EDITORIALS

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THE VOICE OF BLACK AMERICA SINCE 1892

Stop shortchanging people

As Baltimore's heavily burdened taxpayers begin to groan louder under the weight of the highest tax rate in Maryland, it is not surprising that the city's elected officials are becoming anxious to find a way to further tap the state treasury.

There may be a legal way for Baltimore to win more money from the state to help with its under-financed school system. Poor subdivisions in other states have been having success in this area, and if Baltimore can't get a better shake otherwise, now is the time to make the welfare of our children a major priority and do what is necessary to better their chances in life.

This city, on its own, can't afford the quality of schools its children require, and it can't truly become "The City That Reads" unless it stops shortchanging them — as it now does, year by year, class by class.

Among its needs are better paid teachers and enough updated textbooks and suitable supplies for all its students. Baltimoreans pay more taxes by far than do residents of any other subdivision, and we shortchange our students more so than do most competitive systems. And the learning results faithfully reflect this sorry state of affairs.

In Kentucky, the poorest 66 subdivisions sued the state on the ground that it was not providing children in their school systems the equal education opportunity Kentucky is legally obliged to make available.

They have recently won a big victory in the State Supreme Court. The state legislature has to find a way to improve the situation.

In Baltimore there is no need to go to war seeking the identical level of education that can be afforded in a subdivision such as Montgomery County. But there is an educational level below which no school system in Maryland should be allowed to operate because of the locality's low income.

Compared to its needs, Baltimore's school system is forced to operate at a substandard level. The mayor, City Council and members of the General Assembly have repeatedly spelled out the problems and needs. The state's response has been unsatisfactory.

The city's response to that must be something more than waiting until it gets a chance to beg for more financial assistance in the next legislative session.

NAACP looking good at 80

For someone 80 years old, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People wears its age very well. Next week, the grand old lady of all civil rights organizations holds its annual convention in Detroit, and some 16,000 people are expected. Obviously, it must be doing something right to attract that large an audience.

Sometimes, too many of us forget what the NAACP has accomplished on behalf of African-Americans, and the tremendous odds it has always had to face. Back in the days when lynchings were commonplace, and virtually every door was shut to African-Americans, the NAACP waged a constant, and often lonely fight, to bring justice to this land and tear down the walls of segregation and discrimination.

It did its job so well that many of our young people have grown up without knowing the indignity of "white" and "colored" drinking fountains, of being made to sit in the back of public transportation, of being told flat-out that African-Americans were not wanted in certain jobs and in certain places of public accommodations.

We are glad for that, for no one should ever have to experience such pain and humiliation. However, it borders on the criminal that so many of us have forgotten what it took to bring us to this point and act as if the past never happened and so should not be remembered. Some even act as if our freedom and civil rights have been secured forever.

If ever the danger in such views has been made clear, the recent Supreme Court rulings on affirmative action and civil rights have done just that. They have demonstrated the precariousness of victories we thought were safe and secure. They have demonstrated why we still need an NAACP.

And so, as the NAACP opens its convention, we wish it well. It has been our champion through many dark days and at 80, it still looks mighty good.

Lee's film not dangerous

Spike Lee's latest movie, "Do the Right Thing," packs enough of the real and unreal, the good and the ugly of a slice of life from sections of America's major cities that it understandably provokes wide variances of reactions from viewers, but it is difficult to see how so many media people and others come away fearing it will cause racial riots.

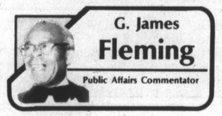
Do they know something we don't? Are they dealing from an understanding of how they might react in similar circumstances? And, are they looking past the history of what ignited such racial disturbances as they suggest the film might provoke?

Except for the occurrences that grew out of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., most major recent-history racial disturbances were touched off by instances of what area people considered to be police brutality.

That was the history of outbreaks in such places as Detroit, Miami and Newark, and elsewhere.

Lee's movie was on target, historically speaking, when it zeroed in on an act of the police as the spark that prompted the film's disturbance.

This thought-provoking film touches a lot of emotions; but it is not a dangerous movie.



G. James **Fleming**
Public Affairs Commentator

'We the people' proves elastic

The most salient positive quality of the American system is its elasticity — a quality that impresses itself this month of Independence Day.

Ours is a system that can expand — does expand — to include more people and more groups in all its freedoms, benefits and protections.

Whereas, when it was first conceived, "We the people" included only free white males, it has step by step expanded to include also black males, white and black women, and Indians — and all with little change in the founding constitutional system.

Whereas, the Founding Fathers were thinking only, or largely, of persons of their class, the system soon demonstrated that it could include, also, the skilled working class, as labor organizations of one kind or another, insisted that they, too, were part of "We the people."

The Civil War and Emancipation, by a different route, stretched the system further, as former slaves, at least legally, were included in "We the people."

And, thus, the pattern of expansion and inclusion has proceeded.

It is this quality of expanding and changing for the better which has made the USA "special" among nations and which has attracted people from all corners of the globe, while its own citizens are quite satisfied with being Americans and remaining in the United States.

There is no exodus from America and those who have tried making their home elsewhere sooner of later, either return to the USA or wish they could. Former expatriates pay testimony to the cliche that "There is just no place like the United States.

Even most of the "Back to Africa" proponents never move from what is often called "the good old USA."

Furthermore, those who are at the bottom of the economic scale, come to see that they are much better off than most of the masses of the world.

It may be, also, that despite the "Robber Barons," the American system has also been willing to share more of its riches with those not so rich. Perhaps, the trickling down principle works, especially as it is enhanced by the strength of independent labor unions.

Here in America, of all places, no man or woman is condemned to rise higher than his or her parents. Regardless of race of previous condition of servitude, the record is rich and almost endless of fellow - Americans who have lifted themselves up to higher ground.

It is the political freedom which is enjoyed by Americans which has most fascinated the people of the world and which makes the USA "special" even to its own citizens. Thus, "We the people" which was applicable to only a handful of white, largely landowners, 200 years ago, today is beloved, defended and extolled by all, regardless of sex, race, color or religion.

Among the freedoms held most high, in addition, is the opportunity to fight, to organize and bring pressure, to improve the system, "to make things better."

Indeed, to repeat, of all the elements which impel Americans to cling to America, or to return to America, or remain loyal to America, the most is the political freedom, and the promise of more freedom.

During the days of the Marcus Garvey Movement in New York, it used to be said that most Harlemites preferred starving on Lenox Avenue to living like a king anywhere else. There is little of this sentiment in all Americans and it all comes from a deepy belief that we are all, warp and woof, part of "We the people."

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

Budget cutters

Each year, Congress has sought to cut the federal budget. The Gramm-Rudman Act requires that federal spending be reduced. The national debt is a monumental problem, but I have to quarrel with the approach used by the budget cutters.

Each year, Republicans and Southern Democrats inevitably target social programs for disproportionate cuts, or even for elimination. They do not understand that the Constitution demands that the government "promote the general welfare." They believe that job training programs are unnecessary. They believe that government financing for child care is superfluous, and they believe federal funds for our young men and women in our colleges and universities are not the proper function of government.

This push to reduce federal spending began under the Carter Administration. One evening, I along with a dozen other members of the U.S. House of Representatives, headed by the Speaker of the House, Tip O'Neill, flew to Camp David for a consultation with President Carter on his budget.

The President had proposed cuts in several important social programs. I argued to the President that his proposed cuts would cause much pain for some of our people and pointed out that the effect of his proposed alienation that many citizens have toward government. Tip O'Neill, the often fiery speaker, laughed into a tirade, "Mr. President (expletive deleted) serving people, meeting their needs is the heart and soul of the Democratic Party and (expletive deleted) it should be the heart and soul of this American government."

In another year, the Congressional Black Caucus had worked out an arrangement with Democratic leadership that certain social programs would not be cut above a certain percentage. As the budget process continued, there were rumors that the agreement would be scratched. At a leadership meeting one morning, one member made a formal proposal that the agreement worked out with the Congressional Black Caucus be "re-considered."

I exploded. I told the leadership meeting participants that such "reconsideration "would be perfidious. "The one thing that I thought held us together was trust, belief, that an agreement would be honored," I said, "I want to know what has happened to the integrity of leadership that appears now willing to betray a reasonable agreement, carefully worked out." The reconsideration did not take place, the CBC position prevailed.

The major problem is that many budget cutters simply do not like social programs and/or are more prone to cut those programs because the beneficiaries of those programs do not have the money, the politcal clout, the well organized lobbies that have an impact on the Congress.

I think we must agree on certain points. One, federal spending must be reduced, and two, that draconian across-the-board cuts which result in people losing their jobs and in reducing services is the dead wrong way to reduce federal spending.

I propose a far more sensible and compassionate approach. Most public employees are hard working dedicated people, but for the most part, almost every agency in the federal government is overstaffed to a greater or lesser extent. I propose a gradual reduction in personnel through retirements, resignations, etc. This attrition should be matched with a no new-hire policy that was more than 50 percent of the attrition rate. This, of course, would require administrative tightening to insure that each employee was conscientiously performing his or her job.

It's cruel to order reductions in force by budget cuttings. It's wrong to deny services to those who need the services most through budget cutting.

There is a better way to reduce federal spending. Why not try it?

The Afro-American
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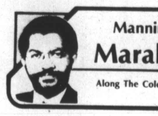
COMMENTARY & OPINIONS



Manning **Marable**
Along The Color Line

C. L. R. James Political Giant

In June, in London, C. L. R. James died at the age of 88. Not widely known in the United States, James nevertheless is one of the most important black political theorists and scholars of the twentieth century.

Born in Trinidad, James travelled to England in the early 1930s and quickly became involved in radical politics. Collaborating with fellow Trinidadian George Padmore and artist/activist Paul Robeson, James helped to spark a growing movement for Pan-Africanism and the independence of Africa and the Caribbean. He agitated for relief efforts to assist Ethiopia against the invasion of fascist Italy.

In the 1940s and early 1950s James lived and worked in the United States, involving himself in socialist political organizations and learning about the black movement in this country. He recruited a young African university student named Kwame Nkrumah to join the Pan-Africanist struggle, and via his association with Padmore, helped to initiate the independence movement in the Gold Coast, today's Ghana. In the late 1950s James returned briefly to his native West Indies, leading the unsuccessful struggle to achieve political federation among the former British colonies. While in Trinidad, James brilliantly edited the independence movement's journal, and was chief adviser to leader Eric Williams, his former student.

James was a master of literature, history, political analysis and social criticism. During his seven years in England in the thirties, he produced some of the most profound works on black liberation yet available: **A History of Negro Revolt, World Revolution,** and **The Black Jacobins.** The **Black Jacobins** is arguably the best single historical study by a scholar of African descent in this century. The book charts the only successful slave revolution in world history, the saga of slave rebel Toussaint L'Ouverture and the revolt in Haiti.

In a sense, history was cruel to James, as it frequently is to all political prophets. James's **Black Jacobins** was ignored at the time of its initial printing, and for two decades it was out of print entirely. James's astute political analysis went largely unread and unrecognized among black political leaders during his years in the United States. Back in Trinidad, when James raised the necessity to break with an economic and political dependency upon American imperialism, Williams broke sharply with his radical mentor. James's books were banned, and for a time he was placed under house arrest.

James will be remembered by scholars for his eloquent narrative of cultural and racial life in the Caribbean in the early 1900s, entitled **Beyond A Boundary.** His book **Nkrumah and the Ghana Revolution** is a detailed account of the triumph of African nationalist Kwame Nkrumah over British colonialism. James's **Notes on Dialectics,** written at the beginning of the Cold War, is a critique of Soviet Communism and the philosophy which leads to authoritarian social control.

Why is James important to us? His intellectual legacy includes several fundamental insights. Unlike most socialists five decades ago, James argued that the black American working class had its own vitality and unique political history. He believed that the black movement was potentially the most radical of all American social movements. Second, James emphasized the central role of culture, including sports as well as literature, to our understanding of political change. And most importantly, James was a radical democrat. He opposed all forms of censorship, and advocated full democratic rights for all, whether in capitalist or Communist countries. I was fortunate to have met James, and to have spent a day with him two years ago, discussing politics.

James would stand side by side with the Chinese students in Beijing who struggled for democracy. He would be with us in our struggle against racism and economic inequality here in the United States. James will be remembered as a fighter for black freedom and democracy.

AFRO Welcomes Letters

The AFRO welcomes letters from its readers. Letters should be brief and must bear the writer's name and address. All letters will be given consideration for publication. Write:

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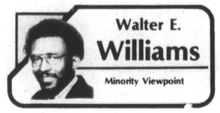

Walter E. **Williams**
Minority Viewpoint

Choice By Race

The civil rights establishment was shocked by three recent Supreme Court rulings regarding racial choice in the workplace.

Earlier this year the court invalidated Richmond, VAs 30 percent minority set-aside program in construction. In another, the High Court held that plaintiffs bear the burden of proof that employment practices which produce unequal racial results are discriminatory. In its latest decision, the court said, workers who were not part of a racial-consent decree could bring reverse discrimination suits.

Barry Goldstein, attorney for the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, lamented, "No job remedy for past discrimination is safe from challenge by a white or a male who thinks the remedy limited his job opportunities." Rep. Don Edwards, D-Calif., said, "This decision will open old wounds and create unfortunate new levels of racial animosity."

Nobody questions the fact that racial discrimination exists. It's one of the ugliest parts of our history. But *most* of it is just that: history. And like it or not, history cannot be changed. Equally important, a "remedy for past discrimination" is as discriminatory as the past discrimination.

Let's look at it. When the City of Richmond set aside 30 percent of all city construction contracts for blacks, it excluded whites from bidding on those contracts and hence reduced their opportunities. This is merely the other side of past racist policy whereby blacks were excluded from city contracts in part or altogether; it reduced their opportunities.

According to Rep. Edwards, the recent court decisions will "create unfortunate new levels of racial animosity."

Unfortunately, it doesn't occur to Edwards that today's quota policy may ignite new racial animosity. To appreciate some of the uglier effects of quota policy, we need only look at the thousands of lives lost in India, Sri Lanka and Malaysia.

Congressman Robert Smalls (1874-1886), Beaufort, S.C., said, "My race needs no special defense, for the past history of them in this country proves them to be the equal of any people anywhere. All they need is an equal chance in the battle of life." Unlike those in the civil rights establishment, I agree.

Many blacks have significant problems entering the mainstream of American life and enjoying its wealth, but racial discrimination has nothing to do with it, and quotas are not the solution.

In many metropolitan areas, thousands of jobs paying $4 to $9 an hour are going begging while poor people remain jobless. A large segment of the black community has been made immune to the traditional poverty cure — a rapidly growing and expanding economy.

According to the June 18 Philadelphia Inquirer, "Some people who find their way into the job-training programs say they do not know a single working adult."

At the heart of the problem is grossly fraudulent education. When black secretarial applicants show up at a law firm for a job interview, and cannot spell words like gentle, personality and minimum, it is not racial discrimination when they aren't hired.

Grossly fraudulent education will remain a barrier as long as black politicians and civil rights activists make the assumption that racial discrimination explains all, and mount attacks against tests and job qualifications as a racist tool designed for denial.

In my opinion, racial quotas are nearing the end of their political life. It's time we spent more effort in challenging some of the real barriers to upward mobility like education and the welfare mentality. Failing to do so will increase the human destruction that characterizes too many of our cities.

Distributed by Heritage Features Syndicate

John **Jacob**
To Be Equal

Minimum Wage Veto Unfair

On the same day that President Bush vetoed a minimum wage bill passed by Congress, the newspapers reported that Congressional and Administration experts were studying a proposal to cut the capital gains tax.

That puts the spotlight on the minimum wage as a fairness issue, at least as much as it is an economic issue. And if fairness is any test, Congress should override the veto.

The President was ill-advised in vetoing the bill. A higher minimum wage advances his vision of a "kinder, gentler nation," and the Administration should have been pushing for a higher wage. The President did support a raise in the minimum and only 30 cents an hour separates his proposal from that passed by Congress — hardly enough of a difference to go to the mat over.

The bill would have raised the current minimum of $3.35 per hour to $4.55 in three years. Even that would have left the legal minimum wage below family poverty levels.

The arguments against a higher minimum are long familiar — it would curtail job growth, it would benefit teen-agers who don't need the extra money, it would impose burdens on employers and make them less competitive. None of those arguments are persuasive.

No one disputes the fact that increasing employer payroll expenses would mean some lost jobs at the margin, but few economists think the toll would be more than 100,000 and many believe it would be less.

The teen worker argument is also flawed. Teen-agers make up only about a fourth of minimum wage workers. Two-thirds are women and almost four million are heads of households. About 4.5 million men, women and children live in families in poverty where the head works at the minimum wage. The minimum is so low that a full-time worker can work all year round and still be below the poverty line.

As for the competitive argument, if the minimum applies to all employers they'd still be competing on level ground, so that one won't wash either.

Balanced against the marginal negative effects of a higher minimum are major positives. Poor families with workers would have higher incomes. Teen-agers from low income families would be better able to help their families out of poverty.

And the biggest plus of all would be that the drift to greater inequality in incomes would be slowed. Our system would be more fair, and fairness is the bedrock of any system. Anyone who doubts that, need only look at the way the communist countries' leaders are being challenged because of the unfairness of their system.

Yet another flaw in the opposition to the higher minimum is the belief that it would ratchet wages up throughout the economy and fuel inflation.

In fact, the minimum wage — even the higher one passed by Congress — is too low to have a perceptible effect on inflation. And so many employers are exempted from the bill's requirements that most small businesses and non-profits would not have to pay it.

The market dictates higher wages anyway. The slowdown in the growth of the labor force has led many low-wage employers to boost their wages beyond even the new higher minimum. So opponents of the higher minimum are driven by ideology, not reality.

It is unconscionable to tell low-wage workers in poverty that their work shouldn't pay enough to let them climb above the poverty line, while at the same time pushing a measure that would let affluent taxpayers cash in on lower rates for capital gains.

Salute to Simeon Booker

By Carolyn DuBose

Journalists come and go. They strut and fret their hour upon the stage and then are heard no more. Not so, with Simeon Booker. The dean of black journalist in the nation's capital has unique staying power. With a record of 35 years as the Washington bureau chief of Johnson Publishing Company — publishers of **Ebony, Jet** and **Ebony Man** — he has outlasted seven U.S. president.

On a recent Saturday night, nearly 500 people packed the ballroom at the Hyatt-Regency Hotel, on Capitol Hill, in a "Salute to Simeon Booker." It was their way of thanking a man who has made a difference in their lives. Among his many fans were: Publisher John H. Johnson, Jesse Jackson, Dr. James Cheek, outgoing president of Howard University and CCN's Bernard Shaw.

It was Dr. Cheek who said to thunderous applause: "It is utterly impossible to imagine the United States of America without the Johnson Publishing Company. And, we certainly cannot imagine the Johnson Publishing Company without Simeon Booker."

Actually, he got his start in journalism at the Baltimore AFRO-AMERICAN Newspaper. A Baltimore native, Booker grew up in Youngstown, Ohio. He returned to work for his hometown paper after graduating from Union University in 1942. Publisher Carl Murphy and Booker's uncle, J. H. N. Waring, Jr., had been roommates at Harvard University.

Booker once said of Murphy: "No Black publisher was a greater believer in furnishing his readers first - hand reports from throughout the country and the world." As the only male on the city desk, Booker covered the crime beat at the police stations and the criminal court. He pointed out also that he had watched "some nine or 10 men hang by the neck until dead at the Maryland State Penitentiary."

Publisher Murphy had encouraged "front-line" journalism and covering hangings was part of Booker's training in obtaining a journalistic foothold. When Booker moved on to other jobs, he carried with him Carl Murphy's crusading style of journalism.

I believe that Simeon Booker has changed many of the perceptions that have created racial tensions in the past. He has diligently served as a "watchdog" for black Americans by monitoring administration policies and interpreting them for millions of readers.

What makes him more unique, is his willingness to try to affect change. He is never content to sit on the sidelines as an observer. By practicing front-line journalism, he has been able to prick the conscience of the nation. During the last four decades, the pioneering journalist has crisscrossed the country ferreting out injustices. In print, or on the air as a Group W commentator for Westinghouse Broadcasting Co. in the '60s and '70s, he constantly challenged the White House, the U.S. Congress and state and local governments.

When troubled spots erupted in the Deep South, he was often the first on the scene. Using the code name "SIMBO," he was able to make telephone contact with key sources without fear of detection. In the Carolinas, folk would hide him in their homes and drive him by night to get to his location.

He looked beyond his own personal safety to get the story. When 14-year-old Emmett Till was beaten and lynched in 1955, for allegedly whistling at a white woman in Money, Miss., Booker covered the trial of his accusers. The presence of then Rep. Charles C. Diggs, Jr. helped draw national attention to the dangerous living conditions in the South during those years.

In time, he rode in the rear of the bus covering the first Freedom Ride, marched with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in Selma and flew off to Little Rock, Ark., to write about the battle for school integration.

Whether it was traveling to Africa with VP Richard Nixon or VP Hubert Humphrey, he was sure to provide the same insightful coverage for both Republicans and Democrats.

Booker is a trailblazer. In 1950, he became the second black newspaperman to win a Nieman Fellowship to Harvard University. By 1952, he was hired at the Washington **Post** as the first, full - time black reporter. In 1982, the National Press Club presented him it's highest award. As the recipient of the Club's 1982 Fourth Estate Award, he joined Walter Cronkite and other distinguished journalists who have received the honor.

Even when his peers pay tribute to him, however, Booker prefers to keep a low profile. "I have always believed that a newsman covers the news; he doesn't make the news."

So, when friends and associates turned out to salute him the other night, it was "Vintage Simeon." After learning that a scholarship fund was being established, in his name, at the Howard University School of Communications, Booker requested that a change be made.

He asked that the fund be merged with the one already established at Howard for his late assistant, E. Fannie Granton. His additional request was for his longtime photographer, Maurice Sorrell, to be added to the merger.

That, to me, was Simeon Booker's finest hour.