EDITORIALS

John J. Oliver, Jr.
Chairman of the Board

Frances M. Draper
President

THE VOICE OF BLACK AMERICA SINCE 1892

Health not Stealth

They don't care what they are doing to their fellow man or their country — They just want to be rich at any cost.

This used to be the line handed down by criminologist when they talked about dope peddlers and gangsters but today that line could fit that group of legislators and administrators, who are arguing that the U.S. taxpayer should spend $70 billion for a fleet of B-2 Stealth bombers.

The Stealth Bomber is the top of the line airplane which at this point is really a mystery. It is supposed to be able to find and destroy moving nuclear targets and report back on what has been hit.

The B-2 Stealth Bomber looks pretty, brings up images of Star Wars at the same time it lines the pockets of the manufacturer with good, old fashioned cash.

But is it necessary at the cost of better health for the elderly, better schools, more college scholarships and homes for the homeless. The answer is a resounding "No"

The United States is a country which continually cries poor mouth when it comes to the basic necessities needed by its everyday citizens.

But when the rich boys need a new toy they go in hiding and secretly find a "special access" portion of the military budget to spend $23 billion on a B-2 bomber before undertaking a single test.

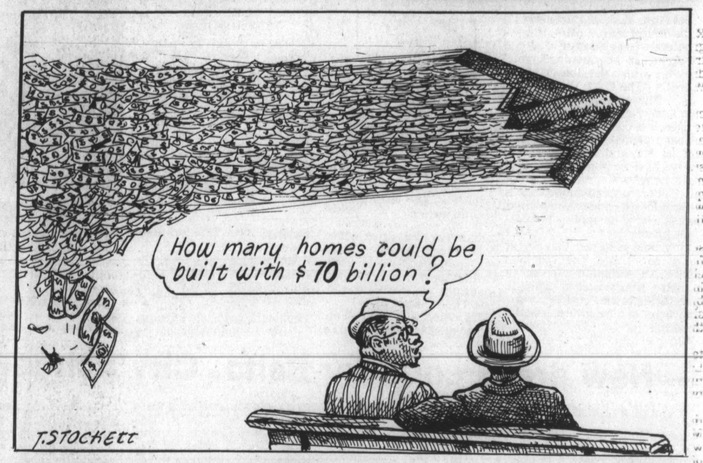
According to Cong. Ronald V. Dellums, chairman of the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Research and Development, the Air Force's original estimate of $43 billion for a fleet of 132 B-2s is way too low. He states that the figure is changing every week, that the latest projection is $73 billion but the final cost will exceed $100 billion.

Can you imagine how many homes for the homeless could be built from this money; how many elderly people would no longer have to worry about food, shelter and health insurance; how many children with potential could be assured of a college education and how many drug dealers could be stopped at the American border.

But rich people without a conscience don't have time to worry about the have nots...no matter that the expert say the B-2 is irrelevant in the nuclear missile age; that the B-2 represents the use of a potentially revolutionary technology in meeting an established mission already competently met by other means; that the Stealth technology could be added to other aircraft, ships and military systems which could provide a decisive military edge with minimal cost.

But many members of House and the Senate understand this. That is why the House has called for a two-year purchase restriction on the B-2 bomber and the Senate cut portions of the funding.

But that is not enough. The B-2 Stealth Bomber should be put back on the shelf. And taxpayers should tell the Air Force that enough is enough. Let's put the health of this nation ahead of a bomber with Stealth.



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

Status Quo in S. Africa

The protests before the South African Embassy in Washington, D.C. continued for months. Each day, protesters were arrested and each following day, new volunteers appeared to protest and to be arrested. We wanted the hated apartheid system in South Africa to be abolished.

No other country in the world equals South Africa's violations of human rights. Black South Africans are abused, degraded, humiliated and debased in their own land. We, who protested, had as an interim objective the passage of legislation to impose tough economic sanctions against the South African Government.

Such legislation was passed by Congress and signed into law. Is it working? The hard answer is that we don't know, we do not even know if it is being enforced.

One of the most infuriating things that a member of Congress can experience is the inability to get honest information from the Executive Branch of Government. In addition to being the most scandal-ridden administration in modern times, the Reagan Administration was the most duplicitous and law - defying Administration I can recall. Let me give you some illustrations of the perniciousness of the Reagan Administration.

Reagan did not like the Small Business Administration (SBA) and twice sought to abolish that agency. The Congress defied the President by authorizing and appropriating funds for the agency. My office was flooded by complaints from minority small businesses who could not get direct loan money or bank guaranteed loan money and other assistance from the Small Business Administration.

Under questioning during Congressional oversight hearings, SBA officials lied about the number and dollar value of loans made to minority businesses. What had happened was that the President had ordered the SBA to sharply curtail its operations by denying loans and other forms of assistance. Infuriating!

Reagan did not believe that the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) was necessary, but the Congress continued to appropriate monies for housing. The recent HUD scandals have revealed how those monies were diverted to greedy, fat cat friends of the Administration, thus denying decent housing for the poor and the working poor.

At oversight hearings, HUD officials never breathed a word about the crooked, nefarious ongoings at the agency. Infuriating!

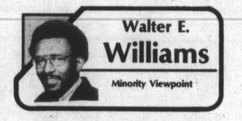
Insofar as South African sanctions are concerned. I do not believe that the government is enforcing those sanctions. If hearings are held, I am willing to wager that government officials will testify about their strong efforts to enforce economic sanctions, but they would probably be lying to the Congress.

Reagan did not want the sanctions and we have had no word from President Bush on this issue. This fraud means just one thing. Our government will not do anything to hurt white South Africans and will, therefore, continue to ignore the plight of black South Africans.

Today in South Africa, an elaborate charade is taking place. While waiting for the upcoming elections in South Africa, this charade is given full publicity. Nelson Mandela, after almost thirty years of imprisonment, has been moved to "more comfortable" quarters. Mandela has had tea with Botha, and that is hailed as "an encouraging sign."

But apartheid remains as firmly entrenched as ever, and indeed, the slight progress that had been made is now all but erased. The scheduled elections will not do much to improve the situation, because the contest will be between hard-line racists, and ultra hard-line racists.

Meanwhile, our government, the great defender of human rights; the champion for democracy for the rest of the world; the implacable foe of totalitarian governments, stands mute, immobile and aloof from the suffering of black South Africans. "America, America, God shed His grace on thee!"



Walter E. **Williams**
Minority Viewpoint

Constitutional Amendment

Since the Supreme Court's 5 to 4 ruling that desecration of the United States flag was constitutionally protected, pundits and politicians have been having a field day trying to outpatriot. Was the court wrong or right on this issue? Before offering my two cents, let me say that I proudly display the flag daily.

Americans profess a commitment to free speech and freedom of voluntary human action. The true test of one's commitment to those freedoms does not come when he permits others to say and do those things with which he agrees.

To the contrary, the true test comes when others are permitted to say and do those things we consider repugnant. Indeed, one purpose of the Bill of Rights is to protect the freedoms of people engaged in unpopular acts.

Suppose we decide to adopt a constitutional amendment against a repugnant act, like flag desecration, where do we stop? Some people may consider burning a Bible or drawing obscene pictures of Christ more repugnant than burning the flag.

Do we adopt another amendment? If we don't, does it mean that we value a national symbol more than God? What if a person burned the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, documents far more important than the flag?

Politicians are quick to exploit our emotions over the flag to divert attention from other crucial national issues. One insightful White House reporter picked this up after hearing President bush announced he was going to press for a constitutional amendment banning flab desecration.

The reporter asked the amendment-minded president about his campaign promise to push for a balanced budget/spending limitation amendment to the Constitution.

The president was visibly shocked by the question and tap danced around it, saying it was on his agenda. Time will tell just how serious a commitment the president has to a balanced budget/spending limitation amendment.

Such an amendment will do far more to preserve our freedoms than an amendment banning flag desecration. In the world's most despotic countries, the flag is protected while their leaders economically rape their people.

We face nothing like that kind of economic despotism; however, if we ask whether we are becoming more, or less, like those despotic regimes, the answer is quite clear as our government takes large chunks of our earnings and increasing controls of our lives.

I had the honor to serve on the National Tax Limitation Committee, which drew up a balanced budget/spending limitation amendment that passed the Senate in 1982, but lost in the House, then lost in both when reintroduced in 1986.

In part the amendment stated; "Total outlays (including budget and off budget) in any fiscal year shall not increase by a percentage greater than the percentage increase in the GNP (Gross National Product) in the last calendar year . . When for any fiscal year, total revenues received by the government of the United States exceed the total outlays, the surplus shall be used to reduce the public debt."

There was also a clause allowing the limit to be exceeded upon declaration of emergency by the president and a two-thirds consensus in both houses of Congress.

Our children's freedom, as well as their prosperity, will not be determined by what George Bush and Congress do to protect the flag; it will be determined by what they do to protect economic freedom.

Oh, by the way, anyone looking to desecrate Old Glory in front of my house is advised to first kiss his loved ones good-bye.

Letters:

Movie recommended

I saw the movie, "Do the Right Thing." I recommend it highly to any black person in America who is really interested in what the real problems are which face us today. This dramatic and vivid presentation shows just what has happened to the majority of blacks in this country.

The crack in the walls of discrimination that ocurred in the 60's and 70's have been sealed off and, again, a whole group of blacks have been systematically shut off from the system.

The anger, frustration and violence caused by this is accurately portrayed. As my ever discerning wife stated, "this film is the 'Native Son' of the eighties."

Those of us who have achieved some modicum of "success" should remember the end of the film. We will all be treated the same. It is for us with training to do something about these conditions. Our sororities, fraternities, churches, and black colleges should all have definite programs to try and change these conditions.

We are the generation that should make a difference.

Robert J. Smith, M.D.

Vandalism crackdown

Vandalism has reached epidemic proportions in our society. This is most unfortunate. In the newspapers we read daily about both occupied and vacant buildings being spray painted. Houses, schools, and churches are set on fire by vandals.

Citizens have their property vandalized simply because vandals think it's fun to be destructive. In some cases it costs taxpayers as much to restore vandalized school buildings as it cost years ago to have the entire building constructed.

The majority of vandalism is done by young people. Most of the vandals operate under cover of darkness and in many cases have an alibi for their evil deeds.

Just as we have done in the area of drug eradication, we must adopt a get-tough attitude toward vandals. First, we must be willing to devote the time and money to catching them.

Second, we must push for prosecution of and payment by irresponsible, blase parents, who in many ways are to blame as they do not monitor their youngsters' whereabouts.

Finally, we can curtain the destruction done by vandals by working with police, prosecutors, and juvenile authorities to catch vandals and have them make full restitution for damages.

Parents of juveniles must be held responsible for the youngsters' ill deeds.

One thing is certain: Far too many of our citizens are having their properties vandalized, and rarely are the vandals caught or forced to make restitution. As a result, vandalism abounds and costs millions of dollars.

John A. Micklos

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COMMENTARY & OPINIONS

Manning **Marable**
Along The Color Line

'Do the Right Thing'

Spike Lee's latest film, "Do the Right Thing," has provoked the greatest political debate and controversy since the polemics surrounding the film version of Alice Walker's "The Color Purple."

As in the previous controversy, critics and defenders alike have focused less on the relative merits and weaknesses of the film as a work of art, and have focused instead on the movie as a cultural litmus test on race relations and the question of political powerlessness within African-American communities.

What's required at this point is to separate an analysis of Lee's film from the charges and counter-charges engendered by the movie, in order to shed light upon the broader political and social significance of the issues raised by the debate.

"Do the Right Thing" was written, produced and directed by Spike Lee, a 32-year-old African American filmmaker, who has previously done two movies on black-oriented topics.

Lee's motivation for developing the film was sparked by the death of Michael Stewart, a graffiti artist who was killed by transit authority officers in New York for allegedly resisting arrest.

The events of Howard Beach, New York, in which black men were assaulted and one killed by a gang of white racists, further crystalized Lee's concerns about the state of race relations in America's largest city.

The essential storyline of the film is as follows: Based in a black and Hispanic neighborhood in New York's Bedford Stuyvesant area, the events take place during one hot day during the summer on one city block.

Lee presents a series of characterizations of black low income people, undereducated and jobless, but with a real sense of dignity and humanity.

The characters include two black elders, excellently portrayed by Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee; Bugging Out (Giancarlo Esposito), the local neighborhood's activist who is upset by the lack of black-ownership in the community;

Radio Raheem (Bill Nunn), a huge young man with an equally large ghettoblaster; Smiley (Roger Smith), a young man with a speech defect who nevertheless represents the most politically advanced character in the entire film by his advocacy of the ideas of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr.;

And Mookie, played by Lee himself, an unmarried father who works at an Italian American-owned pizzeria in the heart of the black community.

The central antagonism develops when Bugging Out complains to the owner of the pizzeria that there should be photographs of prominent African American artists, athletes and political leaders in the shop almost exclusively patronized by blacks and Hispanics.

When the owner refuses, Bugging Out organizes a small boycott which leads to a confrontation. Radio Raheem's ghettoblaster is smashed by Sal, the owner, and a fight ensues.

The police are called and in typical fashion respond by choking Radio Raheem to death. Mookie leads the outraged residents to attach and destroy the pizzeria.

Let's focus first on the main elements or themes which Lee is attempting to explore here. Metaphors abound in the movie. Unintentionally, by projecting Smiley as a stutterer who sells photos of Malcolm and Martin, the film seems to say to us that the legitimate voices of resistance and activism in our communities are frequently held down or denigrated

There's a dialectical tension underscoring the whole film from beginning to end between a hope for interracial peace and nonviolent change vs. the need for group solidarity, empowerment and an advocacy of armed self defense against racial brutality.

This is the reason for Lee's uses of Public Enemy's "Fight the Power" and the National Black Anthem, "Life Every Voice and Sing", at the opening of the film, and the quotations from Malcolm and Martin at the conclusion.

Politics and power are at the heart of the film. We are shown black men and women who are out of work or marginally employed, living in neighborhoods which are controlled economically by nonblacks. The police treat African Americans with contempt, functioning like an occupying army in enemy territory.

One is struck by contemporary parallels to Palestine or perhaps the bantustans of South Africa. To ensure the property, businesses and lives of white occupiers, the police make selective examples of non-whites through the utilization of extreme coercion.

Thus Radio Raheem's execution is not accidental, but typical of a larger question of white political domination and black oppression.

"Do the Right Thing" also presents the contradictions of black-white relations by examining the personal ambiguity between the white storeowner Sal (Danny Aiello), his two sons and Mookie.

The film graphically depicts the extreme racism of one son who defines blacks as animals, yet Sal is proud of his establishment and his cordial relationship with most patrons.

Mookie initiates the looting of the store after Radio Raheem's death, yet the morning after, Sal is prepared to pay his former employees twice what he is owed. The reason that the film strikes a responsive chord here is because race relations are complex, not simplistic.

Whites who are profoundly racist frequently can hate an entire group of people yet make exceptions in their relations with individuals. Sal's failure isn't personal, its political.

Bugging Out doesn't want to marry Sal's daughter, or to force him to sell the pizzeria. He only wants Malcolm's and Martin's pictures on the pizzeria's wall as symbolic of recognizing the heritage and humanity of the patrons.

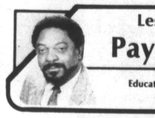
Sal's refusal is fundamentally the refusal of white racism to recognize that human rights go beyond property rights.

A number of confused critics, black and white, have attached Lee for making a film which supposedly advocate violence. Journalist Juan Williams complains that the movie lacks "vision" and promotes racial confrontation.

If Williams, et. al. really lived in the innercity, they'd understand that Lee's film actually understates, if anything, the race and class tensions in contemporary America.

"Do the Right Thing" provides a complex and dynamic examination of American racism.

Dr. Manning Marable teaches politics at the University of Colorado, Boulder.



Les **Payne**
Educator

Malcolm and Martin

Much has been made of the statements on violence Spike Lee floated across the screen at the end of his movie, "Do the Right Thing."

After black rage reduces Sal's Pizzeria to ashes, Lee counterpoints a Martin Luther King, Jr., statement against violence with Malcolm X's view that its use in self-defense is intelligent. This bland utterance — the very kernel of human survival — is treated by critics as a piece of revolutionary contraband.

Had Malcolm's quote been attributed to a sitting president, Patrick Henry or any other white hero, Lee said, it would have been applauded.

Malcolm X's brief statement on violence has caused more concern among some critics than the entire hour and 43 minutes of the film. Such is the power of Malcolm's analysis, 24 years after his assassination.

It was Malcolm, I submit, who by his uncompromising stance made King more acceptable to white Americans than he otherwise would have been. On the question of violence, Malcolm also forced the Baptist preacher to broaden his position on nonviolence and come out against America's role in the Vietnam War.

"If violence is wrong in America, violence is wrong abroad," Malcolm reasoned to King and everyone else who would listen. "If it is wrong to be violent defending black women and black children and black babies and black men, then it is wrong for America to draft us and make us violent in defense of her.

And if it is right for America to draft us and teach us how to be violent in defense of her, then it is right for you and me to do whatever is necessary to defend our own people right here in this country."

Before black audiences, Malcolm was slashingly effective against those who accepted King's doctrine of passive resistance while never criticizing black participations in national wars abroad.

"As long as the white man sent you to Korea," Malcolm said, "you bled. He sent you to Germany, you bled. He sent you to South Pacific to fight the Japanese, you bled. He sent you to Vietnam, you bled. You bleed for white people, but when it comes time to seeing your own churches being bombed and your little black girls murdered, you haven't got any blood.

"You bleed when the white man says bleed; you bite when the white man says bite. You bark when the white man says bark."

In addition, the Muslim minister criticized King and other leaders for failing effectively to counsel whites to be nonviolent.

"If the leaders of the nonviolent can go into the white community and teach nonviolence, good. I'd go along with that. But they are teaching nonviolence only in the black community. I'm not for telling black people to be nonviolent while nobody is telling white people to be nonviolent."

Malcolm also sharply criticized civil-rights leaders for counseling against black-on-black violence: "Besides, black people aren't nonviolent with each other. Here in Harlem some blacks talk that nonviolent talk.

But you can go to Harlem Hospital and see them going in there all cut up and shot up and busted up where they got violent with each other. So Negroes are talking about being nonviolent with the enemy. There's an inconsistency there."

Toward the end of his life, Malcolm grew weary of the media inextricably linking him to the word "violence." "I doubt if I had one interview without having to deal with that accusation," he told his biographer, Alex Haley.

"If it takes violence to get the black man his human rights in this country," he said, "I'm for violence. Exactly, you know, as the Irish, the Poles, or Jews would be if they were flagrantly discriminated against . . . In Brooklyn, the Hasidic Jews formed vigilante committees. No one thinks it's so wrong."

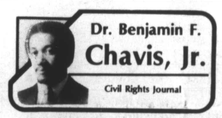
In Spike Lee's movie, the photography of a smiling King and Malcolm together suggested what the Muslim leader always knew . "Our goal has always been the same," Malcolm said, "the approaches were different . . with Dr. Martin Luther King's nonviolent marches dramatizing the brutality and the evil of the white man against defenseless blacks.

In the racial climate of this country today, it is anybody's guess which of the 'extremes' in approach to the black man's problem might personally meet a fatal catastrophe first — nonviolent Dr. King or so-called violent me."

Interestingly, actor Ossie Davis, who plays a drunk in "Do the Right Thing," was severely criticized for eulogizing Malcolm at his Harlem funeral in February, 1965.

"Did he ever do a mean thing?" Davis said over the coffin of the martyred leader. "Was he ever associated with violence or any public disturbance? If you knew him you would know why we must honor him: Malcolm was our manhood, our living, black manhood! This was his meaning to his people . . in honoring him we honor the best in ourselves . . our own shining prince! — who didn't hesitate to die, because he loved us so."

1989, Newsday Inc. Dist. Los Angeles Times Syndicate



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

Endangered Males

Safety and security are never permanently insured for anyone. Yet, it is a mark of a civilized society to strive to ensure safety and security for its citizens as a social, political and economic objective.

A recent feature story in the Boston Globe entitled, "Endangered: Black Men" once again raised disturbing and serious questions about the condition and prognosis of the African American male in the United States.

The article by Joanne Ball detailed how African American men are disproportionately suffering from homicides, drugs, and other forms of violence, AIDS, and from the devastation of economic injustice.

Ed Pitt of the National Urban League was quoted as saying, "What's new is that now we, for the first time, in the history of this country, have a declining life expectancy for black people.

And the biggest factor in this decrease is attributed to the high death rates of African American males between 15 and 44".

Jawanza Kunjufu, a nationally known authority on African American males, has charged that there is "a conspiracy to destroy black males."

The negative statistical data concerning the mortality rate of African American males is not an accident or a mere coincidence of history, it is rather a factual explication of the severity of this conspiracy which begins before birth and is maintained until early death.

Racism and economic exploitation continues to endanger all African Americans and in particular African American young men.

Nathan and Julia Hare, who have authorized many writings on the plight of African American adolescent and family life contend that the growing crisis of African American males in the United States demands the attention of all Americans, but in particular the attention and response of the African American community is an absolute necessity.

Dr. Nathan Hare, a noted psychologist and sociologist has suggested that a long-term solution must come from "an independent black intellectual class which puts value on ourselves and value on our youth, and stop looking to the white media for good images."

Dr. Hare knows well the negative role the established national media continues to play in stereotyping and demeaning and depicting racist images of the African American community.

One point to be emphasized is that a society that selectively and oppressively predetermines the genocide of a community of that society is a society that ultimately determines its own destruction.

Are African American males today an endangered species? Yes, this is the sad but true reality in this nation. Will African American males continue to be an endangered species? The answer to this question lies in what response we all make today concerning this crisis. We believe the time has not yet run out. There is still time and great opportunity to challenge this situation.

Alarmingly, President Bush has just announced that a priority of this new administration in the White House is to put some citizens of this nation back on the moon and even to go to the planet Mars safe and securely.

This effort will cost in the hundreds of billions of dollars. President Bush: "What about the planet earth, and in particular how will a multi-billion dollar attempt to find some new species on another planet help to save the endangered species in this nation?"

Whether or not Bush answers this question is not the issue. Let us all be challenged to place our personal and collective priorities in the right place, i.e., the place of joining together in a renewed national movement for justice and empowerment.

Not to respond to the challenges of African American destruction and self-destruction is to invite more danger and fear.

COMMENTARY:

Born at the right time

By Dick Campbell

I just saw Spike Lee's latest film "Do The Right Thing", and I thought, how blessed this young man is, not to have been born in 1905, or 1915, or 25 and even 1935.

His talent would have been a "Montage of a Dream Deferred". Just like Langston Hughes'. Poor Langston, whom everybody lauds with glorious praise these days was more than qualified to do just what Spike Lee has done.

Not as a producer, director but as a writer, innovator. But he was born to soon. Hollywood was not ready for Langston, America was not ready for Langston, American was not ready for anybody, colored, (excuse me "black").

In fact, nothing in America was ready for American "Negroes". The economy certainly wasn't. Credit cards, which Spike Lee used to finance one of his films has not yet made the scene.

And even Credit Cards discriminate against people who were not flush with healthy bank accounts. That automatically excluded blacks. How fortunate he was to have been born so late.

And, how unfortunate all of us are to view at this late date the solid exposition of "racism", delineated in "Do The Right Thing". I guess this denotes "progress" of a sort for the U.S.A.

The white critics never gave a black film any plaudits, at anytime in my memory, with the possible exception of "Green Pastures", - but Vincent Canby of **The Times**, went almost beserk in praising Spike Lee.

Said Canby, "Lee emerges as the most distinctive American multi-threat man since Woody Allen". That's pretty good stuff. David Edlestein of the **New York Post**, says, "Lee does some things better than anyone else", and so it goes.

Yep, it's nice that Spike Lee is a young fella and wasn't born in 1905, or 1915, or 25 or even 1935, like this old writer, producer, director was. Nevertheless, it's comfortable and lovely to still be alive and notice the changes taking place in the lively arts.

No hanging out under the "Tree of Hope" on 131st Street and Seventh Avenue in the Thirties, hoping that Lew Leslie would come up and cast his next musical "Blackbirds of 1928" from the unemployed black performers in front of the old Lafayette Theatre.

No doubt about it. Spike Lee was born at the right time, with the right talent, and he quickly learned how to use it, Hallelujah!

Dick Campbell is the Executive Director of the Sickle Cell Disease Foundation of Greater New York, One West 125th Street, Suite 206, New York, New York 10027, (212) 427-7762. He was a former Director, Producer, Writer from 1928 to 1941 and the official producer for Black USO-Camp Shows during World War II.