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After all these years, she's still daddy's girl

DG
Martin



When somebody talks about weddings, my thoughts almost always race back in time to the day when my daughter came home from kindergarten one day and told us she and one of her little boy classmates "were married."

We quizzed her about the details of her new "husband," about the ceremony, what the other children and the teachers thought about the situation, what his parents thought, and on and on.

Later, my wife and I laughed at the seriousness with which she responded to each question we asked. But we requested and received daily reports of the kindergarten marriage until the day my daughter announced that she had gotten a divorce. He was now married to someone else.

All so matter of fact she made it seem. It was so much a part of her being a little child. But it was also an early signal that this wonderful child would someday grow up into real womanhood.

And suddenly, it has happened.

She is a grown-up now. Three years out of college. A year of working with troubled young women in Asheville. Two years of teaching junior high school in New York's South Bronx. Still beautiful, but mature and tough.

And planning her real wedding this summer. But I still think of her as my little girl — my baby girl. Yesterday, it seems, no, a few minutes ago, I was in the delivery room watching her push out into this world, then washed up and wrapped up in a blanket, there, suddenly alive and real. My baby girl forever. Helpless she may have been. But also compelling. And demanding attention and love.

Diapers — dirty, smelly, full. Worms. Lice. Spit-up on my clean shirt. Raging fevers. Falls. Tantrums. Bloody cuts and stitches, broken leg and broken back. Hurt feelings and broken heart. Beautiful she was to us — through every stage. Every messy little calamity bonded us.

And thousands of joyful times. Smiles, hugs, camping trips, good report cards, church pageants, school concerts, athletic heroics, and a

cast of friends that opened windows wide to worlds I would otherwise never have known.

Somehow, sometimes I can't keep up with the passage of time.

I see a "Sesame Street" television program or book today — and want to talk to her about the activities of Ernie and Bert — as if it were 20 years ago.

I see a doll in some other child's arms and rush into plans to get one just like it for her. If there is a piece of miniature furniture somewhere, I want to buy it for her doll house.

When a restaurant chain has a "birthday club" for kids under 12 years old, it is hard for me to stop myself from signing her up. I see an athlete or some other celebrity — and wonder if she would want an autograph.

A seashell, a leaf, a college T-shirt, a funny rock, a piece of wood, whatever crazy thing I see, the question jumps into my mind, "Should I take it to her?"

At different times, I remember her at different stages.

Fifth grade. "Dad, why don't you ever come and eat lunch with my class like the other dads do?" Or 10th grade. "Dad, please don't come to our school. I would be so, so embarrassed."

Fake perfume. Real perfume.

Pretend jewelry. Charm bracelets. The real stuff.

When Halloween comes around, I think what kind of costumes we will wear and whether she will let me go up to the neighbor's door with her.

Where will her Christmas stocking be hung? What should be in it?

On dark rainy nights I wake up wondering whether or not she is home and safe.

Will I ever give her up — give up my little girl?

The newspaper announcement says it clearly. It states that her mother and I announce her engagement and set the wedding date. I know it is real. I know that she is long since grown up. I know it all....

I know it, but she will always be, for me, my little girl.

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Zaire's political conscience

By Emery Okundji Ndj
SPECIAL TO THE POST

The government of Kengo Wa Dondo and the "experts" has been in place in Zaire since June 1994, and has failed to pass its checkup. Nonetheless, this government still manages to benefit from precious support of the international community and of international financial institutions.

But what exactly is happening? The international community, especially the international financial institutions, should at least be able to learn a lesson from the effect of their politics in Africa in general, and in Zaire in particular.

Since 1990, the political realities of a great number of

African countries have changed. There has been a breakdown in the democratic process. Despite the fact that certain countries, such as Zaire, have had a break in their democratic processes, one important outcome deserves to be outlined: the birth of a political conscience. That is to say, a consciousness of the citizens has been awakened which has made the people aware that they rightfully deserve to hold the power in their own hands. They know that those who direct the government should be their servants.

What change has occurred in the attitude of the international community now that these facts have come to light? In fact, the international community and the interna-

tional financial institutions act as if nothing has changed: they still seem to disregard the socio-political realities of Zaire and Africa in general. It is this which explains the



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fundamental reason for the failure which the international financial institutions continues to reap in Africa.

Let's not forget the Kengo government — the international community has indeed brought unfailing pressure on this government to the scorn of rules which were democrati-

cally established. The results are very deceiving because Kengo had not received his mandate from the people of Zaire. He is a product of constitutional trickery. This is the reason why Kengo uses anti democratic methods to force his power and authority on the people. At least this does not go unnoticed by Zairians since they have acquired a political consciousness which will be indispensable for its total liberation. We can now take comfort in knowing for a fact that all politics which are not conscious of this important parameter will only be wind.

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THE UNACRUISER
STRIKES AGAIN



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MANNING MARABLE

Why should workers make a decent wage?

Manning
Marable



In the summer of 1969, my first real job was working in a large warehouse, unloading box cars and cleaning toilets. I earned the minimum wage, which at that time was \$1.60 an hour. In today's wages, that was equal to \$6.45. By working all summer, I earned enough to cover most of my first year's college tuition.

Today, millions of Americans work over 40 hours each week, and never take home enough money to feed and clothe their families. Minimum wage workers currently make \$4.25 an hour, or approximately \$170 for a 40-hour week. Almost 60 percent of these workers are women. Nearly two-thirds are adults who are trying to support their families.

In a recent column, Bob

Herbert of The New York Times observed that it has been "nearly seven years since the minimum wage was increased." A year ago, President Clinton proposed a modest 90-cent-an-hour increase in the minimum wage, which was rejected by the Republican-controlled Congress. If this modest wage increase had been granted, Herbert noted, "the \$525 in additional wages could have provided food for three months, or ten months worth of electric bills, or new clothing for several children."

Conservatives argue that increasing the minimum wage will discourage businesses from hiring workers with limited educational backgrounds and skills. But Department of Labor Secretary Robert Reich cites a series of studies that prove that increasing the minimum wage does not have that effect. More to the point, Reich states: "It is fundamentally immoral to expect people to work full-time for \$8,600 a year."

One national organization that is leading the fight for

decent wages is ACORN — the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now. Last year, ACORN mobilized the Chicago Jobs and Living Wage Campaign, a coalition of over 40 community groups, labor unions and religious leaders.

The campaign has called for a city ordinance requiring businesses that receive subsidies or hold city contracts to pay their workers at least \$7.60 an hour.

The majority of Chicago's City Council now supports the living wage ordinance, but it is opposed by Mayor Richard Daley.

In Missouri, ACORN is organizing support for a statewide initiative to raise the minimum wage to \$6.25 in 1997. In St. Louis, ACORN started a petition campaign that would require all companies from the city to employ local residents through community-based hiring halls and all subsidy recipients and city contractors to pay employees fair wages.

And in Houston, ACORN and

SEIU Local 100 have obtained 12,000 signatures to place an initiative to increase the minimum wage for the city on the ballot.

However, the effort to achieve decent wages for working people will not be won without a struggle. In St. Paul, Minnesota, last year, an initiative that would have required any company that received over \$25,000 in public subsidies to pay their employees at least \$7.21 an hour was defeated.

Labor unions and civil rights organizations must lead a national campaign for a significant hike in the minimum wage, as well as for full employment legislation. We cannot wait for Congress or Clinton to "do the right thing." Only through public protests and mobilization can we win a living wage for all.

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Armed and ready: Gun control and the African American community

By Eric H. Kearney

NATIONAL NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

If statistics are reliable, on the day you are reading this someone will get shot with a gun. In the African American community the debate over gun control and the Second Amendment to the United States Constitution which grants, in the Bill of Rights, the right to bear arms is a see-saw without a balance.

On the one hand, there is the individual's right to protect him/herself from crime. Many rely upon a gun in their home as a method of protection from robbery. Further there is the enjoyment which some receive from collecting, shooting, and hunting with guns. On the other hand, there are the lives of African American men (statistics again suggest that it is usually men who are shot) lost because of violence stemming from guns. This can take several forms: African Americans who are shot, African Americans who receive harsher sentences because of the use of a gun when accused of a crime, and the increased likelihood of violence which occurs from the availability of guns. Increasing the

complexity of the gun control issue in the African American community is the dysfunctionality of the criminal justice system. One of the strong motivational factors behind owning a gun is a lack of confidence in the justice system. The perception is that the justice system is broken — trials take too long, African American defendants are sentenced unfairly, African Americans are brought before the system too often, and lawyers manipulate the system so people must take the law into their own hands. This feeling is one of the factors found in the Second Amendment. The Second Amendment contemplates a well-armed citizen militia. Should the large, authoritarian federal government ever become out of control, the argument goes, the militia could fight on behalf of the people.

Recently, the House of Representatives voted to repeal the ban on assault weapons, despite knowing that it will not pass the Senate and will certainly be vetoed by President Bill Clinton. Part of the House of Representatives' reasoning was that individuals have the right to own guns and the right to participate in a (mythical or primitive, you pick the adjective) militia. The problem is that the images associated with militia are fat guys in

upper Michigan, skinheads in Idaho, and religious separatists in Texas. Moreover, assault weapons do not fit with the argument that guns are for protection.

The African American community has a strong interest in reducing violence and crime. Yet, does gun control reduce crime? Does it create barriers for people who would responsibly use guns, while creating opportunities for those who would not obey such a law? Would enacting legislation on the state level be more effective than federal legislation? Does the community encourage youth gun use by glorifying violence? Is it reasonable to ask people not to own guns, when they know that criminals have guns? Or should we draw a red line through the Second Amendment because it does not fit with modern times?

Or perhaps there is a balance...with a few modifications. For instance, states could require waiting periods, limits on the number of guns purchased, registration, and training classes for new owners. Some may consider these measures as intrusion upon the Second Amendment, but at least they provide a livable solution.

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