EDITORIALS

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THE VOICE OF BLACK AMERICA SINCE 1892

Let's hear drug debate

Once the smoke and fury has cleared concerning Mayor Schmoke's call for a national debate on the decriminalization of certain drugs, the need for clear-headed discussion of the issue is more than obvious.

The posturings of Rep. Charles Rangel, D-NYC, fail to serve any constructive purpose, and instead lend an air of hysteria to what may be a very good idea.

The verdict still isn't in on the effectiveness of state-approved treatment programs for drug addicts. In Great Britain and Sweden, the results of state policies which treat drug addiction as a health problem are not conclusive.

But several facts are conclusive, and should be included in the decision-making process.

One, as a former prosecutor, Mayor Schmoke is in a better position than most to judge the effectiveness of the war on drugs. All of us have been affected, either directly or indirectly, by the drug menace. It is obvious that what anti-drug policies there are in existence are not working.

Two, our nation has had plenty of experience with sin proscriptions. One need only remember Prohibition, which led more people to drink than ever before, as an example of well-meaning legislation gone awry.

Three, the state has a tremendous social laboratory which could be used to measure the effectiveness of cutting off illegal drug dealers from their profits. That laboratory is the state numbers game. Why not examine if it has been effective in running the illegal numbers game out of business? Who knows? Maybe the legal game has been a stimulus to legal and illegal gambling.

Let's turn away from ranting and raving, and calmly analyze the pros and cons of Mayor Schmoke's proposal. A national debate is a good idea, as it would certainly lead to the discussion of the three points listed above. We welcome a call for debate.

After all, our drug-ravaged communities are mute testimony to the need for a coherent and effective drug policy.



—Our Readers Write—

Support for institutions

Recent AFRO articles have addressed the need to support African-American institutions. I would like to commend the AFRO for addressing this need and identifying these institutions.

I would also like to add the names of two independent African-American institutions of higher learning to that list - The Park Heights Street Academy and Sojourner-Douglas College. both the Academy and Sojourner-Douglas are the only institutions of their kind in the state of Maryland.

The Academy offers a unique three-year college preparatory senior high school program for students 13 thru 19.

Sojourner-Douglas College is a four-year Bachelor of Arts degree-granting college. Both are fully accredited and provide stimulating, caring educational environments.

By supporting these institutions, which are more than 10 years old, we will continue to provide alternatives for our youth and adults who choose to attend African-American schools of higher learning. Don't wait until the institutions are down and out!

The Honorable Marcus Garvey said, "Education is the medium by which a people are prepared for the creation of their own particular civilization, and the advancement and glory of their own race."

Darryl L. Kennon

Schmoke vs. Rangel

Representative Rangel vs. Mayor Kurt Schmoke is an undebatable joke. "There IS no coherent drug policy" "We are not winning the war on drugs."

These were the two points upon which Schmoke and Rep. Rangel (D-NY) - Chairman of the House Selected Committee on Narcotics Abuse and Control, were in agreement when Rangel challenged Mayor Schmoke to begin hearings on the legalization of drugs here in Baltimore.

All Rangel's prior comments about Mayor Schmoke's proposal "not having gone beyond the cocktail circuit" and assorted other bits of myopic sloganeering and jargoneering simply reinforce a concern long held by this writer.

Politicians apparently suffer a genetic, cerebral and testicular defecit. In short, many of them are simply not very bright. Why would Rangel, of all people, challenge our mayor to testify or debate the drug legalization issue?

Has he no need to ask why there is need for our Mayor's initiative. Is he, himself not a part of the reason why we have no coherent national policy? He is, after all, the chairman of the committee that oversees the issue. A blind man can see that we've lost the drug war; we keep on losing it.

The Representative's challenge to the mayor is, to put it bluntly, a cheap shot. If, intelligent, informed and powerful blacks and whites are giving quite reasoned consideration to our mayor's initiative (after he made it) pray tell me why does Rangel feel it necessary to play political games with the idea when he is obviously uninformed about the substance of the issue.

Have we gotten to the point where we are "staunch foes" of whatever needs a staunch foe? Can it be that Rep. Rangel is so much of a tool of the establishment types that he's picked up the gauntlet through by the white conservatives?

It's amazing how blacks manage to verbally assassinate other blacks in the name of whites, while still pretending to be concerned with and about the welfare of black people. Where are the vested interests here? All drug profits are not garnered by the locals.

How convenient for the vested interests in Washington to have a black man from drug and AIDS ridden Harlem as chairman of the Select Committee on Narcotics Abuse and Control. Guess who gets (or will get) the lion's share of the credit for the failed drug (?) program???

Maybe this writer needs a crash course in politics, myopia ... and ... in the words of the great apache chief ... "how to speak with a forked tongue". It is now very clear, I would have a lot of company in Washington and in some areas of Baltimore.

At any rate, it would be nice to have the benefits of the wisdom(?) it takes to win elections and become a part of the fraternity of double talkers, "triple speaks" and the movers and shakers.

In Rangel's challenge to the Mayor, I see a barrel of crabs "moving and shaking". "Crab Schmoke" began to climb out of the basket only to be snatched back down into the mess by a fellow black. Business as usual. Black against black; ignorance against intellect.

A recent AFRO column on politics (I guess) showed us a columnist who had the temerity brass to refer to the mayor's proposal as "using Baltimoreans for stepping stones". He's got to be kidding. He trivialized a significant initiative and even maligned the mayor's son ... (about whom he probably knows less than nothing). At any rate, he used up the allotted space for his column. God bless him.

It's time to worry about the kind of world we'll be leaving our children when we make a profession of taking cheap shots at each other. There is absolutely no excuse for the Congressman from New York. If he's begun to run for President in the nineties he can forget it.

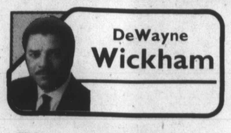
If he's running for Congress again, I dare say that he'd stand a much better chance if he were to be first convicted of stealing for little kids, some gross sexual offense, cheating on his income tax or in some way performing in a way designed to call attention to the fact that he too is a part of the D.C. sleaze market.

If we are faced with another four years of a Republican administration with its accompanying sleaze factor, various new and as yet unpronounced "gates", pipelines and such, we had best prepare ourselves for hard times. All we need now is four more years of astrologically influenced initiatives, and unprincipled crooks who expect to be vindicated when all the facts are in.

I submit that we had best get busy and convince honorable and integritous blacks and whites that there is a place for them in government. The alternative is far too dismal to contemplate.

Barbara D. Lyles

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. Write
The AFRO-AMERICAN
628 N. Eutaw Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21201



The danger of Joe Clark

Honolulu — There are a few things in life more dangerous than an ignorant man who latches onto a good idea.

Joe Clark is an educator, an acknowledgement that is given to him by virtue of his position. He is the principal of a New Jersey high school.

Clark has gained national celebrity for his efforts to rid his school of problem students, people he refers to as "leeches and drains." He patrols the hallways of Paterson's Eastside High School armed with a bullhorn and baseball bat, intent upon making an example of anyone who runs afoul of him.

"I admit, on my job, once a week, I have a crucifixion just to build up morale," he brags. "You have to have a crucifixion once in a while to let them know you're still in charge."

Joe Clark is an ignorant man. And he is clinging to a good idea like fleas to a junkyard dog!

The good idea in this case is the need to improve our public schools. Improving public education is something of a national obsession. Making our schools "better" is a goal most of us embrace. It's the "how" that divides us.

Clark has become the champion of those who believe that disruptive students pose the single greatest threat to public education.

His solution: to chase them from the schoolhouse.

Wait a minute! Before you rush to agreement with Clark, think about this.

The "challenge" for public education is not to teach those who come to school hungry for knowledge. It is to educate those youngsters who have little interest in that which takes place in the classroom. Sure, teaching willing students is important, but it is little challenge for teachers and school administrators.

The jails and welfare rolls of this country are top-heavy with people who our schools, for one reason or another, failed to educate. Educating a student, even one who doesn't want to be in school, is a lot less expensive than maintainng them in prison or on public assistance.

But it's not just the problem students that this black educator wants to be rid of to improve public education. He has zeroed in on other targets as well.

"Parents have no business trying to make policies. Parents have no business trying to run schools. Community control (of public schools)," Clark complains, "is an absolute disaster."

And Clark also wants to abolish school boards. Especially those "in your inner cities" which are dominated by blacks and Hispanics, he told executives attending the American Newspaper Publishers Association here recently.

"Black inner city schools are a disaster" and "blacks and Hispanics are academically inferior to whites and Asians," he charged in a rambling speech.

"I didn't say intellectually, I said academically... We're not genetically inferior to whites but we certainly are academically inferior to whites and Asians," he argued.

Clark's ignorance is dangerous!

Blacks are neither genetically nor academically inferior to whites and Asians. What has become increasingly clear to educational researchers is that income may be the best predictor of academic achievement, not race.

Children from wealthier families tend to outscore children from poorer families on standardized tests, regardless of race.

Add to this circumstance the fact that poor students attend classes in relatively poor school districts and you can begin to understand the real factors which affect learning for many black students.

That Joe Clark doesn't understand this is a disturbing reality. That he is unfit for his job is best demonstrated by his own words.

Commenting on the type of administrators he surrounds himself with, Clark said he only hires women — those who meet these requirements:

"Number one, I want you to be divorced. Number two, I want you to be separated. Number three, I want you to be unhappy. Number four, I want you to have grown children.

"... Because those types of individuals are able to give to me time, effort and a lot of things that other people cannot give to me." he explains.

Outrageous? Yes!

But more than that, Clark is a high school principal who lacks on understanding of the real challenges which confront public school educators today.

"The penalty of intelligence," H. L. Mencken once said, "is oblivion."

If that is so, Joe Clark will suffer no such fate!

COMMENTARY & OPINIONS

MEMBER MDDC NNPA UPI



Kweisi Mfume
U.S. Congressman

Research + Treatment = Progress

As Congress works to make medical care more accessible through the passage of catastrophic health insurance and related legislation, medical research and technology indicate that important inroads are being made in the treatment and cure of several life-threatening ailments.

With premature birth as the leading cause of infants' deaths, nothing tugs at our hearts more than knowing that there are thousands of premature babies struggling for every breath of life.

Born with extreme vulnerability to infections and bodies so small that they could be held in the palm of an adult's hand, many premature babies stood little chance of survival at the beginning of this decade.

Fortunately, recent breakthroughs in neonatology (the care of newborn infants) are rapidly inceasing the likelihood of survival. Miniaturized equipment (used in conjunction with computers capable of round-the-clock monitoring) is playing a key role.

Treatments for breathing disorders that once resulted in side effects that caused blindness have been improved. In addition, infant lung failure has been significantly reduced through innovative use of specially-adapted ventilators.

With an estimated four million Americans now receiving some form of specialized care in the privacy and comfort of their homes, what is described as a boom in home health care is underway in many communities.

New techologies are a chief reason why. As opposed to being hooked up to a machine, some victims of cystic fibrosis now have access to a pocket-size device that administers prescribed amounts of antibiotics on set time schedules.

In addition to allowing patients to lead relatively normal lives, such treatments are much more cost-effective than lengthy hospital stays.

The National AIDS Quilt consisting of 4,000 panels memorializing those who have succumbed to the disease will be on display at the Baltimore Museum of Art from June 10 to 12.

This tragic reminder of the men, women and children we have already lost makes us impatient for some good news. A recent American Medical Association conference revealed that there is reason for "cautious optimism."

Using the analogy that early detection of cancer can often lead to successful treatments when the tumor is found before it spreads, there is encouraging evidence that current drugs can effectively block the AIDS virus if the person is treated soon after exposure.

The goal is to block the virus before it has a chance to establish itself. This will hopefully rid the body of the virus or prevent it from reproducing and causing the disease.

The medical breakthroughs which I have outlined are encouraging news from all of us. As I continue to support legislation to make the best possible health care more accessible, I will also continue monitoring the impressive accomplishments of the medical research community.

AFRO SURVEY

Should the Firehouses be closed?



BRENDA SHULER,
data entry operator. No, I don't feel that they should close. I think they should stay open. I was in the program for firefighters, so I stick with them 100 percent.



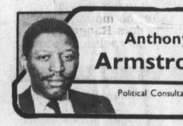
DONALD SELLERS,
34, fry cook. I don't see why they are closing them up. I think we need all the fire stations we have.

BEVERLY BROWN,
35, secretary. No, I don't think it's very safe at all. I'm new to the area; but I don't find it feasible to close down fire stations.



ED HOPKINS,
80, band member. I don't live close enough to any of them for it to make a difference in my life. But, if Schmoke thinks it's best, it must be the best thing. I think he knows what he's doing. It might be different if I lived near them.





Anthony Armstrong
Political Consultant

The politics of drugs

WHICH IS MORE harmful to the individual and to society, a tobacco cigarette, a joint of marijuana, heroin taken intravenously, cocaine, or its derivative, crack?

Based on the latest report from the Surgeon General, C. Everett Koop, cigarettes are now, officially, seen as addictive as heroin. Dr. Koop's most recent revelation about cigarettes only confirms what cigarette smokers have long known, and, yes, the habit is extremely tough to break.

Few people would argue that any of the substances mentioned above have any positive personal or social value; and the question as to which is more addictive or less addictive is really a moot question.

The fact that each of the substances create their own addictive behavior in humans seems enough to make them all equally out-of-bounds.

Yet, and as strange as such a thing is, there is more social no-no now being associated with smoking a cigarette than there is with smoking coke.

Marijuana has long been treated like an after-dinner mint, and is used by people who would never consider using either cocaine or heroin. Heroin has never made it into any social acceptance, and the drug continues to be associated with the dregs of society.

Cocaine, however, has always been treated like a girl who gets on a bus full of men: with a bit of fear mixed with a bundle of desire. Every man on the bus hopes she sits beside him - the desire part - and, yet, each man is somewhat doubtful that she'll choose to sit beside him - the fear part. Perhaps that's why cocaine is referred to as "girl".

The politics of drugs, especially cocaine, is so interesting because, like anything associated with so much money, we want to know all about it. More than that, we people want to be like those we read about who have so much, and if getting involved with the drug of the rich will do that then we're willing to get coke spoons and smoking pipes, just like the rich do.

Rich people may be different from us poor folks, but when it comes to drugs the rich and famous, and the poor and obscure can all nod in unison.

At a recent party it was amusing to see and hear the politics of drugs at work. Nowadays, of course, it's polite to ask, "Does anyone mind if I smoke"? Invariably, someone will object, and usually in a voice filled with disgust, "Yes I mind".

The funny thing about it is that the same person who objects to cigarette smoke - passive at that - is the same person whom you look around later to find has disappeared.

Oh, they haven't left the party, they've just sneaked off to another room, where the host has said it's alright to get a little blow (slang for doing cocaine). Socially, it's now more acceptable to do cocaine than it is to light a cigarette.

No one needs to defend the tobacco industry - they do a fine job of that themselves - but, why is it that we're starting to hear a line of reasoning that borders on a defense of cocaine, to say nothing of the unspoken and long held acceptance of grass?

Is it the money, the reportedly wide use by opinion makers in society, both of these or none of these? Or is it a terrible and dangerous attempt to divert attention from a problem no one seems able or willing to attack—that of the ongoing and growing desire for the drug of the rich, girl, the white powder, cocaine.

There is a strategy in politics that works this way: if you can't solve a problem you divert attention from that problem by making another problem seem even more urgent. We've done that with the questions of cocaine use.

By making cigarettes the equivalent of cocaine we split the public's attention span in two, and by doing so we insure that the public won't focus on either problem. That way, the public reduces its pressure on the politicians.

No matter that the same public goes on killing themselves, and others. What matters to the politicians is that they don't have to suffer the glaring light of failure, on a problem that threatens and frustrates them.

Politicians are a bit like doctors when it comes to pointing out failures in their midst, and though most of them would calmly state how irresponsible this statement is you don't, or won't, hear many politicians seriously criticize each other.

For, to point out the failings of one of their kind is to point a finger at all of their kind. So they don't even attempt solutions to certain problems; instead, they divert attention from the problem and hope it will magically go away.

The other culprit in such situations is money. Everybody knows that the drug business would have to be managed by the most sophisticated individuals, with access to the most largess government can provide.

It sure isn't some local drug dealer who is flying all over the world to get large quantities of dangerous drugs. It certainly isn't some Jamaican gang member who is carrying drugs in a diplomatic pouch; and it difinitely isn't you or me that's dealing with a General Noriega.

No, everybody, including the politicians - to say nothing of the police, local, state, and federal - know that the drug traffic is encouraged and controlled by some Brahmins in our society.

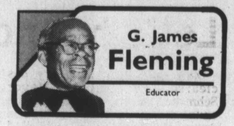
Very frankly, that's one reason why so many people are thumbing their coke filled noses at much of the drug enforcement efforts. These people take the position that the government really isn't serious about drug enforcement, because if they were we'd be witnesses to the arrest of some of society's most rich and famous.

Another theory goes this way: so many "big" people lost so much money during the war in Vietnam that they're using the international drug business to refill their treasure chest.

Another point of view is that small, poor countries that for so long were economically raped by America are now just returning the favor.

Whatever the truth is, the truth is also that if this government wanted to stop the flow of drugs they could. But who is this government? It obviously isn't a bunch of granite statues in Washington, and it really ain't the average dime store politician.

This government is us and those shadowy rich people, and in a society of "equals" they are undoubtedly first among equals. So we divert attention. And that's my friend, the politics of drugs.



G. James Fleming
Educator

Salute to Israel

This year Israel celebrates the 40th anniversary of its founding — an ancient and historic people settled, at long last, in a homeland they can call their own, with the blessings of most of the nations of the world.

After being harassed and chased from pillar to post in most "civilized" countries, in 1948 the Jews of the world were deemed worthy of a national home.

The place which became Israel was god-forsaken for the most part. Today, however, flowers, fruit and vegetables are abundant where nothing could grow before. Water is now flowing uphill and downhill, rendering arid lands no longer arid.

The Israeli education and health systems are rated among the best anywhere and, in most peaceful times, these programs serve both Israelis and people from the neighboring Arab countries.

Israeli international aid, extended to co-developing countries of Africa, have been tailored to provide the greatest good to the receiving people.

This is the Israel and its people that we salute and congratulate today.

* * * *

It would be amusing if it were not so sad, the furor which has been raised by Mayor Kurt Schmoke's proposal that Congress hold hearings on the pros and cons of decriminalizing the drug traffic.

It was only a proposal, a suggestion for dialogue and debate, made to the National Conference of Mayors.

Speaking out of his experience as state's attorney, he accented what everyone knows, or should know: (1) The greatest incentive to the drug business is the huge profits that can be made, and (2) The total failure of government, on every level, to control or combat drugs — after trying for over 25 years.

A definite plus for the mayor, however, has come from several public health officers and editors who have supported the mayor's call for discussion in high places.

* * * *

While congratulations are being passed around over the new Orioles sports complex, to be built in downtown Baltimore, the pledges made to the minority community must not be forgotten.

Several months ago, the chairman of the Maryland Stadium Authority, Herbert J. Belgrad, in writing, gave assurance that there will be the fullest non-discriminatory employment practices in connection with all areas of the condemnation, demolition, construction and operation of the new facility.

In other words, blacks, women and other minorities should also benefit from the over 4,000 new jobs that will be generated, from now to the completion of the stadium.

Delegate Howard P. Rawlings (D-Md.) and Senator Decatur W. Trotter (D-PG), and the Maryland Legislative Black Caucus may be depended upon to be watchdogs over this project.

* * * *

Is it hypocrisy or for real? Now and then, it has been heard, that "We just can't vote for Jesse Jackson but, if it was another black, like Mayor Tom Bradley of Los Angeles or Congressman Bill Gray of Philadelphia, we would gladly vote for a black man as president."

Although white voters have been increasingly supporting black candidates lately, it cannot be overlooked that Tom Bradley, after three successful terms as mayor of Los Angeles, could not win enough white votes, statewide, to be elected governor, in either of his two campaigns for the governorship.

It is almost an axiom in black circles that most whites will not vote for a black candidate if there is any way to avoid doing so.