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Mother's Day

Once a year Americans take an entire day nationally to honor the women who have for the most part loved and nurtured all of us. Many of these women are the natural parents but frequently they are relatives or non-relatives who perform the precious task of child-rearing.

The holiday, Mother's Day, inspires beautiful expressions of love and affection on the part of the recipients of that motherly, but many would say that the tributes would have to be given 24 hours a day every year to equal the love that many mothers give to their children.

The black mother especially has borne a tremendous burden through the years. They have had the task, far too often of raising their children alone. Many times when the father has not been present the mother has had to bear an inordinate amount of the child-rearing burden because the father had to work long hours and sometimes even a second job.

These mothers have brought forth geniuses out of adversity and often reared decent men and women who've contributed to society greatly by emulating the positive family environment that they grew up in.

Expressions of love for the black mother have been immortalized in literary works such as "A Raisin in the Sun," the classic play by Lorraine Hansberry and Langston Hughes' classic poem, "The Negro Mother."

Many other tributes in the form of gifts and other acts of kindness will be given to mothers and in most cases they will be richly deserved. However, a new aspect of Mother's Day should be emphasized.

With the alarming incidence of teenage pregnancy in this country, some Mother's Day activities should be geared toward encouraging young women to put off motherhood until they are mature enough and financially secure enough to give their children a decent home. The struggles of motherhood should be emphasized to these young ladies as well as the joys of motherhood. Activities of this nature would give Mother's Day a progressive added dimension.

Provident Hospital status quo

The discord at Provident Hospital continues unabated. This week the present president of the medical staff and the president-elect were both dismissed from the staff of the hospital and removed from their present offices.

The conflict has been continuing since November 1984 and has outlasted numerous personnel changes. It has also persisted through a number of changes on the board of trustees of the hospital.

With the changes in the makeup of the board which gave the new president unanimous support, it was thought that the conflict would be settled by compromise on both sides.

Unfortunately that does not seem to be the case in the Provident dispute. The firings this week seem to indicate a hardening of attitudes. Whatever the reason, the hospital which is under Chapter 121 protection from creditors now faces a number of financial problems in addition to a tarnished image.

The continuing conflict leaves a bitter residue in the black community because of the uncertainty that persists about the future of the 91-year-old hospital.

How Mother's Day began

Mother's Day was Julia Ward Howe's original idea. She was born in New York City on May 27, 1819. Mrs. Howe was a published poet, author of the original Battle Hymn of the Republic and staunch supporter of her husband, Dr. Samuel G. Howe, director of the Perkins Institute for the Blind and a life-long campaigner for the better treatment of the disabled, insane and the criminal.

"She chose June 2 (1872) as the proper date, and by 1878 she was writing a Mother's Day letter to friends. . . . who help me celebrate this day.'

But Mrs. Howe's idea was not the sending of flowers, gifts and telegrams to mothers. . . .Mother's Day, as she conceived it, was the day when everyone should be dedicated anew to the task of bringing about world peace. 'Mother's Peace Day,' she called it, honoring all who had lost sons in the Civil War and in other wars everywhere.

She urged the newspapers to publish articles stressing the means by which lasting peace could be brought about and she wrote many such articles herself. "She sent Mother's Day peace programs to women's clubs in answer to requests from all over the country." (Three Saints and a Sinner, Tharp, Little, Brown & Co., 1956.)

"For several years, she held an annual Mother's Day meeting in Boston. Mary Towles Sasseen, a Kentucky schoolteacher, started conducting Mother's Day celebrations in 1887. Frank E. Hering of South Bend, Indiana, launched a campaign for the observance of Mother's Day in 1904." (World Book)

On June 1, 1912 in Riverton, New Jersey, the last celebration of her Mother's Day was held by the Pennsylvania Peace Society, in conjunction with the Universal Peace Union. The printed invitation to this festival read:

"Thirty-nine years ago Julia Ward Howe instituted this festival for peace — a time for the women and children to come together; to meet in the country, invite the public, and recite, speak, sing, and pray for those things that make for peace.'" (Julia Ward Howe 1819-1910, Richards and Elliott, Berg, 1970)

That same year at a General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota, a delegate from Andrews Church introduced a resolution recognizing Anna Jarvis as the founder of Mother's Day.

In 1904, "Anna Jarvis of Grafton, W. Va., and Philadelphia, had begun a campaign for nationwide observance of Mother's Day. She chose the second Sunday in May.

On May 10, 1908, churches in Grafton and Philadelphia held Mother's Day celebrations. The service at Andrews Methodist Episcopal Church in Grafton honored the memory of Anna Jarvis' own mother, Mrs. Anna Reeves Jarvis.

"Mother's Day received national recognition on May 9, 1914. On that day, President Woodrow Wilson signed a joint resolution of Congress recommending that Congress and the executive departments of the government observe Mother's Day.

"The following year, the President was authorized to proclaim Mother's Day as an annual national observance." (World Book, 1984 Edition)

AFRO welcomes letters

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

Parren J. Mitchell

Affirmative action— Justice for all

There was a time in this land of opportunity when a black man could not get a cup of coffee if he walked up to a lunch counter. If he boarded a bus, he had to sit in the back. If he wanted a job, the door was slammed in his face.

Then, the 1964 Civil Rights Act outlawed discrimination based on color, sex, or religion. But centuries of prejudice were hard to wipe out. That was true in all walks of life, but the problem was more obvious in high-visibility jobs, like police work.

In Indianapolis in 1978, for example, 20 percent of the residents were black, but the city had very few black police officers. To give more blacks that opportunity, the Justice Department under President Carter filed a discrimination suit against the city. To settle it, Indianapolis agreed to set goals to hire more blacks and women and other minorities.

Today Indianapolis has many policewomen, and 14 percent of its officers are black. The department is more representative of the population and has a better relationship with minority neighborhoods.

Across the USA, from Baltimore to Los Angeles, 56 cities have similar agreements. Most work well.

Working together, city officials and civil rights groups have agreed on goals and timetables to increase the number of blacks and women who are police officers, fire fighters, and office workers.

Now the Justice Department wants to tear up all those agreements. They have asked all 56 cities to abandon them. Last week, Indianapolis, fire fighters, and office workers.

The Justice Department bases its action on the Memphis firefighters' case, which the Supreme Court decided last summer. The court ruled that when a city lays off workers, seniority takes precedence over affirmative action.

It did nothing to outlaw affirmative action, but that hasn't stopped the Justice Department from trying to turn back the clock on 25 years of civil rights progress.

What the Justice Department is doing is wrong. It is tragic. It is dangerous because bigots will see it as a green light to discriminate. It sends the message that racism is OK.

Today America is still two societies, separate and unequal. While seven percent of whites are unemployed, 15 percent of blacks are unemployed. Thirty-nine percent of black teenagers cannot find jobs. In 1983, median family income for whites was $25,757. For blacks it was $14,506.

The day may come when we will no longer need affirmative action. Then, as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "our children will be judged not by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character." But these days are not here yet. Until it is, we cannot abandon affirmative action.

I have contacted the office of the governor, the office of the county executive, and the office of the mayor, urging them not to modify any affirmative action decrees in this state, county, or city. To date, I have received favorable responses from the governor's and the county executive's offices. I have not yet heard from the mayor's office.

The Justice Department apparently feels that attacks on affirmative action as well as on school busing are "morally right." The fact of the matter is that the Justice Department is not there to make the laws — that is what our system of checks and balances are designated to do. What I see is a serious breech of power on behalf of the Justice Department with ominous implications.

Affirmative action is the concept of fairness which is an indispensable ingredient in our U.S. system of justice. Meanwhile, the Justice Department ought to rethink its priorities and open the door for women and minorities instead of callously slamming it in their faces.

Anthony Armstrong

On being a man

No body ever said that being a man was an easy thing to accomplish. The requirements for manhood have been passed down for centuries and, the links in the chain continue til today.

For the black man in America, the rules have been intentionally blurred, to prevent us from realizing our extraordinary potential.

The reason is simple to understand; for, all one has to do is objectively look at the history of the black man, anywhere in the world, but particularly in America and; it becomes clear that the inherent strength of the black man has been a source of fear, for almost everyone else in the world. People try to stop things they fear.

Whites have a basic fear of the black man; worse still, our own woman has been taught to fear (and even hate) us. Frankly, some of our behavior in the American social context has been irresponsible enough to warrant such fears.

It isn't important which came first — the hatred or the fear — but both are clearly apparent. What is also apparent is the need to return to some generally agreed upon standards of manhood and, some clearly defined rules of how to "mount the horse" of these standards.

Some rules follow:

1. Males are born, men are made.

2. A man, first, steels himself against defeat and then waits for opportunities to defeat his enemies — whether the enemy be himself or some exterior person or thing.

3. Never allow anyone, especially a woman, to do for you what you ought to and can do for yourself.

4. Males become men at different ages; never live your life by someone else's timetable; however, you must not forget that you do not have all the time in the world.

5. Learn to forgive and forget, especially with regard to the women; for they often know not what they do.

6. A man is not doing the flashy well; a man is doing the mundane and the regular consistently well.

7. Do not allow people to help to maintain your neuroses; such people do not have your best interest at heart.

8. Pay your own way.

9. Your ego is among your greatest enemy; learn to sit - it "off in the corner."

10. You have gained no stature from taking advantage of the many weak, frightened, and lonely women in our community; your stature will come from, first, respecting yourself. Being a "ladies' man" is easy; being a "man's man" is not so easy.

11. Your dollar cannot define your manhood; so too, the lack of the dollar does not reduce your manhood.

12. Remember, all honest, productive work is honorable work.

13. If you use your mind too much find ways to use your body; if your body, find ways to use your mind.

14. A man learns quickly; on some matters he must stand and fight. Such matters are few, pick them carefully.

15. If the Lord is your shepherd, you shall not want.

. The tragedy of so many modern males is their tendency to allow others to define who and what they will be.

Phrases like, "you can get a woman when you can't get a cup of coffee" and, "all you need nowadays is two dollars in your pockets and a crease in your pants and the woman is yours;" these phrases, unfortunately, become the standard for too many of us males.

Believing this kind of trash leads us to attempt to treat others in a way that reflects the miniscule nature of our concept of the world.

When other people, more aware of their worth as humans, react to such antics, by these so - called men, the men get all bent - outa - shape, not able to understand why he has been told to go you - know - where.

Mr. Man, just because you don't have a high esteem for yourself, don't think, for a minute, that everyone else feels just as bad about themselves. Start by putting the "weight" on yourself, that is if you plan to be a man!

Morality lost at Bitburg

Morality and humanity lost . . . and politics, or geopolitics won when the president of the United States — our president — visited the German cemetery where Nazi SS troops are buried and officially laid a wreath there.

Regardless of what President Reagan said Sunday about there being time for "reconciliation," the decision to appear at Bitburg was insensitive, unhuman and immoral (or a-moral) from the very beginning. No pretty - ing up of the event has lessened the shame.

Chancellor Helmut Kohl of the West German Republic, can be excused for issuing the invitation to visit the cemetery, but we are quite sure that, if Mr. Reagan was in his first term as president, and facing reelection, he would have had the right answer right away.

He would have declined the invitation; he would have found a way to say "No, thank you."

The ease with which he accepted, since he was not eligible to run again, shows what his real moral imperatives are.

Reconciliation, "Yes;" friendship for the rank and file of the German people, "yes." But there are so many other ways, besides the Bitburg route to have shown a spirit of reconciliation to the living people of West Germany.

Reconciliation might have taken the form of scholarships for German young people to study in American universities; or honoring in some way, those Germans who were anti-Hitler amidst Hitlerism, until they were murdered, too.

The last - minute decision to make a stop at the monument to a democratic hero, Chancellor Konrad Adenauer, and the visit to Bergen Belsen, one of the notorious concentration camps, do not blot out the scars of the original decision and bungling.

The Jewish people of the United States — our neighbors and friends — have a right to be hurt, grieved and incensed against the parade of an American president — their president, too — to the Bitburg burial ground, to pay homage to those who, either actually or symbolically, had participated in the deadly atrocities against over six million Jews.

But, more than Jews are incensed. There were thousands of non - Jewish and Jewish American soldiers who were also victims of the Nazi SS and their special kind of cruelty. It's no wonder that the American Legion and other veterans groups are also incensed.

Besides, all human beings should be incensed against the Holocaust and those who had a part in inflicting such revolting suffering on so many men, women and children, for no other reason than that they were Jews.

One prisoner of war recently said, "Anything you've ever heard about the SS is an understatement."

When our president could not see that there is a vast difference between those who were forced to die in the concentration camps and those SS troops who did the forcing and committed the mass murders, he showed an insensitivity, and lack of understanding, that is to be deplored.

One step more and we might be expecting our president to lay a wreath on the spot where Adolf Hitler committed suicide — in the name of reconciliation.

Given time, the Reagan crowd may be holding a memorial service to honor all those mobs which, down the years, lynched thousands of black men, women and children, in our own country, for no other reason than that they were black — in the name of reconciliation.

At Bitburg, on Sunday, sensitivity, morality and human understanding lost out, and politics — Reagan style — won.

The rest must be left to history.

—AFRO SURVEY—

Should daycare workers have security checks?

Warren Hutcherson

Harvey Justis

Denise McLean

Adrianne Stevens

Question: Do you think criminal background checks should be required for day care operators and employees?

Warren Hutcherson — "No. Because you can check and find out good or bad about a person but it doesn't always reflect upon their present character. And people tend to believe the negative about a person."

Harvey Justis—"I feel there is a limit to it. Some background should be researched but some things may be taken the wrong way. And who will determine how the information will be judged?"

Denise McLean—"Yes, I certainly do. Too many things are going on in these centers. Our babies are our jewels. That's the future generation coming up. We have to take care of them. They need to be protected."

Adrianne Stevens—"Yes I do. Thats why she isn't in day care now. I don't have a way of finding out enough about the people. Investigation will at least make mothers think about who they are leaving their kids with. I keep thinking about the Atlanta child murders. It scares me."

Zollie Woodson—"No. They should be checked through regular personnel procedures. I think the check should go back about 5 years. No one should be penalized forever for one bad move."

Zollie Woodson

Melvin Massey

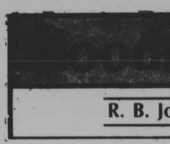
Joyce Smith

Angela Turner

Melvin Massey—"Yes they should. At least some of their background anyway. After all, these people are coming into your home. From the reports of the things that sometimes go on, it's time to tighten up. These things have been covered up too long."

Joyce Smith—"Yes because you can find out about them before something goes wrong."

Angela Turner—"Yes. Just like any other job they need references and resumes. I am very particular. My baby's day care mother is very good and I like her. But I feel I know her. We can talk. We communicate. Mothers should do that along with an investigation.



R. B. Jones

Desegregation deception

Of the many dilemmas that white Americans have to face in the declining days of the American Empire is the quandry over desegregation. The recent agreement reached between the State of Maryland and the federal government over the desegregation of Maryland's institutions of higher learning illustrates the point sharply.

The prupose of segregation in the beginning was to enforce a racial caste system. Segregation provided whites with a sense of superiority and inculcated in blacks a sense of subjugation and inferiority. The social hierarchy was displayed in all its repulsive absurdity.

Blacks could not eat with whites as equals, yet they could perform the far more vital task of cooking and serving the food. Blacks could not enjoy public facilities at the same time they were frequently running those very same facilities.

Segregation in its original form was a kind of etiquette.

Once America abolished the peculiar institution of slavery it made the great mistake that has plagued this country since 1868. This country adopted the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution which made black people citizens and guaranteed them equal protection under the law.

Although this amendment did not address the social tradition of segregation nor its developing economic basis, it did eliminate any morally justifiable recourse to the federal constitution for the practice of segregation.

As long as equal protection under the law was in the constitution there had to be an eventual reckoning with the practice of segregation. The Supreme Court ruling in Plessy versus Ferguson in 1896 - solidified the notion of "separate but equal" accommodations before the law.

America went on its merry way practicing a form of racism, that anyone over 40 can remember, was as vicious as anything currently by South Africa.

A number of factors converged to disrupt the oppressive caste system known as segregation. First, blacks served valiantly in World war II and were very reluctant to return to the same oppressive conditions that they left. Secondly, America's post-war role as the enforcer for the capitalist alliance required changes in the social system, such as a permanent war economy, that would not allow the society to comfortably settle into prewar patterns.

Finally, people of color around the world began to have impact on the world historical stage and an America hoping to align them against the communist bloc nations could not allow itself to be perceived as a white supremist nation.

Blacks also began to put pressure on the system by demanding equal accommodations. If separate, but equal was the rule then they demanded equality brick for brick and book by book. Since America could not or would not afford a dual system of government services segregation began to crumble.

The 1954 Supreme Court decision saying separation was inherently unequal eliminated the legal underpinnings of segregation in education.

Thirty-one years after this momentous decision, Maryland is just reaching an acceptable plan agreement with the federal government. In that agreement traditionally black colleges will attempt to reach a level of white enrollment of 10%, while the traditionally white schools will attempt to attain a black enrollment of 15 percent.

The whole scheme is absurd from beginning to end. First, the black colleges did not turn whites away. Whites chose not to attend those schools until fairly recently and then not in great numbers, because of the virulent racism that still plagues this society.

Second, white schools with the explicit help of the state turned black students away or bribed them away by paying for their tuition, room, and books, if they would go to a college outside of Maryland.

If the above facts are true, then the traditionally black schools should be under no pressure to integrate since they have always welcomed whites with open arms, especially administrators and professors while traditionally white schools have been highly reluctant to welcome blacks either as students or as staff members.

Maryland can persuade whites to attend the traditionally black schools by bringing their budgets and facilities to a comparable position of the traditionally white colleges and universities. A figure of about 75 million dollars has been quoted as the amount that the four state black colleges will receive for enhancement. A figure twice that high would be an adequate beginning on making up for the inequities of the past.

Another way that the state can get whites to attend traditionally black colleges is to make the teaching of anti-racist information mandatory at all levels of education in the state.

Perhaps, when the residents of the state are less racist there will be little need to offer inducements for whites to attend black colleges. The other situation is more ticklish.

In order for the black enrollment to rise and remain stable at traditionally white schools there must be a sizeable increase in the numbers of black faculty, staff and administrators.

It is not sufficient to get the students there by dangling other race grants in front of black students. The essential points is to do everything possible to retain the student until graduation. This will also require a massive effort in terms of monetary commitment. I doubt the willingness of the state to make the effort.

This is another case of America wanting to eradicate its past injustices by placing a band-aid over them. The imposition of the system of segregation was a massive wrong done to black people and now that white people have become ensnared in their own laws concerning race relations, they have attempted to obscure the issue by demanding that black schools which did not discriminate must now share the burden of trying to desegregate.

Desegregation deception has struck again.

Justice is color blind

I predict that by the time you read this column, one of the three men convicted of killing Malcolm X will be free on parole after serving 20 years of a life sentence.

Muhammad Abdul Aziz, known as Norman Butler when he was convicted, has convinced many—if not most—of the 14 members of the New York State Parole Board that he has paid his debt to society and is rehabilitated. Conspicuously, however, the only black member of the board behaved as a zealot—not an impartial witness—in his attempts to keep Aziz in jail for the rest of his life.

Commissioner Ted Kirkland, who will not be re-appointed to his job by New York's governor, has been accused of practicing his own brand of racism by Senator Christopher Mega, head of New York's Crime and Correction Committee, and a most admired and respected black state official, Senator Leon Bogues.

Kirkland's questioning of Aziz and his behavior during a parole hearing before a three-member panel not only shocked many state officials, but moved the full parole commission to the unprecedented action of picking a new panel to hear Aziz's case. The new panel will exclude Kirkland and the other two members of his panel.

Before Kirkland's panel saw Aziz in February, a previous parole panel of three ruled in December that it had no objection to his parole; a psychiatric report was also favorable. However, Kirkland abandoned the legitimate charge of the parole board to evaluate a convict's ability to lead a productive life and focused rather on Aziz's racial views.

Kirkland's questions were not only insulting and groundless, but suggested that he was more concerned about his own personal "blackness" than the convict's fitness. In fact, the climate smacked of racial paranoia.

Although the parole panel's job is not to determine guilt or innocence, but how a convict has used his time in jail, you would never know it to read the official transcript and the statements of this black commissioner.

Kirkland began his assault with his version of history. Malcolm was "a psychological uplifting...a Nat Turner...Harriett Tubman...Frederick Douglass...Marcus Garvey...." Malcolm was helping black people gain their identity. "Today I think most may very well be lost from lack of identity," the interrogator said.

He took this point of view, Kirkland says, because of his "uniqueness" as a "victim of racism." That may be more of a statement of fact than a reason to diminish the system of justice. While there is some merit in his attempt to help black people, he has harmed them by his example.

It seems that in his rush to judgement, he is more interested in enforcing his perception of blackness than in being fair. Neither does he seem to understand that the objective of placing Blacks in these sensitive positions is not to defend Blacks that they approve of philosophically and persecute those with whom they disagree, but to make the judicial system work for all.

Kirkland should be particularly sensitive to this issue because he now is the subject of an investigation of the New York State Crime and Correction Commission. "I was accused of releasing an inmate after reading a confidential letter that was allegedly in his folder outlining his crime plans upon release." Two policemen subsequently were killed as a result of the convict's plans.

If Kirkland goes to jail (highly unlikely, but possible), would he want his successor, a Black named Veroncia Thomas, to spend her time at his parole hearing discussing her perception of his Blackness or the merits of his fitness to return to society as a productive citizen?

And what would Kirkland, as a responsible, Negro parole board member 35 years ago, have said to Malcolm Little, the pimp, the drug pusher and convict? Would he have compared him then to Nat Turner, Harriett Tubman, Frederick Douglass and Marcus Garvey?

No. Kirkland, I suspect, would have been overwhelmed by his own Black-blindness and Malcolm Little would never have become Malcolm X, the "statesman...leader...and pillar for the poor," as Kirkland calls the man whom he now idolizes so much.

African-Americans in prison and outside need justice—not self-appointed overseers.

He clearly suggested that had Malcolm lived, Blacks would have no identity problems today and Aziz, as "one of his killers," is, by virtue of this convoluted logic, responsible for the pathetic black condition today as observed Kirkland.

Kirkland was also obviously bothered by Aziz's outstanding performance as a prisoner: a master's degree; a calming force at the Attica prison riot in 1971 and at Sing Sing in 1983; a counselor to other inmates; an Imam for the American Muslim Mission in prison.