EDITORIALS

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THE VOICE OF BLACK AMERICA SINCE 1892

Supreme Court wrong

As the Supreme Court of the United States succumbs more and more to the Reagan doctrine of keeping blacks and other minorities in their places, citizens of this country can thank their lucky stars that our forefathers decided that this government would have three ruling bodies —executive, judicial and legislative — and each would keep a check on the other.

When the Supreme Court ruled Monday that white fire fighters in Birmingham could challenge the validity of a hiring and promotion plan designed to achieve a racial balance, it was wrong.

It sent a clear message to all skeptics that it was no longer going to let blacks try to catch up. This was the third blow the Supreme Court has dealt to civil rights and there is no doubt it won't be the last.

The present U.S. Supreme Court is called the Reagan Court — since the last three jurists were nominated by President Ronald Reagan. Before these Republican nominations were made, the court was more sensitive to the needs of blacks, minorities and women.

The Constitution of the United States, which went into effect in 1787, states that the executive power shall be vested in the president; the legislative power in the Congress composed of the House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate; and the judicial power shall be vested in one Supreme Court and in such inferior courts as the Congress might from time to time ordain and establish.

It has taken all three branches of the federal government to bring blacks to the point where they are today... When the Bilbos filibustered in the Congress, the civil rights fighters and organizations like the NAACP and SCLC turned to the courts.

The courts in suit after suit then outlawed unequal salaries for teachers and discrimination in schools, fire departments, police departments,department stores, railroad stations and bus stations.

When the courts moved too slowly, our fighters got men like Presidents John Kennedy, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, and President Harry Truman to issue executive orders outlawing such things as unfair employment practices.

Now that the Supreme Court has turned against advancement for the downtrodden, it is right that the members of the Congressional Black Caucus bring the fight back to the U.S. Congress which led the way to abolish slavery beginning in 1865; said citizens rights would not be abridged in 1868 and proposed that race would not be a bar to voting in 1869.

In 1913 when the 17th amendment was adopted, it required that Senators be elected by direct popular vote and not by state legislatures. This laid the ground work for a new type of Congress.

Now, both houses of Congress must respond to the voters back home or be outvoted... and since more blacks and minorities are becoming aware of the power of the vote — thanks to the recent presidential campaigns of the Rev. Jesse Jackson — it is possible for the Congress to again make a difference in the civil rights arena.

The Reagan Court has — by mostly split decisions issued — these last three set-back judgments. Voters who didn't believe the Supreme Court was so vital to the advancement of civil rights now have a better understanding of how important the vote for a president is.

On the good side is the word from Amelia Parker, executive director of the Congressional Black Caucus, who has announced that members of both the House and U.S. Senate have already been developing a strategy to fight for more civil rights initiatives on Capitol Hill, rather than in the courts.

Individuals and civil rights organizations, who value the gains made to date along with the need for a racial balance in the United States, should urge their congressmen to take up the fight for civil rights. If blacks and other minorities are not given an equal chance to forge ahead, the whole country will suffer.

Loving real fathers

Fathers are such wonderful people — and to have a good one is a delight beyond imagination.

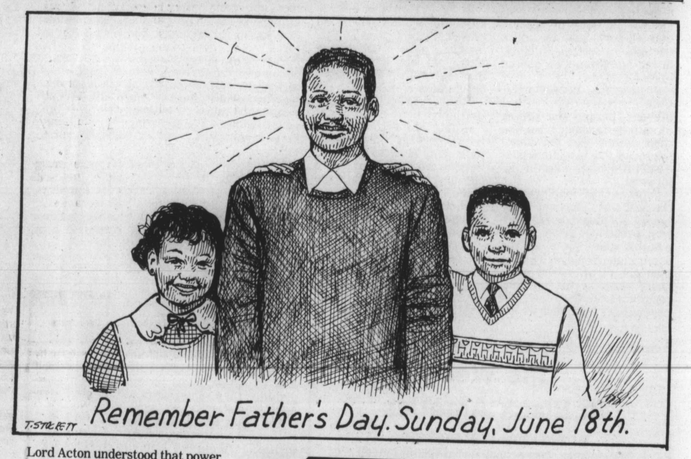
A father is that guy whom you see in the supermarket wheeling the baby in the cart at the same time soothing and talking to the toddler as mom wonders in and out of the aisle. Or that young guy you see in the park tossing the ball back and forth to his son or daughter — and the child never seems to get tired but dad hangs in there.

Or that man you see sitting under the tree gesturing as he reads that favorite book to a youngster trying to listen — even as sleep creeps in.

Or the one who works all night but still has time to walk to school with his own children and others — and manages to talk like a human being and keep a smile on his face.

But the picture of the father we like best is the one of that hardworking, strong black man all dressed up on Sunday sitting tall and proud in church with his family — or singing in the choir or ushering — as his young sons look up to him and pray that they can be like him.

For the persons who can say "that's my Dad" to any of these mental pictures you can count yourself as blessed...If you are one of the lucky ones, you don't have to be told that Sunday is Father's Day —the day you do something special for that special man in your life who has made life worth living. And if you don't have a real father, adopt someone ... you just might make him a better father.



Anthony Armstrong
Political Consultant

Power, money, sex

Lord Acton understood that power corrupts and absolute power, well; you know the rest of the phrase." The founders of democracy knew that a man who would serve the public interest had better have a private station.

And, "beware of the flip of the hip" was the French politician, Anton Caliere's axiom, rounding out the trilogy of power, money, and sex in politics.

Ethics in politics is like a flower surrounded by bees, all incessantly buzzing trying to get some nectar.

Business leaders take courses about it, clerics spend lot's of time contemplating it; but politicians and ethnic more often only bump into each other. For the average politician ethics is what the other guy did, especially if he got away with it.

In local politics, ethics is played out against a plot of extremes. It's either the right side or the wrong side, and those who waver in the middle eventually get pulled to the former.

Politicians aren't generally dishonest, but politics is frequently done in an environment of borderline dishonesty. You can pull on the branch but when it cracks you have to let it go.

Our political leaders are closer to unethical situations precisely because they feel they need more money than they usually have, and because the nature of their work is fueled by the very money they lack.

In the closed door world of local politics it's a question of who's to know, and thus, who's to tell. Obviously, then, ethics in politics reduces to a matter of what's done when no one is watching.

Things buzz buzz buzz; they range from the mundane of getting money to pay the G&E bill to buying the wife a new coat, and once in a while something spectacular get's exposed.

Suppose you saw a wallet lying on the floor of an empty restroom. It contains five hundred dollars. Do you take the wallet to lost and found; and even if you do is the cash left in it?

It's a similar temptation for the elected official. Yet, you haven't asked the public to trust your representation and haven't held yourself to a higher standard of conduct by doing so. Not just the letter but the spirit too.

What we see most on the local level cracks the branch. Questions of the ethics of the use of power need to be raised. How serious are we about ethics, how even do we wish to define it; and when certainly has one person's ethics framed all of ours?

Should we be concerned about the ethics of how the top advisor's spouse comes by a job in the officials inner office? Are there questions embodied in a husband being on, say, the school board and the wife serving on the civil service commission?

We see a person unwelcomed one day and transformed into the fair haired boy the next — questions of ethics? A brother-in-law serves here, and sister-in-law there, and things start to all run together and all apart.

No, every elected official is not behind in the car payments; nor am I sure if it's good that every public official have a completely private station. And in truth, most elected officials crave longevity far more than power.

As for sex and politics, that kind of stuff is best left private. Only when it drips into the public domain should it be our direct concern; but it has so much lately it's also become public fare.

In Baltimore there's only one local politician with any real money. We don't know about the "S" word; but I do know the administration is involved in a smothering power game.

We hear the time worn phrase, "They did it, why shouldn't we." He'll, talk about Jim Wright, Tony Cuelho, or Representative Gray; we ought to be talking about what's wrong with the politics of local ethnics.

G. James Fleming
Public Affairs Commentator

Bush's danger may be Atwater

Lee Atwater, glorified by some and despised by others, put George Bush where he is today, in the White House, but Lee Atwater will also lead to the president's downfall if Bush doesn't watch his step.

This Bush-chosen chairman of the Republican National Committee, who engineered the infamous "Willie Horton" campaign against Michael Dukakis, is still at his old tricks, or is harboring the purveyors of the same.

He who fanned the slogan, "a card-carrying member of the ACLU" into McCarthy-like indictment against Dukakis and made it stick.

He who elevated rhetoric about saluting the American flag to a principle platform plank of Candidate Bush, in a character debasement of his opponent.

This time (the most recent) it is Thomas Foley (D-Wash.), now speaker of the House of Representatives, who is the victim of Mr. Atwater's poison pen, for which one of his deputies, Mark Condon, has taken the "rap."

Condom may be only the "fall guy" but anyway, after some righteous indignation on the part of the president, he was fired and Mr. Atwater telephoned an apology to Mr. Foley.

The message seems to be out, nevertheless, that campaign "skullduggery" need not go out of the window at the end of the campaign, or cease even in the midst of a drive for increased ethical behavior in Washington.

"Willie Hortonism" will continue in cities, counties and the states as politicos and party pros combine rumor and the rhetoric to smear opponents. "Willie Hortonism" is not a thing of the past.

* * *

Ron Brown, chairman of the Democratic National Committee, was bound by his office and as a good and true Democrat, to protest the dastardly attempt to torpedo Speaker Foley.

He had a right to take umbrage when he discovered that the Republican national office had set up a well-oiled secretariat of 40 sleuths, with a budget of $1 million, whose main duties are to dip up anything and everything it can about politicians, especially against Democrats and, more especially, against Democratic congressmen and candidates for congress.

There are those Republicans who feel they "must get even" with Democrats and their cohorts who voted to defeat Appellate Judge Robert H. Bork's nomination to the Supreme Court; they feel, even more, that they must make the Democrats pay for having prevented former Senator John Tower from becoming Secretary of Defense.

These Republicans are in no mood to "go easy" or ethical in regard to Democrats. They will indulge in leaks and rumors (as in the current case of Representative William H. Gray (D. Pa.); they will try an ounce of "Willie Hortonism", or a pound, as the expediency dictates, but they will not turn their backs on Willie Horton.

* * *

Back to Lee Atwater. From the latest example of what the Atwater camp is capable of the Howard University students were prophetic in their estimate of the character flaw in the otherwise quite acceptable fellow-citizen.

When the Howard students went on strike in opposition to the naming of Mr. Atwater to the university's board of trustees, they followed the historic steps which brought educational institutions, such as Fisk University, Hampton Institute (now University), and even Howard itself into the 20th century.

The historic impact of student action must be further noted, when it is recalled that it is the young people of the 1950s and 1960s (including students at Morgan State University) who opened the doors of restaurants, theatres, universities and other public places. Students also were the backbone of the Freedom Rides all over the South.

Many students may always be right but, right, or wrong, may the gods look kindly on them.

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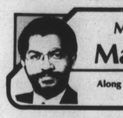
COMMENTARY & OPINIONS



Manning Marable
Along The Color Line

The challenge of democracy

Throughout the world today, there is a rising tide of democracy. In China during the past month, we have witnessed more than a million students and workers who demonstrated on behalf of democracy in Tiananmen Square in Beijing.

The cry for greater civil liberties and against official corruption threatened the regime of Deng Xiaoping and Prime Minister Li Peng, and a bloody repression was launched. Hundreds were killed and wounded.

In the Soviet Union, a new legislative process has promoted mass popular approval and participation of dissidents. A new willingness to foster ideological and political pluralism is necessary in order to restructure the Soviet economy.

In Hungary, there are plans to establish a genuine, multiparty state without the permanent domination of the Community Party from the top.

And in Poland only days ago, a competitive, democratic election brought many advocates of the Solidarity labor movement into the government.

Once outlawed, now Solidarity is viewed as part of the solution to help resolve Poland's pressing economic programs.

In country after country, people are demanding a greater degree of accountability by their political leaders, and more authority to determine state policies.

They expect a higher degree of ethical behavior and democratic-decision making.

In Washington, D.C., the crisis of ethics brought down Jim Wright, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Tony Coelho, Democratic House Whip.

Republican Congressman Donald Lukens was recently convicted for having sexual relations with a minor, yet he's fighting to maintain his official position.

Such ethical issues raise in sharp relief the issue of what citizens have a right to expect from elected officials.

The outbreak of democracy in Communist nations has prompted many conservative critics to argue that the competition between socialism and capitalism is finally over, and that capitalism has won.

Going even further, rightwing ideologue Michael Novak, insisted recently that socialist-inspired "dream of economic equality does not work."

Since the abilities of each human being are different, Novak argued in **Forbes** magazine, each individual must receive different rewards.

"Justice seems to demand diversity, not uniformity, in rewards," Novak declared. "The dream of economic equality for all is not attainable."

Progressives in America have much to learn from the Soviet experiment in Glasnost and from the Chinese students' quest for democracy, for such examples teach us that there are many different roads to democracy.

But when conservative critics tell us that such efforts disprove the necessity for equality of material conditions, we accept such a judgement at our peril.

For if the civil rights movement against racial segregation taught us anything, we should have learned that the greater vision of democracy cannot be fulfilled simply by providing an integrated cup of coffee, or laws which permit blacks to attend whites-only schools.

A viable democracy cannot exist in which two to three million people are sleeping in the gutters and streets of this nation.

A viable democracy cannot exist in which 20 million Americans go to bed hungry each night, and 37 million lack any type of health or dental insurance.

Democracy is not a thing, it is a process of expanding opportunities for all citizens, and the ability to control decision making from the bottom up.

This requires certain prerequisites for a decent life for all within the political society — full employment, decent housing, education, health care, and so forth.

The battle for full democracy leads directly and inevitably toward the promise of economic equality. The challenge for all democracies is not to make the rich richer, but for all of us to greater economic and political rights.

Dr. Manning Marable is professor of political science at the University of Colorado, Boulder.

AFRO Welcomes Letters

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Kweisi Mfume
U.S. Congressman

Another court reversal for civil rights

The recent Supreme Court decision followed predictable precedent. Like the other recent reversal of affirmative action in the Richmond vs. Croson case, the Court was sharply divided along lines to which we are now growing uncomfortably accustomed as the recent Reagan appointees were the majority outvoting the older court of proven commitment to civil rights.

On Monday, June 5, as the world watched in horror and dismay as the People's Liberation Army of China fired on unarmed students and residents in Beijing, the Supreme Court further whittled away at the civil rights of African-Americans.

The Court's 5-4 ruling in the Wards Cove Packing Company verses Atonia (87-1387) case is but their most recent, and certainly not their last, assault on Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which prohibits discrimination in employment on the basis of race, sex, religion or national origin.

The Court is changing a law that is 14 years old. This ruling now puts the majority of the responsibilities of proof on the plaintiff while narrowing the scope of acceptable proof and makes it harder for workers to use statistics to prove on-the-job discrimination.

The legal burden of proof now rests on the plaintiff who must show that the employer had no "objective standard or business related justification" for the allegedly discriminatory practices.

In the opinion of Justice White, it is not enough to prove a racial imbalance in the work force, the plaintiff must now also prove that there are specific employment practices that cause specific disparities.

This decision now requires plaintiffs to show, that some **other** standard than was previously allowed, that the under-representation of minority groups in the most desirable jobs has violated Title VII.

Barry Goldstein, attorney with NAACP Legal defense and Education Fund, Inc., quoted in **The Washington Post** 6/6/89 says this ruling has, "reversed the most important fair employment decision that the Supreme Court has ever made," namely the 1971 *Griggs vs. Duke Power Co.* decision.

The Court decision makes it legally justifiable to discriminate against both women and minorities if the employer can show that those discriminatory practices are based on reasonable business practices.

Employers can repel suits by requiring plaintiffs to prove that the practices are unreasonable business practices.

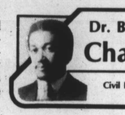
It is ironic that as we celebrate the 35th anniversary of the Brown vs. the Topeka Board of Education, that leads to the desegregation of public schools nationwide, that the high court is now eroding those very victories that eroded discrimination.

Congress must respond to the Court's continuing assault on civil rights with appropriate new legislation that will protect workers who are women or minorities from discriminatory employment practices.

Undeliberate discrimination in the workplace is still discrimination and must be addressed. The Court is not helping to reverse historic, systemic and endemic bias.

It has, in fact, consistently reversed previous decisions considered victories protecting the rights of many Americans, including those of African descent.

Justice Blackmun wrote, "One wonders whether the majority still believe that race discrimination — or more accurately, race discrimination against nonwhites — is a problem in our society, or even remembers that it ever was."



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

Today's child: tomorrow's hope

The Coalition for a Free Africa, Inc. (CFA) is to be congratulated for their successful efforts in planning the first international television telethon to be produced by African-Americans to raise funds to support and benefit the struggle in southern Africa.

The telethon will be aired on Black Entertainment Television (BET) on Sunday, June 25, 1989, from 5:00 p.m.-11:00 p.m. EST. We support this effort wholeheartedly and we encourage all Americans to view this important telethon and to pledge support.

The Coalition for a Free Africa is a public charity co-chaired by Solar Records' President, Dick Griffith, and California Assemblywoman Maxine Waters.

Griffith and Waters have been long time supporters of the cause of freedom and justice in southern Africa. We believe that this type of telethon concretizes the meaning of solidarity.

The funds raised through this effort is a positive step forward not only for the anti-apartheid movement in the United States but also for the African-American community in particular as a means of increasing the relationship between the supporters of freedom here and in Africa.

This will also be a bold example of how the latest in telecommunications technology can be and should be used to create positive images and impact.

Too often the established media has negatively stereotyped the plight of the situation in Africa as well as the situation here in the United States.

Nothing will be more positive and constructive than seeing millions of persons throughout the United States and other parts of the world joining together to support this telethon.

According to the Coalition for a Free Africa the purpose of the telethon is three-fold:

1) To wage a national education campaign around the morally repugnant system of apartheid and its devastating impact on the entire southern Africa region;

2) To mobilize the African-American community and to challenge the entire family of humankind to share its resources with the children of Southern Africa and;

3) To raise substantial funds for nutrition, education and health projects for the children of southern Africa.

At a time when African-Americans spend over $200 billion annually in the United States, financially supporting this telethon would be a significant act toward re-directing the spending patterns of the African-American community.

The theme of this First Annual Southern Africa Benefit Telethon is "Today's Child, Tomorrow's Hope."

A multi-racial lineup of internationally-acclaimed stars and entertainers have already indicated their willingness to perform for the telethon and to support projects helping our sisters and brothers in southern Africa.

Among the headliners are Stevie Wonder, Chaka Khan, Sheena Easton, Al Jarreau, Holly Robinson, Debbie Allen, Roy Ayers, Atlantic Starr, Sheryl Lee Ralph, Third World, Casey Kasom, and numerous others.

Black Entertainment Television increasingly is becoming a viable form for newsworthy and noteworthy events in addition to providing excellent musical entertainment.

The joint efforts of many national organizations along with the hard work of the producers and the Coalition for a Free Africa are a testament to creative pooling of resources for a worthy cause.

Yes, today's children are our hope and future. In Africa and particularly in southern Africa, children are crying out for help and for freedom and for peace.

Our future will be dependent upon how well we respond individually and collectively to the cries of these children because their future is our future.

Walter E. Williams
Minority Viewpoint

Experts and nonsense

Isn't it preposterous how experts pass nonsense off disguised as fact? And we eat it up. Here are some examples.

Critics argue that since our Strategic Defense System (SDI) is not 100 percent effective, we shouldn't spend resources for its development and deployment.

Great! Using that reasoning, neither we, nor our enemies, would have developed and deployed anti-aircraft guns during World War II. After all, some aircraft always got through.

The whole point of any defense system is to make enemy attack more costly, less successful, and hence less probable.

Then, there's America's education which is in near shambles. Experts and political hot dogs take junkets to Japan to marvel at its educational excellence.

They return to tell us we need more money for this and more money for that to become educationally competitive with Japan.

First of all, I don't think the Japanese are such intellectual geniuses. Why have they only four Nobel Prizes in science compared to our 126?.

Second, we spend nearly 7 percent of our gross national product (GNP) on education compared to their 5 percent.

So if it isn't superior native ability and money, what explains Japanese children outperforming ours? Instead of listening to the babble of education experts and political hot dogs, we ought to ask questions like:

Do Japanese children rape, rob, assault, and curse their teachers and fellow students? Are their high school texts rejected because they contain too many polysyllabic words?

Have Japanese teachers mastered 10th grade reading, writing, and arithmetic? How many guards patrol their school corridors, and how many police cars are outside? Do Japanese students bring weapons and drugs to class?

Now, let's get into a panic about the weather. After the bitterly cold winter of 1976-77, experts warned of the coming Ice Age.

After the sweltering summer of 1988, the same people warned of the coming Greenhouse Effect (Hot Age?).

In both cases, the experts argue, the weather pattern was a byproduct of man's production and consumption, and Congress must save the weather by stopping us from using sprays, pesticides, and other environmental insults.

In terms of weather history, the earth's temperature has always fluctuated. In the early 1800s, the earth's temperature was warming faster than it is now.

One wonders what kind of pesticides, sprays, and automobiles our ancestors were using.

Some scientists speculate that dramatic climate changes led to the extinction of the dinosaurs. We wonder what the dinosaurs were doing to the environment, and whether we'd still have them had there been a Congress at the time.

Now, let's look at the prison situation. Starting in the '50s, prisons began to be run by cute college graduates with degrees in sociology, and no longer by those who had risen through the ranks of guards to become wardens and administrators.

These cuties, aided by courts, lawyers, and various do-gooders, began to give convicts new "rights":

The right to assault guards, the right to rape fellow inmates, the right to convert life sentences into eight years or less, and the right to be released on furlough or to halfway houses where they could prey on decent people.

These experts have imposed an awesome cost on us. They whimper that longer sentences can't be given because of prison overcrowding.

Here's my solution. The United States has trust territories in the Pacific that can be turned into penal colonies.

Criminals convicted of heinous crimes, or who show repeated contempt for the rights of others, should be exiled thereof or life — with death at the penalty for escape.

I wish we could find some humane way of getting rid of the experts.