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Arguing the issues

This past week has seen the black community in an uproar over the campaign for the 7th District Congressional Seat. The primary contest for that seat saw 9 Democratic hopefuls and two Republican candidates fight very hard for the right to succeed Con. Parren J. Mitchell.

The prize is a great one and the office seekers tried mightily to win it. The election, however, left some bitter feelings that will take some time to heal. Some people were left without elective office and others tasted the unpleasant cup called voter rejection.

Despite the tension of the primary, there were only the usual dirty tricks perpetrated, sign vandalism, murmongering and confrontations outside polling places.

Kweisi Mfume won by a very large margin over his Democratic opposition while St. George Crosse won a close race with Isaiah Fletcher. The odds favor Mfume since there is a huge disparity between the number of Democratic voters and their badly outnumbered Republican foes.

Crosse's only hope for a victory in November was for the Democratic Party to be so bitterly divided by the primary that many members of that party would vote for a GOP candidate.

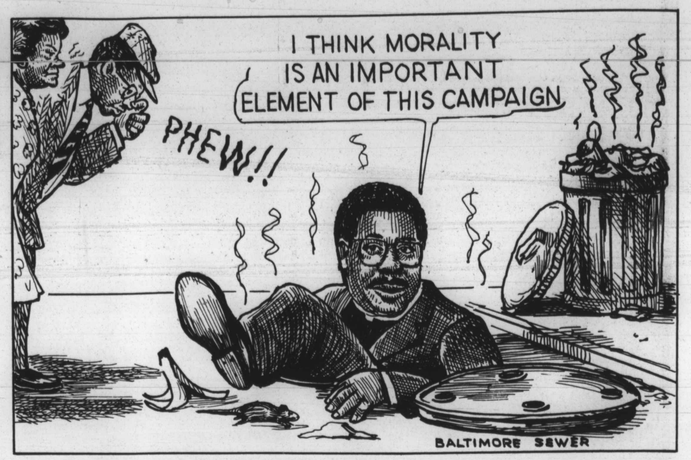
Crosse effectively destroyed that faint hope by lowering the level of the campaign to the sewer. When Crosse attacked Mfume's moral fitness for office by dredging up some paternity suits that are 18 years old, he degraded himself and the election. The issues were settled to the satisfaction of the mothers involved, years ago. By his act, Crosse united Democrats behind Mfume.

What purpose was served by bringing up the issue? Mfume has received the sympathy of many, many people in the black community and the few votes that Crosse might have gotten have been significantly reduced by this desperate act. Even some members of Crosse's own party have denounced him.

The out of town advisors that Crosse has been listening to obviously know very little about Baltimore. This is not Jesse Helms country where smear politics is the order of the day. Black people are not as unforgiving as other groups in America and they are not as easily stampeded by public declarations of morality.

It is a sad commentary on the Crosse campaign that nothing was found in Mfume's voting record or carrying out of his elective duties that was deemed more worthy of emphasizing to the public than the birth status of his children.

If Crosse cannot discuss the issues that are most pressing for 7th District residents without exposing the private lives of minors then he should withdraw from the race. It is the public man who should be scrutinized, not his children.



Parren J. Mitchell

The waning days Part II

The Congress will adjourn sine die soon. However I am required to continue to meet all of my duties and responsibilities until the 100th Congress is sworn in. That event is scheduled to take place on January 3, 1987.

As the clock ticks, I continue to reflect on my experience in Congress. I continue to marvel at this experience. It gives one an awesome feeling of power and, at the same time, humility, to realize that I have been a part of the seat of power for the world for the past fifteen plus years.

For all the good that it does, and it does many good things, Congress should be accepted and appreciated by our citizens. On the other hand, there is an incredible phoniness about the Congress. So many things are done out of a sense of tradition and ritual...things which in my opinion are relatively insignificant and meaningless.

The observance of certain special interests by naming a week or a month in honor of those interests is a case in point. Let me illustrate this.

On the same day I wrote this column, I received requests from Congresspersons to support the following commemorative resolutions:

1. National Burn Awareness Week
2. My Nationally American Day
3. National Children's Television Awareness Week
4. Made in America Month.
5. American Physiologists Week
6. National Women in Sports Day
7. National Adoption Week
8. National Adult Immunization Awareness Week
9. National Hungarians Freedom Fighter's Day

Such resolutions are almost absolutely meaningless. In the House of Representatives, 218 signatures of members are required before such resolutions can be considered. Often the Members of Congress spend a great deal of time scurrying around trying to get the required number of signatures.

During my tenure in Congress, I have signed on to a very, very few such resolutions. If ever these types of resolutions really had meaning, such meaning is now lost because of the hundreds of such resolutions I have been passed since I have been in Congress.

I would like to see a requirement imposed that would call for the signatures of two thirds of the members of the House of Representatives before the resolution is considered.

Of course we have a problem with children watching television, but is that problem of the same significance as the Black unemployment rate.

Of course we should encourage adoptions but would it not be more beneficial to focus on America's Balance of Trade Deficit.

It's nice to recognize the Hungarian Freedom Fighters, but is it not true that even if economic sanctions are not imposed, South Africa remains poised on the brink of a prolonged, bloody crisis?

Jewish holidays

This week marks two of the most important Jewish holidays of the year, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Rosh Hashanah according to Judaism is when mankind passes before the throne of God for judgement. The "Book of Life" is opened during Rosh Hashanah and closed on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement.

During this period, Jews are supposed to reflect deeply on their spiritual behavior and their deeds. It can also be a time when blacks and Jews can rethink their relationship to each other. That relationship has been strained in recent years.

It predated the Jesse Jackson Presidential campaign, but his candidacy brought the conflict into the open. Blacks and Jews have traditionally worked together in civil rights organizations, but social and economic changes have resulted in the two groups being on opposing sides.

The relationship between Israel and South Africa has also aggravated the conflict. If the two groups are ever to bridge the gap, some honest talk must take place. During these holidays would be a good time for the reflection to take place that would make any black Jewish dialogue productive.

Anthony Armstrong

Wealth and taxes

"All you have to do is stay black and die, and nothing is surer than death and taxes." Now days taxes seem even surer than death; medicine can prolong life but nothing seems able to hold back taxes.

With the passage of the new federal tax bill everything remotely influenced by taxes is about to change, and those changes will be discussed and analyzed from A to Z.

Who pays, how much, when is it due, how complicated is it, how can it be used to keep more of what is earned and make it grow.

All these and more questions must now be answered because of the new tax legislation.

The new tax act is supposed to achieve a number of desired ends. First, just filing taxes, a problem for many people, should be made simpler.

Second, tax rates for most Americans will be reduced. A significant number of people will no longer have to pay any federal taxes at all. A minimum tax has been set for business; and one of individual taxpayers main complaints, that some large corporations were getting away without any tax liability at all, has been corrected.

Many tax loopholes have been closed, some deductions for interest payments have been eliminated, and most of the more notorius tax shelters have been tamed or struck completely.

The mechanics of the new all-encompassing tax bill are too numerous to begin to address here, but you can bet that in short order every one of them will be examined like fine diamonds by tax lawyers and accountants, looking for ways to make money or save money for their clients.

How do you, however, who cannot afford either tax lawyer or accountant learn enough about TAXES 1987 to benefit from the changes?

One of the major objectives of the new federal tax bill is to put more money in the pockets of Americans. Put more money in their pockets and they will spend more. If they spend more, more must be manufactured — this should mean more investment in plant and equipment.

The real plus, however, should be more jobs for Americans. This is a simplistic view, but a view that should prove correct in practice. And although taxes are but one half of the fiscal/monetary equation (the fiscal half), with coordinated monetary (U.S. money policy, set by the Federal Reserve) policies the new tax legislation should have mostly positive effects.

Thus, another clear objective of the new tax bill is more money for the federal government.

Again, however, taxes are about money — making it and keeping it. Building wealth is what it's really all about; individual wealth and collective wealth.

It is here that taxes have the greatest interest for people "with money." Tax codes have always been famous for making some people rich and others poorer. It's not that they work any differently for rich versus poor people; the difference is that rich people use the tax code to make more wealth, and reduce losses in wealth they already have.

All poor people do with the tax code is pay-it. This use of perfectly legal tax measures to make money is as old as taxes themselves. It's just that most people think the whole business of taxes to be too complicated for them, and there seems to be this mystique about taxes that make most of us stick our heads in the sand.

With the new federal tax bill comes an opportunity of a lifetime to make some money. You don't have to be rich to do it either. All you need is your common sense, the ability to do some reading, and desire to keep more of what you earn.

It's a great opportunity for black America to start amassing more wealth, the same way everyone else does it, from the tax code.

Letters

Close our eyes or stand and fight?

America is the oldest constitutional Democracy on Earth. Even with our faults and our injustices, this is still the best place in the world to live, to work, and to raise a family.

I know this fact especially well, since I was born on an island called Grenada. My family came to America because my father wanted his children to be educated, to work, and to someday be able to have a life better than he and my mother had.

This great nation has lasted so long because we are in a constant state of change. We are constantly debating old ideas, and confronting conventional wisdom with new ideas. Martin Luther King knew that, as did every other great Black leader in history.

They all also know that the truth in and of itself cannot be bad. Facts cannot be bad. Greed, immorality, criminal activity, poverty, discrimination...those are bad.

That's why we WANT Winnie Mandela to tell us the truth about South Africa, we want Joseph Savimbi to tell us the truth about Angola, and we want the Washington Post to tell us the truth about the Ku Klux Klan's activities.

For the truth to set us free, we must know the truth. And we must not be afraid to confront the problems in our community, even though it may be a painful process.

It was a painful road to travel for Blacks in America to pull ourselves from the oppressiveness of slavery, to fight for civil, human, and economic rights. Today, we have achieved much, but we still have problems that threaten to destroy the progress it has taken us so many years to make.

Drugs, crime, the breakup of the Black family, poverty, teenage pregnancies, lack of jobs... these are the problems of Black America. Either we get serious about solving them, or we retreat into a permanent underclass of society, dependent on the government, instead of ourselves, for our lives.

Whether it is in Johannesburg or in Baltimore, change is often painful, and often turbulent. We always have the choice to close our eyes, close our shutters, and close our minds. But if we do that, we only don't see the things around us, but we don't see ourselves either. And to lose sight of one's self and one's direction is to LOSE.

St. George I.B. Crosse

False prophets

The recent vituperations fo the redoubtable St. George I.B. Crosse, III are indeed cause for alarm-perhaps among the Black community as a whole, but surely among those of the Seventh Congressional District.

While purporting to reveal the 'real' Kweisi Mfume, Crosse has embarked on a campaign of innuendo, smear, and half-truths worthy of Adolph Hitler or those racist boers in South Africa. All for his own personal end.

Needless to say, I will not dignify Crosse's gutter tripe by repeating it; rather, I have gone to my Bible to glean words of inspiration to the Black community; words of moral uplift to Kweisi and his sons and their mothers; and words of caution to this 'false prophet'—Crosse.

To the Black community, "...choose wise, understanding and experienced men, according to your tribes, and I will appoint them as your heads..."

Moreover, "...beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorns or figs from thistles? So every sound tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears evil fruit..."

Finally, "...every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and house falls upon house. And if Satan is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand?...."

So far, the only fruits of Crosse's labors have been a financially lucrative political appointment by Reagan and a constant harangue and denigration of Mfume in particular and Blacks in general.

So far, Crosse has not delivered one good fruit to the Black community. He has 'monkeyed' the regressive and repressive Reagan policies.

The kingdom of Crosse will have its day of atonement at the polls. For it is here that Blacks will thoroughly repudiate his positions and seek his redemption.

Up until now he has completedly ignored Mfume's redemption while via his pathetic efforts at self-aggrandizement, Crosse has publicly harmed sons who must pay for the sins of their father.

Somewhere Crosse forgot, "....let he who hath not sinned cast the first stone!....."

Finally, I say to Crosse, "....Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgement you pronounce you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get. Why do you see the speck in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?"...

What you have 'revealed' about Kweisi has revealed much more about yourself. A luta continua!

Sincerely,
ALBERT C. ROBINSON

Samuel L. Banks

Proposition 48 and black Americans

There has been too much time spent, especially in the Black community, fulminating and whining about the minimal requirements of the National Collegiate Athletic Association's (i.e., NCAA) Proposition 48. The essential elements of Proposition 48 are as follows:

1. STUDENT - ATHLETES MUST MAINTAIN A "C" AVERAGE AS A BASIS FOR ADMISSION TO COLLEGE IN A BASIC CORE OF ELEVEN (11) SUBJECTS (i.e., English, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, etc.) AND ELECTIVES.
2. STUDENT - ATHLETES MUST PASS THE SCHOLASTIC APTITUDE TEST (i.e., commonly called SAT) WITH A MINIMUM SCORE OF 700 OR THE AMERICAN COLLEGE TEST WITH A MINIMUM SCORE OF FIFTEEN (15).
3. STUDENT - ATHLETES ADMITTED TO COLLEGE MUST DECLARE A MAJOR AND SHOW SATISFACTORY PROGRESS TOWARD GRADUATION.

The troubling and unsettling aspect of Proposition 48 is that most of the casualties of Proposition 48 this fall were Black and Hispanic students. In point of fact, over 60 percent of student-athletes who did not meet the MINIMUM requirements of Proposition 48 were Black and Hispanics. This, to be sure, is a tragic and unconscionable waste of human talent and potential.

The fundamental problem is not that Black and Hispanic youngsters are not able to peform effectively and at high levels on the SAT and ACT, but that, disproportionately, they are not expected by the larger white society to perform at optimum levels.

The highest score one can achieve on the SAT, Verbal and Mathematics sections, is 1600; 800 points for each section. The highest score for the ACT is 36 points. **HOWEVER, IT SHOULD BE BORNE IN MIND, A STUDENT RECEIVES 400 POINTS ON THE SAT SIMPLY FOR REPORTING AND SIGNING HIS/HER NAME ON THE TEST SHEET. IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE THE BARE MINIMUM OF PROPOSTION 48 ONLY 300 POINTS WOULD BE REQUIRED.**

It is a national scandal and rank abomination that so many Black student-athletes have been assigned to the nation's educational scrapheap. A youngster who has not mastered the process of reading by grade five in elementary school, to an overwhelming degree, is doomed to failure in the race for equity, excellence and an improved quality of life.

It is significant and noteworthy that in many large urban and poor school districts across the nation, Baltimore included, there are pockets of excellence where children and youths, in concert with dedicated, resourceful and superior teachers, administrators and parents, who function at optimum levels in the face of awesome odds.

In this connection, I am reminded of Mrs. Elizabeth A. Edmonds, a luminous, gentle and prescient precursor of Proposition 48. The essence of Proposition 48 was enunciated by Mrs. Edmonds five years ago when she served as principal of Southwestern High School. Mrs. Edmonds announced that all students at Southwestern High School who participated in athletics and other extracurricular activities (viz., student government, choir, etc.) had to "pass all of their courses" with a grade of "C" or better.

Her intrepid, firm and sound decision, flowing from her deep interest in the academic development of her students, resulted in the postponement of a game with Northern High School in the fall of 1981.

It was determined that 23 of 35 Southwestern varsity football players did not meet the minimum academic level set by Mrs. Edmonds.

The courageous educational decision taken by Mrs. Edmonds subjected her to the angst and hostility of an obstreperous, clamorous and meanspirited band of individuals who were more concerned about producing athletic gladiators than academic competence and excellence.

Mrs. Edmonds persevered and the students were the beneficiaries of her foresight and caring. She stated her point aptly and eloquently in 1981: "I do not feel that parents of these young people want a principal to support failure in any subject." Huzzah!

Mrs. Edmonds serves today as the principal of Northern Senior High School. I cite her leadership here because she was a forerunner in the effort for demonstratable educational excellence for student-athletes and all students. Mrs. Edmonds' pioneer efforts at Southwestern High School for student-athletes and all students are most worthy and deserving of national emulation.

The central point that is crucial for us as Black people is to think less about achieving the MINIMUMS of Proposition 48 or any other undertakings and to set our minds and hearts on the DEMONSTRABLE ATTAINMENT OF MAXIMUMS.

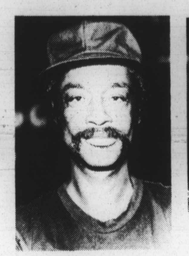
To this end, we must be unrelenting and firm in demanding requisite human and monetary resources for the education of our children, set consistent and lofty expectations at home and in school for our children and, above all, **GET SERIOUS ABOUT DOING FOR OURSELVES.**

Proposition 48, in a perverse and painful way, given unequal weight assigned to gladiatorial and bread and circus pursuits, may well be the catalyst we need as a people.

-AFRO SURVEY-

About the 7th District. . . .

Louis Butler



Roosevelt Jones

Donna Fitzgerald

Dewey Wrigth

Survey Question: How do you feel about the tone of the 7th District Congressional race?

(LOUIS BUTLER,) 50, U.S. Postal Service. I haven't followed the race that much. What I have heard is that Crosse's side has injected a little negativism. They should be talking about the issues.

(ROOSEVELT JONES,) 47, Cement construction worker. I like Mfume, Even through all the stuff Crosse is talking about, Mfume is still a man amongst men. He should keep on trying. He's a better man than Crosse.

(DONNA FITZGERALD,) 30, retail management. I'm really disgusted with it. I feel there's a better way to approach any man. If you need political dirt, I don't think it should go back that far. Crosse has a Reverend in front of his name. I don't see how a man of God can represent people using the same tactics as a man of the world. Why doesn't he take a different approach? I'm beginning to wonder, Is he truly a man of God?

(DEWEY WRIGHT,) 37, warehouse foreman. I don't think it's necessary. People will decide on the record of the men. We don't need this mudslinging. It won't make a difference because it's based on what the two have done for the community.

(CATHY SMITH,) 28, beautician. As far as drug testing, it should be done. It depends on the type of job. If you look at someone, don't hold their past against them as long as they are doing something positive.

(ANDREA BLAND-TRAVIS,) entrepreneur. You don't need negativism being injected in a political campaign. People should deal more with the issues.

(BARBARA GRAY,) 49, Assistant manager at Lexington Lady; Mondawmin Mall, First of all, I voted for Kweisi. I think he's an asset to our political cause. I feel that he's the type of individual long needed to show our people's needs are inevitable. I even feel as though he would be able to stand out if other black people had knitted together. I say go ahead Kweisi. He's the best.

(DENISE ALDERMAN,) 29, retail sales. Kweisi is someone we definitely need morally, politically. He always conducts himself as a gentleman. As far as Crosse, I don't want to dignify or talk about him. He's doing what white people want him to do.

Cathy Smith

Andrea Bland-Travis

Barbara Gray

Denise Alderman

Letters to the Editor

Support for Commissioner Hopkins

Dear Editor:

Assuming that there were no "ulterior motives" that have prompted State Correction Commissioner Arnold Hopkins to take the MUCH OVERDUE punitive measures that he has recently initiated against the "Criminal Element" of Correctional Officers in the Maryland Penitentiary; this writer feels that the Commissioner deserves the Renewed attention of those groups that are fighting for prison reforms, both outside and within the penal institutions.

I, personally have been beaten, tear gassed, and mistreated in so many other ways, over a 25-year period of incarcerations, by "so-called" Correctional Officers and have pursued most of the legitimate avenues to seek redress to these wrongs, with VERY LITTLE success, that it embittered me to the extent that I have come to reject the fact that THERE ARE good, dedicated, honest and fair persons working in the correctional apparatus.

I have quite literally had to fight against a growing "hatred" of the refusal to recognize incarcerated persons as STILL American citizens, with rights safeguarded by our Constitution, of the very persons whose positions mirror the concept!

I feel that the famous and frightening "Stanford Experiment" that was conducted by students and faculty members of that institution should (Like the Jewish Holocast) never be forgotten, for it showed (among many other frightening possibilities) just what the human mind and emotions are capable of when absolute authority is FELT over another human being, and training in these areas is not what it should be.

Maybe some —all but dead— reaffirmation of FAITH will be realized by inmates and prison reformers, by this latest and overly justified move by Commissioner Hopkins.

Sincerely,
Harry L. McClelland,
Inmate at MHC.

Crosse's lost appeal

We do not need men or women in Congress who fail to understand that all people need compassion and forgiveness, including Rev. Crosse!

Respectfully Submitted,
REV. LEON M. SHADE, SR.
Seminary Student
Wesley Theological Seminary

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.

Bloodnotes

R. B. Jones

Connections

They're singing that song all over Baltimore. Women are quoting it in conversation. It is said often as a joke but often the brittle truth shines through . . . "Ain't nothing going on but the rent . . . you got to have a J-O-B if you want to be with me."

In the 1980s, when the meism of the 1970s has been multiplied by the callous greed of the Reagan era, what could be more appropriate than a song where a woman puts her mercenary ambitions on display.

White women had Madonna's "Material Girl" and so in the American tradition of equal access to alienation, black women have "Ain't Going On But The Rent."

The singer Gwen Guthrie is talking about security which she equates with a man having money to spend on her. The beat of the song is catchy and the message strikes a responsive chord.

It's strange how cultural trends change so rapidly.

About 13 years ago James Brown had a record on the charts called "The Big Payback" talking about how the injustices done to black people deserved retribution. There were songs such as "Black Seeds Keep On Growing" by the Main Ingredient. Our music reflected our attempt to be more than the deformed creation of four centuries in American slavery.

Our music reflected our desire for a new world and a new way of living. With the decline of the black Movement which forced all of society to look upon black life and aspirations differently.

Now, during the ascendancy of Ronald Reagan, it appears that far too many of us have bought into the subtle message of Reaganism. Rich is good and poor is bad. Wealth has becom eoverly enshrined as the American God. Before a pretense was kept up that people worshipped the Judeo-Christian God or that red, white and blue flag.

Reagan and his ilk have made it acceptable to grovel before the flimsy deity in the black community as "mean green." From multi-level marketing meetings to television pulpits the message rings loud and clear, "If you're not wealthy or well on your way down that road to riches, you're a loser and not one of God's people."

Far too many of us now view potential lovers as commodities. I watched a video program the other night and the song about a man seeing his girlfriend "Walking in the Rain" with another man came on.

The angry party decided to retaliate for his lover's infidelity by destroying the material gifts he had given to her and cutting up her credit cards. He then proceeded to criticize the dress and economic status of his lover's new man.

It was all about Gucci items and designer names and not about the human element of the situation. It was not about abandonment and betrayal of love and trust, but more like a shopping catalogue.

The boyfriend sounded more angry about his lost investments in gifts for the woman than he did about the loss of his woman. But then Madonna did warn people that this is a material world.

Some ministers have thundered from the pulpit that this society is losing its values as many people rush to worship at the altar legal tender otherwise known as the Almighty Dollar. I contend that the worship of money and the turning of people into commodities for sale and rental are ideas that were held at the founding of this country.

If white people for the most part and a few sick, imitative black folks and Native Americans could hold black people in chattle slavery and buy, sell, work rape and generally abuse them because they were considered by the law and social custom to be things-pieces of property, how can anyone be surprised that relationships in the black community and the larger society are commodity based.

Karl Marx and Frederick Engels wrote in the "Communist Manifesto" that capitalism has reduced all social relations to commodity exchanges and money relations. The underlying assumption of capitalism is that everything can be bought for the right price and nothing has a higher value than wealth.

Dr. Maulana Karenga has written a book on the subject of male/female relationships in the black community entitled "Beyond Connections: Liberation in Love and Struggle." In the book he outlines the difference between connections and relationships.

He defines connections as short term associations that are utilitarian, alienated and a mutual misuse of each other's bodies. He defines a positive relationship as one that is long term, stable and involves mutual sharing and investment in each other's well-being, happiness and development.

Dr. Karenga states that there are four basic connections that alienate black men and women: the cash connection, flesh connection, force connection and dependency connection. The cash connection is what Gwen Guthrie is singing about when she says there's nothing going on but the rent and asks what can the man do for her?

She is placing value on the man based on material acquisition. The question is not how community or family oriented the man is. The question is not how moral the man is or how loving and gentle, but whether or not his pockets are empty.

The man who sings, "Walking in the Rain" is speaking very explicitly about how he thought he had purchased a woman with all the material gifts he had given her and he's dismayed that she could turn to a poorer man for romance.

If we continue to look for the cash connection all we will end up doing is playing mind games while gigolos try to out maneuver whores.

Only quality relationships will bring healing to the black community. Those relationships can only develop when we stop listening to the siren song of capitalism and begin listening to voices like Dr. Karenga and Dr. Nathan Hare and others who have attempted to provide alternative values and ways of relating to each other.

For all America's wealth and material well-being it's people are more alienated from each other than ever before. That should show us that money is not the be-all and end-all of life.

OCT 1986