EDITORIALS

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

Vote YES on Question 3

In the state of Maryland, more than 25,000 handguns are sold legally each year. Most are bought by people who feel they need a firearm for self protection.

Prior to the passage of HB1131, there were no regulations as to the type of handguns that can be manufactured and sold in Maryland. With the enactment of Chapter 533, it would become a misdemeanor to sell handguns not included on a roster of permitted handguns.

The list would be compiled by a newly created nine-member Handgun Roster Board. This board would consist of the Superintendent of State Police as chairman, and members, all of whom will be appointed by the governor and ratified by the state senate.

The law is designed to curtail the sale of lower-priced weapons, some of which are dubbed "Saturday Night Specials." It is widely held that these handguns are used almost exclusively for the commission of crimes.

The law itself has no bearing on the ownership of handguns—except for those cheaply-made weapons which often pose a danger to the user. People who have reason to purchase a handgun for defense purposes will still be able to do so.

Over 50 percent of the murders committed in Maryland in 1987, involved the use of handguns, almost 40 percent of the armed robberies were committed with the use of handguns.

In the case of the black male, handguns are responsible for over 40 percent of the homicides in the nation, and allowing easy access to the weapons through cheaply made items, simply increases the risk for bodily harm from criminals.

Obviously, a "yes" vote on the referendum will not get rid of handguns, but it will cut down on the number of guns being sold in the state. This is a forward step.

Vote FOR, Question 3 on the ballot November 8.

Kweisi Mfume
U.S. Congressman

Poverty: the real legacy

Perhaps with all the campaigning that Dan Quayle has been doing since the Republican National Convention, he has not had the opportunity to review the true facts about what the Reagan/Bush administration has done to assist America's poor.

Senator Quayle's suggestion that the Reagan/Bush administration has been sympathetic to our nation's poor is tantamount to the Ayatolla being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his commitment to human rights.

The senator from Indiana needs to examine the record in order to reaffirm what many Americans already know!

For instance, when Senator Quayle was asked to comment on the number of families in poverty, he stated "this administration, and a George Bush administration, will be committed to eradicating poverty. Poverty hasn't gone up in this administration . . ."

Well Dan Quayle, according to the Census Bureau's annual report, poverty has gone up since 1980.

Today there are three million more people below the poverty line than there were when the Reagan/Bush administration took office.

Moreover, the average rate of poverty during the course of the Reagan/Bush administration has been 14.2 percent, compared to an average rate of 11.9 percent for the years 1977-1980.

While 1987's poverty rate of 13.5 percent was the lowest this nation has seen since 1980, it was still higher than any rate between the years of 1967-1981.

While the incomes of white families have increased, African-American family income declined to 56 percent of white family income, compared with the 1980 figure when black income was 58 percent of white family income.

Additionally, in 1987 an estimated 45 percent of African-American children were below the poverty line, which is substantially higher than 42.7 percent for 1986.

Senator Quayle's domestic policy advisors should have provided him with these statistics before he took to the podium to brag about how "committed" this administration and a George Bush administration would be toward our nation's poor.

Well before President Reagan took office in 1981, it was widely expected that his administration would reduce federal spending for domestic programs.

Under his concept of shared responsibility, state and local governments would assume the lion's share of their respective social spending priorities.

Further, Reagan planned to strengthen the role of the private sector, so that their increased profits would "trickle down" to the average working American in the form of higher wages and lower prices.

Our nation's growing problem of homelessness and the increasing number of people living below the poverty line was, to say the least, predictable.

Both the GOP presidential and vice-presidential nominee are full of election year glee and adulation, which may account for their short term memory loss when it comes to the GOP's commitment to the Stuart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act.

The administration fought this measure vigorously, and argued that it was too "costly and unnecessary."

While Senator Quayle insists that the GOP backed the Homeless Assistance Bill, the real record shows that the Reagan/Bush administration requested $265 million for this measure, and the house approved $378 million in homeless assistance.

Probably the saddest revelation of all is the fact that the city of New York spends over $300 million to aid its homeless, which is greater than the administration's total homeless assistance budget request for FY 1989.

Anyway you look at it the Reagan/Bush legacy speaks for itself. Poor and homeless families in America need assistance in order to keep their hope alive.

The present administration has sought to reduce spending on social programs precipitously since taking office eight years ago. These are the hard facts that Americans must consider before going to the polls on election day.

Remember, George Bush and Dan Quayle kicked-off their national campaign with a commitment to the American family. What is most puzzling to me is how those who have no regard for our nation's underclass can assume the posture of a caring and committed party.

There are many inconsistencies surrounding the Reagan/Bush administration's leadership over the past eight years. We can ill afford to forget how they have treated those who need our help the most.

Voting is important

Citizens of Baltimore City face a real test of their political clout with the ending of modest voter registration efforts.

Much is at stake for urban centers such as Baltimore City during this presidential election, including the question on the gun control law, but will the citizens and their leaders meet the challenge?

Let me speak plainly. Will many voters who are readers of the AFRO-AMERICAN Newspapers sit at home as they did in 1980 and 1984 and then complain about the policies and programs of the Reagan administration?

The challenge now is total political mobilization of registered voters. Past political performances in voting has not been impressive and Baltimore City has paid a price for its non-voting. But the pattern of low voter participation can be turned around.

Look at it this way. During the 1984 presidential election, while Baltimore City ranked third in the percentage of voters registered out of its eligibles, it ranked last in voter turnout among Maryland's 24 subdivisions.

That is, 78.0 percent of Baltimore City's eligibles were registered voters, but only 65.5 percent of the registered voters actually turned out to vote.

Similarly, during the 1986 general election, Baltimore City ranked fourth in the percentage of voters registered out of its eligibles but ranked at the bottom in voter turnout.

That is, 69.8 percent of the eligibles were registered voters while only 44 percent of the registered voters actually voted.

Clearly, a sizable portion of Baltimore City's voting clout had not been mobilized. For Baltimore City to compensate for the massive voter registration efforts in other subdivisions, citizens must be organized and motivated to get out and vote on November 8.

Make no bones about it; there are political forces who would be overjoyed to have you stay at home and not vote.

Political parties in Baltimore City cannot be counted on to mobilize the voters. Be self-sufficient and make use of the resources within the communities of Baltimore City.

It will be up to individual citizens, civic and neighborhood groups, community leaders, churches, schools and colleges, fraternities and sororities, political clubs, unions, and what-have-you to help get out the voters.

Yes, family members can insure that their elderly parents and relatives are given a ride to the polling places on election day.

Vote as early as possible on election day just in case the weather becomes inclement later in the afternoon or evening.

AFRO-AMERICAN writer Jill P. Carter's coverage of area high school students registering to vote gives pause for jubilation and praise for the young adults about to get their political baptism by balloting.

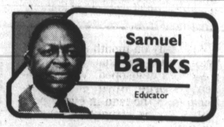
Thanks for the initiative and leadership demonstrated by Dunbar High School in its program of civic instruction, especially with regard to voter registration and voting.

The 18 to 24 age group in Baltimore City has the highest percentage of non-voting in Maryland. Political socialization cannot start too early given the fact that many students drop out of school before graduating from high school.

Citizens of Baltimore City, make yourselves proud and best in voting. In short, my message to each registered voter is vote and be counted.

HERBERT H. LINDSEY

LETTERS



Samuel Banks
Educator

Avoid election year folly

There has been much extravagant bombastic and delusory language and promises associated with the current statewide and presidential elections.

The consequences in the current statewide and presidential elections are highly consequential and fraught with possibilities and dangers for all 250 million American citizens; especially Black and minority citizens.

In terms of the statewide senatorial race involving Paul Sarbanes and Alan Keyes, the time has come, less than a month away from election day on Tuesday, November 8, to separate the wheat from the chaff and to get serious about solid, substantive and believable choices.

In this conjunction, the statewide senatorial race pitting Alan Keyes against Paul Sarbanes is in reality, based upon demonstrable track records in support of human and civil rights and public service, an exercise in futility and illusion for Keyes.

The reality is that Keyes, highly educated at Harvard, very articulate and personable and an energetic and peripatetic lawyer, is the Republican standard bearer for the U.S. Senate from Maryland because no other white aspirant could be found or was willing to run.

Additionally, Keyes' highly conservative political ideology as a black citizen, largely in line with President Ronald Wilson Reagan, makes him attractive and appealing to the Republican high command's very conservative political bent.

In view of the erosion of human and civil rights in the Free State and throughout the nation for black citizens and the lack of opportunity for a broad spectrum of black, minority and white citizens as measured in cutbacks in education, health care and other socio-economic indices, the situation bodes of very unfavorable for Keyes.

The Reality is that, through the years, Senator Sarbanes has been in the thick of the struggle in the U.S. Senate in support of human and civil rights for all citizens.

Especially for black, females and other ethnic-racial minorities and a vigorous advocate for social, economic and political justice for all citizens of our nation.

This exemplary, solid and inspirational record of service will lead to a resounding victory on November 8. In short, I believe he deserves reelection.

Insofar as the presidential race is concerned, it boils down to more of the same with Vice President George Bush or a new direction of hope and opportunity for all with Gov. Michael Dukakis.

Again, when the critical issues of socio-economic justice and an inclusionary American body politic are considered, Governor Dukakis represents a fresh, creative and marvelous opportunity for all citizens of our nation.

As black citizens, Gov. Dukakis's strong support of civil rights and economic justice represents an opportunity for us to move closer to full freedom opportunity in the land of the free and the home of the brave.

A cautionary note is in order germane to the presidential race. Namely, as black citizens, we must foreswear and repudiate the illusionary and delusionary pontificating and emoting of Dr. Lenora Fulani and her desire to attract enough voters to ensure the defeat of Governor Dukakis.

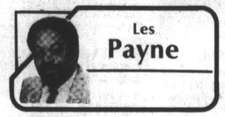
Dr. Fulani is a highly intelligent academican, and an erudite and comely "souls sister," but in this particular instance, she is majoring in minors.

Stated differently, her national peregrinations and political preachments are exercises in gargantuan folly. We don't have time to play political games.

The right to vote is the most priceless and treasured right in a democratic society and needs to be taken seriously. Rain or shine on Tuesday, November 8, 1988, please vote and not go fishing. The stakes are too high.

COMMENTARY & OPINIONS

MEMBER MDDC NNPA UPI



Les Payne

Black athletes endorsements

In the week that Ben Johnson gave steroids a good name — and himself a bad one — professional football teams were lining up to have the sprinter earn for them the millions he would be denied were he to labor only for himself.

Impressed with Johnson's speed and apparent power, the Dallas Cowboys and other teams are eager to own the Canadian track star who resorted to dope. Well, not dope exactly, but "performance enhancers." The anabolic steroids that got Johnson banned from the Olympics supposedly would give all such users an unfair advantage in their performance.

Despite the long-term liver and kidney damage associated with steroids, sports officials seem more concerned with the drug's short-term effect on performances.

But while the amateur Olympics frown on steroids, professional teams have looked the other way. To date, not a single professional athlete has been suspended for using steroids. They have long been as available in football as towels.

College coaches disallow their use, at least publicly. The pros tend to look upon steroids with unseeing eyes. So a Brian Bosworth, of the University of Oklahoma, is kept out of a college bowl game for using steroids, but is paid millions to play for the Seattle Seahawks.

This may be the pattern with Ben Johnson.

The anabolic steroids that got Johnson derailed in Seoul might well earn him top dollar to carry the freight for Dallas. What, pray tell, is the difference? Simply stated, it is profits.

Drugs that enhance on-the-field performance seem to present fewer problems, except in public relations. If a player chooses to slowly turn his liver into asphalt while improving his performance, it has been ignored so long as he's doing it on a team's payroll.

In individual sports, such as a track, whatever pay and endorsements the athlete receives, post-Olympics, go unimpeded into his own pockets.

Like rodeo champions and prize fighters, track stars remain among the few athletes in America who are truly professional. They can pack their spikes and run in, or skip, whatever meets they choose. They don't slave for owners or tie themselves to long-term contracts.

All this may change, of course, as more track stars begin to command top earnings like, say, Edwin Moses. Some entrepreneur will organize them, tie them to a team, build a stadium and exercise exclusive rights, which is to say ownership. But for now, track stars are independent, free and professional.

Team athletes in America are free agents only during those increasingly vulnerable periods when they are between contracts.

The owners, with their eyes fixed on profits, care much less about the health of their players medium-term than they do about winning. Thus the perceived drug problem in professional sports centers on those illegal substances that adversely affect on-the-field performances.

If it could be demonstrated that cocaine and marijuana — like steroids — were "performance enhancers," they too would be viewed by team owners with unseeing eyes.

For now, in the pros, recreational drugs are out and "performance enhancers" are in. Ben Johnson is anathema to Olympic track and field, but a possible prize for some lucky football owner.

All that aside, what happened to Johnson seems a personal tragedy, if for no other reason than that he lost some $5 million in endorsements.

It could not be learned what happened to the prospects of the other Olympic athletes thrown out for drug use. They went much more quietly.

By all indications, the big endorsement winner, post-Olympics, might be Florence Griffith Joyner. She is draped in gold medals, fast, charming, and every sports editor has fallen in love with her. She has gotten through all of her interviews without giving any signs that she is in any way a threat to the status quo.

This is a tall order for any black athlete, especially a male. Sprinter Carl Lewis brought home four Olympic gold medals in 1984, but cut off endorsements by offending white sports journalists, and thus America, by being too sure of himself.

At one point, he said that he would be bigger than rock star Michael Jackson. This year Lewis has been shuffling and groveling to win the respect of the overwhelmingly white sporting press.

This year, he carries an American flag that grows bigger and bigger after each of his victories and even his defeats.

Vanity and ego, so prized in white athletes, is not acceptable in African-Americans. To get onto the cereal boxes, blacks must not only win but also display extreme selflessness and the most superficial kind of patriotism. Even then endorsements are not guaranteed.

In sports, despite hundreds of black superstars, many of whom are handsome and some of whom are wise, only O. J. Simpson has cashed in on endorsements in a big way.

To date, Joyner, or Flo-Jo, as she's called, has outdone Mary Lou Retton's performance in the Los Angeles mini-Olympics boycotted by the Eastern Bloc. It will be interesting to see if Flo-Jo can overshadow Ben Johnson as a black role model — and make her way onto the cereal box.

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Ruth Jenkins
SOB SISTER

So, how much is a billion?

We like to read, both for entertainment and for information. Information rather than education, because 'education' implies knowledge about elements way out of our realm of understanding. Subjects like mathematics, geography, history, science, philosophy, etc. Even "et cetera" is a topic we're not too well versed on.

We have not outgrown our childish delight with fairytales. So we are lately fascinated with a book which relates facts which awe us like fairytale fiction. Actually it's a magazine which tells stories about great wealth.

Using words which don't make our daily conversation. Words like 'billionaire'. For the benefit of strangers (like us) to that word, the magazine explains that "a billion is a thousand million . . ." Well, heck, we're not quite sure how much is a million . . . especially when it refers to money.

In the pictures, these billionaires look just like ordinary people. So we deduced that the 'billion' has nothing to do with their looks, but with something they have which most other people do not. (Leastwise, not the folks we know.)

That 'something' is not necessarily like a green thumb, or a cowlick, or long eyelashes, or a very high IQ. No, these folks have heap much of something quite common. Mere money. But they just happen to have a billion (or more) dollars, or whatever is the equivalent amount in their native currency.

Well, we read up on who they are. In case we ever meet perhaps, at the supermarket counter, we can strike up a conversation. Other than about the weather. Then invite them to our holiday party.

Well, it seems like the richest of the rich is the 42-year-old sultan of Brunei, on the north coast of the island of Borneo. About 90% of its revenue is derived from oil exports.

And with oil selling for $4 a barrel since last year, this gent is worth about $25 billion. Our chance of meeting him is rather slim, since our abode uses gas heat.

Atop the USA stack of affluence is Forest Mars, 84, whose family makes the Milky Way taste treats. He's worth about $12 billion. Business chalks up sales of about $7 billion annually. Latest palate-pleaser is liquer-flavored candy. Alas, we've cut down on sweets; protecting our figure.

Youngest of these billionaires is 32-year-old William Gates, co-founder and 40% owner of a computer software company. Hardly a chance to meet him; we don't have a computer.

Well of the 129 individuals and families in this exclusive economic clan, we feel a sort of kinship with only two. One is the world's richest woman, Britain's Queen Elizabeth. Her personal fortune hovers around $8.7 billion. And last spring, Parliament increased her annual salary by $321,715.

As an AFRO reporter we covered the royal visit to the Washington, D.C. city hall many moons ago during the mayoralty of Walter Washington.

At that time, Queen Liz wore one of her usual unbecoming hats. But lately they seem to be more flattering. Maybe she can afford a better selection now. Or maybe she borrows some from Princess Di who has 400 chapeaux.

Our other 'kinship' is with real estate tycoon Donald Trump, worth between $1.5 and $3 billion, a figure not to be sneezed at. Ace of fabulous NYC properties, a $52 million yacht, he has acquired jackpot ownership of three Atlantic City hotel-casinos.

In the magazine article, King Trump was referred to as 'the most acquisitive' of this select group. We can vouch for that title. (Note our proper English here.) From whom do you think his casinos acquired the finances to expand his empire?

Well, we got turned on to this 'filthy lucre' concentration because of the recent listing of top wage earners in the entertainment field. Ranging between $16 million and $100 million during the 1987-88 period.

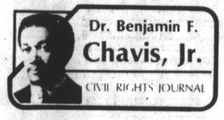
Leader of the pack is 'bad' Michael Jackson, credited with an income of $98 million. Well, Michael seems to prefer the companionship of Bubbles, the chimp, to a steady girl friend.

Well, that makes money-saving good sense. He doesn't have to shower this pet with gifts of diamonds (a girl's best friend). And the chimp already has a fur coat.

Lush lass on the list is Oprah Winfrey, popular talk show host. There was a time when we took issue with clothes advertisements which claim that 'One size fits all.'

We contended that only two things would fit both Oprah and us — a pair of earrings and a stretch limousine. Now that she has slimmed down so beautifully, maybe some fashions would fit us both. But she still has a major size advantage. When it comes to bank accounts, the big bucks stop there.

All that glitters is not gold,
Of that we're well aware
We'd just like to have as chums
Folks who reflect that glare



Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.
CIVIL RIGHTS JOURNAL

Bishop Harris

Bishop Harris' leadership as "a very serious challenge to many in the Church."

Some traditionalists who oppose the ordination of women as bishops

We have often explained that the best way to celebrate African American history is to continue to make history. For the first time in world history, a woman has been elected bishop in the Episcopal Church.

The Rev. Barbara C. Harris, an African American Episcopal priest and social activist, was recently elected Suffragan Bishop of the Diocese of Massachusetts, the nation's largest Episcopal diocese.

A native of Philadelphia, PA, Rev. Harris has been a long time participant and leader in the struggle for justice and freedom in the United States and throughout the world.

I remember meeting the Rev. Barbara Harris at a conference sponsored by the Episcopal Publishing Company.

What impressed me most about Rev. Harris was her candid sense of mortal responsibility combined with her unique agility as a committed social activist.

In particular Rev. Harris has acquired many years of experience in helping to promote prison reform in the state of Pennsylvania and in other regions of the nation. We need more church leaders to follow the example of Rev. Harris in the areas of prison reform and criminal justice.

The election of Bishop Harris is a victory for all women. In too many places throughout the world and in the United States women are still victimized by the sin of sexism.

We take note that the Episcopal Church, after centuries of struggle and debate, has taken an important step forward in history.

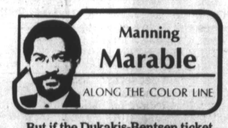
It is our hope that all church denominations and religious bodies will become institutions where women will enjoy equal justice, respect, status and support.

Already in the wake of the election of Bishop Harris, the winds of negative reaction are beginning to blow.

The Rev. Eddy Stride, who is the chairperson of an organization of conservatives and traditionalists of the Church of England which the Episcopal Church is affiliated, sees attempt to make the argument that because the Christian ministry has primarily been male dominated for nearly 2,000 years then there should not be a change.

We agree that Bishop Harris's leadership will be a "very serious challenge to many in the Church." We believe that this is a necessary and positive challenge to the entire history of the negativity of sexism and racism in the life of the church universal.

We congratulate and salute Bishop Barbara C. Harris for her leadership and for her continued commitment.



Manning Marable
ALONG THE COLOR LINE

Why Dukakis may lose

With only on month prior to the presidential election, a definite trend has developed. Vice President George Bush is unquestionably in the lead in every poll, with Dukakis struggling to gain ground.

Bush has been successful in dictating the major issues or perhaps more accurately, he has skirted the central public policy questions in favor of patriotic demagoguery, shrill rhetoric and reactionary posturing.

Bush has wrapped his campaign in the flag, implying that "loyal Americans" don't favor the near-subversive positions of Dukakis.

Since the Republican convention, Bush has been on the offensive. The Dukakis team was first in disarray, apparently less experienced in handling the pressures of a national campaign in a general election than Bush's forces.

The media played a contributing role in Dukakis's August and September nose-dive, by "under-reporting" the Democratic nominee's policy position on financing college tuition payments and the more recent health care program initiative.

By creating the appearance of going overboard in its critical examination of Senator Dan Quayle's personal problems, the media created a sympathetic backlash for the Indiana reactionary.

By focusing too heavily on the pseudo-pledge of allegiance issue, the press and television media boosted Bush's fortunes. Back in 1984, the media handled Reagan with kid gloves, doing all it could to return the Republican president to the White House. Now it appears that the press is trying to repeat this service for Bush.

But if the Dukakis-Bentsen ticket goes down into political oblivion next month, the Massachusetts governor should not look for scapegoats to explain his defeat.

The temptation will be great to cast the blame on Jesse Jackson, the Rainbow Coalition, and the remarkable electoral mobilization of American progressives and minorities in 1988.

Dukakis and his team of sour grapes experts will declare: "It's all Jesse's fault! Without a Jackson candidacy, the Duke would have locked up the Democratic party's nomination before the Wisconsin primary, and certainly by New York's primary.

Jackson's high negatives among Jewish voters, low-to-middle class whites and Southern whites turned off the Democrats who had previously voted for Reagan.

Dukakis's tireless efforts to move the Democrats back to the ideological center, and to go after the political moderates, was too little, too late. Jackson's radicalism and rhetoric doomed Dukakis."

Their view is that the American people need two Republican parties, not one; that "Reaganism" can be administered by Democrats more efficiently and humanely.

Jackson simply doesn't fit into this conservative consensus, so he will catch the blame for any defeat. Never mind the fact that Jackson's core consistency will vote by a margin of ten to one in favor of Dukakis over Bush.

The real reason that Dukakis may lose is found squarely and solely within the Democratic candidate's timid camp of advisers and soothsayers. If consumers have to choose between an "imitation product" vs. the "real thing," they'll select the latter.

Voters act in an identical manner. Dukakis's advisers have presented the candidate and his public policy agenda as a lukewarm corporatist version of Mondale's program, with ample selections of Reaganism.

Dukakis doesn't offer a sweeping egalitarian vision of where the nation needs to move. He fails to capture the spirit of discontent and alienation generated among millions of Americans by the socio-economic destruction of the Reagan agenda.

With Bush, at least you know where you stand; with Dukakis, no one is quite sure, least of all minorities and the poor.

Dukakis's chief shortcoming is his inability to call for "class struggle." Bush is the "child" of the privileged upper classes. The only poor people who came into intimate contact with Bush are those who serve his dinner at country clubs.

Bush's policy agenda is dedicated to the proposition that the rich should get richer at the expense of the poor, people of color, working women, and the unemployed.

If Dukakis cast his agenda as a democratic and populist crusade for the vast majority of American people, he might achieve victory. His failure to do so could easily produce defeat.

Dr. Manning Marable is Chairperson of the Black Studies Department, Ohio State University.