Baltimore Afro-American

Founded August 1892 by John H. Murphy Sr., 1840-1922. Published every Tuesday and Saturday by the AFRO-AMERICAN CO. of Baltimore City, Inc. Carl Murphy (1889-1967). Editor-Publisher (1922-1967).

NAACP move

The approval of a $110,000 grant to help the NAACP renovate and equip its prospective headquarters building in Northwest Baltimore is a good sign for the city and the organization.

This moves the NAACP one step closer to bringing its headquarters here which will generate jobs, tax revenue and prestige to the city.

The NAACP will put up most of the money for the $2.6 million project while the state will put up about a million dollars. The move is expected to be complete by September and the AFRO looks forward to welcoming this historic advocacy group to Charm City. The AFRO also applauds the foresight of state and city officials who aggressively sought to bring the group here.

Budget priorities

It is of interest to note that the city government has found a $11.4 million budget surplus that will allow the city to hold the line on the tax rate and avoid layoffs that were ominously predicted previously.

This surplus is even larger than the $2.3 million due to real estate sales revenue and monies received for the sale of delinquent properties for the taxes owed.

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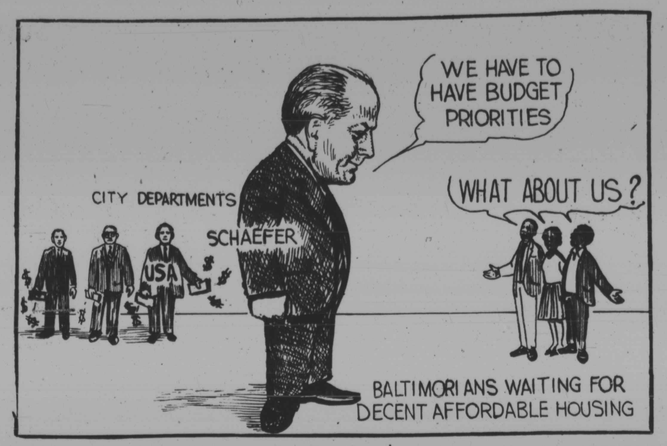
The city budget shows an increase in spending almost across the board, including an increase of $9.8 million to the Urban Services Agency which represents about a 31 percent raise for the agency which has been plagued by sharp criticisms in recent years.

The budget, at the same time, calls for severe cuts in the manpower program and large cuts in city housing programs at a time when tens of thousands of Baltimoreans need decent affordable housing and federal programs are being cut back.

If the city is doing so well financially that it can accumulate large budget surpluses and give large increases to some city programs, perhaps the city can find a way to lower the property tax rate. The citizens of Baltimore deserve serious consideration by city officials of a tax cut.



Just give us the facts

Marian Wright Edelman

Take a moment to think about why you are reading this newspaper. In part, you are probably looking to be amused or entertained.

But you are very likely reading it for one major reason: the information you need to make decisions, large and small, about your life. If you know it is going to rain tomorrow, you will not get caught in a downpour without your umbrella.

If you know that interest rates are down, you will know it is a good time to buy a house. The more you know, the better off you are.

The same is true of our nation as a whole. We Americans need to have complete information, and to have it freely available, to make the decisions we need to make about our future. We need to know the facts affecting our children, our health, our economy and much more, in order to know what direction to take on these issues.

But the Reagan Administration, claiming that it is trying to save money, is cutting back our access to information from our government.

If you would like to find out about our nation's progress on civil rights, for example, you will now have a harder time getting the information.

President Reagan's Office of Management and Budget has virtually eliminated civil rights data collection on housing and mortgage credit, though Housing and Urban Development Secretary Samuel Pierce is appealing that move. Also under President Reagan, the Department of Education is looking into alternatives to the school civil rights survey, which has been the major source of information on racial, ethnic, and other discrimination in our schools.

Recently, OMB proposed a sharp reduction in the federal government's efforts to gather and distribute statistics about all aspects of American life. If this directive is not stopped, it will take effect this fall.

"It's a real trend of this Administration to limit public access to information," said Eileen Cooke, associate director of the American Library Association, in response to the President's proposal.

"Nowhere in this document is there any recognition of the Government's responsibility to provide information to its citizens. The entire thrust is to reduce the accountability of government."

If the Administration is allowed to continue in this direction, we the people will no longer be able to get hold of the information we need to do our job governing this nation. We cannot make intelligent decisions based on pablum speeches or pretty campaign commercials. We need the facts.

It is time to stand up and insist that our government continue to give them to us.

Parren J. Mitchell

Anti-Apartheid Act

In an effort to raise the consciousness of Marylanders and the nation to the inhumane conditions that exist for blacks in South Africa because of apartheid, the Maryland Federation of Organizations conducted its first "Maryland Week of Protest" at the South African Embassy in Washington this week.

The "Federation," which I am proud to have founded, mobilized the resources available to it and came to the nation's Capitol in force to demonstrate and speak out on the policies which have denied blacks in South Africa their God - given rights.

Coincidentally, the House of Representatives debated H.R. 1460, the Anti - Apartheid Act of 1985 this week, which seeks to impose economic sanctions against the racist government of South Africa.

I, along with Congressman Howard Wolpe, Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa, managed the allotted time for debate on the floor of the House for the Democrats.

The debates were heated and extended long into the night with no apparent victory on either side. Although one vote was taken on a weakening amendment which failed passage, the House was unable to vote on passage of the bill itself and postponed further debate until a later time.

The following is an excerpt of the statement I made on May 21, 1985, before the House of Representatives in support of the Anti-Apartheid Act.

This House today has the rare opportunity to dispel the idea that America's foreign policy is hypocritical insofar as Blacks on the continent are concerned.

I was in Gabon, Africa in January of this year. Black African leaders questioned me over and over and over again. "How can your country praise the people of Afghanistan who are fighting the Soviets and in the same breath condemn black South Africans who are fighting for their liberation?"

"How can your country, the great America, continue to give aid, support, and comfort to the Union of South Africa, the only country in the world which upholds racism by law?" "Is your country's policy towards South Africa reflective of a kind of colonialist mentality which demands that whites dominate the lives of blacks?"

The questions came on, and on, and on. I tried my best to answer them in an honest forthcoming manner.

But today, today this House can give a clear, straight answer to all of those questions. By our vote for this legislation today, this House can say not only is the system of apartheid an ugly, evil thing which we condemn, but we shall this day take strong, positive, direct action against this evil thing, this abomination which assaults our very sense of humanity, the system of apartheid.

By our action today we can show the same compassion to Blacks trapped in Pretoria as we show to Jews trapped in the Soviet Union.

By our vote today, we can show that we respect the essential dignity of those blacks in Capetown as we show for the beleaguered people in Afghanistan.

Let us dispel the notion that we have a foreign policy towards South Africa which is really a neo - colonialist policy for blacks in Soweto.

My colleagues, let us vote for freedom, for dignity, for the right of self - determination for blacks in South Africa. Let not this House fail this nation on this vote today.

The House of Representatives has, in the past, adopted several resolutions sharply criticizing the pernicious and repugnant institutionalized racist policies of the South African government.

Although the language enunciating our position has been clear that the Republic of South Africa should cease its "constitutional" practice of apartheid, we have seen essentially no change in the status quo over the past two decades save the accelerated violence and oppression by Pretoria.

Not only has world attention been focused on the efforts of the 1984 Nobel Peace Prize winner Bishop Desmond Tutu, for his peaceful struggle against racism in South Africa, but much attention has been focused on the protests outside the South African Embassy here in the nation's Capitol and in other cities across the nation.

It is apparent that these protests have stirred the consciousness of the American public over the past several months, but most casual observers do not realize that blacks and whites in South Africa have endured an abrasive and often bloodstained relationship since the Dutch first established a trading post at Cape Town in 1652.

Although this bill allows for certain conditions under which two of the sanctions could be waived for limited periods, I do feel that it is the kind of legislation that is needed to make clear our opposition to the abominable system of racial discrimination in South Africa.

The economic sanctions this bill would impose include: (1) a prohibition on all loans and extensions of credit to the South African government, (2) a prohibition on all investment, direct or indirect, in new business enterprises in South Africa;

(3) a prohibition on the importation into the United States of South African krugerrands or any other gold coins minted or sold by the South African government, and (4) a prohibition on the direct or indirect export of U.S. computers, computer software, or other computer parts to the South African government.

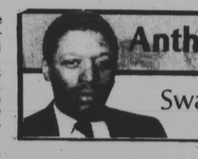
Over the past several years, we have witnessed an easing of export controls, and, increased sales of aircraft and other high tech equipment from the United States to the South African government under the guise of "quiet diplomacy," but we have yet to see any move by the South African government to abandon its policy of apartheid.

Apartheid is a direct assault against our ideal of what is right and moral. It personifies evil, offends decency and affronts dignity.

If we in this body really care about ending the condition of mass servitude in South Africa, if we are really concerned about the violence, human suffering and economic exploitation which results from minority rule in South Africa;

If we really want to indicate to South Africa and the world that the United States is sincere in its abhorrence of the inhumane constitutional practice of racial segregation, we have a perfect opportunity today to do so.

I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to do the responsible thing and adopt this bill.



Anthony Armstrong

Swallow the poison pill

Sir James Goldsmith broke through Crown Zellerbach's anti - takeover defenses, when he decided to swallow Crown's poison pill. T. Boone Pickens, by now the almost legendary corporate raider from Texas oil "patch," has met with his first corporate takeover defeat, he couldn't swallow Unocal Corporation's poison pill.

Greenmail, leverage buy - outs, tender offers, buy backs, liquidations, corporate restructurings, poison pills — what does it all mean? Do these things ever affect anyone other than the corporate bigwigs that vie for control of American industry or the millions of Americans who own stock in these corporations?

The answer is yes; more than most black Americans know or want to know.

In the way of explanations, a poison pill and all the other funny sounding terms that are increasingly leaving the corporate boardrooms of America and becoming part of our daily lexicon, are part of the language of American business — today more than ever.

The poison pill, for instance, is, so-to-speak, a roadblock that a company threatened with takeover by another unwanted company will put into place in order to thwart the pursuing company's hostile takeover attempt.

It often comes in the form of added debt (to make the pursued company less attractive to it's suitor);

Or in the form of a refusal by the sought-after company to include any of the hostile enemy's recently purchased stock in a stock buy back, or in any of a number of tactics designed to keep control of a corporation in the hands of its current owners and managers.

In a way, all of American business is having to swallow a poison pill of sorts. The most massive restructuring of American business since the turn of the century is under way and, when it's over business in America will never be the same.

The unprecedented changes in the character of American business are being forced by the realities of a world that has become more competitive and by the need, on the part of American business, to meet the challenge of the Japanese, the Germans, the Koreans, and, every body else trying to compete in an interdependent world economy.

The old phrase used to be, "When America sneezes the whole world catches a cold." In 1985 that is no longer true. The Japanese have the world's third largest economy and, the Germans tout the fourth largest and; no more are these countries (and many others) so dependent on America for their economic health.

One of the most vexing aspects of all this corporate change is the role of black America, in the rebuilding of American business. Our role will determine, for the next hundred years, whether we remain a vibrant part of economic America or whether we become outmoded and useless, like some ancient vacuum tube computer.

The first thing that we must understand is the old truism "he who pays the piper calls the tune." Black America owns preciously little of America's means of production.

If our labor, as important as it is, were not there we would not play any important role in America's corporate activity. Even this is changing, because America's need for labor (at least the kind — mostly brawn — that we have historically offered) is changing dramatically.

America today is an economic brain; brawn is playing an ever decreasing role. The persistently high unemployment among blacks, even in an economy that is experiencing boom, is the direct result of the fact that blacks today simply do not have the kinds of skills the new, more technology-centered American economy requires, if it is to stay competitive in a viciously competitive world.

Make no mistake, America will remain competitive whether we are a part of it or not.

We American blacks need to swallow some poison pills of our own.

We have to find ways to stop the further deterioration of our total position in this country. What we need to do, in part, is make their interest our interest and vice versa.

We need to begin, on a much larger scale, our own training of "state-of-the-art" blacks, to buffer the loss of so many old style "smoke stack" jobs. We need to begin to buy equity interest in America's corporations today; far more than we need to continue to be the largest consumers of alcohol, the disproportionately large purchaser of automobiles and the rapacious eaters of all manner of junk foods.

Unlike salmon, we had better begin to flow with America and not against it and; if a poison pill is necessary to achieve this — so be it.

James Fleming

Public housing may be owned

Must occupants of low-cost public housing be renters all their lives?

Perhaps not. Perhaps there will be a choice—if Baltimore and other areas join a project, sponsored by government, to allow public housing tenants to buy and own their apartments and houses.

So far, it is only in the planning stages, nationally, but somehow American ingenuity is expected to make the plan more than a dream for responsible, steady, public housing families.

Some of these families come from a background of home ownership — perhaps in the South or in the West Indies — but change of locale or change in fortune forced them to turn to public housing, in order to have good housing at low cost.

These old homesteads were no mansions, but the land on which they rested was usually owned by the occupants.

Since the New Deal, these families now occupy modern public housing, with all the conveniences of the inventors' art —refrigerators, running water, inside flush toilets — the whole bit.

But these people no longer own the land under their feet; they have become landless, actually and spiritually, with no sense of owning a part of God's earth.

This is no plea for a return to the "good old days," however. It is a report that perhaps a way is being found to have our cake and eat it also.

* * *

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is soon going to announce a demonstration project allowing public housing tenants to buy their apartments and houses. According to present plans, the project will involve not only federally financed housing, but municipal units also.

The "Public Administration Times" calls this project "controversial" and it has not been greeted with open arms in many circles.

It is, nevertheless, working in Great Britain, patterned after a concept developed by one Stuart M. Butler, an architect of the Heritage Foundation.

Under this plan, several hundred thousand families in subsidized homes have been able to buy them from the government at a discount since 1980. Indeed, it is no longer considered an experiment!

HUD has already received applications from 35 housing authorities, in large and small cities, to be permitted to offer this choice of occupancy. These cities include Philadelphia, Chicago, Denver, McKeesport (Pa.) and the District of Columbia.

Those opposed to the project argue that the move is "another effort by the federal government to wash its hands of housing problems." This is seen as another one of President's Reagan's ideas to get the government out of private enterprise.

Congress is not over - enthusiastic about the plan, either, and it has forced HUD to agree to sell a maximum of only 2,000 units during the first year. HUD also agreed to spend no more than $50,000 in technical assistance grants to tenant associations which may be organized to push the project.

Regardless of the administration's motives, however, it seems that the plan to allow public housing occupants to purchase, and gain title to their homes, is the idea whose time has come.

It brings the condominium down to the level of those with little cash and collateral but are long on character, a sense of responsibility, and an earnest yearning for acquiring one's own home.

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.

-AFRO SURVEY-

How will you celebrate Memorial Day?

Lawan Scott

Linda McCurdy

Robin Patterson-Quarles

Bunchie Jackson

Question: How do you celebrate Memorial Day?

1. LAWAN SCOTT: 30, HOUSEWIFE

Yes, because I think of the soldiers that didn't make it back. And also people who have passed away, especially my mother; I miss her so much.

2. LINDA MCCURDY 34, HOUSEWIFE

It's a day that the family gets together and we honor the dead of our family- it's kind of a reunion. It doesn't have any political sentiment for me.

3. ROBIN PATTERSON - QUARLES, 35, DIR OF ADMISSIONS & PUBLIC RELATIONS

It really hasn't played any significance other than a day of rest from work. It's also a day of fellowship with the family. Every year I say I'm going to visit the cemetery to see my grandparents... Maybe one day I will.

4. BUNCHIE JACKSON, 35, DRIVER

It's a day for cookouts and family unity. It's a day for relaxation and fun.

5. ANN EMORY, 57, EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT TO THE SCHOOL BOARD

In that Memorial Day you honor the dead, it holds that kind of significance for me. Prior to coming to Baltimore, it was not honored in states that I lived in previously. I've never lost anyone in a war so that aspect is not significant to me. But we do put flowers on all our dead.

6. LARRY HUNT, 18, SALESPERSON

Not really, cookouts and things. I mean I know what its for, but it doesn't have any significance to me because I got to work.

7. UTRINA LEE, 16, STUDENT

No. It's just another day. It's supposed to be to honor war dead, but that doesn't have any significance to me.

8. IRVING FRACTION, 30, CASHIER

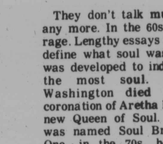
Somewhat. Memorial Day is for someone who has passed and my mother passed away on my birthday. And I miss her a whole lot. Other than that, it doesn't hold much significance.

Ann Emory

Larry Hunt

Irving Fraction

Utrina Lee



R. B. Jones

Soul

They don't talk much about soul any more. In the 60s it was all the rage. Lengthy essays were written to define what soul was. A hierarchy was developed to indicate who had the most soul. When Dinah Washington died there was a coronation of Aretha Franklin as the new Queen of Soul. James Brown was named Soul Brother Number One. in the 70s, he became the Godfather of Soul, due to the popularity of the movies by that name.

The impetus for this preoccupation was the momentum of the civil rights movement that utilized soul force against entrenched racism and the crossover of black music onto the airwaves of white radio stations. Motown's northern soul music opened the way for Stax-Volt's fatback and greens, visceral version of soul music.

The concept of soul and the fascination that America developed for it was a long overdue acknowledgement that black people had contributed mightily to the social development of this county. It was also an admission that there were intrinsic values in the black community that transcended the watered down hypocrisies that have passed for American cultural expression.

At its essence, soul is a deep identification with and sensitivity to the human condition. It is an ability to reach deeply and touch the most essential elements of the best of human longing and aspiration. One does not have to be black to have soul, but in this society it is one of the prerequisites.

When one has soul, oppression cannot be ignored or accepted. When one has soul, one recognizes that there are higher values in life than material comfort or self - satisfaction in the midst of suffering.

Soul is more than mere emotionalism. In the 60s Tom Jones was subject of a debate in the black community about whether he had soul or not. He sang with a great deal of emotion, but the greater question was not answered. I suspect that it has been since he switched to country music when the soul music era faded.

Soul extended to politics also. Malcolm X and Martin Luther King had soul. They touched universal chords in people that make their words part of the noble historical legacy of human struggle for dignity. Who can remember any statement by Lyndon Johnson or Richard Nixon that touched the hearts of people around the world, with the possible exceptions of their announcements that they were leaving the office of president of the United States.

Soul is what made Jesse Jackson's speech so memorable at the Democratic National Convention last year. Who can recall Mondale's speech? Is there one phrase in it that will go down in history? Jackson had the whole convention on its feet, weeping, despite the fact that it did very little good later on.

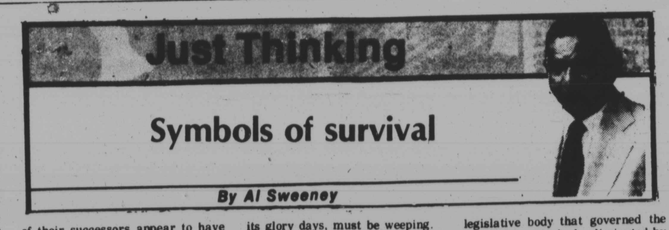
When one knows who one is and how one is interdependent and interrelated to the rest of humanity one can have soul. Actors trying to be the nonexistent "just plain actor" not a black actor and singers who are obsessed with costume changes and lighting may look black and may even be competent in their fields, but they will never be able to play Miss Jane Pittman the way Cicely Tyson did and they will never bring an audience of peers and rivals to their feet the way Patty LaBelle did on the Black Gold Awards and Motown Salute to the Apollo television shows.

Those performances will stand the test of time, no matter how often they've viewed, just as Bessie Smith and Louis Armstrong's "Careless Love" will always sound good. "Dr. Feelgood" by Aretha Franklin will raise goosebumps into the next century. John Coltrane's "My Favorite Things" will live on as long as people love good music.

In the era of Reagan, a time of mediocre rhetoric, lethargic and callous leadership and an obsession with the whims of the very rich, it is very difficult to find soul individuals playing a national role. Clarence Pendleton and other neoconservatives who are being praised as new leaders of the black community don't have soul because they are not in touch with any deep human aspirations. They work for Reagan and they parrot the confused, amiable mumblings of their boss.

They are not in touch with the masses of black people they are supposed to lead nor are they in touch with any groups in this country other than the jackpot conservatives.

Soul is a rare thing, and we could use a lot more of it these days.



Just Thinking

Symbols of survival

By Al Sweeney

It's so easy to forget!

If "the past is prologue," as it is etched in marble over the entrance of the National - Archives building, today's headliners will be lost in the future conscious of today's admirers.

Is that good? Or bad, you ask. I can't answer, remember, I am Just Thinking.

To those of us with the Black Experience, we are astounded when the names of Lyndon B. Johnson, Adam Clayton Powell, Jackie Robinson, Edgar G. Brown, Ray Wilkins, Walter White, Lester Granger, Mary McLeod Bethune, Charles Houston, Carter G. Woodson, Francis Gregory, Judge Andrew Howard, Autherine Lucy, Daisy Bates, to name a few, are casually mentioned.

Oldtimers now drink Perriere, they turn down offers to consume Cuttysark, Chivas Regal, Smirnoff or Gordon's or any of the other choice hard drinks. They are amazed in rap sessions when young emerging leaders admit little recognition of these names.

Suddenly, you realize it has been 40 years when the modern civil rights movement was in high gear.

Space is too limited to recall the contributions that each of the aforementioned individuals made to the struggle. They are just a few of the many committed warriors who fueled the civil rights freedom train.

In many instances, the legacy they should have left and the commitment of their successors appear to have evaporated with time.

Our National NAACP is floundering and is sinking economically. At a time when its preamble that was written at Niagara Convention of 1909, the organization can't afford a home.

In 1985, the national civil rights organization worked on a budget of $5-million but is now limping along with a current budget of $3 million.

Its once highly-regarded Crisis magazine is kept on a printer's shelves because of lack of money to pay publication costs.

Yet, with one of the largest circulations of black publications, it hasn't been able to line up the necessary advertising to keep it circulating.

Walter White and Roy Wilkins, the great leaders of the NAACP, in its glory days, must be weeping.

Men like Bill Pollard of the AFL-CIO work assiduously to keep the NAACP's torch burning. Pollard and his union associates and friends raised some $511,000 to aid the cause and are pledged to raise even more in 1985.

"It's all we have as an organization, we better see that it survives," Pollard observes.

That's true. No matter how you feel about the NAACP's national leadership, it will survive.

Those of us in the Black Experience "name drop", but we fail to realize that the young black leaders of today in their 30s and 40s were either not born or were too young to remember the black heroes of the 1940's.

The struggle for District Statehood is not new. The issue of Home Rule is not new. In the 1970s DC had a legislative body that governed the capital city. The body eliminated by congressional action.

As Delegate Walter Fauntroy leads the move for D.C. statehood he is seeking to realize his "impossible dream" to become D.C.'s first senator.

Lest we forget, nothing is "impossible."

Forty years ago, if anyone had predicted that the town would have a black mayor, the soothsayer would have been carted off to St. Elizabeths, the town's keeper of mentally retarded.

If the town's black council led by Charlene Drew, John Ray, Bill Spaulding and H.C. Crawford continue to apply the whitewash to the town's demographics by legislative actions, the realization of statehood may not be an "impossible dream."

Delegate Fauntroy probably might not live his personal "dream."

The black population will be in a minority.

While Black Experience discloses the axiom: "it's easy to forget," there is a concurrent belief that blacks are "survivors."

When the going gets rough, it has been proven that the brothers close ranks to forge a plan of action.

Some 200 black organizations have been meeting this year in what has been called a "Black Roundtable."

Like most conferences with delegates with different perspectives, it is difficult to synthesize the recommendations and to sift out a common document.

The fact that 200 concerned leaders with different perspectives meet, indicates that the present racial crisis is real.

In the words of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., "we will hang separately, but if we hang together, we will survive." Or something like that.

Memorial Day is coming up on Monday. So in the names of the forgotten, let's hang in there with optimism.

Black families are disintegrating, some of the dreams of the past have become today's nightmares and clouds of uncertainty hovering portend a social cyclone.

Those forgotten soldiers and leaders in the struggle have left a legend for this Memorial Day. Survival!

MAY