheid.

Instead, the mother church (the black and mixed race congregations are designated "daughter") backed away from its condemnation of apartheid.

"The white church has, in effect, repudiated its confession of guilt in creating, maintaining and justifying apartheid," said the Rev. Allan Boesak, the best known member of the mixed-race mission church.

What are we to make of this white South African church so closely in touch with the "will of God?" Did the deity change his mind? Was he just jerking the Afrikaner's chain? I dunno.

However, I suspect that, like the Boer government, the DRC is trying to come into the 19th Century. The South Africans have learned from the Americans that they can oppress their black population without posting signs on toilets, water fountains and public buildings.

They have pulled down many of the "white only" signs and are making other fine adjustments to their apartheid superstructure. They are careful, however, not to tamper with the three pillars upon which apartheid stands:

(1) the racial registration of the population; (2) the official segregation of racial groups and (3) the control of the movement of the black population for economic reasons.

Following the government's lead, the DRC seems to be making fine language adjustments to its support of apartheid. It may soon support racial equality. Like other Christian churches, it may support racial equality with words but not with deeds.

But these moves may not be made overnight. So the church elders, after making two steps forward, made one and a half backwards.

There is little pressure to reform within the 1.7 million - member church that counts 80 percent of the Afrikaner powerbrokers within its ranks. Those Afrikaners who seek true reform often leave the church, some choosing tc worship with the mixed-race congregations.

The best known such Afrikaner rebel is Beyers Naude, who also bolted from the powerful, secret white supremacist Broederbond after leading the nondenominational, ecumenical Christian Institute. Naude was banned for seven years.

Turning his back on the DRC, Naude called for the formation of a "confessing church" that would resist the deprivation of rights, exploitation and other excesses of the apartheid system. He called upon all white South Africans to align themselves on the side of the victims and those who suffer.

"Why," he asked, "resist the inevitable—namely the forces of change, which, if properly utilized, could assist all the people of South Africa, both black and white, colored and Indian to lay the foundation for a new, nonracial and democratic society."

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