EDITORIALS

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Make every day Earth Day

Twenty years ago, some 20 million people gathered to voice their concerns about the destruction of the Earth's environment. It was the largest organized demonstration in history.

Their concerns have been recognized every year since, and this Sunday, April 22, will be commemorated worldwide at Earth Day-1990.

Only a few of the problems that were the object of the first Earth Day have been successfully addressed — many others are worse than they were in 1970. It will take heroic efforts if we are to avoid total disaster for mankind.

Our planet needs our earnest help, join with the many groups in your own community whose purposes are to fight global warming, acid rain, ozone holes, forest destruction, landfill proliferation, and the thousands of other factors that are rapidly turnng our planet into one vast and deadly desert.

Earth Day-1990 seeks to promote the dedicated responses which are ncessary to launch the 90s as the "International Decade of the Environment."

We must save the Earth — It is the only home we have.

Ralph Abernathy

How do you write a farewell salute to a man whom you have respected all of your life only to have about seven pages in a 638-page book which can be found in the index under the words, "King, Martin Luther, Jr., as a womanizer" cloud the whole picture.

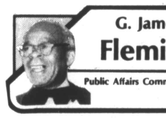
This is the dilemma many civil rights workers find themselves in as they mourn the death of the Rev. Ralph Abernathy,64 who died Tuesday,April 17 in Atlanta,Ga.

Many like President George Bush ignored the book, "And the Walls Came Tumbling Down" and said that "In recalling Ralph Abernathy's life, we inevitably recall the great campaigns for civil rights for Black Americans in which he played such a signal part."

And Coretta Scott King, Dr. King's widow reminded the nation that Dr. Abernathy was the one who stood by her family when their home was bombed and their family threatened. She also saluted Dr. Abernathy for his life of achievement and merit.

We too would like to remember Dr. Abernathy as the man Dr. King called "my dearest friend in the world;" as the man who went to jail with Dr. King during the sixties; as the young Baptist preacher who believed in non-violent protests and helped lead the 381-day Montgomery boycott after Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat; and as the man who took over the Southern Christian Leadership Conference after Dr. King's death and led the Poor People's Campaign which attracted some 50,000 persons to Washington.

Dr. Abernathy believed that no matter what he wrote or said in later life he had earned his place in history. We hope he has but, we are not that naive. Unfortunately for him and us those seven awful pages in his book might erase all of his good deeds down to a few words — "the man who accused the great Martin Luther King of having extra marital affairs."



G. James Fleming
Public Affairs Commentator

Parks Sausage setting example

It's "Grand Opening Celebration" this weekend when the Parks Sausage Company throws open the doors of its new, modern and enlarged facilities.

Not only new, modern and larger, but attractive in every respect and located in what is now (happily) 3300 Henry G. Parks Circle (formerly Reisterstown Road and Druid Park Drive).

From modest, unimpressive beginning on an Inner City side street, it has now risen to be one of the city's major manufacturing enterprises.

Not the largest, but one of the most impactful employing 245 men and women, and distributing its products in leading stores and supermarkets from New England to Virginia.

When it appeared that Parks Sausage might have to leave its Baltimore home, to make room for the new Orioles baseball stadium, there was widespread alarm, so pivotal has the company become, especially to the African-American community.

"More Parks Sausage, Mom, Please" is not only the slogan of a business, but it has become the catchwords of countless people, regardless of race or background who have learned to enjoy the good things, and high quality, which are associated with the Parks' signature — from chitterlings to sausage and in between — all flavored with a bit of the Old South.

* * * *

When the Parks company started 38 years ago, it had to depend on Blacks for its financing and on Black outlets for its principal distribution.

Not so anymore, due to the winds of change; due also to the aggressive promotion and marketing practices of its guiding spirits — William A. Adams of the earliest days and, later, henry Parks and now Raymond V. Haysbert, now the incumbent president. These men fortunately, surrounded themselves with the best brains and brawn seemingly available.

The leadership has also been quite smart in dealing with the wheelers and dealers who buy and sell business properties. They have known a good thing when they have seen it and vice versa.

* * * *

Parks Sausage also had to educate the banking and financial fraternity. The story goes that when, at last, one bank was willing to grant the company a short-term loan of $60,000 to make possible the buying of a carload of "guts," the banker, very seriously, had to ask Mr. Parks, "What's guts, man."

From then on, that banker, and others, began cramming up about the parts of the pig and why Parks had become one of the leaders in its field.

Henry Parks and Raymond Haysbert have also set an example in corporate leadership as they have shared their talents with the larger community.

Mr. Parks, for some years, was a vigorous member of the Baltimore City Council and Messrs. Adams and Haysbert have served on the boards of important political, civic and business organizations — organizations whose leaders can make or break Baltimore.

If the banking and business climate of Maryland is much healthier today than it was yesteryear, much of the credit must go to Parks Sausage Company and those other pioneering enterprisers who in their several ways have had answers to "What's guts, man?"

Kweisi Mfume
U.S. Congressman

Budget basics for Bush

Ten years ago, the Reagan/Bush Administration presented a budget blueprint that proposed transferring $45 billion from domestic and social service programs to our nation's military budget.

At that time, President Reagan assumed that no one in Congress could put another proposal on the table that could match his budget to build a strong America and challenged his critics to either put up or shut up.

While the first Reagan/Bush budget proposal alarmed many in Congress, the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) viewed the budget as a hostile assault on many metropolitan districts.

In fact, vital community development, educational, job training, housing, health and environmental programs were slated to be significantly pared down in order to bolster our peacetime war economy.

To counter the Reagan/Bush budget doctrine, the Congressional Black Caucus drafted its first Quality of Life Alternative Budget. Since its introduction ten years ago, the CBC Alternative budget has become the preeminent alternative budget policy on Capitol Hill.

The main attraction of the CBC budget is that it has demonstrated year after year that America can provide a sufficient national defense while simultaneously caring for America's communities.

Here in Baltimore, according to City Hall, the City faces a $48 million budget shortfall for the next fiscal year. Sadly, this may mean layoffs for some and reduction in services for others.

While Baltimore relies increasingly on the State of Maryland to assist, the state inevitably faces an identical problem with the precipitous reduction in federal aid.

One only needs to look at our community and see that in fact we could use more funding in many of the areas that were sacrificed in order to keep Moscow and other evil empires at bay.

The Congressional Black Caucus realizes that the American people deserve a sensible budget which redirects funding back into the nation's communities.

Essentially, the CBC budget lays the foundation for the fundamental reprioritization of our nation's economy.

Instead of rooting our ecoomic destiny in a war - economy, the CBC and other members of Congress believe that we need to focus our resources on a more efficient and equitable society for the year 2000 and beyond.

This cannot be achieved by building bigger and better weapons and weapons systems. The entire free world around us is changing and America's international posture should change to accommodate the new environment America will soon find itself.

The CBC budget is $25.9 billion above the Office of Management and Budget's (MB) "current services" estimate of what it will cost the government to fund all non-defense programs compared to F'Y 1990 level.

By contrast President George Bush's budget proposal is estimated to $10 billion below OMB's "current estimate" baseline.

Additionally, the CBC rejects the idea of a capital gains tax to raise revenues. The CBC budget offers two revenue enhancing proposals. First, the CBC budget would remove the anomaly or tax "bubble" created by the Tax Reform Act of 1986.

The present formula requires highest income taxpayers to pay the same marginal rate as lower income taxpayers. Thus, higher income taxpayers' rates are 28 percent and lower income taxpayers pay 33 percent rates.

Second, the Black Caucus Budget imposes a ten percent corporate income tax for the highest 10 percent incomes of corporate tax payers.

The CBC budget would exempt nearly all minority and small business owners. This surtax would be in effect for the entire three year budget cycle and would not disrupt the bulk of the tax code.

Last year's Congressional Black Caucus Budget garnered more supporters than in previous years. Budget Committee Chairman Leon Panetta, said of that bill: "it is an honest, direct, and bold approach to the budget that deserves the attention of my colleagues."

Already in Baltimore several groups such as Jobs With Peace and the Baltimore Development Commission have expressed interest in the CBC Alternative budget.

The Congressional Black Caucus Quality of Life budget is a progressive fiscal alternative designed to invest in people not defense.

Thanks must go to former President Ronald Reagan for putting forth the challenge to create a better budget for America than his administration offered.

Proudly, the Congressional Black Caucus accepted this challenge and began building an alternative that continues to garner stronger support year after year.

AFRO Welcomes Letters

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:

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COMMENTARY & OPINIONS

Ron Daniels
Vantage Point

Gus Savage

Congressman Gus Savage has been engulfed in a firestorm of controversy since the feisty Congressman from Illinois allegedly made some anti - semitic remarks at a March 17 campaign rally.

Cong. Savage accused his opponent Mel Reynolds, who is also an African American, of receiving most of his campaign contributions from "pro-Israel Jewish Organizations."

Cong. Savage contends that he was targeted for defeat because he consistently questioned why the tiny nation of Israel receives some 3 billion dollars in U.S. foreign aid annually while sub - Saharan African nations, with an estimated population of more than 500 million people, receive only about 700 million dollars in aid.

In the heat of the campaign rally Cong. Savage referred to "Jewish organizations," "Jewish Money," and the "Jewish Lobby" as the source of most of his opponents campaign contributions.

I will concede that using sweeping generalizations can be risky and inappropriate when referring to any racial, ethnic or religious group.

However, the real issue is whether or not African American leaders, organizations or concerned citizens or any other group for that matter, has the right to question the actions of Israel or the conduct of American Jewish organizations and individuals who may lobby on Israel's behalf.

Another question is, where there are apparent differences between the agenda and interests of African Americans and the interests of the American Jewish Community?

Do African Americans have a right to pursue their interest, or criticize Israel or organizations within the American Jewish community without being branded anti - Semitic?

One of the clear sources of the tension in "Black - Jewish relations" is the resentment among increasing numbers of African Americans that a considerable number of leaders and organizations within the American Jewish community act as if African Americans do not have the right to raise questions about Israel.

There is concern that if there is a Black - Jewish relationship, African Americans are expected to be the junior partner blindly following the senior partners lead, even if that lead is contrary to best interest of African Americans.

If is in the nature of the American pluralistic political process that various interest groups, be they ethnic, religious, economic or social, compete to have their agenda and interests translated into public policy.

Hence labor targets candidates to support or defeat, so does the Moral Majority, business political action committees, and a range of other organizations and associations. Various groups also "lobby" to promote their interests, including various groups within the African American community.

Despite these political realities there always seems to be a controversy when anyone, including Cong. Savage, suggests that there is a "Jewish lobby." From my vantage point to deny that there is a Jewish lobby is ridiculous on the face of it.

So that when Cong. Savage made the allegation that he had been "targeted" for defeat by "Pro-Israel, Jewish organizations" outside of his district, before anyone ran for cover, or issued any public denunciations, it would have been appropriate to check the veracity of the allegations.

According to these sources the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (Aipac) and other "Pro - Israel PACs" as defined by the Almanac of Federal PACs, did indeed contribute $19,750 of the $20,500 which Cong. Savage's opponent received. $6,750 of the $8,250 in individual contributions also came from similar sources.

Apparently Cong. Savage, as an outspoken critic of U.S. policy towards Israel and a voice crying foul over the gross disparity between aid to Israel and aid to Africa was targeted for defeat by Jewish Organizations and individuals concerned about the Congressman's position on these issues.

And Cong. Savage has every right to object to their objection without being labeled anti - Semitic.

There may be a few African American leaders who still panic and tap dance whenever the question of the Jewish lobby and its behavior in relation to African American interests is raised. But by and large the days of the "buck n'wing" are over.

African Americans in pursuit of their interests must be full (grown) partners in relationships with any group. First and foremost, we need a powerful "African American lobby" which can be just as aggressive, tenacious and effective as the lobbies of other ethnic and religious groups.

It's time that the African American lobby strike fear into the hearts of anyone whom it perceives as offending African American Interests.

Walter E. Williams
Minority Viewpoint

Earnings action

Here at tax time, let's see what critical government functions are being funded with the money taken from your paycheck. But, remember, don't get angry with Internal Revenue Service workers, they are just following congressional orders.

The National Science Foundation, along with the National Institute of Mental Health, awarded $107,000 to study the "sexual looking, classical conditioning of sexual arousal, and improvement of copulatory performance with practice" of the Japanese quail.

The project concluded that male quails showed a distinct preference for a female quail over male quails and female ducks. Congress will spend $100,000 more on this project this year.

Congress has broader interests. They fund other important research projects like: $84,000 for a study of why people fall in love; an itty-bitty $2,500 for a study on the causes of rudeness, lying, and cheating on tennis courts;

And $46,000 for a study on how long it takes to cook breakfast eggs. Along with these investigations are thousands of others, totalling billions of tax dollars for research like:

Congress doesn't only spend our earnings for studies; they do brick - and - mortar work too. They spend $500,000 to build a 10-story replica of the Great Pyramid of Cheops (Egypt) in Bedford, Indiana.

With the building materials left over, Congress forked over another $200,000 for an 800-foot replica of the Great Wall of China.

Congress also wants to improve mass transportation. That's why they send officials to the Urban Mass Transit Administration, at a cost of $68,160, to Disney World to learn Disney's secrets on how to move people and improve employee morale and performance.

We certainly have a "compassionate" Congress; they spend $45 million each year on "debridement of myopic toenails." I should let you just sit and wonder what this is but, since you're caught up trying to forget your IRS 1040 form, I'll spare you the grief.

It's toenail clipping. Some podiatrists bill Medicare for as many as 116 in one day. That's one clipping every 15 minutes.

Just a few weeks ago, Secretary of Transportation Sam Skinner and President George Bush announced their desire to beef up our transportation system.

Part of their agenda includes beefing up an already existing $241,764 computer project to assist those lost travelers who either cannot or refuse to use a map.

Then there's the Defense Department which spent 13 years and $38 million to develop a better gas mask; the new mask is no better than the old one. The Air Force illegally shuttles officials on military planes at a cost of $2,334 per hour.

Taxpayers shelled out $221,800 to fly 21 members of Congress and 80 "officials" (read wives, staff, and friends of congressmen) to the Paris Air Show.

All of this is just the tip of the iceberg showing Congress' callous disregard for our hard - earned money. The story is documented in "Wasting America's Money," published by the Washington - based Citizens for a Sound Economy.

But should anybody be surprised by this despicable, irresponsible behavior? Just ask yourself: "When is the best time to throw money away on nonsense?"

If you said, "When it's other people's money," go to the head of the class; that's basic economics.

Dr. Ramona H. Edelin
On The Cultural Offensive

Will to succeed

The lives of African Americans have been filled with the blues, spiritual "sorrow songs," and the weight of oppression as it has manifested itself in so many forms. Some of us say, "been down so long that down don't bother me" — and seem to really mean it.

In the context of the African American cultural offensive, we must examine together just how much being down does bother us; and whether we have, at this time, the will to succeed.

Let's define success as the attainment of our goals, whether they include fame and fortune or more personal achievements. For students, success may mean the joy and satisfaction of mastery in learning, excellent grades, higher test scores so long as these are required of them, and admission into higher levels of the academy.

In personal relationships, success may mean keeping the love bond strong and secure (even when both partners are striving for success and achievement), meeting family financial and familial obligations, and achieving greater and greater self - sufficiency.

In business or professional life, success may mean keeping the budget balanced, steadily advancing with respect to upward mobility in the market place, and achieving financial independence.

As one cultural group, success for African Americans will include the eradication of poverty, ill - health and ignorance and the building of institutions, on our own land, that ensure our self - determination and perfect an unlimited equality with all other groups, here in the U.S. and throughout the world.

The heart and core of success is intense desire; the unshakable determination, unchanging intention, and absolute decision that success is ours. One has to will success for himself or herself — to choose it, believe it, affirm it, and expect it without entertaining doubt, fear, self-pity or defeat of any kind.

We can help and reinforce one another as a group, not only to enlarge and enhance our will to succeed, but also to want what is positive and correct for ourselves, our families and our whole race.

Prosperity and resources to do what we need to do are positive; but greed, base materialism and opportunistic individualism are negative to our cause. We can help and reinforce one another by honestly communicating more; but we must not be satisfied with talk alone.

It is time for us to act — to choose a project or effort in our families, churches, schools and communities and work together to succeed at reaching our goals together.

Yes, we have been, and still are, crucially exploited, mistreated and abused; but we cannot continue to focus primarily on what someone else has done to us. In order to reach our goals — to succeed — we must focus systematically on our own will to prevail over our circumstances and change our condition.

We must ask ourselves, "If everyone of European descent vanished from the face of the earth tomorrow — what would we do?"

And then we must take counsel with each other, decide on some specific goals, and work toward achieving them together in the fullness of our will to succeed.

We can do what we will do! Let's begin right now.

Manning Marable
Along The Color Line

Black education in crisis Part II

Quality schools are absolutely essential for improving the status of Black Americans. Parental involvement in school governance, and adequate instructional resources and excellent teachers are all essential for quality education. But one frequently over looked the components of a strategy of education for liberation is the curriculum, the content and structure of academic information.

We need to seriously think about the connection between the curriculum and the ability of specific groups of children to learn information.

People generally learn best and retain more information when it is presented to them in a framework or context which makes cultural and social sense, which is relevant to them. In other words, learning is culturally specific.

We retain and utilize information which reaffirms those things which we already know, or are reaffirmed by our families, our cultural and social heritage, and our communities.

If the content of a curriculum is culturally or racially biased, or rooted solely in the history, heritage and language of a particular group, to the exclusion of others, then those outside of the system become crippled and disadvantaged in the process of learning.

Last year, the New York State Commissioner of Education, Thomas Sobol, after being pressured by the state legislature's Black and Puerto Rican Caucus, named a panel to review the state's curriculum from kindergarten through twelfth grade.

The curriculum guides affect what every New York private and public school students learn. Teachers can teach what they want, but they must use the guidelines if they want their students to perform well on statewide tests like the Regents exams and competency tests. After seven months of deliberations, the panel finally reported several weeks ago.

The panel stated that the current curriculum in New York had "a systematic bias toward European culture." Consequently, children of European descent not surprisingly acquire the "arrogant perspective of being part of the group that had done it all."

In the social sciences, the study noted, the curriculum embraces "Anglo - Saxon cultural values" and implicity rejects the notion that all races and ethnic groups have an equal place around the table of American civilization.

Almost immediately after the report was released, White critics denounced the report's conclusions. One critic, Professor Andrew Hacker of Queens College in New York, smugly declared: " . . . Almost all of this nation's major decisions have been made by White Christian men."

If educators have a Eurocentric background, an unshakable faith in the power, privileges and prestige of the White race, then one could easily draw this conclusion.

Thomas Jefferson was a "White Christian man," and he authored the Declaration of Independence. Yet did his commitment to freedom really overshadow that of Nat Turner, Denmark Vessey, Gabriel Prosser, and Hariett Tubman?

Can our children learn more about democracy from Jefferson, who owned 200 slaves, and reportedly forced one of his slavewomen, Sally Hemmings, to bear five children?

Or should we listen to the words of Nat Turner, and his higher commitment to human freedom and justice?

Abraham Lincoln was a "White Christian man," and he signed the Emancipation Proclamation, which technically freed the slaves in the rebellious Southern states.

Yet is Lincoln's act more important than the contributions of a Frederick Douglass, who more than anyone else, awakened the conscience of the nation to the inherent evils of slavery, and lead the political fight to abolish the "peculiar institution?"

Lincoln said that this nation could not long survive "half enslaved and half free." But Douglass explained the dynamic meaning of freedom:

"Without struggle there is no progress . . . Those of you who profess freedom, and who deprecate struggle, are like those who want crops without plowing up the ground.

"You want the ocean without the roar of its mighty waters. Power concedes nothing without a demand; it never did and it never will."

What lesson is more important for our children?

Lyndon Johnson, a former segregationist Senator from Texas, rose to the historical occasion by embracing the cause of civil rights in the mid 1960s, signing the Civil Rights Act and Voting Rights Act.

Johnson was also a "White Christian male." But the name and the mighty contributions to freedom by Martin Luther King, Jr., will be long remembered in world history, beyond the specific acts of the Johnson administration.

Martin's dream, and dream of political freedom and democracy, is now being echoed in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

In Czechoslovakia, the masses sang "We Shall Overcome," the anthem of the civil rights movement in this country.

The major decisions and great events which shape history and the character of society are almost never initiated from above, but from below.

If our textbooks teach our children the "Great White Man Theory of History," as if the sacrifices and struggles of millions of Black people and working people were somehow irrelevant, then they have been denied the ability to channel their creative energies and intellects toward the creation of new history and greater freedoms for oppressed people.

If our children have no vision of what our people have accomplished in the past, then they will be unable to realize their fullest potential in the future.

Dr. Manning Marable is Professor of Political Science and Sociology at the University of Colorado, Boulder.