# EDITORIALS

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THE VOICE OF BLACK AMERICA SINCE 1892

## Our children need help

AFRO staff writer Delfield S. Yoes, III's pertinent three-part series on teen-age pregnancy pointed to an urgent need for increased action regarding this problem and its devastating effect on our community.

We cannot be passive about our children having children they aren't emotionally nor financially equipped to raise.

The extra burden on the city and state resulting from far too many teen-age pregnancies is in the millions of dollars.

However, the cost to these young mothers and their children — and more to the fathers of the children — are steeper still.

Whatever dreams they have of living above a poverty-level existence at the least are unnecessarily deferred and too frequently are lost forever when they become unwed mothers.

In every home, in every school, in every place of business and recreation, and in every church men prevent pregnancies out-of-wedlock.

We cannot take solace in the fact that this problem is not one affecting only young black people. We know our community is disproportionately represented and we know that all our futures are disproportionately limited in some way by the problem.

We also know that the more of us involved in helping turn the situation around, the sooner it will happen. Find a way to help.

## Treated as if guilty

The inability of law enforcement officials to stem the tide of illegal drug use in this country has moved Maryland to join the federal government and a number of other states to compromise on the once-sacred position that an American citizen is presumed innocent of any crime until proven guilty.

As of the first of this month, Maryland has in force a civil forfeiture law, which means that the property of suspected drug dealers can be taken and sold without the suspects ever having been found guilty of a criminal act.

If a suspect can't prove money used to purchase property, automobiles or anything else, was come by legitimately, the accumulated wealth can be taken.

This is not the kind of justice citizens of this country have been accustomed to having meted out. It is easy to see why these kinds of laws that shift the burden of proof to defendants have been criticized by groups such as the Civil Liberties Union, the American Bar Association and the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers.

Already there is talk of taking these laws a step further so that law enforcement officials would be able to confiscate money paid to persons who sell things to suspected drug dealers.

In states like Michigan, which has had its law since 1982, there is an abundance of stories from law enforcement officials boasting about the homes, boats, luxury cars and other things they have taken from suspects.

Unfortunately, the boasting does not include the claim that this new type of treatment of a special class of defendants has done anything to stem the flow of drugs.

If this continues to be the case, are we to expect to see further compromises of what was once considered a sacred right of citizens suspected of being involved in criminal conduct?

To its credit, Maryland at least requires all is civil forfeiture actions to go through a court and it calls for a criminal conviction before a suspect can lose a primary residence. Also, unlike the laws in some other areas, confiscated wealth in Maryland goes into general fund accounts rather than directly to law enforcement authorities.

As much as we approve the idea of taking the profit out of the illegal drug business, the comprising of citizens' rights are not to be taken lightly.

## Don't burn flag or cross

Del. Walter Fauntroy (D. DC) who is also a minister, declares that if a bill is introduced in the U.S. Congress to ban the burning of the American flag, he will add an amendment forbidding the burning of the cross. That makes sense to us.

The American flag is a patriotic symbol — the national standard — to people only in the United States.

The cross, on the other hand is a compassionate symbol for religious people — the emblem of Christianity, a symbolic representation of the instrument of punishment on which Christ died. It is recognized not just in the United States but around the world.

Burning of the cross is usually done by hate groups...in modern times it has been done by white supremacists to tell black folks they cannot live in a certain neighborhood or to prevent blacks from fighting for their civil rights. As recent as last year, crosses were burned on lawns in Prince George's County.

Hate groups like the Ku Klux Klan ignore the Christianity aspect of this wonderful, compassionate symbol as they pour on gasoline to start the cross to burn. They use the cross to spit out their hate because they know this symbol is revered and respected.

Around the world the cross has many names — Papal Cross, Celtic Cross, Maltese Cross etc., but the cross most used for burning is usually the Latin Cross which most resembles the cross on which Jesus Christ was crucified. In this cross, the cross bar was put near the top so that the arms of Jesus Christ could be stretched wide and his hands nailed down...the Latin Cross has the upright longer than the beam which crosses it near the top.

To burn the cross or the flag is an act of defiance ignoring the sacredness of these symbols.

Usually those doing the burning of the flag are people seeking publicity for a cause. Those who burn the cross are sick, weak minded persons who survive on terrorism.

Ministers throughout the land should heed Cong. Fauntroy's call and join him in urging that if the U.S. Congress wants to prevent the burning of any symbol, the first priority should be the cross and then secondly, the flag.

Parren J. Mitchell
Former U.S. Rep.

## Working for the Nation of Islam

After I had gotten my clothes out of the cleaners, I could not get my car started. I began walking West on North Avenue to a filling station about six blocks away.

As I walked past the Nation of Islam Recruitment Center, a clean-cut young man asked what I was doing walking on that hot day. I explained I had car trouble, and he said, "Don't worry Sir, we will get you started." He went into the Nation of Islam, returned immediately with another neatly dressed young man and another more mature man.

I got in their van and they drove me to where my car was parked about four or five blocks away. They had to push my car to another spot where they could work on it. They tried for about a half hour but could not get me started. The more mature man got in the van and said he would be right back.

While awaiting his return, I talked with the two young men on that hot, steamy corner. Each time they spoke to me they addressed me as "Sir." Laughingly, I told them everyone calls me "P.J." or "Parren", and they could do the same. "Sir, we are taught to respect our elders," they said.

The van returned with a mechanic, also a Muslim, who patiently stripped the corrosion off my battery, and I got started. When I attempted to pay them, they resisted saying, "We are taught to help our fellow man and we do not expect to be paid for it." I insisted, and they reluctantly accepted a contribution to the movement.

One evening the next week. I went back to the Nation of Islam Recruitment Center because I wanted to thank them more properly.

Ever young man in the Center was neatly dressed, polite and intense.

I went in a back room and talked with them for about an hour, posing questions and responding to their questions.

I talked about my visit to the Maryland House of Corrections last year, when the end of Ramadan was celebrated. It was dramatic to watch their fierce dedication to their faith.

Hundreds of men said prayers to Allah and they knelt, facing towards Mecca, almost touching the floor with their heads at times. This was not play acting, this was not a sham.

Many correctional authorities have spoken of the discipline of the Muslim inmates. "If they are so disciplined, why are they in prison in the first place," you may ask. The answer is, of course, that most embraced the faith with its discipline after they were incarcerated.

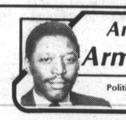
We talked about the remarkable transformation in Malcolm X after his return from Mecca. He embraced a new humanism, and I expect that is why he was assassinated.

I opened the door to a discussion about some small groups which purport to be followers of Allah but who are clearly exploiting the faith. They would not criticize any of the groups I mentioned, but from their eyes and gestures, it was clear they held nothing but contempt for such groups.

I told them I could not accept a practice of hatred towards any group. The Holy man of Moslem said it well during his visit to Maryland. "Hatred towards none, love for all." I can no more accept a doctrine or hatred than I could accept a theory of racial inferiority or racial superiority.

Look for these young men. They are everywhere and you can't miss them. Look for the always neatly dressed young men in their dark suits and bowties. Look for these young men who are unfailingly polite as they proselytize their faith. Oh! How I wish all of our young men dressed and acted as they do.

You may not like the idea of the Nation of Islam, but you must respect these young men for their dress, their demeanor and their self-discipline. They are the best of a movement.



Anthony Armstrong
Political Consultant

## No more 'wolf' tickets

It started out with the selling of "wolf tickets." First Kurt then Willie Don, then Kurt again; back and forth it went. Then the drugs conference and the outcome was not very pretty; but still it was just words.

Now the whole matter has escalated and the real fight — RING — has begun. What the people must be made to understand is the immense power and responsibility inherent in the Office of the Governor of the state of Maryland.

With the suit just filed by the state of Maryland against Baltimore — a suit that would not have been filed without the Governor's approval — what was an ugly exchange of words has now resulted in a financial broken jaw for the city.

The $1,000-a-day fine for sewage backups at the Back River Waste Water Treatment Plant is no small happening, either politically or financially.

With the action, the governor has made it clear that he is the chief executive of the entire state, with a long-standing commitment to Baltimore City.

For many local chief executives to allow things to go this far shows a serious lack of appreciation for the structural differences — to say nothing of political realities — built into their respective responsibilities.

To go further, the Back River action, in reality, has sent a signal to Baltimore County that it and its chief executive need the governor too. What does this do to regionalism, the much talked about strategy for helping Baltimore City out of the hole?

A mayor must find ways to work with a governor in order to secure the means to provide basic government services to the citizens under his governance. Back River shows an ignorance that is now causing the people of Baltimore to pay the tab.

Suits among sub-division, say, Baltimore County vs. Baltimore City, are not uncommon. However, when the state intercedes on behalf of a sub-division this is clearly more than just legal rangling, but an obvious flexing of political muscle. When a lion and an antelope fight the antelope loses. The antelope that is Baltimore ought to stay away from lions.

Okay, the suit has been filed. What now in the way of solutions? It shouldn't have to be said that the solution to this problem goes further than the clean up of the Back River waste treatment facility. The city will settle the law suit, but will we be able to clean up the bigger rift between Baltimore and the state.

The state has an announced surplus of almost a half billion dollars; all sub-divisions except Baltimore seem to be moving prosperously along. Surrounded by all these riches Baltimore sorely needs to be reconnected to the vital source in Annapolis.

How do we reconnect and who will do the reconnecting? It is certain that a reconnection has to happen for the good of the entire state. The port is here, most of the state's major cultural institutions are here, its medical and educational giants are located mostly in Baltimore.

Even when abroad the name most recognized is not Maryland. Outside of Maryland, Baltimore is our flagship, but at home we're increasingly treated like an old relic. In contrast, Venice, Italy is ancient but revered by all who know of her.

In recent years old cities all over the world have been lovingly revitalized by the smart governments who understand their importance. The solutions have not always come from governmental leaders who see eye to eye. The separate parts have been maintained for the benefit of the whole.

Baltimore in Maryland should be no different. Here, the difference lies in the people doing the governing. Like it or not to deal effectively with the state; because today's technology can see the replacing of the real heart with an artificial one.

One thing is for sure, any local leader must find ways to work effectively with the state's leadership. To not do so puts Baltimore in a position that is forever no-win. Fact is, we may be looking at an unreparable situation given the current administrations.

If this is so, where does that leave Baltimore and its citizens? Only the voters can determine the answer to this question. Politics requires that choices be made between our like for any individual versus our need for solutions that serve Baltimore's interest — and thus that of Maryland.

Let's stop this selling of "wolf tickets."



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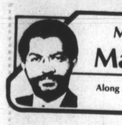
# COMMENTARY & OPINIONS



Manning Marable
Along The Color Line

## Black liberation radio

Most oppressed people throughout the world are not controlled primarily by force. Usually, they are denied accurate information by the media or their government, which helps to perpetuate misinformation and political acquiescence. A people kept ignorant can be politically manipulated.

In recent weeks, for example, when Chinese students and workers took to the streets in Beijing, the Chinese government used the state-controlled media to keep the masses in line. The vast majority of the one billion Chinese peasants and workers in the countryside have no access to accurate information.

In the United States, we like to say that we have "freedom of the press." In truth, there is only freedom for those who own the press. Although there are nearly 30 million African-Americans, we have fewer than 300 black - owned weekly newspapers. Most black - oriented radio stations broadcast little information which can mobilize the community or provide political education. And the vast majority of white - owned media sources discourage any substantive reporting which targets police brutality against non-whites, or focuses on unemployment, poverty and institutional racism. In short, the oppressed must find ways to develop their own sources of communication.

In Springfield, Illinois, Dewayne Readus, a blind and unemployed African - American, concluded that this neighborhood needed a local source of information which favored the interests of black people. In December, 1987, with an initial investment of under $600, Readus initiated Radio Station WTRA-FM, a low-watt station which had a signal reaching one and one half miles. The station was based in Readus' apartment inside Springfield's John Hay Public Housing Project.

Within months, Readus's programs reached up to three - fourths of the local African - American community. WTRA-FM featured black music, but also included commentary programs discussing political and social issues. Readus's radio commentary criticized local housing authority officials, and discussed local cases of police brutality. Victims of police harassment were guests on the station's programs.

Within the hard-hitting format, Readus also sought to train young African - Americans in conducting radio interviews and running the equipment. Although WTRA - FM had only one watt of power, it had become a voice for black liberation for Springfield.

It was inevitable that Readus's activities would come under political scrutiny by those in power. Several months ago, the Springfield Police Department initiated an investigation of the station by the Federal Communications Commission. The FCC inspector visited the station, and demanded to see a "valid radio station license."

Readus replied correctly that there was no U.S. law requiring the licensing of FM radio stations which have less than 100 watts of power. The inspector attempted to intimidate Readus, implying that the radio equipment was possibly "contraband." The police were called in, and Readus charged with an FCC violation which carries penalties of up to $10,000 or one year in jail. The station was shut down.

Millions of dollars are spent for "Radio Free Europe" which promotes U.S. propaganda. The corporations spend billions here in this country to get black consumers to purchase their products. Yet when a single African - American exercises his rights to produce a media source dedicated to black liberation, the government and police respond with repressive measures.

Readus observed: "If we just talked about how great things were going, we'd still be on the air. But because we said that things aren't so great around here, they shut us down." DeWayne Readus and other sisters and brothers like him deserve our support, in the battle to liberate black minds.

*Dr. Manning Marable teaches political science at the University of Colorado. "Along the Color Line" appears in over 140 newspapers internationally.*

**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:

**Baltimore Afro-American**
**628 N. Eutaw Street**
**Baltimore, Maryland 21201**

Walter E. Williams
Minority Viewpoint

## Cong. miracles and their victims

In the play, "Green Pastures," God says to the Angel Gabriel, "Everytime I pass a miracle, I have to pass three or four more to catch up with it." Miracles may pose problems for God, but at least He's aware. Congress and the White House, however, blithefully hop from miracle to miracle ignorant or uncaring about their side effects. Let's take a close-up look at a miracle.

In 1984, Voluntary Restraint Agreements (VRA) that limit the import of steel were established. They will expire this September unless they are renewed. President George Bush hinted that he'd support their continuation unless foreign governments stop subsidizing steel producers.

The benefit of VRA on the importation of foreign steel that the White House and Congress point to is the saving of as many as 17,000 jobs in the U.S. steel industry.

But you and I know there's no such thing as a free lunch. So what is the cost of this benefit? According to Bryan Johnson, a member of the research staff at the Washington-based Heritage Foundation, the Voluntary Restraint Agreement on steel imports since 1984 has cost an estimated 37,200 U.S. jobs.

Here's how it happened. As our steel producers wanted, the VRA enabled domestic producers to raise their prices. That meant American firms who use steel — auto, consumer appliance and heavy equipment manufacturers — had to pay higher prices for their inputs. When input prices rise, manufacturers have to charge higher prices. As a result, consumers purchase less, and companies hire fewer workers than they otherwise would. Therefore, job losses in steel-using industries are estimated at 54,200; jobs saved in the steel industry are 17,000. The net job loss is 37,200.

As God lamented to Gabriel that one miracle forces him to produce another is the same dilemma facing Congress and the White House. According to Timothy Elder, an executive of Caterpillar Inc., steel accounts for 15 to 20 percent of its production costs. He says, "We and our workers are paying the price for protecting the U.S. steel through higher prices and shortages of steel." Caterpillar has lost sales to Japanese, South Korean, and West European manufacturers because of higher steel prices.

So here's what tends to happen. A steel-using company will go to Congress or the White House and say, "You know that miracle you created for the steel industry? It created a non-miracle for me. Please create a miracle for me."

If enough pressure is applied, the politicians will acquiesce. After all, for politicians, creating a new miracle is easier than eliminating a past miracle. But the new miracle will result in another non-miracle. If import restrictions are placed on tractors, thus raising their price, farmers will be hurt, and they'll be in Washington demanding a miracle. And the story goes on and on.

The blame for the reduced level of American competitiveness lies squarely at the foot of Congress. Congress, through import restrictions raised the cost of inputs. Congress wrote the tax laws that reduce savings and discriminate against capital formation. But greater culpability lies with us — Americans who focus our attention on congressional trivia like pay raises.

The way I see it, our country would be immensely better off if congressmen were each paid $3 million a year on the condition they never set foot in Washington.

**Distributed by Heritage Features Syndicate**

## REPRESENTATIVE GUS HAWKINS:

## Democracy has problems, too

Like just about everyone else, I was stirred by the resurgence of democratic movements breaking out throughout the communist world.

After years of police state oppression, citizens of the U.S.S.R. actually voted in relatively free elections, heard free and frank discussions of political issues, including open criticism of their leaders, and watched television proceedings of their new Congress that included blasts at the secret police and other previous untouchables.

In Poland, the regime allowed free elections that demonstrated overwhelming support for democracy and rejection of communist rule.

And in China, millions of workers and students, through peaceful, non-violent demonstrations, exposed their rulers as having little popular support — which was confirmd by the brutal, bloody suppression of the democracy protests.

While the tanks may have won in the short-term, the long-term prognosis suggests that the popular demands for democracy will ultimately triumph.

But while I've been moved by this worldwide outbreak of democracy, I'm also bothered by the smugness with which so many Americans have reacted.

Editorials and think pieces, television commentators and politicians, have all weighed in with self-satisfied statements about how American democracy is the model for the whole world, and about the failure of communism to achieve a decent living standard.

They're all saying — look at us, we're the way to go, take our political system and our economic theories as the example for your own countries.

I agree that the American model is one example countries might take as they emerge from political dictatorship and economic mismanagement. But it's not the only one.

Sweden and other countries have managed to combine political democracy and economic prosperity without slavishly following the American model.

So let's not get too arrogant — we're good, but so are others. And the American model has some flaws that other countries have to think twice about before rushing to adopt.

In equality here is more pronounced than in most other western nations. Unemployment is high — at Depression levels for African Americans. Our education system is a mess, especially in its failure to train the disadvantaged. Crime and drugs are rampant. Racism is entrenched in too many aspects of our national life.

Sure, the system works well enough for most people, but how many Poles or Russians would embrace a model that provides much less social services and employment security than others?

And how good a model can we be, if our inner cities are rotting, if homelessness is widespread, and if nearly 40 million people have no access to health care?

Such questions may be irrelevant to people who have to share apartments, stand in line for hours to buy a pair of shoes, or live in constant fear of the secret police.

But they are very relevant to Americans who truly want their nation and their society to be a flawless model for the rest of the world.

I take little satisfaction in the fact that my country has more freedom and a better economic system than to China, Poland and the U.S.S.R. I think more of myself and of my country than to compare my society with politically and economically backward nations.

The real comparison should be with what American democracy ought to be; with how much better we can become, with how much more we have to do to make our system work for each and every American.

Les Payne
Educator

## Hypocrisy of the Fourth

This July 4 season, it is amazing how patriots repulsed by the stuff of independence are enthralled by its cloth symbols. Some who applaud the Supreme Court's recent torching of affirmative action, for instance, hits at the court's application of First Amendment protection to the misguided among us who wish to protest by burning the flag.

By narrowing the civil rights measures, the court further delayed, if it didn't reverse, the drift toward fulfilling the promise of liberty and justice for those citizens whose forebears were brought to these shores on slave ships. Before the court's recent decisions, the law had held out to blacks and other victims the hope for the suppression of injustice in the workplace.

Unfortunately, such hard - fought measures are still needed, at this late date, to extend to blacks the full coverage of the Bill of Rights, the Constitution and its Preamble. The blow the court struck against civil rights will hamper this unique nation's evolution toward its promise of greatness.

The flag, at bottom, is but a neutral rectangle of cotton cloth stitched into a pattern of dyed stars and stripes. It can be as easily honored as it is exploited. The heroic take refuge in Old Glory, but so do the scum on the make.

John Walker, who enlisted his entire family in his Russian spy enterprise, damaged his country's security as much as any modern spy. Until his discovery Walker was respected by neighbors as a patriot who flew the flag in front of his home. Flag camouflage is employed by other spies, Mafiosi and anarchists.

The flag is all too often accepted as proof enough of one's commitment to the ideals expressed in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. It certainly seemed sufficient for talk-show hosts and callers in recent weeks. While praising the Supreme Court's attack against civil rights, they damned its concession to symbolic free speech.

This is like an army sentry who, after allowing a division of enemy troops to sneak past his post, springs to the alarm when a peasant woman wanders by with a baby in her arms.

The flag, true enough, is different things to different people, but in a free society it should not be made into a graven image. National monuments, be they of granite, steel or concrete, should not, of course, be defaced or desecrated. But the reproduced image of a national symbol, whether handmade or purchased in a gift shop, should belong to individuals to do with as they please so long as they do no harm to others.

There are countries, Turkey being one of them, where to treat with public disrespect the national currency, bearing the portrait of the national hero, is to commit a criminal act. There are others, Iran being one, where to issue a public insult against the generally accepted prophet is to be targeted with a hit contract.

If the image of the national flag is to be made holy, then why not the eagle? The sitting president? The motto? The national flower? The dollar bill?

What amuses about this flag furor is that it emanates from a people who focus only on the good or at least the heroic deeds done under its mast. Never is this carrying-on more inflated than on the Fourth of July. This Despite the reality of the hypocrisy from the country's very beginning.

"While (the founding fathers) were making the clearest assertions of the rights of man," Frederick Douglass, the great black abolitionist, once wrote, "the identical men who drew up the Declaration of Independence and framed the American democratic Constitution were trafficking in the blood and souls of their fellow men!"

Interestingly, the more enlightened African - Americans are sensitive to their countrymen's duplicity on current issues as they were on the slave issue years ago. No one was more lucid on that issue than Douglass in his famous Fouth of July speech, which before now I have refrained from quoting during this season. In this 1852 speech in Rochester, N.Y., Douglass struck a note that resounds somewhat today:

"I am not included within the pale of this glorious anniversary. The rich inheritance of justice, liberty, prosperity and independence is shared by you, not me. This Fourth of July is yours, not mine. You may rejoice. I must mourn.

"What, to the American slave, is your Fourth of July? I answer: A day that reveals to him, more than all other days of the year, the gross injustices and cruelty to which he is the constant victim. To him your celebration is a sham. To him your sounds of rejoicing are empty and heartless; your denunciation of tyrants, impudence; your shouts of liberty and equality, mockery. Your prayers and hymns, your sermons and thanksgivings, with all your religious parades and solemnity, are to him mere bombast, fraud, deception, impiety, and hypocrisy — a thin veil to cover up crimes which would disgrace a nation of savages. For revolting barbarity and shameless hypocrisy, America reigns without a rival!

"You profess to believe that 'of one blood God made all nations on men to dwell on the face of all the earth'—and hath commanded all men, everywhere, to love one another — yet you notoriously hate (and glory in your hatred!) all men whose skins are not colored like your own!"

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