EDITORIALS

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THE VOICE OF BLACK AMERICA SINCE 1892

The hanging of Hastings

If you are one of those persons who gets mad easily don't watch on C-Span II the impeachment trial of Judge Alcee Hastings or attend the hearings in the Senate Hart Building. For if you do you will soon see blood red and scream "hanging."

Yes, here in these United States a District Court judge from Florida is being tried by the U.S. Senate after a jury of his peers has said in 1983 he is not guilty of bribery and corruption.

And to make matters worst,he was found guilty of bribery and corruption by the House of Representative subcommittee on criminal justice headed by black Cong. John Conyers (D. Mich) —and you have to ask, what political games are being played here?

Conyers said it was the most difficult decision he had to make when his committee voted 7-0 to recommend Hastings expulsion. They found him guilty on 17 counts of "high crimes and misdemeanors." Politicians say this decision has put Conyers in the history books with a big question mark (?)

The Rev. Jesse Jackson has said that what congress is doing is "unfair and unjust" according to our constitution.

All you have to do is think about the slap on the hand guilty Oliver North and Edward Meese got — to name a few — and you know that if Hastings were white this would not happen.

Thank God for Cable television. Now most of the upstanding legal minds in the country can see these senators try desperately to make a case out of one that doesn't exist. And legal minds throughout the world are saying with disgust that something is wrong in these United States of America if this is what they call justice.

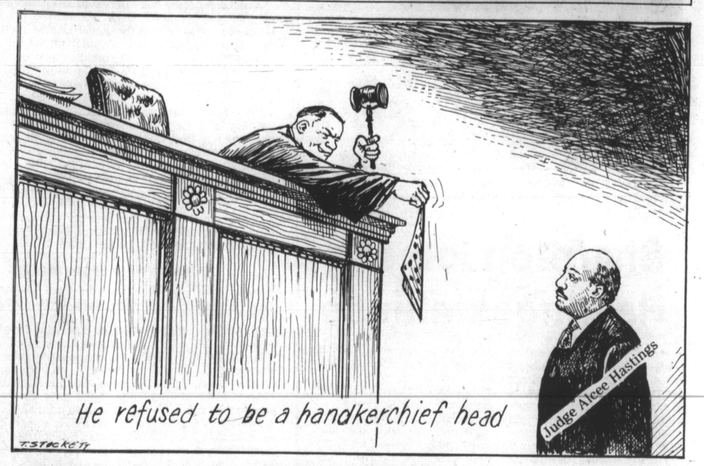
And there are many other people who believe that Judge Hastings is innocent. They are the ones who have sent their money to his defense fund including the Florida NAACP, members of the National Bar Association, the National Newspaper Publishers Association and the National Association of Black Social Workers.

Judge Hastings, the first black to be appointed to the bench in Southern Florida, has said that he would not get a fair hearing in the Senate. He has said that the hearings are a personal vendetta against him because he refused to be a handkerchief head.

When you watch the hearings on C-Span you see a Judge Hastings — black and proud — unbent by the weight of these many trials and congressional hearings.

Certainly, Judge Hastings could have taken the easy way out and resigned from the bench. We are glad he didn't. This one District judge has shown the world that there are blacks in the United States who are willing to stand up for their rights even if they have to fight members of their own race in the U.S. Congress.

But the bottom line is that if our elected officials are allowed to commit this hanging of one of our outstanding citizens like Judge Alcee Hastings,imagine what these same officials will do to poor people around the world.



G. James Fleming
Public Affairs Commentator

Bermuda Not Exactly Paradise

This is one confession that we'll never forget.

Some 40 years ago, one of our students at Morgan State University, returned at the end of summer and related, sadly, his experience: He said:

"I had become filled up, discouraged and depressed over racial discrimination and segregation in America. I wanted to find some place where race and color were not used against me.

"The more I griped, the more I heard that things were different in Brazil, that being black was no handicap there. So, I got a job as a seaman on a Brazilian ship, in order to get to visit the 'paradise.'

"But, I was disappointed," the student continued. "I found that in Brazil, too, the black man is on the bottom ... It seems that everywhere we are on the bottom ... It is as if white people everywhere have a National Association for the Advancement of White People."

* * *

So much for Brazil, but not so for Bermuda, according to reports. Down the years Bermuda was believed to be one of the most enlightened spots, interracially speaking, in all the Americas.

But, not necessarily so, we have come to learn, thanks, a few days ago, to Tom and Gwendolyn Mickle, who on a recent trip sent us newspapers of Bermuda. Result: We have learned a thing or two about current life there.

In a front page, top-of-page, story with banner headline, the Royal Gazette screamed, "Mentor Needed for Young Blacks," in which a young senator laments on the lack of opportunity for young native black Bermudians to learn the rudiments of commerce and trade.

"There are a very few people from our particular race participating in international business," Senator Lynda Milligan-Whyte told her fellow-senators, in a veiled reference to blacks.

"This is something the whole community should not just pay lip service to and we have to decide what structural problems exist ... Just giving young people a job and letting them sink or swim is not enough," she stressed. "You have to have the mechanism in place so if they want to succeed, they can."

Senator Milligan-Whyte took issues with white-owned and white-run firms from a "network" of companies which monopolize the services offered to international corporations...

These firms were established by whites 30 and 40 years ago and their control is still monopolized by whites.

In rebuttal, some of the business people explain that it is not a matter of white and black, "only a question of commercial promotion."

But, Senator Milligan-Whyte, a successful member of an interracial law firm, sees it just the opposite.

Perhaps the senator was also aware of the case of the Oasis Nightclub, whose manager refused to seat one Kent Simmons, a Bermudian, because he was "local"; that means because he was black. "I don't need business from local people," were the exact words of the Oasis manager. He caters only to tourists, American tourists, he meant to say.

"What is needed on the part of our successful businesses," Senator Milligan-Whyte concluded," is to have individuals who can mentor the younger people coming along," herself the beneficiary of a mentor relationship in her rise in the law.

The issues raised by the senator are applicable not only to Bermuda. Her speech can be mde all over the Caribbean, in the U.S., Virgin Islands and yes, in Brazil, also.

And, lest we forget, the record of the USA is right alongside Bermuda when it comes to the persistent pockets of racism which exist here, there and everywhere, especially in reference to opportunities in the business world.

Kweisi Mfume
U.S. Congressman

Few minorities in foreign service

The Reagan Administration had no will to correct any minority representation problem and his legacy in the Supreme Court bodes ill for the future of civil rights in America as recent Court rulings have further eroded any incentive that the public sector might take in leading the way and setting an example for the private sector in hiring and promoting minorities.

The foreign service is widely (and correctly) perceived as a "white male elitist" institution and little is being done to correct this reality. Job opportunities in the near future are severely limited while leadership posts remain ever remote for minorities.

Chronic causes of rare minority representation in the foreign service include a dearth of role models for guidance, no formal (or even informal) mentorship program, job insecurity, slow promotions, poor assignments, absence of a recruitment plan or educational policy and the denial of viable managerial assignments, a prerequisite for leadership posts.

Until systemic racism is defeated there are a number of approaches that the interested student can pursue.

Minority undergraduates should understand that international relations is not confined to the diplomatic corps, but also to international business, finance, academia, development and agriculture.

Minority students interested in the foreign service or international relations career should develop excellent written and oral communication skills, as well as course work in economics, finance, liberal arts, world cultures, languages and participate in exchange programs, internships and leadership training.

Personally, minority students should develop the ability to project the societal norms and patterns of behavior which pervade the United States while realizing the assumptions of Eurocentric teachings pervasive in most American educational institutions.

Plans are now being finalized for a follow up meeting at Lincoln University of Pennsylvania with my fellow panelists Lincoln University President, Niara Sudarkasa, president Johnnetta Cole of Spelman College and TransAfrica Director, Randell Robinson to further discuss the educational needs of Africa - American students in preparation for a career in the foreign service or international relations.

Americans of African descent have been members of the foreign service since emancipation. These rare appointments were made exclusively to African capitals; the exception in the western hemisphere is Haiti's capital.

In 1958, Clifton R. Wharton, a Baltimorean, was the first black appointed to head diplomatic mission outside of Haiti or Africa by serving in Romania.

Throughout the world African - Americans continue to serve in a wide variety of posts, nevertheless, we are grossly underrepresented.

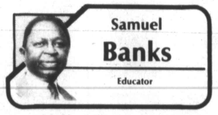
Available data indicates that government, universities, think-tanks, foundations and private representation overseas do not reflect the ethnic diversity of the United States.

I recently participated in a panel discussion on Capitol Hill sponsored by TransAfrica on increasing minority participation in the foreign policy process.

TransAfrica's eighth annual Foreign Policy Conference panel was entitled, "Blacks in Foreign Affairs: The Role in Education."

The major cause of the dearth of minorities in the foreign service is the absence of a consistent recruiting policy and commitment from Executive Branch agencies.

This was especially true under the Reagan Administration in contrast to President Carter's often stated goal and genuine efforts to actively increase the numbers and visibility of blacks in the foreign service.



Samuel Banks
Educator

1st Amendment and flag burning

The recent decision of the U.S. Supreme Court affirming the right of citizens, as an expression of political dissent, to burn an American flag has been the occasion for national tumult, obstreperousness and expansive jeremiads and denunciations of the Courts' ruling.

While I certainly do not condone or support flag burning or trashing, I do believe, as set forth by the Supreme Court, however distasteful it may be to others, that a citizen does have the right as a first amendment guarantee and protection to burn an American flag as a part of legitimate political protest.

The First Amendment is quite clear as to the constitutional guarantees available to all 250 million of us as citizens. It states: *"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment or religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances."*

There is an enormous danger inherent in tampering with the Constitution or seeking to amend it based on some emotional predilection or disagreement with persons who seek, through the rule of law and conscience, to express political dissent.

The fact that our national Constitution has been amended only 26 times since the establishment of our nation indicates that the rule of reason, not emotionalism, has prevailed.

The other aspect of the loquacious and vociferous opponents of the Supreme Court's decision respecting the burning of the flag as an act of political expression is that there is a deadening silence on the part of these persons germane to recent Supreme Court decisions that will have a very adverse impact on Black and minority citizens and women enjoying equality of opportunity and affirmative action protection in the work place.

One, too, wonders where many of these persons who now are incensed about the Supreme Court's decision on the flag were when black churches were being bombed and children and adults killed, crosses were burned as an expression of hate and terror and a general mood and posture of hostility to Black, Hispanic, and poor citizens prevailed.

The tragic and lugubrious reality is that, even now, more crosses are burned in our nation than flags.

It is disconcerting and highly unfortunate that President George Bush has endorsed the proposition of a constitutional amendment to reverse the Supreme Court's decision.

I believe it would have been far more salutary and supportive of President Bush's pledge of a "gentler and kinder America" if he would exert more energy, vigor, and vision in support of equal human and civil rights of all 250 million citizens in our nation.

As people line up, pro and con, on visceral, substantive and pivotal issues affecting their welfare and issues, we, too, as black citizens must speak up and support our interests.

In this conjunction, I am highly pleased with the "Save Another Youth" project that the Reverend Willie Ray has launched across the city in conjunction with the Baltimore Coalition to Stop the Killing.

Reverend Ray, a very versatile and respected native Baltimorean, has interrupted his theological studies in Boston to head the Save Another Youth (i.e., SAY) project.

In view of the escalating number of drug-related deaths, incarceration and fragmented families in such urban centers as Baltimore, New York, Philadelphia, Newark, New Jersey, Richmond and Norfolk, Virginia, Chicago, Detroit, among others.

Save Another Youth, as an expression of community solidarity, respect and unity, has made plans for a massive "Love Hands Across Baltimore" in early August.

Just as people voice their opinions regarding the Supreme Court's decision relative to the First Amendment rights, we, as in the case of the Save Another Youth project and related endeavors, must be about the business of caring, sharing, and doing for ourselves.

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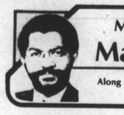
COMMENTARY & OPINIONS



Manning Marable
Along The Color Line

No glory for Old Glory

One of the most controversial Supreme Court decisions in years was the recent ruling which protected the protest act of burning the American flag as a protected form of free speech.

By a narrow five-to-four majority, the high court declared that the flag burning may be a detestable act, but it is nevertheless an expressive conduct protected by the First Amendment to the Constitution.

"We do not consecrate the flag by punishing its desecration," declared the court, "for in doing so we dilute the freedom that this cherished emblem represents."

Significantly, the ruling was supported by two conservative justices appointed by former President Reagan.

The politicians scaled the heights of political demagoguery in denouncing the Supreme Court's decision.

In last year's presidential election, George Bush utilized the phony issue of mandating the pledge of allegiance in schools to smear Democratic challenger Michael Dukakis as 'unpatriotic."

Bush was quick to declare his criticism of the recent ruling, stating his "personal, emotional" belief that "flag burning is dead wrong."

In a rare display of bipartisan unity, Republicans and Democrats clamored to display their patriotism. House Speaker Tom Foley declared that "Americans look on the burning of the American flag with abhorrence, and it is deeply offensive to virtually all Americans, and it will be a difficult matter for them to understand how it can be justified under any circumstances."

Republican Congressman Ron Marlenee of Montana reminded his colleagues of the flag-bearing soldiers depicted at the Marine Corps memorial and declared that "those six brave soldiers were symbolically shot in the back."

Democratic Congressman Doug Applegate fummed that the justice had "humiliated" the flag, and wondered aloud, "Are they going to allow fornication in Times Square at high noon?"

Should the public burning of "Old Glory," the stars and stripes, merit a prison sentence?

More than two out of three Americans polled oppose the Supreme Court's insistence that First Amendment rights of those who reject the government and its flag had to be preserved.

Nevertheless, the high court's ruling was correct, although I would advance different reasons to preserve the right of those who choose to destroy the flag as a form of political protest.

The flag is not symbolic of the heritage of the entire people, but rather a civil icon of the fededral government. Should any state punish dissenters for attacking symbols of the government as an act of protest?

Suppose Soviet dissents gathered in Moscow's red square and burned the government's red flag? If Soviet authorities imprisoned the protestors, the same American politicians in both parties would demagogically insist upon the release of the prisoners.

If pro-Contra demonstrators burned the Sandinista flag in Managua, Nicaragua, Buchanan would be praising them. Why is the American flag any different?

No government should have the right to imprison or punish those who reflect its banners or symbols, whether the icons are stars and stripes, or hammers and sickles.

Where do you draw the line in prohibiting legitimate protest? A constitutional amendment could be passed to outlaw the burning of the flag. Would artists' paintings which used the flag in a critical manner also be forbidden?

Perhaps there would be a demand to outlaw any political demonstrations which burned models of the statue of liberty, or photographs of the president.

Within a few years, we might be jailed for writing letters to newspapers which criticized U.S. policies.

What does Old Glory really represent to millions of Americans who have experienced racism, unemployment, poverty, and homelessness? The stars and stripes flew over slave markets where black families were permanently divided.

It was unfurled at the massacre of Wounded Knee in 1890, when hundreds of Native Americans were slaughtered. It flew from public buildings which were segregated by law for decades.

The flag was carried into illegal and immoral military operations from Vietnam to Grenada.

There's no glory in Old Glory for those who have been deliberately denied the American Dream. And as long as equality and justice are illusions for millions of people, the flag will be an ironic reminder of absence of real democracy in this country.

Protestors who burn the flag, however, do not advance the struggle for democracy, because they create easy and emotional targets for public outrage.

Instead of burning the flag, we need to challenge the political system it represents in order to achieve economic opportunity and social justice for all.

Walter E. Williams
Minority Viewpoint

Congress has failed again

The average American has neither the time nor the energy to fully protect himself from his government. Politicians know this very well and like criminals seeing unguarded banks, they are only too anxious, ready, and willing to exploit the situation.

Study the facial expressions of politicians talking about the savings and loans crisis. In each case, you'll see a concerned, good-guy, butter-wouldn't-melt-in-his-mouth, let-us-make-it-right expression.

The same devious look that Sylvester the cat sports as he protests to his mistress that he hasn't molested Tweetie Pie, the bird.

In the March newsletter of the Washington-based Institute for Research on the Economics of Taxation, Michael Schuyler says, "The government fostered an S&L industry that made long-term loans, mostly for housing, on a base of short-term deposits." That is an asset-to-liability mismatch begging for trouble.

In the 1970s, Congress developed fiscal and monetary policy that brought about a rapid inflation rate. This contributed to a massive outflow of short-term deposits because Congress had set interest rate ceilings that S&Ls could pay depositors.

In the face of this bungling, Congress changed regulations and allowed S&Ls to make investments formerly prohibited while the Federal Savings and Loan Corporation (FSLIC) continued to provide deposit insurance "regardless of the investments' riskiness."

That's like mandating that auto insurance companies charge safe and unsafe drivers the same premium.

Dr. Schuyler reports that most S&Ls behaved prudently. Indeed most (80 percent) are solvent, and over 70 percent are profitable. However, Congress' indiscriminant guarantee, through FSLIC, insulated poor management decisions and outright fraud from the normal discipline of the market place.

Indeed, once an S&L got into financial trouble, because it faced the same guarantees as healthy institutions, its management had even greater incentive to take more risks with their depositors' money in the hopes of evening up by making a big score.

You'll recall the U.S. Treasury's bailout proposal to impose a "user fee" of 30 cents per $100 on deposit set off a storm of protest and they withdrew it.

Now they are back at the drawing board trying to devise a bailout plan that will fly better. Translated, fly better means a way to trick depositors into paying for the bailout.

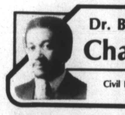
As they go about this task, they rely on the public delusion and lust for a free lunch. A new plan calls for charging commercial banks 7 cents more and S&Ls 3 cents more for deposit insurance.

If insurance costs rise, and if banks are to earn the normal return on equity, who do you think will ultimately pay? You've got it.

Depositors will pay through higher charges for bank services and lower interest on deposits; investors will pay through a lower rate of return. Responsibly managed banks and their depositors will pay for the actions of inept and crooked managers.

Congress should be pressed to recognize the failure of the government guarantee program and permit private provision of deposit insurance. Private insurers would have a greater incentive to monitor bank conduct and make insurance premiums reflect differential risk.

Privatization's downside risk is that it reduces the scope of politicians and bureaucrats and hence their justification for existence.



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

African peace in Angola

After fourteen years of war in and on the People's Republic of Angola, it now appears that peace will have a chance of becoming a reality.

President Jose Eduardo dos Santos is to be congratulated for working with the Presidents of other African nations to find a peace proposal that would be accepted in the interest of the people of Angola and the peoples of southern Africa.

At a recent summit meeting of African presidents which was held in Gbadolite, Zaire, Jonas Savimbi, the leader of the Angolan rebel group, UNITA, agreed to the peace proposal that was a product of African diplomacy and peacemaking.

UNITA, with the backing of South Africa and the United States, had unsuccessfully waged war against the government of Angola during the last 14 years.

Now that President dos Santos has taken another initiative to bring a lasting peace to Angola and more stability to the southern African region, it will be interesting to see whether or not the Bush Administration will change its current policy of supplying weapons of mass death and destruction to UNITA.

We should remember that last year Angola defeated South Africa and UNITA at the battle of Kuito Kunevale in southern Angola. This victory by the government of Angola set the stage for the Peace Accords that were signed near the end of 1988 between Angola, Cuba and South Africa.

These Peace Accords set the stage for the process that is now unfolding regarding independence of Namibia under United Nations Resolution #435 which calls for South Africa to stop its illegal occupation and exploitation of Namibia.

The peoples of Angola, Namibia, Mozambique and from other frontline states have suffered much from the destabilization and war-making barbarity of the racist apartheid regime of South Africa.

Angola has suffered one of the highest amputee rates per capita of any nation in the world as a result of these brutal acts of war. Now that another step has been taken to ensure peace in the region, it is important that the international campaign against apartheid be increased.

One of the most remarkable issues concerning the peace proposal and agreements between the government of Angola and the UNITA group is the fact that the basis for peace is the future of Angola and the future of all of southern Africa in the context of African unity.

What was displayed in Zaire at the summit of African presidents was the best of African unity. The fact that soldiers from UNITA and from the government of Angola will no longer shoot at each other will be good news to all people.

It is our hope that the government of the United States will no longer support and encourage UNITA to attack Angola. The United States should send medical aid for the victims of the war rather than more land mines and bombs which do nothing more than increase the number of victims.

An African peace is a peace with justice and with respect for the right of self-determination of the peoples of southern Africa. Once again if this peace holds, the future for Angola is very bright.

The United States should officially and diplomatically recognize this African nation because in the world community the struggle of the Angolan people is respected and saluted. A LUTA CONTINUA.

COMMENTARY: By Norman Hill

The child care crisis!

The traditional family — with a working father and a mother who stays at home — now accounts for only 10 percent of all families.

Today's economic necessities require that all able-bodied adults work outside the home. That's why 70 percent of mothers with school age children have jobs, as do about half of mothers with pre-school children.

As a result, finding child care services that are affordable and of high quality has become an issue of critical concern to many millions of families. For one thing, child care is expensive — about $3,000 per year per child.

And a recent Louis Harris survey shows that how much parents pay bears little relation to what they can afford. Blacks pay an average monthly fee of $258, topped among the groups polled only by parents with incomes of $50,000 and over ($332 per month) and those with post graduate degrees ($289 per month).

Business executives, at $244 per month, and professionals, at $226 per month, are among the groups that pay less. With regard to quality of child care, only 50 percent of those surveyed were satisfied.

But even putting aside cost and quality issues, there is a child care crisis just in terms of availability. In 1986 there were 2.5. million child care slots in licensed facilities throughout the nation.

Meanwhile, about 36.2 million children belonged to families where either the sole parent or both parents worked. Of these children, 10.5 million were under the age of 6.

The appalling shortfall of child care services has forced many working parents to leave their children with poorly trained caretakers, often in understaffed or unlicensed facilities.

One consequence has been an increase in cases of child neglect and abuse by incapable or indifferent child care providers.

On the other hand, studies have shown that good child care increases the chances that children will later be literate and employed and decreases the chances that they will subsequently be school dropouts, welfare dependents, or involved in criminal activity.

This is especially true for low-income families, which means that blacks have a higher stake than most other Americans in the availability of high-quality child care at a reasonable cost.

Fortunately, the Senate on June 23 passed a bill that takes an important step toward making the federal government responsible for assuring low and modest income families quality, affordable child care.

The centerpiece of the legislation is a $1.75 billion authorization for direct subsidies to help parents pay for child care and to help states improve the availability, quality, and affordability of child care.

The measure also includes tax credits to the poor to compensate them for some of the costs of child care.

The White House and most conservatives on Capitol Hill favor using tax credits as the primary tool for dealing with the child care crisis.

They have commended as excessive government intervention the Senate Bill's provision for state minimal child standards.

But as Sen. Christopher Dodd (D-Conn.), the legislation's sponsor, said: "If your car and your pets are given certain protections by state licensing agencies, we think your children deserve no less."

Right wingers also argue that tax credits offer more choice to parents than do subsidies. But the limits on parents' child care choices stem from high cost, limited supply, uneven quality, and inadequate information.

And as conservative Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) has observed, tax credits do not increase supply, improve quality, or enhance availability of information.

A tough battle can be expected this summer in the House over child care legislation. And whatever the outcome there, the fight will not be over.

Senate Minority Leader Bob Dole (R-Kan.) has pledged a hard fight by conservatives when differences between Senate and House bills are negotiated.

And Marlin Fitzgerald , President Bush's spokesman, has called the Senate measure "a veto candidate" — no surprise, coming as it does from a White House which thinks that $4.55 minimum wage is too high.

So it seems clear that this summer the black-labor alliance will once again have to bear down and engage in serious lobbying on behalf of an important cause.

This time the cause is the right of working men and women not to be faced with a choice between their family's economic well-being and their children welfare.

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