EDITORIALS

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THE VOICE OF BLACK AMERICA SINCE 1892

Mother's Day

The official observance of Mother's Day was created by Presidential proclamation. It was first observed at the request of Anna Jarvis of Philadelphia in 1907, who asked her church to hold a service in honor of all mothers on the anniversary of her mother's death.

The date, second Sunday in May, was fixed in 1914 with the issuance of Public Resolution No. 2 of May 8. The observance continues to this day, although creeping commercialism threatens to engulf the special day, just as it has for many of our holidays.

The acknowledgement of the debt every one owes to mothers should not be confined to just a single day, once a year. We feel the celebration of Mother's Day, should be every day. Not in the tradition method of paying tribute, with gifts, flowers or similar tokens, but by following the precepts she has tried to instill in you.

Mothers teach their children right from wrong. They try to provide guidance, counsel and leadership in shaping the destiny of their offspring. What better way to celebrate Mother's Day than a pledge to try to live up to the teachings of your mother.

If everyone did this, think of what a wonderful world this would be. A pipedream? Yes, but don't dismiss the idea out of hand — think about it!

Black businesses

Support black businesses has been a theme promulgated by many, and ignored by too many. All too often support for black businesses wait until it is too late. The list of businesses owned by blacks which died for lack of black support continues to grow.

Think for a moment of the parade right here in Baltimore City. Shake and Bake, Provident Hospital, Ethel's Place, Chicken George, Duke Martins — all gone.

When the owner of the Palladium filed Chapter 11 bankruptcy this week, it points up the lack of support under discussion. This is not a "black front" operation which is too often a ploy resorted to in an effort to force a black-owned business to the breaking point.

Chapter 11, of course, protects a business from its creditors until a reorganization business plan is approved by the courts. It does not put a company out of business, but it does serve notice that there must be a radical change in operations in order to survive.

As Enolia McMillian of the NAACP has stated time and time again, "black people only respond when we have a crisis." And fortunately, they have responded in most cases.

But such has not been the pattern when it comes to black businesses, and it is hoped that this lassitude will be replaced by a determination and drive to keep the struggling entities afloat.

It can be done, for the good of black businesses everywhere — it must be done!

Farrakhan, Africa is no homeland for criminals

At the recently held African-American Summit in New Orleans, Minister Louis Farrakhan offended many an Africanist when his rhetorics tapered off to a suggestion that black population in U.S. prisons should be shipped back to a homeland in Africa.

Much as we are very proud of our brethren who are identifying themselves with the true aspiration of Africans, we are prepared to challenge any political affront against the mother continent.

In lieu of spending the $35,000 a year on each inmate in Farrakhan's dreamland in Africa, why not expand the sum to fight drugs, AIDS and other malaise afflicting American society? When has Africa become a no man's continent that would not control the quality of human beings that inhabit her territory?

Apparently, Brother Farrakhan must have had Africa's Tarzan era in the mind when he came up with such a jaundiced panacea to America's prison problems.

However, we can not agree less with Farrakhan when he said that racism, sexism and materialism are crippling the Western civilization. To counteract the White House plan "to keep blacks from gaining full equality," we suggest that African Americans must first work toward economic emancipation.

As a strategy toward this, we suggest there should be a greater understanding between Africans from the continent and those in the diaspora.

In other words, African Americans should move beyond blank rhetorics and open up lines of communication and business activities between America and Africa. Who wants prisoners?

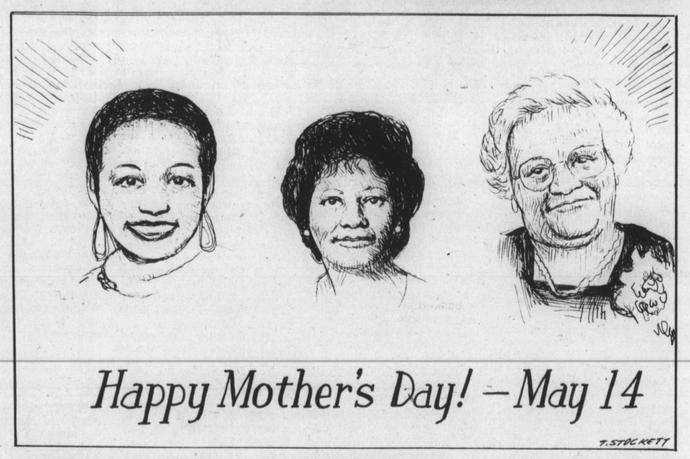
AYODELE AYETIGBO

Summit coverage

I'd like to commend the AFRO-AMERICAN Newspaper for its outstanding coverage of the African American Summit held in New Orleans. While I regret that I could not attend, your newspaper kept me informed of both the pre-planning by the Maryland Delegation and the actual activities at the Summit.

I was especially pleased that the AFRO published the entire agenda which was the by-product of the work of hundreds of African American delegates from across the country. I think the important thing now is that the AFRO take leadership as a catalyst for the implementation of the many excellent recommendations that are embodied in the African American Summit's agenda and to that end you can count on my full support and commitment.

HOWARD P. RAWLINGS



Samuel **Banks**
Educator

Class of 1989

In a few days on verdant and picturesque college campuses and universities throughout our land, the sonorous, lilting and mellifluous strains of Sir Edward Elgar's "Pomp and Circumstances," Mendelssohn's "War March of the Priests," among other familiar and majestic "seasonal" music, will be heard throughout our nation.

This is a grand time to be on college campuses. Wherever you happen to be, make a very special effort to attend "senior week activities and commencement" at a college or university in your area. A call to the college's information office will provide you with a schedule of "senior week activities" culminating in the commencement exercises.

I look forward with much anticipation and avidity in terms of my annual challenges to the graduating classes. In this conjunction, amidst a year of immense ferment, disquietude, anxiety and academic-intellectual stimulation and excitement, I am extremely delighted and pleased to extend bountiful and heartfelt felicitations to all graduates, their parents, families, loved ones and supporters.

Welcome to the majestic, demanding and pulsating "World of Letters."

At a time when a national mood of retrenchment and retreat on civil and human rights, it is apparent, as in times past, that immense demands will be made on black college/university graduates to give hope and succor to the masses of our brothers and sisters, across our nation, bereft of hope and opportunity. Much has been given to you; much will be required of you. Please do not fail us!

I am particularly proud of a number of persons that I am aware who will graduate with high honors. I have reference to Ms. Gina Allen, daughter of Harrison Allen of Washington, D.C., who will graduate from the University of the District of Columbia as a pre-law major;

Nancy Holt Brown, daughter of Harts M. and Ruth Payne Brown, who will graduate from the Johns Hopkins Medical School, and Michael Bowen Mitchell, Jr., son of Mr. and Mrs. Michael Bowen Mitchell, who will graduate from the Johns Hopkins University.

These proud, courageous and perspicacious minds, among others, represent a glorious and heartening harbinger for our future as a people.

Through it all, in a fierce and rigorous academic-intellectual process, they have gone forward splendidly. I am most proud of them and their fellow-graduates.

I. Dare to make a difference in the life of our people and nation.

As a graduate of a college/university, you are a very special person because of the high level or quality of your education and ability to plan and think analytically and systematically.

You have an opportunity to use your academic-vocational skills, ingenuity and creativity to help black children and youths in our elementary-secondary schools understand and appreciate the necessity of education as a means of sheer survival.

II. Dare to work for economic and political empowerment.

You now must use your talents and abilities to help our people to have greater authority, influence and respect in the American body politic. We must always remember and act in the spirit of Frederick Douglass's sage admonition: "Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never has and it never will."

III. Dare to be a forceful and consistent advocate for the voiceless, excluded and dispossessed.

You must now join hands with the stalwarts, past and present, in the NAACP, the National Urban League, the National Council of Negro Women, PUSH, and other church, fraternal and civic groups to advance socio-economic justice and equality of opportunity, in fact, for over thirty-five million of brothers and sisters.

Finally, as you go forward to face the vicissitudes and opportunities of this era, on the eve of the Twenty-first Century, I offer an apt observation of Dr. Benjamin E. Mays:

It must be borne in
mind that the tragedy in
life doesn't lie in not reaching
your goal. The tragedy lies
in having no goal to reach.
It isn't a calamity to die
with dreams unfulfilled, but
it is a calamity not to dream.
It is not a disaster to be
unable to capture your ideal,
but it is a disaster to have no
ideal to capture. It is not
a disgrace not to reach the
stars, but it is a disgrace
to have no stars to reach for.
Not failure, but low aim is
sin.

Godspeed Class of 1989 and may you realize your fondest dreams and expectations. I am counting on you to SOAR TO THE HEIGHTS.

G. James **Fleming**
Public Affairs Commentator

Henry Parks model of a man

Henry G. Parks, Jr., may his tribe increase!

In contemporary times, and in the Baltimore area, few if any individuals, have been more of what a man can become; few knew how he can rise above circumstances; how he can meet and overcome obstacles;

How he can venture into untried waters; how he can challenge "the system" without seeking to destroy it; and how he can bear frustrations in business and racial discrimination without hatefulness. In the end, his life was a success.

Everything he touched did not turn into gold but he never became discouraged or bitter enough not to try and try again.

He changed jobs often enough but he never stopped trying to find the niche which would be the fulfillment of his abilities, ambitions and training.

He was born in the deep south with no "silver spoon" and was raised in the segregated north, but was fortunate to have around him family and friends who, while they lived in battered neighborhoods, never allowed him to feel he was personally handicapped or that poverty was a life sentence.

It is not surprising, therefore, that he applied to Ohio State, the premier university in the state, and that he majored in accounting—not in teaching, preaching or social work — then considered the safest havens for the black educated.

He never turned from trying his hand at one kind of business enterprise or another. He regarded no failure as permanent or of having no value.

Neither did he consider any human "contact" uninteresting. That made it easy for him to strike up an acquaintanceship with Baltimore's William "Little Willie" Adams on a chance railroad trip to Boston.

From that trip grew Park's decision to settle in Baltimore and, in 1951, to open his now celebrated Parks Sausage Company, with its even more celebrated "More Parks Sausage, Mom, Please" signature. That meeting with Adams remained a substantial friendship and partnership to the end of his days.

Not only did Henry Parks build one of the larger meat processing operations in the country—the largest black-owned — but he loaned his influence, his training and his leadership to many sectors of civic and business life.

Countless are the enterprisers throughout the country who have been inspired by him to try, to dare, to work hard, to persevere and, just as important, to be "chin up" and look upwards and ahead.

Henry Parks also followed the best American tradition in sharing his talents and his substance with, and in, good works.

It is not surprising that he was a constant fundraiser for the United Negro College Fund, the NAACP and other civil rights groups, and that he was an early spiritual, as well as material, sponsor of such a useful local organization as Woman Power, Inc.

More surprising, perhaps, is that he also took time to serve a stint as a member of the Baltimore City Council. He added strength to the efforts to widen the bases of civil rights in the city and state and supported all people - enhancement programs. He also served seven years as president of the Board of Fire Commissioners and was often mentioned seriously for even high offices.

* * *

Henry Parks had a way of putting first things first. That is why he pursued the best higher education possible and never stopped studying.

He worked to build a strong food production business and surrounded himself with an energetic, resourceful band of assistants; he wanted his enterprise to grow—to be an example of black achievement—and, therefore, never personally splurged in conspicious consumption.

He also believed in the rightness of whites and African-Americans getting along together in mutual respect and helpfulness, and worked always to that end.

With this tapestry of his life, it was most fitting that groundbreaking for the new, multi-million-dollar Parks Sausage Company should take place last week (April 24) on the very day that Henry Parks died.

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COMMENTARY & OPINIONS

Les **Payne**
Educator

Why do blacks dunk better?

In the middle of a network television special about black athletes last week, host Tom Brokaw posed a key question: "Does white man's disease really exist?"

The term, au courant in the National Basketball Association humorously refers to white players' almost unanimous refusal, some say inability, to dunk the basketball. "Except for a few token leapers like Tom Chambers, now of the Phoenix Suns, whites in basketball don't do this (dunk) very well," the commentator said.

This and other weak nuggets were thrown in to make up the show's curious mosaic, suggesting that blacks dominate major sports in America because they are superior athletically.

The NBC show, "Black Athletes — Fact and Fiction," worked mightily, though not altogether successfully, to uncouple physical superiority from mental inferiority.

This link has prevented many blacks from accepting, or even discussing, the possibility that they are superior athletically.

Underpinning the thesis of the show were current racial statistics from major American sports. "Blacks do dominate the major sports," Brokaw said. "Black men and women were the big stars in Seoul. Three of every four players in pro basketball are black. They're 63 percent of the National Football League. almost a third of the top stars in baseball. Blacks hold most of the major titles in boxing."

So in this very seat of the world's most successful experiment in apartheid, a major network has decided it's time to settle this question scientifically.

There were, not surprisingly, a few scientists, so-called, trotted out to answer with weights and measurement questions none but a bigot would conjure up.

In a homogeneous — and just — society with no recent immigrants, it might make sense to determine what there is physically that separates athletes from the rest of society. In America, which is neither homogeneous nor just, such an inquiry based on pigment factors, conducted by the dominant society, is necessarily racist.

In the first instance, without being corrupted, science might legitimately be employed to answer, "Why are sprinters faster than the rest of us?" Is it coordination simply? The internal drag coefficient of tendons? Lung capacity? What?

In the case of NBC, science was compromised by being employed to answer a sociological question. Not why are sprinters faster, but why are so many sprinters black?

I'm afraid it takes something of a Nazi mentality, or some opportunist playing to this mentality, to construct the question.

This racist impulse emanates not from the general public but from the opinion makers and power brokers of sports—the plutocrat team owners, the bankers, the sportswriters, the broadcasters, the investors, the network hosts.

These are the same folks who, in the old days, decided that baseball, basketball and all professional sports should be kept lily-white.

After the color line broke, they held that fans would not support a professional team that had more than a token number of black players. Now they fight to ensure that blacks not become quarterbacks, managers, broadcasters and, God forbid, owners.

In America today, it is impossible to determine, in other than sociological terms, why blacks crowd a certain craft or profession. This phenomenon has nothing at all to do with science, mainly because African-Americans are barred from so many professions and crafts.

Were they allowed to compete fairly for top spots on Wall Street, in the auto industry, law, medicine and the fine arts, they would not so disproportionately jam the ranks of the military, sports, entertainment — and the prisons.

When asked when black athletes were going to permit white players back into the NBA All-Star game, Elgin Baylor reportedly said, when you allow blacks into the banks and the professions.

This is about all the program needed to have said.

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Walter E. **Williams**
Minority Viewpoint

Political shortages

Courage, honesty, and just plain decency have always been in short supply among politicians, and today it's no different. But somehow we weathered the storm.

Today, with government controlling over one-third of our gross national product and dictating many aspects of our lives, politicians have awesome power to do serious damage.

A hint of this potential was seen in the political response to ex-Klansman David Duke winning a Republican seat in the Louisiana State Legislature.

In part, Duke's victory was a result of his campaign statements against busing and racial quotas in hiring and college admittance.

Lee Atwater, chairman of the Republican National Committee, George Bush, and Ronald Reagan were the first to disavow him as a member of the GOP. Later on, other Republican and Democrat stalwarts chimed in with united voices of disapproval.

Here's the $64,000 question that you won't hear asked at press conferences: Bush (or Atwater), since you repudiated Duke's political victory, won by his campaigning against race being used as a criteria in hiring and college admittance, does that mean you're in favor of race as a determinant for jobs and college admittance?

What do you suppose would be the response to the question? I predict they'd rephrase the question, or at best give a convoluted answer, but not a clear yes or no.

George may honestly think that race is an immoral criteria for deciding who gets a job or is admitted to college.

But his political advisors may feel that a forthright statement against racial quotas may thwart the GOP's efforts to become "America's new majority party."

If the president and his men, as well as other politicians, share Duke's stated position against racial quotas, isn't it dishonest or lacking in courage not to say so? And doesn't it smack of political deviousness to be against racial quotas to curry favor with blacks while criticizing Duke?

We face a potentially perilous threat to social harmony when the Klan, Skinheads, and people like Duke get a sympathetic hearing and make recruitment or political inroads among people who are not active racists.

If we look at some of the injustices of quotas that offend every standard of fair play, it is not too difficult to see how some whites can fall prey to racial charlatans.

Honest and courageous politicians, as well as courts, should act now to defuse increasing racial polarization by taking a principled stand, stating clearly that race, as a determinant of who gets what, has no place in America.

Much of the foundation for quotas lies in President Lyndon Johnson's Executive Order 11246. Bush should exercise his presidential prerogative and rescind that order making it clear to the nation that racial discrimination in any form will not be tolerated.

The elimination of racial quotas would help deprive racists of fertile grounds whereby they exploit the legitimate complaints of white people for their own agenda.

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

Violence without motive

Violence has always been a part of the history of mankind, and continues to be today. Violence has always had a "motive," sometimes a false motive, sometimes a hidden motive, but always a motive.

The recent rape and assault of a young woman jogging in Central Park may present us with a terrifying new development in human behavior — violence without motive.

The Christian crusades in early centuries were rife with violence, but the "motive" for the violence was to bring Christianity to the heathens.

The penultimate horror that was Nazi Germany saw unspeakable violence, but it gave itself a "motive," protection of pure Aryans from inferior peoples.

Recently in Iran, a score of men and women involved in prostitution were stoned to death before thousands of people and the "motive" that justified the violence was that Islamic laws had been violated.

In the assault in Central Park, New York, a score of very young teenagers assaulted, beat and raped a young woman who was jogging in the park. These teenagers came from good family backgrounds, only one had had a prior conflict with the law.

They attended school and went to church. They carried no weapons, but they committed a vicious crime. What was their motive? We don't know.

What was the motive behind the wantonly cruel assault, rape and beating of the young woman jogger in Central Park? While I thought about this, a mind numbing, terrifying thought thrust itself into my mind. Has a new form of human behavior emerged, violence for the sake of violence? Violence in and of itself is good?

The white youths of Howard Beach, New York, who caused the death of one Black man and assaulted others, are also motivated by racial hatred.

Has violence become the desideratum for some? Have the decades of exposure to the incredible violence which saturates the motion pictures, the television, the video cassettes, thereby saturating our lives, created a climate for some in which violence needs no motivation, violence is needed, desired, wanted as a part of individual lives?

As I wrote this column in a comfortably warm room, the thought of violence without motive, caused a cool streak of perspiration to slide down the upper portion of my back. Violence without a motive is simply terrifying.

I re-read portions of "The History of Violence in America"—A report to the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence. The authors, Ted I. Gurr and Hugh P. Graham, concluded, "Almost every major act of violence in our history, whether public or private, has antagonized one group at the same time it has satisfied another. . . .

The grievances and satisfactions of violence have so reinforced one another that we have become a rather bloody minded people in both action and reaction. We are likely to remain so as long as so many of us think that violence is an ultimate solution to social problems."

Every incidence of violence chronicled in that report had a "motive"—racial hatred; alleged injustice; robbery; economic fears and feelings of oppression and/or intimidation.

But what was the motive behind the vicious acts of those young boys in New York City who were out "wilding." What grievances provoked the violence? What satisfaction did they receive from the violence?

Have we indeed become so bloody minded that we have infected some people with the idea that violence is good, violence needs no motive, violence does not require justification, it is as natural as swimming, eating or thinking.

Perhaps it is now time for sociologists, psychiatrists and psychologists to at least address the proposition that violence without a motive is a new form of human behavior infecting only a small segment of our population but which has the potential to infect thousands more.

Manning **Marable**
Along The Color Line

African American Summit: an assessment

Part II of a Two-Part Series

The recent African American Summit in New Orleans called for the development of a political strategy for black liberation. Yet most of the key leaders and spokespersons failed to present a coherent or comprehensive approach to black empowerment.

At the major plenary session of politics, in which I participated, strikingly different and conflicting perspectives were advanced.

Faye Williams, civil rights lawyer and former Congressional candidate in Louisiana, brought the audience to its feet with the assertion: "White people cannot tell us who our readers will be . . . we must groom our people early and support them to run for office."

No one could disagree, but Williams didn't outline a strategy for political activity. Similarly, former Gary, Indiana Mayor Richard Hatcher informed the audience, "We get the kind of politicians we deserve . . . If you're in the public office, and you do what you feel like doing, you will not serve your constituency."

Hatcher suggested that the quality of black elected officials could improve if "a national African American lobby" and public policy center on black politics were created "to protect our interests." But nothing in Hatcher's presentation represented a critique of the strengths and weaknesses of black politics during the postcivil rights era.

The most creative and manipulative presentation was given by Black Republican leader Gloria Toote. Recognizing that the audience would be heavily oriented toward black nationalism, Toote came prepared, wearing a type of dashiki and quoting Malcolm X and W. E. B. Du Bois throughout her speech.

The black adviser to Reagan and Bush declared: "What strategy should we adopt to maximize power in the 1990s? We need a strategy which will insure our survival. We have no permanent friends, no permanent enemies, only permanent interests."

Although Toote defended her allegiance to the Republican party, she hinted that part of the strategy of empowerment could involve a Third Party. Upon occasion, "we must seek power by taking risks . . . and explore Third Party options."

Toote consciously mimicked Malcolm X by observing: "We must cease to place party labels above our racial interests."

Toote's strategy was transparent. The record of the Reagan-Bush administrations on civil rights and socioeconomic problems of African Americans is disasterous.

Without discussing Bush's pandering to racism in last year's campaign, Toote attempts to advance a neo-Booker T. Washington economic program and a dependency upon conservative Republicans by using the rhetoric of Malcolm, Garvey and Adam Clayton Powell.

An effective strategy for black empowerment must begin by recognizing the limitations of the electoral system in addressing our basic problems. We frequently think of power as purely an electoral process.

But there is also power when oppressed people acquire a sense of cultural integrity and an appreciation of their political heritage of resistance. There is power when we mobilize our collective resources in the media, educational institutions, housing, health care and economic development to address issues.

A strategy for African American empowerment means that black politicians must be held more closely accountable to the interests of black people. Power implies the ability to reward and to punish friends and enemies alike.

Can Blacks continue to afford to conduct voter registration and education campaigns, and then do nothing to check the voting behavior of our elected officials?

Accountability must be measured objectively according to a list of policy priorities, and not determined by political rhetoric at election time.

One method to consider could be the creation of "people power" assemblies, popular, local conventions open to the general black public.

Politicians of both major parties would be evaluated and ranked according to their legislative or executive records, and their responses on specific policy questions.

Neither the Democratic nor the Republican parties can be expected to provide this level of direct accountability.

African American empowerment must mean that all major political groups must encourage the democratic exchange of views, and the full participation of all black people in the decision-making process — including the unemployed, the homeless, elderly, youth and students, working woman, and others who lacked the funds to travel to New Orleans or to pay the $25 registration fee.

The truth, no matter who utters it, remains the truth. If a valuable political insight is presented by Angela Davis or Imamu Baraka, it remains useful and relevant even if one does not share a Marxian political philosophy.

And empowerment also means that public forums and conventions must be accessible and affordable to the black masses. There exists no black so-called middle class road to freedom which detours or ignores the dire situation of the black poor, working class, and the unemployed.

Empowerment should also connote the establishment of both a program and a strategy for progressive politics. At New Orleans, delegates adopted a fairly good program which covered many different issues.

But a program is only a roadmap for where a constituency intends to go; what's missing is a strategy which guides the realization of that program.

It would be as if we constructed a highly accurate compass, indicating where we needed to move, but lacking a vehicle to get us to that objective.

The strategies of the civil rights period, the alliances with Democrats and corporate liberals, are no longer relevant. We live in a new historical period, requiring leaders with imagination and vision to challenge the status quo.

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