EDITORIALS

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THE VOICE OF BLACK AMERICA SINCE 1892

The games people play

How serious should the general public take the new parlor game — Home Roulette — which was removed from the shelf of a Georgetown Park Mall store after the AFRO-AMERICAN began asking questions?

Real serious if we believe historians who tell us that board games imitate, symbolically, the activities of men.

Board games have been played for thousands of years. Many games were used to teach military and survival lessons. In modern times, games have been developed to teach business skills,like Monopoly, and word skills, like Scrabble. What does this new game Home Roulette teach?

The producers of the game Home Rulette, who copyrighted it under the name Sensitivity Group,Inc., made their purpose clear in their disclaimer which reads:

"We have tried our level best to be equal opportunity bigots. Yes, we hate most everybody. Chinks, Honkeys, Cripples, Spics, Wasps, Micks, Nazis, Negroes, men and women."

From this disclaimer we find that teaching people to hate is one of the purposes of this new found toy.

But, what also disturbs us about this game which pokes fun at blacks, the homeless and gays and also denounces our institutions like Howard University, UDC and the Union Temple Baptist Church is that it took too long for the good citizens of Washington to get excited about it.

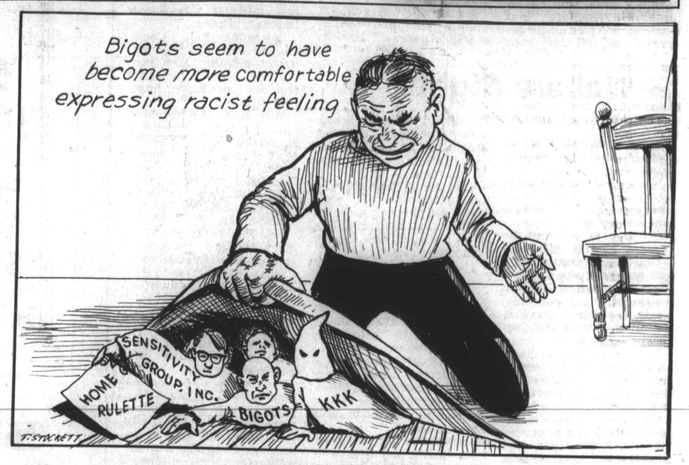
The store manager in Georgetown Park called it a "political satire game that pokes fun at everybody down the board." She first said she would not remove it from her store although she "had slight reservations about selling the game."

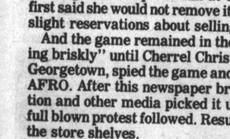
And the game remained in the store for almost a month "selling briskly" until Cherrel Christian went on a shopping spree in Georgetown, spied the game and brought it to the attention of the AFRO. After this newspaper broke the story in our Dec. 10 edition and other media picked it up and put it on the air waves, a full blown protest followed. Result. The game was removed from the store shelves.

For the people who made the game, those who sold it and those who will play it we give them fair warning. As long as there is one Cherrel Christian in this world to shout out in protest we stand committed to print the story. We will not ignore this insult like some of the media did.

Linda Thurston of the Partisan Defense Committee — a newly formed group which has become a watchdog against racism — said that "Racially motivated violence has been on the rise in the sense of more demonstrations and the link-up of the young storm-trooper skinhead organization."

If this kind of bigotry is to be stopped, more alert citizens like Cherrel Christian are needed. We cannot afford to ignore what we know is wrong. Hatred is like a virus. Unchecked, it will pay no attention to race, creed or color and will continue to spread not just in the black community but in all communities. And that makes it serious business.





Anthony Armstrong
Political Consultant

Crooked lines

I wanted to know her mother's mother, my great-grandmother's mother; and her's and her's, all the way back to eternity. So as a boy, I would ask my mother who our people were.

I was satisfied, in faith, with Adam and Eve; still, however, the questioning went on.

I wanted names I could match to imaginary collaborations of faces, that must have formed the pieces of the appearance of the way my family looks today.

It's emptying, at first, not having many specifics about the family's genealogy. Like so many lines extending backward into the past, being enveloped in a thick cloud of no-names; African-Americans' family backgrounds permit of more questions than their few resolutions.

The lines are crooked; all we know is that they remained unbroken. Physically, lovingly, progenitor beget progeny, who beget off-spring, whose products beget still more; on and on til today.

Then, somehow, love's crooked lines broke. Matriarch and patriarch left their common wedded moorings.

Children broke, no, were broken, from both; inevitably abandon without "a mind." The last most vital knots in our crooked lines became untied.

In place of family — mother, father, and children — we voted an alien separatism of being merely women, men, or children. We don't know what we've done.

Our defense can only be that we forgot to tend the clouds that protected who we were, even though we didn't know our names. Now that the lines are severed, who will tell us who we will become?

The family history is a root searching process. From the roots a tree grows hundreds of branches, thousands of twigs, if only in the darkness of the mind's eye. Life begins, couples marry and divorce, kids get made; up til now all the branches and twigs had connecting nodules.

Though crooked, the lines were never really ever completely broken; in fact, they wove the rope bridges of our futures. Someone was always linked to someone else.

For instance, Buddy could be Joy's cousin, who is Bill's sister's sister-in-law, who had a baby by the guy down the block;

Family sustained us through the dark centuries of real slavery, and, later, real ex-slavery. However, great institutions almost never meet their destruction from the outside.

What happens is that they give up on and, then, stop living themselves first; weakening themselves from the inside. Only then are the outer shields breeched.

Once cracked, a family's destruction will still require collusion to finally bring it crashing to the earth, sending its former members careening aimlessly and separately into time. Is anyone family now and, thus, isn't everyone family now?

If not, won't we destroy ourselves eventually: the rich, the poor, even those not yet brought to life by birth?

Are we a million stars without a galaxy? Will we come full circle to belong to everyone, to all the rest, and they to us? Isn't it one for all, all for one?

Is it something new, like life; or as old as Miss Netty sharing potatoes across the fence with Miss Grace, and both sharing coffee made too sweet with other ladies on the block?

There's really no getting away from family, only the ruinous tension of attempting to. Nature's wrath is the only prize for any who try.

Kweisi Mfume
U.S. Congressman

Home for the holidays

Each city has its own distinct set of problems. One problem that is found in almost every American city is the dire lack of affordable housing.

In 1983, the U. S. Conference of Mayor's surveyed 66 American cities and discovered that the dearth of adequate and affordable housing was a problem in each of the cities.

Home-ownership dropped 7.8% in the past 8 years for young parents proving that this situation has deteriorated in the 5 years since the Mayor's survey was conducted.

Many causes contribute to the housing crisis: (1) increase in home buying population, (2) decrease in the construction of modestly priced homes, (3) rapidly escalating prices of built homes and (4) too low salaries for down payments and purchase.

The problem hinges on the decreasing supply of affordable housing available to the increasing population of middle-class buyers. As the Baby Boom ages and raises families the need for multi-bedroom single-family dwellings increases.

This population group which needs family housing the most is hard pressed to make the kind of financial commitment necessary for purchase.

Most people have to rent before buying so that they can save enough for the down-payment and closing costs.

But since rent takes such a substantial percent of the annual income that saving the necessary funds for a down-payment is a lengthy process. The plausible solution is to build more rental units and single family dwellings.

Developers though are building more units priced for the upper-income bracket than for middle and low income wage earners.

Compounding this lack of private initiative to solve the housing crunch, at present, there are no new federally assisted housing units being built.

The prices of homes has far outrun the salaries of most families to buy homes. A recent Washington Post story is indicative of the astronomical increase in home prices. One owner was recently offered half a million dollars by a developer for his 30-year-old eight thousand dollar home.

Most homes don't appreciate this dramatically, but a modest three bedroom home is nevertheless out of reach for most families. The national average price of the single family dwelling is now over $85,000.

A generation ago, one wage earner in the family made enough to purchase a home. Now, ownership remains but a dream even for many couples even when both work. Low salaries make purchasing impossible. The price of homes today make it impossible for single parent head of household to ever purchase a home.

In 1987, there were 2.2 million Americans are single parent families - double the number in 1974. It is clear that more families are renting knowing that they will never be able to buy a home.

The problem, in a nutshell, is this: more homes are needed by an increasing number of single and two-parent families who are less able to afford the escalating prices of the fewer number of homes being built.

In 1987, Congress passed the Emergency Low-Income Housing Preservation Act, which protects tenants from being unduly burdened by rent increases.

These federally subsidized apartments and their legally protected tenants are now under attack in the courts.

Residents in Chicago trying to prevent the 25-50% monthly rent increases by landlords have recently won a case in the U. S. District Court in Chicago which decided that the law is unconstitutional.

Building owners and landlords say the law is unconstitutional for it, "imposes conditions on the sale or conversion of property for low-income people to market-rate housing that are virtually impossible to meet and thus violate the Fifth Amendment."

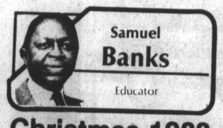
A Class Action suit by apartment building owners in North Carolina is another recent challenge to the 1987 Act. Yet, having survived one court battle there is growing confidence that other such measures will arise during the 101st Congress.

I am committed to putting a halt to the dwindling number of units available.

Adding to the burdens that the black middle-class must overcome as we look for affordable housing is the integration barrier.

A study released in the December 1988, American Journal of Sociology entitled, "Suburbanization and Segregation in U. S. Metropolitan Areas," conclued that:

"Two decades after the Civil Rights Act of 1968, which, in theory, banned racial discrimination in the sale and rental of housing, blacks have still not achieved equal access to housing in American cities and suburbs." Discrimination in housing compounds an already heavy burden for the middle-class black family.



Samuel Banks
Educator

Christmas 1988

The time has come, once again, throughout the land, when there is a felicitous and infectious lilt in the air, a delicious feeling of universal comradeship and fellowfeeling and a frenetic pace of getting and spending for self and others.

The fundamental raison d' etre or justification is simple: It is Christmas.

A few days ago over five million Jews throughout the land were observing Hanukkah or the "Festival of Lights" commemorating their people's triumph over the mighty Syrian power of oppression and tyranny.

Their global commemoration of Hanukkah represented a grand and continuing manifestation of hope and religious and political freedom.

The central and overriding message of Christmas for Christendom represents the birth of Jesus in a lowly stable over 2,000 years ago.

His birth and universal witness have transformed the world relative to the universality of love, unconditional love and unlimited human possibilities for all.

This boundless and exhilarating expression of the best for the human condition has a timeless way of eliciting the best from us.

It is unfortunate that we are unable to sustain the spirit of love and caring which animates and pervades Christmas for a longer period.

It; too, is equally distressing that there is a disinclination to address the multiple and long-standing needs of our fellow-citizens who, in season and out, endure societal rejection, exclusion denial and privation.

The time is now at hand to look beyond the ephemeral Christmas interlude and begin, in earnest, the process of standing up for the dispossessed, downtrodden and Les Miserables in our midst.

We must summon the courage to care and to love for change and human possibilities.

One of the genuine joys I have as a regular columnist for the Baltimore Afro-American, other than sharing my philosophical thoughts for reflection and action, is the preparation of my annual Christmas message.

The annual journalistic catharsis at Christmas affords me a valuable opportunity to express my bountiful thanks to those of you who have faithfully supported and encouraged me in the course of my eight years as a columnist.

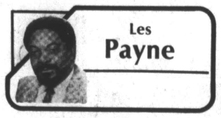
The past year, as in times past, to be sure, has been difficult, taxing and cumbersome for us as black Americans. In spite of all of the tribulations, vicissitudes, pain and disappointment, through it all, we, as collective people, continue to inch forward for full freedom, social justice and equality of opportunity.

In the universal and time-honored spirit of the season, I wish you and your families a most joyous, tranquil and rewarding Christmas.

Whatever your status or condition, at this marvelous and wondrous time of the year, muster the will and high resolve to catch the spirit. Happy Christmas and Kwanza, Brothers and Sisters.

COMMENTARY & OPINIONS

MDDC NNPA UPI



Les Payne

Tipping is a new threat

Tipping. Beware. The real estate agents are up to the "T's." Tipping is the latest threat against which apartment managers have armed themselves in their ongoing offensive to hold the line against genuine open housing.

Motives were much simpler in earlier years when real estate agents employed such tactics as "blockbustin," "restrictive zoning" and "steering."

Preserving lily-white neighborhoods was the naked intent.

In time, federal laws were enacted to roll back housing segregation blacks had fought against in the court and spilled blood in the streets to end. The 1968 Fair Housing Act was enacted to put housing segregation into the crypt.

Yet nowhere in America has housing integration taken place.

Clusters of desegregation spring up sure enough, but they bloom only for a short while before either the invading black hordes are repulsed or the white occupants flee in terror. So common is this latter American neurosis that social observers have given it a name—"tipping."

"This is the point in the desegregating process at which whites, who can take only so much open housing, begin to flee. The first critical point supposedly arrives when black occupancy reaches 15 percent. At 30 percent, all whites of means frantically take to the hills. At 50, the garrison is surrendered.

Experiments in urban housing units have been set up to reverse, or at least stabilize, this "white flight." Since whites flee in earnest when blacks arrive in percentages over 30, the theory was to freeze the black occupancy rate below this "tipping" point. This way privileged whites would be reassured in their majority.

Starrett City, a 5,581-unit publicly subsidized Brooklyn housing project in 46 high-rise buildings, is the best known such experiment.

Constructed in 1965, Starrett City employed "integration maintenance" quotas which initially fixed the black occupancy rate at 22 percent, later hiking it to 28 percent.

The Supreme Court recently refused to review a lower court ruling that banned the quota system. The controversy has found odd couplings on the same side of this issue.

Acting for different purposes, both the NAACP and the Reagan Justice Department had challenged the "integration maintenance" system. The Justice Department opposes all quotas, and probably housing integration itself.

However, the NAACP earlier filed on behalf of blacks who, under the Starrett City system, had to wait up to 10 times longer than white families to get an apartment in the publicly subsidized project.

The prescribed remedy is not really a cure. Whereas the Fair Housing Act outlawed racist practices that often set the black occupancy rate at zero, the Starrett City plan fixed that at 28 percent. Closing down 70 percent of the apartments to blacks clearly is not fair or open housing.

Despite the managers' claims, the courts were proper in ruling against this bogus attempt at "integration." These limiting quotas, incidentally, are quite different from affirmative action quotas designed to overcome the inertia of exclusionary practices a gainst an oppressed class.

Affirmative action quotas generally aim at establishing a floor to keep the dominant class from maintaining a zero or token level of black participation in areas such as housing, education and the job market.

The Starrett City quotas fixed not a floor below which blacks could not be pushed, but a ceiling above which they were now allowed to rise.

If, in the name of "integration," this latter principle was similarly applied to professional basketball, then 70 percent of the slots on the Knicks, the Lakers or the Hawks, say, would be reserved for white players.

"Integration maintenance" has been enforced in sports. In the University of Texas system, basketball coaches in the late 1960s were under orders never to play three blacks on the court at the same time. The argument was that fans, to say nothing of alumni, would not support such a team.

Integration is best served by open competition, not by its elimination to protect white privilege. In the Starrett City case, the "integration maintenance" plan attempted to cure the "white flight" syndrome by avoiding it. If a 30 percent black occupancy rate terrorizes white tenants, then the cure lies in their confronting those fears.

Otherwise, it is like treating the people who fear height by reducing the whole Earth to sea level. The road to genuine desegregation must lead to freedom of choice for blacks and whites, not restriction.

It is sad that whites choose to flee when blacks exercise their rights to open housing but it is their right.

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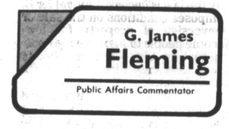


G. James Fleming
Public Affairs Commentator

Bashing others not enough

Growing sentiment, by blacks, against the Japanese, raises the question of whether "Japanese bashing" is really productive; whether it is enough.

Not that there are not grounds for complaints against alleged job discrimination by Japanese industrial magnates, or against silly remarks by some Japanese officials. But it is worth the energy just railing at the Japanese and threatening boycott of things Japanese.

After all the "righteous indignation" by Blacks, the Japanese are still building some of the best automobiles in the world and selling them to the world. The same record holds for the best in electronics and high-tech.

Some Japanese are buying some of the most prestigious of American real estate, while others are active on the American stock exchanges.

If all the bashing by blacks, by some legerdemain, would close the doors of the United States against all Japanese enterprises, of what benefit would that be to blacks?

Instead of "Japanese bashing," we blacks need to learn from the Japanese; we need to imitate others as they have historically been imitating the best of the western world; we could very well profit from their habit of industry, reliability and old-time stick-to-it-ive-ness.

We blacks could well adopt some of the Japanese practices in reference to the place of the family in the society, and especially, the place of children, their upbringing and education.

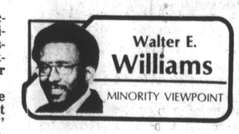
Where American students dodge mathematics and the natural sciences, the Japanese young people crave these subjects.

We need fair employment practice laws in the nation, the states and in our cities, we need the rigorous efforts of the NAACP, and we need, too, the educational programs of the Urban League. But, for most of us blacks, "Japanese bashing" is, to repeat, nonproductive and is not enough.

* * *

What goes for the Japanese also holds for other Asians, especially those who are doing business in black neighborhoods, and it holds, also, for Jews, with whom blacks have had a long love-hate relationship.

The best way for blacks to meet the competition of all comers is to offer them similar competition—in Mom and Pop stores, in corporate (or cooperative) business, in organization of fiscal resources, and in the classroom.



Walter E. Williams
MINORITY VIEWPOINT

Read my lips too

Since we've read President-elect George Bush's lips saying "No new taxes" how about reading my lips too: Congress is dominated by scalawags who don't give a hoot about our future as a free and prosperous nation. "Okay, Williams," you say, "This is the last straw; we've had it with you!" But wait; let me plead my case.

We're faced with a $150 billion deficit and a $2.7 trillion national debt which costs $400 million per day in interest.

If we include the unfunded liabilities (the hidden deficit), Social Security, employee retirement and loan guarantees we're talking about a national debt estimated at between $9 and 12 trillion.

Nobel Laureate economists, like Milton Friedman and James Buchanan, say there's no way we're going to pay the national debt. The more likely scenario is repudiation.

There is no eminent crisis. Federal deficits are only slightly more than 3 percent of our GNP. While a future Congress will repudiate the national debt, it won't be this year or the next.

If, like this columnist, you're over 50, there's nothing to really worry about; when the real calamity comes, we'll be dead, leaving our children and grandchildren holding the bag for today's political cowardice.

Congressional scalawags mouth concern over the deficit and debt for no reason other than to hoodwink us into accepting higher taxes. Any politician who says a tax increase will balance the budget is a liar. Look at the record.

In 26 of the last 27 years, the budget has been in red ink. Yet, in 24 of those years there has been one tax increase or another.

Top that off with the fact that since World War II, for each dollar of tax increase, federal spending has increased an average of $1.58. A deceitful Congress forces Americans to cough up more money in the name of deficit fighting only to fuel its hidden agenda of more spending.

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates that annual tax revenues will grow by roughly $74 billion.

The CBO estimates 1989 revenues at $980 billion, 1990's at $1,064 billion, and 1991's at $1,134 billion. Federal expenditures for 1989 will be $1,127 billion.

According to Dan Mitchell of the Washington - based Citizens for a Sound Economy, you don't have to be a mathematical genius to figure out that, if we froze federal spending, at its current level of $1,127 billion, by 1991 the deficit would be eliminated and there'd be a tiny budget surplus with a chance to bite into the national debt.

Neither the White House nor Congress has the courage or the incentive to take on the powerful prospending lobbies. After all, the politicians are accountable to the voting pigs currently at the federal trough, not to the future generations who will pay dearly for the slop.

Horsefeathers!

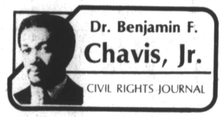
This is like the man telling his wife, "Honey, we've fallen on hard times and have to cut spending." And she replies, "We can't; 75 percent is non-discretionary."

Again, horsefeathers!

Non-discretionary nonsense! Congress enacted the spending programs; they can surely unenact or curb them. After all, they have no trouble writing and rewriting laws enacting higher taxes or increased congressional salaries and perks.

The long-term strategy for the control of Congress is a balanced budget/spending limitation constitutional amendment.

A short-term strategy is to support President-elect Bush's call for some form of a spending freeze. The worst thing we could do is fall for a tax increase. Case closed.



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

Help free South Africa

We all should be aware of the tricks and disguises of the racist apartheid regime of South Africa. Yes, there have been some recent but reluctant indications in South Africa that some changes may soon occur.

The fact that South Africa has now tentatively signed an accord with Angola and Cuba, regarding withdrawal of South Africa'a armed forces from Angolan and Namibian territories, is a welcomed event.

The fact that South Africa has recently released several political prisoners who have been unjustly held for many years is another welcomed signal.

Yet, these welcomed actions by the government of South Africa to stay in power.

Thus, the anti-apartheid movement in the United States should accelerate efforts to insure the passage of the Dellums-Cranston Comprehensive Sanctions Bill in the next session of Congress.

Nelson Mandela and thousands of other political prisoners are still being unjustly held in the custody of the apartheid regime.

Mobile Oil and Shell Oil Companies, based here in the United States, continue to fuel the death pumps of apartheid.

While most of the established news media in the nation have stopped giving consistent news coverage about the unfolding situation in South Africa, we should be aware that the social and political climate in South Africa has deteriorated.

Fascism is on the rise in South Africa to the point that, within the last several days, a member of a white neo-fascist group based in Pretoria opened gunfire on a group of unarmed black South Africans.

In this incident, three people were killed and at least ten were wounded. These incidents continue to escalate throughout South Africa.

The perpetrator of this violence was a former policeman, Barend Strydom, who is a member of the Afrikaner Resistance Movement, a neo-fascist, swastika wearing group that openly attacks black South Africans.

As we approach the Christmas season which stresses goodwill and peace on earth, let us remember our responsibility to help free South Africa from the tyranny of apartheid.

The new Bush Administration needs to be pressured by the African American community along with the growing anti-apartheid movement to stop the United States' "destructive engagement" and support of South Africa.

GUS HAWKINS:

The art of lip reading

We have been challenged by the incoming president-elect to "read his lips," about not raising taxes. The tax which is referred to is the personal income tax.

But where there are different types of taxes which may be proposed to deal with the $155 billion deficit. These include taxes on gasoline or imported oil - and so called "sin" taxes on alcohol and cigarettes.

These alternatives, which are regressive in my judgement because they unfairly penalize the poor, would not raise enough revenue to appreciably reduce the federal deficit.

Playing the "no tax" game has gotten us in a lot of trouble, and has put us in a position whereby social programs fiercely compete against each other for funds.

The tax giveaways of the early 1980's, where the wealthy enjoyed bountiful breaks and major multi-million dollar corporations paid no federal taxes (and in some cases received rebates), depleted much of our revenue base.

We are told that we would "grow out of the deficit." Instead, the deficit tripled.

Some political observers noted that the "no tax" strategy was a way of defunding social programs without actually proposing cuts. Simply put, if the well is dried up, there is not enough money to go around.

The hard reality was, not only did the Reagan Administration cut hard into the bone of the social programs, but they also created a fiscal crisis that puts the future funding of these programs at risk.

In the short term, the "no tax read lips strategy" is prose for politicians, but it ignores the hard realities ahead.

These realities are: educating a workforce, especially children of the poor, to make us competitive; rooting out the menace of drugs and crime in our nation; a rapidly diminishing availability of affordable housing; and the general decline of our manufacturing base.

The short term policy of not even considering the "T" word, is a way of deferring the problem into future years.

But the policy of this indifference on budget priorities, which invest in people, has already begun to unweave our social fabric.

Some examples are: the homeless, increasingly children and families (a lack of public housing); high joblessness and crime in our inner cities (a lack of comprehensive urban policy); high school dropouts (a lack of proper investment and quality care).

These observations are sometimes criticized by some as "prophets of doom and gloom."

We can not simply represent the people on easy street — we also represent the jobless; the working poor; seniors on marginal fixed incomes; and others who are struggling to survive.

We can all read lips. But instead of politically popular slogans we need to discuss the real key to prosperity . . . investment in our citizens.