—Life or death

Continued from page 1

couple, each stabbed twelve times in their ransacked Pimlico home on May 20, 1983.

Mrs. Bronstein, her hands tied, a scarf over her face, was lying on the livingroom floor in a pool of blood. Her husband, also bound from behind, was on the couch, a plastic bag over his head, according to police documents.

The criminal system says that John Booth did it and should die for it.

* * *

My mother sat sobbing from the back of the courtroom, saying over and over again, "Please don't kill my son," recollected Booth, who remembers wanting to comfort her and tell her there was no reason to cry because God himself would step in and prevail in the end.

Divine intervention had not come by the time he was being transported back to the Maryland State Penitentiary to begin his sentence and a cold reality surfaced states Booth.

He became totally consumed with anger at a system that would allow a man to be put to death for a crime he did not commit, says the man, perceived by many to be a drug-crazed maniac.

The Gothic-like stone prison where Booth was brought, looms over the Eager St. neighborhood, like a dark and threatening storm cloud. Children play out their childhoods against this backdrop, rarely disrupted by inmates who occasionally yell obscenities to people on the street and beat against the barred windows.

Ironically, some young boys playing football in the street now, will one day take up residence in the facility, perhaps for a lifetime.

Somewhere between the football game and the death sentence, an unspoken rite of passage tacitly requires that in order to prove their manhood, it is necessary for these young men to maim or kill someone.

"I was out looking for a reputation," admits one inmate, who at age 16 was given a "natural life" sentence for first degree murder. "I wanted my buddies to say, don't mess with him, he's got a "big heart" and a lot of courage," he says wistfully, "but I feel sorry for my buddies now because they don't know — they are going a long way from home."

Booth lowers his head slowly when he claims that he is the kind of man, who is looked up to by these kids. "If I could walk out a week from now, I'd like to set up a program in the community that would reprogram their thought patterns," he enthuses.

"I'd like to take all of the negative experiences like broken homes and drug addiction and turn it all around," because as he points out, "I've been through it all."

Getting enough money together to rent an apartment in the project and then buying a color T.V. to put in it, are lifetime goals for many teenagers, according to Booth. "There is a moral deficiency in lower income groups and it seems that elderly blacks are the only ones who keep tradition alive," warns Booth.

Booth's lifetime goal is to live, although the state would have it otherwise. Maryland is one of eight states that uses the method of gassing as a form of capital punishment.

The gas chamber was thought to be an entirely painless method of executing condemned men, that would cause instantaneous and painless unconsciousness within the first breath and death within four minutes.

The state's victim is strapped to a chair in an airtight room. Sodium cyanide crystals are dropped into a bath of sulfuric acid below his chair, by depressing a lever from the outside. Hydrogen cyanide gas evolves and the condemned man inhales it. A sufficient concentration to constitute a lethal dose might take several seconds to minutes to accumulate, depending on how hard he tried to avoid inhaling.

However, eyewitness accounts from various newspapers detail death in the gas chamber as particularly disturbing. "At first there is extreme evidence of horror, pain, strangling.... the eyes pop, they turn purple, the victim drools. It is a horrible sight. Witnesses faint...," the papers say.

"Those who support the death penalty are nothing more than supporters of a relic of hypocrisy from the dark ages," writes Booth in a letter to the Let Live Project, an organization that is against capital punishment.

On death row, it is not possible to consciously escape the threat of death, he writes, "it is there in your thoughts, day after day, night after night...while you eat, it invades your dreams and invites itself to your visions of tomorrow....a lurking threat to your God-given right to life."

—SSA union

(Continued from page 1

referring to workers that carry guns or other potentially dangerous instruments;

But Gage said "if he (Reagan) is talking about secretaries or technicians, I have a real problem with that."

Much of the debate surrounding the president's order has focussed on the seemingly inordinate amount of power given to agency heads to determine who should be subjected to the tests and who should not.

Reagan also announced that he is sending a legislative package to Congress that includes tough drug measures.

This legislation, along with other powers, would permit the head of an agency to order the testing of any employee when there is reasonable suspicion that the employee uses illegal drugs;

As part of an investigation of an accident or unsafe practice; and as part of or as a follow up to counseling or rehabilitation through an Employee Assistance Program.

"Our people (federal employees) are sick and tired of being symbols," exclaimed Gage, referring also to Reagan's recent announcement of an only two percent pay raise for federal workers to help reduce the federal deficit.

Calling the measure "very intrusive," Chris Brown, president of the Maryland ACLU, argued that in order to "thoroughly" perform these tests, a tester "would almost have to stand and watch a person urinate."

Meanwhile, the **Washington Post** reported this week that the National Treasury Employees Union filed a suit Wednesday in federal court in Washington, alleging that the order violates the Fourth Amendment, which outlaws "unauthorized search and seizure."

In addition, the suit asserts that the order violates the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978, which limits disciplinary actions against government workers to misconduct off the job that hinders job performance.

—High school

(Continued from page 1

riculum they enjoy so much.

Dunbar's principal, Dr. Elzie Gladden, said, "Dunbar emphasizes health professions." If a student is interested in band and music, he said he would recommend Douglass High School or The Baltimore School for the Arts, for that student.

It is a matter of mandates, he said. Dunbar and other high schools must follow austere instructions from the city and state levels; and each student is required to have a number of credits in major disciplines in order to meet graduation requirements.

A longer school day, due to be implemented in the 1988-1989 school year, will allow more time for electives, he exclaimed.

Meanwhile, Tom Delane, supervisor of Fine Arts for the Baltimore City public schools, said it is a situation of budget cuts and that "the arts area has been affected tremendously."

It is also a matter of decisions made by particular high school principals, he said also, and Jackie Hardy, public relations officer for Baltimore City schools agrees.

"All schools receive allocations depending on the population," Mrs. Hardy said. "Principals decide how allocations are spent."

A high school band is neither a priority at The Baltimore Polytechnic Institute although principal, Dr. John Dohler said they are in the process of developing a new school band.

It is an after-school activity, however, Dr. Dohler said there is no time for a school band, during regular school hours.

The problem is also financial. "If the kids have their own instruments, that's fine," Dr. Dohler exclaimed. Other than that they have to 'scrounge' around for instruments."

Northern High School principal, Mrs. Betty Edmunds said, "I'm trying to get a science teacher; I'm trying to get an English teacher. We have to have some priorities, you see."

At Merganthaler the word is, "Mervo hasn't had a school band for a long, long time..."

Judson Porter, chief financial officer, for Baltimore City Public Schools, said money allocated to schools depends on the amount of registered students and that it is up to the principals to decide how it is spent.

It is a matter of "programmatic selection," he exclaimed, "that dictates how a principal decides to spend his money."

Delane, an advocate for fine arts said, "music should be offered because it is a discipline."

Jackie Hardy said there is becoming a new surge for the fine arts and very soon "music programs will take an increase importance in the minds of people."

—Korean mechant

(Continued from page 1

a business in the area.

Many Walbrook area residents indicated they are getting quite used to the Koreans, and disagree strongly that the community harbors any resentment.

"I feel that Koreans are taking advantage of an economic opportunity and if blacks would form economic coalitions, we too would be on every corner," said Paul Green, who is concerned that blacks are economically disenfranchised.

He pointed out that the Korean community provides a service that is obviously needed because people are patronizing their businesses.

"I am a firm believer in economic boycotts if a business isn't operating properly, this is an effective way of protest," he said, "We should not resent Koreans, but rather ourselves for not taking advantage of the opportunities."

—Coke selling

(Continued from page 1

ference. "Coke's decision will send a strong moral statement to South Africa.

"I would hope that other members of the corporate community would follow Coke," he said. "I think there needs to be a serious threat to the economy of South Africa."

Coca-Cola spokesman Randy Donaldson said the company's holdings include a 30 percent share in the Amalgamated Beverage Industries bottling company and a majority ownership in a canning company in Johannesburg.

Donaldson said Coca-Cola has 460 employees in South Africa, but could not elaborate, explaining that "We don't break down our financial assets on a country-by-country basis."

"Our intentions now are to sell those holdings so that we will have disinvestment from South Africa," Donaldson said. "Also, in the process this would introduce multiracial equity — but the details are yet to be worked out."

Jesse Myers of the trade journal Beverage Digest said South Africa represents about 3 percent of Coke's business worldwide.

Coca-Cola has been decreasing its holdings in South Africa since 1976, when it restructured its business there to sell its syrup to independent franchisers.

"In recent years there's been a hastening pace of reduction of our holdings there," said Donaldson. "Two years ago we had a majority ownership interest in Amalgamated Beverage Industries. It's been reduced a couple of times in the last two years to where our ownership there now is 30 percent."

Coca-Cola owned a juice-processing company that it sold about a year ago to some South African companies.

"This action today was just the next step of voicing our opposition to apartheid in South Africa," Donaldson said.

He said Coke anticipates selling the remainder of its holdings within six to nine months.

POLITICS '86

Continued from page 1

a possibility and it is perfectly legal.

"It's not the usual," Burns said. "But it can be done."

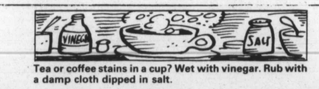
The city council vacancies could occur in January if Michael Mitchell is successful in his bid to become the state senator for the 39th Legislative District, the spot now occupied by his older brother, Clarence and if Kweisi Mfume is the victor in the 7th Congressional district race against his Republican opponent, the Rev. St. George I.B. Crosse.

Neither Michael nor Clarence Mitchell could be reached for comment at AFRO presstime.

However, Del. Larry Young, who has been associated with the Mitchell family politically for several years and who is a member of the Mitchell-Young Team of the 39th District said the rumors are untrue.

"Those rumors must be from the outside of those who know," Young said. "People who are spreading them have an agenda that is wild and imaginative."

Of the rumors he said, "I know it not to be true."



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SENATOR TROY BRAILEY

Senator Troy Brailey

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I will be your strong representative in the State Legislature and in Baltimore as well. I will continue to serve you in the future, as I have done in the past 20 years.
Thanks!! Thanks!!

Your Senator
Troy Brailey

By authority Chessie Brailey, Treasurer

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After the primaries, candidates say, 'Full steam ahead to November'

By P. A. Tatum

The Republicans running for office in Maryland are not resting like some of their Democratic opponents after the hard fought wins of the Sept. 9 primaries.

Evidence of some of this activity came Thursday morning in front of the city's Board of Education headquarters on East 25th Street.

Gubernatorial candidate Thomas Mooney and his running mate, Mel Bilal, launched an educational program designed to help Baltimore City school children.

The plan would raise money to buy new books and is linked to a series of debates with Mooney's debate shy opponent Mayor William Donald Schaefer, whom Mooney referred to as the "Wizard of Oz."

Called "A Penny For Your Thoughts," the plan asks citizens and businesses to pledge a penny, nickle or more for each word Mooney or Schaefer utters in a scheduled debate.

His researchers have found that a candidate speaks about a hundred words per minute, at a penny per word a hour-long debate would cost $60.00, Mooney said.

He is calling for three debates between himself and Schaefer and one for Bilal and Steinberg. Mooney estimates between $30,000 and $40,000 could be raised to buy new textbooks for city children.

"If the mayor refuses to debate the only one who suffers would be school children," Mooney said.

While Mooney and Bilal are now focusing on education, St. George Crosse apparently is taking his lead from the White House and is addressing the drug problem.

Rocky Mountain, a southern political consultant working with the Crosse campaign, told the AFRO that on Wednesday, Sept. 17, Crosse was tested for drugs.

He said the test results would be made public at a Friday, Sept. 19 press conference at Johns Hopkins Hospital.

Mountain said that at the conference Cross will challenge his opponent city councilman Kweisi Mfume to take a similar test. Crosse also is to review his 10-point plan for dealing with the drug problem in the Seventh Congressional District.

One of the points includes the death penalty for drug dealers, Mountain said.

Crosse also is said to be concerned about the increase of crime and drug use in Mfume's councilmanic district and Mfume's lack of a specific plan to address the problem, according to Mountain.

Project Operation Big Vote, which is gearing up for the general election on Nov. 4, is less concerned about people's party affiliation than with people getting out to vote.

Comprised of the Baltimore branches of the NAACP, the A. Philip Randolph Institute and BUILD, Project Operation Big Vote and its members feel it is imperative efforts continue to get people to register, learn about the issues and mobilize voters.

"It is our ardent hope and prayer to register more citizens, educate them about the candidates and the issues and then get them to the polls," Marvin Cheatham, voter registration chairman, for the NAACP said.

Of particular concern is the low turnout of voters for the primary election, especially black citizens, he said.

City blacks have lower owner rate

BALTIMORE — Blacks living in the city have a lower rate of home ownership than do blacks in many other U.S. metropolitan regions, a new study shows.

The study, published in the July issue of American Demographics magazine, reported 36.4 percent of blacks in the Baltimore metro region own their homes. That compares to the national average of 44.7 percent.

The lowest average of black home ownership was in New York City, where only 18.4 percent of black households owned the home where they lived. The highest rate, 61 percent, was reported in the suburban Nassau-Suffolk region in New York.

Baltimore ranked 39th in black home ownership among the 48 areas examined by William O'Hare, of the Joint Center for Political Studies in Washington, D.C.

The study found the median value of black-owned homes in the Baltimore area in 1979 to be $29,600, slightly lower than the natio black median value of $31,594. There was a $24,700 difference between black and white median home values in the Baltimore area.

O'Hare found Baltimore blacks had a median income of $12,397 in 1979 — slightly higher than the national black median income of $11,501.

Deborah Ford, a real estate professor at the University of Baltimore, said she was not surprised by the results of the ownership survey.

"Blacks have only started increasing their income and asset levels in the last 20 years . . . The possibility for them to acquire property is relatively recent," Ford was quoted.

The professor added, "If blacks' income keep going up and their asset levels keep rising, I would expect the percentages (of home ownership) to rise."

City youth on visit to Africa

PHILADELPHIA (UPI) — A Baltimore fourth grader is on an 11-day tour of the West African nations of Senegal and Gambia, Russell Green won the trip by answering questions correctly on the 1985 GRIO Historical Highlights Contest sponsored by GRIO magazine and 7-Eleven stores.

Winning contestants were selected from entrants in Maryland, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware and the District of Columbia.

The other winners of the 1985 contest are Arleen Barksdale, a Philadelphia eighth grader, and Katherine McGarr, a Yorklyn, Del., seventh grader. Each winner will be accompanied by a parent or guardian and a teacher. The winners depart from Philadelphia.

GRIO magazine, published by Enteracom Inc. of Philadelphia, is an annual chronicle of African-American history and culture distributed primarily through schools. The magazine's name comes from the West African term griot. Griots are traditional historians and story-tellers who have preserved African history and culture.

The tour will take the winners to the "Land of the Griots," where they will visit Dakar, the capital city of Senegal. They also will visit Juffree, where Alex Haley, author of "Roots," found his ancestors.

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