Baltimore Afro-American

OPINION

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Assault on the black community

The black community is being assaulted by a reign of terror that far outstrips anything in recent history. We are being assaulted in schools, churches and even in our homes which at one time could be regarded as one of the most sacrosanct of all of all our possessions.

Most of us look forward to the peace and tranquility of the home as a place where we can share common experiences after a tedious day of toil under the anvil of indignity and humiliation. We have always felt that the home is a cloak of safety and warmth that is our right and not a privilege due us as normal human beings.

In our local area we are seeing schools operate under tension and fear. Students and instructors alike are being assaulted by unruly students abetted by outside elements that are bent on criminal acts that disrupt the normal atmosphere conducive to the learning process.

One of the most recent incidents is a fire at Roosevelt High School in Northwest Washington. Senseless vandalism at other schools scattered throughout the city is also of serious proportions because of their frequent occurrence. The time and money lost in these incidents could well be spent on improvement of school facilities, creation of new programs and even increase teachers' salaries.

Recently there has been a plethora of housebreakings that has thrown an aura of fear and trepidation in the hearts and minds of many families. Innocent and defenseless families at seemingly at the mercy of uncontrolable predators because they strike almost at will with impunity.

There are persistent reports that a network of criminals are operating in the metropolitan area. These reports say that adults stake out target areas in the black community and cause juvenile criminals to invade houses and abscond with portable valuables.

It is reported that these predators will commit the ultimate crime if confronted during their criminal act. These nefarious conditions are in addition to a resurfacing of the Klan with cross burnings as their symbol of racial hatred.

Our schools and homes have always been regarded as the most basic of institutions and when they are endangered the very fabric of our entire society becomes frustrated and diffused. They are the fundamental barriers of social disorganization which keep us from becoming adrift like a ship without a rudder.

To combat these assaults on the black community many neighborhoods have established citizen groups. Many of these groups have had limited success because they pool their efforts as a measure of protection for all concerned.

These groups must work in closer cooperation with existing law enforcement agencies to obtain maximum results to preserve the basic institutions of schools and homes so that the black community can survive as it always has under the most severe of circumstances.

Rights of accused threatened

Chief Justice Warren Burger, who was the first of Richard Nixon's many legacies to our nation, has proposed a reversal of judicial history in his call for limits on the rights of those who are accused of crime. He said this week that America's cities are "in terror," and that one of the principal causes is the unnecessary protections that the Warren Court extended to defendants in the 50s and 60s.

The Chief Justice was not specific, but it is clear that he is anxious for the High Court to take a new look at previous rulings that curbed police brutality, ensured the reading of rights to the accused, offered free legal advice to the indigent and placed limits on the length of time an accused citizen could spend in custody without a hearing.

It is difficult to see how these measures have promoted crime. It is difficult to imagine why a Supreme Court Chief Justice would make such a connection. But it is easy to see where repeal of these safeguards would lead: straight back into the past, to the days when defendants' rights were as unimaginable as civil rights, voting rights or women's rights.

Burger is chafing at the 750 - year - old tradition that "a man is innocent until proven guilty." He wants the mere suspicion of a crime to empower the state to suspend rights. He thinks streets will be safer if jails are more crowded. A careful reading of Burger's record, and that of his 12 - year - old Court, would show he has always held these opinions. Now the mood of the country has shifted to match his, and he has stood up to be counted among those who find the Bill of Rights too strong for their weak hearts and too broad for their narrow minds.

From the St. Louis ARGUS

Cross burnings in Harford Co.

Dear AFRO:

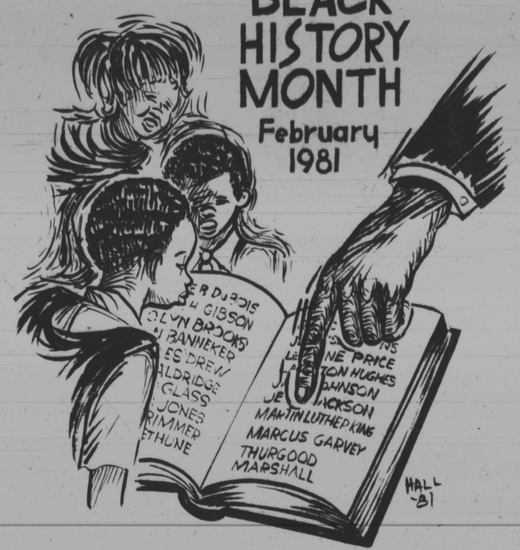
The BNI Board has expressed its appreciation to J. Thomas Barringer, Harford County Executive for his prompt reaction to cross burnings in Harford County. Mr. Barringer immediately held a press conference at which he, as County Executive, expressed his dislike of cross burnings, racial harassment etc. and the County government would be firm in investigating and prosecuting these incidences.

Mr. Barringer indicated that initially he had some reservations about taking a public stand - feeling that he didn't want to make a bad situation worse. The BNI Board indicated to Mr. Barringer its belief that while a prompt police investigation is necessary, that this in itself is not enough. Cross burnings, etc. are a public and symbolic declaration of hostility against minorities. Therefore, there is needed a strong and public declaration by local government of support for the rights of minorities and a firm statement that the local government will do everything in its power to stop such harassment.

Incidentally, the public should be aware that state law indicates that "It shall be unlawful for any person or persons to burn or cause to be burned any cross or other religious symbol upon any private or public property within this State without the express consent of the owner or such property and without first giving notice to the fire department which services the area in which such burning is to take place.

"Any person or persons who violates the provisions of this section shall, upon conviction, be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor and shall suffer punishment by imprisonment in the county or Baltimore City jail for a period not to exceed one year or shall be fine an amount not to exceed $2,000 or shall suffer both such fine and imprisonment in the discretion of the court."

GEORGE B. LAURENT



Do you take your children to the public library? Black History Month is a good time to study the lives of Black Americans—and to learn about all the many services of our public libraries!

MADELINE MURPHY

Cherry Hill, a low income community, in the main, has had most of its success in survival from its own community residents over the years.

Little was expected from its all white representatives, either in the city, state or federal governments. But despite this benign neglect, it usually was able through strong, vocal community organization to get more streets, better lighting and more schools as its population grew, its children multiplied.

Now it is time, it seems, to attack its soft apolitical under belly, to begin to chip away at its public institutions, by closing its newest elementary school, because of low enrollment. Suffice it to say, that lack of support for its own political representation has been its undoing.

Nevertheless it is strange at a time when we need smaller classes, lower teacher pupil ratio, we are penalized. When we need more well trained young people, who can at long last be able to read, write and figure, that the best equipped school in the commmunity is slated to be closed in June.

When we heard rumors a little over six months ago, that a high rise was to be built on land adjacent to the school, we were lulled into sleep with a "not so".

Now we hear that School 164 will be closed. But the irony of it all is that there is a wedge of land including the school and at the entrance to Cherry Hill that just concidentally attaches to the Mayor's plan for Waterview Avenue and the Back River, with marinas, hotels, high rises, shops and malls.

In the gentrification of the city, this land is prime for development. There are only two private apartment complexes in Cherry Hill near it, two Mayor's stations, and about six to eight small industries, with a broad expanse of wood land on a hill.

The small industries could be easily moved to the new Southern Industrial Park, near the planned Waterview development; the apartments bought out; the Mayor's stations torn down and relocated; and like Ridgeley's Delight, a beautiful brick wall built to screen out the poor black neighbors. (When the economy really gets tight, Cherry Hill could become a private reservation of day workers exploited below minimum wage...unlike the the Industrial section that hires none from Cherry Hill!)

Yet, at the same time there are two elementary schools within the heart of Cherry Hill that take up a whole city block and a half, where their close proximity is an anachronism. One of them, 159, is the first elementry school in Cherry Hill, which during the first generation of children who grew up in Cherry Hill operated for a number of years on parttime, three sessions a day, because of overcrowding and insensitivity of the City Council.

It does not go unnoticed either as Mayor Schaefer tries to attract more middle class whites to Baltimore City, that $8.5 million was used to renovate City College while at the same time the new expensive and luxurious High School for the Performing Arts in the old Alcazar has attracted about 200 students with a pupil teacher ratio equal to that of a private school. So who suffers the retrenchment, so that the tax base of the city remains the same: poor whites and blacks.

This reverse Robin Hood syndrome of stealing from the poor and enriching the middle class a la Ronald Reagan, must be nipped in the bud.

With over 77 percent black enrollment, with the public school enrollment dropping by 3 to 4 per cent a year, the improvement of an old plant like City College and the development of the arts school can mean only one thing: make ready for the influx of white middle class to the city, attracted by cosmetic outlays of money in a few elite schools.

The fact is that more money is needed for schools across the board and the mayor has not been overly vociferous in running to Annapolis for schools as he has been for the subway and conventions. He has virtually ignored for eight years that $2 on the tax rate yields $662 for each student in the city, compared to $1, 360 in Balto. Co.

Belatedly he has joined in the federal suit to challenge the system of state apportionment aid to the city and poor rural counties. In light of the plummeting economy while spending for capital improvements as if there were no tomorrow, the mayor is like the farmer who closes the barn door only after the cow has run loose.

Reverse Robin Hood syndrome

And so it is with the closing of School 164 in Cherry Hill that we see the culmination of his neglect of the poor, and black who make up his constituency.

It would be easy but misleading to point a finger at the Board of School Commissioners who although appearing to be autonomous, are necessarily loyal to the mayor, who appoints them. Because if there is anything the mayor hates worse than noisy critics, historically we know it is an independent school superintendent, and a forceful board. This board is quietly accomodating the mayor's need for a white middle class strategy that would identify to all potential city dwellers that middle class emphasis means good schools. Witness the restructuring of an elitist curriculum at Eastern.

Sadly, Superintendent John Crew can only do as the mayor dictates at his weekly cabinet meetings.

It is a sorry state of affairs when priorities for local spending do not factor in per pupil spending in 1977-78 even at a whopping 30 per cent below the state average; when Baltimore spent less in relation to the state average than urban systems in other states; and that the teacher pupil ratio was 2 per cent below the state average.

The Cherry Hill community must demonstrate at City Council, in the Mayor's office on behalf of all the future schools closing in poor neighborhoods as well as its own. It must form coalitions with sympathetic ministerial groups, the NAACP, the teacher's union, the Welfare Rights Organizations and any others who will confront City Council, the mayor and the media and all who might listen—even a court injunction wouldn't hurt.

For Mayor William Donald Shaefer's shadow government, without checks and balances from the City Council has made him more arrogant as he has become more powerful.

Need it be reiterated therefore that "Power corrupts, absolute power corrupts absolutely"?

LETTERS

Fort Apache

Dear AFRO:

In light of the fact that "Fort Apache" is now showing in seven area theaters, would you be willing to reprint the the article from the Feb. 9 B. P. Daily World paper to alert Baltimore audiences to the racist nature of the film.

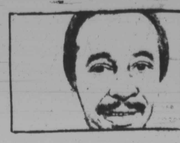
This movie is an insult to Puerto Rican and black people everywhere. It stereotypes us as savages, criminals and degenerates. By doing this, it appeals to the most prejudiced thinking in the country today.

At a time when the economic and social crisis is deepening in America, at a time when the KKK and other hate groups are openly calling for racial murders - while at the same time these murders are increasing - movies like this feed right into the racist momentum.

Don't waste your money on racist trash. Every dollar spent at the box office is encouraging more to those who want to profit by exploiting racial hatred. Go to another movie, or better yet, join us on the picket lines.

MARGARET BALDRIDGE
ARTICLE reprinted
from Daily World paper

PARREN MITCHELL



Nightmare!

The Supreme Central Coordinator met with his deputy coordinators. "The problem the state confronts is directly traceable to the minorities in our midst, the Supreme Central Coordinator said. "They are basically allied, incapable of absorbing our value system, and are not contributing to the growth of the state."

He continued, "We have three advantages to help us control and contain these minorities: first, the anti-minority mood in the country; second, their dependence on government assistance, and third, the revived cold war with the Union of Communist States, which will divert attention from whatever we plan to do to control them and to contain them."

The Deputy Coordinator said, "This may be true but if we permit the anti-black, anti-minority mood to continue to grow in intensity, will we not be contaminated in the eyes of the world because we are a Democratic state, because of our international stand on Human Rights." We have scrapped Human Rights, was the reply, "and must permit the anti-mood to mount to its highest point; it gives us a psychological advantage over them. I will not speak out against anti-black, anti-semitic, anti-Hispanic groups."

The Deputy Coordinator for Government Operations spoke up saying, "We know, through no fault of their own, these people need federal support programs, but if we cut these programs abruptly, will not even some of our own people be shamed?" "I thought about that," the S.C.C. said, "and the answer is to impose some restrictions across the board, but focus in hard on those programs which help minorities most; therefore, we can say that everyone must make a sacrifice and justify it."

"Your plans are well thought through," said the Deputy Coordinator for International Activities, "but if we push the cold war psychology too hard, is it not possible that we could, inadvertently of course, cause a real outbreak of hostilities?" "Certainly that is possible," the S.C.C. replied angrily, "but don't you see if there is an outbreak of war, we can call upon the people to make even greater sacrifices and that will be the precise time to end the state's housing, education, health, and labor-power programs completely, once and for all."

The vote was taken and the plan was put into effect. Blacks were forced to work at less than a minimum wage and were easily exploited because through national policies, unemployment was kept high and the scramble to get and hold a job was furious.

Pseudo religious groups, fanatical right wing groups, and the Knights of the White Camelia formed the ranks of racial hatred. Cross burnings took place all over the state, and violence against the minorities was tolerated and indeed acted out by the control agents for security of the state.

In the Persian Gulf, massive forces of the Union of Communist States (U.C.S.) massed poised for an invasion and the Supreme Central Coordinator told the state that all was in readiness for a nuclear first strike against the U.C.S. But then something happened.

The Supreme Central Coordinator told the emergency meeting of his deputy coordinators that something had gone terribly wrong. "They are fighting back, the blacks are actually fighting us in the Courts, in the legislative halls, in the courts of world opinion. They are. Can you imagine it. They are fighting the Nazis, the White Knights and other groups actually fighting them with every weapon at their command. He paused, shook his head and said, "We can't change the grand plan, I don't think they would fight back. I honestly did not think they would fight."

By Elizabeth M. Oliver, City Editor

Here is a brief history I found recently. In a nutshell, it seems to give a pretty good background and traces:

THE BLACK JOURNEY

The American Colonists who felt the need for more land to grow cotton moved farther and farther inland. They had the task of clearing the wilderness and draining the swamps to make the land more suitable for planting.

There were not enough whites available for this laboring task which made the enslavement of blacks a must.

As they penetrated deeper inland to the Mississippi and across it, so did the black men and women. In time slavery extended as far west as California. The souls of such states as Georgia, Alabama and the Carolinas proved to be rich black soil. Land was plentiful and yielded healthy cotton crops.

In the mid 18th century came the industrial inventions which highly mechanized the textile industry requiring more raw cotton from English mills.

The cotton gin simplified the removal of seeds. Despite the aid of new machinery more slaves were needed to work in the cotton fields.

Ships that brought loads of slaves to America carried bales of cotton to England. In the first quarter of a century cotton production rose to more than 500,000 bales a year and by 1850 more than 3,000,000 bales.

The cotton market yielded high fortunes which made slavery a profitable business also, slaves were necessary. For more than a hundred years slaves were the key to the Southern economy.

All blacks were not relegated to the fields. Some were skilled workers, carpenters, brick masons, bridge builders and iron workers. Many of the famous Southern mansions were built by slaves.

Many slave owners encouraged and helped trained slaves to become skilled tradesmen. This was advantageous for the slave masters in that they received the wages of their slaves and the better trained, the higher the wages.

Slaves also worked in copper mines, coal mines and gold mines. In some areas of the South there were more skilled slave laborers than white skilled workers.

There were times when much controversy existed which flared into violence because of the competition between free white labor and slave labor.

Those slaves who worked as house servants were much better off than field workers and much better off than the poor Southern white sharecropper.

They also had the advantage of learning to read and write.

Slave children learned much from playing with and being around their master's children, they learned together.

There was a clearly existing animosity between the house slave and the field slave. The field slave did not trust those who worked as house servants.

While many blacks had skills, most of them did not. The men worked as common laborers while the women worked as domestic servants.

Eventually some of the women became seamstresses, and a few became school teachers. Some of the men went into businesses such as barbers, general contractors and small shop keepers.

As early as 1860 there were several black drugstores and grocery stores in Baltimore.

Atlanta, was credited with a black dentist.

In New Orleans, there were black printers and architects.

By the outbreak of the Civil War blacks owned more than 15 million dollars in property. These were exceptions.

Most blacks were merely existing. Many of them had managed to escape to freedom but had no possessions, no skills and no formal training.

The western movement of whites created a labor shortage in the North which was helpful to blacks in that many of them were able to find something to do.

The cost of freedom was dear for blacks who had to struggle to survive. Most of them refused to go back into slavery, but some did.

The black experience today is a far cry from that of the days of slavery.

Today black Americans play a vital role in every phase of our American way of life, contributing significantly to our culture, helping to enrich the lives of all Americans.

FOR ALL WE KNOW

Tony Brown's Journal

A killer of dreams

In a special television program—"A Killer of Dreams"—on sickle cell disease, Tony Brown's Journal dismisses many prevailing myths and misconceptions about this genetic malady. The widespread ignorance of the vast differences between the sickle cell anemia trait and sickle cell anemia is rampant.

"Sickle cell anemia is the name for sickle cell disease, which is a deformity of the red blood cell which carries oxygen through the system for everyone to live. Sickle cell trait is the form of sickle cell disease which is passed by only one parent, and is usually benign," explains Dr. Samuel McElroy, a psychologist at the Howard University Center for Sickle Cell Disease.

Dr. Clarice Reid adds: "In order to get sickle cell disease, you have to inherit a gene for sickle cell hemoglobin from both parents. Each parent contributes one gene to the sickle cell child, so in order for a child to have sickle cell disease, both parents would have to be a carrier and have the sickle cell trait. The disease was first described by a black West Indian cardiologist in Chicago in 1910." Dr. Reid is Chief, Sickle Cell Disease Branch, National Institutes of Health.

Social traumas are often the result of a misconception of the implications of the anemia and the trait. A black cadet at the Air Force Academy was recently discharged because he had the trait. Ironically, as Tony Brown's Journal points out on "A Killer of Dreams," blacks were selected for duty in Vietnam because they carried the sickle cell gene.

"It is thought that the government went into heavy screening for sickle trait, in order to find out who genetically would survive best in Vietnam during the war. Black folks went to Vietnam who had the trait, because their survival rate against the environment was so much greater," explained Dr. McElroy who has discovered a method to measure the pain associated with the disease.

Of any 10 people in the black population you can expect one of the 10 — or a little over two million — to have the sickle cell trait. This is equal for men and women. On the other hand, the prevalence of sickle cell anemia among blacks in the U.S. is one in 600 and some 50,000 suffer from this genetic malady. Sickle cell trait and sickle cell anemia occur most frequently in blacks in the United States and in Africa, but are also found in Italians, Greeks, Iranians and many other races.

This program also tells the story of Jacklyn McDonald, a 26-year-old black woman who suffers from sickle cell anemia. In her own words, she tells how she copes with the awful physical pain, the employment problems and the fears of becoming a mother.

Tony Brown's Journal, the longest running national black television series, is sponsored by Pepsi-Cola Company. It can be seen in the Baltimore area every Sunday on WBAL-TV, Channel 11, at 3:00 p.m.

JUST THINKING

Black middle class has played role

By Al Sweeney

It's difficult to write one of these so-called think-pieces about any controversial subject without getting labeled.

The Black Experience has taught me that. So the introductory to this week's effort could be construed by some as an apology and by others as an explanation.

All of which leads to that same sinking feeling that one encountered during the McCarthy era. Before you, criticized the system, you had to wave the flag and insist that the red brush had not tainted your opinion.

And today, if this writer says that Tom Sowell, the west coast black conservative, is saying some things that are valid, suddenly you get the Black Conservative smear placed against you.

In one of Sowell's recent efforts, he indicated that the so-called black leadership was made up of middle class folk, not necessarily ghetto dwellers.

So, what's wrong with that?

In nearly every area of social progress or revolution the movement of the masses has been led by middle class whites or blacks.

As for blacks, the architect of utilizing the courts to attack racial inequities was the brainchild of Charles H. Houston, former Howard University Law School dean.

He was born in a middle class family. His dad was one of the town's successful lawyers. The Houston and Houston law firm became one of the most prestigious, among blacks. William Hastie, one of the first black federal judges on the appellate court as a member of the law firm. Four current judges in District Court came out of the Houston and Houston firm.

The legendary Martin Luther King Jr. received his training thanks to the successful pastorate of a father ensconced in one of Atlanta's more successful churches.

While "Daddy" King was often apprehensive his son's civil rights forays, he provided the economic base permitting Dr. King to be America's leader of the non-violent assault on racism.

Cliff Alexander, who Sowell alluded to in his effort published in the morning paper, had the advantage of an Ivy League schooling as a honor graduate of Harvard and a law degree from Yale.

His dad, once headed the Harlem YMCA and later managed an apartment complex on New York's Sugar Hill, where Harlem's elite resided during the "good old days," after the 40s.

Alexander became one of the better chairmen of of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and as Secretary of the Army defended Black volunteer soliders against the verbal critics in Congress and among the white brass.

Most of the modern civil rights legislation was steered through Congress by a product of the black middle class — Congressman Adam Clayton Powell Jr.

Congressman's Powell received a top education because of his father's pastorate with the Abysinnia Baptist Church, one of the largest black churches in America, let alone Harlem.

Powell was not only a passionate minister but a civil rights leader who spearheaded an economic boycott of Harlem merchants not hiring blacks.

As chairman of the House Labor and Education Committee, Powell used his power more effectively than any other black in congressional history.

The lady who led the fight against segregated restaurants in the District of Columbia was a product of a middle class black family. She was Dr. Mary Church Terrell.

One of the first women, black or white, earn a Ph.D. degree Dr. Terrell manned the picket lines around the Thompson Restaurant during the heat of summer and cold of winter until the High Court ended restaurant segregation in D.C.

The ravages of racism are shared by blacks of all classes. So, I don't know what the point that the Stanford economist was trying to make.

G. JAMES FLEMING

If he is qualified

Reaction seems never-ending to the performance, or non-performance, of William P. Clark, as he appeared before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, examining his qualifications or readiness to become the Deputy Secretary of State.

There is no need to list question after question for which Mr. Clark, fresh from being an Associate Justice of California's highest court, had no answer better than "I don't know that," or "I have no opinion as yet," or some equivalent. At one point, a questioning senator asked if he did not read the newspapers or follow the news on television.

One Republican supporter of President Reagan who nominated Mr. Clark for the No. 2 spot in the State Department, dejectedly said that he would vote for the confirmation of Mr. Clark, but he thought the policy-making department of the government was too important and sensitive a responsibility for "on-the-job" training.

No candidate for any office is expected to know everything for his new position before he enters upon it. But, neither is any Cabinet member-designate expected to know nothing at all about what is really facing him—expectations and challenges so recently brought to the surface by the United States' encounter with Iran and its Revolutionary Council. Mr. Clark did not even appear to have "crammed" for his Senatorial experience, as most students do before an exam or a debate.

Mr. Clark's performance was disastrous, or would have been disastrous, except for the honeymoon period which now exists between the President and the Congress, and the political practice of allowing each new President to surround himself with his own people.

The European newspapers have had a field day commenting on the Clark exposure, and blacks in the United States have been "having a bell". More seriously, they have been saying that "Nobody asked him if he were qualified."

This latter reference is to the practice of whites whenever a black is proposed for some important position. And few things rankle blacks more than the presumption that a black person, in spite of his credentials may not be qualified, or that the sponsor of a black candidate would back an unqualified person.

Most galling is the fact that, these same questioning persons usually take it for granted that any white candidate is or must be qualified, a priori, just because he is white, especially if he is white and male.

Sometimes, even "friends of the Negro" have found themselves, as if by reflex action, asking "Is he qualified?" just because some applicant is black and for no other reason. The usual refrain from white personnel managers or business executives have been: "We will be very happy to employ your man if he is qualified "(In the years before federal civil rights laws and equal employment opportunity commissions, such a replaying of an old record always meant "Here is another black person who won't be hired."

The truth of course, is that no black candidate for the position of Deputy Secretary of State would have been confirmed for the position if he were such a "know-nothing" performer as Mr. Clark.

But if must be added, that no black aspirant would have had the opportunity to serve as chief of staff to Ronald Reagan of California, and to be his campaign manager in his several attempts at higher office.

Reacting to a situation similar to the Clark adventure, a black radio commentator once said: "It's sure great to be white."

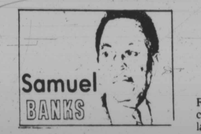
Nearer at home, in Baltimore, it is good to have a case just opposite to that of Judge Clark, now the second in command at the State Department; a case, too, that reflects increasing change for the better.

We doubt if any one knowledgeable will ask if Henry C. Parks, Jr., is "qualified," when he is questioned by the City Council about his nomination as president of the Baltimore Board of Fire Commissioners by Mayor William Donald Schaefer—unless qualities are expected of Mr. Parks which have not been required of his predecessors.

In addition to formal education, his experiences have been broad and deep, and successful. He is experienced in managing and policy-making for large enterprises; he knows his way in politics, in and out of office; he is highly respected by the business community and by the masses of the people who know him best; and his roots are in Baltimore, to which city he has contributed greatly and brilliantly.

Baltimore is lucky to have a Henry C. Parks, Jr., to call upon, and Henry Parks is exemplar in that he need not shudder, or even resort to anger, if someone mutters "Is he qualified?" or if some councilman or TV interviewer asks him, "What makes you think you are qualified?"

A NEW DAY BEGUN



Blacks on the edge of a precipice

The 55th national anniversary observance of Black History Month finds 31 million black Americans in profound crisis and desperation. The mean-spirited and maladorous socio-economic prescriptions of President Ronald Wilson Reagan advocating approximately 17 billion dollars in cuts for social programs, if enacted by the Congress, will have a devastating and crushing effect on black Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans and the poor in our society. The mood of the Congress appears to be disposed to giving the President what he wants or in euphemistical language, utilizing "supply economics."

The draconian, punitive and lacerating cutbacks in social programs as reflected in college loans for economically depressed students. (i.e., Basic Education Opportunity Grants.), Medicaid, food stamps, CETA, school lunch program, low-income energy assistance, Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), Social Security and Urban Development Action Grants, among others,) will push the collective backs of 31 black Americans to the wall. The national leadership of our nation, as shown in its legislative agenda, is turning its back on blacks and the poor in the United States. President Reagan has resolved to use his "bully pulpit," a phrase popularized by former President Theodore Roosevelt, in a highly questionable and indefensible effort to break the escalating inflationary spiral and reduce the national debt at the expense of blacks and over 40 million poor people in our nation. It must be borne in mind that Mr. Reagan has proceeded to eviscerate and dismantle social programs with great haste because of the broad support that he perceives within the white majority. David Stockman, director of the Office of Management and Budget, has wasted little time in scuttling human programs in order to buttress and extend the defense establishment.

There is enough money to be sure, in the current 660 billion dollar national budget to meet fully pressing human needs if the Reagan Administration decided that human needs would be the foremost priority. The present posture of President Reagan reinforces and extends the institutional exclusion and denial of minimal socio-economic benefits and opportunities for black Americans and the poor. It represents a chilling and saturnine national disgrace. President Reagan's proposed socio-economic cutbacks constitute a prodigious lack of compassion and sensitivity to human needs.

No where is the situation more ominous and desperate than among the nation's excluded and economically dispossessed 31 million black Americans. Black America is reeling from ancient, enduring and intractable institutional racism, hate and bigotry: 17 black children abducted in Atlanta; 17 have been found murdered; long-standing structural unemployment higher than the Great Depression levels; urban schools caught in spirals of deterioration, depression and distress; blacks sequestered, disproportionately, in substandard and segregated housing; health care services at abysmal levels; the 110 predominantly black colleges facing extinction; senior citizens to live in decency and comfort; insidious and reprehensible Ku Klux Klan activity; murder of black males in Buffalo, New York; national mood of retreat and resistance to human and civil rights. In brief, as in the rich and inspirational history and legacy of our forbears, we find ourselves being sorely "buked and scorned." The temptation is enormous, given the awesome, collective and unrelenting adversities which impinge on black people, to capitulate to self-pity, apathy and self-doubt, but we must continue to persevere. The late Dr. Carter Godwin Woodson, the revered and Spartan founder of the Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History and Black History Month, provides a steady, unifying and contemporary challenge:

The Negroes are facing the alternative of rising in the sphere of production to supply their proportion of the manufactures and merchants or of going down to the graves of paupers. The Negro must now do for himself or die out as the world undergoes readjustment. If the whites are to continue for some time in doing drudgery to the exclusion of Negroes, the latter must find another way out.

It is indeed ironic that 15 years after the late President Lyndon Baines Johnson's "War on Poverty," President Reagan and his functionaries have declared war on blacks and the nation's poor. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s fervent "Dream" that "my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character" has been dealt a monumental setback.

The national political leadership as represented by the Reagan Administration has determined to do its worst for 31 million black Americans and the poor. Black Americans must continue to give our best and keep our minds stayed on freedom. Langston Hughes captures the spirit splendidly and poignantly in "Mother and Son:"

So, boy don't you turn back
Don't you set down on the steps
'cause you finds it kinder hard.
Don't you fall now—
For I'se still climbing
Don't you fall now—
For I'se still goin', honey,
I'se still climbing
And life for me ain't no crystal stair.

The dreadful socio-economic storms of the moment, if we remain strong and faithful to our glorious heritage, will pass over. We owe it to ourselves and our posterity.

Why black conservatism?

RICHMOND

Why black conservatism?

I suppose it is a sign of the times that was to be expected. Black conservatives are getting a good deal of media attention these days.

The black conservative agenda is not very coherent at this point which, I suppose, explains why they are pursuing organization. But Dr. Sowell and his supporters tend to rally around three issues: they oppose busing; they oppose affirmative action and they support a lower minimum wage for teenagers.

Sowell reportedly turned down President Reagan's offer to become Secretary of Education. He is close to some of the President's men. Sowell's critics insist that his first name—Thomas—is quite appropriate. Sowell is just as aggressive in condemning his critics.

A "leader" of the black conservative movement is Dr. Thomas Sowell. It was recently reported that he is in the process of forming a black group to serve as a counterweight to the NAACP and other civil rights organizations.