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NNPA Editorial

We Must Pay As Well As Pray For Civil Rights

"We must pay as well as pray for civil rights progress."

Those are the words of a black business man who exemplifies black philanthropy at its best. Don King, boxing promoter extraordinaire, is known as a self-educated and very glib speaker. Put him behind a microphone or in front of some listeners, and he can entertain, charm, and overwhelm you with his eloquence. But he also believes in putting his money where his mouth is.

Don King practices what he preaches — not forgetting from whence you've come; returning something significant to the community which helped make you; sharing, caring, and giving in support of your own people; doing all you can to help support the strength of the black community, black family, and using power and money intelligently and effectively to support our cause.

In February, King, during a visit to Howard University to speak to students, handed out checks totalling \$130,000 to ten black organizations, including the NAACP, the National Urban League, United Negro College Fund, and the National Newspaper Publishers Association. Significantly, King presented a \$10,000 check to Dr. LaSalle Lefall, a black physician, then the president of the American Cancer Society, for a national campaign to reduce the high incidence of cancer deaths among black men.

In the past several years, King has contributed more than a half million dollars to black causes.

At the PUSH convention in Chicago recently, King not only contributed another \$10,000 in support of Project Excel and other PUSH programs, but brought with him four of his boxing champions, each inspired to contribute \$1,000.

Says King, "Some of our successful blacks, who are products of the black community, the black ghetto, like myself, are so quick to forget who helped make them, the origin of their black roots. As soon as the wrinkles get out of their bellies, they proclaim they have done it alone... made it to the top by themselves."

Added King, "We must deal with the fact that we are our black brother's keeper, whether we want to be or not. And our plight, as blacks struggling for parity in the economic market place, will not be changed, until we help ourselves."

As a boxing promoter who brought the "big purse" to the fighters, King has had a phenomenal "rags to riches" saga — from an ex-convict to the "P.T. Barnum of Boxing." But when you reach the mountaintop, as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., discovered, there are many forces out to knock you down, to discredit you, to put "the nigger" back in his place.

So, it is true with King. The same FBI that investigated Dr. King, and passed along vicious and malicious rumors to discredit him; the same FBI that helped destroy the life of a white movie star by deliberately planting news items in Hollywood gossip columns about the woman being impregnated by a member of the Black Panthers, and this same FBI is now allegedly looking into criminal violations in boxing, but up to now, the focus has been on one person, Don King.

King's No. 1 competitor, Bob Arum, who is white, has not been a subject of what the FBI agent in New York described as "comprehensive investigations." Of course, we know that when a black man moves near the top, whether in politics or the private sector, racism raises its ugly head in many sophisticated forms.

We remember very clearly how the Federal Trade Commission instituted an investigation against Johnson Products regarding the safety of one of its products and refused to make similar checks on Avon and the other major white cosmetic firms. The FTC claim and subsequent publicity critically hurt George Johnson, president of Johnson Products, in the marketplace.

So, black America, let us not be so naive to believe that every investigation by federal authorities against blacks in power is justified and the black is not guilty until proven guilty.

In the meantime, we should call upon the Reagan Administration and Attorney General William French Smith to explain why one person, Don King, is being penned against the wall, and is the only subject of a prolonged investigation. Either public charges should be filed against King, or we all will believe its part of a racial persecution plot.

It's Don King this time. Who will be next? For this reason, black America cannot sit idly back and let our Administration of Justice run a reckless course, as it has often wantonly done in the past.

Affirmative Action

Black Britain and Reagan's War On Civil Rights

Gerald C. Horne, Esquire

As the flames of rebellion begin to flicker in Great Britain, it is appropriate to examine the reasons for this mass unrest. For the past weeks, the kind of urban rebellions that dotted the landscapes of Harlem, Watts and other black communities hit Liverpool, Manchester and other staid, terribly British towns.

Those of the United States should be especially quick to analyze recent events in England because Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher has been pursuing assiduously the same kind of "monetarist" soak the poor/feed the rich policies formulated by the right-wing economist Milton Friedman and presently being executed by her Atlantic counterpart, President Ronald Reagan.

The fact is — as even New York's Governor Hugh Carey has pointed out — that continued pursuit of Reagan's program of throwing money at the Pentagon while bleeding dry all social programs (Medicare, mass transit, day-care and the like) will cause rebellions of a sort that would make Britain's unrest seem tame by comparison.

Britain's prestigious Commission for Racial Equality, which was established by the government to monitor progress in race relations and to investigate charges of discrimination, declared in a recent report that as the economic recession worsened and unemployment rose, blacks and other peoples of color were disproportionately affected.

The report noted that discrimination in employment, far from being eliminated, is increasing in some areas and that at the head of the unemployment line are blacks. But like the USA, whites are affected too by this unemployment; hence, it was not surprising that black and white youths were joined together in fighting the police and attacking symbols of corporate wealth.

What this report outlined about unemployment and racism plaguing the British isles could just as easily have been written about the U.S. Of course, this kind of urban outbreak — as only a few commentators noted — is nothing new for Britain. In the 18th century, for example, "bread riots" and other forms of opposition to price hikes were as common as slums. Nevertheless, the specter of black and white youth banding together in the recent rebellions is certainly worthy of note.

Though he is not smart enough or sufficiently sensitive to do so, President Reagan would do well to study carefully the report of the Commission for Racial Equality. For it is certain that his policies are inexorably leading to a domestic apocalypse now.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in his current war on civil rights. Reviving President Nixon's discredited "Southern Strategy" with a vengeance, the former B-movie thespian has been working overtime to appease those who long for the "good old days" when blacks "knew their place."

High on their hit list is the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which has helped to bring so much change and so many black elected officials on the scene. Civil rights leaders want to renew the act in its present form, covering nine southern states and portions of thirteen other states in various parts of the country, including Manhattan, Brooklyn and the Bronx in New York City.

With a slyness and sleight of hand that would cause an amateur magician to blush, Reagan has suggested that the Act should be

extended to cover all fifty states. The President knows that the Justice Department can barely fulfill its present responsibilities in enforcing the Act. Extending jurisdiction to all fifty states would mean that states where the most serious and egregious violations occur — Mississippi, Virginia, Georgia, North Carolina, Florida, etc. — would be likely to escape notice and get away clean. Some opponents of affirmative action have tried a similar trick by suggesting that everybody should receive "preferential treatment." But if everybody receives affirmative action, then moves to give blacks a boost are negated and we're right back where we started. Reagan must know that his proposal would be the kiss of death for the Voting Rights Act and he should be accorded the same lack of respect that he is displaying toward us.

If Reagan's position on the Voting Rights Act is bad, then his position on school desegregation, civil rights litigation by the Justice Department and employment discrimination is incalculably worse.

In response to complaints from Big Business, the Department of Labor has delayed the date of publication of affirmative action guidelines by the all-important Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP).

But that's not all. Since Reagan has taken office, the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division has filed a meager five civil lawsuits on discrimination issues, as against 17 such suits in the first six months of the Carter Administration. Before a call is issued for a return to the White House by the peanut farmer, please note that 24 such suits were filed in the first six months of the Nixon Administration. These statistics dramatize a fact some of us have known all along. What is important is not so much the President but the political context in which he operates. In 1968 when Nixon came to power there were frequent demonstrations, picketing and mass pressure to which he had to bend. Some of us thought that just because black votes elected Carter, we could sit on our hands. But it should have been recognized that freedom is a constant struggle and the pressure should always be on the President — he should always hear our marching feet — even if our votes elected him.

In criminal actions, mainly against policemen accused of civil rights violations, the Reagan Justice Department has filed 21 suits, while during the same time frame the Carter Administration filed 28. During Reagan's reign, eight objections have been lodged pursuant to the Voting Rights Act; under Carter during the same period, 23 were filed.

In the area of school desegregation, e.g., North Carolina's higher education system, in what has been termed "a total reversal," Justice Department attorneys have asked the North Carolina court for a consent decree cancelling most of the desegregation demands the Government has made over the past decade.

Attorney General William French Smith has stated opposition to busing in school desegregation cases and affirmative action in employment cases. There seems to be no hurry to confirm Reagan's appointee for Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights, William Bradford Reynolds; moreover, Reynolds is vastly in experienced in the field and has not been known for a fervent com-

mitment to civil rights.

Most observers agree that there is a "virtual paralysis of activity" at the crucial Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, as the *New York Times* put it. The civil rights community has been taking it on the chin from Reagan, as he has won round after round. The *New York Times* captured the perversity of the situation: "Ironically, the civil rights forces have been sustaining major losses in this behind-the-scenes battle while Mr. Reagan has been inviting black groups to the White House to reassure them of his stand on civil rights." This two-faced strategy is fooling fewer and fewer and many civil rights forces are in the process of taking off the gloves and doing away with the defensive "rope-a-dope" tactic that has allowed Reagan to pile up points.

Changing tactics is especially critical now because Reagan has made no bones about his desire to sustain withering blows on the OFCCP. At the moment, companies with fifty or more employees and at least \$50,000 in government contracts must develop written affirmative action plans. Reagan wants to change this to make jurisdiction reach only concerns of 250 or more employees with contracts over \$1 million a year. This would reduce the number of companies covered from 17,000 to a paltry 4,200. Certain sectors of the business community are overjoyed at the prospect of this coup. They are also ecstatic because of Reagan's appointee to head OFCCP is an inexperienced attorney who has worked her way quickly up the corporate ladder by being a "yes-woman." The appointee, Ellen Shong, has acknowledged already that she has no plans to bar government contracts to violators of her agency's rules.

Meanwhile, back in the black community, Labor Department statistics reveal a high unemployment rate that almost makes one long nostalgically for the Great Depression of the 1930's. In the schools, black children use tattered books and note books while across town white children are using computers, reading machines and other fruits of the scientific and technological revolution. Most of all, a growing resentment is building that threatens to explode in an orgy of violence unless corrective measures are taken.

The NAACP has endorsed the call of the AFL-CIO and the labor movement for a massive March on Washington September 19 to protest the awful insanity of Reaganomics. Operation PUSH, the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists and the National Conference of Black Lawyers are among the hundreds of other groups who have similarly endorsed this manifestation that may surpass the 250,000 that marched for jobs and equality in 1963.

Mobilizing for this march must be accelerated so Reagan will know — just as we let Nixon know — that his policies are totally unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Further, few look forward to seeing blood flowing in the streets and fiery confrontations between unemployed black youth and police officers with pistols, rifles, hoses and tanks. Black Britain has shown where "monetarist," Thatcher-Reagan policies inevitably lead. Their rebellion was a warning shot over the bow that Reagan would be wise to heed. But unfortunately, Reagan must be forced to sue for peace and call a ceasefire in his ongoing war against civil rights.

To Be Equal

Britain's Riots

By Vernon E. Jordan, Jr.

The July rioting that swept through British cities provoked a lot of soul-searching, both here and abroad. In some ways, the responses to the riots were more interesting than the fact of the riots themselves.

That is not to underestimate the importance of the breakdown of social order in what is generally regarded as the most orderly of nations. Rather, it is because the responses to the riots tell so much about today's social climate.

The initial response on the part of the authorities was to give the police more authority and weapons. Officials were more concerned with putting out the fire than with seeking the cause of the blaze.

One Cabinet minister, noting that the rioters were unemployed young people of all races, called for guaranteed jobs and training positions for all young people.

That proposal was quickly shot down by Britain's conservative government, which stuck to the monetary and economic policies that have led in the highest levels of unemployment since the Depression.

Finally, the government managed to bend its rigid principles just enough to announce a modest plan to subsidize private employers that hire young people at below market-level wage rates. It plans other measures too, to expand youth job and training programs.

Such steps amount to fire prevention — doing just enough to keep some semblance of social peace but not enough to end the problems that result in social explosions.

But even those limited steps make more sense than some of the comments from this side of the ocean. American editorialists warned against such compromises with the

rioters. Many suggested that a hard-line law and order approach was the only one that should be taken.

Almost all American commentators appeared sensitive to the similarities between Britain's angry youth and the effects of the Administration's economic program on our inner-city poor.

The particular mix of ingredients that led to Britain's explosions are peculiar to that country, including race. The attacks of neo-fascist white hoodlums on Asians and the police harassment of British blacks are part of a complex form of racism that has its roots in Britain's history and social structure.

But the riots were not race riots; they brought white, black and Asian young people into the streets in an integrated display of anger and alienation.

How bad do things have to get before social controls break down? Britain's unemployment rate is about eleven per cent, or about what America's was during the deep recession of the mid-seventies.

But youth unemployment ranges around the fifty per cent mark, similar to minority youth jobless rates in our cities. And that may be a more relevant factor, one that has to make American officials uneasy.

But unemployment and other forms of economic hardship rarely burst into riots such as both America and Britain have experienced if poor people still feel themselves part of the society. So long as they feel they are being dealt with fairly, that their hopes and needs are taken into account, and their condition is temporary, they will not burst the bonds of accepted social behavior.

But once they feel they are being treated unfairly and denied even minimal access to

the system, watch out. That's why the issue of police harassment was so important a factor in the British riots — the white and black poor could put up with the poverty in dignity, but the official harassment appears to have been the spark of humiliation that ignited their outburst.

When poor and alienated people of any nation feel themselves pushed against the wall their reactions are not going to strike well-fed, comfortable people as rational.

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If there is no struggle, there is no progress. Those who propose to favor freedom and yet depreciate agitation are men who want to without plowing up the ground. They want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean's majestic waves without the awful roar of its waters. —Frederick Douglass