EDITORIALS

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THE VOICE OF BLACK AMERICA SINCE 1892

No longer kind or gentle

Just when people were settling back to what they hoped would be a "kinder and gentler" nation, the Republicans have kicked over the bucket and spilled evil and venom across this nation — now, all eyes are on President Bush to see if he knows what "K and G" mean.

It is obvious that Attorney General Richard Thornburgh—despite the urging from Democratic Committee Chairman Ronald Brown and members of the Congressional Black Caucus— has no intention to really find out who illegally leaked the word about that so-called "investigation" of Cong. William Gray... An investigation that supposedly had gone on for three or four months only to come to a head on Memorial Day just in time to start a smear campaign before the Democrats got their third in command...the Majority Whip.

This came on the heels of that trial by media of House Speaker Jim Wright who resigned rather than see the House of Representatives turned upside down by charges and counter charges.

Thornburgh's idea of an investigation into this evil mess is not to appoint an independent counsel but to have his own people conduct the investigation.

We agree with the 23 members of the Congressional Black Caucus who wrote the president:

"It is our sincere belief that there is no way that the public can have any confidence in an investigation of the Justice Department, by Justice Department attorneys. Indeed, those responsible for the leaks could well be involved in the inquiry."

But just as important to the average citizens is that all of these evil things are happening to men and women in power. People who have a platform in the legislative branch of the land...people who have access to lawyers, staff people and friends in high place.

Does this mean that during the Bush administration his party plans to tear this country apart by smearing people as they did during the McCarthy era....just because that person does not belong to the same party you do or think the way you do...?

Is the K and G philosophy just for Republicans? What about all the talk by Bush that he wants to "reach" out to all the citizens of the United States to make this nation a better place to live?

The words of C. DeLores, Tucker, chairman of the Democratic National Committee Black Caucus should make you think. She said "While we had very clear indications during the 1988 presidential campaign of just how vicious national politics can become, the escalating attacks on Democratic leadership, and the character assassination now being forged against William Gray, is a chilling reminder that desperation remains the centerpiece of Republican political strategy."

We hope that Mr. Bush will read these words carefully and then make up his mind that he is going to be the "kinder/gentler" president he said he was hoping to be for all the people...He can show the world he means business by ordering the Justice Department to set up that independent counsel and then quietly telling his fellow Republicans to stop acting like they want to be the next Hitler.

National youth service: No

By Augustus F. Hawkins
Congressman (D-CA)

A number of House and Senate members have introduced versions of "national youth service" legislation, a proposal which links volunteer duty to government benefits.

The bill receiving the most attention is the McCurdy-Nunn bill, named after the respective House and Senate authors. While the proposal may be well intentioned, there are many problems regarding equity, worker displacement and program administration which need closer examination.

In the McCurdy-Nunn proposal, government aid would be tied to either military or civilian service. In other words, young people could serve in the Marines or work in a public facility, such as a mental hospital.

For each year spent in the military, at a reduced wage of about $100 a week, the youth would receive a $12,000 voucher to be used for student aid, job training or a down payment on a home.

For each year of civilian service, again at a reduced wage, the youth would receive a $10,000 voucher to pay for government benefits. The intention of the bill is to foster the ideal of civic duty and public service, while at the same time meeting community social needs.

The victims of these youth service proposals, however, would be the poor. It is a regressive concept which turns youth into indentured servants. Similarly, in the 17th century people would trade a passage to America to work for another person for a definite time period. Surely, we have progressed from the days of this practice.

One of my major concerns is based on the questions of how equity and equality of sacrifice can be guaranteed.

The proposal would eliminate existing forms of student aid and condition receipt of postsecondary educational assistance on participation in national service.

This would undoubtedly result in a national service composed primarily of low-income youth who would not have the opportunity to go to college unless they served their time in national service.

On the other hand, their middle and upper income counterparts could enter college without similar service.

The current and pervasive socio-economic and educational siege which lacerates 35 million black people in our nation requires, as a fundamental sine qua non, that we do more for ourselves.

It is not enough to "rap" and engage in oratorical excursions about the evils, present and past, of institutional racism, bigotry and societal subordination and exclusion from the American mainstream.

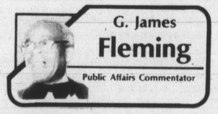
Racism, to be sure, is a colossal abomination and needs to be roundly condemned as an odious, reprehensible and iniquitous condition.

However, as we deplore institutional racism, we must, too, be about the very serious and urgent business of helping ourselves where we can.

We have, as a collective people in the United States, a gross national product well in excess of $250 billion. This sum is greater than the combined income of GNP of over twenty nations in the world community.

The central and overriding issues becomes one of how we strategize and utilize the human and monetary resources available to us.

We have not, for the most part, acted wisely and prudently in helping black entrepreneurs and ourselves in the process.



G. James Fleming
Public Affairs Commentator

Hopkins in new dress for 100th

It is good and healthy that the love/hate relations between the Johns Hopkins Hospital and the black community is no more, as the city observes and celebrates the 100th anniversary of the founding of the venerable institution.

Nowadays one does not hear anything but its highest praise and commendation — from the man in the street to the most thoughtful, and from visitors to loved ones on all levels of illness.

Thirty and more years ago, while blacks still sought the services of the outstanding practitioners at JHH, they still generally complained of its segregated wards, of its refusal to open its doors to black interns and residents, and about its unfair employment practices. One also often heard that "They treat us there like guinea pigs."

At least, even in those days of yore, the Hopkins was admitting black patients (by direction of the will of Benefactor Johns Hopkins), although black physicians had to surrender them once they reached the hospital. (There were other hospitals in the country where African - Americans were not admitted at all).

In this 100th anniversary of its founding, the Johns Hopkins Hospital can hold its head high, not only as the premier teaching and research hospital in the land, but as parent to the Johns Hopkins Medical School, the School of Hygiene and Public Health, the School of Nursing and, most recently, the Johns Hopkins Medical System, — all marked with a touch of excellence and dedicated to improvement over the past. Its 77-year-old Children's Center is reputedly in a class by itself!

Informal questioning of Hopkins' black workers, in several departments, brought forth nothing but high compliments on its personnel practices, the conditions of employment, and the expected "comfortable" retirement which they will enjoy after long years of service.

Being a patient at the hospital, as this writer has been recently, showed that patients are assigned without discrimination because of their race, color or religion.

Contrasted with a few decades ago, it was especially satisfying to participate in the professional visits of medical students, as, across racial lines, they went through their learning paces.

They were white and black, Jewish and Gentile, men and women, African - Americans and Asian - Americans — all on the way to becoming Hopkins - certified physicians.

What was equally impressive was that some of the classes were led and supervised by Hopkins' professors who are African Americans.

Not too far away were the offices of Dr. Benjamin S. Carson who won international acclaim for his leadership part in the separation of two German Siamese twins, among other notable surgical feats.

Then there was Dr. Levi Watkins, whom this writer had known previously, not only for his standing as a cardiac surgeon but also as the civic activist who has, personally, increased the number of black students at, and graduating from, the Johns Hopkins Medical School.

We could not meet all the blacks in topmost positions at the hospital. On the other hand, we saw numbers of middle management people and countless skilled technicians everywhere.

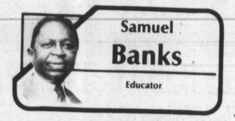
* * *

The changes that have come to the Johns Hopkins Hospital are further demonstrated outside of the institution, by the face-lifting that is providing for that section of Northeast Baltimore and by its successful cooperative program with its neighboring Dunbar High School, by which students and graduates are fed into health-delivery jobs.

The wider outreach of the Hopkins also made an impact on the writer some years ago when he travelled in Africa.

In everyone of the 12 countries visited, there were persons who spoke of, or inquired about, the Johns Hopkins. In every case, they meant, not the University, but the hospital or the School of Hygiene and Public Health, at which some of their people had been patients or had done post-graduate studies.

"Almost like a miracle" is the new Hopkins, if it could be viewed by some of our forebears, now deceased. Be that as it may, the present - day, new dress of the Johns Hopkins Hospital makes it easier for the living to join in its 100th birthday celebration.



Samuel Banks
Educator

Doing for ourselves

The concept of helping ourselves extends far beyond the spending of money or entrepreneurial interests, but include, as a vital component, the sharing of our academic - intellectual, vocational and God-given talents with our brothers and citizens trying "to make it" in a demanding and debilitating social order.

In this conjunction, on Sunday, May 25, 1989, I had occasion to attend a marvelous and exquisite manifestation of sharing and caring by the Epsilon Omega Chapter of the Alpha Kappa Sorority at the Enoch Pratt Free Library.

The focus of the Epsilon Omega Chapter of AKA was its local and national involvement in an outstanding project in Africa called the "African Connection."

The project makes available human and monetary resources to such sub-Saharan African countries such as Malivi, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Zambia and 16 other countries for basic human uplift as reflected in the construction of wells, agricultural development, health care and a variety of other critical projects.

The outreach programs are coordinated through Africare. It was, indeed, heartening to observe Mesdames Cardrienne Griffin, Lavern Turner, Idell Pugh, Carolyn Troup, Florence Bailey, and a host of other pulchritudinous and elegant sorors of the local Epsilon Omega Chapter and national AKA sorors, attired in striking indigenous dress of Africa, affirming and extending human possibilities for Mother Africa.

There are other local and national groups in our race who refuse to curse the darkness, but are witnessing energetically and creatively for a better quality of life and hope for our people and others.

The reality is that all black "Greek" letter organizations, locally and nationally, the NAACP, the Urban League, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Black churches, beyond denominational lines, and civic groups are involved in a masterful exemplification of "Doing For Ourselves."

There are also individual examples of how one can do for ourselves as reflected in making sure you are registered and vote in all elections, buy black papers and periodicals in order to obtain a more comprehensive and Afrocentric view of what is happening in our communities and, above all, take pride in yourself and communicate it to your children, family members and others.

If we are about this process in earnest, we can, as other ethnic-racial and religious groups have done, strike a telling blow against institutional and operational racism, religious bigotry and societal exclusion.

The late Malcolm X makes a very apt and compelling observation anent Doing For Ourselves: "I'm the man you think you are . . . If you want to know what I'll do, figure out what you'll do. I'll do the same thing—only more of it. It is now up to each of us, over and beyond what others may do, to do for ourselves and our posterity.

The Afro-American
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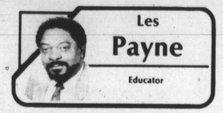
COMMENTARY & OPINIONS



Les Payne
Educator

Cry of rape: crack of doom!

Falsely accused!

The charge strikes without warning like a dagger from the dark. No time to prepare; little time to defend oneself.

Under our criminal justice system, the mere laying of certain charges by members of the dominant society against specific types of defendants practically erases the presumption of innocence. Such victims are so rocked by these false accusations that they appear for all the world to look guilty.

"I knew if a white woman accused a black man of rape, he was as good as dead," said Clarence Norris, the last survivor of the Scottsboro boys. Despite being falsely accused of raping two white Alabama prostitutes in the 1920s, these Southern teen-agers were given death sentences.

Despite changes in penalties, there still exists in America today a general predisposition toward believing a white woman who accuses a black man of rape.

Expensive court proceedings, which take forever, do not guarantee justice, especially when an African-American is accused — by a white woman — of rape. Some relief is offered, I imagine, when the falsely accused is exonerated before trial instead of afterward. Even this, however, offers little real solace.

Quincy Brandon Troupe, 22, was so accused last month — then exonerated six weeks later.

The case never reached a grand jury, but it got a great deal further than it should have. A white 20-year-old student claimed she was accosted while entering her dormitory at the State University of New York at Stony Brook on a rainy night in April.

She was "positive," she swore, that Troupe — whom she picked out of a school yearbook and two lineups — committed the alleged rape.

However, her descriptions to police differed so drastically from Troupe's actual appearance that one must question his arrest on first-degree charges and his $10,000 bail.

The alleged attacker, she said had a pierced ear and earring; Troupe did not. The "attacker" was very dark-skinned, with parted hair, medium-brown. Troupe's hair is partless. The alleged victim swore that she scratched the chest of her attacker; Troupe's chest bore no mark.

Despite a smelly pile of contradictory information, police booked the black engineering student. Stony Brook officials suspended Troupe a few weeks short of graduation.

Luckily, Troupe had weapons unavailable to most black men who are falsely accused.

As a popular scholar and basketball star, Troupe from the beginning attracted supporters who publicly protested his treatment and the false charges. The campus was split racially when other students demonstrated on behalf of the alleged victim.

On the legal side, Troupe's family, headed by a famous father, posted the $10,000 bail and hired a campaigning, activist attorney. Quincy T. Troupe, a brilliant poet and writer, forsook his university lecture duties to oversee his son's legal defense.

The strategy was left to attorney C. Vernon Mason, whose last big case ironically had him defending an alleged black rape victim. Tawana Brawley, who had falsely accused several white men.

Any such false accusation, with regard to race, is of course abominable. However, given the history of this country, black targets are placed in infinitely more danger of imprisonment and death.

One is hard-pressed to think of a single white man, guilty or innocent, who has ever been executed by the state or otherwise was killed for raping a black woman.

This, in fact, in a country the southern parts of which were literally built on the kidnaping of Africans and the raping of their women.

On the other hand, the graveyards of this land groan with the bodies of innocent black men, many of them lynched, who were falsely accused by white women.

This is not to say that no blacks have committed rape, or that those found guilty should go unpunished. It is merely to remind that falsely accusing a black man of rape, at times in this nation's history, has been tantamount to a guilty verdict.

Fortunately this week was not the case with the privileged Quincy Troupe. Some with an incurable predisposition refuse to accept the Suffolk district attorney's clearing of young Troupe — who according to solid evidence, was miles away from the campus at the time of the alleged rape.

Still, to recall the certainty of the arresting officers is to understand how frighteningly close he came to being jailed pending trial — and possibly conviction. Save for a supportive family with resources, a good lawyer and a pristine reputation, Troupe likely would have landed where so many other black youngsters have.

It never ceases to amaze me how lacking in rancor some black men have emerged after being punished — and Troupe was punished — by false accusations.

To read Clarence Norris's book, "The Last of the Scottsboro Boys," for instance, is to find a falsely accused man without bitterness after serving five years on Death Row and a decade in an Alabama prison.

Listen now to Quincy Brandon Troupe: "I have no bitterness toward the woman."

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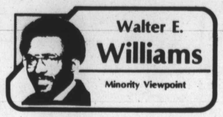


Walter E. Williams
Minority Viewpoint

Reparations, or amnesty

When the African-American Summit recently met in New Orleans, some black leaders, like Benjamin Hooks of the NAACP and 21 of the 24 black congressmen, refused to come.

But in attendance were such notables as the Reverends Louis Farakhan and Jesse Jackson. One policy recommendation that came out of the meeting was a call for reparations.

Reparations gained creditability when Congress agreed to give $20,000 to Japanese survivors of World War II concentration camps. How does this columnist feel about that?

I think it's great, but I don't want Congress taking my earnings to compensate the Japanese. When Franklin D. Roosevelt and then California Gov. Earl Warren agreed to intern Japanese citizens, I was only seven years old and hardly a participant in that decision.

This individual accountability norm also applies to the injustices of slavery, I feel that those persons who owned slaves should make reparations to those who were enslaved. But there is a problem.

Both those who were slaves and those who owned slaves are now beyond the reach of Congress and the courts. To carry out a justifiable reparations program, we must take our case to a higher (or lower) authority.

Some people will persist, saying that today's whites carry a reparations burden from America's heritage of slavery. After all, we have a rich country, and much of this richness was built through the blood, sweat, and tears of slaves.

That's true; but it's quite a leap of logic to say that today's whites ought to give Walter Williams money because his ancestors were slaves.

Besides, slavery has had mixed beneficiaries. I estimate that my income and wealth is greater than 95 percent of Americans and 99.9 percent of the world. Assuming I would have been born anyway, my wealth is probably higher than it would have been had white slave traders not captured my ancestors and brought them to America.

Thus, am I to be counted among the beneficiaries of slavery — not to mention millionaires like Bill Cosby, Michael Jackson, Kareem Jabbar, O.J. Simpson, and Jesse Jackson?

If we solve the "who benefitted' issue, and actually get around to passing out the money, there's the thornier problem of who pays and who gets?

Not all blacks were slaves. Eleven percent were "free persons of color." Other American blacks are of West Indian ancestry. True, West Indians were slaves but not "our" slaves.

Wouldn't it be unfair to make American whites pay for what the English and French did? After all, I'd feel quite put upon if a Jew or Armenian asked me to make reparations for the Nazi and Turkish atrocities.

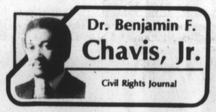
Then there's the problem of identifying the culpable whites. Many American whites are relatively recent immigrants. Do we make a reparation assessment on the Jews who settled here during the '20s and '30s, or the Hungarians who settled here during the '50s, or the Vietnamese who arrived in the '70s?

A Jew, Hungarian, or Vietnamese might say, "Not me, buddy, I just got here. My ancestors had nothing to do with slavery!"

Reparations for slavery is nonsense, but I have yet to hear it being roundly denounced. Underlying guilt, and fear of being labeled an insensitive racist must be the answer. So here's what I'm going to do.

I herein grant full and general amnesty to today's white people for the grievances of their forebears against my people. I grant this forebearance so that White people might feel less guilty and act responsibly.

Just in case the nation falls for this reparation business. I want my share sent to Ireland as compensation for our being on England's side in Ireland's struggle for independence.



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

Light-skin vs. dark skin

One of the dangers that the victims of centuries of racism in the United States need to be cautioned about is the pseudo-struggle between light-skinned and dark-skinned African Americans.

One of the basic strategies of the powerful and oppressive forces of this society is to provide and subdivide racial and ethnic communities against themselves.

The history of the United States is a history of racism. Unfortunately, the victims of racism sometimes get caught up in their own victimization by fostering the continuation of racist stereotypes and myths along the color line.

The established media takes great delight when a chance is given to expose internal contradictions within the African American community.

In a recent front-page article in the New York Times entitled, "Lawsuit Raises Issues of Color Bias Between Blacks," the issue of conflict between light-skinned and dark-skinned African Americans was highlighted.

The fact that there persists in some communities a contrived notion of bitterness and envy between light-skinned and dark-skinned African Americans is a sad commentary.

One of the achievements of the civil rights and African American cultural revolution of the 1960's was the re-evaluating of the relationships between all members of the African American community without prejudice due to skin color.

Interestingly, it is out of the city of Atlanta, Georgia, a place where African Americans in particular have made great progress, that a recent lawsuit is advancing in the federal courts.

The two plaintiffs are both African American women. One is dark-skinned and one is light-skinned.

Tracy Lynn Marrow, an employee of the Atlanta office of the Internal Revenue Service, has sued the IRS and Ruby Lewis who is the dark-skinned supervisor of Marrow who is light-skinned.

Marrow contends that she has been discriminated against in her employment at the IRS by Lewis because of Lewis' "prejudice against Marrow because of her light-skinned color."

The fact that I have to use these descriptions to describe the bone of contention speaks to the depth of the problem. Who would believe that in 1989 two sisters would be squaring off in a federal court because of the perception or the reality that skin color is this world have been created equally by God.

If African Americans continue to carry forth the racist myths and stereotypes of this society, then the resulting division and internal conflicts will only serve to further perpetuate the exploitation and oppression of the community.

It matters not what color you are. What matters is how you use your life to ensure that justice and freedom is for everyone.

NORMAN HILL:

Family and Medical Leave Act

This is an era in which it is the rule rather than the exception for both parents to be working and in which some 25 percent of all families are headed by a single parent. For black families, the percentages in both cases are especially high.

It is also a time when we are becoming more aware of the connection between strong, stable families and many indices of individual and social well-being.

Because of these facts, it can be said that one of the most important bills now being considered by Congress — and particularly important for the black community — is the Family and Medical Leave Act (H.R. 770 and S. 345).

It would establish a national leave policy providing time off without penalty for parents to care for newborn or adopted children and for family and medical emergencies (with "family" defined to include the employees' parents).

This legislation is essential if we want to make sure that working people are able to devote proper attention to their families.

The United States is far behind most nations in this area. For example, 98 countries now have laws allowing women (or, in some cases, their husbands) to stay at home after the birth of a child for at least 12 weeks and be paid at least part of their salary.

In Canada, for example, the leave period is 37 weeks, with 60 percent of pay for the first 15.

In Chile, which we in the United States often think of as a "backward" country, 18 weeks' leave are permitted, all at full pay.

In the United States there is no legislative provision at all for parental leave, or for any kind of family leave.

Some company policies and collective bargaining agreements offer a number of the types of unpaid leave included in the Family and Medical Leave Act, but they are in the minority.

Large companies are the ones most likely to provide employee benefits, yet only half of the nation's 1,500 largest companies give job-protected unpaid leave to new mothers. Just one-third of small businesses allow employees unpaid leave.

As with all previous federal labor standards legislation, business lobbyists are conducting a strong campaign against the bill. Corporate America contends that guaranteed leave would place unfair financial burdens on many businesses.

But if countries such as Canada, West Germany, Finland, and Austria not only survive but thriye with such legislation in place, why can't the United States?

Besides, as is often the case when social welfare legislation is at issue, the corporate world is taking a narrow, self-defeating point of view.

Listen to Dr. Berry Brazelton, a well-known pediatrician who has examined the issues at the intersection of work and family responsibilities and who supports the Family and Medical Leave Act, as he urges businesses to adopt precisely the kinds of policies prescribed in the bill:

"Businesses that pay attention to the family concerns of their employees are already reaping rewards. Studies demonstrate that employees of such firms display less burnout, less absenteeism, more loyalty to the company and significantly more interest in their jobs."

Also, the corporate world should recognize that the provisions of the bill are rather modest. Both House and Senate versions allow employees of either gender up to 10 weeks of unpaid leave per 24-month period upon the birth or adoption of a child or upon the serious illness of a child or parent.

(An employee may take 15 unpaid weeks a year in the House bill and 13 unpaid weeks in the Senate bill within a one-year period when he or she is ill.)

This period of leave seems small compared to the time allowed in many countries — and remember that in some countries all or some of the leave is paid.

So the Family and Medical Leave Act is a significant yet unburdensome step toward a uniform leave policy that will give employees a better chance to integrate their work and family lives in ways that will be beneficial to both.

Both the House and Senate versions of the bill have cleared committee and are on their respective floors. There, we can expect a hard fight that will probably be decided within the coming few months.

It is urgent that all who recognize the importance of this legislation should write or call their Representatives and Senators to make their voices heard.

Norman Hill is President of the A. Philip Randolph Institute.