EDITORIALS

John J. Oliver, Jr.
Chairman of the Board

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President

THE VOICE OF BLACK AMERICA SINCE 1892

Hampden horror

A rude twist of fate has snared Carolyn Braxton-Bey, Eric Boyce-Bey and their three children in an ugly situation. The couple, who regularly deny their blackness, have been judged black and are thus abused by their neighbors.

The couple claim they are Moorish-Americans, but to the regressive elements who frequent the Hampden community, they are as black and as welcome as the Plague.

One would hope that, as we approach the end of the 20th century, the only boundaries to a family's desire to settle in the neighborhood of their choice would be economic ones.

But unfortunately, the unfolding story of the beleaguered couple shows just how short a distance we have come. Each day, the family is forced to run a verbal and physical gauntlet as they merely try to do what most of us seek to do—live a decent life.

In reporter Ejike Obineme's front-page story, several whites seem to condone and even justify the treatment accorded the family by claiming that whites would be equally abused if they moved into black neighborhoods.

Whether or not that is true remains to be seen. Historically, the fear of black backlash among whites has always been infinitely greater than the actual reaction.

What is true is that Eric Boyce-Bey, Carolyn Braxton-Bey and their children are being abused by racist action. To even attempt to justify the treatment by claiming whites would suffer equally at the hands of blacks is **IGNORANT AND UNFORGIVEABLE.**

There can be no real movement toward racial harmony unless people such as the Hampden hooligans wake up to the fact that we **ALL** must live together.

Iron fist/velvet glove

The bloom is off the rose, and the honeymoon is over. We could go on in this vein, but the bottom line is that Mayor Kurt Schmoke's real work as mayor is just beginning.

Early on in his administration, it was easy to characterize the mayor's enemies as conservatives or as hangers-on from the Schaefer era.

But a new consensus of opposition to the mayor appears to be forming, and it appears he would do well to consider fence-mending strategies. He has not been able to form an amicable relationship with city employees and politicians accustomed to Schaefer's style of government. Some of this is natural, as Mayor Schmoke does have the power to redistribute patronage and largess to those who loyalty he commands.

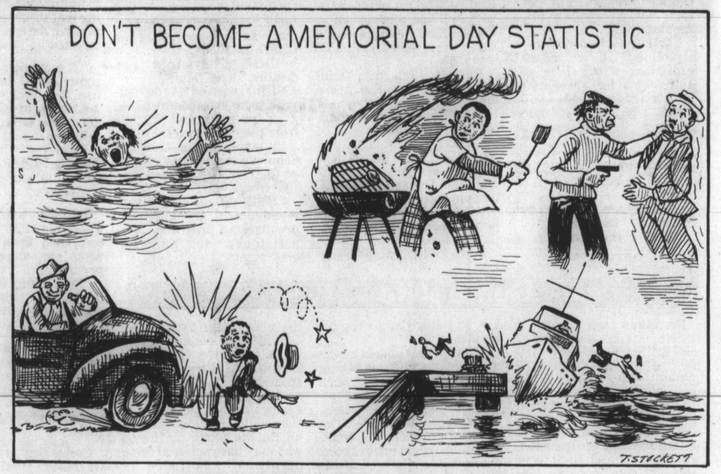
But all battles must end, no war goes on forever, and one of the saving graces of the American political system is the flexibility to change with the times and embrace old enemies and new policies.

But the threat posed by the Babusci's, the Cunninghams and others pales somewhat compared to the larger problem of alienating natural mayoral supporters.

At least one member of the Fourth District Councilmanic delegation complained recently that he and other natural allies were often rebuffed in their efforts to form strategic and tactical coalitions with the major.

All of these rumblings have come to a head as council members from the disrate First, Sixth and Fourth districts have banded together to oppose the closing of firehouses or reductions of emergency fire services in their district.

Granted, Mayor Schmoke has the courage to take an unpopular stand. But we hope he has the political savvy to build a lasting relationship with both the formal and informal powers-that-be in the city of Baltimore.



Our Readers Write

Jackson has viable candidacy

The question of what Jesse Jackson wants has been misput. The real worry is what America needs.

We have become a society that juggles biological engineering and nuclear power, pretending not to know how easily the stuff could bring down thousands of deaths and centuries of contamination. The public expresses few substantive opinions, the industrialists insist they can turn the corner on profitability, and leadership seeks a middle ground

Conviction has come to mean that which would prove beyond a doubt that a person is unworthy of our trust. Conviction as vision of what we all can behold (and be held by) is hard to find.

The feeling that no one is watching the store has spread a tension upon the public. It is invisible, like radiation. On the Streets, it shows itself as flattened lilts and absence of easy natural joy, as a universal habit of not connecting glances unless you're looking for a hustle. It's lethargy, not direction, that maintains order in America.

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 public needs to stop blinking between racial knee-jerks and look! Whether Jesse Jackson is someone else's notion of the "compleat" presidential package is moot. He's in contention because he prevailed over the process of elimination.

His ability to better the odds derives not from his being an insider, which he isn't, but from his inheritance. It's come down from his relatives who walked out of slavery against the will of a public that did not want to live by its own rules of fair play and civility.

"Democracy" and "Free Enterprise" are NOT of first importance with the powers that be. Their real issue is staying on top; by being better, by cheating, by changing the rules. That Jackson would jump up is acceptible to their attitude that life is just a game; but this man knows it's not a fun and games situation and he "ain't playing".

FREDERICK NASTVOGEL

Reader praises AFRO columnist

Dear Editor:

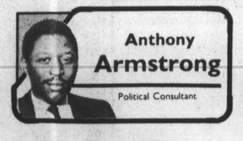
This letter that I'm writing is in reference to the articles of Ms. Twilah C. Scarborough. I have to say her writing touches the minds and hearts of the people.

I am a woman who studies quality and I recognize a quality mind when I see one.

Ms. Scarborough, from what I've read, is a woman of ethics and morals, and I hope she continues to write because she is inspiring to a lot of people.

I really hope you continue to print her feelings and ideas, because they are definitely a reality and enthusiastic.

Ms. Clara McCray
Baltimore, Md.



Anthony Armstrong
Political Consultant

Failing while passing

THERE'S THIS COMMERCIAL on television that shows a group of parents at a meeting in which they are discussing the education their kids are receiving at the community high school.

One of the parents abruptly, but politely, asked the meeting's leader to "table" their discussion so that the issue of the physical fitness of their student/ children can be addressed first.

This parent is apparently worried that his child, "might be passing her test but failing her future."

Though the commercial is about the physical fitness of our youth, the concern of the parent, as voiced in his statement about passing test while failing futures, is a matter that needs to go beyond just a caring for the health of the body, to include the health of our student childrens' minds too.

For, in too many large cities, Baltimore included, too many of our school children may well be passing their test and, nevertheless, failing their futures. The overwhelming number of such children-at-risk are black.

Though most educators will deny it, a two-tier system of public education has been built in America, and the bottom tier is being filled up with usually poor, urban bound boys and girls, from homes where there is usually only one parent.

This process has been under way almost since the first days of Brown vs. The Board of Education (of Topeka, Kansas), more than thirty years ago. In the last decade or so, however, the process of creating essentially what are two separate schools systems, within one, has quickened to a point where the job is, now, almost complete.

Baltimore's public school system is a classic example of this national trick; and the consequences that it holds for black kids are truly freightening, certainly unfair, and most probably, illegal.

Oh, the days when a Bull Connor type will stand in the schoolhouse door to prevent black (and poor) students from entering is gone, to be sure; but the new roadblocks that have been constructed in his place, are more preventive to the education of our kids than any Bull Connor could ever be.

Whether through man or method, Baltimore's predominently black public school system has become really two systems - one that has some semblance of quality,anda second, vastly larger one, that does little more than watch kids and penalize kids.

Chances are, if you have kids in the system, your child could be passing all his/her tests and roundly flunking their futures.

This is not something that just snuck-up on people, educators and families alike; this is a conscious and planned attempt to insure the futures for a relative few select kids, while acting out plans to effectively forget about the rest.

Public education in America has become a set of systems that involve too many of the wrong people, that seek to do too much of the wrong things, for what are turning out to be the wrong reasons.

The issues at hand are long range issues, and the objectives ultimately go to the heart of education - power. Education, like nothing else, is truly the power to change one's circumstances.

It follows, then, that if I want to keep someone from getting power, I must prevent them from getting education.

The power at stake here is not the kind we think of when we muse about political candidates or big business leaders: the kind of power being targeted here is the power people gain from education, that allows them to empower themselves.

To restrict the flow of a good education is to lock-out the possibility of people being able to manage and control their own lives; and to effect the lives of their families, their communities, and their entire world.

It was no accident in the days of slavery that the two things you could be instantaneously killed for were, one, being caught looking at the white woman, and, two, attempting to get or give education. The first was an effront to the salve boss's ego; the second was, as far as the slave boss was concerned, an effront to a whole way of life.

"How ya gonna keep-em down on the farm after they've seen Paris?" In the same vein, "How ya gonna keep people dumb after they've gotten a taste of education, and the power it brings"? It was that way in 1788, and it remains that way in 1988.

Yet, if trying to deny a whole segment of Americans the opportunity that education offers for self empowerment is the first objective, then money has to a close second.

Frankly, there are people out there - educators, politicians, social architects, and the like - who don't believe your kid is worth spending the same amount of money to educate as, say, a kid who lives in Montgomery County, Maryland, or Grosse Point, Michigan.

Included are also a lot of blacks who don't believe your black child is as good as their black child, and they have joined the others in insuring less than a fair education opportunity for your child.

If you don't believe me just ask those black teachers and administrators, in Baltimore, where their kids attend school. Their answer, if they'll tell at all, will be one of the top-tier public schools, or one of the area's parochial or private schools.

The point is important, because a public school teacher that wouldn't educate his own kid in the public schools system is a lot like a chef who won't eat at his own restaurant, or an auto worker who won't buy one of the cars he helped manufacture.

So, while little Johnnie or Mary goes merrily merrily on, passing their test, the same Johnnie or Mary wounds up graduating from public school not knowing how to read, unable to complete a job application, or struggling through a college, only to drop-out along the way. In part, this can go on because parents (a majority of Baltimore public school kids reside in single parent homes - overwhelmingly with mother) let it.

The incompleteness felt by so many of these parents, as parents, and, it must be said, the growing animosity of too many parents toward too many of their children, is a major factor in the conditions that foster this wholesale ripen-off of these defenseless kids.

We've blown this trumpet before: and in the past we've been called a sensationalist for doing so. Fine! If sensationalism is the only thing that will call attention to the inequities in this city's , or America's, public education systems, then sensationism it shall be.

If need be, I'll get a brass band. Someone has to do something; otherwise too many of our kids will go on passing their test, and failing their futures.

COMMENTARY & OPINIONS

MEMBER MDDC NNPA UPI

F. Gregory Newton
Educator

Foresters earn rousing salute

This final report on the phenomenal scholastics being produced at the Forest Park High School highlights yet another graduating senior.

That student is 17-year-old Tracey Harvin, winner of the "Eleventh Annual 'Baltimore's Best' Writing Contest," which was held on April 28, 1988. This year's essay topic was, "How Will Reading Improve Your Life?"

Miss Harvin, who resides at 2816 Hillsdale Avenue, in Baltimore, will be honored at the awards ceremony on June 2, 1988 where, as winner, she will be recipient of a full scholarship to the college of her choice, and will be invited to have lunch with Baltimore's Mayor — The Honorable Kurt Schmoke.

Tracey's entry was said to be a work of literary beauty by those who viewed it. In her essay, she eloquently stated that, "Reading is the catalyst which sets the human mind in motion. It feeds the human hunger for knowledge and wisdom; adventure and danger." According to Miss Harvin, "Reading is the key which opens the door to new worlds."

As a young person who gives intelligent thought to her world is for each individual to strive for complete development of himself or herself. She feels it is this lack of a sense of self-fulfillment which results in much of the problems and anti-social behavior in today's world.

Tracey — an honor student at Forest Park — aspires to attend and complete college, and to become a successful writer. A modest and personable young scholar, her hobbies are simply reading, writing, and sewing.

Thus, all of Baltimore salutes Tracey Harvin for this beginning milestone of achievement.

And indeed, the month of April 1988 was a rewarding one for the entire Forest Park High School. For, it was during this month that other accomplishments occurred; not the least of which was the "Citizenship Test Of Basic Skills," an annual standardized examination administered by the Baltimore Public School System," on which the Forest Park Student body earned the highest average score of all the other comprehensive or zoned schools in the city.

Those average scores per grade were as follows: 9th Grade equals 72 percent, 10th Grade equals 80 percent, and 11th grade equals 70 percent, for a total average score of 74 percent; While the total average score made by all the other zoned schools was 66.5 percent. Even more phenomenal, however, was that more than a dozen "Foresters" made perfect scores on that examination.

Finally, the Science Department, in keeping with its standard, sponsored two seminars on May 18, 1988. They included one by Judy Tucker, representative of the "Lady Maryland Program;" and one by the "Bridge Builders," a group of engineers and one accountant, from the Westinghouse corporation.

The "Lady Maryland" is the sister ship to the "Pride Of Baltimore." It is a sailing classroom which, for the past three years, has taken students on cruises of the Chesapeake Bay to study the ecology of the area, to collect specimen, and to learn the skills of boating. Forest Park High might be the first inner-city school to participate in the program. The students are scheduled to set sail on June 10, 1988.

AFRO SURVEY

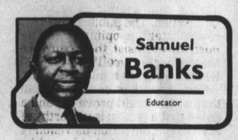
How will gay rights affect Baltimore?

Anita Hofmeister, 37 beautician; "I don't think it will affect the city at all. I think it is silly. People are going to do what they want to do. I don't think it will make people do anything for or against them.

Lona Rhoades, 26, credit advisor; "I think it will allow those who are already in jobs, and doing quite well, the opportunity to be promoted. I don't think it will attract more gay people to the city, but rather protect those that are here.

Aaron Samuels, 34, welding instructor; "I think it will be good for the city because it will put a little more protection on gay people, and they deserve protection just like any other man or woman because they are people. They should be able to be employed and benefit from the same civil rights as everyone else. Sometimes, I've been mistaken as gay, so I can see what gay people go through with people on the streets harassing them.

Larry Miller, 42, Salesman; "I don't think it will change anything. I don't think the bill is that strong. From what I understand, they would still have to file a complaint with the Civil Rights Commission.



Samuel Banks
Educator

The Class of 1988:

One of the columns I thoroughly enjoy writing is my annual FELICITATIONS AND CHALLENGES TO THE GRADUATING CLASSES. In this vein, as with past graduating classes, I extend earnest, heartfelt and hearty congratulations to the CLASS OF 1988. Your achievements, against the odds, constitutes a luminous, solid and inspirational manifestation of intellectual potency and academic witness. I am most proud of all of you.

At this time most of the colleges and universities have gone through the annual rites of commencement pregnant with the sonorous melodies of Mendelssohn's "War March of the Priests," Sir Edward Elgar's "Pomp and Circumstance" and other majestive and moving music.

Honorary degrees have been tendered, with the usual somberness and delight of college-university presidents and faculties, to expectant and joyous honorees, graduates are bedecked in flowing robes, caps and hoods peculiar to their degrees; parents, relatives, friends and teachers are exalted and proud and the principal speaker for the occasion, in his/her way, has challenged you to make a happy and distincitive difference in a world at war with itself.

You are now a part of the world of letters and ideas and so much, in your tender years, is expected of you. WELCOME ABOARD AND CONGRATULATIONS.

It is in the spirit of HIGH EXPECTATIONS AND HOPES that I suggest a few critical and pivotal challenges to the CLASS OF 1988. The fundamental challenges are as follows:

DARE TO BE A RISK-TAKER A DEMONSTRABLE EXCELLENCE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

You now represent a special breed and group in our nation as a person of letters. MUCH HAS BEEN GIVEN TO YOU AND MUCH IS REQUIRED. The marvelous and tantalyzing academic theories which have thrilled and transported you for the past four years must now be put to the test in helping to forge, maintain and extend a more loving, caring and humane body politic.

Your specialized knowledge, especially within the Black community, reeling from over three centuries of institutional racism, neglect and exclusion to bring hope to many caught, veritably, in a death wish for drugs, fast and riotous living and galloping alienation from our historic roots. WE COUNT ON YOU TO MAKE A SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE.

DARE TO WORK FOR A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

In so many ways as Black people in the American social order with the dizzying technological changes and cybernetics, we have begun, in too many instances, to lose the ancient and steadying sense of community, a loving and caring feeling for each other and to countenance, in the name of the acquisition of things and unrestrained pleasure-seeking, once again, self-hate.

It is we who must move among the dispossessed, fainthearted and perpetual revelers and help them, in our own way, to "COME HOME" in a spirit of unity, solidarity and high purpose.

The exquisite knowledge and skills you have acquired can help to strike a mighty blow for psychological liberation, mutual progress and salvation.

DARE TO JOIN IN THE ONGOING STRUGGLE AGAINST RACISM, SEXISM AND RELIGIOUS BIGOTRY

As fledgling and well-educated lawyers, medical doctors, dentists, preachers, architects, educators, nurses, social workers, psychologists, technicians, among other callings, you are needed now in the struggle for equity, justice and equality of opportunity in the American social order.

DARE TO BE A ROLE MODEL FOR OTHERS

The poet William Wordsworth admonishes us directly: "The world is too much with us; late and soon. Getting and spending we lay waste our powers." I challenge you as a high school or university graduate, in your tender years, to take what the Danish philosopher, Soren Kierkegaard, calls the "leap of faith" to rise above a *concentration on things and emphasize people and their high possibilities.*

In your restless and buoyant years, armed with the best our nation can afford in terms of knowledge, I challenge you through your example as a celebrant of the world of ideas to persuade, induce, motivate or persuade others to follow your example. *WE COUNT ON YOU.*

I extend special and heartfelt congratulations to all of the graduating seniors in the Baltimore City School and high school and university graduates throughout our nation. You have now commenced to begin the lifelong process of education. I am particularly proud of Ms. DeChanta Jordan, graduate of the University of the District of Columbia, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. James Jordan of Washington, D.C., Ms. Pilar Burke, graduate of Hampton University, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Bernie Burke of Baltimore; Ms. Lisa Jackson, graduate of University of Virginia, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John Jackson, Landover, Maryland. Mr. Larry K. Harcum, M.A. Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling, Coppin State College. A loving and hearty salute to all of our graduates.

The problems that plague our society are complex, burdensome and multitudinous, but it is still an exciting time to be alive and about the business of well-doing. I hope, in this sanguine and hopeful spirit, that you as graduates will seize the moment to make this a better world for all 5 billion of us on Earth. Paul Laurence Dunbar provides a sobering and heartening challenge for all of us:

"He labored hard and failed at last,
His sails too weak to bear the blast,
The raging tempests tore away
And sent his beating bark astray.
But what care he
For wind or sea!
He said, 'The tempest will be short,
My bark will come to port.'
He saw me through every cloud a gleam -
He had his dreams."

I hope that you as highly deserving members of the Class of 1988 will hold high your dreams, through it all, and go forward and upward. We are, in your tender years, counting on you. Congratulations, from the bottom of my heart, Class of 1988.

DeWayne Wickham

Support for legalization

Washington — News from the battlefield recently was of yet another victory!

American forces, deployed on the southern flanks of the war zone, engaged an enemy vessel headed toward this nation's coastal waters. The ship, which is thought to be part of a large hostile fleet, was captured on the high seas before it could unload its deadly cargo.

In port, military officials proudly displayed their catch and its contraband: one pleasure yacht and a small stash of marijuana.

Ok, so it wasn't much of a haul. But considering the war this nation is waging against the illegal drug trade, any victory is worth noting — even one that only produces nine grams of pot on a yacht called the "Monkey Business."

Monkey business indeed!

America's "war" against illegal drugs is a greater tragedy than the Vietnam conflict, and it has produced many more casualties.

The time has come to sue for peace!

A year ago I wrote a column calling for the legalization of illegal drugs. "Let's give the poor fools who pump these poisonous substances into their bodies the same freedom to self-destruct that people who smoke tobacco or drink alcohol now enjoy," I offered then.

Today other voices, more influential and less petulant than mine, have begun to question the wisdom of America's so-called drug war.

Recently Baltimore Mayor Kurt Schmoke shocked many of his constituents by calling for a national debate on the question of legalization of narcotics. Schmoke's call for a drug-war peace conference drew the ire of some, like New York representative Charles Rangel, who are obsessed with the fight.

In a joint appearance on ABC-TV's "Nightline," Rangel lashed out at Schmoke's proposal with the fervor of the generals who once assured us that victory in Vietnam was just another battle away.

The ensuing reaction to the Schmoke-Rangel television encounter caused a rupturing of emotions among opponents and proponents of drug legalization.

In Washington one city council member, anxious to press the attack, called for tougher penalties against drug traffickers, while across town the head of the White House Drug Abuse Policy Office termed legalization a "dumb" idea.

And a Baltimore judge, reacting to Rangel's attack on Schmoke, called the chairman of the House Select Committee on Narcotics Abuse and Control a "rectal orifice." It was obviously a moment of great judicial indiscretion.

Name calling aside, the fact of the matter is that America lacks both the will and the stamina to win its drug war.

While Coast Guard cutters patrol coastal waters in the hope of interdicting just a fraction of the tons of illegal drugs which reach our shores every year, Reagan administration officials contemplate a deal with Manuel Noriega that would leave the drug-trafficking general in virtual control of Panama — a country that serves as a way station for U.S. bound dope and the profits the illegal drugs generate.

Given both the human and financial costs of our failed drug war — we spend billions of dollars annually in our unsuccessful efforts to keep illegal drugs out of the veins of junkies — we cannot afford to prolong the combat.

DeWayne Wickham's column is syndicated nationally by the Gannett News Service.