EDITORIALS

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THE VOICE OF BLACK AMERICA SINCE 1892

Memorial Day

The official purpose of Memorial Day, issued as a Presidential Proclamation each year since 1948 at the request of Congress, is to proclaim this day as a day of prayer for permanent peace.

Years ago, Memorial Day was a time when families got together to visit the gravesites of dead relatives, placing flowers and wreaths in memory of them.

Veterans' organizations saw to it that the graves of our military men and women were decorated with American flags in honor of the day. It was a time for prayer and reflections for those with memories of those who have passed this way, and a renewal of faith and commitment to the precepts established by our forebears.

But now things have changed. May 30 is widely trumpeted as the beginning of the beach season. Department stores and other sales outlets increase their hypes to move merchandise.

Other non-memorial items have crept into the observances of the day. Outdoor barbecues are *de rigeur* for the day, and it is considered the official beginning of the straw hat season.

But, things have begun to change. The hippies of the 60s are now the bankers of the 80s. The slovenly mode of dress has given way to high-fashion stylings. Young people have begun returning to religion, declaring their faith.

Thus too, the observance of Memorial Day will revert to its original concept — We can only hope it won't take too long.

Black businesses in peril

Here's a riddle for you. What's in the red and black and going down all over?

African-American businesses in the Baltimore-metropolitan area.

In just the last couple of weeks, the Palladium has filed for bankruptcy, Inner Harbor Ford and the 7-Eleven convenience store on Gwynns Falls Parkway have both closed down within days of each other.

Why is this happening; what's the real problem? The real problem stares right back at us when we look into the mirror.

The truth is that the black community is notorious for not patronizing black businesses. In general, we do not support our own.

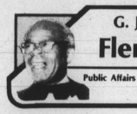
The black community has the potential to be economically dominant. We control 16 billion dollars of the U.S. economy.

This sum is equivalent to what would be the Gross National Product of the eighth largest nation in the world.

Entrepreneurship and empowerment are supposed to be buzzwords in the black community for the 90's.

If we continue to move in the direction we are moving, none of us will have to worry about the nineties, because our total economic demise will be inevitable.

It must not happen!



G. James **Fleming**
Public Affairs Commentator

Barbara Bush

The more we see and learn about Barbara Bush the more we find ourselves liking her, admiring her, thinking of her as being really genuine.

She does not seem to be a "Johnny ComeAtely;" indeed, she is not, as the record shows.

For instance, long before she reached the White House, she had been working to help adults learn to read; for years she had been a member of the board of trustees of the Morehouse College Medical School; and she has been the wife of a husband who had been associated with the United Negro College Fund since 1947.

Comparisons never do justice but it should not be surprising that Barbara Bush is being classified as "another Eleanor Roosevelt," of which there can be no higher honor. In a short while, she'll stand in her own rights, with her achievements, in her integrity.

If there was any mistake as to the kind of person Mrs. Bush is, such should have been erased following her recent commencement address at Bennett College (where, incidentally, Mrs. Roosevelt spoke over 30 years ago). Not only what she said but how she said it.

* * *

Barbara Bush spoke on how freedom - giving an education is; of how without education, one is a slave. She told of how she brought up her five children to have the manners and qualities that go into good breeding. She reminded her young listeners that the world had a place for them as they made that place.

The First Lady was relaxed and at ease—and beaming. It was as though she was chatting to a group of students in her living room or in a dormitory.

No wonder, therefore, that the audience of parents, graduates and Greensboro citizens gave her a long, standing ovation. No wonder, either, that there was such approval of her receiving Bennett's honorary doctorate degree.

* * *

While Barbara Bush chose to make her first commencement visit to the small all-woman's college, the president also chose to make his commencement debut at Alcorn College, in Mississippi, another historically black institution. This, so far, is a sign that the black colleges have a sympathetic and understanding ear in the White House.

It is especially revealing to know that George Bush has been involved with the United Negro College Fund since he was its campus representative (from 1947) at Yale University.

This side of Candidate Bush could not be stressed during the presidential campaign, for fear it would have been used against him.

So far, the Bush thrust in the appointment of Blacks to higher positions has also been very good—an improvement over the Reagan years.

One of two sparrows do not a summer make, but the beginnings, to date, show much promise of things to come.

* * *

But, back to Barbara Bush. Baltimore became very enamoured of her earlier, when she visited the city as the guest of Mayor Kurt Schmoke, to become acquainted with the local campaign to make "Baltimore, the City that Reads." She was then as gracious and as fetching as she appeared at the Bennett College.

It may be that history is repeating itself, this time in Republican garments, and that there is presently in the White House a help mate to the president, one so affable, friendly and able.

President Franklin Roosevelt had to turn to Eleanor Roosevelt often, for one set of reasons; President George Bush may find it useful and profitable to turn to Barbara Bush for a different set of reasons.

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

Legacy we gave

The picture on the front page had a poignant quality. Chinese students massed in protest were shown giving soup and drinks to the Chinese soldiers who were keeping watch on them and who may be ordered to crush their protest demonstrations. The threat of violence was being responded to with nonviolence.

Nonviolence was the strength of our civil rights struggle. Martin Luther King, Jr. embraced the philosophy and strategy that Ghandi had used in India. The protracted nonviolent struggle against British Colonial rule finally prevailed, and India gained independence.

For the first time in modern history, nonviolence had conquered armies; power; and might.

Here in America when the news about the nonviolent struggle against segregation and racism blanketed the nation, it wrenched at the hearts of hundreds of thousands of white Americans, and the tide began to turn.

White America saw black women; men; and children responding in a nonviolent manner to brutal, bestial actions against them.

How could they erase from their eyes and their minds the picture of a tall, frighteningly calm black male walking through the hail of thrown objects; curses; and threats as he escorted black students to Little Rock High School?

They could not, dare not forget the pictures of black bodies being smashed by the force of high powered hoses but those victims clung to nonviolence.

White America saw the picture of the black youth standing still and the police dog whose fangs were buried in the young man's body, and white American was stained with shame.

Creative nonviolence toppled the police power, the might and the force which sought to preserve and defend the evil system of segregation.

During the Vietnam protests, most of the protesters copied the nonviolence of the civil rights struggle. for as long as I live, I will remember the photograph showing campus student protesters placing flowers in the barrels of the rifles held by the soldiers who had been sent in to squash their demonstrations against the war in Vietnam. Some students were killed at Kent State, but the protests continued.

Nonviolent protests helped to end a tragic, senseless war. Dr. King was right when he said, "The power of nonviolence is far, far greater than the power of violence."

My brother, George, told me recently, that the striking Polish shipyard workers sang, in their native tongue, "We Shall Overcome" when they confronted violence or the threat of violence.

We have given so much to America. Black History Month recounts our manifold contributions to this nation in science, art, medicine, music, and so forth. However, perhaps our greatest contribution was the use of nonviolence against violence and viciousness. Perhaps that legacy will continue to be given to other nations of the world:

Black nonviolence of Little Rock, Arkansas accepted and used on the college campuses of America.

The nonviolence strategies used at Selma now transferred to the Great Square in Beijing, China.

That is only a part of the legacy we have given, but what a legacy it is!

Samuel **Banks**
Educator

Paying dues

One of the almost universal forensic flourishes which tends to saturate the larger black community in Baltimore and throughout the nation is the ubiquitous paying of dues.

A simple and direct explanation of this proposition, especially as used by black people, is that we should be about the business of using our academic-intellectual talents, monetary resources and energies in order to overcome the pernicious and debilitating effects of racism and social subordination, predicated primarily in color and to achieve wholeness, socio-economic and educational empowerment and equality of opportunity in the American body politic.

We must not forswear or abandon the historic, courageous and herculean efforts for our people for a full and equal inclusion in the American body politic.

An internal crisis which currently besets us as black people is that too many black brothers and sisters who have benefited from the costly civil rights struggles of the 1950s and 1960s refuse to become involved in the travail and vicissitudes of the masses of our people.

I have specific reference to the so-called-black bourgeoisie and the upper income blacks who have, to a disquieting degree, a veritable obsession with the acquisition of material efforts and a "party, party mentality."

I want to make myself unequivocally clear that I am not adverse to nor do I denigrate the need of our people, as is true of other ethnic-racial and religious groups, to have a social life and to acquire some of the "good things of life.."

My fundamental point is that, in view of the enormity of problems confronting our people we have to rethink our priorities and work for a judicious balance.

In brief, those of us to whom much has been given, largely through the sacrifice of our forebears, have a moral obligation to be the voices for the voiceless of our group and strong forceful and unwavering advocates for the excluded and dispossessed.

It is demonstrably clear and incontrovertible that we as a people cannot and will not achieve empowerment if over one-half or 19 million of our fellow-brothers and sisters are mired in poverty, illiteracy, hopelessness and misery.

While the root of these human pathologies flow from historic institutional racism, suppression and exclusion, we still have the capacity to effect substantive and enduring changes through our collective unity, action and solidarity.

Black scholars, academicians, professionals, and middle and upper income groups must be in the forefront as fearless informed and indomitable advocates for full opportunity, social justice and economic justice for all of our people. The nation must know that these issues are non-negotiable for us as black citizens.

As we work unrelentingly, imaginatively, and cooperatively for full empowerment, social justice and palpable educational excellence, we must not capitulate to hate for the white majority society or any ethnic-racial and religious groups (viz., Asians, Hispanics, Jews, ect.) endeavoring to make its way in the American social order.

Moreover, we must resolve to overcome envy, hostility, and internecine warfare within our own ranks. The linchpin for our movement forward and upward is solidarity and respect for ourselves. We simply will not be able to live and respect others if we do not first love and respect ourselves.

Finally, we must dare to speak out as regards paroxysms of violence, criminality and heinous and deviant behavior engaged in by a very distinct minority of our people.

We know, to be sure, that the electronic and print media do not give the same attention to vicious and brutal acts committed against black people.

But this should not encumber or prevent us, as we call attention to the duality of treatment, to roundly condemn the cruel rampage by 30 black and Hispanic youths in New York's Central Park and the savage murder of two youngsters in Glen Burnie, Maryland.

Any violation of the human spirit or person is anathema and repulsive and needs to be condemned.

The concept of the paying of profound, complex, and demanding and far exceeds a simple oratorical exercise. We, too, as black people must understand, in this life, that the payment of dues is an ongoing and lifelong process.

In view of the sheer magnitude of the problems, challenges, and opportunities which confront us here on the "Spaceship Earth," it is unmitigated folly and deception to believe that societal dues can be liquidated.

The Afro-American
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COMMENTARY & OPINIONS

Les **Payne**
Educator

Taking the measure of Malcolm & Martin

One of the wisest men I know once said he got his first revelation when it dawned on him that he did not have to choose between Ella Fitzgerald and Sarah Vaughan — that he should simply enjoy them both.

My choice was between Martin Luther King and Malcolm X, and it could not be worked out quite so simply. The greatness of both was that they gave voice, force and, indeed, life to the experiences of a suffering people.

King was a rock shaped by the lessons of Jesus. Malcolm cut his teeth on Marcus Garvey before drifting throughout the world seeking a mold that could hold his restless mind and soul.

Though separated by Temperament, outlook and tactics, both King and Malcolm X were united in their commitment to liberate African - Americans from oppression.

"Our goal has always been the same," Malcolm once said of his relation to King. "The approaches were different . . . with Dr. Martin Luther King's nonviolent marching dramatizing the brutality and the evil of the white man against defenseless blacks.

And in the racial climate of this country, it is anybody's guess which of the 'extremes' in approach to the black man's problem might personally meet a fatal catastrophe first — nonviolent Dr. King or so-called violent me."

Malcolm X was assassinated on Feb. 21, 1965; King on April 2, 1968.

Given their fates, it is clear that both men provided effective leadership for their people. J. Edgar Hoover, whose FBI served the needs of the power brokers, marked them both as the gravest of threats to the social order: a racist, thought stable, society. Of the two men, King, with his total commitment to nonviolence, was considered the lesser long-term threat.

King's birthday is a national holiday, his burial site a shrine, thanks to devoted, long - suffering African-Americans who forced it upon a conservative Republican Administration during an election year. Most Americans know nothing of Malcolm's birthday, May 19, not to mention his burial ground.

Except for a few devotees, there is no birthday observance for Malcolm, or trek to his gravesite or suitable recognition of his extraordinary contribution to the progress of his people this half of the 20th Century.

The two titans, King and Malcolm, were brought together on television last week, in a 90-minute play on PBS titled "The Meeting." The actors, Dick Anthony Williams as Malcolm and Jason Bernard as King, smuggled what they could through Customs, but nothing of value made it to the air.

Each actor looked the part but while supposedly meeting in Malcolm's Theresa Hotel room, they kept bouncing up and down unlike men of their historical consequence.

I changed the channel for good when they engaged in a bout of arm - wrestling — and King won.

The presentation, though shallow, was not at all surprising. No television drama, I should say, could begin to take the measure of Malcolm or, for that matter, King. They are men best left to the documentary.

Malcolm was the most gifted, authentic African - American leader of the 1960s and one of the great men of the century. He would have shuddered at being called an American, for until the very end he saw himself among the victims of his country.

"We didn't land at Plymouth Rock," he said often. "Plymouth Rock landed on us. If being born in America made you an American, blacks wouldn't need any amendments to the Constitution."

More than any other leader of the 1960s, Malcolm moved blacks to consider who they were and whence they came, and to plan for what they could become. He saw his people as a brutalized class, who after centuries of slavery and oppression had been made to think of themselves — and to act — as inferiors, as "n....rs."

To correct this condition, the black man could either work on the outer manifestations of discrimination — as did Martin Luther King — or change himself from within, through transformation.

Malcolm took the latter course, both in teaching and in his personal life on this planet. He underwent a dramatic conversion, from street criminal to devoted moralist and revolutionary.

Along the way, Malcolm sought to upset the white man's grossly inflated sense of himself, his complacent arrogance and smugness. In rejecting the dominant society that he felt had rejected him, he instructed his followers to reject the white man's ideas, values and, above all, the way he looked down upon blacks as inferiors.

King offered racists the other cheek, Malcolm the back of his hand. Freedom was so important to him that Malcolm counseled risking all, except one's sense of self respect, in the fight.

Nonviolence, he taught, unduly narrowed an oppressed people's options. "We have to change our minds about each other," Malcolm said often to his followers. At the core of this message was a clear call for them to liberate themselves — by any means necessary.

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Walter E. **Williams**
Minority Viewpoint

A dying breed

Recently, funeral services were held for Mrs. Dorothy I. Rice. It was a modest funeral, at Philadelphia's St. Thomas Episcopal Church, attended by friends, relatives, and her surviving daughter.

I met Mrs. Rice about 10 years ago when she invited me to deliver a couple of lectures to community groups with which she was associated. But I never got to know her personally.

At the funeral for this wonderful lady, who was born in 1902, the 40 or so people in attendance were mostly ladies, like Mrs. Rice, up in years.

As I sat in the audience before the open casket, an important part of black tradition, now virtually gone, passed before my mind's eye. I was reminded of traditions passed because, while most of the mourners were strangers to me, there was an uncanny familiarity about their faces.

One of these ladies might well have been the one who confronted me when I was a kid, "Does your mother know you're out here throwing stones at people?" Another might have been the one who set me back by saying, "After I tell your mother, you won't do that again!" Yet another might have admonished, "Be a credit to your race!"

One of the men, seated gazing at Mrs. Rice's casket, could have been the one who kicked me in the butt as I squatted letting the air out of his tires.

Of course, in all probability, these were not the people actually encountered during my mischievous youth, but they sure looked familiar.

Back in the '30s, '40, and '50s, "parents" were everywhere. If you did something wrong, even in another neighborhood, your real parents were likely to learn about it sometimes even before you got home.

Listening to the quiet conversation during the funeral viewing, I heard the King's English being spoken. None of that "I be" and "they be" talk, called Black English, which today's "enlightened" tell us is the traditional speech pattern among blacks. If there is such a thing as Black English, it must have skipped Mrs. Rice's generation.

Ladies like Mrs. Rice and those at her funeral were the leavening and stabilizing factor in black neighborhoods of yesterday. They had absolutely no reservation or fear in coming up to a youngster and demanding that he behave himself.

At best the youngster would shiver in his boots hoping the matter would end there. For any would-be surrogate parent of today, taking the same action could easily mean assault, loss of life, or at the least a tongue lashing . . . by the kid.

Experts wring their hands debating this and studying that about what's wrong with the large and increasing black underclass in our cities. But the answer is simple. Relationships and behaviors among people in black neighborhoods, once natural, are now unnatural.

Let's look at it. Isn't it unnatural for adults to be afraid of kids? Kids cursing and assaulting teachers? Healthy people refusing to work? Teenagers and preteens engaging in sex?

Isn't our response to all this unnatural? Not punishing kids who curse and assault teachers? Subsidizing healthy people who refuse to work? Establishing nurseries in schools to take care of teenagers' babies?

We invent excuse after excuse for irresponsible and reprehensible antisocial behavior. Given these unnatural acts and our unnatural responses, should anybody be surprised to see exactly what we see?

Sensible, caring, and demanding blacks of Mrs. Rice's generation are just about gone. The ones who would have followed in their footsteps have seen their efforts sabotaged by government authorities who in effect teach: "It's okay to be sloven and irresponsible; it's okay to destroy neighborhoods; and it's okay to engage in antisocial behavior because it's not your fault.

Millions of people, like Mrs. Rice, made all of the difference for blacks, but I get the feeling they are dying off faster than they're being born. If that's the case, I hate to think ahead to the year 2050.

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

Abolish death penalty now!

Amnesty International has been joined by hundreds of human rights groups throughout the world in the recent launching of a new international campaign against the death penalty.

Here in the United States the issue of capital punishment continues to be hotly debated.

The NAACP Legal Defense Fund, the Commission for Racial Justice and numerous other civil rights and human rights organizations in the United States have long argued against the death penalty.

John G. Healey, Executive Director of Amnesty International, USA stated, "the death penalty is a human rights violation. It is cruel and degrading. It is barbaric and should be stopped immediately."

In a 268-page report that details how and why the death penalty is applied worldwide, Amnesty International concluded that in many nations the death penalty is used "for blatant political reasons and/or disproportionately against the poor or racial and ethnic minorities."

Since 1979 it is estimated that more than 40,000 women, men and even in some cases children have been officially executed in some 90 different nations as a result of the imposition of the death penalty.

In the United States the report cites statistics that "86 percent of prisoners on death row in 1987 have been convicted of killing whites.

Forty - five of the ninety-eight prisoners executed between January, 1987 and May, 1988 were black or Hispanic and 98 percent of them have been convicted of killing whites."

Capital punishment in the United States has been rarely imposed when the victim was an African American or Hispanic. Because of racism, the values of the lives of the victims of crime and violence is socially determined by race and socio - economic circumstance.

The point here is, however, not the color or the race of the victim or of the accused. The issue is that the imposition of the death penalty is immoral and unjust in any situation.

The state does not create life and the state does not have the right to take life.

Although African Americans today are approximately 15 percent of this nation's population, African Americans comprise 41 percent of those on death row. Hispanics, Native Americans, and other racial and ethnic communities also disproportionately are sentenced to death.

In those states where capital punishment has been made legal, the argument that the death penalty is a deterrent to crime has failed. In fact, there has been a gradual increase in the murder rate in those states where the death penalty is routinely imposed.

We, in the United States, should join the international campaign to abolish the death penalty by first taking this action here. The Supreme Court of the United States needs to be petitioned, and the death penalty should be outlawed.

But, of course, the present members of the Supreme Court would only take such a vote in the wake of a national public outcry against this type of inhumane cruelty and barbarity.

Ruth **Jenkins**
Sob Sister

So pay the bill!

Wouldn't you think that a Philadelphian's first visit to the legendary lures of New Orleans would be a memorable one? Well, it certainly was for us — but for some of the wrong reasons. Maybe that's because we chose April Fool's Week to make the trip.

Ours was a party of 40 funsters on a club bus excursion to Dixie. The enroute ride included overnight stops in Greensboro, N.C. and Atlanta (also our first look-see).

The 'memorable' incidents began after a gutsy breakfast in Greensboro. We were about to drive off the parking-lot when an aggrieved motel aide made an aggravating announcement. We would not be allowed to leave until a disputed $17 telephone bill was settled.

Our folks said that the debt was not ours. But rather than be held 'hostage,' the passengers considered taking up a collection for payment. While we fumed impatiently, the hassle ran up the pressure of the motel aide, our travel escort and a couple of computers. But our folks won the final round with credit and credibility both intact.

The day before our arrival in Atlanta had been quite eventful. We just missed a tornado touchdown which skirted the city. We just missed the ceremony in which Coretta King gave her son Dexter the reins to the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for NonViolent Social Change.

We also just missed the administration building takeover by some 25 disgruntled students at Morris Brown College. No such drama was evident when we drove through the campus. And we understand that everybody kissed and made up soon afterwards. Think the Atlanta tour guide said there are 32 'Peachtree Streets' thereabouts.

Next 'big deal' was turning our watches back an hour to conform to New Orleans time. Only a week earlier we had turned the watches up an hour for Philly's Daylight Saving Time.

This new adjustment totally confused our medicinal schedule. Our 8 a.m. pill was never quite sure what time it was being taken. So we just put the ailment on 'hold' until we returned home and got back to normal.

Philadelphians are the nation's foremost fans for street revelry. As witness the dedication to our annual New Year's Day Mummers Parade with 10,000 costumed cavorters. But these travelers had no desire to either join or jolt springtime street strutters, so our southern visits was deliberately set to avoid the Mardi Gras and Jazz Festival dates.

So how come we arrived in New Orleans smack dab in the middle of the French Quarter festivals? Which closed off some streets, preventing bus delivery to the door of some tourist delights. So we had to trek a lot on tender tootsies:

— To a famous restaurant which is featured in that instant coffee commercial. Where diners express delighted surprise when told they are not drinking the real McCoy. But nobody fooled us; we drank milk.

— To more gumbo gusto at the New Orleans Cooking School. Where the comedic chef commands class attention with smashing smacks of his cleaver. He gifted us with an official school apron. Unaware that we were the only person in the room who can't even boil water.

— To the Pete Fountain nightclub. But despite all that jazz, we were too tuckered out to do our breakdance. On a moonlight cruise down the Mississippi, a cute bartender taught us the proper way to order our favorite cocktail. (We are a glutton for education).

And at the massive Louisiana Superdome, the guide's lecture was drowned out by speedsters roaring around the track, preparing for an off-road grand prix. We hadn't seen so many tons of flying dirt since spring housecleaning.

Homeward-bound, we stopped overnight in LaGrange, Ga. and in West Durham, N.C. For yet another motel experience not mentioned in the brochure.

Opening a dresser drawer, a guest nearly fainted when she faced a semi-automatic gun, with clip alongside. (The Gideon Bible was in another drawer.)

The motel management seemed shocked about the gun. But in case that was a warning, our party made sure to pay all telephone bills when checking out.

Modern lifestyles dim the era
Now long 'Gone With The Wind,'
With zesty customs, culture, charm
The south has 'riz agin'