EDITORIALS

John J. Oliver, Jr.
Chairman of the Board
Frances M. Draper
President
THE VOICE OF BLACK AMERICA SINCE 1892

Alice Pinderhughes

Alice Pinderhughes has carved a niche for herself in the archives of public school education, and the battle she waged despite the terrible odds of success is something she should be proud of forever.

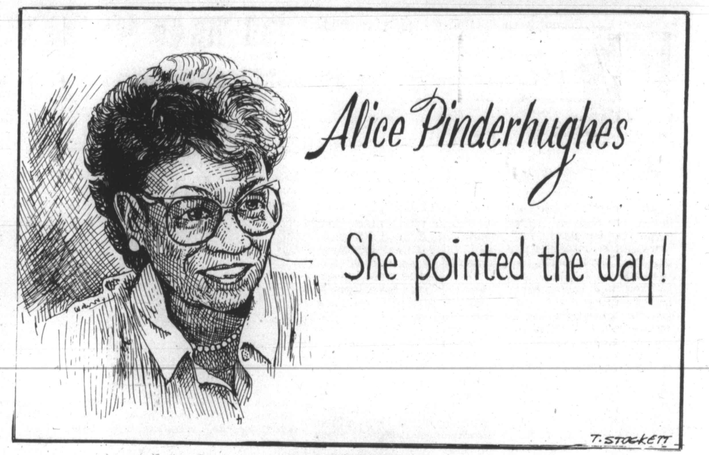
In a school system which had become mired in a mere holding pattern for its youngsters, Pinderhughes grappled with angry teachers, slugged toe to toe with union officials, calmed anxious parents, and put into effect programs which continue to bear the fruits of success albeit limited.

After so many years, as a teacher and school administrator, the difficulties faced in adopting a hardline approach to the problem were sometimes tempered by the realities of the classroom teacher who must translate official pronouncements into day-to-day action.

She can take pride in the knowledge that test scores are on the rise in city schools—the return to basics that she has nurtured throughout her administration—is a very real entity.

As she steps down, turning over the reins to the incoming school chief, Richard Hunter, she can be assured that the way has been cleared in many ways for a forward thrust in education.

We recognize and applaud the Pinderhughes administration. The Baltimore Public Schools are better because of her.



The Dog Days begin

It's hot.

Temperatures for the first week of this month have averaged in the high 90s with the humidity equally as high. And the National Weather Service has predicted no real relief in sight — not only for the District area but for the entire country. A lot of experts have offered opinions on why it is hot and continues to remain hot, with most of the opinions centering around the much talked about Greenhouse Effect and the slow deterioration of the ozone layers. Health experts offer advice to young and old on how to stay cool and kids have enjoyed the extended benefits of the area pools and garden hoses.

Of course, everyone tries to make light of the extended heatwave, but the fact of the matter is this heatwave has far reaching implications for all of us. Of course there are the more immediate like increased electric and cleaning bill but has anyone considered the possibility of increased grocery prices later this year or next year or the costs involved should someone become sick or die due to the heat.

It's something to think about.

Japanese racism

Black America is enraged with Japan again — this time over the manufacturing of items which stereotyped and insulted them.

First there was the comment made by former Japanese Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone about the academic performance of blacks in this country. He and the Japanese government apologized, of course, but the scars from that incident remained raw for a very long time.

Now there is the Japanese beachwear, featuring the caricature of "Little Sambo" and using black mannequins with "exaggerated platypus lips" in athletic poses. The line also features "Sambo's" sister "Hannah" and contained the caption "When I'm hungry there 's nothing stoppin' me! I'll be up a palm pickin' coconuts before you can count to three An' I can count way past three, too!"

Black people, according to the latest figures, spend some $300 billion in goods and services. To be treated in such a manner by any business is not a smart move. The Congressional Black Caucus has called on the current Prime Minister Noboru Takeshita to take a hand in ending to such stereotyping through a public information and education program.

The alternative said CBC officials, Japanese businesses do not want to consider.

While this form of diplomacy is laudable, it is time to take off the kid gloves. Two years ago Nakasone insulted the intelligence of blacks. This time Japanese businesses have again insulted Black America. A boycott of Japanese products is necessary and is encouraged.

LETTERS

CMEA disagrees

In reference to the article entitled "CMEA Upset by CUB as City Union" by Charles H. Brown, dated 06/28/88, I find the word "upset" a poor choice of words. The small copy and the lack of ineptness in treating this issue concerns me very deeply.

I find that Mr. Brown (according to his copy) made little effort to verify anything he said. Moreover, I know that the best way that untruths can be dispelled are with the real facts.

For the record, CMEA represents 3,000 persons who are divided into five (5) units, they include: Unit B: Recreation Leaders, Programmers, and Center Directors; Unit C: City-Wide Managerial (these are generally employees who supervise AFSCME represented employees); Unit E: Security Officers, Guards, Parking Control Agents, Crossing Guards, and School Police; and Unit G: Transit and Traffic Workers (non-clerical).

Also, for the record, CMEA membership has just approved amendments and new articles in its contract that speak to the issues that our members are mostly concerned about. Some examples of the categories of improvement include:

Improved Grievance and Arbitration Procedure; 4.25% increase in pay; an unprecedented longevity step at 30 years of service; Health and Welfare; Increased Death Benefits Flextime; Retention of loss benefits for School Crossing Guards; Personal, Sick, and Vacation Leave adjustments along with the establishment of several Health and Safety Committees.

In each of the categories mentioned above, including other supplementary ones, CMEA representatives were able to win valuable concessions on behalf of our membership. We are not talking about "peanuts" but we are talking about making outstanding headway in negotiating one of the most successful contracts in the history of our Association.

Sharon B. Randall,
President, CMEA

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

A prisoner's complaint

Over the past several years I have wonder why it is necessary for the Division of Correction to maintain a Reserve Account for all inmates.

The Division of Correction position with regard to this policy is to allow the released prisoner "some money" at the time of his/her release from the Department of Correctional Services.

The rationality of this policy is illogical. What can be purchased in the present economy with 25 dollars?

If the released prisoner has to travel any distance from the Maryland Penitentiary, surely the 25 dollars would barely meet his expenses. Where could he/she obtain adequate shelter for the money?

The pitiful truth is there is very little that the prisoner could accomplish with this meager subsidy. Its totally impractial to me that they would have a policy that is in effect ... ineffective.

I think the inmate should be able to spend the money. I perhaps could understand the policy if the man/woman was in the process of being released, but to have the money laying dormant for period of years is unsound reasoning.

Particularly when the inmate could unquestionably use the money during the period of his/her incarceration. This policy is in fact ludricrous and contrary to sound logic.

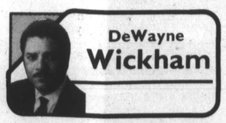
The average inmate in the Division of Corrections doesn't have the luxury to have 25 dollars inactive. Those who don't receive any financial assistance from family members, girlfriends, etc., catches unmitigated hell during the third week of every month. The meager state allotment at present is positively insufficient to meet the basic needs of those confined.

Where is the logic in such a policy? It escapes me. Here you have an individual who in all likelihood will be in the Division of Corrections for at least five consecutive years, so why deduct the money so far in advance?

Why not deduct the money six months prior to the release of the individual? That would make sense to me. I would suspect that the Division of Corrections is making use of the interest from these monies.

At first glance, one would think they are operating out of the old antebellum South with highly questionable policy. Its like, if they don't complain, for God sake don't pull their coates. I am astonished that the Division of Corrections would allow this practice to continue, but on the other hand - everybody loves MONEY.

TOUSSAINT



The Tate story: it may get told

WASHINGTON — "Can you get me on 'The Oprah Winfrey Show?" the caller asked, obviously excited about the possibility of appearing on the nationally syndicated television talk show. "I want to tell her my story. She knows what it's like to be abused."

It's been more than 18 months since I last talked to Celestine Tate, but strangely her voice had a familiar ring. Tate, you may recall, is a New Jersey quadriplegic who makes a living playing a keyboard with her tongue on the Atlantic City boardwalk.

Most days, Tate can be found propped atop her gurney near Caesar's Hotel and Casino, where she performs for passers-by and the small change they leave her.

Late in 1986 city officials charged the 32-year-old mother of two with violation of a 1910 law that forbade begging on the famed boardwalk.

Her fight to continue "working" on the boardwalk drew national media attention, along with the ire of some local officials.

When a judge ruled that she could continue her performances, the media spotlight dimmed for Tate, just as it had 10 years earlier, shortly after the feisty woman waged a successful court battle to prevent the Philadelphia welfare department from taking custody of her first-born child.

Then city welfare officials charged that her handicap made it impossible for Tate to care for the infant. But the judge ruled in Tate's favor after watching the new mother use her mouth to change the baby's diaper in the courtroom. Eventually Tate gave birth to a second child and moved to New Jersey.

Back in January, 1986, she told me that she wanted Bill Cosby to produce a movie version of her life story. "I want Cicely Tyson to play my mother and Billy Dee Williams to play my father," Tate said then. The other day she made yet another casting call.

"I want Oprah Winfrey to play my part," said Tate, her laughter suggesting a not-too-serious appeal for the fully developed celebrity to portray a woman whose legs and arms are severely underdeveloped and useless.

I wrote a column 18 months ago about Tate's struggle to make a better life for herself and her children. Her life story, I said, "could be one of the most heart-wrenching movies to come out of Hollywood since 'Imitation of Life.'

"I urged Cosby to "give the lady a call." She never heard from him. So much for my ability to move a media star to action.

A few days ago, I got a copy of Tate's autobiography in the mail. Actually it was just a typed manuscript, titled: "To Those Who Ask, Why Me?" Celestine says she typed all 143 pages with her tongue.

There is little chance that Tate will be confused with Alice Walker or Toni Morrison. And the Pulitzer Prize judges certainly will be spared a reading of her book. But she does have a story to tell, and it is at times compelling and poignant.

Tates writes of her early life in Philadelphia, her lesbian mother and her loving grandparents in a way that gives the reader a chilling understanding of the multiple handicap of being black, poor and physically disabled — any one of which is excuse enough for the less committed to give up on life.

She speaks of a love-hate relationship with a mother who often deserted Tate and her younger sister, on one occasion leaving the two pre-schoolers at home alone for several days.

Tate also writes about her first sexual encounter, the one that led to the birth of her first child and her court fight to maintain custody of her baby.

"Given what you've told me she seems to have a remarkable story," Debra DiMaio said when I got her on the telephone. And she ought to know.

DiMaio is executive producer of "The Oprah Winfrey Show" and while she would make no commitment to have Tate appear on the program, she did not slam shut the door. "I'd like to hear more about her," DiMaio offered.

Ok, so her response falls far short of an invitation. Maybe we'll never see Oprah Winfrey take a disbelieving question from an audience member and then turn to Celestine Tate with her now classic question: "And you say what?"

But give me a little credit. While I didn't produce a booking for Tate on "The Oprah Winfrey Show," at least her name is now known to the folks who decide these things. Given the grab bag of topics the program covers, DiMaio just might get around to giving her a call one day soon.

And if that happens, well, maybe it won't be long before Oprah Winfrey agrees to take on her most difficult acting role since "The Color Purple," and Celestine Tate finally gets her story told.

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

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COMMENTARY & OPINIONS

Kweisi Mfume
U.S. Congressman

Workers rights

After months of lengthy debates and conferences, the Worker Adjustment and Retraining Act, better known as the Plant Closing Bill, has finally cleared both houses of Congress.

When enacted, this measure will require employers with 100 or more full-time employees to give 60-day advance notice of certain plant closings and mass lay-offs.

From the time that it was first introduced as part of the original Trade Bill, plant closing notification has faced heavy opposition from the Reagan Administration.

However, what appears to be particularly puzzling is the fact that the critics of plant closing notification have never made mention of America's inefficient business management style and its direct correlation to America's competitiveness and productivity, or lack there of.

In contrast, five of our toughest trade competitors—Japan, Taiwan, West Germany, Canada, and South Korea, who together account for 70 percent of the total U.S. trade deficit—all require advance warning before layoffs.

Each of these nations, in addition to our other Western European trading partners, have already determined that common decency requires proper notification of management decisions that will affect their nation's labor force.

American workers want to help our nation regain its competitive edge within the world economic community, and are ready to take up the challenge.

Nevertheless, many of these same workers remain skeptical of large corporations, whom they view as being more concerned about profits, than they are about families, and job securitv.

The fervent opposition to the plant closing and lay-off notifiction only strengthens this hypothesis in the minds of our nation's workforce.

Studies by the General Accounting Office, the Office of Technology Assessment, and even a Reagan Administration Task Force all conclude that advance notice significantly enhances the success of retraining programs, thereby promoting economic flexibility and growth.

Without advance notice, a displayed, structurally unemployed worker is far less likely to acquire new and useful skills without undue delay.

If America is ever to regain its position as the world's principle trading nation, then it must begin to reinvest its resources back into this country. Advance notice has proven to be cost effective and would save an estimated $400 million a year in unemployment insurance costs.

Additionally, the reduction in the period of unemployment that results from notice means that our labor force stands a better chance of being more productive.

In the coming years out nation will begin to see the direct benefits of advance notice. This legislation was carefully drafted to protect employees and employers.

For instance, notice is not required when a faltering company may be hurt by providing it. Notice only applies to layoffs of at least one-third of the workforce or 500 or more employees and exclusive remedies do not permit any layoff or closing to be delayed.

For those of us in Congress who recognize and support working men and women, plant closing notification is a step in the right direction for businesses to take. The time is now for our nation to join hands and recommit itself to America's economic rebirth.

Plant closing notification will pay for itself with minimal cost to corporations, and in the end, when our balance of trade is favorable again, all of America can rejoice together for a job well done.

AFRO SURVEY

Should squeegee kids be allowed?

William Burton, 36, maintenance mechanic, I think the important thing is the safety of the kids. If they can find a safe place to do it, then why not support the kids.

William Burton

Donna Stevenson, 23, nursing assistant, I am one hundred percent against it. It is definitely dangerous, and it is too hot. They should open up a snowball stand instead.

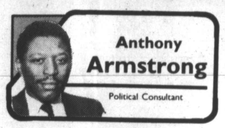
Donna Stevenson

Jimmy Womack

Jimmy Womack, 22, part-time worker, I think it's a good program for kids to involve themselves in. At least they have something to do and are not out fighting or commiting genocide.

Don Ryan

Don Ryan, 31, sales representative, There are pros and cons to it. Sometimes they run up to people who don't want their windows washed and it can be a nuisance, but it is a way for them to pick up extra money. The main thing is they need to be a little diplomatic.



Anthony Armstrong
Political Consultant

Baltimore is...

A city of several names needs to be clear just which name it wants to be known by. In the past Baltimore has been known as the Monumental City, the city of the white marble steps;

We've been called Charm City, and now, we're known variously as Drugtown U.S.A. or the city that wishes its people could read.

It's the last of these handles, the one about reading, that the new Superintendent of Schools will either be famed or dammed by.

A city encircled by so much proserity is bound to be looked upon like a child with holes in his socks, up against the Saks 5th Avenue, the Annapolis yacht docks, and the Montgomery mansions that surround us.

The holes in our socks will be with us for a while; they are there because of some structural factors that, for now, make our economy here in the city unable to buy new socks. The best we can do now is make sure, though full of holes, our socks are clean.

It's said that pride goes before the fall, and perhaps we here in Baltimore are closer to the fall than we know; but we still do have some semblance of pride.

More than books and pencils, more than blackboards and chalk, it'll be the pride we still have left that will be the most valuable weapon in the hand of the new top-teacher.

We'll have to wash the same pair of socks, holes and all, every night, hang them in the bathroom to dry, and put 'em on the next day.

Perhaps there's some redemption in suffering the knowledge that everyone else around us has on perfect socks, with lots of changes of shoes to go with them.

Redemption does breed new life, and pride can give that life a base to grow from; but the new Superintendent must prove himself a skillful gardener, because the roots of this city's educational discontent go very very deep.

We don't read very well in Baltimore because we really haven't had to. We've been much more a muscle city than a brain town.

Our large minority population is an invitation for some people to practice a long range and basic strategy predicated on, "the less known the better"; and too often our black on black destructiveness has kicked over many of the good pails of milk we've squeezed from ourselves.

An academician might conclude that there is not the ethos for educational growth in Baltimore. Our city's character has often made the professorial, the knowledge driven, the egghead very uncomfortable.

Things like that have had to take refuge in insular places like our college campuses, and private clubs, where helping our dull educationally unexciting population usually remains only a topic of intellectual conversation.

It's like some ancient city where the libraries stay shut, surrounded by walls to keep out the infidel who, some think, would only burn the books - not knowing anything else to do with them.

Into this comes a new man, and along with him comes the most far reaching evolutionary change in the public's attitude about public education since McGuffy's Reader, Land Grant colleges, and Horatio Alger.

McGruffy thought that all a student needed was a book, starting with simple stories about apple... and ending with tales of zebras.

The Land Grant colleges rested on the concept that African-Americans, too, could learn and not just at the cotton field level, but in the thin air of undergraduate and graduate studies.

And through hard work, virtuous living, and luck, Alger told us that anyone could rise from poverty.

In this atmosphere pride was the only "X" factor; but the attitude for broad based public eduction for everyone was apparent in abundance.

Like our nation as a whole, Baltimore isn't sure, anymore, about its commitment to the best public school education possible. We are a city that is flirting with educational elitism, as if we think we can stuff our holes far enough down into our shoes that no one will notice.

Yet, if you've ever had holes in your socks you know that trying to push them down further only serves to make the holes bigger.

Enter the unknown into the unknown. All we can do is watch and pray, and hold on tightly to our pride. If we get lucky and the new headmaster turns out to be magical in his ability to lead, we will still have to be on guard about where he will take us, especially given the changing routes of American public education.

If, however, he, too, becomes caught in the gears of this city's laboriously grinding present state of affairs, education will essentially come to a halt, for everyone except those who can influence their way or pay their way into the top tier.

We are in danger of becoming a city divided against itself - one small segment eager for the future of the 21st century, another very large segment groping for ways to keep a flicker of flames in the pride we'll have left; and waiting, still, for something to come along to show that the pride has not been in vain.

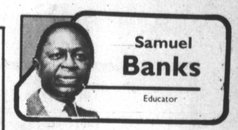
Baltimore is at the crossroads like we've never been before. The direction in which we've been marching has been painfully absent or oases.

The spirit we built over the last ten to fifteen years has been almost all thrown away in just the last seven or eight months. No one even talks about real jobs creation anymore. The word housing has disappeared from our lexicon, and there is pityingly little building or clearing to build going on.

The kind of city we've been is clearly not what we are today; and the brightest lights now are, ironically, the ones that burn at night from the street lamps above our heads. Great cities burn brightest from inside the souls and aspirations of its people.

For all America, but particularly African-America, education has been the wick from which we have gotten the fires that have brightened all of life. We still have our pride, but it's being forced to flicker in very strong winds.

Education will strengthen the pride, and our pride must work to buttress whatever we do educationally. For now, however, it's hard to say just exactly what Baltimore is.



Samuel Banks
Educator

79th annual NUL confab

At the time of the founding of the National Urban League in 1909, the plight of 14 million black citizens throughout the United States was fraught with fear, wholesale exclusion from the socio-economic mainstream and frequent violence and traducement.

It, too, was a time just after the abysmal failure of Reconstruction and the removal of Federal troops from the South leaving black Southerners to the depredations, hostility and lynchings.

As a result, the "Great Migration" of penurious, largely illiterate and embattled black Southerners began to the North and West.

The transplantation of large number of agrarian blacks and destitute black Southerners of the North, the urgent need for jobs, housing, education and health care and the need for acclimatization to the demands of urban areas, gave rise to the founding of the National Urban League 79 years ago.

While a majority of black citizens have made the jump from an agrarian culture to complex and abstruse urban centers, the vexatious, debilitating and painful exclusion from the educational, political and socio-economic mainstream of the American social order remains a clear and present reality.

The facts are obvious in terms of the staggering issues which impinge directly on 35 million black Americans:

(1) approximately 50 percent of black children and youths under 18 live in poverty; (2) 44 percent of black children live in single-parent families;

Black elected officials, in spite of the 1965 Voting Rights Act and predominate representation in major cities, constitute less than two percent of the elected officials in our nation; almost half, in an era of unprecedented prosperity with a Gross National Product of over 2 trillion dollars and over 112 million people gainfully employed, of the 35 million black citizens in the United States are either at the poverty-line or a part of the lumpen proletariat referred to as the working poor.

In short, the socio-economic indices for black citizens flowing principally from institutional racism, subordination, shoddy education and unequal opportunity, past and present, have consigned a disproportionate number of black, Hispanic and poor citizens to the nation's backburner.

As the National Urban League convenes in the commodious and elegant Cobo Conference Center in Detriot through August 4, the ancient problems of the socio-economic exclusion of black citizens from the economic center, growing alienation, hopelessness and frustration, rampant and longstanding black unemployment and underemployment in urban areas, inadequate and inferior education, housing and health services will occupy central challengers and opportunities.

The presence of John E. Jacobs at the helm of the National Urban League offers a ray of hope that creative, imaginative, forceful and pragmatic strategies will be developed to serve the pressing needs of black Americans.

The tasks before the National Urban League, as was true of the NAACP in its meeting at the Washington Sheraton, are enormous, but, through it all, capable of a humane and just resolution.

The NAACP and the National Urban League, historically, since their founding in 1909 have been staunch and unyielding stalwarts and advocates of social, economic and political justice and educational excellence for all Americans. The proceedings of the National Urban League should command broad interest and support.