

# Locking up children and throwing away the key

Bernice P. Jackson



We were all shocked more than a year ago by the story of Eric Morse, the 5-year-old child killed by two older boys, one 10 and one 11 years old, who threw Eric out the window of their Chicago housing project when he refused to steal candy for them. We were shocked by the reality of children killing children.

Now we should be shocked by the sentences which the two older boys received and that it says about us as a nation. The younger boy becomes the youngest child locked up in a maximum security juvenile prison in the country. The older is also headed for prison.

Both of these boys are living,

breathing examples of what happens when parents and all the institutions of society fail children. Both are living, breathing examples of what happens to children who do not know love at home and do not find caring in schools, social agencies or the criminal justice system. Both show us what happens when little children "fall between the cracks."

The younger boy has an I.Q. somewhere around 60. The older child failed every subject in the fourth grade, only to be passed on to the fifth grade by a system that had to know he was in trouble. Often a runaway, he had been picked up by police before but he had never been seen by a social worker. His father is also imprisoned. Both boys lived most of their lives in the Ida B. Wells housing project, one of the nation's toughest.

Before this horrible case appeared in the nation's headlines, children under 13 could not be sent to prison under

Illinois law. Now that has changed so that children as young as 10 can be locked up in Illinois. It's a trend that is being followed in state after state.

Said Jay Hoffman, an Illinois state legislator, "...That's my sense of what the public very much wants."

Like much of the national debate around crime in this nation, public emotion and sentiment are often used as the rationale for get tough laws. Make no mistake about it: the murder of a five year old is a heinous crime. But it was a crime committed by children, no matter how angry or defiant or hardened they may seem to be.

Indeed, much of the debate around these two child murderers centers around whether punishment or treatment should receive priority. The judge in their case seems to have weighed in on the side of punishment. But those who are studying children and violence believe that while they should be punished, that intensive psychiatric

care and old-fashioned nurturing must be a significant part of what happens to them if they are to change.

Moreover, the same laws which imprison 10-year-olds also mandate that the children must be freed by the time they turn 21. As Dr. Bruce Perry, a psychiatrist at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, said, "These children have to get out of prison

eventually. And when they do, if they haven't received intensive treatment and help, they will be the most remorseless, angry and skilled predators imaginable. What else can we expect of someone who has grown up in prison?"

The boys' lawyers fear that they will end up in prison with 200 or more inmates and one part-time psychiatrist, guaranteeing that they will receive little help. Said Michelle Kaplan, the lawyer for the 13-year-old in a recent New York Times interview, "There's this history leading up to this child

being in crisis and no one has ever intervened. Now the system has finally intervened and they want to throw him away."

We're in trouble in this country. A nation where children are killing children must deal with

what has created murderers out of children. A nation that locks up its young and throws away the key can only create more murderers and more Eric Morses.

BERNICE P. JACKSON is executive director of the Commission For Racial Justice in Cleveland.

## Letters to the Editor

### Movement to stop killing is under way

Over the past years I have been quick to speak out when black ministers were slow to come to the aid of our people. I have spoken out so much that some call me a preacher-fighter, so it is with great excitement that I write this letter.

On Nov. 18, 1995, a "Black Town Meeting" was held at the St. Paul Baptist Church. Ten churches were represented there. For the first time ministers in this city sat down with the grass root and admitted that many of them had come short of the mark. Some did not attack black-on-black crime, however they were quick to attack Barnett. We all agreed that there was much we all could do to help save our people.

A plan was worked out to bring about a 25 percent decrease in the rate of murder in our city in 1996. After the meeting, we counted up all the black churches that were in support of the campaign to "Stop The Killing." We came up with a total of 28. Those churches began a campaign to help raise the awareness in our community. Some pastors spoke from their pulpit. All agreed to pass out "Stop The Killing" handbills.

Dr. Jones of Friendship Baptist Church was one of those that told their members he was going to do more in 1996 to help the campaign. He was one of the pastors that joined us on New Year's Day in our kick-off campaign. With pastors like Dr. Drummond, Dr. Jones, Dr. Klmbrough, Dr. Pridgen, Dr. Pendergrass, Dr. Steger and others, there is no way we can lose. When the black church speaks, things begin to happen for the best.

On April 13, we are calling for 5,000 supporters to take a stand against drugs and violence. This movement will be led by the black church. I have always said that if we could just get 25 black churches working together we could win this war and give hope to the world. Thank God the movement is now well on the way.

-Rev. James E. Barnett  
Charlotte

### Farrakhan stands up for all black people

Once again, Minister Louis Farrakhan's uncompromising stance has created widespread concern, anger and fear among government officials. His recent tour to nearly 20 African and Middle East countries has prompted outrage within the State Department and Congress.

For the past few days, national newspapers have printed editorials and articles condemning his actions as "terrorist thugfest." The Farrakhan phenomenon continues to disturb and confuse those who would like to gain some control over his message and actions.

After the success of the Million Man March, so-called black leaders thought that perhaps they could embrace and welcome Farrakhan into their pantheon of leadership. However, his recent journey will, unfortunately, force them to further distance themselves from him and label him irresponsible. Kweisi Mfume, the new president of the NAACP was quoted as saying that Farrakhan's visits to some of these countries did not help efforts to establish "conformity with international law." To hell with conforming to international law!

Obviously, those so-called black leaders who have condemned Farrakhan's actions, based on his violation of international law, have suddenly been stricken with a colossal case of historical amnesia. Since the early 1920s, with the emergence of Marcus Garvey to the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968, there have been several black men who have been accused of being in violation of international law. These men were ridiculed, stoned and some even murdered for simply exercising their human rights.

Malcolm X, during the last year of his life, made a similar trip to African and Middle East countries to gain international support of these countries to bring the United States government before the United Nations to charge them with violating the UN Charter of Human Rights as it relates to blacks in America. For this the U.S. State Department helped to create a climate for his assassination. Thirty-one years after his assassination, the same forces who conspired to destroy Malcolm X seek the destruction of Farrakhan.

I sincerely believe that African people in America and abroad have developed an intellectual maturity that will allow us to disagree with each other without creating division that will impede with the struggle for liberation and equality here in America as well as Africa and so-called Third World countries.

I applaud Farrakhan's audacity in a time when it seems that so-called black leaders are interested in being careful not to offend this wicked government. I watched Farrakhan on C-SPAN as he spoke of how each of the African and Middle East nations embraced and welcomed him and his delegation with open arms and in the spirit of solidarity and brotherhood. This is what America has deliberately attempted to disallow for years; the collaboration between Black Africa and Black America.

-Andre P. Steveson  
Charlotte

## What's on your mind?

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# Supporting an African freedom fighter

By Conrad Worrill  
SPECIAL TO THE POST

Recently, I received word that Kwame Ture, (formerly known

as Stokely Carmichael), was hospitalized in New York City for observation and tests after suffering a great deal of pain during his "1996 Worldwide Recruitment Drive."

I began to reflect on when I became aware of Kwame and his great contributions to the worldwide African liberation movement.

Since the late 1960s Brother Kwame has been one of the chief spokespersons and organizers for the All African Peoples Revolutionary Party (A-APRP) where he has lived in the Republic of Guinea in West Africa. While in Guinea, Brother Kwame studied with, and worked under the guidance of, the late President of Guinea, Ahmed Sekou Ture and the late President of Ghana, Osagyefo Kwame Nkrumah.

Most people throughout the world began to hear of Kwame (a.k.a. Stokely Carmichael) during the civil rights movement of the 1960s where he participated in the first Freedom Rides and many sit-ins and marches.

The origin of Kwame's participation in the civil rights movement began during his

high school years at Bronx High School of Science where he graduated in 1960. Kwame always had a tendency to be active around the movement circles in New York while in high school and this continued when he enrolled at Howard University in 1960.

Primary source documents reveal that "In the Winter of 1960, Black college students in dozens of communities across this country conducted sit-ins to secure the desegregation of lunch counters in drug and variety stores. These sources go on to explain that "Arrests numbered in the thousands. On every major college campus in this country, students organized groups such as NAG (The Non Violent Action Group) at Howard University to continue the Sit-In Movement." Kwame was a founding member of NAG and was one of its early leaders.

Out of this student activism, the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee was formed at Shaw University in April of 1960. SNCC and its student base provided ground troops for almost every major civil rights demonstration and campaign during the 1960s period in our history of the movement. Kwame was one of the 300 "Freedom Riders" that were arrested "in Mississippi and Alabama during the spring and summer of 1961."

From that point on, Kwame participated in every major campaign that emerged.

Kwame came to the public's attention in 1965 when Look magazine featured an article titled "Freedom Road" that mentioned Kwame's role as an organizer and leader in SNCC. Several months later in June of 1966, Ebony magazine historian and writer Lerone Bennett wrote an article featuring Kwame. Brother Bennett observed in this article that Kwame, like "No other young man, with the exception of Martin Luther King Jr. has risen so fast so quick. No other young man has sparked such an avalanche of hope, fear, anger, and public concern." Bennett asks the question "Who is this young man? What does he want? What does he mean by Black Power?"

Further, Bennett wrote that Kwame "...embodies one aspect of the Black Power doctrine that he preaches. Tall (six-foot-one) and loose, with a disciplined wildness that led SNCC associates to dub him the Magnificent Barbarian." Kwame, wrote Bennett, "walks like Sidney Poitier, talks like Harry Belafonte and thinks like the post-Muslim Malcolm X."

Again, primary source documents explain that "In April, 1966, at the Kinston Spring SNCC staff meeting (aka Stokely) was elected chair-

man, ushering in a new level and direction for both the organization and the larger movement of which it was an integral part." These same sources indicate that "In June, after James Meredith was gunned down on a highway in Mississippi, (aka Stokely) sounded the new Black mood." This is what Kwame said:

"The only way we are gonna stop them white men from whippin us is to take over. We been saying freedom for six years and we ain't got nothing. What we gonna start saying now is BLACK POWER!"

Kwame has been one of the leading advocates of Pan Africanism through his leadership in the A-APRP. Since the late 1960s Kwame has travelled throughout the world lecturing and organizing African people to understand the need to struggle around the idea of Pan Africanism "as the only solution to our problems."

Kwame, we appreciate all that you've contributed and sacrificed for the movement. We stand ready to support you in your time of need! Ready for the revolution!

CONRAD WORRILL is national chairman of National Black United Front in Chicago.

# Farrakhan's world tour: The issue of Nigeria

Manning Marable



Louis Farrakhan has managed to outrage and anger white America once again. With his highly-publicized 20-nation "world friendship tour," the leader of the Nation of Islam caucused with many African and Asian heads of state. This new level of political prestige and international recognition for Farrakhan was largely due to the dramatic success of the Million Man March in Washington, D.C., last October.

In Iran, Farrakhan was reported to have joined the celebration of the 17th anniversary of the overthrow of the Shah. The Iranian press quoted him as saying: "God will destroy America by the hands of Muslims. God will not give Japan or Europe the honor of bringing down the United States; this is an honor God will bestow upon Muslims."

In Iraq, Farrakhan expressed solidarity with dictator Saddam Hussein, and suggested that United Nations economic sanctions against that country were parallel to the status of the Jews in Nazi death camps.

According to JANA, the Libyan Press Agency, the Libyan leader Mohammed el-Gadhafi offered \$1 billion to Farrakhan to finance his political activities inside the U.S.

It was not surprising that these statements and actions abroad provoked

harsh condemnations from the government and the media. The white political establishment has always criticized black American leaders who have addressed international issues or

who have traveled abroad — including Paul Robeson, Martin Luther King Jr., and Malcolm X.

However, I would challenge Farrakhan's political judgment on Nigeria.

During his visit to the most populous nation of Africa, Farrakhan in effect gave his personal approval to the military regime that only three months ago hanged noted writer/playwright Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other human rights activists.

The background to the execution of Saro-Wiwa represents a mixture of

corporate greed, environmental racism, and the brutality of a military dictatorship. Saro-Wiwa was the leader of a political movement among Nigeria's Ogoni people, calling for greater democratic rights and environmental protection measures to check oil pollution in the region.

Shell Oil Company produces about one-half of Nigeria's oil, and has vast petroleum holdings in the Ogoni area. In the Ogoni ancestral land of 400 square miles, there are 96 oil wells and five pumping stations, where vast amounts of natural gas are burned 24 hours every day. Frequent oil spills have polluted water supplies and destroyed crops. Virtually no profits from Shell's oil production went to the Ogoni people.

When protests developed, Shell authorized the Nigerian government to send mobile police to suppress dissent. Shell paid for the transportation and salary bonuses of troops known as the "kill-and-go mob," who terrorized the local population.

Last year, Saro-Wiwa was arrested on false charges. He was tried before a mixed military-civilian court with no right of judicial appeal. Two witnesses for the prosecution later retracted their testimony, admitting that the government had bribed them. Nevertheless, Saro-Wiwa was

executed. Nineteen more Ogoni are now awaiting trial. Human rights groups throughout the world were outraged by this example of despotism.

But Farrakhan chatted amiably with Saro-Wiwa's murderers. He even criticized Western governments for their condemnations of the Nigerian

dictatorship. Farrakhan was reported to say: "They say that you hanged one man. So what? Ask them, too, 'How many did you hang?'"

Randall Robinson, president of TransAfrica, expressed "extreme disappointment" with Farrakhan's visit to Nigeria's military dictatorship: "His statements and the things that were said appear to make Minister Farrakhan an apologist for an authoritarian, corrupt and repressive regime."

Farrakhan's action on Nigeria calls into question his entire political agenda. His right to travel and to engage in international dialogues must be defended. But on the issue of Nigeria, as far as black people's interests are concerned, he has much explaining to do.

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